

<p>Institution: University of Aberdeen</p> <hr/> <p>Unit of Assessment: UoA 28 Modern Languages</p> <hr/> <p>a. Context</p> <p>The University of Aberdeen is one of eight universities in the UK which has been funded by the Research Councils as a Research Catalyst for Public Engagement, requiring the University not only to have a strategic commitment to public engagement but to reward and recognise staff involved in public engagement activity. As part of this strategy the College of Arts and Social Sciences has appointed a Public Engagement Co-ordinator (Stewart, German/Film and Visual Culture; 0.2 fte secondment) who works with College and School Research Committees and with the University's Public Engagement with Research Unit, and its Researcher Development Unit, to extend existing pathways to public engagement and to initiate new ones. Thus the WORD Festival, which has run increasingly successfully since 1999, bringing large audiences (of up to 7,500 attendees) to the campus to hear internationally acclaimed authors, has been developed into a broader festival – the May Festival, launched in 2013, with 10,000 visitors – which showcases research from across the University, and which, in 2013, featured prominently offerings from both Gaelic and Film. The Public Engagement Co-ordinator was involved in a successful bid for an AHRC Cultural Engagement Award that employed two Early Career Researchers (both in Scandinavian studies) for 3 months each to gain first-hand experience of public engagement, as they worked to consolidate the new 'Discover' strand of the May Festival, which focuses on presenting new knowledge to both adult and child audiences.</p> <p>Our public engagement activities are aimed at providing the resources for a general public to become engaged citizens in the development of the culture in which they live. As part of the University's 'Energy' research theme – building on Aberdeen's experience as the centre of oil production in the UK since the 1970s – staff in Film and Visual Culture (Stewart, Ward, Groo) initiated 'Oilscares', a project which hosts exhibitions and film screenings that explore artistic responses to 'carbon cultures', and therefore to the understanding of the environment which Aberdeen shares with many other centres of carbon energy extraction across the world. On the same theme, a major conference on 'The Politics of Oil' was run by the <i>Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society and the Rule of Law (CCCSRL)</i> in 2013 (Stack), bringing together politicians, energy analysts, journalists, academics and the general public to consider the ways in which the international oil economy impacts on the conduct of politics and the organisation of civil society across the globe.</p> <p>Many staff in the unit are also engaged directly in cultural production, contributing to the cultural richness of local, national and international communities, Thus Kiwan's research on communities of migrant musicians (Impact Case Study 2) also encouraged those musicians to create and perform new works, and Marcus's research into the places of traumatic memory in twentieth-century history has resulted in the production of ten internationally recognised documentary films. Others have created new cultural content through translation, as in the case of Watson's translations of works such as <i>The Hobbit</i> into Gaelic or Biggane's translation into English of a novel (<i>Aunt Tula</i>) by Miguel Unamuno.</p> <p>These forms of public and cultural engagement are also encouraged among the School's postgraduate students. Students attached to the <i>Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies (RIISS)</i>, for instance, produce the multi-lingual creative writing magazine <i>Causeway/Cabhsair</i>, now in its fourth year, which publishes work in both Scottish and Irish Gaelic, as well as in English, Scots and Ulster Scots, while students attached to the <i>Centre for Modern Thought</i> organised events dealing with 'found art' and 'creative work' at the Generator Project in Dundee and at the Centre for Creative Arts in Glasgow.</p> <p>Our public and cultural engagement strategy not only aims to bring a higher level of awareness of our academic research to a general public but to contribute directly to enhancing our cultural environments and making the public more conscious of the forces which shape them.</p> <hr/> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The research areas represented under Modern Languages and Film – Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Studies, Film and Visual Culture, French, Gaelic, German, Hispanic Studies – interact with a wide variety of cultural and social concerns of relevance to many non-academic publics and to a range of governmental and non-governmental agencies. Our approach to impact is to ensure that our</p>

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research can be made relevant to a local public in the North-East of Scotland, to national institutions in Scotland and in the UK, and, where possible, to international communities and organisations.

A key issue for all of our disciplinary areas is the importance of acquiring knowledge of second and third languages. The University of Aberdeen's School of Education played a significant role in the development of the recently introduced 'Curriculum for Excellence' (CfE) across Scotland's schools, which stresses the importance of language learning, with the aim that all schoolchildren will have a 'mother tongue' and knowledge of two other languages. Members and former members of the unit (particularly **MacLeod** and Dunbar) have also helped inform the Scottish Government's implementation of its Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005. Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the organisation charged with delivery of that policy, has commissioned reports by **MacLeod** and **MacLeod** to inform its work in extending the use of Gaelic with adult learners, with schoolchildren and across a range of publicly-funded bodies. The status and sustainability of minority languages has also been a prime concern of the Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ulster (of which **Watson** is a committee member) and of a major strand of the AHRC-funded work of *RIISS*, which ran a ten year series of annual 'Language and Politics' conferences (to which **Watson** and **MacLeod** in Gaelic contributed) that have helped shape language planning both in Scotland and in Ireland (see Kirk, *Language and Politics of the Gaeltacht and Scotstacht, 2000–2010: Review and Impact*, 2011). One of the consequences of this activity was the development of *SOILLSE* ('The National Research Network for the Maintenance and Revitalisation of Gaelic Language and Culture') which was initially designed by staff from the University of Aberdeen (Dunbar) and of which **MacLeod** has been Co-Director. *SOILLSE* developed the case for strengthening the infrastructure of Gaelic language research and £5.28m in funding was secured in 2008, combining contributions from the Scottish Funding Council, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the four participating universities – Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and the University of the Highlands and Islands, the establishment of the latter as a research institution being one of the outcomes of the project (Impact Case Study 1).

Our public engagement activities involve close relationships with bodies such as the Confucius Institute, funded by the Chinese government, and local arts organisations and their publics. Thus **Stewart** and **Groo** have worked with the leading visual arts organisation in Aberdeen, Peacock Visual Arts, to develop and present exhibitions such as 'Oilsapes', and **Marcus** and **Flaig** work closely with the Belmont Picturehouse, Aberdeen's leading art cinema, to do screenings related to series such as *The Director's Cut*, which brings prominent film directors, documentary flim-makers and animators to Aberdeen to be interviewed about their work. *The Director's Cut* (Impact Case Study 3) has hosted over 30 events since 2008, with average audiences of over 200 and, on an occasion such as **Marcus**'s interview with David Attenborough, an audience of over 900. Many of these visiting directors hold public masterclasses in the Belmont Picturehouse, which is also used for the *Junior Director's Cut* competitions for local schoolchildren.

c. Strategy and plans

Our impact strategy is shaped by the unit's large number of relatively small programmes, with the activities of individual researchers being co-ordinated through a range of cross-disciplinary research centres. A substantial portion of the School of Language and Literature's research budget (at least 30%, of its total operating budget, amounting to more than £50k in 2013/14) supports the activities of these centres, with an impact plan being a specific requirement of their continued funding.

CCCSRL (organised from within Hispanic Studies) is an example of a Centre that has civic engagement at the very forefront of its mission, since it aims to chart and to inform developments in the understanding of citizenship in the legal and social frameworks of both developing and developed countries. Locally, with the participation of **Stack** and **Kiwan**, it will be researching the ways in which the Scottish government intends to inform schoolchildren about the independence referendum in 2014, and its potential consequences, and will make this a case study that can shape practice in the development of citizenship awareness in other political jurisdictions. At an international level, it will be continuing to explore both the relationship between religion and civil society, which it initiated with public conferences at the British Academy in 2010, and the impact of oil extractive industries on civic societies around the world.

RIISS, too, has civic engagement as a key part of its remit: as well as hosting local lecture series in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council, it co-operates with Queen's Belfast and Trinity College

Dublin in Irish-Scottish forums focused on public issues in the Irish Republic, in Ulster and in Scotland, such as the series on 'The Arts, Culture and the Wealth of Nations' (2007, 2009, 2010), which has been the foundation for a larger comparative study of the role of culture in the economic development of the three territories. In addition, the Institute's international conferences (planned for Melbourne 2015; Notre Dame, 2017) always have public events celebrating the cultural interchange between Scottish and Irish migrants (often Gaelic speakers) and local communities

The *SOILLSE* initiative will continue to chart the success (or otherwise) of the Scottish government's language policy, both through research commissioned by NGOs (**MacLeod** and **Macleod** have already been commissioned to undertake several projects) as well as through its own independent analyses. These will continue to feed into future government policy-making and into the work of organisations delivering language learning, and will contribute to the overall aim of improving the infrastructure for exchange of information between academic researchers, native speakers and second language learners, with a particular emphasis on developing appropriate terminology that will allow Gaelic speakers to communicate in their native language about modern technological developments.

The School's strategy involves acknowledging emergent areas of research by establishing new research centres which can co-ordinate collaborative work across a variety of disciplines. The strength of film and visual culture has led to the establishment of the George Washington Wilson Centre for Visual Culture (named after the prominent nineteenth-century Aberdeen photographer), which will be taking forward *The Director's Cut* series and developing new projects focused on cultural responses to carbon culture, on urban space, the archive and early photography (in which Aberdeen has particularly important collections). Through exhibitions, both in the new library space and in galleries in the city, public screenings and collaborative work with the University and City museums, these projects will be made available to non-academic audiences. The Centre's Director is **Welch**, whose research on visual culture has been funded by the AHRC, and who co-curated a successful exhibition on France and Algeria at Cornerhouse Gallery (Manchester) in 2011. The *Director's Cut* series will continue to develop its collaboration with Aberdeen City Council, who commissioned a series of short documentary films by recent graduates to celebrate the work of local artists (used as part of its bid to become 'City of Culture') and will sponsor students to attend Europe's largest documentary festival, which happens to be hosted in 2014 by one of Aberdeen's 'twinning' cities, Clermont-Ferrand, where their films will be presented for a large international audience.

A key element in the activities of this unit is its publication strategy: with the support of *RiISS*, Aberdeen University Press was relaunched in 2013: and among its first publications is **MacLeod's** edition of the works of Tormod Calum Dòmhnallach, a modern Gaelic-language dramatist, and the initial volumes of the collected works of Scoto-French poet, Kenneth White, formerly Professor of Poetics at the Sorbonne.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies have been chosen to exemplify the impact of research across Modern Languages and Film, to illustrate a variety of forms of impact and a range of end-users, and to highlight impact at local, national and international levels. Case Study 1, **SOILLSE (SRDG Gaelic Language Network)** underlines how research in language can inform and, indeed, transform the ways in which a minority language can be sustained by encouraging its application in academic research and other areas in which it has not normally been used. Its work builds connections between government, non-governmental agencies, language learners and the Gaelic-speaking public. Case Study 2 (**Diaspora as Social and Cultural Practice**) shows the ways in which research can reveal unexpected dynamics both in the experience of migration and in our understanding of that experience, while bringing migrants together to prove how their mutual interactions can enhance their creative achievements. The third case study, **Paradigmatic Film Practice and its Reception**, shows the ways in which 'practice-based' research can both reach a wide international audience for film and also encourage interest in film in a local audience by exploring the procedures of a wide range of film-makers. Each of these case studies has effected important changes in particular communities, either by encouraging local creativity, by changing government policies, or by helping different groups within the general public to come to a better understanding of their legal, political and cultural environments.