Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: Edge Hill University
Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature

a. Context

The English research group at EHU produces work in a diverse range of fields, including: original creative writing in various genres; literary and cultural criticism; and linguistic analysis. The team has strong interdisciplinary links with researchers in allied disciplines such as film studies, history, media, and the social sciences. Research in this extended field has considerable potential to make impact by enriching cultural life, through awareness-raising, and stimulating public debates which arise from critical and creative originality. Principal beneficiaries include the following:

- <u>Writers, readers, and publishers of contemporary literature</u> (e.g. Comma Press, Gollancz): dissemination of research highlighting the distinctiveness of a neglected genre – the short story / short story collection; cultural events which promote the value of this genre; public speaking at small writers' groups, promoting the poetry of lived experience (The Narrative Research Group and Poetry and Poetics Research Group generate these activities.)
- <u>Teachers of Creative Writing at other HE institutions</u>: sector-level policy-making in creative curricula and pedagogies through the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE)
- <u>Health professionals, youth workers, and those in their care</u>: arts and health projects which facilitate creative autobiography, a coping strategy to articulate the experience of long-term illness; awareness-raising through community theatre projects and associated public-facing discussion, e.g. on themes of sexual health and ethics
- <u>Educational policy-makers</u>: location-specific linguistic research on ethnic identity feeding into new policy, e.g. ongoing discussion of the role of creole languages in Caribbean education, informing policy changes on school curricula and classroom practice
- <u>Communities concerned with the representation of Islam in the UK</u>: dissemination of linguistic research on the representation of Islamic identity and of immigration in mass media (Ethnicity, Race, and Racism Research Group)
- <u>Schools and colleges in the Merseyside area</u>: research-informed promotion of a specific literary genre – Gothic fiction; cultural events providing opportunities for participation, e.g. the first Liverpool Gothic Festival (Romanticism at Edge Hill research group)

b. Approach to impact

The guiding principle in generating impact from our academic research is that it should arise naturally and logically from research that scholars in the team want to undertake. The Department provides a positive environment in which new ideas for impact-generating projects are encouraged, assessed, and supported. This is achieved through regular staff development activities to raise awareness of the impact agenda, such as an annual strategy day, and fora and workshops during the academic year. A Departmental Impact Steering Group, consisting of senior colleagues with experience of successful public engagement, oversees the development of new projects. The group is broadly based in the department's disciplines: all subject areas in English studies (Creative Writing, literary and cultural studies, language and linguistics) are represented among its members, as well as two historians. The group supports project leaders and helps the HoD to devise relevant staff development and advise on funding applications, thus building capacity. The groups listed above have been identified as having the potential to benefit from English research. In several cases public engagement is already ongoing; in other cases it is planned as an integral part of research projects over the next five years. All cited projects have been conceived in terms of measurable public significance. Approaches and indicative examples are listed below.

<u>Organising public-facing events</u>: As a strategic aim of the UoA, event organisation is supported by department managers and the university's conference office; the opening of new international-standard venues such as the Arts Centre and Creative Edge has made the campus a more attractive venue for high-profile speakers.

- The annual Edge Hill Short Story Prize, organised by **Cox**, is now recognised as the premier national award for a collection of short fiction published in the UK or Ireland; the sixth annual prize was awarded in 2013, and attracted substantial coverage in national media. **Cox** also continues to play a major role in promoting the status and positive public perception of the genre, e.g. interviews on BBC radio (see case study for further details).
- The UoA frequently hosts high-profile literary readings for public audiences, co-ordinated by **Sheppard**. Recent readings include: Neil Gaiman, Jackie Kay, Colm Tóibín, and David Vann.

In October 2010 EHU hosted a double speaker event organised by **Hughes-Edwards** and **Pantano**, featuring the UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and former US Laureate Billy Collins; the event incorporated writing workshops for schools and colleges.

- Rob Spence, researching the work and reputation of Wilfred Owen, will take the opportunity of the World War I centenary to initiate public-facing events on Owen's legacy, to stimulate media coverage, and promote teaching of WWI experience in the National Curriculum.

Attracting external funding: The UoA's encouragement of researchers to identify a wide range of potential funders for public-facing projects is demonstrated in this project, match-funded by EHU:

- **Brabon**'s *eGothicist* project has been supported by a c. £27k grant from the HEA; *eGothicist* is a 15-month project, which draws on the UoA's research strengths in Gothic literature and the digital Humanities. Part of the project includes the development of pioneering educational apps of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* combining scholarly editions and teaching materials. **Brabon** has organised a number of associated outreach events in local colleges and book shops, and is on the organising committee of the Liverpool Gothic Festival (2013). The public engagement value of the project was integral to the initial bid for funding, and impact criteria continue to inform its investment in technology and staff time.

Working directly with user groups: The following projects have been initiated by individual researchers, and are monitored and supported by the department's Impact Steering Group:

- The dramatist Kim Wiltshire is engaged in various projects exploring the therapeutic value of art and writing. *CF Transitions* (funded by Children in Need) worked with young people with Cystic Fibrosis to tackle the often traumatic transition from paediatric to adult services. *Project XXX* (funded by the Arts Council) is a multi-faceted project addressing ethical themes around the mainstreaming of pornography: public performances of scripts developed in improvisation workshops are followed by open discussions, designed to raise awareness among young people and sexual health workers in the NW region.
- In the field of 'language death', **Grant**'s pioneering work in preserving Native American languages continues to have cultural significance outside the academy: the alphabet that **Grant** designed for transcribing three dormant languages of the Oregon coast has been adopted as the orthography for these languages in Tribally-produced material.
- **Bradshaw** gives an invited talk on his research into Romanticism and Disability Studies at the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, at an annual event promoting disability awareness and showcasing the work of local disabled writers' and artists' groups (2011-13).

Disseminating research through public media: Mentoring and advice on working with mass media is available from within the department and via the university's RCB programme.

- **Gabrielatos**'s discourse analysis of the representation of Islam in British media informs public debate about language and ethnicity, connecting with the work of EHU film theorist Barrett (UoA 36), and EHU historians Renton, Verney, and Whitham (UoA 30), under the framework of the interdisciplinary Ethnicity, Race and Racism Research Group. Outcomes from **Gabrielatos**'s project on the representation of refugees, and asylum seekers in the UK press have informed reports of the Migration Observatory (2013).

Involvement in policy-making: Opportunities for direct input into public policy are relatively limited in English studies, and therefore projects with this potential are given a high priority by Department managers when seeking institutional support and funding.

- Sociolinguistic work on creoles, bilingualism, 'student pidgins', and code-switching conducted by **Daleszynska** and **Shoba**, impacts on policy-making in Bequia and Ghana respectively, especially relating to curricula and classroom practice, due to their direct engagement with specific communities and educational institutions.
- **Sheppard**'s work on the HE committee of NAWE (2005-13) has helped to shape national benchmarks on the teaching and assessment of Creative Writing in UK universities.

c. Strategy and plans

Looking ahead to the next five years and beyond, the Department has developed a number of strategic foci for the improved generation of cultural benefit through research. A survey was undertaken of all ongoing and planned projects in the extended English team, assessing their potential and prioritising them for support and development, in order to strengthen the management of public-facing research. This structured approach will also entail pro-active consultation with beneficiaries, especially in NW England, EHU's geographical region: user groups identified in section a. above will form the initial base for this activity. It is a further priority to

support collaborative projects and those which connect between researchers in two or more disciplines. The UoA aims to identify effective projects at an early stage and to develop their potential systematically, supporting and resourcing researchers to achieve this. Below are some of the means by which impactful research will be supported.

Working with and through the Institute for Creative Enterprise (ICE): ICE is a University-wide inter-disciplinary initiative, focused on the digital and creative economies with the aims of contributing to debates on the roles of culture and creativity in economic growth, sustainability and citizen engagement. Its Advisory Board includes industry and third-sector members. It is a focal point for engagement with research users in collaborative research and knowledge exchange. The UoA will use ICE as a vehicle (offering marketing support, a clearer, more outward-facing and more prominent *brand identity*, and dedicated administrative resources*)* to engage with users. Emerging priority projects include further engagement with the publishing industry on creative writing, marking the World War I centenary with public events on Owen's legacy, and further developments of the relationships developed in *Project XXX.*

Collaborative organisation: To improve production of impactful research, the work will centre on small teams of collaborating researchers, rather than on individuals. Post-2014 strategy therefore includes the re-organisation of teams in key subjects. Teams will include: **Cox** and **Glass** (public engagement in contemporary fiction); **Brabon** and **Vuohelainen** (extending Gothic studies into secondary education); and **Burbano Elizondo**, **Daleszynska**, and **Gabrielatos** (informing public debates with linguistic research). Peter Wright's (returned to UoA 36) project to develop a role-playing game for commercial distribution in Cubicle 7's *Cthulhu Britannica* product line from historical and literary research will entail collaboration with computing researchers at EHU.

Staff development and training: More staff will be trained to develop public-facing research by accessing internal resources such as the RCB programme, and external resources such as the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, and Research Councils UK's *Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research*. The Graduate School provides a framework for the training and career development for PGR students, which includes public engagement and media work. At departmental level, staff development will promote a change in research culture, towards an understanding that applied and engaged research is a shared responsibility of the team. Support and advice on external funding applications is available from the RESO, and drafts of major bids are evaluated by EHU's Peer Review College. The internal Research Investment Fund has a developmental role, aiming to improve success rates with external funders, and welcomes bids for investment in projects specifically designed to achieve impact outcomes in culture and society.

d. Relationship to case studies:

Both case studies demonstrate the public engagement of individual researchers – **Cox** and **Sheppard** – who combine original creative writing and critical scholarship. This approach recognises the entrepreneurial nature of literary writing and publishing, in which new readerships are constructed through the promotion of innovative practice. Both are senior members of staff (respectively a reader and a professor) engaged in external-facing projects; accordingly, they have benefited from flexible workload management in the department, concentrating most of their time in research and enterprise and in PGR, where they have strong track records of supervision to completion. They also play integral roles in the research environment, coordinating the Narrative Research Group and the Poetry and Poetics Research Group, which provide fora for the development of new experimental work by writers in the region, including EHU PGR students. Both were active in their fields and engaging with public audiences long before impact featured on the research assessment agenda.

Making a distinctive contribution to the revitalisation of the short story genre: this case study has informed the development of our strategy to work with and through ICE in order to achieve impact. It has shown us the benefits of supporting sustained engagement with research users, and of creating clear *moments of influence and engagement* (e.g. recurring events) in order to keep drawing attention to our work.

Linguistically Innovative Poetry: critical and practice-led research: again, this case study has shown us the benefit of supporting sustained and active engagement with our research user groups. **Sheppard's** immersion in the field and focus on working with key figures (e.g. niche publishers) has helped to inform the way we now advise all staff (including ECRs) and PGRs to identify key research users and intermediaries with whom they should build their own relationships.