

Impact template (REF3a)

<p>Institution: Queen's University Belfast</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 35</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The School of Creative Arts brings together expertise in drama, film, music and sonic arts. In addition to disciplinary strengths, the unit has a strong interdisciplinary focus on research in the creative arts and its impact on society at large. The impact of research in the School is primarily associated with three types of audiences: communities engaging with the arts, policy makers, and professionals in the creative industries. In order to effectively reach these audiences, the School works together with public sector bodies, including local government and private enterprise through SMEs and large corporations.</p> <p>The types of impact most relevant to the unit relate to public engagement in the arts, quality of life through the arts, influence on cultural policy and the cultural economy. This is achieved through a flexible and responsive approach to research in the creative arts, which ranges from the historical and theoretical to the practice-based.</p> <p>All research areas in the School make a contribution to the impact of the overall unit, although the most significant activities have been centred on contemporary creative practice and cross-cultural arts. Non-HE educational activities constitute an area of significant impact through the engagement of primary school children in contemporary music and sonic arts techniques. Children aged between 4-16 are also a primary focus for the development of the Junior Academy of Music, which is increasingly acting as a vehicle for articulating research in a music education context.</p> <p>As the largest creative arts academic unit in Northern Ireland, the School is aware of its role in developing the regional arts environment while making substantive links at both national and international levels.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Since 2008, research across the unit has significantly increased its public presence through expanding audiences and participating groups. As such, there are a growing number of non-academic users in both the arts sector and cultural professions at large.</p> <p>The School takes advantage of its unique venues and organises regular research-led concerts, screenings and drama productions. A weekly event series serves as a way of developing publics from outside the institution. The programming of these events is predicated on showcasing research-led activities, which are public-facing and range from historical repertoire to contemporary practice. Engagement with organisations such as Audiences NI is evidence of the School's commitment to nurturing audiences for research-led practices.</p> <p>Partnerships with organisations such as The Metropolitan Arts Centre, PLACE Built Environment Centre, the Lyric Theatre, Belfast City Council, Catalyst Arts, Moving on Music, Theatre of Witness (Derry Playhouse), Young at Art, the Arts Reference Group of the Peace Building and Conflict Transformation Centre, and the Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association enable the development of interactions with a wide range of beneficiaries and users. At the core of these relationships is the development of new audiences, promotion of the arts in a post-conflict society and art practice in healthcare environments. These partnerships are a mechanism for ensuring that research in the School can have a presence outside academia, leading to both direct and indirect impact.</p> <p>The School supports impact activities through internal funds (e.g. Big Ears, Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music, Prison Memory Archive) and through infrastructure, which includes three high quality public venues for performances and screenings. The School is proactive in supporting the showcase of research activities outside the University, with exhibitions such as the "Listen to Your Place" installation based on soundscape pieces by researchers at the Sonic Arts Research</p>

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Centre touring four regional art centres in late 2013. The School is committed to building an infrastructure for maximising research impact, for example the creation of the Junior Academy of Music in 2009 and, in particular, a creative music technology programme which links in with research activities in sonic arts.

The School has been extremely successful in expanding the reach of impact from a local to national and international range. Examples include work with young performers in the context of Chamber Music 2000 in England, screenings in South Africa emphasising the role of the arts in post-conflict societies, community engaged exhibitions in Brazil and digital resources in languages other than English, such as the “Liederlexikon” project.

c. Strategy and plans

Goals

The key goals for the School’s impact strategy over the next five years are:

- to embed impact across all research activities in the School;
- to develop and support areas of international impact primarily through existing links with Europe and South America;
- to become a regional hub for the interface between creative arts research and the wider community (e.g. through Belfast Festival and Queen’s Film Theatre).

Plans

The School plans to continue to build a strong profile in community engaged contemporary art practice, building on existing work in theatre, documentary film-making and sonic arts. Based on the success of projects such as “Sounds of the City” (Rebello), “Theatre of Witness” (Phelan, Grant), “Prison Memory Archive” (McLaughlin) and “The Stroke Folks” (Winter-Palmer), the unit plans to further develop community-engaged projects, which address specific cultural and social conditions through the arts.

Through the appointment of the Royal String Quartet in 2012, the School plans to make a significant contribution to both the dissemination of existing repertoire and the creation of new works. Plans include workshops with schools aimed at complementing the curriculum through performance and composition platforms, providing young people with the opportunity to work with an international quality ensemble in the context of research-led practice. This will contribute to the ongoing development of research-led primary and post-primary education activities such as Big Ears: Sonic Arts for Public Ears (Schroeder) and Chamber Music 2000 (Hellawell).

The unit will continue to identify opportunities for expanding high impact projects to an international level. Examples include the screenings of “We Never Give Up” in South Africa, connecting two post-conflict societies or “Sounds of the City –Rio Maré” in 2014, translating participative methodologies developed in Belfast to a Brazilian cultural context. This will be facilitated by the University’s Impact Development Fund, which was established to support a wide range of impact-delivering initiatives. In addition, the Research and Enterprise directorate has created an Impact Manager post, which supports Schools in delivering their impact strategy.

The School has devised specific plans aimed at enhancing research impact in our three key areas:

Communities engaging with the arts

- to facilitate wider public engagement through strengthening partnerships with local arts organisations (e.g. PLACE, the MAC, Farset Labs, Northern Ireland Screen)
- to design and deliver targeted training and awareness events for specific communities (e.g. Junior Academy of Music, Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association)
- to include impact focused training for PhD students across the School building on the Big Ears programme
- to create new forms of artistic expression which engage diverse audiences

Arts and Cultural Policy

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- to develop approaches for influencing policy in unique areas of research expertise (e.g. traditional music, new technologies in the arts)
- to develop opportunities for the use of creative arts methodologies in other professional contexts leading to changes in the understanding of cultural value (e.g. improvisation and the law)
- to act as a regional hub for cultural policy and public discourse in the arts by hosting high profile events and networking opportunities (e.g. Creative Europe Workshop)

Creative Industries

- to develop an environment for more effective knowledge exchange in the creative industries building on the current AHRC funded Creative Exchange project
- to increase representation on relevant Boards (leveraging on existing relationships with Skillset, The Lyric Theatre, Belfast Film Festival, Ulster Museum, Invest Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Screen)
- to embed entrepreneurship and networking in PhD training programmes, for example through the Northern Bridge AHRC BGP2 consortium and residencies in partner arts organisations
- to develop effective ways of preserving and presenting cultural heritage, in particular in the context of commemoration and reconciliation in collaboration with Belfast City Council and Community Relations Council

d. Relationship to case studies

The unit has developed four impact case studies, which highlight specific areas of research activity with demonstrable sustained impact. All case studies are based on the articulation of impact through partnerships with non-HE organisations. In broad terms, the case studies exemplify impact through community engaged contemporary arts practice, the articulation of research in primary and post-primary education and historically informed cultural practice and policy.

The School's four case studies are:

- "Transforming the Musicality of Young Players" - showing how short chamber compositions have transformed the musical experience of young musicians within the on-going Chamber Music 2000 project in England
- "Sounds of the City: Engaging Communities in Sonic Arts" - demonstrating how new approaches to collaborative sonic arts lead to increased awareness of the role of sound and its relationship to place in everyday life
- "Sonic Arts for Public Ears: Enabling Children as Designers" - developing ways of empowering children to design content using digital sound technologies and understanding how these shape and influence how we listen to music and our environment
- "Using German Protest Song in Political Education" - promoting German protest song as democratic heritage through an online resource used by music clubs, festivals and schools.

These case studies articulate scholarship and practice-based work in the context of public engagement through carrying out focused research-led activities with specific user groups. The beneficiaries in these case studies range from specific local communities, which have actively been involved in research projects (Sounds of the City), folk musicians and political education teachers in Germany (Using German Protest Song in Political Education) and school children and young people across the UK (Sonic Arts for Public Years, Transforming the Musicality of Young Players).

The four case studies were selected from a wide pool of projects, which successfully manage to articulate the research process into the non-academic domain. These constitute an important platform for developing future capacity in the articulation of challenging and enriching research with economic, cultural and educational impact across society.