

Institution: Robert Gordon University
Unit of Assessment: 20 Law
a. Context

The University's mission is to be recognised for using internationally excellent translational research to contribute to the growth of innovation, and to this end, the focus at Robert Gordon University is on applied research. An integral part of the University's purpose is to build a research base of staff and students who undertake highly relevant leading-edge research that advances knowledge and provides tangible benefits to the wider economy and society. The principal non-academic user groups identified by the Law School are legal practitioners in all their guises, including practising lawyers and judges, as well as those involved in the legislative process. The work of a number of staff demonstrates such an impact on practice. Long-standing work on aspects of criminal law allowed **Christie** to collaborate with McArdle at Stirling University (see REF3b) in fusing their respective research interests in breach of the peace and football banning orders, to be able to engage with the call for responses to the Justice Committee's work on anti-social behaviour at football matches. This initial engagement was then developed further as the Committee took particular note of their written submission, and used it in the course of its debates. While ultimately, the proposed legislation was passed into law, the contribution of **Christie** and McArdle had a clear role in informing aspects of the parliamentary and public debate on this issue. The publication of this written evidence and a subsequent research output led to a range of requests for commentary from media outlets, an invitation to speak at a public meeting organised by groups opposed to the Bill, and an invitation to speak at a symposium funded by the Scottish Government and organised by Stirling University with an invited audience of practitioners and representatives of various relevant government bodies (**Christie** was unable to take up either invitation as a result of the special circumstances outlined elsewhere). **Wallace's** work in producing the medical evidence guidelines (see REF3b) is generating continued engagement with those judges who have begun to use the guidelines to inform and underpin their decisions. This avenue of impact is expected to continue to develop over time as the guidelines become more established through continued use. **Moller** has been heavily involved in disseminating his research, beyond his work submitted in REF2, to practice-based groups via publication in practitioner journals in the oil and gas sector, (Shepherd and Wedderburn's Energy E-Bulletin, local and national newspapers and Chamber of Commerce publications). Other staff members contribute regularly to practitioner publications such as Green's Employment Law Bulletin, and Taxation, and are involved in presenting their research to practitioners when delivering CPD and other training.

The structure and groupings adopted in the Law School have been instrumental in providing a context for promoting and supporting the development of impact. Research groupings identified prior to RAE08 have continued and developed, so that, while legal research is a broad field, staff are encouraged to view themselves as belonging to identified smaller research groups, where collaboration and maximisation of outputs and the impact of specific pieces of work can be fostered from working in a more closely related subject area. Researchers within these groups are encouraged to promote their work and their findings widely, both through School-level and University-wide mechanisms, and through subject-association news. Evidence of various measures of research achievement, including evidence of impact, is routinely sought by the Research Institute with which the School of Law is aligned (IMaGeS) which serves as both an avenue for collating and disseminating evidence of impact, and as a stimulus to identify and promote impact. This emphasis on translational research is also evident through the School's doctoral students, many of whom are working in areas designed to lead to concrete proposals for reform or the development of mechanisms which can be adopted in practice.

b. Approach to impact

Impact template (REF3a)

Staff members are encouraged to think at an early stage about the potential impact of their research and to be aware of the possibilities for engagement outside academia. University-wide initiatives, such as workshops on the research process and the Angel's Nest to Dragon's Den workshops where staff have the opportunity to work up funding proposals with support and mentoring in place, are examples of this. Support mechanisms are also in place to help to capture relevant information about impact which has already taken place.

At an institutional level, RGU undertook a research foresighting exercise in September 2011, the purpose of which was to identify areas of activity on which the University should concentrate its research focus. To assist the University in this assessment, a prestigious international academic panel was convened by the Vice-Principal for Research and Academic Support Services. The panel worked with the University research community (as well as a number of key national and international stakeholders from government, industry and the third sector) to consider the key social challenges society will face in 20 years and what research will be required to address these challenges. The panel ultimately recommended future research focus should be around the areas of oil and gas, energy society and remote health. The selection of these areas took into account the extensive dialogue with key potential end users of the research, the capabilities of existing staff and the University's unique location in Aberdeen. Energy society, and in particular issues of governance and regulation, are well represented among Law School staff research interests and publications, as well as among chosen doctoral topics, and there is growing expertise in the area of assessing legislation and its fitness for purpose. Staff utilise RGU's Communications Office and Marketing Department as a means of sharing research more widely, throughout the University (through the monthly newsletter 'Nexus'), placed on the RGU webpages, and disseminated through Twitter. This office also offers an internal consultancy service on communications and media relations issues and coordinates external press and media enquiries (such as newspapers, and radio and television broadcasters) including requests for subject experts to comment on current national and local news. Law staff members frequently contribute through this forum. At a Research Institute level, the engagement with practitioners and the public has been considered since its inception in May 2011. The IMaGeS launch invited a wide ranging audience including representatives of information services, as well as figures from local government and industry. The launch also included a public exhibition of IMaGeS research. IMaGeS has produced a number of brochures outlining research projects and capabilities which have been made publically available online, and distributed at public events.

Part of the University's strategy is to "create a research environment that nurtures career development and progression, across every level, from a vibrant research student community to a successful professoriate". Helping staff and students to develop and harness the impact of their research is critical to this. Training on approaches to and development of impact is built into the doctoral training programme. The compulsory PG Certificate in Research Methods includes an introduction to the potential for deriving impact from research, and how this impact can be maximised. A further module was then developed for the Doctorate in Profession Practice, which has subsequently been made available to all IMaGeS doctoral students. This module looks at the different forms of research impact, how impact can be generated, using participative research methods, and how to effectively disseminate research findings beyond academia. The development of doctoral students' understanding of impact is further enhanced by colleagues within IMaGeS who provide impact training for the ESRC DTC Scottish Graduate School for the Social Sciences Information Science pathway. This workshop included an introduction to impact (how it is defined, its function and benefits), an impact case study, and a session in which students worked with a media consultant to 'roleplay' a variety of media engagements. Staff development in terms of the impact from their own research is fostered and encouraged through a number of mechanisms, most notably through the annual staff performance review process at both School and Institute level, where objective-setting and forward plans for research activity include consideration of the nature of the likely impact and the means by which that impact will be captured. At a School level, **Wallace** has been instrumental in running a number of staff development sessions to support less experienced staff to focus their research efforts in thematic areas and look for the opportunities to develop impact and disseminate their findings more broadly.

c. Strategy and plans

Staff have made use of a range of opportunities and developments instituted by the University in order to develop and exploit potential impact from the Law School's research activities. To support the publishing and dissemination aspects of the impact strategy going forward, the University has employed Professor Charles Oppenheim, a renowned expert in bibliometrics and copyright. In 2011, as part of its strategic focus on impact, Professor Charles Oppenheim joined the University. He has been retained to review and advise on publishing strategies across a range of subjects, to work with the Research Institutes and the University library in reviewing and updating the open access strategies, and to provide guidance to the University on the adoption of suitable KPIs to reflect and track research progress. Professor Oppenheim delivered a session for research staff across the University at an early stage in the preparation for REF when bibliometrics were under intense consideration. His specific remit includes Research Institute engagement with impact, engaging staff in developing the impact from their research, tracking and monitoring impact and contributing to the further development of the University's impact strategy. These developments will in turn influence planned staff development programmes focusing on developing individual publishing and impact strategies. Staff development workshops to develop and share good practice in planning and monitoring research impact will be held across the three Research Institutes. More specifically in relation to publishing strategies, IMaGeS workshops on publishing have been run over the last two academic years for staff and doctoral students and others are planned for 2014. These will continue the process of engaging staff in the development of individual publishing strategies for both academic and user impact, including the effective use of Open Access. IMaGeS has also invested in the part time services of a member of staff to record impact for the four units of assessment submissions associated with the Institute, using Google Scholar analytics and alerts as well as other tools.

Staff within the School also utilise the Employee Performance Review (EPR) process to jointly determine with either the Institute theme leader or the Head of School, the direction and priorities for their research over the coming year, and consider the options for developing impact from those priorities. While such reviews have been part of the Law School's practice for many years, they have of more recent date become a useful means of considering and following the impact generated by specific research outputs and projects, and a means of integrating impact strategies into the work of researchers. A training programme for reviewers in research institutes is in development which will assist in this process. Reviewers meet with researchers twice each year to review performance and set future objectives for the period ahead, including the identification of research impact plans in each case. Whilst the use of EPR mechanisms is commonplace in most UK universities, RGU can lay fair claim to leadership through our Investor in People (IiP) status. RGU has been accredited to the IiP standard since 1995, and was the second higher education institution in the UK to gain recognition. The standard is a nationally recognised mark of attainment against 10 key indicators, with organisations assessed by a comprehensive audit every 3 years. RGU is one of a small number of universities to have accreditation across the entire institution, including all areas where research is conducted, and is the first university in Scotland to be accredited against the revised and strengthened IiP standards currently in force. Further developments in terms of RGU's impact strategy are already underway as regards the development of external and cross-Faculty collaborations (see REF5) designed to produce work which crosses discipline boundaries with increased scope for reach and impact as a result. Continued use will also be made of the key stages set out by the ESRC in setting out an impact framework for future research.

d. Relationship to case studies

The highlighted case studies demonstrate how research within the Law School impacts on legislative change, developing legal principles and legal practice. Staff members are also involved in writing for and presenting to legal practitioners, which helps to inform and underpin the more developed research of the type to which the case studies refer. The two identified case studies illustrate how the group has identified and interacted with key user groups in order to produce work with an identifiable impact on legislative change and legal practice.