

Section 3: Impact template and case studies (REF3a/b)

REF3a: Impact template

UoA 35 – Music, Dance and Performing Arts

a. Context.

The Research Group is active in collaborating with external partners including venues, performance companies, schools, universities and community groups at local, national and international level. Recent collaborations have focused on therapeutic applications of the arts; generating innovative and/or socially engaged performance work in the region and abroad; fostering partnership with local arts venues, arts organisations, institutions and community organisations; and using performance to raise awareness of social and health issues. This work incorporates recent projects in participatory settings in the UK and abroad, plays and performances presented in the UK and US, and community theatre projects involving collaboration between students from the University, students from the US and community groups in Lesotho in southern Africa. The Research Group's work is thus directed at a wide range of individuals and constituencies. Some recent examples of projects include. Phil Ellis' sound therapy work in care homes and schools; John Kefala Kerr's commissioned work in musical composition, sound art and 'creative musicology'; Rosalind Haslett's commissioned plays for the Northumberland Theatre Company (presented at the Alnwick Playhouse), and Origin Theatre Company (presented at the first Irish theatre festival in New York); Nigel Watson's community theatre projects with students from the University in Lesotho in southern Africa; Roy Connolly's work in the area of performance based-research and regional theatre.

In addition to the impact of staff projects on local, national and international users, the Research Group also makes a significant impact through its students and graduates. The Research Group places considerable emphasis on research informed teaching and via this strategy seeks to foster graduates engaged with knowledge at the cutting edge of their disciplines who go on to enhance local artistic practices and social life through innovative and socially engaged performance work, and/or through passing on their knowledge to others via projects in the community, in local venues, or in schools. The Group's success in fostering a culture where students and graduates make a contribution to local life is reflected by the extent to which these students and graduates are active in producing work in local venues and/or with local community groups. Recent examples of such work include projects at the Washington Arts Centre (2012-13), the People's Theatre in Newcastle (2011), the Sage Gateshead (2010-13), the Customs House in South Shields (2010-13) and amid various community groups in the UK and abroad (2006-2013).

b. The Unit's approach to impact during the period 2008-2013

During this period, many aspects of the Research Group's strategy explicitly focused on exploring the relevance, effects and benefits of bringing into contact academic and community discourses, and developing partnerships with external organisations, constituencies and performance groups. This work included developing collaborations with local venues, institutions and arts organisations to produce performance outputs; developing projects with community groups designed to raise awareness of social and health issues; and providing mechanisms for students to share in staff research and to participate in outreach projects in the UK and abroad.

The Research Group have at their disposal substantial staff expertise to support this work in the area of sound and music therapies, composition, musicology, participatory arts, theatre for development and playwriting. The wide ranging underpinning research and geographical scope

of the Research Group's work reflects the Research Group's collective engagement with the many potential forms that performance may take and the benefits it may have in a given context.

Since 2008, the Faculty has run a number of calls for proposals for projects that focus on impact and provided funds to support projects by members of the Research Group including the following: John Kefala Kerr (Research Mini-Fellowship, 2011: £4,500), Rosalind Haslett (study trip to US, 2011 £2000) and Nigel Watson (Research Informed Teaching Grant, 2009: £1,500; support with documentation of community theatre work in Lesotho, 2010: £2000)

Student involvement in these projects has also been significant and included liaising with local arts venues; developing performance projects with, or for, specific client groups and constituencies; running workshops in the UK and abroad, leading Youth Theatre Festivals, creating verbatim and documentary theatre, engaging with therapeutic applications of drama and music and developing their own projects in light of initial work undertaken with staff at the University. Some recent examples include programmes of activity at the Customs House South Shields May 2011, May 2012 and May 2013, and the Washington Arts Centre, May 2011, May 2012, May 2013.

c. Strategy and Plans for supporting impact

The Unit of Assessment's objectives to support impact from staff research in the future are:

- To place emphasis upon bidding for internal and external funding to support staff research concerned with issues of particular relevance to local, national and/or international users
- To maintain existing, and develop new, collaborations with external partners through initiatives such as Art Works North East, continued research with colleagues in other institutions, and off-campus performance projects
- To establish and participate in focus groups via Art Works North East and related projects concerned with the needs of participatory arts practitioners and audiences and to meet the needs of these practitioners and audiences by initiating curriculum change
- To continue to support dissemination of research through off-campus performance projects in community settings, local venues (e.g. the Custom's House and Washington Arts Centre) or abroad

d. The relationship between the unit's approach to impact and the submitted case studies

The case studies illustrate the Research Group's commitment to developing and or sharing research and scholarly activity with non-academic user groups and applying research outcomes beyond the boundary of the University. This commitment can be summarised as seeking to combine a focus on deepening theoretical understanding of a given topic, and testing and reflecting upon this understanding by applying research outcomes in the real world (and where appropriate developing or exploring new outcomes). In this regard, the work carried out by members of the Research Group demonstrates recognition of the mutual responsibility shared between the University and its staff

- the responsibility of the University to provide a scholarly context where forms of specialised knowledge can be developed,

- the responsibility of staff, when appropriate, to bring this specialised knowledge into contact with the wider world.

The following case studies based upon the work of Phil Ellis, Nigel Watson and John Kefala Kerr provide striking examples of how the highly specialised knowledge developed in the academic context can be applied to have far reaching effects beneficial to individuals, the community and public institutions. The diverse range of stakeholders and agencies aligning around the research (despite their divergent world views and respective 'sensitivities') signals the high degree of impact the Research Group's work has accrued over time.

Phil Ellis' research carried out in association with schools, care homes in the community, and at the Sound Therapy Lab at the University of Sunderland has not only advanced understanding of vibro-acoustic therapies but also had a tangible effect on the quality of life or a wide range of individuals in the region; altered the working practices of several local community organizations and schools providing services to young people and adults with disabilities; provided a creative outlet for individuals with 'profound and complex needs; and created training and professional development opportunities for sound and music therapy practitioners.

Nigel Watson's work in the region and in Lesotho has impacted upon the lives of both student groups and audience participants. His work in Lesotho has led to community theatre events, contributed to an ongoing development project using learning circles, and impacted on the curriculum and working practices of Nursing students. Student participants in community theatre research projects have gone on to train in arts therapy and to create their own employment opportunities in young people's theatre and in community education. Additionally a number of students have taken up volunteer activities in the developing world.

John Kefala-Kerr's award-winning work as a composer engages with a wide public in terms of its proximity to and engagement with social context, place and circumstance—doing so in order to create music that has the capacity to temporarily instate alternative forms of sociality and cross-disciplinary discourse. His work has brought together a wide range of stakeholders, agencies and organisations (from prisons to cathedrals), crossing aesthetic and cultural boundaries and receiving regional, national and international recognition, substantial funding support and press coverage. John's work is underpinned by an effort to re-evaluate and explore the limits of music as a narrative art, hence the significant role played by writing/language in his output.

The Research Group's work thus may be considered to have particular impact upon:

- Informing and influencing the form and content of associations between people or groups to illuminate and challenge cultural values and social assumptions.
- Creating and interpreting cultural capital in all of its forms to enrich and expand the lives, imaginations and sensibilities of individuals and groups.
- Informing and influencing the form or the content of the education of any age group in any part of the world where they extend significantly beyond the submitting HEI.
- Extending the range and improving the quality of evidence, argument and expression to enhance public understanding of the major issues and challenges faced by individuals and society.