

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Abertay Dundee</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 23</p>
<p><b>a. Overview</b></p> <p>This is the first submission of the Sociology unit to the national research evaluation, with 7 staff being submitted from a complement of 13 FTE academic staff. Since 2008 the unit has published 125 outputs (books, chapters, journal articles, reviews, research reports), an increase from 8 in 2008 to 16 in 2012. This reflects a re-balancing within the Unit of the relationship between teaching and research activities over the period a developing research capacity and an increasingly vibrant research culture. The Sociology unit comprises two (overlapping) groupings which provide focus for current and emergent research activities. The <i>Security, Identity and Policy</i> grouping connects the unit to the University's internal multidisciplinary research grouping 'I-SPI' (Investigation, Security, Police and Intelligence), and to external stakeholder networks, including the Scottish Police service. The <i>Social Theory and Critique</i> grouping gives social/sociological theory a more defined profile, through seminars and study groups, and all members of the Sociology unit contribute to this. This balance enables the unit to benefit from the University's overall research approach, which encourages multidisciplinary working, and its research priorities which include Security, while also expanding the unit's contribution to the theory base of sociology. The unit has benefited from the existence of multidisciplinary research groupings in the University such as I-SPI which the small size of the institution encourages. These groups provide additional research opportunities and research support networks that are mutually beneficial. The research profile emerging in Sociology will enable the unit to benefit from the introduction of a University-wide 5-year research strategy which sets the overall strategic direction under key research themes, and which integrates research activities across the University into a single research and knowledge exchange architecture, underpinned by a new Graduate School and funding opportunities.</p>
<p><b>b. Research strategy</b></p> <p>The strategic direction of the unit is aligned with the University's overall strategic priority to be "rooted in its community, with global reach, contributing to the economic and social well-being of Scotland and the UK" (<i>Strategic Plan 2011-15</i>). The University aims to develop subject-focused and multidisciplinary research that aligns with and impacts on Government priorities. Within this context the Sociology unit has, since 2008, pursued a strategy to build research capacity to the level of a potential REF submission. This strategy has had two explicit priorities: a. the development of critical mass of research active staff in defined areas of research and b. the development and deepening of relationships with internal cross-disciplinary research groups and with external policy and research networks. These priorities have been pursued consistently since 2008 and have resulted in the current submission, the first from Abertay in Sociology, an increase in the number of staff producing REF quality outputs, from 1 to 7 FTEs, and an increase in peer-reviewed published research output from 8 in 2008 to 16 in 2012. To achieve its objective of increased published research output and quality, the unit undertook an external research review in 2009. The purpose of the review was to support the development of the unit's research activity, and its planning in preparation for a future REF submission. The review highlighted existing strengths in policy evaluation research but noted relatively limited engagement with theoretical issues and debates in the field of sociology. These findings, combined with a change in recruitment policy, further shaped the unit's strategy. The recruitment of more staff with PhDs, and the concerted effort across the unit, has resulted in the unit being engaged more fully with advanced issues in sociological theory (e.g., <b>Thorpe</b> and <b>Law's</b> engagement with relational sociology, <b>Waiton's</b> critique of moral panic theory, and <b>Memos'</b> study of the social theory of Castoriadis). Increased engagement with social theory and critique, and research activities in the field of security, identity and policy have resulted in research groupings within the unit which currently form the basis of its future strategic priority setting.</p> <p><b>Security, Identity and Policy</b></p> <p>This group focuses on criminological and policy issues and connects the submitting unit to the University's research group I-SPI (Investigation, Security, Policing and Intelligence). Building on existing strengths, the I-SPI group was established to harness and promote inter-disciplinary research activities. The group currently comprises over twenty researchers and includes lawyers, forensic scientists, sociologists, criminologists and computer engineers. Two sociologists (<b>Waiton</b>;</p>

**Winter**) contribute to I-SPI. **Winter** collaborates with criminal justice researchers from the Law unit and with Sociology departments from other universities on annual UACES (University Association for Contemporary European Studies)-funded Policing and European Studies Conferences, and is producing an edited collection 'New Challenges to the EU Security Strategy' (2013) in collaboration with I-SPI colleagues. **Winter** also acts as research consultant to the EU Committee of the Regions' Area of Freedom, Security and Justice project. The unit is also linked with the inter-university Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), investigating, for example, ways to gather reliable evidence from victims of and witnesses to crimes; and with the Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance (SICSA), for example in relation to cyber-security. The unit has also developed strong stakeholder links with police forces and industry. **Winter** investigates far-right movements, race and racism, terrorism and political violence. He has a developing publication and public profile as an expert in these issues, with two co-edited books to his credit. **Waiton** examines crime and antisocial behaviour as therapeutic ideologies. In particular, he analyses processes of victimisation and the construction of vulnerability. He has explored public issues such as 'amoral panics' in society and is currently researching the history of early intervention and its emerging centrality to crime related social policy. **De Paoli** is engaged in innovative, inter-disciplinary research on surveillance, cheating and punishment in digital worlds. His work cuts across a number of strategic research fields in the University, including the creative industries and SICSA cyber-security research. **Moir's** work extends to discourses of policy and practice in the fields of higher education and health. His research on Personal Development Planning in higher education has been recognised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Externally, the Sociology unit has taken steps to deepen its relationships with Scottish policy networks and public services and focuses, wherever relevant, on the public significance of theoretical and empirical research. As a result, the unit produces quality theoretical and applied sociological research, as in **Waiton's** widely-reviewed and discussed monograph *Politics of Antisocial Behaviour: Amoral Panics* (Routledge, 2008). **Annetts and Law** are engaged in publicly-funded policy-evaluations of youth and smoking and sex education.

### Social Theory and Critique

While all research active staff contribute to theoretical developments in their respective fields this grouping gives social/sociological theory a more defined profile, through publications, seminars and study groups. **De Paoli** develops theoretical insights from the sociology of technology, particularly actor-network theory and social shaping of technology in his inter-disciplinary research into cyber cultures. He is also concerned with methodological issues arising from qualitative research paradigms in virtual networks. **Thorpe** is developing a distinctive approach to the relational sociology paradigm, building on Alexander, Bourdieu and Elias. This helps structure his sociological theoretical practice and empirical research into aspects of cultural sociology, not least European identity. **Law's** work concerns relational sociological theory, especially Bourdieu and Elias, and the history of sociological theory, reflected in critical study of the early sociology of Patrick Geddes, and sociology of literature. Critical engagement with relational sociology also informs his work on the sociology of state and nation in devolved Scotland, particularly the tensions between competitive nationalism and welfare nationalism, as well as studies of class, youth, football, and media representations. In light of this breadth, **Law** co-published an undergraduate text on classical social theory and co-authored a text on the role of social movements in the formation of the UK welfare state (**Annetts, Law, McNeish**). **Memos** studies broadly in the areas of Marxism and radical social and political theory in political and historical context. He is acquiring an international reputation as an expert on the theories of Cornelius Castoriadis and Kostas Axelos and social movements like council communism. He has recently completed a manuscript on the contested legacy of Castoriadis and has published this work in leading journals including *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. **Moir** is developing social interactional theory which emphasises discourse analytics of General Practitioner and politician rhetoric. **Waiton's** work on anti-social behaviour displaces moral panic theory with a theory of 'amoral panics' influenced by the social theory of Frank Furedi.

### Linking with University Strategy

The University's new 5 year research strategy covering the period 2013-18, labelled R-LINCS (Research-Led Innovation Nodes for Contemporary Society), will support the needs of a small and

**Environment template (REF5)**

compact institution by providing the following resources to the research community:

- A single, pan-University research leadership to drive discipline strengths and an interdisciplinary research agenda, propose strategic research-focused appointments and mentor early-career researchers;
- Intra- and inter-theme support for research (doctoral studentships) housed in a single Graduate School, which offers a coherent, University-wide integrated training programme (e.g. research methods, writing and presenting skills, entrepreneurship); inculcate interdisciplinary working in our next generation of researchers;
- Targeted support for researcher training and for open-access publication;
- Facilitate public engagement channels including action research with local communities.

The strategy drives the quality and outputs of research and is overseen by the University's Research Executive which is responsible for managing internal research funds and interacting directly with the overarching University Executive and Senate's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The strategy builds on existing and emerging research strengths that are organised into four cross-University themes: Environment, Security, Society and Creative Industries, each with appointed theme leaders. The marked increase of research activity and outputs since 2008 has put the Sociology unit in a position to benefit from and contribute significantly to R-LINCS, with a particular focus on the research theme Society, which is being led at an institutional level by a Sociologist (**Law**), as well as participating in the other themes, notably Security. R-LINCS will prioritise its resource allocation to existing academic staff with a good track record and to early career researchers, and will seek to foster collaborative ventures including cross-Institution (other universities and research institutes) and RKE external partnerships.

To ensure that strategic objectives are met, the Sociology unit fully uses the University's performance management tool. Research impact, funding and publication form a central focus of staff objective-setting and staff performance, including research, is monitored on an annual basis. Research output is monitored three times yearly and forms part of the annual performance appraisal meetings with line managers. Research activity and output is further reported annually within institutional reporting structures, such as annual Divisional Reports (see c. People). Staff regularly discuss their research proposals with each other and seek guidance from more experienced colleagues who may have a specific research leadership function, such as theme leaders and other staff who have research leadership roles. These formal and informal mechanisms aim to enhance the quality of research outputs, strengthen teaching-research linkages, increase research funding, augment reputation and, centrally, foster a research culture as part of the routine of academic life.

**Looking forward**

The Sociology unit aims to develop this emerging research profile nationally and internationally over the next five years, particularly in areas of critical sociological theory and policy sociology, especially criminal justice policy. To achieve this aim, the unit has identified the following priorities for the forthcoming period 2013-18:

1. produce national and international recognised research which prioritises external impact
2. contribute productively to the work of R-LINCS research themes (Society; Security; Creative Industries)
3. increase annual research income through individual and collaborative funding applications

The central driver for the next five years will be to extend and improve the quantity, quality and impact of research output within the Sociology unit. The unit's strategy for 2014-2019 has three aims. First, for a higher proportion of staff to produce research output at national and international levels and for more of this output to have a demonstrable impact. Second, to deliver a step-change in the unit's contribution to the research strategy of the University. Third, where appropriate, to engage in multi-disciplinary research across and beyond the University and seek funding to support research activity. Key here will be the development of thematically grouped sociological research. Research concentration will inform future staff appointments. Over the next five years research themes will be developed further as staff research matures and expands. The externally funded (£2.7m) Dundee Academy of Sport and internal research activity in the creative industries

are already opening up new opportunities for research activity in areas strategically prioritised by the University, such as the sociology of physical exercise among young people and the social shaping of computer games.

**c. People, including:**

**i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

The approach of the Sociology unit in this area is aligned with that of the University. The University's staff appraisal system and workload planning align personal objectives with University research objectives in order to enable an appropriate balancing of teaching, research, administration and external engagement activities to permit personal career development aligned with the strategic priorities of the unit. Thus, early career researchers are given more opportunities to develop their research, and probationary lecturers have a lighter teaching and administration load to free up more time for research-intensive staff development. In December 2012 the University's human resources department conducted an audit of the University's recruitment and staff development policies to ensure that these were in line with the recommendations and guidance provided in the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (2008). To develop and enhance the University's capability to conduct excellent research with impact, appointments to lectureships are required to have a PhD. The University has also appointed new Chairs, Readers and Senior Lecturers within the review period. The Sociology unit has benefited from this, with one member of Sociology staff promoted to Chair (Law) and two further staff promoted to Senior Lecturer (Annetts and McNeish), and the recruitment of 2 additional FTEs. All promotions are based on research contribution, thus demonstrating the University's policy of rewarding key research staff.

The University has robust Equality and Diversity policies for all staff and students, and regularly monitors and evaluates staff data through its Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duties, the University has published an Equality and Diversity Action Plan that maintains the process of Equality Impact assessment for admissions policy, statements and procedures and makes accessible relevant software systems and supporting information (in online formats). Ongoing engagement with Athena Swan guides development of the University's Equality and Diversity practices for STEM and non-STEM disciplines. The University is implementing the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* with an enhanced training package making use of social media to spread awareness of training and development opportunities. The University has supported a range of development and training opportunities, open to all staff and research students, from which the Sociology unit benefits. These include in-house and externally-provided workshops on grant writing, statistical methods, European Framework funding and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

Given the University's small size it aims to make best use of regional and national development and training opportunities, for example:

- Accessing research development courses provided by the University of Dundee enables accelerated early career research development.
- The University's membership of inter-university research pools (SICSA and SIPR) provides opportunities to share research expertise (both among staff and PhD students) and access to developmental opportunities across traditional disciplinary boundaries

Within this wider University environment the Sociology unit has worked to foster the continuous development of staff research capacity and provides additional support for new researchers in the following manner:

- New staff are integrated into the research culture by a more experienced research mentor.
- New staff are invited to contribute to the School seminar series within the first 12 months of their appointment.
- In-house research advice and workshops are offered to postgraduate students.
- Research-active staff are funded to present at national conferences.

Towards the end of the review period two research-active staff left the unit for posts elsewhere. This depletion of research expertise was temporary with replacement lecturers recruited speedily. These posts were filled by one early career researcher and one more experienced staff. Both are

included in this submission. The submission comprises early career and established researchers in the proportion of 1:2, and the proportion of submitted to non-submitted academic staff stands at 7:7. Contributions of early career researchers include **De Paoli**, appointed to teach and research sociology of digital technology, and **Memos**, appointed to teach and research social theory and globalisation, as well as the more experienced recent recruit **Thorpe's** advanced engagement with relational sociology of culture. Recent work produced by early career researchers has been published in international journals. The rest of the submission is made up of two long-serving promoted staff (Chair and Senior Lecturer, 15 years plus service) and two Lecturers (5 years plus). Making up the remaining demographic profile of the unit are a further 3 Senior Lecturers and 4 Lecturers, who have typically been in post for 12 years or more.

Sustainability and improvement of research quality has been a priority for staff recruitment and development. This has been facilitated through the application of the University's workload planning. Throughout the review period, the Sociology unit has given consideration to workload planning and provided support to staff to enable them to complete PhDs and to begin the process of preparing research for publication. 85% of staff working in the Sociology unit are qualified to PhD level. Each new appointment is mentored by an experienced colleague who offers advice on research issues. The Sociology unit has made research aspiration, coherence and complementarity key principles for recruiting staff.

All members of academic staff have at least one protected day for research activity each week and those yet to gain a PhD are encouraged to achieve this by the publication route. All staff participate in an annual performance management scheme. An important element of this scheme concerns research planning and activity. All research-active staff are required to produce at least one peer-reviewed output per year. As well as the agreement of research related targets, the regular meetings afford the opportunity for development needs to be identified with staff being referred to different forms of institutional support.

## ii. Research students

The University caters to a diverse range of students and research programmes are flexible to suit the range of students. Thus the University has introduced a Masters by Research (MbR), which can be transferred to represent the first year of study towards a MPhil or PhD if appropriate. The University encourages academic staff to undertake part-time PhDs by publication and participates in several inter-University research pools. The postgraduate research student community is overseen by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDS) which approves student recruitment and examination teams, ensures that research support is in place, that at least 2 trained supervisors are allocated, offers generic training events (for staff and students), and organizes an annual post-graduate conference. Progress is monitored through 6 months reports on progress and thesis planning. For the coming 5 years, the University is committed to providing 16 fully funded MbR/MPhil/PhD studentships and the development of a University-wide Graduate School as part of the new research strategy.

Over the review period 6 PhDs and three Masters degrees were supervised to completion by the Sociology unit staff, with 3 PhD supervisions currently on-going alongside 2 Masters supervisions. All of these supervisions have involved collaborations with other units and research centres in the University. The unit will also play a key role in the new Graduate School, especially in the Society theme. Currently, the unit contributes to the training of postgraduates, and through interdisciplinary collaborations with other research centres. Sociology postgraduate numbers at both Masters and PhD levels remain low. The major barrier is the capability of the Sociology unit to secure external funding. The recently developed one year Masters by Research programme has given early indications that this will attract our own graduating students. This augurs well for the future and it is the intention to expand the number of research students over the next five years significantly from the current 4 to 12 by 2018. The Graduate School will offer greater opportunities for the unit to collaborate with others and to integrate the theme of 'Society' with existing strengths around funding and supervision in related themes of Environment, Security, and Creative Industries.

While the numbers of postgraduate students is relatively small, support for postgraduate research

students is extensive. Each student has a supervisory team consisting of a Director of Studies (DoS) and at least one other member of staff. In addition to the formal induction organised by the University central Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDS), the DoS is responsible for conducting a skills audit and identifying student development needs. Regular fortnightly supervision meetings are held and a 6 monthly progress report is agreed between supervisor and student. Students, through their supervisor, can apply for School funds to contribute to external conference costs.

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

##### **Income**

Since 2008, the attraction of external funding has been a priority for the Sociology unit and there have been three strands to the unit's strategy.

Early in the review period staff were encouraged to submit proposals for small amounts of seed money to organisations such as the British Academy and the Carnegie Trust. The preliminary data collected with the use of this 'seed funding' then enabled the unit to apply for more substantial grants to larger bodies such as the Funding Councils. The third element of the strategy has been to develop output-oriented working relationships with external partners such as NHS Tayside, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR), and to seek to work with them on funded knowledge exchange projects.

As a consequence of this strategy, the number of grant submissions has increased dramatically over the review period, from 6 in 2008 to 22 in 2012, 53 in total. Of these, 14 applications have been successful, and a total of £52,442 was awarded from external bodies to fund research over the review period. Small to medium grants have come in the form of consultancy awards from the QAA and HEA, and for health promotion related research from the Scottish Government, and NHS Tayside. This is an area which the unit aims to strengthen further.

##### **Infrastructure and facilities**

The University's Research Enterprise and Innovation Services (REIS) office provides advice and support on research related matters, including costing and approvals of applications for external funding; management of the research degree students' process from their initial contact with the University to graduation; and management of IPR and contractual obligations with funders. Bringing these services together ensures that a consistent approach is taken across the University in relation to management of research projects and improves efficiency by providing a single point of contact for all research related matters. In terms of governance, applications for external research funding are reviewed by an ethics committee.

The University's Research Repository, which is monitored by staff line-managers, hosts staff publications. Staff research profiles are regularly revised and updated, and publicised on the University web page. The University provides a fund to support the cost of publications in open access journals.

The University's research and teaching resources are located on a single site. This encourages regular contact and exchange between researchers from different disciplines and thereby fosters interdisciplinary research. This has been further encouraged with the development of open plan and shared facilities. Staff share common IT and HR facilities, ensuring a uniform level of support for all staff. Sociology at Abertay is supported by a generous budget allocation for scholarly journal subscriptions, book purchase, data sets and inter-library loans. Research-active staff are also supported financially to present their research at one national-level conference per year.

The University's Estate Strategy is committed to supporting high quality research infrastructure, with a design philosophy that ensures new spaces are built to promote Research-Teaching links. Our focus in the forthcoming period will be to establish the new Graduate School within a dedicated space in order to accommodate increasing numbers of students undertaking research degrees.

Abertay is transforming its ICT environment to support our RKE activities together with our

teaching and learning provision. To support R-LINCS the University is increasing its research-academic staffing by 35 (~20%) in 2013-14. This is the first of several steps to develop and augment research capacity and is a major plank in our staffing strategy. In a separate development we are working with Dundee College, one of our FE partners, to develop the £2.7m Dundee Academy of Sport (with attendant RKE facilities). This will principally involve the Society research theme, but the knock-on effect through reallocation of other space will affect all themes to provide more effective research spaces.

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

As well as the key collaborations between researchers in Abertay's multidisciplinary research groups, the Sociology unit has prioritised the establishment and maintenance of strong national and international research collaborations. The unit organises an annual seminar series with external speakers. Staff hold journal editorial board roles, for example *The Howard League Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Sociological Research*, and *International Journal of Social Sciences*, and regularly peer review papers for journals like *Media, Culture and Society*, *Sociological Research Online*, *Social Policy and Society*, *Youth and Society*. Staff act as conference stream coordinators for the British Sociological Association (BSA), including BSA Social Divisions and Identities Stream, BSA Class and Social Divisions Sub-Stream, and BSA Race and Ethnicity Sub-Stream, and participate in broad research groups such as the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, the BSA Race and Ethnicity Study Group, BSA Scotland Study Group, and BSA Social Theory Study Group.

Individually, **De Paoli** has worked with colleagues from the Telecom Software and System Groups at the Waterford IT (Ireland, 2008-2010) and is currently collaborating with colleagues from the Department of Information Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Trento (Italy).

**Memos** is engaged in an international collaborative project initiated by French, Swedish, English and Greek scholars and researchers regarding the transmission of social theory in Europe, which will result in a series of conferences and books. **Law** publishes research with colleagues at The Open University, linking sociology to social policy and geography. With a colleague at Cambridge he has initiated a research network examining relations and processes of institutional and intellectual gains and losses in the historical development of sociology. This brings together researchers based in England, Scotland, Canada, Singapore, United States, Germany and France. One expression of this work is a planned edited collection to be published by Ashgate. **Law** is coordinating a network of scholars researching the sociology of Patrick Geddes, and co-organised a symposium on the sociology of Geddes at Abertay in June 2013.

**Winter** founded and convenes the Race and Ethnicity Sub-Stream at the British Sociological Annual Conference. He has been appointed 'Expert Analyst' for the Extremis Project, Routledge's new platform for research on extremism. He coordinates the BSA Social Divisions/Social Identities stream, and has international collaborations (US and Canada), as well as publishing in international collections: edited in Belgium, Germany and US. **Waiton** is active in a number of formal and informal networks including the ESRC parenting network, moral panic network, and youth work academics. **Moir** is involved in collaborations with colleagues working in the areas of linguistics and discourse analysis at the Universities of Łódź and Warsaw in Poland, resulting in two edited volumes with a third in preparation. He also collaborates with colleagues at the Ramon Lull University in Barcelona, Spain on the 'Life Without Media' Project which will result in a forthcoming volume. A priority for development is the imperative to attract research funding to build research capacity. This will be addressed by encouraging staff to collaborate with established researchers from other universities and to further develop productive and outcome-focused working relationships with external partners such as NHS Tayside, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR), and to develop funded knowledge exchange projects. The development of research groupings will provide a more concerted approach to research collaboration and contribution.