

Institution: Robert Gordon University
Unit of Assessment: 34
a. Context

The main non-academic beneficiaries of the research fall into seven categories:

1. **Cultural Organisations**, including Scottish Sculpture Workshop (SSW), Deveron Arts, Museum of Scottish Lighthouses, National Galleries of Scotland/Historic Scotland, Woodend Arts and sound international festival have benefitted through the creation of new forms of artistic expression that have emerged out of rethinking the artist/audience/community relationship (**Impact Case Study 1**, e.g. *Lavender 2013*, Woodend Arts; *Cullen Ceiling*, Duff House, 2001-4). In dialogue with the Natural History Museum at Kendal, **Blyth, 1** has provoked a debate on 'natural history', through his critical use of taxidermy as art practice. **Matarasso** (Cat C) deployed creative writing, *Warp and Weft* 2012-13, to translate data into a vivid cultural portrait of Aberdeenshire, enabling regional professionals and organisations to catalyse social, cultural and economic regeneration from an informed perspective.
2. **Local authorities**, have evolved a new strategic focus through **Harris'** design-led initiatives in Creative Scotland's place making agenda (**Harris, 4**) as well as his involvement with V&A Dundee through Design in Action KE Hub (2012-16) (KEHDIA). NHS Scotland and its subgroups (alcohol and drug users) have benefitted from visual methodologies that contribute to a wider public understanding of human wellbeing (**Hackett 1,2,3**). The design element of *Streetsport*, (2006-present) (**Fairburn**) has facilitated a complex collaboration between Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Aberdeen Safer Communities Trust to support disaffected youth. In addition, **Fairburn (2)**'s research into design in extreme environments has influenced the delivery of the secondary curriculum in partnership with Skills Development Scotland.
3. **Economic agencies**, in particular Scottish Enterprise (SE), has benefitted from c4di contributing to its innovation policy and SE's *Winning Through Innovation* workshops with SMEs and their SE Account Managers. c4di's interventions were based on the use of innovative visual/experiential methods (**Impact Case study 2**).
4. ~1,000 **SMEs** across a number of sectors, including Food and Drink (KEHDIA, c4di), Biotechnology, Energy Finance and Creative Industries (c4di) (450+ in KEHDIA; 400 + in c4di) have benefitted from design research contributing to innovation, entrepreneurial activity, new products and services.
5. **Rural communities** constituted the main beneficiaries of Blyth's 97k *Turra Coo* new approach to Public Commission, Aberdeenshire 2011 (**Blyth, 2**). On The Edge (OTE)'s Phase 1, involved remote rural communities in Huntly, Fraserburgh, Lumsden, Banff and Shetland (**Impact Case study 1**). This has informed KEHDIA's focus on rural SME's in the research into Design and Food that in its first year has supported a new start-up company, Beer52 alongside Lovsushi and Scovac.
6. **Audiences** within NE Scotland, Britain and internationally have responded to new forms of artistic expression that mine cultural traditions, such as **Agnew, 1 & Cranston, 2**'s Scottish specific *Fact and Fiction* thematic, that draws national/ international artists into sharing a brief and working with culturally specific material, opening up new ways of thinking about creative practice. In a similar way artists and audiences in Belgium and Scotland, have had the opportunity to enrich and expand perceptions of music and the visual through shared experimentation in **Douglas'** *Sounding Drawing*, an impact pathway of *Time of Encounter* Connected Communities research (**Impact Case Study 1**).
7. **Representative bodies**: Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) and AB+, the newly formed regional cultural forum, have all benefitted

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from Harris',⁴ expert advice underpinning strategy development through research informed data and contextual literature.

b. Approach to impact

Grays has steadily developed an ethos of co-created research working with public bodies, partner organisations, regional communities as well as audiences of different kinds (RAE 2001, RAE 2008, REF 2014). Impact is a key factor in the vitality and sustainability of our research culture and runs in two directions. The research develops interventions that enable stakeholders to benefit and researchers are open to learning and being challenged by their engagement with other communities. In terms of intellectual assets, many of our outputs are co-authored across disciplines and often involve external partners (**Douglas 1,2,3; Hackett 2,3; Harris 1,2,3; Fairburn 1,2**). We build accessible and flexible knowledge exchange support mechanisms through collaborative research, shared training support and by building networks e.g. AHRC funded *Second Skin: Co-design for Advanced Textiles for Health and Well-Being* 2013-15. This ethos has undergone considerable development since January 2008 in line with the Knowledge Exchange Framework (RCUK) to develop impact pathways as follows:

Pathway 1 utilises creative practice in the visual arts as an intervention in society working with individuals and organisations in order to generate new thinking and adapt to changing cultural values. Examples have included the *Artist as Leader* (2006-9), drawing together high level representatives from the Scottish Executive, Scottish Arts Council, Jerwood, British Council, and Platform among others developing an understanding of leadership that emerged out of arts practice as a counterpoint to 'top down' managerial models. This shifted underpinning metaphors from 'leadership as status' to 'leadership as action' evidenced in a number of follow-on interviews in 2012-13. The interviews form a key component of a doctoral programme specifically tasked to evidence the impact of the earlier research (Cultural Leadership PhD 2012-15) and complements other methodologies such as tracking published articles and testimonies (**Impact Case Study 1**).

Pathway 2 creatively rethinks the interrelationship between making and contexts of dissemination. For example **Cranston, 2** in following a personal family story in a new body of work, linked two exhibition sites, one regional and context specific, and the other, the Royal Scottish Academy. He is one of five Art in Practice researchers within this pathway encouraged to critically analyse the multiple historical, cultural and organisational contexts in which art impacts and to formally articulate their processes in ways that provoke new forms of practice, drawing on Grays experience of practice-led research. Importantly by opening up process to greater levels of scrutiny and collaboration, new opportunities were identified to make work differently, such as sharing a brief and confounding the roles of artist, curator and commissioner, in turn creating new openings in the organisational and institutional frameworks of production and dissemination.

Pathway 3 focuses on exchanging knowledge and insights in the creation of wealth and quality of practice, informing policy and debate in economic well-being. KEHDIA Aberdeen (2012-16) engages Scotland's designers, SMEs and third sector organisations in developing a larger and more diverse market place specifically within Food with some focus on the rural economy. Follow-through is an integral part of the methodology. Multi-disciplinary dialogic *Chiasma* events draw together individuals from business, academia and design in the generation of ideas that are subsequently finessed and then evaluated by an independent panel of experts, resulting in support for start-ups or diversification. A team of PDRAs and PhDs from diverse specialist backgrounds collect and analyse data, and feed back regularly at local and national levels. The approach has been to develop strong highly engaged collaborative partnerships within the target communities.

c. Strategy and plans**Strategy and Plans for supporting impact**

Given the importance of co-created research articulated above, Grays' strategy is as follows:

Art in Public works directly with organisations, growing relevant research as a partnership through generative methodologies, artistic interventions and long-term research residencies. A key objective is to strengthen the critical approach by continuing to work closely with high-level practitioners through deepening the critical perspectives within important strands of literature.

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Art in Practice will engage more actively and critically with the givens of specific visual art media, by opening these up to new innovative forms of engagement with a public. This innovation will continue to be pivotal in the nature of the dialogue with the public as well as aesthetic content.

Design in Society will contribute to entrepreneurial activity through developing strategies and methodologies for innovation in the delivery of new products and services, working directly with SMEs, support organisations, designers and the third sector. This research grouping will increase its expert advice to governments and agencies, influencing policy, strategy and practice. Indicative trends include **Harris'**, 4 presentations and keynote addresses (2008-13) that have catalysed policy changes in positioning the cultural and creative industries.

Looking ahead: Our impact plan sets out to address three key priorities: **Sustained vibrancy** draws on the learning from activities of the three research groups and their collaborative contexts. It strives to apply new methodologies whilst exploiting opportunities for creative production, engagement and delivery. **Creative leadership** consolidates our current strengths in artistic and cultural leadership, which seeks to question commonly held beliefs about leadership, delivering new models that address change. **Cultural resilience** responds to the pertinent factors within operational and environmental constraints identified within research, including policy, that organisations need to address to achieve their primary aims and objectives.

Our impact plan involves:

- The strategic aligning of projects to involve key stakeholders in co-development at the earliest possible stage of the research process.
- Developing an evaluative framework to assess the success of any interventions through qualitative feedback.
- Disseminating the research widely directly to the communities most likely to benefit from findings, as well as government sponsored reports, and presentations to professional organisations.

The identification of key sectoral imperatives with a view to informing the development of funding sources, including research councils, charitable and business sources.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies have been selected on the following criteria:

- They evidence co-created research within strong partnerships across different cultures of art and design. Where design (**Case Study 2**) draws together SME business communities with designers and academics, art (**Case Study 1**) addresses artists, cultural leaders and their communities.
- The focus of activity in both case studies is knowledge exchange and knowledge generation through partnership working. Each case study manifests a different methodological approach. **Case study 1** takes the form of projects that are consciously situated in communities of different kinds frequently focusing on challenges and issues faced by cultural leaders and associated organisations, drawing artists into these in ways that shift thinking. Participants are supported in framing well informed projects that address issues creatively, effectively modelling an alternative approach and evaluating this in the learning space (see *Working in Public* 2006-9). **Case study 2** developed a series of workshops focusing on the application of design thinking: service design, new product development, and business model innovation engaging with groups of companies and sectoral representative organisations.
- They each manifest significant and relatively long term partnerships. **Case study 1** formally began research in social engagement through the arts in 2001- present, testing different methodological approaches across the regional, national and international. **Case study 2** offers 3 years developments that have led to a number of current research partnerships supporting research into health and wellbeing and also heritage and the built environment.
- The research has been well documented and evaluated through independent reporting. This data reveals different forms of impact. **Case Study 1** reports projects through its website www.ontheadgeresearch.org including research reports for the *Artist as Leader*, *Working in Public*, *Time of the Clock*, *Time of Encounter* Pilot Demonstrator project (20012-13). Case Study 2 undertook one-to-one design audits with companies using a variety of design methods to encourage an organisational shift towards a culture of innovation and feedback from the process and events helped to refine the approach.