Environment template (REF5)

Institution: University of Stirling

Unit of Assessment: C25 - Education

a. Overview

Institutional setting
Educational research at Stirling takes place within the School of Education, which is one of the seven academic Schools within the University. As well as research, we provide concurrent initial teacher education in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, teacher CPD, and TPG programmes in educational leadership, TESOL and further and adult education, and research methods training.

Research groups
Our research is organized into two groups, which were established in 2010:
- **Curriculum & Pedagogy**: Mark PRIESTLEY (convener), John GARDNER, Michael GRENFELL, Walter HUMES (Visiting Professor), James MACALLISTER, Greg MANNION, Ian MUNDAY, Christine STEPHEN
- **Work, Learning & Society**: Cate WATSON (convener), Richard EDWARDS, Tara FENWICK, John FIELD, Dalene SWANSON, Terrie Lynn THOMPSON, Ben WILLIAMSON

Our groups aim to make our research more forward looking and more connected to developments in policy, practice and theory. They guide appointments, stimulate internal collaborations, enhance research quality, and are foci for the design and management of external collaborations and funded research projects. They organise our seminar programme, mentor newer researchers and assist all members with publishing and proposal writing. Both are led by senior researchers who sit on our Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

Administrative organization
The Head of School has primary responsibility for translating strategies into practice,. He is supported by the School Manager. Research policy and projects form a standing agenda item at staff meetings of the School. Senior academics serve as Director of Research (FIELD, who chairs the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee) and Director of Graduate Research (PRIESTLEY). The School is supported administratively by the School Manager and a dedicated Research Development Manager from the University's Research & Enterprise Office. They have specific responsibility for supporting research bids and helping promote engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The School's Research Ethics Committee (chaired by STEPHEN and including lay members) monitors the conduct of all staff and student research against research ethics frameworks (primarily those of BERA and ESRC), and reports to the University Ethics Committee.

b. Research strategy
Since 2008, our research activity has responded to and engaged with a rapidly changing context. Our strategy brings a broad social science approach to studying learning across the life course and in a variety of organisational contexts. We aim to contribute to improving practices in educational settings such as schools, in Scotland and beyond, by providing a rigorous underpinning for future policy development, and to advance understanding of educational issues.

As in 2008, we view education as a lifelong process, extending from pre-school to later life; situated in a variety of contexts, including workplaces, families and communities; and socially and culturally constructed through systems of shared and divergent meanings. In addition, we have chosen to support theoretically informed research, including work that takes theory in new directions. As anticipated in 2008, we increasingly work with other social scientists in the University, particularly in the Schools of Applied Social Science, Nursing and Health, and Management.

Since 2008, we have tackled a number of staff changes; the University has supported replacement of those who retired, who in the main held senior positions; in addition, we have recruited a number of new colleagues, including several with newly-completed doctorates, to replace those who took

new positions elsewhere. We also changed our recruitment policy; in particular, we require new lecturers to possess a doctorate at appointment.

In 2008, we outlined plans for developing a range of external collaborations. As well as the groups, we support two outward-facing partnership initiatives. ProPEL, directed by FENWICK, is a collaborative, multi-professional international network for research and knowledge exchange in professional education, practice and learning. TheoryLab, directed by EDWARDS, promotes exploration of theory in educational research and practice. Both host regular scholarly conferences, workshops, doctoral summer schools and other events.

Within a changing external environment, our research strategy aims to contribute to the evidence base sustaining the development of education and learning in Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally, and to share the best of our work with the wider community by:
- Developing internationally excellent niche areas of educational research as a key to our success;
- Emphasising rigorous, theoretically informed research that contributes to understandings of education in relation to pedagogy, curriculum, employability, wellbeing and welfare
- Developing future educational researchers through doctoral schools, a strong international environment for doctoral research, recruiting and investing in talented early careers researchers (ECRs) and supporting research excellence across the School;
- Building our strategic research partnerships within Scotland and beyond, fostering transdisciplinary synergies and securing benefits of scale;
- Consolidating our critical partnerships with policy makers, professionals, the third sector and other research users in Scotland and beyond;
- Exploiting opportunities provided by social media, film and other new technologies for sharing our research with wider audiences, and engaging with those audiences.

Our priority developmental areas look to build on our niche strengths. Recent appointments have strengthened our expertise in digital media cultures (THOMPSON, WILLIAMSON), and we expect this area to produce significant new research in the current planning period. We have also decided to invest in research capacity in TESOL, and also to build on our existing strengths in professional education (including teacher education, curriculum design and assessment).

Progress against targets is routinely monitored by each Research Group and overseen by Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. Individual attainment is monitored through the appraisal process (below).

c. People:
   i. **Staffing strategy and staff development**
We pursue our overall staffing policy as part of a University-wide commitment – which we welcome – to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity. Our arrangements are designed to ensure that every member of staff is thoroughly integrated into a collegial body that conceives research as its central rationale. Much of what sustains this is informal everyday leadership. This has to do at least as much with attitudes of staff to one another – our availability to discuss issues with colleagues, our readiness to read work in draft and offer constructive criticism – as with any formal policies. These are complemented by formal staffing policies.

Of the 14 staff submitted 5 were entered in RAE2008. Some senior researchers submitted in 2008 have taken new posts, including Allan (Birmingham), Osborne (Glasgow), and Plowman (Edinburgh); the University approved replacements for all three, as well as for Biesta (Luxembourg). FENWICK was appointed to a chair in professional education in 2010. GARDNER joined the School in January 2012, and currently serves as Deputy Principal (Education and Students). GRENFELL joined the University in October 2013 and becomes Head of School in January 2014. PRIESTLEY gained a chair in 2012, having joined as a lecturer in 2001.

We aim to retain strong mid-career researchers, and expect successful internal applications for professorial promotions in the next assessment period. We draw on, and benefit from, the expertise and capabilities of retired scholars who are keen to share and pass on their skills and experience (including Emeritus Professor Sally BROWN and Visiting Professor Walter HUMES).

We are also recruiting and growing new talent. Five of the 14 are submitted for the first time; they all joined us as ECRs. We make very limited use of short-term contracts, as is reflected in our submission. As a result of pursuing these policies, we have a balanced demographic profile that sees us well placed to sustain and further strengthen our research in the next assessment period.

Researcher development
University policy. The University's research strategy spells out our commitment to researcher development across all stages of the career life cycle. Stirling has been awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission, recognising our work towards implementation of the Researchers' Concordat.

Achieving Success. The University appraisal framework (*Achieving Success*) gives priority to the setting and monitoring of goals for research development. All non-probationary staff are involved, and meet annually to discuss with the Head or Deputy Head of School their individual research plans, possibilities for internal and external collaboration, and the development of funding applications. A key element of the discussion is to identify ways in which the School can help individuals to realize research goals, e.g. through the adjustment of teaching loads, attendance at development events (eg NCRM), workshop support or other 'pump-priming' funds. Follow-up meetings are held as required to reach agreement on specific actions.

Workload allocation. The School's workload allocation model takes Achieving Success and the probationary scheme into account and ensures that all research active staff have sufficient time to undertake a high level of research activity, promotes equitable distribution of responsibilities, and ensures developmental opportunities.

Peer review. Project applications and publications are conceived as collective as well as individual endeavours. Through the research groups, grant applicants and paper writers receive feedback on drafts from one or more senior colleagues engaged in the area.

Support for Early Career Researchers
Probation. For all probationers, the School allocates a moderated workload to support research development for up to three years, and actively supports conference attendance and skills development, as well as participation in networking programmes like Scottish Crucible. The major aim is to help new staff build their networks and expertise.

Senior colleague system. The School nominates senior colleagues to mentor ECRs, reading drafts, suggesting promising directions, advising them on suitable outlets for presentation and publication of their work. They also help identify suitable opportunities for skills development.

Project involvement. ECRs are inducted into collaborative project work through the leadership of senior researchers. For instance, WATSON led a collaborative team of ECRs that secured funding to study innovations in teachers' professional development.

General staffing policies
Research leave. Non-probationary staff may apply for research leave every seventh semester. Since 2008, twelve semesters of research leave have been taken. We encourage staff to coordinate plans for institutional leave with external research applications; in the recent past, EDWARDS, FENWICK, and FIELD have all secured such support from the Carnegie Trust, and FENWICK from the Association for Study of Medical Education. The School and University formally monitor research leave performance to ensure and enhance the scheme's effectiveness.

International partnerships. The School actively encourages researchers at all career stages to develop international understanding and reach. As well as encouraging colleagues to spend part of their agreed research leave overseas, we show flexibility in arranging short periods of leave for research development for similar purposes. We encourage colleagues to participate and contribute in a range of networks, including ECER, EECERA, AERA and ESREA. We also benefit from a steady flow of international visitors to the School; recent visitors have come from universities and research institutes in Sweden, Beijing, Australia, Canada and Germany.

Career progression. Prospects for career progression, and steps that might be taken to improve them, are a topic for every annual appraisal discussion, as well as of informal mentoring discussions. Where appropriate, the Head of School works closely with colleagues, including the Director of Research, in constructing the strongest possible case for advancement.

Researcher development. We normally recruit academics who have completed a doctorate. We also support existing teaching staff to undertake a doctorate, and 4 have done so since 2008. New training and development needs are routinely identified through Achieving Success for all staff, and there is financial support for those who attend agreed programmes. Each member of staff has access to a School conference fund, which is focused on support for colleagues giving major presentations or developing longer term partnerships. Further discretionary funds (e.g. for research skills development or specialist software) are allocated on application to the Head of School and with advice from the Director of Research.

Support for postdoctoral researchers
Transition of PGRs into the profession. By marshalling resources, by offering assistantship roles involving them in the intellectual work of funded projects and the organisation of research programme events, and by providing controlled opportunities for lecturing, we have aimed to assist our own graduating doctoral students into the profession. EdD students typically enjoy a career already, and have rather different requirements. Seven former PGRs have been appointed as Visiting Affiliated Scholars, a scheme introduced in 2012 as a means of formalising continuing engagement with former doctoral students.

ii. Research students
Degrees awarded

Year	2008/9	2009/10	1010/11	2011/12	2012/13
PhD	2.5	3	0	2.5	5
EdD	2	4	3	4	6.5

The total of 33 doctorates over 5 years compares with 14 over the seven years assessed in 2008.

The Scottish Doctoral Training Centre
The most significant development in PGR provision during the assessment period has been the creation of the DTC. The Scottish DTC was established in 2011, as the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science, and organises collaborative ESRC-recognised training across 24 academic pathways, as well as awarding studentships on behalf of ESRC and its partners. The School has contributed to the DTC from the earliest stages, and FENWICK convenes the Education Pathway (comprising Stirling, Edinburgh, Strathclyde and Glasgow), which collaboratively organises advanced training open to all Education PGRs in Scotland.

Recruitment
The School offers opportunities for both full and part-time PGR study. Most students produce a conventional thesis, but the University also introduced the possibility of a doctorate through a planned group of related publications, modelled on existing Scandinavian practice, and two PGR students are pursuing this route. Full-time students have increased steadily both in absolute terms and as a share of the total during the period since RAE2008. This reflects our recruitment priorities since that period. The recruiting potential of the DTC has been one factor in enabling significant PGR growth. In 2012-13 the School supervised 63 research students (39 PhD, 24 EdD).

EdD and PhD

The School was the first in Scotland to offer an EdD programme, which ran successfully for 12 years. In 2010, following a review of our graduate research programme, we decided to merge the EdD with our part-time PhD, and create a new cohort-based part-time PhD programme, with the aim of combining the positive cohort relationships of the EdD with the rigorous training and support of the PhD. The first intake on the cohort programme entered in February 2013.

Studentship funding

Those completing since RAE 2008 include one Commonwealth Scholar and four ESRC students. Those starting this autumn included students funded by ESRC, Higher Education Academy and Skills Development Scotland, as well as by the University. Current students hold scholarships from their own governments, covering such countries as Kuwait, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan. Six PGRs are currently supported from internally funded awards.

Monitoring and support of PGRs

Within the School, PRIESTLEY has overall responsibility as PGR programme director. Each PGR is supported by first and second supervisors. All students are issued with the University's Code of Practice for the Support of Postgraduate Research Students at induction, so they are aware of the responsibilities of supervisors, School and University - and themselves. Each student undertakes a progress review after the first 10/15 months, which recommends on confirmation of doctoral registration. Annual progress reviews are monitored by the School and the University. Students formally record actions arising during regular supervision sessions and report these electronically on the University's student administration system, with comments from the supervisors.

We launched an annual research student conference in 2009, at which all doctoral students are expected to present a paper or poster at the event. We also encourage PGRs to present at the annual university-wide Stirling Graduate School conference. PGRs are able to apply internally for financial support to attend conferences, produce posters and attend external training. The University participates in a number of external student surveys, including the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES); the results are monitored, and implications discussed at University and School levels. In 2013, the School achieved a satisfaction level of 90% in PRES, well above the sector average.

Skills training

All doctoral students discuss skills requirements as part of their individual development plan, and these are then monitored as part of the progress review and annual reporting mechanisms. PGRs have access to the seminars and training sessions provided through the Stirling Graduate School (SGS, to which several School staff contribute), as well as to events provided by Vitae, the DTC/SGSSS, and other bodies including BERA. Those interested in an academic career are encouraged to attend the introductory module of the University's certificate in academic practice, and are supported where appropriate in undertaking relevant teaching.

Integration of PGRS in the research environment

PGRs are provided with designated office space and access to a full range of research resources. All are actively encouraged to participate in the School seminar programme, workshops and conferences. While we encourage part-time PGRs to attend these events physically, we also make podcasts and other outputs available for those who are unable to do so. There is student representation on the RSC and on SGS steering group. PGRs are also encouraged to participate in one of the Research Groups, and develop team-working and other skills through a managed involvement in funded research projects.

Supervisor development

Since RAE2008, the School has reviewed and improved its support for supervisors. We organise a development workshop for all supervisors each semester, with the dual aim of ensuring familiarity with any new policies and procedures, and developing capacity around a topic identified as strategically significant. New supervisors are expected to participate in the training provided by the University, and are additionally encouraged to attend residential training workshops at the

Missenden Centre. The University has introduced 'master classes' for more experienced supervisors, in which colleagues participate, as well as attending activities provided externally by bodies such as Vitae and the Scottish Graduate School in Social Sciences.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Organizational infrastructure
Research funding
We attract funding for our research from a range of funders. These include: 7 new ESRC grants (with a total value of £770k); 2 British Academy grants (total value ca. £15k); 3 grants from the EC and one from CEDEFOP (ca. £300k); 6 from Scottish Government, 1 from SQA, 2 from Education Scotland, 1 from Creative Scotland, 1 from the Royal Society of Edinburgh (WILLIAMSON's robotic research assistant project, which arose directly from his participation in Scottish Crucible) and 1 from the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (total ca. £233k); 5 grants from charities (ca. £75k); 9 grants from Carnegie Trust; and 3 grants for seminar series (one from ESRC for WILLIAMSON, an ECR, one from the Society for Educational Studies).

The broader funding environment for educational research has become much more competitive. Completion of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme has had a particularly significant impact on funding. The School made a major contribution to TLRP, and we benefited enormously from our participation. Of 52 substantive projects nationally, the School was involved in eight. In addition, GARDNER led an ESRC-commissioned review of the whole programme's implications for Northern Ireland on behalf of DELNI.

Conference funding and other support. Members of staff have gained funding to organise conferences and workshops from ESRC, the Society of Educational Studies, publishers (particularly Routledge, NIACE and Emerald), *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, the Scottish Universities Insight Institute, the Scottish Government and HEA.

Operational infrastructure
Staff in University Research Office help us negotiate the specific requirements of various funding regimes. The University's recently introduced Research Management System has further simplified the application process and also promotes dissemination of published work through STORRE, the university's online research repository. Information Services make IT support readily available, and online subscriptions are a particular strength of the library provision supporting research. The library also holds several specialist collections of importance for educational research, which are available to research students as well as academic staff. Through the SCURL agreement, staff and PGRs also make use of libraries at other Scottish universities.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

Collaborations, partnerships and networks
ProPEL is explicitly conceived as a means of supporting international networks around professional employment and learning, with academic and user associates. Internally it collaborates with colleagues within the Schools of Nursing and Health and Management, as well as with quantitative longitudinal researchers in Applied Social Science. The School contributes expertise on professional knowledge and learning to the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), a strategic collaboration of 12 universities with the Police Service. FENWICK is Associate Director of SIPR, and in April 2013 was an invited SIPR presenter at a Joint Symposium and Congressional Briefing on Evidence-Based Policing at the US Capitol.

Our extensive collaboration with Highland Council, described in an impact case study, has since been extended to East Lothian. This in turn led to an agreement with Education Scotland to run a programme for their newly appointed Senior Education officers. Our ESRC Curriculum seminar series involved collaboration with Highland and Falkirk Councils and SQA.

Advisory roles
Research Councils. EDWARDS and GARDNER are members of ESRC's Peer Review College; T. FENWICK is on ESRC Council and its Evaluation Committee; FIELD served on ESRC's Training and Skills Committee and chaired the selection panel for its sustainable communities programme. GARDNER served on the Steering Committee for TLRP, as well as the Steering Committee and Commissioning Panel for the joint EPSRC and ESRC Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Programme (2008-12). Overseas, FIELD and GARDNER are reviewers for the Qatar National Research Fund.

Learned societies and universities. GARDNER has served as President and Vice-President of BERA, PRIESTLEY sits on BERA Council and SERA Executive. GARDNER was on Councils of the Academy of Social Sciences (2002-11) and of the World Educational Research Association (2009-11). GARDNER served on the UK-based Assessment Reform Group, launched by BERA and subsequently funded by Nuffield (1994-2010). STEPHEN convenes SERA's Early Years Network.

Government. FIELD served as a science co-ordinator for the UK Government Office of Science's Foresight project on Mental Capital and Well-being (2008-2009). GARDNER was a member of the Department for Employment and Learning (NI) Higher Education Strategy Review Group (2009-10). PRIESTLEY served on specialist groups for SQA. STEPHEN serves on an SG advisory group on early childhood learning and care.

Quality assessment. FIELD has contributed to quality assessments of university research in Finland and Ireland.

Editorial contribution
During the period, our staff have served on the boards of: *Adult Education Quarterly; British Educational Research Journal; Canadian Journal of Education; Canadian Journal for Studies in the Education of Adults; Canadian Journal for University Continuing Education; Curriculum Journal; International Journal of Early Years Education; Early Years; Human Resources Development International; International Journal of Lifelong Education; Irish Educational Studies; Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung; Journal of Entrepreneurial & Organizational Diversity; Journal of Vocational Education & Training; Journal of Workplace Learning; Management Learning; Pedagogy, Culture & Society; RELA: European Journal for Research in the Education & Learning of Adults; Studies in Continuing Education; Studies in the Education of Adults; Learning, Media & Technology; Vocations & Learning.* Priestley edited *Scottish Educational Review* (2007-10) and now chairs its board. Colleagues have also edited special issues of journals on a number of occasions.

Other contributions
Examining. Members of staff in the UoA have examined 28 doctoral theses in the UK, and 20 overseas.

Conferences and workshops. Stirling has hosted national and international conferences and workshops for scholarly bodies, including Researching Work and Learning (2013), Society for Educational Studies (2011, 2012). ProPEL and TheoryLab have each hosted two international conferences, symposia, and workshops engaging practitioners and policymakers.

Presentations. Highlights of a lengthy catalogue of presentations by members of staff include: prestigious invited lectures; keynotes to conferences; and invited seminar presentations.

Other contributions to capacity. Staff served on nine professorial appointment panels in overseas universities and seven in the UK. GARDNER was consultant to the Review Committee for Promotion and Tenure, National Institute of Education, Singapore (2010). Contributors to overseas doctoral schools include FENWICK (Oslo,Trento) and FIELD (Forlí, Iceland). STEPHEN was the first academic visitor at the new Early Years Research Centre at Waikato University.