

**Institution: Newman University**

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

**a. Overview**

The current UOA is part of the multi-disciplinary School of Human Sciences. The staff team spans the English and Drama Departments and consists of Professor Peter Childs, Dr Helen Cousins, Dr Matthew Day, Dr Kate Katafiasz and Dr Kerry Myler. The research team's expertise focuses on two areas: the first is in modernist and contemporary literature and drama led by Professor Childs and bringing together a group of scholars who range in experience from an early career academic (Dr Myler), through a part-time Senior Lecturer (Dr Katafiasz), to a Reader in Postcolonial Literature (Dr Cousins). A sub-group led by Dr Cousins has interests in reception studies and this brings together the work of Drs Cousins, Day and Myler.

Newman University College became Newman University in 2013. As a University, Newman's aim is to continue to broaden the base of research active staff across all areas of academic activity, and to support staff research through the development of an inclusive culture and supportive environment. The benefits of the University's policies of promoting research remain evident, with financial support for members of staff in Units of Assessment, scholarships for postgraduate research students, and protected staff time for research. We can point to substantial improvements in the quality and quantity of our research publications and a rising research profile, which will see more Units of Assessment returned in the Research Excellence Framework than in previous Research Assessment Exercises.

The University's Research Committee promotes research development and monitors its progress. This includes overseeing the supervision arrangements for postgraduate students and developing a research strategy for academic staff. The budgetary system of the University gives financial responsibility to the Research Committee. A number of measures have been taken by the University to bring about a significant change in the profile of research in order to situate it as an integral feature of activity. These measures culminated in the appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Scholarship in 2013 to take a leading role in promoting research across the institution for the future, following a substantial increase in the resources available to support staff scholarly activities, the development of a new institutional research strategy to encourage and facilitate research, and a programme of training and staff development to support and refine research practices. As previously, funding towards the cost of further academic study is offered through an annual bidding process managed by the Research Committee, and monies secured in the last Research Assessment Exercise have been used to expand the University's areas of research excellence recognized in 2008.

**b. Research strategy**

As set out in its Research Strategy for 2012-2015, Newman University aspires to be recognised nationally and internationally for the quality of its research and scholarship. Our vision for research is underpinned by the University's core values as outlined in its Strategic Plan and its mission to make a positive difference to individuals and communities through the contribution of its staff, students and graduates. Building upon the positive outcome of the RAE in 2008, the Research Strategy has particularly focused investment funds on units submitting to the Research Excellence Framework, whilst enabling early-career researchers to develop their capacity. Against a background of tighter fiscal constraints we are also making links with other aspects of third stream activity. Knowledge transfer, consultancy and related forms of employer engagement are creating opportunities and funding for research and income generation, as well as broadening the student experience and providing staff development.

The English and Drama team did not enter RAE 2008. Since 2009 the Department's strategy has been to enhance significantly the research activity and profile of staff and the department. Staff have been encouraged to obtain PhDs, to pursue publications and develop their research profiles;

all new appointments have held a PhD or shown themselves to be research active, obtaining their doctorates shortly after appointment. Staff have been supported with sabbatical time, funding to cover fees, a devolved research budget to support attendance at conferences, and undertake research activity. Staff have also been able to obtain support for research related training, to purchase equipment and resources to support research. A key aspiration is to retain early career researchers by broadening and enhancing the research community.

Research has also been facilitated by the development of an environment conducive to research. This has included a subject-specific research seminar series, the hosting, since 2009 of conferences ranging from national, one-day conferences (run on an annual basis) to periodic international three-day events, and the development of collaborations with large and significant depositories such as The Library of Birmingham and the Library of Lincoln Cathedral. The givers of research seminars have ranged from Professors to postgraduate students and have been both from Newman and beyond.

Within the next five years all staff in the department will hold PhDs and it is expected all staff will be returned in the REF. Beyond the staff team being submitted for this REF, two others have completed postgraduate qualifications - one MPhil, one PhD - while another member is developing her own Creative Writing. As the University seeks to obtain RDAP a significant increase in PhD completions is expected while increased collaborative work with external organisations, the winning of greater research funding, and the completion of current projects will result in a larger research group, a higher, international research profile and an extended research community. A focus for research funding will be the AHRC Collaborative PhD Award scheme and the Department led Newman's contribution to the Guild HE/CREST submission to the BGP2 scheme. Funding will be sought from external partners for PhDs based on work within museums and archive collections and from charities, scholarly societies and the private sector.

The recent acquisition of Grantfinder supports this search for external income, as does the opportunity to attend bid-writing training. Staff and students are also encouraged and supported to apply for individual fellowship schemes such as the British Academy and AHRC schemes as well as looking at the fellowships offered by research depositories. These initiatives will extend the research experience of staff and improve the environment with an increased number of projects, conferences and events. The postgraduate community has been developed through the introduction of an MA in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature and this initiative will be built on to further increase the number of postgraduates in the subject area through the development of an interdisciplinary MA with research active areas in History and Theology.

Research activity is ably supported by administrative staff who work both within the Graduate School and in the School Office and who help organise and administer research events, and the administration of PGR enrolment, monitoring and reporting.

The University's Research Committee takes as its remit a strategic role in all aspects of developing and sustaining a successful research culture and research performance. The Committee's major function is to ensure that the University's areas of research strength and comparative advantage are protected and enhanced, that research potential is recognised and nurtured and that resources are strategically targeted to build an externally-recognised research presence. A detailed action plan for the implementation of these objectives is provided and reviewed annually. Since the last RAE, we have strengthened our academic leadership through the internal promotion of four further staff to the position of Reader and through the external appointment of several new professors, who have extensive successful PhD supervision experience; two new professors have been appointed as Deans of School and other professors have been appointed as senior academic leads, such that the University now has a Professoriate which meets periodically throughout the academic year to advise the Vice-Chancellor on matters of research.

**c. People, including:****i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

The University's Research Committee operates a Small Grants scheme. Sums of up to a maximum of £600 are made available to subject areas, research groups or individuals. A significant number of awards are allocated every year to encourage members of staff to pursue small-scale research projects individually or as a group. This allocation is based on a highly competitive bidding process. In addition, the Research Committee invites research groups to bid for a maximum of £3,000 as a contribution towards more substantial research projects. The University has also operated when possible a scheme of negotiated sabbatical support for staff, who must identify clear and measurable targets to be achieved at the end of the sabbatical period. Financial support up to £2,000 is provided for staging conferences at the University and funding is also given for conference presentation to a maximum of £400 per conference; support may be given to multiple presentations in any one year. More general support covers both advice to the research community and information to the Research Committee and is provided by the Research Office Administrator as part of the range of support offered by the Graduate School. This involves organising regular research seminars, research training workshops and inaugural-professorial lectures, as well as enabling suitably qualified academic staff to engage in postgraduate research supervision.

Staff development on research related issues is organised by the Head of the Academic Practice Unit, while all matters of staff and student research ethics are overseen by the Research Ethics Committee, which scrutinizes several hundred research proposals each year. Regular staff research seminars are held throughout the year, some organized centrally and some within the School. Contributors to these seminars are University staff, research students and invited speakers from other institutions. The University has now long maintained a Visiting Professor scheme for distinguished scholars. As well as delivering research seminars and workshops, the Visiting Professors play a pivotal role in developing the research and scholarship potential of staff through appropriate forms of advice, training and support.

Over the REF period, all newly appointed staff in English and Drama have been research active and have either held or obtained PhDs. One early career researcher is currently on a short term contract and appointments are usually made on a permanent basis. The Department has recruited two early career researchers and both have progressed to other universities having developed significant research profiles while at Newman. Staff already at Newman have made significant progress in their research profiles since 2008. Two Staff who were mid-career in 2008 and did not enter RAE are entering REF and one has been promoted to Reader; an early career researcher at last RAE now enters with a full complement of outputs; like all other staff, the current early career researcher has exceeded the minimum number of outputs; other members of staff, not submitted, have completed postgraduate research degrees. Staff have gained funding awards from internal sources to support research as well as external ones. Professor Childs has held an O'Neal Visiting Researcher Fellowship from the University of Texas for research into the Julian Barnes holding; Dr Day has obtained a three-month fellowship from the Folger Shakespeare Library to be taken in 2014. Dr Katafiasz was awarded a sabbatical to aid in the completion of her PhD; Dr Myler has recently joined the AHRC-funded Contemporary Women's Writing Skills Development Programme as a Contemporary Women's Writing Skills Development Researcher.

**ii. Research students**

The University's research culture is being enhanced by the on-going development of the Graduate School which has the primary responsibility for postgraduate research student training and social and intellectual integration while playing a key role alongside Schools, Subject Areas, and Programmes in developing career pathways for successful research students.

Development and support for research students is thus provided by the Graduate School, while pastoral support and mentoring is provided by the Postgraduate Research Coordinator. While attracting self-funding students, the University has operated an intermittent policy of offering

research studentships through a competitive bidding process. The University offers training to PGR students preparing for a career in teaching in Higher Education and opportunity is sometimes available for students to gain in-class teaching experience.

Postgraduates have had the opportunity to attend early career training days run by the British Library and English Subject Centre. They have been supported in conference attendance both to give papers and as part of staff development. PGR students have opportunities to present their research in the subject-specific research seminar series and are encouraged and supported to join networks in their research fields. Research students also have opportunities to present their work at a PGR conference.

Professor Childs has successfully supervised three postgraduates in the REF period: one MA and two PhD candidates, and currently externally supervises four others; Drs Cousins and Day each co-supervise one other PhD candidate. Professor Childs has examined six PhDs, and one MA candidate and Dr Cousins has examined two PhDs.

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

As outlined above, staff are able to apply for internal funds to support their research activities to the Research Committee. In addition to this, staff have been successful in securing competitive internal and external research funding. In addition to the fellowships, staff have obtained funding to run conferences and host events. As Treasurer of the Print Networks Committee, Dr Day obtained research funding from the Bibliographical Society to support the annual conference. For the three-day international, Resurrecting the Book Conference funding and support in kind have been obtained from the Society of Renaissance Studies, the Bibliographical Society, publishers (Ashgate and Brill), external partners (The Library of Birmingham, Digital Ink Drop, the Library of Lost Books) and academic partners, (The Typographic Hub, the Postgraduate Book History Research Network). The funding obtained for the Print Networks conferences facilitated the development of essay collections, one of which is entered in REF 2014; funding from the Resurrecting the Book conference will facilitate the development of an essay collection. The Department works routinely with external partners to host conferences gaining both funding and in-kind benefits. Two conferences on the work of Dorothy Heathcote have been held, both in collaboration with the Mantle of the Expert Drama Network.

The Department's strategy towards generating research income is to focus on building up from small awards towards larger awards in the longer term. Individual bids to research depositories (such as Dr Day's to the Folger Shakespeare Library) are intended to facilitate the production of research outputs while bids for participation in research networks (such as Professor Childs's involvement in the Memory Network Project) seek to enrich the research environment, and foster the development of outputs. Income generation from learned societies (such as the Bibliographical Society) and other organisations (the Library of Birmingham) are used to support activities which develop the research environment, create professional networks and result in outputs. Research funding is also sought from local charities with specific interests in both the arts and education to support the dissemination of research to the wider public. These external funds complement and supplement available internal funding.

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

Members of the UOA have worked in close collaboration with other researchers locally, nationally and internationally. Staff are members of editorial boards (Professor Childs for the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Dr Day on *Literature Compass* (Renaissance) and Professor Childs is a series editor, previously editorial advisor, to Continuum's *Contemporary Critical Perspectives* series and co-editor of the series *Contemporary Comparative Literature* (Palgrave). Dr Day served on the editorial committee of the Print Networks Research Committee, co-editing two volumes; Dr Cousins has co-edited a collection of essays on Yvonne Vera in addition to co-edited collection on the *Richard and Judy Book-Club Reader*, Professor Childs has co-edited a collection of essays on Julian Barnes and co-authored a book on aesthetics and ethics in 21<sup>st</sup> century British novels.

In addition, staff collaborate with academics at other universities to host conferences and participate in and develop research networks. A one-day, short-story conference, hosted by Dr Myler at Newman, was delivered in collaboration with the University of Northampton, The Resurrecting the Book conference is delivered in partnership with the Typographic Hub at Birmingham City University; Dr Cousins serves on the Committee of the Postcolonial Studies Association. Dr Day is part of the British Academy funded Hakluyt Project where he works with a network of international scholars on the Oxford University Press edition of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. Professor Childs is a member of the AHRC-funded Memory Network project.

In addition to working with other academics, staff collaborate with the third sector. Dr Katafiasz's work on Bond is developed in partnership with the dramatist and his chosen Theatre in Education Company, Big Brum. Dr Katafiasz's work on the Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert theories and practices has been developed in collaboration with the Mantle of the Expert Network. Professor Childs is a fellow of the English Association. He has also been a plenary speaker at four international conferences, an invited panellist on four other major conferences both national and international and an invited speaker at three further international conferences.