

Institution: University Of Chester

Unit of Assessment: 35: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts

a. Context

The Performing Arts department at Chester runs undergraduate programmes in Dance, Drama and Popular Music; there are also MA programmes in all three subjects, and a trans-disciplinary MRes. The department has a history of fostering and developing links with professional groups working in the field of performance, and with public sector organisations and charities who use performance as part of their work (see below). The department has a long-standing commitment to applied theatre work, and to theatre in education, both in Britain and abroad: projects have been conducted in Japan, Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East. In addition, over the REF period it has sought to widen the impact of its work in a number of ways (see below).

As the department's research culture has developed, staff in dance and in popular music have initiated work that aims to reach and to work with client groups outside of the academic community. This commitment is clearly reflected in the work of our PhD students, an indication of the department's commitment to building and sustaining work that has an impact outwith Higher Education. This work is very much a part of the culture of the department; students at undergraduate level have been involved in theatre work in Malawi and Romania; in Britain, they have taken applied performance work to prisons and schools, and with other community client groups (one project involved the local traveller community); Dance students were involved in a performance to celebrate the arrival of the Olympic torch in Chester; and Music students have taken music education projects to local schools.

b. Approach to impact

Within Performing Arts support is given to researchers in developing knowledge transfer bids, and funds are available to those who wish to develop the impact of their work. Knowledge Transfer bids are treated on an equal footing to more traditional research bids; **Owens'** and **Loudon's** record in securing funding (with departmental support) is testimony to our commitment to impact. Impact work is also supported by the **Chester Centre for Research in Arts and Media (CCRAM)** which provides a forum for researchers in different subject areas to pool their experiences and develop projects. Through the department staff employment policy, new staff are appointed with an eye to the general research environment, and to the potential impact of their research (**Quigley's** applied theatre work in hospitals, **Njaradi's** project proposal on Dervish dance in Serbia, **Morrison's** research into dance cultures).

The Centre for Research in Arts and Media has recently created a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Participatory Practice. The successful appointee was Dr **Simon Grennan** whose work traverses participatory practice across visual and performing arts. For example, a recent work *Colchester Rounds* comprises an edition of 10,000 audio compact disks and a series of live music performances. Four groups of musicians based in Colchester, UK, chose one of their own pieces and passed it to the other three groups to cover in their own musical style. Featuring The Band of the Parachute Regiment, medieval shawm band The Colchester Waits, heavy metal band Sanctorum and world music community choir Quire, 7,000 compact disks were given away door-to-door as gifts in central Colchester. The work was commissioned by *firstsite*, Colchester.

The purpose of this role is to assist and support the development of research in participatory practice; it has a particular focus on emerging approaches to participatory practice that theorise the ways in which the relative status of the participants is established. It also helps to maintain a vibrant research environment leading on conference planning and organisation within **CCRAM**.

Within the institution, impact is rewarded through being one of the criteria considered explicitly in applications for promotion to Professor or Reader. The annual Performance Development Review

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(PDR) process also explores impact both in terms of opportunities for commercialisation of research, and public engagement activities and opportunities. The University's Research and Knowledge Transfer Office monitors all funded projects closely, and one aspect of this monitoring is a report on impact activities. Where appropriate, this can lead to a cross-referral to the University's Knowledge Transfer grant schemes which can pump-prime commercialisation of research outcomes.

Examples of the department's approach to impact:

- **Pattie's** work on the Staging Beckett project (which will help to develop a national performing arts database).
- **Jamieson's** work on the teaching of dance in Higher Education.
- **Harrop's & Njaradi's** work on ethnography and anthropology of vernacular performance practices, which involves mumming practitioners and groups in the UK and the dance culture of the Dervish in Turkey.
- **Herstad Carney's** organisation of the multimedia Threshold arts festival in Liverpool
- **Loudon's** and **Jamieson's** project with Warrington Wolves rugby club, which was timed to coincide with the Rugby World Cup in 2013 (when Warrington hosted one of the participating clubs).
- **Owens'** work with the local Romany community.
- **2Engage**, a student start-up applied theatre company, supported by the department, who have continued the department's theatre in education work in Romania.
- **Minerva Youth Theatre**, run by **Brocken** (PGR student), and based at the department's Kingsway campus.

c. Strategy and plans**Strategy:**

The department's approach to impact (outlined above) is strategically supported through the annual Performance Development Review process, as well as through the allocation of staff development funding and research grants. The development of impact from research undertaken is underpinned by an expectation that a minimum of 20% of the QR income from the RAE2008 exercise is deployed in impact-generating activities. This accords with our longstanding commitment to participatory artistic practice. In addition, funding has been sought through the University's International Research Excellence awards to develop further impact. For research outcomes that are closer to the marketplace and to commercial exploitation, the University operates a system of Knowledge Transfer grants, funded using HEIF income, to pump prime the commercialisation of research. Performing Arts staff have been successful over the period in competitively bidding for internal HEIF grants and have relied on the institutional support of the Research and Knowledge Transfer office in the administration of the projects, and the department intends to build on this support during the next REF period.

Plans:

Over the next research period, the department will aim to build on the successful impact of its applied performance work. Projects in train have been outlined above, but there is still considerable potential to develop impact strategies based on work done within the department.

- **Pattie's** work on the Staging Beckett project (an AHRC-funded study of Beckett productions in Britain and Ireland) will lead to a series of public lectures, and a database of productions which will be publicly accessible (this is also being used to trial a database of all British theatre productions which is being developed by the V&A) and the Staging Beckett research team is looking to extend the scope of its work beyond the period of the grant (to undertake studies of productions in Europe: this work is situated within the Creative

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Practices research group, discussed in REF5).

- **Harrop's** and **Njaradi's** work on performance ethnographies already involves and responds to groups performing in the field of traditional folk performance. Their work (and that of others in the department (**Jamieson, Emslie, Herstad Carney**)) has the potential to have an impact on similarly tight-knit performance communities. (This links to the Performance Ethnography research group, discussed in REF5).
- **Sproston's** and **Duffett's** work on the production and reception of music provides a solid research base on which to develop impact strategies in the cultural industries; other members of staff (**Broughton, Bebbington, Herstad Carney, Morrison and Warnock**) have considerable experience in the music industry, and can therefore work with **Sproston** and **Duffett** both to develop their own research and to liaise with and develop impact projects with client groups in the music and cultural sectors. (This links with the Creative Practices research group, discussed in REF5).
- **Jamieson's** and **Piasecka's** work in performance pedagogy (which links to material in one of the case studies, to the work of other members of staff (**Herstad Carney** and **Loudon**), and to the work of **2Engage**) has considerable potential to impact on the work of those who teach performance in a variety of contexts. This area will be one in which staff in all areas of the department would have an input; as the case studies demonstrate, the department already has a strong track record in this area (this work is located in the Applied Practices research group, discussed in REF5).

As with our developing research strategy, our impact strategy will seek to capitalise on the developing network of research contacts outlined in REF5; we will work with our visiting Professor (Dr **David Fligg**, who can work with our performance ethnography group), our research fellow (Dr **Eva Osterlind**, who can help us further develop our applied practice), and with other researchers at other institutions (where appropriate).

d. Relationship to case studies

As noted above, the two case studies submitted for assessment are very much embedded in the work of the department. Applied performance, that is, performance which seeks to be socially and culturally useful, and to intervene in the lives of its participants, has been a crucial part of the department's activities for quite some time. This is clearly evidenced in the fact that both case studies are based on material submitted for assessment in RAE2008.

Both case studies are also linked closely to the research culture of the department, as described in REF5. **Harrop's** and **Owens'** work clearly fits into the applied performance grouping; and they also connect interestingly with the ethnography grouping, in their underpinning fascination with deep rooted cultural forms (highlighted in the folkloric dimension of the history of performance studies) and the ways these can be applied. **Loudon, Owens**, and to some extent **Harrop**, remain concerned with the layering of dialogical process onto these forms (the entirety of **Owens'** work, **Harrop** and **Loudon** in Romania). **Owens'** channelling of narratives of personal experience as a mechanism for conflict resolution clearly lies within this genealogy of scholarship and practice.