

## Environment template (REF5)

**Institution:** Bangor University

**Unit of assessment:** Panel D, UoA 29, English Language and Literature

### a. Overview

English Literature has been studied and taught since the inception of the institution in 1884 and has been at the very heart of university education at Bangor since that time. The School of English has evolved significantly over the REF period. Five early-career staff have joined us, and four senior colleagues have left for appointments elsewhere or moved to a part-time contract. The appointment of new staff has added strategically to the range of research specialisms, while consolidating the strengths and emphases already present within the School's portfolio. Full-time staffing now stands at four professors, one reader, four senior lecturers, and five lecturers. All staff members are research active, and our *research mission* remains the provision of the best possible platform for the pursuit of individual and collaborative research activity, thus offering diverse, research-informed learning environments for our students. The *distinctiveness* of the School's research is its combination of specialisms, which may be summarised as:

- (i) Historically informed criticism;
- (ii) scholarly editing and publishing history;
- (iii) Celtic cluster: Welsh writing in English and Arthurian literature;
- (iv) creative writing;
- (v) criticism of contemporary UK and international literature;
- (vi) interdisciplinary study of the relationships between literature and other arts / humanities, including religion, music, and the visual arts.

### b. Research strategy

**RAE 2008:** The *research direction* manifest in our 2008 RAE submission remains substantially unchanged. We continue: to commit ourselves to critical and/or creative publications with prestigious presses; to showcase our writing at national and international critical and creative symposia and events; to capture research and writing grants from Arts and Humanities funders with innovative projects; to highlight the Bangor academic environment through our conference organisation and editorial activities; to recruit and grow our postgraduate community directly linked to our research areas of expertise; to participate fully in academic and creative networks with the above aims in mind; and to build strategically upon the experience of our senior staff.

**Future planning:** Continuity will be the key commitment over the next assessment period with a sustained emphasis on:

- a] historically informed criticism – see i, ii, and iii above
- b] theoretically informed criticism – see i, ii, iii, v, vi above
- c] creative writing – see iv above
- d] and critical engagement with the creative process – see i, ii, and vi above

These all form long-standing research fields of enquiry being pursued across the School of English. In the cases of a] and b] they range across a multitude of genres and span chronologically from the medieval to the contemporary periods. In the cases of c] and d] these commitments have grown and developed in contemporary writing to span both prose, performative texts and poetry, in both individual and collaborative projects.

In the future, the cross-disciplinary partnerships fostered by Bangor through Pontio ('To Bridge' – an interdisciplinary arts and innovation centre and events programme, which will foster collaboration between the arts, sciences and the community) will become increasingly important. In the areas of Health, Environment and Culture, for example, it will potentially lead to collaborative

projects in eco-criticism and socio-literary engagement. Such opportunities are warmly welcomed by the School as they offer the possibility to access a growing community of potential audiences for its research and its creative writing and the possibility of exploring a greater span of interdisciplinary collaborations both within and beyond the institution.

Of particular importance will be the accessing of European funds in a category 1 funded area, which will form a key and ongoing contribution to the vibrant and sustainable research culture of the School in its forward development. The School aims to continue to increase its applications to European funders and to build partnerships with more European institutions and colleagues with a view to extending the knowledge of its key areas of expertise into Europe-wide fora.

Through strategic appointments and extended research activities (e.g. seminars, research networks) we plan to develop the study of other literatures in English, thus expanding our capacity in Welsh, Irish, North American and African writing in English and establishing expertise in writing traditions in English across the British nations. These aims draw strategically on our long-standing commitment to Welsh writing in English (recent appointments include **Webb** and **Owen**), takes advantage of the recent appointment of **Ozumba** (creative writing: prose), and will be complemented by existing strengths in the School in comparative literary studies, for example.

### c. People

**Staff development:** every member of the School's staff engages in the institution's 'Annual Professional Development Review' process, which covers reviews of current research strengths as well as future plans and institutional support. The University achieved the HR Research Excellence Award in 2012 which acknowledges our alignment with the principles of the Concordat. In 2013 we held the Careers in Research On-line Survey and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey and held focus groups with researchers to ensure that our provision meets the needs of research staff and addresses the objectives of the University's research strategy. The University's Research Strategy Group monitors on-going improvements to support researchers and develop the University's Concordat Action Plan. The University achieved a University Bronze Award in 2011 and academic colleges are also developing plans to apply for Athena SWAN silver awards. Moreover, the University has an active Athena SWAN Group that is developing interventions to better support women working in the sciences in the University, and is also piloting the scheme in the arts and humanities. This also helps to support enhancement of support for all staff and since 2011 the University has: developed a new senior academic promotions policy and process; agreed a new policy to improve gender representation on decision groups; and is looking to enhance career-break provision for academic staff.

**Early-career staff:** One of the most significant developments in this assessment period has been the appointment of a growing community of ECRs within the School: e.g. **Owen** and **Webb** for Welsh writing in English, **McCue** for Romanticism, and **Willie** for early modern literature, leading both to a strengthening of research commitments and a diversification of the School's research culture. Recently, for ECR staff taking up their posts recently it has been possible to allow a lighter teaching load at the inception of their careers. A system of mentoring encourages the development of research and publishing plans and participation in conference presentations and organisation. As part of the School's strategic and continuing commitment to the consolidation of its research culture, lecturers also receive twice as much financial support for conferences and research visits as senior staff.

**Study leave and study days:** The School operates a comprehensive study-leave programme which allows all full-time members of staff a semester of leave (including the adjacent long vacation) over a four-year cycle. Protected time for research is timetabled for each member of staff during the teaching period to retain research momentum outside the vacations and to maintain the vigour of a research-led teaching environment.

**Career progression:** Research success is recognised as a key indicator for Bangor University's

annual promotion round. Over the assessment period, **Hiscock** and **Sullivan** were promoted to personal chairs, **Radulescu** to a senior lectureship and subsequently a readership, and **Colclough**, **Niebrzydowski**, **Price**, and **Skoulding** to senior lectureships.

**Post-doctoral researchers:** **Niebrzydowski** was appointed as a post-doctoral research lecturer as part of the IMEMS initiative (see below, *Collaboration*), and **Skoulding** held a part-time post-doctoral research post, funded by the AHRC, in conjunction with a part-time teaching position within the School. Fulfilling key roles in the School's development, both are now full-time senior lecturers.

**Equal opportunities:** The School of English is committed to equal opportunities and strongly encourages its researchers to take advantage of the University's Staff Development Team and Academic Development Unit's training provision. This involves, for example, equality training and management of research staff (including personal development reviews).

**Engagement with industry:** Staff have developed research in collaboration with book retailers, bereavement groups, library groups and writing workshops, for example. With a view to nurturing a future generation of doctoral students, the School's funded M-level Access-to-Masters students have pursued academic-industrial research collaborations and practice-led experience. Some of these students have, for example: worked with the local tourist industry to improve the presentation of sites and exhibitions associated with the Arthurian tradition; worked regularly with Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery to offer events linked with research within the School of English and targeting the tourist heritage industry; and researched innovation and teaching practices, for example, in the A level classroom in response to developing trends of government policy. M-level students have also linked their research to the retail culture of local booksellers.

#### **People: research students**

**Research culture and training:** Postgraduate students are fully integrated into the research culture of the School, participating in the three principal seminar series (see below, *Organisational infrastructure*). Specialist training is provided for students engaged in manuscript and archival research, particularly in the earlier periods. Postgraduate conferences are organised on an annual basis and students are able to participate in the School's annual speaker series. The College of Arts and Humanities' Graduate School supports research students by offering College-wide induction days, centralised writing support, travel bursaries for conference and archive trips, and monthly newsletters which provide details of funding opportunities, research training events and a range of internal and external activities run by Bangor academics, such as conference and research seminars. The programme of events linked to literary studies and creative writing within the School of English is closely aligned to and complemented by the college-level provision. Having a college-wide Graduate School encourages cross-disciplinary research activities amongst its students, such as a weekly theory reading circle, as well as consistent and streamlined supervision, support and monitoring procedures. In any given year, the Graduate School offers training sessions for all postgraduates in a range of areas which include: small group teaching; conducting research and preparing the thesis; practice-led research; bid writing and grant application; postdoctoral opportunities; CV preparation; careers advice; presenting research at conferences; preparation for the viva; publishing your research.

**Monitoring and support:** Every research student has a research supervisory panel, consisting of his or her supervisor and two other staff members. A report, detailed plans, and examples of written work are required as a part of an annual review, which include a detailed discussion with the panel. Whenever necessary, supervisors are able to convene an additional review panel of staff members to support and advise students on their academic progress.

#### **d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

**Generation of research income:** Research income (totalling over £210k) has been attracted from the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Projects supported during the assessment period include: **Skoulding** (AHRC, 2007-12, approx. £100k) for her research into contemporary women's poetry and urban space, **Gregson** (Leverhulme, 2010-11, £8.8k) for the research of his Simon Armitage monograph; **Colclough** (British Academy, 2009-£10.6k) for research into publishing history; **Wilcox/Niebrzydowski** (Bangor Diocese, 2010-11, £6k) for interdisciplinary study with religion; and **Radulescu** (AHRC, 2011-12, £4.8k; British Academy, 2008, 2011, and 2010-12, totalling £14k) and **Hiscock** (AHRC, 2011-12, £68k) for research into medieval and early modern literature, respectively. Further external funders included the Society of Renaissance Theatre, Beacon Wales, the Marc Fitch Fund, the Association of Manuscripts and Archive Collections, Welsh Assembly CyMAL, and The Plainsong and Medieval Music Society.

**Scholarly infrastructure:** The School fosters strategically a wide range of research networks in response to long-standing specialisms among its staff. With the appointment of new staff, the further development of our research strands and growing expressions of interest amongst postgraduates, it aims to develop further centres, such as one centring on Book History, for example. The most sustained project over the assessment period has been the continued development of the R. S. Thomas Centre. The Centre, founded in 2000, contains a substantial number of R. S. Thomas manuscripts, including unpublished poetry and prose, and is recognized internationally as the major archive and repository of his work. The collection also contains material by Thomas's wife, M. E. (Elsi) Eldridge, including sketchbooks and her unpublished journals. Elsewhere, for example, in the quite different field of medieval studies, the School has been a key co-ordinator of the Bangor Pontifical project (see REF 3a) which represents a collaboration between the University and Bangor Cathedral to render the valuable medieval manuscript universally accessible via a state-of-the art permanent high-resolution website. Such projects and others within the School are fully supported by the University Library whose resources include: an extensive archives section comprising 80 collections; a rare book collection, including the considerable Cathedral Library (holding over 4,500 books of theological or religious content), under the custodianship of BU; and key research tools such as the major databases EEBO and ECCO. With increased provision of learning and teaching spaces linked to the archives section, both manuscripts and rare books are used in postgraduate training, and may be drawn upon as the primary material for research.

**Organisational infrastructure:** The School of English has been and continues to be a major participant in the strategic research alliance between Bangor and Aberystwyth universities. The Strategic Alliance builds upon a history of collaborative activities between the two universities and, most recently, on the successful HEFCW funded £10.9m Research and Enterprise Partnership (between 2005-2010) which was established by the two universities in 2005. In terms of Arts and Humanities, a key academic platform of this initiative has been the cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (IMEMS) for which **Corns** was the founding director. IMEMS provides a lively research environment for medieval and early modern scholars and for postgraduate students (whether at Masters or PhD level) with regular programmes of research seminars, student-led workshops and postgraduate training sessions. In recent years, the Institute has been overseen by two co-directors, one in each institution: **Wilcox** was appointed to the co-directorial role in 2009 and her term of office was followed by the appointment of **Radulescu** in 2013. The Institute has provided the base for the establishment of research teams, projects and conferences on a range of enquiries such as: Women and the Sacred; Cultures of the Written Artifact; Writing Wales; Pre-Modern Travel; and Cultures of War and Conflict Resolution Research Network. It hosts a fortnightly pan-Wales videolinked research seminar series.

Another seminar series is supported by the interdisciplinary Bangor Centre for Medieval Studies, which has also sponsored workshops and short conferences, most significantly the annual

'Medievalism Transformed' postgraduate conference on medieval studies. *Contempo*, an alliance of creative and critical scholars at Aberystwyth, Bangor and Northumbria supports another videolinked seminar, centred on contemporary poetry. Outside these research clusters, the School also organises a fortnightly research seminar based solely in Bangor. Other cross-disciplinary research clusters include the *Words and Music* group (drawing on research expertise in music and in several literary traditions – e.g. **Wilcox, Willie**) and participation (notably **Skoulding**) in the international network of scholars working on *Literature Across Frontiers* which is designed to advance European cultural exchange in the field of literature and translation through: multilateral cooperation encompassing: policy research and analysis; publication; translator training and skills development; literature festivals and other forums. In co-operation with this initiative, **Skoulding** has led and participated in several international translation workshops involving poets from all over Europe and India, and more generally **Skoulding, Gregson** and **Ozumba** have welcomed poets from overseas to the School of English for readings and workshops. All these networks and collaborations have assisted during the assessment period in fostering partnerships with a view to extending academic enquiry, collaborative scholarship and funding applications to bodies, such as the AHRC, the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust.

**Operational infrastructure:** Bangor University has secured over £30m public funding towards a £46m Arts and Innovation Centre, Pontio, set to open in 2014. As well as contributing to wider impact of the university, creating and sustaining over 100 new jobs and contributing an estimated £15m annually to the wider economy, the centre will offer a £9m innovation/engagement space where interdisciplinary research can be applied to strengthen the regional economy. The centre will be a route for engaging a wider public in bilingual, literary, heritage and cultural research, drawing on Bangor's strengths in these areas. Having a 450 seat flexible theatre, 120 seat studio theatre, cinema and 3D exploratory space (The White Box) will provide a means to explore interdisciplinary research activities that engage the public with research at the beginning, middle and end of the process, and provide a powerful vehicle for communication of the outcomes using a variety of media and techniques. Pontio will constitute a stimulating new platform for creative research and performance in the near future. Further to this, BU has a developed system for video-conferencing and considerable experience in using that platform for research (and other) communication. That technology, very well supported, remains essential to the range of inter-institutional research groups and seminars discussed above.

#### **e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base**

**Partnerships:** regarding more formal and extensive research partnerships, see *Organisational infrastructure* above. Our commitment to bilateral and small-cluster research collaboration includes, for example: **Corns** in collaboration with Gordon Campbell (University of Leicester) in writing their Milton biography and in establishing the eleven-volume scholarly edition of Milton (Oxford University Press, 2008 – continuing), of which they are General Editors; **Corns** and David Loewenstein (University of Wisconsin – Madison) in editing *Paradise Lost* (continuing), and, together with Ann Hughes (Keele) in editing the complete works of Gerrard Winstanley; **Colclough** in collaboration with Sandro Jung (University of Ghent) on Book History from early modern to contemporary periods with a view to publication of complete annual issue of *Yearbook of English Studies* (2015); **Hiscock** in collaboration with Lisa Hopkins (Sheffield Hallam University) series co-editors of *Arden Early Modern Drama Guides*. For further information, see *Outputs*. **Wilcox** is co-editing a forthcoming series of publications focusing upon the poetry of George Herbert with Christopher Hodgkins (University of North Carolina, Greensboro) to appear with a range of academic presses.

**Membership of Research Councils, etc.:** The key contributions of our staff to research councils and funding bodies to the disciplines of English and Creative Writing are recognized in a range of activities across the School. **Hiscock** and **Radulescu** are members of the AHRC Peer Review College. **Radulescu** has served as a panel member of the AHRC fellowships and main grants panel (2011, 2012). **Hiscock** is a member of the AHRC Strategic Review Group and has served as panel assessor for applications to designated AHRC research strands. **Wilcox** and **Hiscock** have

also served as commissioned assessors for The Leverhulme Trust; and **Wilcox** is a member of the AHRC English Subject Centre Group. During the assessment period the late Professor Boulton was a fellow of the British Academy.

**Subject associations and societies:** Service to the larger research community is central to the ethical priorities of the School, placing Bangor at the heart of research collaboration and intellectual exchange within our discipline. Staff hold offices on the boards of core subject associations: **Brown** is the Secretary of the Association for Welsh Writing in English and immediate past-President of the North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History. **Corns** is a Founding Fellow of the English Association, co-convenor of the British Milton Seminar, secretary to the standing committee of the International Milton Symposium; **Hiscock** is a Trustee of the British Shakespeare Association, Council member of the Society for Renaissance Studies (2003-13), Council member of the MHRA and a Fellow of the English Association. **Niebrzydowski** is the conference secretary of Medieval English Theatre. **Radulescu** is a member of the committees of the Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections and of the International Committee of the International Arthurian Society. She is also the Wales representative on the UK National Association of Medievalists. **Skoulding** represents the School at CCUE meetings. **Webb** is the membership secretary of the Association for Welsh Writing in English. **Wilcox** is an advisory member of the Dutch Academic Council and a Fellow of the English Association, of the Royal Society of Arts and of the Royal Society of Literature, and co-founder and board member of the International George Herbert Society; **Willie** is Welsh Representative and Council member of the Society for Renaissance Studies.

**Editorial positions:** The School recognizes that editing forms one of the key platforms for the production, circulation and consumption of English studies and Creative Writing both within the scholarly community and beyond into global non-academic audiences. Thus, journal editing has been and remains a research priority, and five important journals are based in the School of English: *Poetry Wales*; *MLR*; *English: the Journal of the English Association*; *Journal of the International Arthurian Society*; and *Yearbook of English Studies*. Further to this, staff are on the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Welsh Studies*; *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, *Prose Studies*, *Milton Quarterly*, *Milton Studies*; *Journal of Screenwriting*; in terms of European journals, staff are on the Comités Scientifiques for *Études Épistémè* and *Arrêt sur Scène* and on the advisory board of the Greek journal *Synthesis*.

**Organising conferences and scholarly encounters:** There is an enormous wealth of academic events organised at Bangor or in liaison with Bangor to form a key part of the vibrant critical and creative environment within the School. During the assessment period, such events have included: the International Layamon Conference at Gregynog (2008); 'Women and Sacred Space in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods' symposium series (2009); 'Women and Death in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods' (2010); 'the Markers of Identity in Medieval Europe, 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries' (University of Poitiers, 2011); 'Locating George Herbert, Family, Place Tradition', Gregynog (2011); 'Insular Books: Vernacular Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain, 1350-1500' (BA-funded; 2012); the North American Association for the Study of Welsh History and Culture Conference (2012); 'On Page and Stage: Shakespeare, 1592-1890' (2012); 'Medieval & Early Modern Cultures of War and Peace: Representation and Reportage' (2012); Medieval English Theatre Symposium (2013), 'Women and Devotion in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods' (2012); 'The Bible in the Seventeenth Century: The Authorised Version Quatercentenary' (University of York, 2012); 'Prayer in Performance in Early Modern Europe' (University of Aarhus, 2012); 'Community-Making in Early Stuart Drama' (Turku University, Finland). Further to this, **Corns** was chair of the programme committee of the Tenth International Milton Symposium, Tokyo (2012), **Hiscock** was invited strand organiser for the European Shakespeare Research Assoc. Conference (Pisa, 2009) and the Shakespeare Association of America (Toronto, 2013), and **Skoulding** was the director of the North Wales International Poetry Festival. **Wilcox** and **Niebrzydowski** organised a series of workshops and seminars as part of Ongoing Wales Beacon project (with links to University College London, the University of Surrey and the Reader Organisation) 'Past Loss, Present Consolation', using pre-modern women's writing as an aid in bereavement counselling (working in co-operation with local and national charitable organisations).

**Refereeing for academic publications and research proposals:** Appointment to the role of refereeing not only indicates peer recognition but enormously facilitates the dissemination of creative and critical writing amongst wider audiences. This is an activity which is widely represented throughout the School and refereeing roles assumed by members of staff include: Journals: e.g. *MLR*; *Transgressive Culture*; *English*; *Library History*; *The Chaucer Review*; *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*; *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*; *Speculum*; *Renaissance Studies*; *Renaissance and Reformation*; *Literature and Theology*; *Religion and Literature*; *John Donne Journal*; *Review of English Studies*.

Publishers: Oxford UP, Cambridge UP, Liverpool UP, Manchester UP, Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge, Boydell and Brewer, Ashgate, University of Wales Press, Continuum.

Funding bodies (national/international): AHRC, Wellcome Institute, BBC, Swiss Academy of Arts and Sciences, Dutch Academy, Humanities Research Council of Canada, Canadian Universities Research Board, Milan University Research Board.

**Scholarly awards and fellowships:** In the assessment period, School staff have been awarded an impressive range of distinctions, the most important ones of which include: Hawthornden fellowship (**Ozumba**, 2010), AHRC Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts (**Skoulding**, 2007-2012); a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada fellowship to McGill University, Montreal (**Willie**, 2009); an English Association Fellowship and an AHRC Research Fellowship (**Hiscock**, 2011-12).

**Invited keynote papers, lectures, and performances:** These events offer yet another key opportunity to gauge peer recognition of scholars and writers within the School and constitute a frequent commitment amongst the School's body of staff. The School has delivered a wealth of events across the UK and internationally including Europe and North America. Highlights include: Corns's lecture series at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. – 'The Making of *Paradise Lost*' (2011); Hiscock's delivery of the 2011 Annual Lecture of the Society for Renaissance Studies/University of Montpellier at Montpellier; Radulescu's 2010 'Authoring Arthur' presentation at an RSC event in Stratford-upon-Avon organised in connection with the staging of Malory's *Morte Darthur*; and Wilcox's 'Shakespeare and Music' lecture series in Barnard College at Columbia University (2013).

**Performances:** Poetry readings and performances form a key and regular activity of the creative writing staff of the School and these have been given at a wealth of venues by **Rumens**, **Gregson**, **Skoulding** and **Ozumba**. The most important of these include: BBC World Service (2009); Amnesty International (Sheffield, 2009); Edinburgh Int. Book Festival (2010); Literatur Haus, Graz Austria (2010); BBC Radio 3 (2009 & 2010); University of Dusseldorf (2011); Hay Festival (2008); Medana Festival, Slovenia (2008); Granada International Festival of Poetry, Nicaragua (2010); Swedenborg Hall, Bloomsbury (2010); Bodø Festival, Norway (2011); World Festival of Poetry, Venezuela (2011); Luxembourg Embassy, London (2011); Massolit Books, Krakow (2012); Éditions Caractères, Paris (2013), Nazim Hikmet Centre, Istanbul (2013).