

Institution: University of Kent

Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature

a. Context

The **main non-academic user groups and beneficiaries** of the research produced in the School of English include readers of fiction and poetry, practitioners in the cultural and creative industries, theatre operators and spectators, and curators of (and visitors to) museums, archives, and galleries. With research presented through radio programmes, theatre companies, literature festivals, and various print and electronic media, we reach a broad public interested in literature and culture, and address audiences on topics such as the social relevance of contemporary writing, revivals of early modern drama, experimental poetics, and critical debates in areas ranging from medical humanities to the legacy of empire. Results of specific research projects are also communicated to government advisers and policymakers, who are interested in our research on Middle Eastern literature and culture; education experts, who want to find out about our innovative postgraduate programmes; operators in the tourism industry, who benefit from our research on 17th-century Ottoman travel; and festival organisers, who draw on the research of our Creative Writing staff. Individual staff members also offer specialist advice directly to various institutions and individuals, such as broadcasters working for the BBC or other national and international TV and radio stations (eg Russia TV; National Geographic TV; German radio station NDR); NGOs (eg Kent Refugee Help), or embassies (eg Turkey; Egypt).

Examples of the **main types of impact achieved** between 2008-2013 include:

1. material contributions towards new policies in areas such as security or education;
2. enhanced management of heritage, including changes in the working practices of cultural institutions such as museums and galleries;
3. increased public appreciation of the civic benefits of literature, reading, and the aesthetic;
4. changes in creative practice; and
5. greater understanding of cultural diversity, gender equality, and social change.

These **impacts relate to the School's research activities** in a variety of ways. For example, **Rooney's** work on Middle Eastern and sub-Saharan African literature and culture enabled her public broadcasts on the Arab spring and led to advice on Middle Eastern policy presented to the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence; **Landry's** work on 17th-century Ottoman equestrianism and travel writing led to the creation of a UNESCO cultural route committed to sustainable tourism in Turkey; **Gurnah's** research on the legacies of the colonial encounter, mediated through his prize-winning novels, raised public awareness of the consequences of empire in contemporary society; **Kesson's** research on early modern drama led to collaborations with theatre companies and to a long neglected play by John Lyly being staged at Glastonbury Festival in 2013; the practice-based research of the School's published poets engaged new audiences through collaborations and performances with leading musicians at the Sounds New Poetry Festival; and the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies' research into material culture in collaboration with the heritage sector helped generate new ways of displaying fragile artefacts in museums.

b. Approach to impact

Infrastructure and funding:

1. **Research Centres:** The School's eight Research Centres, established between 1976 and 2013, are key to delivering our impact strategy. The Centres have always included non-academic user groups among their target audiences and since 2010 have been asked specifically to consider impact as a constituent element of research. Staff engaged in individual projects are requested to specify which non-academic audiences are potentially affected by the research, how these audiences can be built and maintained, and how public understanding will most likely be changed as a result of the research.
2. **Director of Research and Public Engagement (DoRPE):** The School DoRPE oversees all impact activities, chairs the impact committee, meets with all staff once a year to discuss individual research and impact plans, and ensures collaboration within the School and

across the Faculty. S/he also develops the School's approach to impact in line with the University's Public Engagement Strategy, keeps abreast of national developments regarding the impact agenda, maintains the research and impact blog on the School website, and keeps all staff informed at School meetings.

3. **Impact committee:** Set up in 2012 and composed of the Heads of all Centres plus all major departmental office holders, this committee supports the DoRPE and ensures cohesion across the School. With help from the Faculty the School also hired an impact administrator who assists the DoRPE in identifying and measuring impacts. Follow-through from the School's impact activities is ensured through the collection and analysis of audience feedback, a review of the strategy employed, the evaluation of the School's performance relative to the sector, and the archiving of all relevant impact documentation.
4. **Institutional support:** Across all support schemes, the total impact funding in the School currently stands at £25,000 p.a. Each Research Centre has a guaranteed impact budget of £2,000 p.a., and can access additional funds upon application to the Head of School or the Dean. Further resources are available through the funding streams for public engagement administered by the Kent Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, available for both pump priming and ongoing activities. The prestigious Sounds New Poetry festival, designed and run by School staff as part of our impact strategy, receives funding of up to £10,000 per festival edition directly from the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

Means of enabling impact:

5. **Dissemination, outreach, and public engagement:** The School makes targeted interactions with the media and the cultural and creative industries an intellectual and strategic priority. Between 2008 and 2013, staff have addressed audiences regionally via institutions such as the BBC, Turner Contemporary, or Canterbury Cathedral, and nationally via Shakespeare's Globe, Tate Britain, the National Maritime Museum, the Courtauld Institute, the British Museum, and many others. Local communities are reached directly through initiatives like the thematic collaborations with Canterbury's Beane Museum or the Wise Words education project aimed at local schools. Whenever possible these outreach activities are linked to areas of heightened public awareness, such as the media appearances of Dickens expert **Waters**, which coincided with the series of Kent-organised Dickens events in the 2012 anniversary year, or **Landry's** broadcasts and exhibitions on the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi, declared a UNESCO Man of the Year 2011. **Stirrup's** *Guardian* piece (co-written with James Mackay, 20/12/2010) on the British National Party's appropriation of the term indigeneity, provoked ripostes and increased public participation at the 2011 conference on 'Indigeneity and the Arts'.
6. **Contacts and collaborations:** We cooperate across the sector with museums, heritage sites, and cultural institutions, and actively maintain contacts with media operators and policy consultants. Examples are numerous and include the links with Godmersham Park Heritage Centre, a Kent site of great significance for Austen, where **Batchelor** organised the 200th anniversary celebrations of *Pride and Prejudice* in 2013, and **Klein's** EU-funded Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctoral Programme 'TEEME - Text and Event in Early Modern Europe', run by a consortium of 4 EU universities and 30 associated HE and non-HE institutions. The programme has attracted the interest of EU education experts (who interviewed **Klein** in 2012 for a study on joint programmes) and institutions such as The British Council and the Association Bernard Gregory in Paris (who invited **Klein** in 2013 to speak on international researcher mobility).
7. **Public events:** Whenever appropriate, our research is mediated through performances, concerts, readings, or other public events (often programmed into academic conferences), for which staff work in conjunction with writers, artists, and performers. Examples include **Rooney's** 'Global Youth Culture' conference in 2009 which featured musicians, poets, and hip hop artists in a public performance strand organised in conjunction with the Canterbury Festival; or the UK tour of several Native American poets in 2009, which followed **Stirrup's** Leverhulme-funded conference 'Culture and the Canada-US Border'.
8. **Internationalisation:** Ensuring the international reach of our research underpins all our impact activities. School policy is fully in line with the University's Internationalisation

Strategy aimed at increasing international impact. The School has project partners on all continents and our European initiatives such as the EU-funded Erasmus Mundus programme or **Ayers's** research network 'Internationalisation and the Idea of Europe' validate Kent's claim of being the 'UK's European University'.

9. **Festivals:** Staff present research at arts and culture events worldwide. Since 2011, the School has been running its own poetry festival, 'Sounds New Poetry', and between 2008 and 2013 the School's creative writers gave readings, presented lectures, ran workshops, or sat on juries, at more than 40 national and international arts festivals, including the 2009 Palestine Festival of Literature (**Gurnah**), the 2011 Budapest Book Festival (**Sackville**), the 2013 Sydney Writers' Festival (**Thomas**), and the 2013 Etonnants Voyageurs Festival, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo (**Gurnah**). Theatre researchers in the School also contribute to festivals: **Kesson** advised the RSC on John Lyly's play *The Woman in the Moon* (c. 1590), staged at Glastonbury Festival in June 2013, and **Neill** took the lead role in the Auckland Summer Shakespeare Festival's professional production of *King Lear* in March 2013, drawing on his extensive research in early modern drama.
10. **Creative Writing:** The School's Creative Writing staff have developed approaches to impact specific to the field of practice as research. These are aimed at increasing the public visibility of the School's creative-critical outputs and include submissions to **writing competitions**, frequent **media appearances**, and **public readings**. Staff have been shortlisted for, or won, several prestigious prizes between 2008 and 2013, including the Commonwealth Writers' prize (**Todorovic**: shortlisted 2010); the Edinburgh Festival Readers' First Book Award (**Preston**: winner 2010); and the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize (**Sackville**: winner 2010). **Gaffield** was shortlisted for the Forward First Collection Prize, awarded the Aldeburgh First Collection Prize, and received a Poetry Book Society recommendation for her collection *Tokaido Road* (2011). Examples of extended media engagement include the interviews in the UK and international press that followed the publication of **Gurnah's** most recent novel, *The Last Gift*, in 2011, and the two-page spreads in several Sunday papers that marked the publication of *Our Tragic Universe* (2010) by **Thomas**. Since 2008 the School's creative writers have given over 120 readings in 13 countries, while their published work has been translated into over 20 languages. Some of their work features on reading lists and university syllabuses: for example, **Thomas's** novels are taught at Aberystwyth, Lancaster, and Manchester Metropolitan; **Gurnah's** at the Open University, Birmingham, SOAS, and Manchester, and at universities abroad including Paris, Oklahoma, Frankfurt, Cape Town, Congo, and Zanzibar. The commercial success of our creative writing staff has also had economic benefits, via the publishing industry, in the UK and abroad. The international print run of **Thomas's** 2007 novel *The End of Mr Y*, for example, reached 160,000 copies in 2013.
11. **Impact development:** Post-research impact optimisation strategies include online media use (websites, blogs, podcasts, videos), interactions with relevant user groups, and targeted consultations. This approach is exemplified by **Debney's** critical-creative columns in *balance*, the UK Diabetes Journal, and ensuing interactions between NHS practitioners, diabetes sufferers, and care providers. Other examples include the podcasts, online videos, and museum consultations that followed **C. Richardson's** 2012-2013 workshops on early modern interiors, which brought together academics, scientists, heritage professionals, and museum curators to discuss issues such as the tracking of eye movement in exhibition spaces.

c. Strategy and plans

Plans for 2014-2019 focus on the **consolidation and further development** of the impact strategy set out in section b, implemented in the School since 2010, and embedded in the University's wider Public Engagement Strategy. The following additional priorities have been identified:

1. **Impact review:** The School will participate in the formative evaluation of the impact element in REF2014 carried out by RAND Europe in 2014. This follows the formal invitation extended by HEFCE to the University of Kent. This review will provide a basis for reflection on impact and inform our strategy over the next research assessment cycle.

2. **Staff support and training:** The School will develop a set of guidance notes on impact expectations to advise staff on career planning and progression. These notes will emerge from the School's portfolio of successfully identified and delivered impacts, and from the assessment of those research projects undertaken by UK universities that have produced impacts with the highest reach and significance in REF2014.
3. **Research Centres:** The Centres will be invited to explore areas of common interest to increase their impact potential through cross-Centre collaboration. One example is the emerging cooperation between the Centre for American Studies and the Centre for Studies in the Long 18th Century around the topic of indigeneity, exemplified through the Treaty Canoe II artwork project mounted in 2013, which has raised awareness of the significance of the 1763 Royal Proclamation for indigenous peoples in North America.
4. **Non-academic advisers:** The identified good practice of having non-academic members on the advisory boards of Research Centres will be extended to all Centres in the School.
5. **Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts in Southeast England (CHASE):** Following the BGP2 success of CHASE, the School will work with CHASE partners to incorporate innovative public engagement schemes for doctoral students (such as those pioneered by the School's own TEEME programme) into its PG provision to ensure that impact features on the agenda of all researchers in the School from the earliest stage of their careers.
6. **Regional initiatives:** The School will build on successful projects such as the Sounds New Poetry festival, Wise Words, and the 'teacher in residence' scheme involving local Schools, to increase regional alongside national and international impact. New initiatives will be developed through the Kent Centre for Heritage, which includes the School DoRPE on its advisory board, and the Eastern ARC consortium (Kent, Essex, UEA), which features a Visualisation and Heritage theme in its Digital Humanities strand. Our newest Research Centre, founded in 2013 and dedicated to the 19th century, will place particular emphasis on the study of Victorian literature and culture associated with Kent and the southeast.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies represent the work of five of the School's eight Research Centres and have been selected to indicate the main types of impact achieved between 2008 and 2013. All five case studies have benefitted from various forms of institutional support (including funding for meetings, secretarial staff, research assistance, web logistics, and promotional materials); four also draw on grants awarded by UK or EU research councils or other public bodies. The relationship to the key approaches outlined in our impact strategy (b.1-11) is noted in brackets.

1. **New policies in areas such as security or education:** The Radical Distrust case study (b.1-8, 11) shows how our research has informed public policy making and improved the quality of the debate on national security and international politics; the case study MEMS – Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (b.1-8, 11) demonstrates our impact on EU education policy.
2. **Enhanced management of heritage:** The MEMS case study further illustrates how our research has changed existing practices in the heritage sector; the Evliya Çelebi case study (b.1-8, 11) demonstrates our achievements in heritage promotion and conservation, and the creation of socio-economic benefits through sustainable tourism.
3. **Public appreciation of the civic benefits of literature:** All five case studies show how our research has promoted the values of literature and its benefits to society.
4. **Changes in creative practice:** The Sounds New Poetry case study (b.1-7, 9-11) illustrates our success in changing tastes and extending audiences through rigorous intellectual engagement as well as aesthetic pleasure.
5. **Greater understanding of cultural diversity:** The Radical Distrust case study shows our impact in bringing about new understandings of movements for democracy in the Middle East; the Evliya Çelebi case study demonstrates how our research promotes understanding of East-West cultural exchanges; the Abdulrazak Gurnah case study (b.1-5, 7-11) demonstrates how our research has advanced the understanding of cultural difference and the legacy of empire.