

Section D4: assessment criteria: environment

a. Overview

A major restructuring of the university in 2009 created four interdisciplinary Research Beacons to foster research activities across the institution. The Beacons' activities include creating academic collaboration, external partnerships and exchanges through funding, knowledge dissemination and subject-specific research management. All 14 UoA 29 staff are members of the Beacon for Regional and Cultural Research which is based in the Department of Culture, Faculty of Education and Society.

Three main subgroups (Postcolonialism; Modern Gothic; Language and Culture) draw together the teaching and research interests of many of the staff. Furthermore, all members of staff are involved in research networks outside the University where fruitful interdisciplinary relationships have developed over the years, making Sunderland's English department one that is well known both nationally and internationally.

b. Research strategy

Since 2008, the aims of the Unit have been:

- To promote the research development of new staff in the early stages of their careers with a view to their being submitted in 2013;
- To build upon previous achievements by supporting the research of those already established;
- Through the Beacon, to ensure there is an explicit commitment to open competition and equal opportunities in applying for resources to initiate and develop projects;
- To increase our provision of opportunities to postgraduate research students;
- To develop the research-active curriculum at all levels;
- To ensure all academic staff are submitted in 2013;
- To build upon our regional networks, both academic and with the public, in order to engage with, and have an impact on, the wider community.

In keeping with the university's research strategy, future plans for the unit in addition to the above include:

- To develop existing links and initiate new ones with the community outside higher education;
- To increase the level of external funding garnered by the unit;
- To increase our provision of opportunities to postgraduate research students;
- To ensure all academic staff are submitted to the next REF.

The highly successful research strategy of the Unit means that all 14 members (12.4 fte) of the English team have been submitted to REF 2014, including 3 ECR staff (Hall, Pheby, C.Younger) plus new starter Fallon, compared with just 6 staff in 2008.

The framework of monitoring and accountability in the University means that UoA 29 is embedded in a structure of reporting to and receiving feedback and guidance from Beacon, Faculty and University. The Beacon's individual grants are monitored for output and successful completion of projects: expenditure and its consequences, investment and policies of equal opportunity are subject to monitoring and report to the Faculty.

The University, through its REF Core Group, has oversight of the progress of Units within their Beacons and shapes the strategic aims of research within the University and for the Units. In addition, the REF Core Group has invested in a University Research Development Fund (RDF) which is open to all members of staff to apply for support on a competitive basis.

The Beacon has enabled the continuation of a thriving research culture in English. This can be divided into three main areas: Postcolonialism; Modern Gothic; and Language and Culture. Several colleagues who specialised in the Long 18th Century have left and their research group has been replaced by developing interests in Modern Gothic as well as the consolidation of the Postcolonial research grouping from RAE 2008. This has continued to grow, with the well-established North East Irish Culture Network (NEICN) in particular continuing to expand. Within the newly-formed Language and Culture grouping, innovative research on dialect has developed, in addition to research into media language, partly funded by the AHRC.

The Beacon hosted a research funding workshop in 2012 where members of staff were offered advice and presented with case studies by successful bidders who were also on hand to

assist less experienced colleagues in writing bids, ranging from overseas conference bids to larger projects involving other institutions. The Beacon has funded Fallon to be bought out of some of his teaching for one semester so that he could write an AHRC Early Career Researcher project bid in 2013 (spring 2014 submission). The University's Graduate and Research Support (GRS) team are also able to provide copies of previously successful funding bids to act as exemplars.

In keeping with the university's commitment to civic engagement, the English team have organized conferences, attended by several hundred A-level students, to enhance understanding of the English A-level syllabus (the Spectral Visions conferences). Smith's work with Beamish Museum, which links with longer-term projects relating to the centenary of the start of the Great War, is also relevant here. The university's underwriting of the Spectral Visions conferences is continuing, and the Beacon is organizing a three-day international conference in April 2014, The First World War and its Global Legacies, which also links with the unit's Postcolonial researchers.

c. People

i. Staffing strategy and staff development:

The University values and promotes the equality and diversity of staff and students. In line with our strategic aims, we work to ensure that all members of our community treat one another with respect and dignity. The University is an Athena Swan Bronze award holder and a Stonewall Diversity Champion, holds Investor in People status, and subscribes to the "2 ticks – Positive about Disability" scheme (the university's policy is described on pages 27-32 here: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/inclusion/disability/strategic-approaches-to-disabled-student-engagement-case-studies.pdf>). The university operates faculty-level and executive-level Equality and Diversity committees which deal with complaints and problems from staff and students across the university.

Staff development is carried out by HR and the Academic Development Office, in conjunction with the GRS team. The library also contributes through its 'buddy' support system. Training includes accreditation courses for Research/PhD supervisors, workshops on presenting research, and research staff management courses for middle managers. The university also holds an annual research conference at which invited speakers present papers on aspects of research policy.

The University Research Strategy (2013-2018) embeds the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers into the various policies relating to training programmes and courses for academic staff. The University is an HR Excellence in Research Award holder. We have reviewed our support for researchers, and have identified areas for further improvement which are being implemented in 2012/13 (including a new development programme specifically for contract researchers and a review of careers provision to ensure researcher needs are fully met). The provision of both equal opportunities and diversity in recruitment, support and pay is underpinned by a 'holistic approach' that takes account of individual researchers and their aims (the comprehensive 'institutional practice' is described on Vitae's website: www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/). For example, the PG Certificate in HE Teaching and Learning, run by the University and mandatory for new staff, offers an introduction to research skills. One early researcher in English (Pheby) was awarded a Research Development Fellowship, and the Beacon hosted an Early Career/New Researchers Conference in 2010/11. In addition, Fallon attended a two-day residential programme, set up by Sunderland University in collaboration with Newcastle and Durham, to enhance his performance as a researcher and prepared him for a successful academic career.

The university grants all academic staff 160 hours of Research and Scholarly Activity (RSA) time on their workloads. This is time staff can draw on to attend conferences, give talks in non-academic settings, engage with contacts in the wider community, and plan conferences. Staff can use it throughout the year as they see fit.

In addition to RSA time, Beacon money has been made available for all staff in the Unit to employ academic tutors (ATs) so research-active staff can finish monographs (Kerr-Koch 2013), complete research projects (Pearce) and PhDs (Kerr-Koch) and attend conferences (Nash).

Special attention is paid to the research opportunities for new and early career staff. Fallon was given a reduced teaching load in his first year, and then provided with Beacon funding, as detailed above. Pheby has been awarded RDF money to employ an AT for one semester,

allowing him to develop teaching materials relating to research into outreach for creative writers. C.Younger has been given two separate Beacon grants to buy him out of administrative commitments so he could work on his first publication. RDF money means Hall has reduced teaching for his first semester.

Staff who are at the beginning of their research are encouraged to do a PhD. In Unit 29, 2 members of staff have completed doctorates, one at the University of East Anglia (Pheby 2010) and one at Cardiff University (Kerr-Koch 2011). The PhD fees for Dempsey and C.Younger are paid by the Beacon. Hall, Smith and A.Younger are all former postgraduate students in the Unit.

The Leverhulme post-doctoral researcher attached to the Unit in this period contributed to a co-written monograph and two edited collections before obtaining a lecturer post at another university towards the end of her contract.

ii. **Research students:**

Central Academic Services provide a comprehensive range of postgraduate student training programmes which spans the whole VITAE researcher development framework. All postgraduate students are required to attend this programme and annual reviews of their progress. The PRES survey in 2011 showed good scores for student satisfaction with skills development, with 73% for transferable and research skills, 85% for analytical and project management skills and 87% for independent learning (an overview of the PRES survey is on pages 34-5 here: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/postgraduate/PRES_enhancement.pdf).

The English department has 16 research students. Four students have fee remissions, and 3 are fully funded by the Beacon (2 of these are staff). Studentships are offered on a competitive basis, and principles of equal opportunity and diversity were taken into account in the recruitment process. Research students have access to a dedicated room (equipped with comprehensive IT facilities) on the same floor as the Unit's staff offices. The 2012 Post- Graduate Research Review (PGR) was highly positive about the Faculty, particularly in 'sharing of experiences and collaborative working among both staff and students, and reported on the evident scholarship of colleagues enabling immense flexibility in their supervision capacity'.

GRS monitors the annual progress of research students and provides a postgraduate research student development programme covering several years. The generic skills development programmes are organised by Academic Development and delivered in collaboration with other central support services and the academic community. These programmes are in addition to any bespoke subject-specific faculty based training, or master's level programmes, accessed through research student managers and supervisory teams. The programme includes sessions on database searching, using Nvivo, academic writing, project management, grant applications and job interview skills, and also prepares research students for teaching at Sunderland University, thereby providing transferable skills in preparation for HE research-led teaching. Several research students have already been given the opportunity of teaching classes for a semester or longer. Through the North East Collaboration Group for Postgraduate Researcher Development, students at Sunderland, Teesside, Newcastle and Northumbria Universities are also eligible to attend training courses at other universities in the North East, offered as part of a reciprocal arrangement.

Conference organisers for the Northern Association for Postcolonial Studies (NAPS), Spectral Visions and NEICN have made particular efforts to engage research students in the management and running of their conferences where a number have also given papers. The Beacon organised 2 well-attended postgraduate conferences, in 2010 and 2011. Research students have also been involved with presentations and contributions to the Unit's research seminars. The 2012 PGR again observed a strong record of student and staff participation in seminars and conferences both internally and externally (largely funded by the Beacon).

iii. **Promoting research and learning in emerging scholars:**

The Beacon supports members of staff and research students in funding conference attendances to promote networking and interdisciplinary research. It also offers support for conferences held at Sunderland such as the annual NEICN and Spectral Visions conferences, as well as book launches.

The BA (Hons) English and Creative Writing programme encourages students to publish.

In 2013, to mark the third year of graduates on this programme, a collection of short stories by the students was published independently. This will become an annual event, whereby students' fictional work will be peer-reviewed and published to coincide with the summer graduation ceremony. Elsewhere, several students have published their poetry in international journals and collections whilst still undergraduates, and one published her first novel in 2013.

Aside from Creative Writing, the research culture in the team is such that several undergraduate students published articles based on their coursework in peer-reviewed journals in 2010.

The University has a strategy of recruitment for doctoral students that is open and equal, with emphasis placed on the quality of the students rather than the quantity. The Unit has a strong research basis and care is taken in pairing student and supervisor appropriately. The research student manager (Nash) takes a particular interest in postgraduate students, encouraging them to develop a wide range of skills. Three PhD students have been fully funded by the Beacon: 2 have completed; 1 is currently in write-up and 1 is making minor revisions following a successful viva.

2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
2	1	1	1	6

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Central support for research is provided by a Research Support team, within Academic Services. This team provides support for postgraduate research students, research active staff, research project managers and senior management through the provision of management information.

Sunderland University is home to the Kate Adie Collection, the only archive of a single journalist's work in the UK. This has been used to provide data for two AHRC bids, and is the basis of several journal articles and conference papers (Smith, see below). This archive is open to students and members of the public by appointment. The university library has a specialist subject page for English, http://www.netvibes.com/uoslibenglish#University_Library_Services_-_English, which includes a range of online resources and blogs. Resources include the library catalogue and the university's Kate Adie Collection. This site is managed by a subject-specific librarian who liaises with the team.

Postcolonialism: The Unit has a well-established reputation for research on Irish Studies and has made a significant contribution to scholarship in this field. The impact-related activities described in the Spectral Visions case study use insights from this research which aims to deepen and extend public engagement with Irish literature and culture.

In 2008, A.Younger was the co-recipient of a Leverhulme research award (£258,000) for a joint Sunderland/Durham universities project on James Joyce and nineteenth-century Irish advertising: 'Consumer Culture, Advertising and Literature in Ireland 1848 – 1921'. The project hosted a series of 7 public lectures and a conference and brought with it a research associate's position and two PhD studentships. It resulted in the publication of two monographs and three edited collections, along with a number of scholarly articles by members of the team. The Leverhulme project was developed under the aegis of NEICN, of which A.Younger is a founder member and co-director. NEICN has annually hosted international conferences since its inception in 2003. A.Younger has published extensively in this area in this REF period (2009, 2011, 2013a, 2013b plus 8 other book chapters; 3 co-edited collections), with other colleagues (Lewis 2008; Dempsey 2010; Wefelmeyer 2011; C.Younger 2013) also publishing in this grouping.

Aligned with this is NAPS, a research collective established in 2007 as a collaborative organization between Newcastle and Sunderland universities to establish links both regionally and across Britain, as well as internationally. In 2010, NAPS sponsored a two-day international conference, Postcolonialism and Islam, which inspired a volume of essays, edited by Nash and Kerr-Koch (2013). Nash has also published extensively in this area in the REF period (book chapters 2009 and 2013, plus 1 other; 2 edited collections; monograph 2009 and 2012), as has Wefelmeyer (2012; 2013).

Modern Gothic: This more recent research group has emerged from staff interests in Irish studies and the Long 18th Century and led to the Spectral Visions conference in 2012. This followed enquiries from a number of local schools who drew on this for A-level studies. The success of this conference has led to it becoming an annual event for local sixth form students. Organised by the English team, the conferences included enthusiastic participation from undergraduate and post-graduate students, who set up a lively Facebook group which continued to be used by the invited schools and colleges after each conference.

The Modern Gothic grouping draws together English Language and Literature specialists, with Mandala's publications on fictional representations of modern vampires (article published in *Language and Literature* 2006; monograph 2010; book chapter 2011) overlapping with A.Younger's interests in literary and cultural representations of vampires (book chapter 2013). C.Younger's PhD research is into supernatural ballads and regional identity and he has produced an edited volume of creative writing by delegates at the Spectral Visions 2013 conference. Current and future developments involve enhanced collaboration with The Wordsworth Trust to develop outreach and community involvement; further publications of the work of the general public designed to engage creativity; and development of the Gothic cooperative in local schools/colleges facilitated by the Spectral Visions team. A.Younger and Mandala are contracted to co-write a monograph that will draw on their research in this field (2014 deadline).

Language and Culture: This research area has developed considerably since the 2008 RAE. AHRC funding (£53,460) in 2009-11 for 'The Gendered Construction of the Professional Journalist' project, led by Smith, included a co-researcher from the University of Strathclyde. This project resulted in 4 journal articles, a co-edited special edition of an international journal, and the wider dissemination of knowledge through conference and invited research papers, both nationally and internationally. It also led to the development of an AHRC bid (£271,683) to look at the development of the 'live two-way' in broadcast news, continuing the work of the two researchers (decision announced November 2013 graded bid at 4 but failed to secure funding: now being rewritten as Leverhulme bid for spring 2014 submission).

Smith is also a member of an international group of academics, based in the University of Macau: Changing Discourses of Broadcast News. Her access to the Kate Adie Collection at Sunderland means she is one of only two British-based academics involved in this project.

In addition, Smith has published seven other journal articles and five book chapters. She has also produced 3 books: 1 edited collection (2013); a textbook; and 1 monograph, and is contracted to write a monograph on confrontation talk in broadcasting (2014 deadline).

Pearce's project on perceptual dialects has involved 1,600 local participants and the web site developed from this has had more than 3,500 hits (September 2013). Six journal articles have thus far arisen out of this project (including 2009, 2011 and 2013).

Krauthaker-Ringa, Pearce and Smith have research interests in language and gender and have published journal articles (Pearce 2008; Smith 2010) and book chapters (Krauthaker-Ringa 2010, 2009; Smith 2013) separately in this area.

Other research: Although not attached to specific research groupings within the unit, there is a lot of research that has been carried out in related areas. For example, new research in 18th century literature has led to Fallon producing 3 book chapters (2012a; 2012b; 2009) and a journal article (2011), Hall one journal article (2013) and Wefelmeyer a book chapter (2013). A.Younger is involved in a research bid: 'Male Coteries in Late Georgian England, 1785-1840', with a colleague at Bath Spa, due to be submitted spring 2014.

There is also research in 19th century French literature, as shown by Krauthaker-Ringa's publications (1 book 2011; 2 book chapters 2009; 2010). The 20th century is covered by publications from Dempsey (2 journal articles 2010; 2008); Lewis (3 book chapters 2012, 2011, 2008; a journal article 2009); and Wefelmeyer (journal article 2013). The newly-established creative writing team have also produced high quality work, such as Pheby's novel (2009) and journal article (2010); Dempsey's short stories (2013a, 2013b); and C.Younger's edited collection of creative writing resulting from the Spectral Visions conferences.

The Department of Culture also has a research blog, run by Pearce and Smith, which offers a lively, up-to-date record of research activities, with UoA 29 proving to have the most

entries across a wide range of activities. The Beacon produces a twice-yearly newsletter which is distributed around the university, showcasing the current research of staff in this Unit, whilst also offering news on forthcoming projects and grant deadlines.

As well as print books, the library purchases e-book versions of textbooks when available. The library subscribes to over 20,000 print and electronic journal titles. Usage is monitored and the portfolio of titles is continuously reviewed. Search and retrieval tools include Discover (a resource discovery tool capable of searching multiple sources simultaneously) and a range of online databases including: JSTOR; Literary Reference Center Plus; MLA International Bibliography; British Newspapers 1600-1900; and Swetswise. The Beacon has provided funding for part of JSTOR. Researchers can make up to 65 interlibrary loan requests a year for items which are not part of the library collection and may join the Sconul Access Scheme, enabling access and borrowing from other HE libraries.

Each academic has access to dedicated baseline software at their own work station. IT support is managed centrally, with each Faculty having its own dedicated IT staff on campus to provide support.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

There is a great deal of collaborative research carried out by the Unit's academics, as shown in the published research. This includes edited collections by A.Younger, C.Younger (2013), and Nash and Kerr-Koch (2013). These collections include essays both by colleagues within the Unit and also a range of academics from the national and international context. The Beacon has made funding available to get some of these publications professionally indexed, proof-read or typeset as required, as with C.Younger's first publication. Elsewhere, RDF money has funded teaching relief to allow editors and authors to finish their research in a timely manner. This is managed by the UoA Leader, who has coordinated requests with available resources.

The Unit's contribution to the wider research base can be seen in the following examples:

- Both A.Younger and C.Younger are on the management group for NEICN. C.Younger has a dedicated administrative role as part of his non-academic contract to support this group. A.Younger has been the elected member for Northern England and Scotland for the European Federation and Conference for Irish Studies since 2009.
- Krauthaker-Ringa is a member of the Gender: Advanced Research Consortium, <http://www.genderarc.org/index.htm>, and is also a member of Le Journal, Miroir de la Société, a research group studying politics and sexuality in personal diaries from 19th century France, which has received a €5,000 grant from the Irish Research Council in 2013 and has another application in process for 2014.
- Fallon is co-convenor of the North East Long Eighteenth Century group that is run by academics at Sunderland, Northumbria, Newcastle and Durham Universities. He is also a contributor to Networks of Improvement: Literary Clubs and Societies 1760-1840, a Leverhulme project, hosted by Warwick University: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/networksofimprovement/>
- Smith is co-convenor of the Ross Priory Broadcast Talk Group, an international, interdisciplinary group of academics who specialize in language in broadcast media, <http://www.ross-priory-broadcast-talk.com/>, and is also a member of the Macau-based Changing Discourses of Broadcast News group.
- Pheby is Fellow of the Higher Education Association; a member of the National Association of Writers in Education and the Society of Authors, and served on the committee of the Durham Divan Writers Group (2010-12).
- Wefelmeyer is co-convenor of the Historiography research group at Emerson College/UK and, with colleagues from Derby and Dublin universities, has organized international conferences

there in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012.

Staff regularly review articles for journals such as *Corpora*, *The Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *Language and Literature*, *Multilingua*, *Discourse and Communication*, *Modern Drama*, *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, *Mobilities*, *Journal of American Studies*, *Literature and Theology*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Journal of Historical Biography*, *British Politics*, *English Today* and *Media, Culture and Communication*. Smith is on the review panel for the *Journal of War and Culture Studies* and *Discourse, Media & Context*.

Members of the team have also reviewed book proposals for Oxford University Press, John Benjamins, Sage and Routledge, and Smith is commissioning editor for the I.B. Tauris International Library of Gender in Popular Culture. Smith was guest editor for a special issue of the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, published in 2012, and is guest editor for another, *Genders Online*, to be published in 2014.

Staff have examined doctorates in the UK in Swansea, Essex and Glasgow universities. Internationally, staff have been invited to examine doctorates in New Zealand, Switzerland and Australia.

Invited papers internationally have been given in Amman, Croatia, Ireland, Macau, Rome, Spain, Verona and the USA. Nationally, staff have been invited to give papers at Queens University Belfast, Swansea, Strathclyde, Leeds, Northumbria and Glasgow universities, and in public lectures organized locally.

Within the university, the English team contributes to the research base through well-established research lectures, which are open to the public. Speakers have included academics and postgraduates from Sunderland presenting their research, invited researchers and authors. Speakers have included David Almond, Terry Eagleton, Willey Maley, graphic novelist Bryan Talbot, and colleagues from Riga, Auckland and South Pacific. Since September 2012, these research lectures have been organized on a monthly basis to tie into the scheduled evening teaching for the MA English. Details are publicized on the research blog and in the university's online magazine (which is open access).

A research exchange with the University of Latvia in Riga led to a series of four research seminars in 2012. Work in the Unit is also supported by a number of visiting professors who are appointed for a fixed term of three years.