

**Institution:** Queen's University Belfast

**Unit of Assessment:** 29: English Literature and Language

**a. Context**

The relationship between the School of English at Queen's, with its global reputation in English literary studies/creative writing, and the community is close and dynamic, and recognised as such both by researchers and by user groups. Research in the School, notably but not exclusively that which seeks to confront and reinterpret aspects of identity politics and cultural history, is widely studied, disseminated, and referenced in the social, cultural and educational activities of Northern Ireland, contributing to its social wellbeing, to the development of a greater cross-community understanding, and to an enhanced recognition of cultural and political diversity which has impacted on the political sphere. The beneficiaries of the publication and dissemination of high-quality research by staff in English language and literature include:

- (i) Community groups, cross-border and political organisations (Open Democracy, the Peace III initiative, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies, the Cultural Diversity group, Belfast City Council [Tourist Development Office]).
- (ii) Media groups and broadcasters (TV, Radio, Newspapers) in Northern Ireland and the UK, including the BBC (Belfast and London), UTV, RTÉ, the *Guardian*, the *Irish Times*; local newspapers and magazines.
- (iii) Cultural institutions (including the Lyric Theatre, the Ulster Museum, and Culture NI)
- (iv) Individual artists, writers, translators, musicians, and filmmakers.
- (v) Schools and non-HE education sector practitioners and students in Northern Ireland (& elsewhere): HE sector, UK and overseas, students and teachers.
- (vi) Healthcare professionals and patients; disadvantaged and minority groups.

**b. Approach to impact**

The School of English inherits and maintains a culture which values the potential to benefit those outside the research area and the academy. It recognises the unique role the university plays in the context of Northern Ireland, and the relationship between cultural initiatives and political developments in the region, a relationship hard to quantify, but nevertheless attested to and explicitly referenced in the Northern Ireland Assembly's cultural policy statements and agendas, and affirmed more recently by Belfast's Lord Mayor in the establishment of a Belfast poet laureateship (Morrissey). The School is committed to the production and dissemination of high quality, high impact research, and to inter- or multi-disciplinary work, which informs and transforms the knowledge base of literary and linguistic studies. It recognises too that the wide dissemination of the work of its creative writers (work itself often informed by current research in the discipline of English studies) provides a cultural benefit to a general public in and beyond Northern Ireland – as interrogating questions of identity politics through an imaginative medium that reaches a wide public, thereby contributing towards the reshaping of cultural values and expectations.

- (i) Publications on the subject of Irish literature, culture and politics (by Brearton, Flynn, Hughes, Lehner, and Longley), have played a part in the development of cross-community and cross-border activities. Research from the 1990s and 2000s significantly helped to define and redefine the terms by which the Cultural Diversity group now theorises and promotes its contribution to Northern Ireland's cultural and political development; it also informs the activities of the Centre for Cross-Border Studies (<http://www.crossborder.ie/>) which seeks to draw on academic research in order to deliver practical cross-border co-operation, or of 'open Democracy', which promotes 'free thinking for the world'. The research is promoted online (eg <http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/edna-longley>). A series of funded symposia on Language and Politics heightened awareness of, and facilitated debate about, minority languages and dialects in Scotland and Ireland in a context where such facilitation may often be politically controversial (see the BBC Ulster Scots website at [bbc.co.uk/ulsterscots](http://bbc.co.uk/ulsterscots)). Research into the role of culture in remembering conflict, and fostering peace and reconciliation, and on the Northern Irish peace process has led to extensive staff involvement in public fora where researchers discuss and debate current issues with leading figures in culture and politics (for example, the 'Culture after Conflict' conference, 2011; and the Belfast Festival at Queen's).
- (ii) Broadcasting and print media benefit from the School's research, and simultaneously function

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as a significant impact interface for cultural activity, particularly in Northern Ireland. The BBC sponsorship of a Writer-in Residence since 2007 (currently Malachi O'Doherty) in the School of English, who runs events and workshops jointly with QUB and the BBC, open to the public, affirms the two-way importance of the relationship, and the significant investment of both partners in its impact potential. New ideas, recent developments in research, and research expertise inform broadcasting and other media content and production through: (a) informal and formal advisory roles in relation to documentaries and news items; (b) programme participation and comment by researchers; (c) scripting of local broadcasts; (d) development of film projects and documentaries directly inspired by research outputs; (e) writing/reviewing for local and national newspapers. There is an extensive staff contribution to the School's media impact, often, though not exclusively, in the modern period. Staff in the fields of Irish literature, modern poetry, and creative writing contribute frequently to radio and TV broadcasts on literature and culture, including, for example, appearances on BBC Radio 4 *Woman's Hour* (McGowan, 2005, 2008, Morrissey, 2010); BBC Radio 3 *The Verb* (Morrissey 2008); BBC Radio 4 *In Our Time* (Brearton, 2007, 2008, 2009); RTE Radio *The Arts Show* (Brearton, Morrissey, 2010); BBC Radio Ulster, *Arts Extra* (Caraher, Loane, Hughes, Brearton, McGowan, Larrissy); BBC Radio Ulster, *The Book Programme* (McConnell, Brearton, Hughes), *The Book of Irish Writers*, a short history of Irish literature scripted by Hughes was broadcast by BBCNI in 50 episodes from April-June 2009 and is still available on the BBC website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/learning/getwritingni/events/bookofirishwriters.shtml>. Research expertise has also been utilised in the writing and presenting of TV documentaries exploring and promoting Northern Ireland's cultural heritage (for example, Patterson's scripted and presented *Titanic Town*, BBC4, 2008), or in BBC events such as 'Louis MacNeice Week 2013'.

Writing on literature and culture for newspapers, including the *Guardian*, the *Irish Times*, the *Observer*, the *Belfast Telegraph* is frequent (Longley, Brearton, Carson, O'Doherty, Patterson). Media interest in, and recognition of, the impact of the School's research on social and cultural developments facilitates a political input and public engagement by researchers – in, for instance, invited *Guardian* blogging by Patterson, and *Belfast Telegraph* and *Fortnight* culture and opinion columns (Patterson and Loane) as well as appearances by researchers on RTÉ *The View* (Patterson, 2007, 2008, 2009); BBCNI, *Politics Show* (Patterson, 2009); UTV *Late and Live* (Patterson, 2008). BBC NI *Spotlight* (Loane, 2007); *The One Show* (Brearton 2013), BBC Radio Ulster *Talkback* (Loane, 2010); BBC Radio Ulster, *Good Morning Ulster* (Loane 2010). The research expertise of the unit has also been drawn upon by BBCNI's main daily news programme *Newsline* (Brearton 2013 Litvack 2008-9).

(iii) The School contributes significantly to the development of the creative economy, in and beyond Northern Ireland, where its impact is evidenced across the range of research areas in the School, from the Medieval to the Modern. Activities include involvement in theatre, in an advisory role (Litvack); scripting new productions (Loane, McCann, McAleavey), or public lectures (Streete 2011); research interests in the School impact upon museum/gallery exhibitions (for example participation in the '26 Treasures at the Ulster Museum'), and on film-making and dissemination. Research into Shakespeare and film (Burnett and Wray) prompted the showing of the films *Jarum Halus*, a Malaysian adaptation of *Othello*, in the Queen's Film Theatre, and *Romeo Juliet* in the McClay Library, an Indonesian adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, which have fostered changes in consciousness about Shakespeare, cultural capital and the wider world, and which would not otherwise have reached an audience in Northern Ireland.

(iv) Artists, writers, and musicians have engaged in collaborative work with, or been directly inspired by the work of, creative writers and literary critics in the School, thereby ensuring the continuance of cultural activity through the encouragement and promotion of new and innovative work. The AHRC Irish-Scottish Poetry project generated, outside its stated research aims, a new commissioned composition by Greg Cafferty, 'Béal Mouth Beul Mooth', which sets recordings of recent poetry from Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland – written in English, Irish, Scots and Scottish Gaelic – to music for a string quartet (performed by the Ireland String Quartet). The composition and recording available online relied on QUB's resources in music and sound technology: see (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SeamusHeaneyCentreforPoetry/beal/>) and was broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster on 5/11/08. There are numerous collaborations by staff with local, national and international painters, musicians, and creative writers. For example, Patterson has

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worked with the Ulster Orchestra and composer Neil Martin, writing prose interludes and libretti for events (2013) to mark the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Linen Hall Library. Research, across different periods, into poetry and music (as in a project on Revolution and Song in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) has generated public events and recordings. The School may be unique among English departments in having had on its staff from 2008-13 a Traditional Singer-in-Residence, Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin, who researches cross-border and Gaelic song traditions, and who completed several CD recordings during her residency. There is extensive utilisation of creative writing outputs or research in exhibitions (Ireland and UK). In recognition that the work of its creative writers is a considerable draw for the Belfast tourist industry as well as a social benefit at home, the work of researchers in the School has also been utilised in the City Council's tourism development strategies.

(v) Staff involvement in the development of English language within secondary school curricula is complemented by a schools programme in which staff from all research areas participate, working with 6<sup>th</sup> formers (eg through lectures, or online seminars for *Peripeteia*) and A-level teachers. English language research has had considerable impact on university curricula and teaching in the UK; textbooks by Rahilly and Simpson for instance are used in UCL, SOAS, Aberdeen, Cardiff, Essex, Southampton, Nottingham and Sheffield. The 'Schools programme' run by the unit for 6<sup>th</sup> form students, and for teachers of secondary level English (with participants from Integrated, Catholic, and Protestant schools) across Northern Ireland comprises 8 events each year, with an average involvement of over 1000 pupils and teachers. Renaissance staff collaborated on an educational pack about Shakespeare and film. Staff in the medieval area (Kelly, Thompson) established, in conjunction with UK colleagues, the Quadrivium doctoral training network for UK and Ireland students in the medieval and early modern area. Creative writers are extensively involved in teaching & workshops outside the academy. Children's writer, Carr, for example, works with primary school children in Belfast schools to encourage the production of stories and illustrations (see garrettcarr.net). Patterson has collaborated on the setting up of 'Fighting Words Belfast' (activities begin in 2014) as a partner institution to Roddy Doyle and Sean Love's 'Fighting Words Dublin', which offers free writing workshops to all children and teenagers.

(vi) Linguistics research in the School (Rahilly) impacts on the work of speech and language therapists in the Belfast Trust; research on Shakespeare and film (Burnett, Wray) facilitates the activities of minority groups. This contribution to developing physical and emotional wellbeing is also evidenced in other outreach activities and builds on a long history of engagement with therapeutic projects in Northern Ireland. For example, Flynn worked with disadvantaged children and teenagers in the Ardoyne shops area of Belfast in 2007-8, running creative writing workshops designed to encourage self-expression. The poems written were then displayed in the Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast. Wray has run sessions on poetry and prose for EXTERN (A Multi-disciplinary Homeless Support Team), working with alcohol and heroin addicts in the Belfast area (2013). Litvack runs a 'Reading and Writing for Peace' project funded by the Community Relations Council, which delivers workshops to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Flynn is currently working with Parkinson's sufferers and their carers to produce text for composer Ian Wilson, for a work performed in the Adelaide and Meath Hospital in Tallaght in October 2013.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The university is working to 'connect the university with research users' and to foster impact, via showcasing events, the 'DNA of Innovation' series, or the Vice-Chancellor's Impact Prize. In recognition that public engagement forms a key part of its impact strategy, the School of English continues to affirm and strengthen its long history of public engagement, and is committed to involvement in complementary initiatives that foster links between the university, the local community and the wider world. These take the form of funded inter- or multi-disciplinary projects, educational outreach programmes, cultural activities programmes, and public dissemination of research in ways that are often particular to the north of Ireland, and that are not confined to one particular research strand in the School. Key relationships and partnerships have already developed across different research areas of the School with, for instance, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the NI tourist board, Foras na Gaeilge, the Ulster Scots Academy, Ormeau Baths Gallery, the Lyric Theatre, BBC, RTE, UTV, the Irish Film Board, the Derry Film Initiative, the 2012 Cultural Olympics, Culture NI, CCEA (NI), the Educational Shakespeare Company. Outreach events are integral to the research culture of the School – in for example the annual BBC Louis MacNeice Memorial Lecture, the annual 18<sup>th</sup> Century Urban Culture lecture, or the 18th-Century

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Literature research network symposia, involving scholars, archivists, librarians, and the general public. The School supports outreach events, including the Heaney Centre programme of readings, which seek, through collaboration and accessibility, to broaden an audience demographic.

The School Research Committee, building on that tradition of engagement with the wider community, incorporates the fostering of impact into its guidance on research production from the earliest stages. It encourages the recognition in individual staff of the potential for utilisation of, and engagement with, already existing impact interfaces and gives advice and support (through its review of grant proposals) on the development of new impact potential. It envisages the consolidation of mechanisms by which impact may be measured to enhance individual and/or collaborative research planning. The appointment of an officer responsible for the development of impact in the unit from 2012/13 is a key step in this approach, building on the longer-standing appointments of staff in the Seamus Heaney Centre (from 2010/11) to promote outreach and impact. The impact officer (also REF 'Champion') will meet with all staff individually from 2013/14 onwards to link impact strategy to research planning, complementing the existing appraisal processes. The Research Committee promotes a publication culture in the unit whereby it is recognised that the placing of research findings is essential to maximising their impact potential. The BBC writer-in-residence offers media training and awareness to staff, as a means of enhancing impact in the wider community. For new and emerging scholars, understanding and promotion of the impact potential of their research is also encouraged from the outset, through mentoring and training, in particular through advice on grant acquisition. Heritage policy and practice is embedded in the School's MA curricula (for example, in Renaissance studies), and impact is now part of the research guidance offered in the 'Professionalising the PhD' programme.

The University and School have always been closely involved with the local community, and with local and regional government, arts organisations, theatres, libraries, museums and galleries. Members of the School are frequently invited to planning meetings and events on a formal and informal basis, the net results of which are already evidenced in the case studies. Key decision-makers from organisations including the BBC and the Arts Council, as well as individual end-users, serve on the Advisory Board of the Seamus Heaney Centre. This formal arrangement we see as indicative of the way in which the unit as a whole will develop a greater understanding of its impact potential, through the establishment of further partnerships, and through the development of outreach activities with corporate sponsorship that enhance and enable impact.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The unit builds on a long-standing tradition of social engagement, and its approach to impact prioritises cultural benefit for the community in an historically divided society. Since the early 1970s, the School of English has (in conjunction with, or supported by other organisations, including the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and, more recently, Atlantic Philanthropies and the Crescent Arts Centre) run a series of fortnightly events in the Autumn and Spring of each year, which have provided a vital platform, often in difficult circumstances, for the dissemination of the work of both new and established writers, from across the world, to the cultural benefit of the community. The Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry (as seen in the case studies 'Poetry from the SHC' and 'Apprehending Modern Poetry') has consolidated those benefits: literary events have been recorded and archived online, opening up the potential for global impact beyond the particular event's moment of production. The development of creative writing has opened up new avenues for impact on other writers and artists, and assisted in the development of Belfast's post-Ceasefire capacity to attract literary and cultural tourists. Similarly, the impact of linguistic studies ('Promoting Language Awareness') on curriculum development in Northern Ireland is one strand of an educational and therapeutic outreach policy embedded in the School's practice for more than two decades, and evident in other research areas of the School. New ventures into inter- and multi-disciplinary work have significantly altered the School's profile and impact outside the academy over the last decade (eg Medieval and 18<sup>th</sup> Century research projects complement work in the Renaissance), and have come to fruition in 'Shakespeare through Film'. The case study 'Bringing Dickens to Ireland' involves work with the community in achieving an understanding of its own cultural history; as such this project is continuous with, and indeed symptomatic of, the broader ethos of the School in terms of its commitment to promoting cross-community understanding, and in its provision of a cultural benefit to the Northern Irish people.