

<p>Institution: UWE Bristol</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA25 – Education</p>
<p>a. Overview</p> <p>The Bristol Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and Education (BRILLE), ('the Centre'), through which much of the Unit's activities are channelled, builds on UWE's track record of research, evaluation and innovation in lifelong learning and education, including significant research in higher education (HE) settings. Originally the Lifelong Learning Research Group formed in 2002, the Centre gained University approval in 2007, and now supports research and knowledge exchange activity across UWE. Although based in the Department of Education, BRILLE engages across all faculties, and with members and collaborators throughout Bristol and the wider region, nationally and internationally. BRILLE was at the core of our RAE2008 submission which saw 65% of work submitted rated at least 'internationally recognised quality', including some considered 'world leading'.</p> <p>This Unit's 2014 submission demonstrates the exciting, collaborative and outward-facing nature of educational research in UWE, with significant contributions from a number of colleagues across the University complementing the traditional research strength within the Education Department. The Unit's work, including outputs from individuals based elsewhere, shares the Departmental mission to '<i>advance human flourishing and social justice through excellence in education and lifelong learning</i>'. We do so by conducting theoretical and applied research revolving around several distinctive yet complementary research themes, largely through the work of the BRILLE Research Centre, as outlined below. In keeping with the University's objectives, much of what we do is collaborative, involving strategic partnerships, connections and networks, with this Unit's work epitomising UWE's notion of the prime importance of partnerships.</p>
<p>b. Research strategy</p> <p>This submission draws upon the work of colleagues in BRILLE and across UWE, particularly from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences (HAS). In terms of submitted outputs, the inclusion of over a quarter of staff from other departments across the University demonstrates how the Unit crosses institutional boundaries, promoting synergies between colleagues across UWE. Although not all the outputs are included within this submission, research into pedagogical and other aspects of education theory and practice is widespread within the University, as discussed below and in the Impact statement.</p> <p>The University's strategic ambition is to deliver world-class research in selected areas that meets the needs of our community, the economy and society. This is achieved by investing in research recognised as internationally excellent, building and/or sustaining capability and capacity, and supporting business, community and public engagement to generate impact. The 2012 appointment of internationally acknowledged Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) expert Cook to lead this increasingly important area of our work is evidence of this commitment. Likewise early career researcher (ECR) Santos Rodriguez. As well as leading on national and international projects, Cook's role within the University and local community includes coordinating the Bristol hub of the transnational Open Network for Mobile Learning Scenarios (ONMLS). Further support for this initiative comes from Santos Rodriguez, and the allocation of BRILLE's Research Fellow (RF), Last, to assist the hub part-time.</p> <p>BRILLE's importance to the Unit's research strategy increased steadily throughout this period of review, especially since its re-launch in late 2012. Its resilience and strategic importance are demonstrated through the re-invigorated new leadership following the departure of the three previous Co-Directors (Brine (retired, now Emerita Professor of UWE), James (now Cardiff) and Bathmaker (now Birmingham)). These departures presented the Unit more broadly with an opportunity to review our research approach, ensuring a leaner leadership structure, and to appoint in strategically important areas of education research (e.g. Cook's Chair focusing on TEL, Harnett's Chair focusing on Learning and Teaching - she is a National Teaching Fellow, Attwood's Chair in Education, Waller's Associate Professorship (AP) in the Sociology of Education, and Ryan as AP for Educational Partnerships). The re-configured BRILLE is now much better placed to meet a</p>

different set of challenges to those faced previously, and to ensure it better leads the breadth of work within the Unit.

To enhance strategic coherence, BRILLE is now under Cook's sole leadership, and has broadened its research coverage to incorporate and drive more explicitly the wider educational research of the Unit. It works in three thematic areas, each led by a senior researcher: *Designing for Digital Learners (D4DL)*, (Cook); *Researching Children and Young People*, (Harnett); and *Post-Compulsory Education, Social Justice and the Student Experience*, (Waller). Having one Centre with three distinctive themes assists the Unit's dual aspirations to both *build research capacity* in education within UWE, and to *connect* educational researchers both across the University and to potential partners beyond it, a process enhanced by Ryan's 2013 AP appointment.

For example, D4DL specifically supports UWE's ambition to be known nationally and internationally as the best university for 'being digitally advanced, agile and responsive in the way we work, embracing and leading change to create new sustainable opportunities'. The three theme leaders co-managed the Centre's re-designation and re-launch, and meet regularly to maintain operational oversight of its activities, e.g. recently allocating funds for initiating new projects as described below, spreading responsibility for research management and development more widely. Other experienced researchers including Andrews, Harrison and Ryan also contribute to strategic research activities, including offering leadership (e.g. through collaborative research activity) to less experienced colleagues and postgraduate students. Institutional initiatives and investment including the creation of UWE's *Educational Innovations Centre*, the *Peer Assisted Learning* programme and, most recently, *Learning for All* hub, has led to a wider environment further conducive to researching HE teaching and learning practice, and the Unit is now adapting to ensure the maximum benefit is obtained from these exciting opportunities. Our growing partnerships with schools and colleges locally, particularly in school governance and learning and teaching, offers further research potential.

Re-focusing the Centre's purpose means BRILLE is seen not just by UWE colleagues, but also external potential research collaborators as representing interests beyond its previous narrow focus – i.e. primarily post-compulsory education. The re-launched Centre and website are in their infancy and still being developed further, but early portents are good concerning its reception by Departmental and Faculty staff, and stakeholders further afield. Each thematic area meets regularly, with attendance by Faculty colleagues and partners from other organisations (e.g. partnership schools and colleges, local universities and other collaborating bodies).

Major current funding sources within the Unit include two European Framework 7 Integrating Projects, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the Leverhulme Trust. Indicative of its growing ambition, further bids have recently been submitted to a range of funders including the Economic and Social Research Council, Office for Fair Access, Leverhulme Trust, Nuffield Foundation, the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, the Education Endowment Foundation and the Spencer Foundation. The Unit has also had work commissioned by bodies including Aimhigher and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

Following its strategic re-focussing in 2012, the BRILLE leadership team identified two priorities as explained above, the first of which was *building education research capacity* including ensuring a greater volume of bids for external funding being submitted and more high-quality research outputs. We are aware that whilst the work of many colleagues within the Unit has impact, it does not necessarily translate into the type of outputs valued by the REF exercise. This is being tackled by targeted support of colleagues wishing to conduct research through building balanced research teams pump-primed financially to undertake mini-projects. Supported colleagues present locally and at national and international conferences, aiming to publish outputs in appropriate journals, and are expected to develop bids for external funding from their projects. BRILLE's three theme leaders and two full-time researchers (Harrison and Last) are charged with providing the necessary assistance for colleagues in designing and implementing these projects. One recipient of this support (Witt), a new member of academic staff with outputs included in this submission, also received an Early Career grant illustrating how Departmental and University support strategies complement one another.

BRILLE's second priority is *to connect* through working collaboratively within the Faculty, across the University, regionally, nationally and internationally. Specific support measures now facilitate this, including the new seminar series featuring presentations from UWE colleagues, current and recent postgraduate students; bigger events involving national and international speakers; and

those showcasing our externally funded project work. BRILLE's sponsorship of mini-projects and initiatives including taking a dozen new research staff to BERA's 2014 conference to present their work (following ongoing support) also enhances our research environment and builds capacity. So too does the establishment of various networks considered integral to achieving this, such as the ONMLS hub cited above. Also strategically important are specific links with the Faculty's Digital Cultures Research Centre, other UWE groups, notably in Health and Applied Sciences and the Regional History Centre; Bristol Cultural Education Partnerships, partnership schools and colleges and other organisations, all of which are themselves facilitated by Ryan's new AP Educational Partnership role and by longer standing Faculty and cross-institutional initiatives.

Following its strategic realignment, the Unit's work, largely driven by BRILLE, is now in a position of strength, and looking forward to further and deeper future collaborative engagement with local, national and international partners, inside and outside academia, and to supporting colleagues across the University.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

Education staff are encouraged to participate in BRILLE's activities, and identify specifically with at least one of the thematic areas. To achieve a vibrant research culture, researchers are recruited and supported at each stage of their career, and UWE is actively working towards implementation of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*. Reflecting this, the European Commission recognised our progress on supporting the career development of researchers through the HR Excellence in Research Award granted in 2012.

Through the Strategic Research Development Fund, UWE is committed to enhancing support for early career researchers, including a £1.5m investment in 'SPUR' Awards. These prestigious cross-University awards support emerging researchers in priority areas to undertake preliminary research with a view to generating high quality outputs, forging collaborations with relevant external partners and making a substantial bid for external funding to take the work forward. SPUR award holders are allocated a senior researcher to oversee their project and receive dedicated support in bidding for external funds. Current and previous recipients of this support whose work falls within this UoA include Andrews, Babayigit, Harrison and Witt (all of whom have outputs included within this submission). Of these only Andrews was included in RAE2008 (as an ECR), whilst Harrison joined as academic staff and completed his doctorate within the timeframe covered. Butcher and Chicken have received SPUR support too, and are currently completing doctoral studies. SPUR has also helped each recipient bid for external funding for projects and other research activity, e.g. Andrews is part of a cross-institution team recently awarded a £1.5m AHRC grant.

Several 'mid-career' researchers (e.g. Andrews, Waller) have enjoyed Faculty and/or Department funded periods of research leave during this REF period, facilitating completion of specific projects, some of which are represented in this submission's outputs. The Unit provides support for attending conferences and encourages staff to study for higher degrees e.g. Barkham, Berragan (Health) and Harrison (all successfully completed), and Butcher, Chicken, Edmonds, Moyle (Health), Stone, Woodbury, Thompson, Weston and Williams (Health) (current doctoral students; Education Department unless stated), with a view to developing their potential as researchers. Current and ex-PhD bursary students including Bowden-Clissold are often employed as Associate Lecturers in the first instance, a 'train and retain' strategy.

Senior research staff (Cook, Harnett, Ryan and Waller) have dedicated time and a brief to develop staff as part of their Professorial/AP duties, and BRILLE's Senior Research Fellow and Research Fellow are also tasked with developing less experienced researchers through Centre-funded opportunities.

Waller is a good example of how the Department, Faculty and University support research staff development. Originally recruited on a PhD bursary in 2001, he was offered a full-time lecturing post in 2003, completing his doctoral studies on a part-time basis with support via both a fee waiver and reduced teaching load. A mixture of formal and informal mentoring support was provided by more experienced researchers over the next few years, with whose support he achieved a number of peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. In RAE2008 he was

submitted as an ECR, and then subsequently included in several research teams as a co-investigator. He has received Departmental and Faculty support for several research initiatives, has now been PI on a number of projects, and is currently involved in several others, including the high profile *Paired Peers* (see below), the PI of which is Bradley from UWE's Business School. Waller, who leads one of BRILLE's three thematic areas, was appointed Associate Professor during a Faculty-wide recruitment process in 2012.

Harrison offers further evidence of support for developing staff capacity, and like Waller and other staff cited here (e.g. Bovill, Andrews, Harnett, Pollard and Ryan) demonstrates the Unit's approach to succession planning, moving into more research-focused roles as their careers develop. Initially appointed to a research position in the Faculty in 2007 from his senior manager role in the University's Student Services Department, he was supported in developing his own research interests and expertise alongside his work on funded projects for such organisations as Aimhigher, National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Workers' Education Association (WEA). Harrison also continued working on a University-wide role with senior managers around Widening Participation (WP) issues, particularly entry and retention rates, an area in which he has since become an internationally acknowledged scholar as witnessed by his DPhil by publication in 2013 (which received Faculty support), and activities including keynote lectures in the UK and overseas. Harrison is currently in receipt of a 'SPUR' award enabling him to further develop his recent ASDAN funded project, and has submitted a significant (£448k) bid to ESRC as the PI of a four university collaborative project tracking the impact of student financial support systems on application, retention and success behaviours.

All the Unit's researchers are encouraged to make full use of the University's and Faculty's staff development systems including UWE's Research, Business and Innovation (RBI) unit's programme of research skills and development training; the Researcher's Forum where staff from different areas meet to discuss common issues; and Personal Development Reviews with line managers where research is a key issue for discussion. RBI ensures staff are made aware of development opportunities and opportunities for external funding bids. The Unit encourages bids for external funding through workshops, individual mentoring and UWE's Peer Review College that, along with RBI's team, support staff in bidding. The University runs a *Women in Research Mentoring Programme* that benefited several staff in the Unit (e.g. Andrews, Finn, Gardner, Lewis, Whitehouse and Woodbury). A panel considers the strategic roles of Professors and Readers (now Associate Professors) and decides on promotion; within the census period Attwood, Raphael Reed and Harnett were promoted or appointed to Professor, Waller and Ryan to AP, and Harrison and Pollard to SRF.

Staff within the Unit have also benefited from externally funded research leave – Raphael Reed was supported for a year's research sabbatical by a significant grant from the Leverhulme Trust, awarded in recognition of, and to further develop her acclaimed work on socio-cultural explanations of some young people's low participation in post-compulsory education (see impact case study), and Harnett was a Plumer Visiting Research Fellow at St. Anne's College, Oxford.

As with elsewhere in UWE, this Unit makes use of Visiting Fellows and Professors whose expertise complements and extends the work of each group, for instance Dr John Selby, the recently retired Director of Widening Participation and Admissions at HEFCE, is a Visiting Fellow of BRILLE, an active participant in many of our research seminars, and also advises on a number of projects involving the Unit's staff (notably *Paired Peers*). BRILLE also hosted visiting overseas academics from a number of nations during the period of this review, including: Dr Almudena Ocana Fernandez (University of Granada, Spain), (2008-2010); Prof Marc Andre Ethier (University of Montreal, Canada) (2010-2011); Ahmet Tokdemir (Gazi University, Turkey) (2010-2011); Dr Wolfgang Lehmann (University of Western Ontario, Canada), (2011); and Steve Agnew (University of Canterbury, New Zealand), (2012).

In addition to the usual systems for developing research staff, other innovative examples of support include the co-authoring of books under the guidance and mentorship of more experienced researchers – Harnett and Eke for instance. Both their co-edited collections feature staff from the Unit whose work was developed from conception through to publication via a system of support including seminars and workshops for those involved, designed to help develop their work, two examples of which feature in this Unit's outputs.

ii. Research students

The Unit provides an exemplary training, support and learning environment for its postgraduate students, drawing on the UWE Graduate School and the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Study in this work. We have recruited strongly during the census period and PGR activity has increased significantly since RAE2008, in line with the strategic aims articulated there. We have had a total of 18 completions since then – including, two PhD, one DPhil and 12 EdD (Professional Doctorate in Education), plus another 3 PhDs and one EdD in 2007/08 (not included in the last RAE submission). This total of 22 is a significant increase on the RAE2008 figure. There has been a steady growth in doctoral completions over this period, with two in 2009/10, three in 2010/11, five in 2011/12 and eight in 2012/13. We currently support 31 doctoral students (compared to 25 at the RAE2008 census date), 9 of whom follow traditional PhD studies and 22 on the research phase of the EdD. In addition the Unit has invested strategic funds in six fully-funded PhD students since RAE 2008, one of whom features as part of our completion figures, another who completed shortly after July 2013, two of whom submitted in autumn 2013, and another two who started in October 2012. One student's funding transferred to the ESRC during her studies following a successful application for support. The full time PhD students in particular benefit from the RBI courses on employability and generic skills and are given significant support to further develop relevant skills in publication, bidding for funding etc. However, the majority of students covered by this UoA are employed or self-funded experienced practitioners working between academic and professional contexts and who bring with them skills, knowledge and expertise that prove extremely valuable for the Unit's research culture, and assist us in maintaining the research/practice link. Significant numbers of our postgraduate students come from organisations with which we have partnership arrangements. The National Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (2013) showed overall student satisfaction with the Faculty's Research Degree Programmes is 94.3%, compared with 82% nationally.

The Unit's staff actively cross-collaborate in the supervising and teaching of research students, and almost all those submitted are engaged in doctoral teaching and/or supervision – Andrews and Waller currently share EdD programme and PGR student leader roles. The EdD is currently being re-written with the view to recruit a cohort in 2014, with strategies being employed to ensure the programme's sustainability given its strategic importance, not least to the CPD requirements of our own staff; the number of staff delivering the taught phase who go on to supervise students in the research phase has been expanded to avoid over-reliance upon a few key individuals.

The Unit provides outstanding support for research students in a number of ways. They all receive a comprehensive induction session and have a Director of Studies and supervisory team whose composition conforms to UWE Regulatory Frameworks requirements, including compulsory training for academics new to the role. Students are required to pass 60 credits worth of postgraduate taught courses to provide a broad base of relevant research skills and training, and can access a variety of local activities to further develop their research knowledge and expertise. These include University-wide research student training and support days throughout the year, and other activities at Faculty and Department level, including regular research seminars, PGR days and the annual PGR conference. All students are members of the overarching Graduate School which provides general and personalised advice on training needs, funding, careers and other issues and offers networking events for students across the University and access to national and regional networks including the Vitae Hub.

We have recently started encouraging supervisory staff to collaborate with doctoral and the more capable masters' students in writing for publication at the appropriate level, and are re-establishing an in-house peer reviewed journal to help facilitate that process where applicable. We are currently re-introducing the evening seminar series celebrating the success of our graduating doctoral students, an event to which they will be able to invite colleagues, family and friends to hear a presentation and discussion of their work. These events, similar in ethos to a professorial inaugural event, further welcome the successful doctoral candidate into the Unit's research community and provide a validation of their work in a more intimate and personal environment than the graduation ceremony itself.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

In order to ensure sustainability, the Unit's work is supported by a mixed economy of Faculty funding and competitive bidding to Research Councils and other bodies. Major current income sources include two European Framework 7 Integrating Projects, the AHRC, and the Leverhulme Trust. Bids have recently been submitted to a range of funders including the ESRC which has funded significant work previously in the Centre. Other commissioned work from funders external to the University (e.g. ASDAN, NIACE, WEA, Aimhigher and the regional Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training body, TDA, HEA), and elsewhere within UWE (e.g. Health & Applied Sciences, and for UWE's WP unit) have been held throughout this reporting period.

There has been a £10k Faculty grant to BRILLE for 2012/13 and £17K in 2013/14, and a similar figure is anticipated for future years. Part of this sum is employed to help build research capacity through the pump-priming funding of several small projects with staff supported by the relevant theme leader and Research Fellow or Senior Research Fellow staff. This is in response to our recognition that the Unit must continue to build education research capacity, and the mentoring of new researchers by experienced peers assists this process, helping succession planning and the creation of a dynamic research environment.

Further sums are allocated for invited speakers and to establish the Bristol ONMLS hub, to recognise that we need to facilitate connections across the Unit and beyond. Partner Schools locally are being encouraged to connect with UWE through this initiative, and BRILLE awarded a further grant to support a number of seminars on early childhood – *Thoughtful Children and More Thoughtful Children*, attended by over 100 practitioners and policy makers.

External funding – under thematic areas – *indicative current or recent projects:*

1. Design for Digital Learning

- Learning Layers – major European project, 4 years from 2012. Total funding c €9.9m (UWE receives c €0.5m). This project of 17 partners across 7 nations explores the 'scaling-up' of Lifelong Learning using Technology Enhanced Learning in large clusters of SMEs in the health professions and the building industry within European regions.

2. Researching Children and Young People

- BrEaking New Ground IN the SciencE Education Realm (ENGINEER) – European funding c €2.8m, (UWE receives c €127k). This trans-European project involves 10 nations, all of whom have linked a science museum with a primary school, and are using inquiry-based education pedagogical methods in science education to develop a greater awareness and interest in Engineering.

3. Post-compulsory education, social justice and the student experience

- Paired Peers – Leverhulme Trust funded. This project ran 2010-2013 in collaboration with the University of Bristol. It followed a cohort of students studying the same undergraduate degree in the city's two universities, comparing their experiences and examining how their class background impacts upon it. Total project funding is c £250k of which UWE receives £35k.

Overview

The University-wide and local structures, within which staff contributing to this Unit work, are configured to enable their potential to be realised and their research to flourish, irrespective of the stage of their careers. We still have high profile academics and 3* and 4* work being undertaken in education research as we did in the last RAE, but the environment in which this is undertaken now, and the opportunities for staff on the road to achieving that quality of work are significantly stronger and more enabling than previously, as evidenced by the breadth of colleagues cited within this whole submission.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

We are engaged in numerous activities demonstrating our collaborative work and contribution to the wider discipline or research base, but only a few can be showcased here.

Collaborative international work within the period includes Kushner's for UNICEF. Following his earlier work for them in Latin America and the Caribbean (2005-2007) as reported in RAE2008, Kushner undertook further long-term secondments to work on their behalf developing prestigious

Environment template (REF5)

and high-profile projects evaluating children's rights in challenging international contexts, further enhancing our collaborative work in this area. He worked in Barbados (2008-2009), Indonesia (2009-2010), and the Eastern Caribbean States (2010-2011) with UWE's Ahmed and Last. Other international work includes Ryan and Dwyfor Davies in various Caribbean states, Harnett's, Hughes' and Carter's language work, and Harnett and Smart's commissioned work for the Council of Europe on history curricular, Cook and Santos Rodriguez's *Learning Layers* project, and Harrison's current Leverhulme sponsored work on student funding in the UK, the US and New Zealand.

National collaborative work includes for organisations as diverse as ASDAN, Aimhigher, TDA, WEA, UKCISA, Historical Association, Geographical Association, British Sociological Association, AHRC seminars, HEA, and the Cambridge Primary Trust. Our working environment is enriched by collaborative activity, including the UWE/University of Bristol WP Research Cluster, the regional Learning and Skills Council; Bath's Royal United Hospital, the UWE-sponsored Social Science in the City public engagement salon etc; Bristol Better Reading Partners, senior strategic roles involving school governance and numerous local authority initiatives.

Although space limits constrain the level of detail offered here, during this census period many Unit members have held prestigious positions in learned societies (e.g. Attwood in the Society for Educational Studies, and Waller with the British Sociological Association's Education Study Group). We have taken active roles in conferences including making keynote presentations nationally (e.g. Andrews and Babayigit), and internationally (e.g. Harrison in Singapore and Pollard in Slovenia). Staff review journal articles (e.g. Babayigit for *Educational Psychology*, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Journal of Research in Reading* and *International Journal of Educational Development*, Pollard for *Journal of Inter-professional Care*, and *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, and Santos Rodriguez for *Computers and Education*, and *Education, Technology and Society*).

We regularly review book proposals for publishers (e.g. Waller for Continuum, Learning Matters, Open University Press, Pearson Press, Routledge and Sage), and review bids for funding for Research Councils (e.g. both Andrews and Cook for the ESRC). Our members also serve on the editorial boards of prestigious academic journals, including Attwood (*British Journal of Educational Studies*), Babayigit (*Journal of Research in Reading*), Cook (*British Journal of Education Technology*), Harrison (*Teaching in Higher Education* and *Higher Education Review*), and Waller (*International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* and *International Journal of Sociology of Education*).

Several staff have given expert evidence to Parliamentary or government departmental committees etc, including Cook and Harrison during the period.