

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University

Unit of Assessment: 36: Culture Communication and Media, Library and Information Management

a. Overview

This Unit's staff are mostly housed in the School of Cultural Studies and Humanities, which delivers a variety of undergraduate programmes in the broad areas of literary, historical and media cultures, as well as housing Masters programmes in Contemporary Literatures and Social History. It is currently developing an MA in Media. It also has at any one time a population of around 15 PhD students (largely part-time, but some full-time partly-funded bursary students). There are further colleagues in the Schools of Computing, Creative Technology and Engineering (these are colleagues focused on Libraries and Information Management, who also have a very large number of PhD students - up to 20 at any time) and in the School of Marketing, Public Relations and Journalism (colleagues whose research is focused on PR, though the Postgraduate research offer here is less developed because PR professionals tend to seek other forms of personal and professional development). The resources for all activity are held in the first instance by the two faculties in which the schools are located (Arts, Environment and Technology and Business and Law) and are thence devolved to Heads of School and research leaders in the various areas. Because the staff base is located across two campuses and across two faculties, a great deal of effort has been put into managing the coherence of the unit. All cross-unit activities are open to all relevant staff, and colleagues are able to bid for research support regardless of their place in the wider university via a budget based on QR funding that is held in Cultural Studies, and managed by that School's head with the help of her school management team. Where funds are at stake, representatives of the other areas are always invited to participate in selection processes to ensure the fairness of the distribution.

Two main research areas contribute to this unit of assessment's activity. In Public Relations, a great deal of work is undertaken via the Centre for Public Relations Research in the Faculty of Business and Law. This includes consultancy, KTP activity and the research which supports it. More recently, our university has agreed to support the establishment of a Centre for Research into Culture and the Arts based in the School of Cultural Studies and Humanities, but with a remit which is also intended to support related work in Film, Music and Performance, and in Art and Design. The Centre launched in November 2013 with a mission to:

- Support an existing culture of research excellence into the future and to develop it towards future developments in the meaning of excellence;
- Develop cultures of research excellence in emerging areas;
- Develop our capacity to engage meaningfully in the 'impact' agenda;
- Provide an infrastructure specifically for the cultural and arts sectors to support bidding activity as part of a longer-term aim to become self-supporting;
- Act as a hub for a variety of research activities by providing research mentoring, PhD supervision, publication advice, critical readers, support to develop conferences, particularly where they have public engagement elements or impact potential;
- To provide a framework, shop window and media-friendly access point for research (and hence for related enterprise activities) across the range of arts and cultural provision.

It is intended that this Centre will become the research home for all relevant colleagues across the university and is part of our university's strategy for developing impact-rich research into the future and for building on the successes of work from the earlier incarnation of this unit (66) in RAE2008.

A third element of our research is the library and information management grouping which enjoyed notable success in RAE 2008. Strategic shifts away from library education in our university mean that while there continues to be very strong research in this area, it comes from a smaller staff



base than in previous RAE periods. The Centre for Culture and the Arts is open to those colleagues undertaking relevant research. Others working in Libraries and Information Management find their research home with colleagues in computing.

b. Research strategy

This is a unit in which interdisciplinarity is central – as is to be expected of the Cultural Studies field. We take our definition of culture from Raymond Williams – it is the study of 'a whole way of life' - from its past, to its present and its futures. It potentially includes rock music and Shakespeare, business and local government cultures, histories of crime and analyses of contemporary media representations of crime. We take our definition of interdisciplinarity from Joe Moran, who has pointed out that the true aim of interdisciplinary scholarship is not merely to juxtapose different methodologies but to be open to the possibility of transformation in the various disciplines by their exposure to the norms and ideals of other disciplines. It is our view that literary and cultural studies, for instance, and Public Relations, can and do learn from each other. And even the contemporary technology of the computer which makes information management possible, has a history which is represented in this unit by the work of Martin. This is a rich intellectual environment which has existed for nearly twenty years in this unit and its predecessors, and which we do everything we can to develop and sustain. All the work presented here has a cultural dimension. Colleagues working in literary and historical cultures might potentially have been entered in the separate units for English and History. We took the view however that the literary studies elements here are all concerned with wider issues than the purely literary domain issues of publication history, of economic and class cultures, of globalisation and of the relationships that literary culture has with contemporary media are part of the story this research tells. By the same token, all the historians in the group are social and culturally oriented, and pursue research that is informed and transformed by the cultural studies domain, particularly in work relating to public history, celebrity cultures and to environmental histories.

Our university's mission (see Theme 3 of the Strategic Plan at

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/strategicplan/Leeds-Metropolitan_Strategic-Plan_2010-2015.pdf) states that our primary objective in research is to be a 'catalyst for social and economic progress in and for our region' and beyond. This ambition informs our research strategy in combination with other elements of our aims which are focused on the centrality of the student experience to everything we do (including of course research student experience), and the focused development of our staff base. Because of the range of activity that this unit encompasses we have not developed an entirely centralised strategy, which would be inappropriate and would risk stifling some elements of the unit's research base. But we have made the mission statement central to our thinking, with a particular emphasis on social and cultural progress including public engagement beyond the mere publication in generally inaccessible media.

The central aim of our strategy is to pursue world-leading research which makes a difference in the world beyond academia – whether this is practically, as is the case with much of the work undertaken in PR and Information Management, or whether this is culturally and intellectually, as is the case with work in the Cultural Studies domain. A related aim, informed by both our university's mission and its policies in Human Resources, is to enable every colleague to achieve at the highest possible level, and we pursue this aim very thoroughly through our various systems (see below, part c). Our university's research mission is best understood in the context of this unit through our variety of interventions in various public debates about policies, and social and cultural activities.

Systems alone, however, are not enough. Ethos is also a significant factor in the unit. We value and celebrate each other's achievements; and despite the 'lone scholar' tradition at the heart of the older disciplines of literature and history in particular, we work in an interdisciplinary way at every level, including undergraduate teaching, to test the boundaries of disciplinary norms so that our environment is rich and stimulating for all who are part of it.

The unit has existed for about 20 years. In that time, the numbers of research active staff have risen from a handful to the vast majority of the School in which the unit is primarily located. At every level, we have focused on research as a key element of the life of a university – from



recruitment of staff to their nurture and development.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The staffing of the unit is diverse. It comprises of 30 (headcount, 29.75 FTE), of whom 6 (Bianchini, Bryant, Gregory, Halpin, Oram, Robbins,) are professors, one (Watkins) is a reader, and the vast majority of remaining staff are Senior Lecturers. There are 4 early-career researchers as defined in HEFCE documentation (Banister, Hibberd, Thompson, Watkiss), and a number of others who are relatively recent PhD graduates even if they are not strictly 'early-career' colleagues.

The majority of most of these colleagues' time is devoted on undergraduate teaching. This means that the unit has had to think carefully about how to support and enable research for colleagues whose workloads are often focused elsewhere. The ethos we have developed over a number of years (there have been RAE submissions in this and related units since 1995) is that of the 'virtuous circle', in which teaching activity and research are brought together wherever possible. This ethos includes undergraduate programmes in these subject areas at Leeds Metropolitan, which are all strongly research-led, and all our courses have been developed to enable the individual lecturer to have space in their deployment that relates their teaching to areas in which they are also conducting research. We regard this as a virtuous circle because the research enriches the teaching while at the same time being enriched by the process of dissemination to its audiences in classroom before being or alongside being more widely published.

At a practical level research is managed through a series of formal processes.

- There is an **annual deployment round** which seeks to balance colleagues' workloads, and which makes research a central part of every academic's work in a very explicit way. This occurs in all of the three schools from which the unit is drawn, and is a key planning process across our university.
- Coupled with this is an annual appraisal round (**Personal Development Review**, or PDR). For every academic colleague, at least one of the key outcomes of the PDR is one or more measurable research outputs or developments towards such outputs.
- Our university is not able to offer sabbatical leave as a right to all colleagues, but in most years, it does offer a **competitive research leave scheme**, aligned with the broader strategic aims of the institution. In the current REF period a number of colleagues, past and present (Chambers, Herbert, Burroughs, McCook, Herron) have benefited from the centrally funded scheme.
- Additionally, the Head of School has managed, in a number of years, to offer a limited **sabbatical scheme** (a semester away from teaching for 2 colleagues per annum) to support the completion of particular projects (Dampier, Ewen, Robbins and Watkins, all received leave under this scheme during the REF period).
- The institution also encourages colleagues to bid for specific projects to the central QR fund. In the REF period, Watkins, for example, has received £20,000 to support her work with the Contemporary Women's Writing Association, work in literary cultures which also has a wider impact on a larger public than the purely academic.
- **Research Mentoring** is available to all colleagues according to need, whether they are early-career academics, or whether they are mid-career or senior researchers. This process is managed by the professors and reader across the unit and is available either as a request from an individual, or as a targeted action arising from a PDR discussion. It may be as informal as a chat about an idea over a cup of coffee, or be more formalized as a series of meetings to help a colleague hit staging points in a larger project. Senior colleagues invest a lot of time and energy in supporting the unit as a whole. They read and comment on drafts, proposals, research bids, offer advice about publication and provide



supportive engagement with colleagues' work.

- Our **new research centre into Culture and the Arts** (from November 2013) has been established both as an external shop window for our work and as an internal structure to better enable collaboration and constructive dialogue across our wide range of disciplines.
- **Research Seminar Series** are held across the unit, with both visiting speakers sharing their ideas with us, and with colleagues offering papers for discussion in the unit itself.
- Our university has a biannual round of **promotions to research posts** for suitably qualified colleagues. In the REF period, Watkins became a reader, for example, and Robbins a Professor, via this internal route.

As noted above, there are around 30 staff currently housed in this unit. Their work is grouped in a variety of ways:

The smaller groups are those which fall outside the School of Cultural Studies. These include:

- Public Relations focused on the work of Gregory (located in Business and Law in the School of Marketing, Public Relations and Journalism and attached to the Centre for Public Relations Research). Gregory's research is policy directed, and has direct and measurable impacts on businesses and public sector organisations as they build and refine their communications' strategies.
- Libraries and Information Management. This is represented in the work of Halpin, Bryant, and Martin, all situated in the School of Computing, Creative Technologies and Engineering. Their work covers a range of social and historical concerns with information and library management; in the case of Halpin in particular there is also a very strong focus on the potential for sound information management to contribute to practical solutions to human rights issues.

The larger groups are from within Cultural Studies and Humanities. Broadly the School offers expertise in Literary Studies (very broadly conceived), Social and Cultural History, and Media, Communications and Culture.

- The English team has 11 staff of whom 10 are represented in this submission. The staff base includes one professor (Robbins) and one reader (Watkins), with remaining colleagues working mostly as Senior or Principal Lecturers (Banister [early career], Burroughs, Herbert, Lawson, Herron, Watkiss, Chaplin, Marshall).
- History is a team of 9 of whom 8 are represented in this submission. The team includes one professor (Oram) and a remaining complement of Senior and Principal Lecturers: Ewen, Morgan, Shore, Mosley, Hignett, Dampier, Goodwin and Rich.]
- Media is a team of 8 of whom 7 are represented in this submission. The team includes one professor (Bianchini), one Principal Lecturer (Taylor) and 5 Lecturers and Senior Lecturers (Laughey, Mills, Hibberd and Thompson [both early career], and Washbourne).

These divisions are useful in one sense, in that they point to the basic critical mass of staffing in the key over-arching subject areas. In another sense they are deeply misleading suggesting that the different groups are radically separate. In fact, as our impact management statement suggests, colleagues work across the various divides. There are a number of colleagues working across all three areas cross and interdisciplinary areas such as Gender and Sexuality; Environment; Postcolonial Cultures. Postcolonial cultures, for instance, has a naturally interdisciplinary ethos, and roughly half of the school of Cultural Studies are in some way involved in that strand of work. More recently there has been the development of a group concerned with celebrity cultures, led by a historian (Morgan) but with a clear route of interest to other colleagues in both Media and Literary Studies.



Early Career Researchers

By definition, early career researchers are new to the HE sector in an employment role. All such staff in this unit are PhD graduates, and to that extent they have been well trained in their subjects, and have some experience of operating independently. The management of the unit, however, recognizes that the process of beginning an academic career has many 'pulls' on a colleague's time – from the requirement to complete PGCHE training, to delivering entire modules probably for the first time, to learning the academic cycle and the idiosyncrasies of a particular HEI, alongside developing a research and publication record. We are very mindful of the particular stresses that this places on the individual, and manage their entry into the institution very carefully.

There are a number of formal processes which the institution runs centrally for new colleagues. These include:

- Central Induction a day-long introduction to the key elements of the role, which takes place very early after appointment and which helps colleagues to orient themselves.
- Local Induction a meeting on the colleague's first day with their line manager (head of school) in which the key local personnel are introduced, and local orientation takes place.
- Local induction includes a deployment and workload discussion. For early career colleagues, the university states as policy that the colleague should not be burdened with a full teaching load to the tune of 500 hours remission from TRAC categories FST and TRA across their first academic year in post.
- Our university also runs a series of research training activities, which all researchers are free to attend these are pointed out good and early to new colleagues and they are strongly encourage to attend relevant sessions to develop their profiles and to meet like-minded colleagues for peer support.

In addition to these processes, in this unit, the Head of School also conducts an early light-touch version of appraisal in which some key targets are established. These may include the completion of some particular forms of training (e.g. PGCHE). But this meeting is also centrally concerned with helping new colleagues to see their way clear to maintaining and/or developing their research momentum. A research mentor is offered at this meeting, depending on the needs of the individual. It is also usual to seek an early example of a conference or similar research activity to which the individual would like to go, so that they have a goal (and a reward) in the early, sometimes difficult, months of their employment. Support is offered at every stage, and research mentors keep a kindly eye on progress as the new colleague embeds him/herself in their role. The management prioritises funding for early career colleagues on the basis that more senior colleagues can often find other ways to support research activity. The unit's reader and professors also run occasional seminars on particular activities – bidding, publication, and other issues as they arise.

ii. Research students

Research Students at Leeds Metropolitan University begin their journey with the inquiries that lead to applications. These arrive with academic colleagues either directly or through our colleagues in the Research Student Administrative Team, which does all the formal work of collating and sending out applications and all the student administration, including significant elements of guidance through our University's formal processes, once a student arrives. That journey begins with application, strictly speaking, but we do encourage all applicants to make contact with relevant academics to seek and receive advice on the viability of projects and on our capacity to supervise. These two criteria alongside our standard criteria (that a student should be admitted if s/he has the capacity to complete a course of study, and the ability to benefit from it) form the basis of any decision. Entry decisions are taken by Faculty Directors of Research with the advice of the relevant school.

On acceptance, all students are required to undertake a compulsory two-day induction process.



Their programme of study is carefully staged to ensure the sensible progress is being made at all stages – via an early Confirmation of Registration document (at 3 months for a full-time student and 6 months for a part-time student) and via annual progression meetings. Our university offers a number of central services to research students, all detailed in our regulations and in our Research Student Handbook. Please see the web-page at

http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/studenthub/research.htm for all relevant documentation at central level. The three key areas of the unit – PR, Cultural Studies, Libraries and Information – have had different levels of experience relating to Research Students. Libraries and Information Colleagues have a very long and very strong tradition, deriving from significant professional masters provision in the past, of recruiting and completing large numbers of PhD students seeking advanced professional academic status. This is our strongest area in research student terms. PR has tended to recruit far fewer doctoral students because of alternative routes to professional advancement in the Public Relations professions. In Cultural Studies and Humanities, there are around 15 PhD and/or MRes students at any given time. The students' immediate supervision needs are managed locally within schools. Cultural Studies, for instance, uses two colleagues to act as postgraduate co-ordinators who facilitate the local training needs and foster the cohort identity of cultural studies PhD students via regular (twice-termly) events which cover a range of subject-specific and interdisciplinary issues (see below).

Immediately prior to the REF submission, our university was a member of the successful bid to AHRC for Block Grant funding (BGP2) in the Heritage consortium, led by Hull. Our part of that submission was led from this unit (Robbins) and although the potential students may be located in other parts of our university, it is highly likely that the majority of Leeds Metropolitan University's recruits will be students in domains related to this unit, and housed in the School of Cultural Studies and Humanities. The bidding process required that we could demonstrate a robust approach to the quality of our doctoral programmes, and we offer our success as evidence that an external body such as the AHRC is convinced of the appropriateness and rigour of our doctoral training.

Postgraduate Training

Research students access training via a number of different routes. In addition to a centrally-run programme of events, including an annual conference in conjunction with colleagues and students at Sheffield Hallam University, there is a Research Training Programme delivered via the University Research Office. Initial training needs are identified as part of the Confirmation of Registration process. Students are alerted to the RTP events from their compulsory two-day induction onwards, and in consultation with their research supervisor they are also encouraged to identify other relevant training, even if it takes place in another institution (and some financial support is available to help them to attend).

The central programme of training is, of necessity, generic training. The unit regards it as our responsibility to provide more subject-specific support. To that end, colleagues Oram and Taylor (for Cultural Studies students) and the Research Fellow in Computing (Trevorrow) also run a series of more local events for PG researchers. In Cultural Studies this takes the form of a twice-termly seminar, which covers everything from early support for public speaking at conferences (alongside an opportunity to practise), to professional presentation of writing, to 'how tos' on everything from writers' block and preparing for the viva to using theory and managing the gaps in the historical archive. A similar programme also takes place at the Headingley campus with the subject-specific focus on information management. Students who also teach are also required to access the 'In at the Deep End' two-day course which introduces basic teaching techniques. The ethos of the unit is very open to suggestion – students can make requests and where practicable we will support them. One example is a workshop on voice and public speaking held in April 2010 in conjunction with the English Subject Centre, which was the direct result of a PhD student seeking techniques to overcome nervous delivery, and which was attended by a very wide range of colleagues and students from across our university.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities Infrastructure and Facilities

Environment template (REF5)



The unit is housed in three locations – Broadcasting Place and the Rosebowl at our City Campus, and the Priestley Building at our Headingley Campus. The two sites at City Campus are both very new and purpose-built buildings completed in 2008 and 2009 respectively. They offer spacious open-plan accommodation, state-of-the-art teaching facilities, space for postgraduate research students and administration offices. The open-plan accommodation has some drawbacks for the pursuit of lone-scholar type research. On the other hand, many colleagues have commented that the space makes collaboration and co-operation much easier. All the academic staff have their own space, with up-to-date computing facilities, appropriate storage and bookcases.

The Priestley building is rather different environment. It was built c. 1906, and its accommodation reflects that fact. Offices are single occupancy or shared by two to three people, though again, the storage and computing facilities are up-to-date. There is also a shared office for the use of PhD students.

Postgraduate research students at the City site and at Headingley have access to hot-desking facilities with the same furniture and IT support as staff in a room dedicated to their use. The university has recently agreed a protocol of entitlements for research students, which includes, for full-time students, a personal laptop, memory sticks, a hot-desk, and a certain amount of travel entitlement plus support for conferences. Part-time students receive the same benefits, except for the laptop, on a pro-rata basis.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

The unit's staff are extremely engaged, locally, nationally and internationally, with a variety of publics. They are also indefatigable servants of the academic community at large. Since research, if it is to have meaning, must have an audience, we take it as read that we have to speak to more than just ourselves. The evidence of wide publication shown by the outputs submitted in REF 2 is one route to disseminate our discoveries. Other activities include:

- Public engagement days. The School of Cultural Studies and Humanities has a long history
 of offering history study days to the local public both the annual Leeds in Context study
 day, and the Researching Local History day (in conjunction with the ThoresbySociey) have
 been annual fixtures since the turn of the millennium. We have recently sought to expand
 this activity into other subject areas, including contemporary women's writing, with a public
 series of meetings with writers, and a study day in June 2013.
- The Contemporary Women's Writing Association was founded and is currently chaired from Leeds Met (Watkins). Its website, supported by funding from the unit, is an important resource for a wider public including librarians, but also less formal users such as reading groups (see impact case study for further details).
- Three major journals are currently edited from within the School of Cultural Studies: *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (Watkins and former colleague, Chambers); *Environment and History* (Mosley); *Urban History* (Ewen, in collaboration with colleagues at Leicester University).
- In addition to this activity, there are multiple examples of colleagues who sit on editorial boards for a variety of scholarly journals. Examples include: Ewen, International Journal of Regional and Local History; Laughey, Journal of Media Education; Washbourne, Celebrity Studies; Oram, Women's History Review; Lawson, Free Verse; Watkins, Contemporary Women's Writing, Robbins, Victoriographies, Critical Survey, Popular Narrative Media, Interdisciplinary Literary Studies.
- Almost everyone in the unit acts as a referee for a wide variety of journals and a number of colleagues are also publishers' readers for Palgrave, Continuum, Routledge, MUP, EUP,



and others. The list of refereed journals to which colleagues have recently contributed their expertise as reviewers includes: *Postcolonial Text*, *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies; New Hibernia Review; Memory Studies; Twentieth-Century Literature; Women: A Cultural Review; Journal of Victorian Culture; Victorian Studies; Journal of Policy History; Social and Cultural History; Social History; Genders; American Behavioural Scientist, Sociological Review; Journal of Consumer Culture; Women's History Review; English Historical Review; Journal for the History of Sexuality; Media Education Research Journal; Journalism and Mass Communication; European Journal of Communication and Information; Communication and Society*

- During the REF period, Watkins has also served on the executive of CCUE (Council for College and University English); Lawson on the executive for British Association for American Studies; Chaplin on the executives for British Association for Romantic Studies and the International Gothic Association, and as the Romanticism Editor for Literature Compass. Ewen is currently the UK representative for the European Association of Urban Historians. Morgan and Oram are reviewers respectively for the AHRC and ESRC. Marshall is a member of the Executive of the Society for Caribbean Studies. Goodwin was Treasurer of Women's History Network between 2010 and 2013, and Rich is currently a member of its steering group. Morgan is a member of the executive of the Social History Society. Ewen is British representative on the International Committee of the European Association of Urban Historians as well as serving on the Urban History Group's Conference Committee, in which role he has been the organizer of significant strands of their international conference activity. Gregory was President of the Professional body for PR professionals and led its move to chartered status in 2004. She has recently taken up the post of Chair of the Global Alliance (the international body which brings together PR professionals across the world – a confederation of 70 national professional associations). In her role as one of the inaugurators of PR as a professionalised discipline, she also won the Sir Stephen Tallents medal for outstanding contribution to the profession in 2009.
- Lawson was a key member of the AHRC-funded Cultures of the Market network which brought together an international group of scholars from the humanities and social sciences to investigate how economic ideas, institutions, and practices are embedded in the society and culture of Britain and the United States. In this context, he was a panellist at the conference on "Reputation, Emotion and the Market," held at the Saïd Business School, Oxford (19-20 March, 2010), and the "Power and the History of Capitalism" conference held at the New School for Social Research, New York (April 15-16, 2011). He was also a respondent to the papers by Richard Godden (University of California, Irvine) and Nicky Marsh (University of Southampton) at the "Reading the Market" conference held at the University of Manchester (12 September, 2010). Other participants in the network included Dr Peter Knight (University of Manchester), Professor Sven Beckert (Harvard University), Professor Marieke de Goede (University of Amsterdam), Professor Mary Poovey (New York University), Dr Stephen Mihm (University of Georgia), and Dr Michael Zakim (University of Tel Aviv).
- In the Spring of 2011, Mosley was invited to a fully-funded research fellowship at the University of Bielefeld, Germany, in his role as an internationally important historian of environmentalism. And in the Winter of 2010, Washbourne was a visiting scholar at the Department of Media, Culture and Communications, New York University
- A large number of colleagues have also acted as research examiners for PhD and other



research awards across the UK HE sector in the REF period.

• Colleagues have also been invited speakers at a very wide range of conferences, national and international, from Bombay to Amsterdam.

All of this diverse activity is supported by the unit's management by a range of measures. Where possible and appropriate, remission from teaching is offered in support of editorial activity; our university supports the infrastructural needs of colleagues via access to computing and other facilities; and we recognize our responsibility to this activity to support our subject areas in our ethos as well as in our University's mission.

Our environment is vibrant and sustainable. We achieve a great deal with relatively little cost through our commitment to the subjects that make up our unit, through our dedication to researchled activity in our teaching, and through an ethos which values our knowledge. The areas of Culture, PR and Library and Information Management are all about communication: and as such they are all about getting the knowledge 'out there' and getting people to notice it. The management of our environment is focused on those tasks. And we do this with a keen eye on the quality of the research we communicate.