

**Institution:** University of Ulster

**Unit of Assessment:** 28A Modern Languages and Linguistics: Celtic Studies

### a. Context

While the primary objective of the UoA is to publish world leading research, a guiding principle of our strategic blueprint is that 'the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute must build upon outstanding research in order to deliver demonstrable benefits to the community' (see mission statement at <http://arts.ulster.ac.uk/icsri/>). It is with this principle in mind that we have identified immediate and long-term aims. Cardinal aims of our strategy include (a) ensuring maximum reach by impacting upon an extensive cross-section of society and (b) generating maximum significance by ensuring our research has a profound influence on policy and practice within the community.

Our strategy for supporting impact is outlined below. A fundamental aim of this strategy is the fostering of links with (1) community organisations (2) the business and media sectors and (3) the Government of Northern Ireland. Our close cooperation with a wide range of Irish language associations (see below) has led to the organisation of a large number of public events at which our research is disseminated and has resulted in the extensive use of our language learning tools throughout Northern Ireland and beyond. Our links with business and the media have led to the manufacture of innovative learning materials, ensured the marketing of our materials on a world-wide basis and led to the dissemination of our research through television and radio, while our links with government have led *inter alia* to the production of high-impact studies in the area of language policy and planning.

The above should be placed within the context of a complementary range of activities which are indicative of extensive national and international impact. Following our development of innovative learning methodologies and our success in the 2001 QAA Subject Review (receiving the maximum 24/24), the UoA was awarded £825,000 by DEL to establish a *Centre for Excellence in Multimedia Language Learning*. This in turn led to our collaboration in the development of the Third level Irish Syllabus for the Republic of Ireland and our partnership in the ground-breaking TOOLS project ([www.languages.dk/tools](http://www.languages.dk/tools)), an EACEA funded project which provides multimedia language learning materials for the international community of language learners and teachers.

In addition, the international research networks we have established, especially *Societas Celtologica Nordica* and *Societas Celto-Slavica* have added to the dissemination and impact of our research internationally, in particular by means of public symposia and exhibitions (see Annual Report p.63-72 at <http://arts.ulster.ac.uk/icsri/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ICSRI-report-Oct13.pdf>)

### b. Approach to impact

Our approach to enabling impact has been informed by our overall research strategy and determined by the specific objectives of our Impact Plan (see below).

The decision was taken to concentrate our collaborative energies on those areas of our research which possess the potential to have significant economic, social and cultural impact. We decided, with a view to maximizing our impact, to place particular emphasis on three key areas of our research profile: (1) *Language Policy and Planning* (2) *The Irish Language in an Urban Setting* (3) *Language Learning Tools* (the first two being eventually chosen as case studies).

For each of these key areas, plans were made to disseminate our research by engaging directly with the public. However, since there is a significant distinction between dissemination and impact, we felt that we needed to align ourselves with the commercial sector (in particular in relation to economic impact) and also with government in order to be in a position to influence public policy.

We have enabled the impact of our lexicographical and language learning tools by developing our links with the business sector. HarperCollins, a world leader in the development of dictionaries, have marketed our lexicographical outputs globally and the Collins Irish Gem has sold tens of thousands of copies worldwide and led to the publication of a number of other widely used learning tools. The impact of our research on the Irish language in an urban and industrial setting was enabled in particular by our links with the Irish language media: Northern Ireland Screen's Irish Language Broadcast Fund commissioned and funded a highly successful documentary on a 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish speaking community in Belfast which was broadcast by TG4 while the BBC funded three highly-acclaimed Scottish Gaelic documentaries.

In relation to *Language Policy and Planning* and in particular with respect to the Northern

## Impact template (REF3a)

Ireland Languages Strategy (NILS), extensive public consultation was embarked upon including public meetings, public workshops and public consultations. A freely accessible website was also developed by means of which organisations and individuals were able to make written submissions which influenced our thinking ([www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/nils/](http://www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/nils/)). In order to achieve as wide a public audience as possible *Regional Public Consultations* were organised throughout Northern Ireland. A total of 62 organisations participated in these consultations (for a list of participating organisations, see NILS pp. 74-76) and to date the NILS website has received over 19,000 hits. In addition, in order to bring together interested parties from the service delivery side and those interested in accessing services, a *Round Table Workshop* attended by 27 organisations was held in Belfast (18 March 2008, see NILS pp.76-77).

With a view to enhancing our links with government, meetings were held with civil servants to ensure that they were aware of and generally supportive of the recommendations we were intending to make in the areas of education, business, and social cohesion. In addition, the NI Languages Strategy, in its draft form, was put out for consultation to all the Departments of the Northern Ireland Assembly and meetings were held with the Minister for Education (12 Oct. 2011 and 18 Sept 2012) and with the DEL Committee (19 Oct. 2011) in order that government was fully informed about the details of the strategy, thus ensuring maximum possible impact.

**c. Strategy and plans**

We have developed and are currently implementing the following strategic plans. These resolutions will also form the basis of our future strategy.

(1) To give particular support to research projects capable of having a significant economic, social and cultural impact (2) To prioritise funding applications aimed at establishing and developing research in high impact areas (3) To seek funding to enhance impact and set aside a proportion of our recurrent budget to support public events at which our research can be disseminated (4) To foster links with community organisations and in particular with the Irish language sector (5) To establish and develop collaborations with industry and commerce (6) To develop our links with government with the aim of influencing public policy.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The evolution and implementation of these strategic plans during the current cycle has led directly to the development of our case studies:

**Strategic Resolution 1:** *To give particular support to research projects capable of having a significant economic, social and cultural impact.*

An examination of the various research projects within the RI led to the conclusion that the areas most likely to have an impact were Language Policy and Planning (Case Study 1), The Irish Language in an Urban Environment (Case Study 2) and Language Learning Tools (reserve case study). Plans were consequently made to prioritise these areas in relation to public dissemination and public engagement. In each case a cluster of researchers was brought together to further develop research in the area and ensure its impact.

**Resolution 2:** *To prioritise funding applications aimed at establishing and developing research in high impact areas.*

Our success in attracting funding for these research areas was a key element in facilitating our projects and developing our case studies. In the area of *Language Policy and Planning*, the Department of Education for Northern Ireland made more than £200,000 available for the development of a comprehensive Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (Case Study 1).

In the area of *Language Learning Tools* (reserve case study), we attracted circa £150,000 from the RCUK to support our English-Irish Dictionary project and £290,399 from the AHRC for the digitisation of the Dictionary of the Irish Language. We also attracted €48,100 in European funding to develop our research in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); €76,827 in funding from the European Community *Leonard De Vinci Programme* as a partner in the Pools-3 Project (Producing Open Online Learning Systems 3); €48,000 from the HEA (RoI) as partners in the Digital Arts and Humanities Structured PhD Programme and two small grants of £5,250 and £4,750 from Colmcille/Foras na Gaeilge for the establishment of a joint project 'Guthanna na nOileán' involving ICSRI and UHI/Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The dissemination of our research on the Irish Language in an Urban Environment (Case Study 2) was made possible by funding from Northern Ireland Screen's Irish Language Broadcast

Fund, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and *Foras na Gaeilge*.

**Resolution 3:** *To seek funding to enhance impact and set aside a proportion of our recurrent budget to support public events at which our research can be disseminated.*

We applied to the University's Office of Innovation *Impact Awards Scheme* and were awarded £5,000 to support the development of impact in Language Policy and Planning (Case Study 1). This funding was used *inter alia* to organise public colloquia at which the NI Languages Strategy was launched by the Minister for Education (Nov. 2012) and the Steering Committee of the Northern Ireland Languages Council was established (April 2013). Part of our recurrent budget was also set aside to support a variety of public engagement events at which our research has been disseminated to the public. As indicated above, we embarked upon a high level of public consultation in the development of the NI Languages Strategy and we ring-fenced monies from the ICSRI recurrent budget in order to partly fund the *Éigse Loch Lao* (ELL) 2010 Conference *on the Irish Language in Ulster in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (cmp. Case Study 2) and ELL 2011, *The Irish Language in Schools, North and South* (cmp. Case Study 1). We also applied to and received funding from *Foras na Gaeilge* to support these public events and used a significant amount of our DAH funding to organise (beginning in September 2012) the *Third Digital Arts and Humanities Institute* in Derry (September 10-13, 2013) to coincide with Derry City of Culture and the CultureTECH festival.

**Resolution 4:** *To foster links with community organisations and in particular with the Irish language sector.*

The links we cultivated with community organisations and in particular with the Irish language sector were also instrumental in the development of our case studies. Our consultations with an extensive range of stakeholders and organisations throughout Northern Ireland fed directly into the recommendations made in the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (Case Study 1). Our cooperation with community organisations in the Irish language sector (*Pobal, An Droichead, Cultúrlann Uí Chanainn*) led to our learning tools being very extensively used in the teaching of the Irish language throughout Northern Ireland and beyond (reserve case study). Our relationship with *Cultúrlann MacAdam-Ó Fiaich* resulted in their commissioning a permanent exhibition on the history of the Irish language in Belfast and our annual symposium *Éigse Loch Lao* is the product of a dynamic partnership with the Irish Language society *Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain* (Case Study 2).

**Resolution 5:** *To establish and develop collaborations with industry and commerce*

The development of links with industry and the media was instrumental in maximising the impact of our lexicographical aids and our research on the Irish language in an Urban Environment (Case Study 2). As indicated above, HarperCollins, a world leader in the development of dictionaries, have marketed our products around the globe. Our links with the Irish language media led to the production by TG4 of the highly successful television documentary *Scéal na Fadgíes* (an Irish speaking community in Belfast) which audience research has confirmed was watched by up to 100,000 viewers and our connections with the BBC have led to the production and broadcasting of three highly acclaimed Scottish Gaelic documentaries.

**Resolution 6:** *To develop our links with government with the aim of influencing public policy*

The cultivation of our links with Government led in particular to our participation in the Review of Irish Medium Education and in the development of the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (Case Study 1). Meetings were held (see above) with the Department of Education, with the Minister for Education John O'Dowd, with Russel Welsh, Head of Curriculum Development in the Department of Education, and with the DEL Committee. This governmental engagement has maximised the impact of our research in language planning in general and in relation to the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy in particular. Furthermore, the cultivation of links with District Councils has led to a cross-community cultural heritage project on the urban Irish speaking community we explored being funded by Belfast City Council and our exhibition on the history of the Irish language in Belfast being exhibited by Newry and Mourne Council (Case Study 2).