Institution: University of Dundee

Unit of Assessment: 22 Social Work and Social Policy

a.   Overview

The researchers within the Social Work & Social Policy Unit of Assessment (UoA) are located primarily within the social work discipline within the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education (ESWCE). However, as a multi-professional school with strong links in other parts of the University, as well as with local governments, national agencies, and the wider professional communities, research within the UoA frequently occurs with colleagues from other disciplines across the University and beyond. The academics within this unit of assessment primarily belong to one of the School's two research groups (RRV: Resiliency, Risk and Vulnerability, or TCELT: (Transformative Change: Educational and Life Transitions). However, some researchers participate in more than one research cluster as appropriate. In addition, two members are located in other schools or colleges (**Seaman** in the Business School and **Fernandes** in the Nursing School). Finally, research is based in the School's White Top Research Centre and PAMIS, a charity serving people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their families. PAMIS is both based at and forms part of the School.

b. Research strategy

Changes to the research environment since 2008

The main objective of the Research Strategy articulated in RAE2008 was to consolidate and nurture the social work discipline's existing research strengths through a period of change. This period of change included the development of a new College and the School as an integrated entity rather than a collection of disparate parts. Changes to the environment since 2008 reflect this growing interconnectedness and the development of 'School-as-a-whole' approaches, especially in developing a School-wide culture of research and scholarship. Social Work has been a driving force in the development of this research culture and in shaping the vision of the School. As such, the research environment and strategy for social work cannot be seen in isolation from the School. The vision that guides the social work research strategy is intimately linked with the vision of ESWCE. The research strategy is based upon an holistic view of the nature of scholarship, and an inclusive perspective on the nature of academic work. This is one which recognises that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching. Following Boyer's (1990) position outlined in *Scholarship Reconsidered,* academic work within the School is conceived as having four separate yet overlapping functions which comprise the scholarship of discovery (or inquiry), of integration, of application, and of teaching (and learning). We recognise that scholarly inquiry is at the very heart of academic life and that the pursuit of knowledge must be assiduously cultivated and defended. Placing scholarly inquiry at the centre of an holistic view of academic life has been the guiding principle for the development of the research environment within ESWCE since 2008.

Against this background, the overall strategy for research in the School since 2008/2009 has been to enhance research quality, increase research quantity and extend research impact through the advancement of a research culture that continually strives towards the following 7 goals:

1. *Achieving the highest possible standards of quality of our research outputs in terms of rigour, originality and international significance.* There has been a marked increase in the number of publications, both in terms of quantity and quality. The number of articles published by social work staff within the University's Research Outputs Database (Discovery) has increased by 56% since RAE 2008. This occurred despite losing several key senior members of staff immediately after RAE 2008.
2. *Maximising support for our research activity through the winning of external research funding.* The School's income from external funders has been quadrupled since RAE 2008.
3. *Building our research capacity by progressively increasing the number of established researchers in the School.* A number of strategies have been put in place since RAE2008 to increase the number of active researchers. These measures start with the recruitment process, through clear expectations of new and current staff in terms of research and scholarship, and

the provision of support and resources for all staff (see section c(i) below). In addition, we are supporting up to 15 staff members a year on University doctoral programmes. One indicator of the development here is the increase in numbers of staff publishing over the period since 2008. Of the 25 academic staff in the social work programmes in 2007, only 44% had published an article in the RAE period. The percentage of staff with publications during the current REF period has risen to 72%. Within social work the increased research capacity can also be evidenced by the number of staff with doctoral level qualifications. In 2008 only 3 full-time members of social work staff had doctoral degrees and two were enrolled in PhD programmes. There are now 9 full-time members with doctoral degrees and 4 others who are in the last year of their doctoral studies. In addition, there are 2 part-time members of staff with PhDs.

4. *Continuing to expand the number of doctoral students, visiting scholars and post-doctoral researchers.* A gradual increase in the numbers of doctoral students in the School can be seen by comparing numbers at the time of the RAE 2008 submission (22) with those currently enrolled (53). In 2013 there were 10 successful completions, while in 2007 there were 3. For social work specifically, there were 5 doctoral students in 2007 but there are currently 10, and 3 of the 10 completions in 2013 were social work. Looking forward, we are working to increase supervision capacity within the School to accommodate increasing numbers of doctoral students. The most productive avenue currently is the professional doctorate, which is heavily subscribed and shows a marked upward trend. However, we are also working to increase PhD students and continue to receive numerous applications from overseas.

5. *Optimising the impact of our research on our teaching and on student learning by promoting a culture of scholarship in teaching and learning.* As can be seen from section c below, we have already introduced many strategies to develop a culture of research and scholarship. Although section c focuses on staff and research students, this ethos permeates the whole School, from undergraduates to CPD programmes. Research within the school is embedded within the curricula. For example, staff members' publications are regularly assigned to students in their courses of study. Importantly, the research also includes changing practices (eg. admissions screening in the medical school, literacy assessment in education, and service user and carer involvement in social work).

6. *Extending the wider impact of our research through public engagement and knowledge exchange activities.* Many of our research seminars and research groups are cross-disciplinary in nature, helping to widen impact, stimulate cross-boundary discussions and contribute to the vitality of the research culture. For example, the Centre for Research on Teaching and Learning (CRITAL) and T-CELT have members from across the University as well as external partners in health, education and social care settings. Staff conferences, established for some years now, have included colleagues from other sectors of the University, but increasingly from beyond the University. A good example of this is the Stakeholders' conference, which has been used to showcase our work and engage with colleagues from different professional groups. At the most recent one, there were representatives from health, social care and education. The impact template associated with this submission outlines several strategies employed to extend the dissemination and impact of our work, together with plans to develop this. This is an area for strategic development.

7. *Contributing to the advancement of the knowledge base and to the sustainability and vitality of our fields nationally and internationally.* We have continued our upward trend in publications, conference presentations, staff involved on national and regional committees, editorial boards, external examiner duties, and consultancies.

Future Research Plans

In addition to the School-wide goals and accomplishments listed above, the Social Work UoA has worked towards a goal of building a social work research culture of excellence and impact which incorporates *all* academic staff. Having established a firm foundation and embedded a culture of research and scholarship during this REF period, our research goals for the next 5 year period will focus on delivering a step change. We aim to have:

- Over 90% of the academic social work staff with doctoral degrees
- A 100% increase in research income
- Every member of academic staff with an active publication profile
- An increase in the impact of research on practice and policy

- At least two internationally recognised research groups within the TCELT research centre umbrella (Supporting People with Disabilities across the Life Course, and Supporting Traumatised Children and Families)
- A doubling of doctoral students
- Increased use of social media to disseminate research and engage with stakeholders

Research Groupings
The School currently has a range of interdisciplinary research groupings (e.g., Professionalism and Professional Learning) under the CRITAL, as well as a separate research group focussing on Resiliency, Risk and Vulnerability. Most social work staff belong to the Resiliency, Risk and Vulnerability (RRV) group (e.g., **Barron**, **Bruce**, **Fenton, Hodson, Hogg, Jackson, L. Kelly, T. Kelly, A. Leslie, Levy, McCulloch**, and **Simpson**). Several belong to the Professionalism and Professional Learning research group (**Ingram, Jackson, L. Kelly, Walker**).

The Resiliency, Risk and Vulnerability Research Network was established to provide a focal point for research in the area of resiliency, risk and vulnerability across the life course and across service user groups. The themes within the network include mitigating risk through pre-birth assessment and early intervention; strengthening resiliency of carers; trauma and resiliency; learning disabilities across the life course; desistance in criminal justice social work, and community approaches to increasing resiliency. The activities of the RRV group included a monthly writers group, bi-annual writers retreat, a seminar series, research mentorship, and research funding workshop.

The RRV research group has had many successes within this REF period. Some of the highlights include an ESRC funded Knowledge Exchange programme entitled Rethinking Learning Disabilities, programmes of research in Palestine working with traumatised children, a range of Scottish and UK based studies on the needs of carers, research with international partners on interventions to help families and professionals caring for and working with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and a range of studies in the area of child protection and multi-agency working. Six books have been written by members, two of which were completed by junior members of staff.

Several members of staff also belonged to the Transformative Change: Educational and Life Transitions (TCELT) grouping which began in 2011/12. The research areas of interest to members of the RRV group involved life transitions or stressful life events. Conceptually these areas were closely aligned to the developing TCELT centre and in 2012/2013 the two research groups began to merge and pool resources and expertise. This has led to increased interdisciplinary synergies. This merging of TCELT and RRV will continue over the next academic year and beyond. Two co-edited books have developed from the TCELT network as well as several jointly authored papers, and collaborative research grant applications. The new TCELT network focuses on four main themes:

Life Transitions and well-being: This includes normative and non-normative changes that an individual, family or group might experience across the life course, e.g., bereavement, trauma, birth of a child and developmental stages.
Educational Transitions and well-being: This includes transitions at every educational stage and across stages from home to university including those of learners with Additional Support Needs and international learners.
Bringing about Social Change for well-being: This involves actively changing the environmental factors and systems that can hinder or become barriers to successful navigation of life transitions.
Values, Approaches and Strategies: This supports positive transitions, e.g., active learning agency, voice, participation, creative approaches, computer assisted technologies, inter-professional collaboration, groupwork etc.

Mechanisms and practices for promoting research and sustaining and developing an active and vital research culture
The school has established mechanisms and practices for this. The staffing strategy and staff

development section (c.i.) will highlight the people development mechanisms. Additional structures include the school office which provides administrative support to research, three research coordinators for the main areas within the school (social work, community learning and development and education), an Associate Dean for research, research mentors, staff seminars including internal presenters and external experts, staff training events planned in-house and through central services (e.g., Library and Learning Centre, University's Research and Innovation Services team, Organisational and Professional Development), financial support for conference attendance, active research groups and networks.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

Securing and strengthening the research culture while also rebuilding the research capacity of the social work discipline became a driving force in staff development and recruitment strategies. Considerable effort has gone into up-skilling and developing current staff as well as recruiting and supporting appropriately qualified new staff. Expectations for actively engaging in research and scholarship are communicated, and support structures aligned with the *Research Concordat* have been put in place to further develop the research and scholarly culture for all academic staff within the School. Though these are school wide developments, this unit has particularly embraced and benefitted from the School's staffing and staff development strategies. The University is recognised by the European Commission for its "HR Excellence in Research" as an environment that supports excellence and increases focus and impact. Its Organisational and Professional Development team (www.dundee.ac.uk/opd) provides workshops on writing, research funding, enterprise and presentation skills and offers coaching as well as career advice. The researcher development programme is mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and meets QAA Quality Code of Practice for Research Degrees programmes requirements. The University of Dundee is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the Athena SWAN charter.

Demographics of the Unit

Most social work staff entered academia after being in professional practice for many years, so though the current average age is 50 (sd=8.4), the years of academic experience is lower than would be expected with this age profile. The average number of years at the University is 9 (sd=5.5). As few social work staff worked previously at another university, this closely represents the number of years of academic experience and suggests that the unit is made up of early to mid-career academics. Only 4 members of the social work team have more than 20 years academic experience. This shift towards early to mid-career staff was compounded by the retirement of 3 social work professors and the departure of a 4th in 2007. As such, staff development approaches have been aimed at developing people and their careers. In addition, a Professor Emeritus was given a fixed-term contract to assist with capacity building. He is included in the statistics above. There are 20 people involved in social work education, 17 of whom are research active. Nine of these staff members are included in the REF submission. Only one member of the team is on a fixed-term contract.

Recruitment

The recruitment strategy emphasises evidence of research skill, aptitude and post-graduate qualifications. Since 2008 all new permanent social work appointments were of people who had post-graduate degrees, demonstrated capacity and willingness to undertake a research degree, or were already enrolled in doctoral studies. A Professor of Social Work took up post in December 2008. These efforts support our stated strategic aims of having at least 90% of all staff with doctoral degrees and further increasing our research capacity.

Promotion and effective staff development

In addition to recruiting and selecting new staff with the highest potential for research excellence, the School has focussed on developing research active staff and facilitating their efforts for promotion. Two members of staff (**Barron** & **Simpson**) have been promoted to Reader, and three to Senior Lecturer (**Ingram, Jackson** & **McCulloch**).

All members of staff are allocated a research mentor with an associated time allocation for the research mentor role. All have access to a conference attendance budget and a staff development

budget to support associated activities. Currently, 16 members of staff (4 in social work) are supported through doctoral programme fee waivers and others will be supported as currently supported staff members complete (2013/14 will see at least 4 members of staff complete their doctorates). All existing staff members engage in an annual objective setting and review process. Setting research goals is part of the review.

The School coordinates a Research Seminar Series organised by the various research groups. External researchers are invited to present and discuss their research. In addition, the School organises a staff seminar programme which focuses on research and scholarship in teaching and learning and is open to all academic staff. This promotes scholarly discussion in areas of shared interest, provides opportunities for peer feedback, academic discussion and review, and the presentation of research papers in a critically constructive and supportive environment.

The School has established an annual Staff Research and Scholarship Conference early in each academic year. The first conference addressed the nature of scholarship and the relations between research, teaching and application and set the framework for the articulation of this research strategy. The second focused on the strategy for enhancing research quality as a central aspect of the process of advancing scholarship in our academic work. The third focused on strengthening the relationship between research outputs and impact through professional and public engagement. A second event, the School Staff/Student Research Conference, is held at the end of the academic year, and research students and emerging researchers in particular are encouraged to submit their work in the form of papers and through seminars. In recent years this has been extended to Masters students and selected undergraduates.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) group has a programme of events for the academic year based on contributions to the Staff Seminar Series, the School Staff/Student Research Conference, a Reading Group and seminars involving external speakers. This serves to further develop the connection between research and teaching.

The Resiliency, Risk and Vulnerability group and TCELT play an important role in staff development within the unit of assessment. These research groups have developed specific training events in association with the University Research and Innovation Services (e.g. funding) or through their own internal expertise. Collaborative research bids and book proposals between senior staff and early career researchers are fostered through these groups. Successful bids include those from **Kelly, Simpson, Bruce** and **Hodson**.

All members of academic staff are allocated 160 hours protected time for research and professional and public engagement activities out of an overall workload of 1768 hours per annum. This is in addition to the 200 hours for scholarship for all members of academic staff. In addition, there are opportunities for Research Investment Time amounting to an additional 160 hours in order to support capacity building for those research active staff. Additional research time is available from funded research projects. Finally, staff members are allocated 100 hours of contingency in order to ensure capacity for responding to opportunities in an adaptable and flexible manner. For part-time staff these hours are included on a pro rata basis.

Central services within the University provide a wide range of personal and professional development workshops and training events for research staff. All staff are encouraged to make use of these development opportunities.

ii. Research students

There are three research degree programmes offered by the School: the PhD, Professional Doctorate, and the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. Each is overseen by a Programme Director who is given a 20% time allocation, dependent on student numbers. There has been significant growth in the number of doctoral students in recent years, from 1 in 2001 to 53 at the present time. The considerable expansion in PhD numbers, in particular, is due to the significant increase in the number of international students who are supported by prestigious scholarships by their governments. There have been 18 successful completions since the beginning of the

2010/2011 academic year. Five of these completions have been social work PhDs.

The School supports the development of the wider research culture through the encouragement of visiting scholars and post-doctoral researchers. In the last two years there have been more than 10 Visiting Scholars supported by a range of international agencies including the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, Al Baha University in Saudi Arabia, Umeå University and the Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions, the Eduko Foundation, Estonia and UNESCO.

Support for Research Students
All full time students have two Thesis Monitoring Committee meetings per annum and all part-time students have one. There are dedicated offices for research students and each full time student has the use of a desk and computer. The Research Student Forum is organised on a monthly basis and is co-ordinated by a member of staff with a time allocation for this activity. All research students are expected to present their work at a seminar once a year and especially prior to the transfer of ordinance to doctoral level studies. Students from the doctoral programmes are represented on the School's Research Committee and School Board. A school doctoral students' association provides social events for students and staff. Monthly meetings are held with the doctoral programme directors and students on their programmes. In addition, there are a range of support and training events held across the university for doctoral students, including an online community and English language supports.

Sustainable Research Training
All students are assigned a primary and secondary supervisor. There are strict criteria to qualify as a primary supervisor. The University runs a training programme for supervisors, and a school-based mentoring system for new supervisors is being developed for implementation in 2013/14. In addition to the supervisory relationship, there is a dedicated course for doctoral students on research methods training. This course is offered in blocks of two days over the academic year with contributions by active researchers from across the School. It is open to all emerging researchers in the School and is regularly attended by members of staff who are enrolled on research degree programmes. Several members of staff submitted to this UoA (**Jackson, Kelly, Simpson, Barron**) and several staff members submitted to UoA 25 (**Miller, Jindal-Snape, Topping**) teach on this programme. In the current year this has been supplemented by an online research methods module which is an integrated component of the Professional Doctorate programme. A research summer school will be offered for the first time in 2014. The University runs a suite of seminars and training programmes for doctoral students through Organisational and Professional Development and the Library & Learning Centre. All doctoral students are encouraged to attend.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Infrastructure
Research activity is supported by an Associate Dean for Research, and three administrators based in the School Office. One primary administrator oversees all administrative research functions, from supporting initial applications to submission of final reports. A second supports financial management and budget oversight of projects, and the third provides support for research students. Further support for funding applications is provided by members of the College of Arts and Social Sciences Office and by the University Research and Innovation Services. The University subscribes to a research information management system (PURE). The School is represented on the University's Research Ethics Committee and has robust ethical scrutiny.

Facilities
Full-time staff have their own office. Part-time staff members share offices. IT support is provided by the University and an IT support person within the School. Research software required is primarily supplied through the University (e.g., SPSS and N-Vivo). A supply of hardware required for interviews, focus groups and other data collection techniques is available to staff. The Associate Dean for Research holds a research investment budget to support strategic developments.

Income

Research income has averaged £550,000 per year over this REF period. Most of the income is awarded through external bodies and primarily through charities, Quangos, local and national and EU governmental bodies. Several strategies are used to increase research funding. For example, funding workshops have been organised and facilitated for ESWCE by the University's Research and Innovation Services. The research groups and networks within ESWCE have started joint grant writing activities. Members of staff have been invited to attend University wide research funding events (e.g. Pollinate). Members of staff engage with charities, professional bodies and governmental departments, among other reasons and benefits, to become aware of potential funding opportunities. In order to increase the success rate of research grant applications, all applications are reviewed internally before being submitted to potential funders.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Staff members are involved in many ways with research users and the public. For example, many staff members are advisors to or consulted by national and local government bodies, as well as statutory or voluntary agencies. This includes **Barron** who was an advisor to the Parliamentary Cross Party Group on Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and is a consultant to a research centre in Palestine. **Bruce** is a member of Dundee City Council Child Protection Committee and Fostering Panel. **Hodson** was commissioned by a Local Areas Safeguarding Board to write the multi-agency child protection procedures. **Hogg** chaired Dundee's Adult Protection Committee. **L Kelly** serves on the Conduct Committee of the Scottish Social Service Council, and the Professional Development Board for the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. **T Kelly** was an advisor to an Audit and Scrutiny committee for a Council. **McCulloch** was a consultant to the Scottish Government Justice Department. **Fernandes** is an advisor to two organisations in Brazil (Observatório de Favelas and UNICEF Regional Office in Rio de Janeiro)

Research active staff members are also involved in engagement activities which include dissemination and dialogue activities beyond the usual academic conferences. This includes organising conferences for local practitioners (**Barron, Fernandes, T Kelly, Walker**), interviews or stories in the press (**Barron, Fernandes, Harris, T Kelly, Simpson**), research report launches aimed at practitioners (**T Kelly, Fernandes**), presenting at local/national practitioner or policy maker focused conferences (**Barron, Harris, Hodson, T Kelly, McCulloch, Simpson, Walker**). Most staff members have also presented research papers at professional conferences (**Barron, Fenton, Harris, Hodson, Ingram, T Kelly, McCulloch, Scarlet, Simpson, Walker**).

Many staff members contribute to the research base, both within social work and other allied disciplines. Interdisciplinary research can be seen in the work of **Barron** (education, trauma, psychology), **Fernandes** (geography, criminal justice), **Harris** (disabilities, computing), **L Kelly** (health promotion, policing), **T Kelly** (nursing, audiology, carers), **Scarlet** (nursing, education, community learning and development), **Simpson** (history and philosophy in intellectual disability). Several staff members are involved in research collaborations. These include **Barron** (Scottish Child Care and Protection Network, Research Subgroup), **Harris** (Director of IDRIS, ESRC funded research involving nursing, computing and 3rd sector organisations), **L Kelly** (Scottish Child Care and Protection Network, Research Subgroup), **T Kelly** (Global Groupwork Research Network), and **McCulloch** (CREDOS, International Community Penalties Research Network & European Society of Criminology Working Group on Community Sanctions). **Simpson** leads an ESRC funding seminar series on intellectual disabilities.

Other members contribute to the research base through their activities on editorial boards, review panels, or fellowships. These include **Barron** (reviewer for journal, consultant to international research funding foundation), **Fernandes** (member of Brazilian editorial board), **Harris** (member of ESRC Virtual College, member of 4 editorial boards, editor of a journal), **L Kelly** (reviewer for 2 journals), **T Kelly** (reviewer for two NIHR programmes, Chair of JSWEC Conference, editor of a journal and on the advisory board of another), **Simpson** (Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, Rapporteur of ESRC, on the editorial board of 3 journals).