

<p>Institution: Queen's University Belfast</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 23 - Sociology</p>
<p>a. Context: All staff belong to one of three research clusters designed to nurture and develop the application of research: Social Divisions and Conflict; Identities, Lifestyle and Culture, and Contemporary Social Issues and Policy. Through these clusters we engage with different local and international user groups, which take an active advisory role in our research. These include policy makers and civil servants, practitioners, the community and voluntary sectors, advocacy groups, health care professionals and patients, ex-prisoners, church groups, victims' groups, government researchers, and politicians. The global-local nature of our research ensures that it has considerable impact regionally, nationally and internationally. As well as the impact on user groups, our research also has societal impact by shaping social understandings. One unique aspect of our location is that it allows us to shape understandings of how societies in transition manage social processes of peace building, governance, health and well-being, and social control. The Northern Ireland context means that there is particular emphasis on the need for inclusion of all the relevant local stakeholders, as well as attracting a wide range of international peace building actors.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact In line with the objectives and expectations of our funders, we have consciously developed our capacity to reflect on the reach and significance of our research activity beyond the academy. This strategy has been reinforced by University-level initiatives, some of them led by sociology. Specifically, we have engaged in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular discussions of the spheres to which our research belongs, which audiences to reach, what we seek to communicate and how our research may make a difference. • Practical steps to improve our ability to communicate research, including a programme of media training (radio and TV interviews), the use of social media (e.g. the Compromise after Conflict blog, PSE2010 and QUBQStep tweets), training in writing press releases and in presenting to non-specialist audiences. • Enhanced ethical scrutiny of research proposals and sharing of good and effective practice around the involvement of potential research users in shaping research questions, collaborating with relevant agencies on data collection and advising on research dissemination and translation. • Encouraging researchers to participate in scientific advisory bodies, to present evidence to parliamentary bodies, to produce accessible summaries of research and to engage in public debate around their findings where opportunities arise. <p>Given the nature of our research, we have actively engaged with government and policy makers, NGOs and other community based user groups at local, national and international levels to achieve our goals. Since 2009, the Contemporary Social Issues and Policy research cluster has had strategic responsibility for developing engagement with user groups, which has enhanced research impact by for example academics being subsequently asked to advise Assembly Scrutiny Committees on policy. Our success in actively encouraging knowledge exchange is evident in our three successful applications for ESRC Knowledge Exchange Fellowships in this REF cycle. Byrne spent a year with the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People; McAlister was involved in an exchange with the local NGO 'Include Youth', and Shortall spent a year in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). Our knowledge transfer is two-way: in 2012, an ESRC-funded NI Assembly Committee Clerk was based in Queen's for five months to work on rural research to strengthen its subsequent impact.</p> <p>Our research expertise is in demand by organisations seeking to inform policy change in a range of areas. At the international level, Shortall's commissioned work for OECD has helped to shape European Commission policy on post 2013 rural-urban inter-linkages (. She has also advised the European Parliament on rural policy post 2013 and is the author of one of our case studies. O'Dowd has advised the World Bank on a recent report on Cities, Conflict and Development and developed links between the World Bank and the regional NI Community Relations Council. Leonard's research on young people has led to her involvement with the International Childhood and Youth Research Network based at the European University, Nicosia, Cyprus. Through disseminating academic and practitioner research on children and childhood in divided societies, the network promotes greater collaboration between practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers.</p>

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Brewer has used his research to devise peace building workshops for civil society groups, including a project bringing together Sinhalese and Tamil widows and their children. **Whelan's** research on poverty has had a significant influence on the way in which EUROSTAT, the UK Department of Work and Pensions, the New Zealand Ministry for Social Development and the European Foundation for Living and Working conditions conceptualise and measure deprivation and quality of life.

Two areas are of particular importance for our developing impact agenda.

Priority 1 is *the contribution of research to peace building* and in providing a safe environment for the discussion of highly sensitive issues. **Brewer's** pioneering work on the sociology of peace processes, and resulted in him facilitating a series of practitioner workshops to empower civil society groups to engage in peace making in NI and elsewhere. His research findings on religion and well-being among victims and ex-combatants was translated into a training DVD, *Journey Towards Healing*, produced by the NI Association for Mental Health. An inter-faith organisation that advances reconciliation advocates **Brewer's** concept of social peace processes as a strategy to advance peace building, demonstrating how our research shapes **social understanding**. **Hayward's** work on conflict transformation is rooted in networks of international parliamentarians, security professionals, policy makers and ex-prisoner groups. She is involved in the annual visit of the Royal College of Defence Studies which brings an international delegation to Queen's. **Hayward** and **O'Dowd** are active members of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the leading NGO promoting cross-border cooperation in Ireland. The Centre engages with representatives from business, the voluntary sector and government to promote **social understanding** of the peace process. **Tomlinson's** research on suicide, one of our case studies, has shaped the **social understanding** of the impact of conflict trauma on health and well-being. For two years, **Butler** hosted a seminar series with the Committee on the Administration of Justice, attracting a largely non-academic audience of civil servants, police officers, ex-combatants and others to debate a wide range of concerns around policing. She was also commissioned by the NI Prison Service to investigate religious differences amongst prisoners in terms of privileges and punishments. A number of recommendations for reducing stereotyping and for using restorative justice techniques to address conflict are being implemented.

Priority two is *the contribution of research to improving health and well-being*. At the local level, **Prior's** work with the Centre of Excellence for Public Health has led to engagement with a range of community groups interested in improving rates of physical activity and moderating risk factors associated with diabetes and heart disease. His work with PhD students has had an impact on the design of policy for the bereaved and those affected by end-of-life issues. **Prior** also served on the data management sub-committee of the body that drew up the NI obesity strategy. **Penn** has worked closely with NHS Central Lancashire on the health needs of Eastern European Migrants and on the Determinants of Childhood Immunisation, with significant impact on service delivery. **Tomlinson's** research on poverty and social exclusion has involved a partnership with the Community Foundation for NI, providing training for community groups in systematically monitoring the impact of declining living standards in areas characterised by high levels of multiple deprivation. **Percy's** work on adolescent drug use and crime has led to the development of an innovative web-based alcohol education intervention programme for schools. The work has also led to a high profile policy briefing paper for Barnardo's. **McElrath's** research into drugs and drugs policy is another of our case studies. Her research into drugs misuse in Dundalk (Republic of Ireland) made 14 recommendations relating to service provision for people addicted to drugs in the area, most of which have been adopted. These changes represent improved ways of accessing drug treatment for people in need, expanding inter-agency referrals, greater involvement of GPs as part of a multi-agency service provision, the implementation of an inpatient detoxification centre, and reducing institutionalised stigma in the context of service provision. **Shortall** was appointed to the Social Science Research Committee of the UK Food Standards Agency, and advises on policies to ensure food safety. At the local level, **Shortall's** research informed rural policy and led to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development adopting her recommended policy priorities for the region in their Rural White Paper; resulting in increased child care provision and child care training in rural areas across NI.

c. Strategy and plans: Current Strategy: Queen's has had a longstanding expectation that the academy contributes to social, political and economic life, both locally and globally. As signatories

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of the NCCPE's Manifesto for Public Engagement, the University is working more effectively to 'connect the University with research users' (Research Strategy, p.14), for instance via [showcasing events](#), [video streaming](#) and the '[DNA of Innovation](#)' series. The DNA of Innovation publications feature profiles of various researchers at Queen's University who are making a real-world impact with their work, and **Tomlinson** and **Shortall** have both featured. There are also initiatives at Faculty and School levels. In 2009, our Faculty established **QPOL** (Queen's into Policy) to enhance the impact of Queen's research on public policy and to engage users in our dissemination strategies. **Tomlinson** and **Shortall** are both on the **QPOL** steering group. More recently the University has developed a number of initiatives to foster impact, for example, the Vice-Chancellor's annual Impact Prize of £25,000 and the Business Alliance Fund enabling links with users interested in the application of research. At the School level we have instigated a number of measures to enhance the impact of our research. We have worked with the NI Assembly Research Services to establish how best to make our research available to a wide audience of user groups and particularly policy makers. This culminated in the very successful [Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series](#) between the School and the Assembly Services; We developed a template for policy briefing papers collaboratively, and we delivered workshops on how to present research in a user friendly way. PhD researchers also receive training and have presented in the seminar series. Audiences include elected representatives, Committee Clerks, Assembly Researchers, the community and voluntary sector and local NGOs. The Assembly now provide a list of 'hot topics' on which they particularly need research input. This Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series has subsequently been rolled out across Queen's, the University of Ulster and the Open University, demonstrating our leadership role in enhancing impact and knowledge exchange with devolved government. It has generated considerable enthusiasm for similar initiatives across the UK. The launch of the 2013-2014 seminar series was hosted by the NI Assembly Speaker and attended by the Westminster, Scottish and Welsh Speakers.

Our future plans include promoting greater awareness of the complexities and challenges of impact within the Unit and amongst user groups. We plan to further mentor staff at individual and corporate levels to enhance impact. Mentors will work with early career staff to ensure they appreciate the importance of research impact and the need to clearly articulate 'pathways to impact' in research proposals. The dissemination and impact of research will receive greater emphasis within staff appraisals. From autumn 2013, the NI Assembly Research Services will provide training workshops on writing user friendly briefing papers to our PhD researchers across the Faculty. The School's Research Committee will develop a strategic impact plan, including leadership in this area, how to tackle the challenges of international impact, the sharing of best practice and the involvement of research users in training. For example, we plan to develop an **impact seminar series**, at which researchers will present critical reflections on the impact of their research and the process by which it was achieved. The plan will identify staff that can provide leadership in the areas of internationalisation, knowledge exchange, publicity and policy development. These staff will champion these issues, and mentor junior staff. User groups will advise on the impact plan. In summary, we will continue to develop ways to enhance our contribution to the **public understanding** of social issues, to demonstrate the public value of sociology, and to develop the capacity of researchers to inform debates through traditional and new mass media.

d. Relationship to case studies: Our selected case studies reflect the global and local nature of the impact of our research. They demonstrate the broader remit of the Unit's impact through engagement with **user groups** in shaping **social understandings** of how a society should deal with social problems. **McElrath's** research changed the treatment options available to heroin dependants in NI, and the **public understanding** of how heroin dependants should be viewed. Tomlinson's research has changed the **perceptions** of the links between societal conflict trauma and suicide, both nationally and internationally. Rural women in NI and farm women in Europe have been impacted by **Shortall's** research through increased childcare provision and increased representation on monitoring committees. Our case studies are examples of our team's commitment to the public value of sociology.