

Institution: Edge Hill University

Unit of Assessment: 35 – Music, Dance, Drama and Performing Arts

a. Context

During the census period, research in the Department of Performing Arts (PA) was undertaken within four broad themes, expressed as research clusters. Clusters enable the exposure of common research interests and facilitate research collaboration, and sharing of processes and findings with research users. Members of clusters identify, develop and deliver projects, some of which address the aspirations of communities (of place and interest), influence public policy and investigate new practices and concepts within the sub-disciplines of Performing Arts, and across and beyond cognate disciplines. Research users most likely to benefit from understanding or applying our research findings and insights have been identified, by cluster theme, enabling individual and departmental plans to focus on maximising opportunities for impact, developing communication channels, investing in '*impact skills*' and '*impact infrastructure*' and cultivating key relationships. Our research clusters, the forms of impact most relevant to our research and the key beneficiary groups may be summarised as follows:

Performance and Health: Dowler and Hawkins lead research into the potential of dance and movement for maintaining physical and mental health, coping with illness and treatment, recovery and adaptation. This includes management of pain, mental and emotional well-being and the development or maintenance of movement and flexibility. Key beneficiaries include child and adult patients in clinical settings, their families, clinicians and welfare teams, as well as individuals for whom dance and movement can contribute to health and well-being. Adams-Davey collaborates with Ball (Faculty of Health) and Philip (second year funded PhD researcher) on investigations into the efficacy of performance writing for ameliorating PTSD conditions. The appointments of Dymoke and **Karkou** significantly develop research leadership in Arts and Health, as well as underpinning emerging research in Dance Movement Psychotherapy.

Performance and Communities: Edward, Harrop, Hewison, Hopkinson, and Newall contribute to this cluster's growing body of practice-as-research, encompassing investigations of a broad range of social issues through performance (including class, sexuality, place, identity, disability, offenders and ex-offenders, young people at risk and in care). Beneficiaries include individuals and groups concerned with or affected by these issues and the broader audiences they address (enhancing their ability to manage, understand and communicate to others). This work is often undertaken through long-term partnerships with theatre companies, performance groups and arts development agencies and is of direct benefit to these groups. Work on models of production in community-based theatre delivers cultural, social and economic benefits to performers, theatre groups, local communities, arts development agencies and those concerned with broader quality of life (including regeneration and economic development professionals). Early career researchers who will contribute to the development of this cluster include **King** and **McCormick**.

Performance Studies: Edward, Hann, Harrop, Hewison, Hopkinson King, McCormick, Merriman and **Newall** work across fields including performance histories, performance practices (including playwriting, dramaturgy and directing), and performance theory. Beneficiaries include audiences in education (specialist lectures and workshops on curricular topics, and teachers' CPD) and the general public (audiences for original work, at theatres and festivals across the region). Hickey (first year funded PhD student) contributes here, also.

Performance and Technologies: Hann, Lauke, Newall, and Schrimshaw contribute to the work of this cluster, members of which have attracted national awards and exposure during the census period. Researchers collaborate with colleagues in Media, and Computer Studies, and are centrally involved in emerging initiatives under the aegis of the Institute for Creative Enterprise (ICE), with strong potential for future impact. The work of Burrows (second year funded PhD student) also contributes to this cluster.

b. Approach to impact

The core value driving our approach to impact has been a commitment to dialogue with research users and audiences (locally and regionally), and to encourage their engagement with the expertise, perspectives and new knowledge developed in the Unit. During this census period, the Unit strategy has concentrated on supporting impacts in Performance and Communities and Performance and Health, in projects in which the needs and perspectives of research users and audiences demonstrably shaped and influenced research questions, design and methodologies.

Across the diverse range of work undertaken, a number of common elements are visible, as follows:

Collaborating and forming partnerships with research users and key intermediaries: PA Impact strategy enables staff – not least by significant investment in collaborative projects - to develop mutually enriching collaborations with users and intermediaries. For example, **Dowler's** work at Alder Hey Children's Hospital has been supported throughout its various phases by funds, advice, support and workload allocation. Similarly, **Newall** has enjoyed strong support for a wide range of research projects, and specifically for her work with Theatre in the Quarter, Chester. The Unit has developed active partnerships with theatre companies including *Horse and Bamboo*, *Fool's Proof*, *Ad Infinitum* and *Wired Aerial*, and with *Levantes Dance Theatre* and *Earthfall*. **Newall's** work with Theatre in the Quarter, a community theatre initiative in response to the closure of Chester's Gateway Theatre, is a most significant outcome of this strategy. The University provides training and staff development (ECRs and PGR students included) through its Research Capacity Building Programme, shaped by Vitae's Researcher Development Framework, and including bespoke sessions addressing Domain D (Engagement, Influence and Impact). These include sessions on building network presence, use of social media, contract basics and media training. Flexible, person-centred support is available through faculty and departmental staff development resources, as needs are identified.

Direct financial support for the costs of impact-orientated activity: internal research funding application processes require staff to consider impact potential with defined beneficiary groups and to plan to maximise this, where appropriate, in dialogue with the Research and Enterprise Support Office. Impact plans are funded as a component parts of research projects, for projects linked to existing high quality research, or projects intended to identify research questions with or of interest to users. Direct costs of impact activity such as travel, subsistence, events, teaching replacement and dissemination are funded, as in the cases of **Dowler** and **Newall**. The University maintains a highly facilitative approach to cost recovery rates in work with and for external partners where this aligns with research and impact strategy. This expands significantly the pool and type of funders with whom we can work.

Research planning and Workload: All research-active staff complete an individual research plan as part of their Annual Academic Return, with short- and long-term objectives, and indications as to impact potential; progress against these objectives is monitored through the annual appraisal process. Each member of staff has an opportunity to negotiate support for her/his research, including resources required, and to agree personal development needs and objectives. This process informs workload allocations.

Participation in events and festivals: we encourage and support our staff to participate in arts and cultural events and festivals, including the creation of original work responsive to the ethos/interests of funders, organisers, curators and audiences. This approach encourages exposure of research investigations and outcomes of interest and relevance to specialist users and general audiences alike, as in **Edward's** *Council House Movie Star* installation (Homotopia Festival, 2012) and **Merriman's** rehearsed readings of plays by Sean O'Casey (Liverpool Irish Festival, 2013).

Collaboration across disciplines: inter-disciplinary collaboration, actively encouraged in research planning, and supported by EHU infrastructure, allows us to investigate a broader range of research questions and opens up new forms of impact with additional beneficiary groups.

Dowler's collaboration with medical researchers and clinical staff underpins her study of the effects of improvised somatic dance on patients, verified, in Phase 3, by pain assessment tools. Thus, staff research shifts practice and shapes policy in healthcare settings.

Staff recruitment as a tool for impact: REF 2014 sees the first submission from this Unit, making good on EHU's strategy to transform itself from a well established teaching-led institution, to one known for excellence in both teaching and research. The expansion of the Department of Performing Arts over the period 2008-13 was driven by the appointment of staff with strong or potentially strong research profiles, eight of whom (**Hann, Harrop, Hewison, Karkou, King, McCormick, Merriman, Schrimshaw**) are entered here. The university has supported **Dowler, Edward** and **Lauke** in moving to fractional contracts so as to create more time for developing PaR, identifying partners and developing collaborative projects and professional networks.

c. Strategy and plans

Strategy and plans for the next five years reflect ongoing engagement and consultation with our researchers and members of user groups. Plans reflect current and emerging expertise in the Unit, the evolving funding landscape and our strategic commitment to continued close and sustained engagement with users. At university level, members of the Unit will play significant roles in shaping both EHU's new research institutes (**Creative Enterprise (ICE); Public Policy and Professional Practice (I4P)**). Research generated by the Department will contribute to ICE's mission to coordinate research and knowledge exchange activity across the Faculty. Research within ICE is primarily focused on digital and creative economies with the aims of contributing to debates on the roles of culture and creativity in generating economic growth and sustainability, as well as promoting citizen engagement and innovation through creative enterprise activities regionally, nationally and internationally. An interdisciplinary research forum, ICE is part of EHU's long-term strategic research and enterprise plan, encouraging networks across creative and cultural industries, the arts, local government and third sector organisations. I4P is an interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange initiative, committed to exploring opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and co-operation, drawing practitioner experience from all areas into dialogue with academic researchers to enable new ways of working and learning to emerge. I4P will undertake funded research projects and commissioned evaluations which draw upon research expertise across and beyond EHU, bringing together researchers, practitioners and policymakers to critically reflect on the public and third sector collaboration, providing opportunities for 'practitioners in residence' as a way of strengthening links between the University and its regional/national/international communities of practice.

Within the unit, impact strategy will be led by two research groups: **Performance and Civic Futures (PCF, 2013)** and **Performance and Health (P&H, 2014)**. Groups form as clusters achieve maturity, critical mass and research leadership. The development of PCF illustrates this process in action, as follows: As a result of initiatives undertaken in 2012-13, the department launched PCF as an initiative of ICE, in September 2013. With five members within the department (**Merriman** (Director), **Hann, Hewison, Hopkinson, King** and **Newall**), two Visiting Professors (Prentki, Winchester; Farrell, Strathclyde), and one ICE Artist Fellow (Pirovano, Italy), PCF is conceived as a vehicle for public engagement, and thus, impact, on issues identified and investigated in the Colloquium on Performance and Domination (EHU, March 2013) and the Special Issue of *Kritika Kultura* on Performance and Domination (<http://kritikakultura.ateneo.net>, August, 2013). With partnerships emerging within EHU (Urban Geography; Sociology, I4P) and externally (think-tank on Action for Social Change, Dublin; Visiting Professors; Artist Fellow; Indra Congress; Al-rowwad Theater and Cultural Centre, Bethlehem) PCF was established to investigate the role of performance in enabling the potential of the contemporary city as a site of human flourishing. A programme of public engagement to include local authorities and policy makers, young people, and artists will lead to a range of outputs in the census period subsequent to REF 2014, to include performances (including activist performance), exhibitions, open fora, monographs, edited essay collections, conferences, occasional papers and on-line lectures. PCF will model a structure within the department which will support the emergence of a further research group, in **Performance and Health**, within the context of I4P, post-2013.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies show PA impact strategy in action, providing evidence of the existence, efficacy and incremental expansion of support systems, as projects develop. Key features: sustained development of long-term relationships with user groups, demonstrable commitment to adding value through scholarly investigation and PaR, and using critical review to refine future strategy. **Dowler's** artistic imperatives around the body and contact improvisation meet diverse needs of chronic and acute patients, families, and clinicians. Expanding numbers of participants, as STDC's impact on understanding dance and its contribution to the well-being of children in long-term medical care grows, clearly exemplifies the impact of a strategic goal of promoting interdisciplinary dialogue towards innovation. **Newall's** work demonstrates innovative creative practice reaching beyond informed communities of artists and academics to engage in creative and transformative dialogue with local communities.