

<p>Institution: University of Chester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 30: History</p>
<p>a. Overview</p>
<p>Since RAE 2008, History at Chester has experienced a period of tremendous growth. Undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment has risen dramatically, four new full-time historians have been appointed and there is now a greater diversity and range to research activity. At Chester, History forms the major part of the Department of History and Archaeology, which is situated in the Faculty of Humanities. At present the History side of the Department comprises eight full-time academics, two emeritus professors (Swift and White), one research associate (Dunn) and 14 postgraduate research students. Collectively the historians pursue research across wide geographical and thematic loci and, chronologically, from the early to high Middle Ages to the twentieth century. Although not based on formal research clusters, a strong culture of collaboration underpins the Department, with shared teaching and research both amongst and between historians and archaeologists.</p> <p>The Department has worked hard to foster a strong sense of community that embraces full-time staff, part-time lecturers and students. The University's policy of allocating all QR funds from RAE 2008 directly to the unit of assessment that received them has proved particularly beneficial in this regard. These funds have boosted historians' research time, leading to a particularly strong working atmosphere as a result. The Department's move in summer 2010 to the Binks Building – a modern, purpose-built facility on the main campus – has also helped to reinforce a communal atmosphere between staff and students alike.</p>
<p>b. Research strategy</p>
<p>For the 2008 RAE, the Department laid down a comprehensive research strategy designed to grow the size and scope of its activities. The approach has proved successful on several levels. The number and quality of research publications has grown, the postgraduate population has reached a record high and the Department is now home to a flourishing research community which reaches into the North West and beyond. During the last five years, the three key areas of the Department's successful strategy have been the promotion of research outputs, the support of impact activity and a commitment to research led undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes.</p> <p>In the first of these areas – research outputs – the Department's aim has been to provide opportunities for all colleagues to produce high quality publications, whether in the form of monographs or journal articles. In this respect, the strategy has been highly effective. In 2008, this unit of assessment returned 3.2 FTE and for 2014 will return 6 FTE. Put differently, in 2008 historians in the Department produced 16 peer reviewed publications, by 2014 this had risen to 41.</p> <p>The key drivers behind this success have been firstly the implementation of a sabbatical leave scheme open to all staff, the provision of research funding and the improvement of library resources (on these initiatives, see sections c and d below). Secondly, the Department has sought to promote all colleagues' research, but in particular those at an early stage of their career through a formal mentoring scheme (again see section c below). Thirdly, the Department has worked to foster close cooperation between all colleagues whether on a geographical, chronological or thematic level.</p> <p>In general terms, the Department's research specialisms can be divided into three chronological areas. Wilson and Pickles work on the social history and material culture of Britain and the Low Countries during the early to late medieval period. The political and military history of Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is examined by Gaunt and McLay, while Ewence, Grady, Huggins and Jackson focus on the history of modern Britain, Europe and America.</p> <p>However, colleagues frequently transcend these chronological boundaries to work collectively on common themes. Of particular prominence has been research on death and memory which has seen Wilson, Grady and archaeological colleagues collaborate on field trips and articles. Similarly, the history of minorities has led to productive exchanges between Ewence, Grady and McLay, which have resulted in the international conference 'Minorities and the First World War' to be held in 2014. Finally, Jackson, McLay and Gaunt have combined their research</p>

on military history to run day schools and an annual series of lectures on military history through the ages.

Since 2008, impact has formed the second focus of the Department's research strategy. The Department has long pursued a policy of impact activity, founded upon outreach to schools, public lectures and heritage interpretation. Indeed, the Department has actively encouraged all staff to make their research available to a wider public. This has been made possible by the appointment of a Departmental research coordinator and by the provision of dedicated financial support for impact activity. As is common with other institutions, 20% of QR money is now spent in this way.

As a result, when members of the Department produce their research findings, they seek to disseminate their work to both an academic and non-academic audience. Over the last REF cycle, colleagues have used their research as the basis for day schools, public lectures and schools' outreach. Other important initiatives have seen Pickles present an episode of ITV's 'Britain's Secret Treasures' on the Holderness Cross, while Gaunt contributed to the BBC4 documentary, 'Roundhead or Cavalier'.

Through these and other initiatives, the Department has established strong links with a range of local schools and heritage sites, including the Cheshire Military Museum, the Grosvenor Museum, Llangollen Museum and the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port. It has also worked closely with historical associations, such as the Western Front Association, the Battlefields Trust, the National Trust and Cadw. Taken together, these collaborative relationships will provide an important foundation for the Department as it seeks to develop further its relations with public bodies during the next REF cycle.

The third and final leg of the Department's research strategy since 2008 has been the support of research led degree programmes. Indeed, the Department is proud that all of its undergraduate programmes as well as its taught MA in Military History are firmly underpinned by colleagues' own research. Most modules on these programmes are the direct result of research projects, while the remaining modules have served as a springboard for new areas of research. To ensure there is a healthy marriage between research and teaching, the Department dedicates extra resource funding to all new modules and also encourages the rotation of modules to match tutors' current research activity.

In addition to these taught programmes, research activity also underpins the Department's postgraduate research degrees. During the current REF cycle, the Department introduced an MRes in History which matches students' personal research interests with tutors' own expertise. MPhil and PhD students, of course, also work incredibly closely with the Department's research specialisms. As a result of this strand of the research strategy, there has been a 100% increase in the number of history research students supervised since RAE 2008, the majority of whom have been attracted by the Department's strong research emphasis.

For the next REF cycle, History will continue to focus on the research strategy that has served the Department so well since 2008: research outputs, impact work and the alignment of research to teaching. However, for excellence and innovation to be maintained, three specific areas have been identified which will allow History to strengthen still further. First, the Department aims to submit more grant applications for external funding, both on an individual and joint basis. Working in this direction, the Department recently entered a joint bid with History at the University of Kent to establish an AHRC First World War Research Centre. Second, the Department intends to increase the size and scope of postgraduate research, by streamlining routes onto MPhil / PhD programmes and by offering more targeted mentoring support for less experienced supervisors. A third initiative planned for the next REF cycle is to develop interdisciplinary research projects at Chester. A new Research Centre for Gender Studies is already planned for 2014, but further links exist between researchers in the field of Holocaust studies and American studies. The Department's commitment to these three areas will ensure the continued retention of research staff and thereby the growth of History as a discipline area.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The Department is strongly committed to the continual development of all staff members and is also driven by the firm belief that all colleagues should have equal opportunities to further their

academic careers. During the current REF cycle, the Department's staffing and development strategy has been closely aligned to the three strategic elements detailed in Section b above: research outputs, research impact and research led undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

In pursuing these goals, the Department benefits from three significant structures put in place by the University to help the development of all staff working in the institution. First, the University introduced an enhanced annual 'Personal Development Review' process from 2010/11 which provides all members of the Department an opportunity to discuss achievements and to set goals with their line manager. Second, the University encourages the promotion of staff which is formally administered through an annual meeting of the Promotions Committee. Since 2008, three staff have been promoted from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, one from Senior Lecturer to Reader and one from Reader to Professor. Third, the institution has committed itself wholeheartedly to activities that promote equality and diversity. For example, it runs a long-established Diversity Festival once a year and there is a Disabled Staff Group which provides a safe and supportive environment for discussing issues relating to disability. The Human Resources Department also monitors regularly for equality issues as part of the recruitment process for all employees, and is currently working towards an Athena Swan award.

In a similar vein, the University provides particular support for early career researchers. All new academic staff are supported through an accredited training programme which focuses on the demands of teaching practice, research supervision and the assessment process. Successful completion of the programme leads to Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. During their probationary and induction programmes, new staff members are introduced to the facilities available from the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and the Graduate School. These include assistance in grant applications, advertising research projects and interviewing potential research students.

The University's commitment to staff development is not only of great benefit to the Department but has also been recognised externally. Recently the University was granted the prestigious 'HR Excellence in Research Award'. This demonstrates a commitment to implementation of the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers'.

In conjunction with the wider University, the Department has also put in place structures to ensure that early career academics, which the Department has always sought to nurture, are fully supported. Ewence and Wilson are both recently appointed and fall into this category. To help these colleagues develop their teaching while at the same time strengthening their research profile, all have been afforded lighter teaching timetables for their first two years of service. The Department has appointed research mentors for each new staff member, while early career researchers from within the Department also participate in the University's early-career staff forum.

As a sign of the Department's commitment to developing its members' research profiles, a long-standing sabbatical scheme is in place. This is open to all academics in the Department, including early career researchers. It relieves the individual on leave from all teaching (aside from any PhD supervision) and administrative commitments. For the past six years, the scheme offered a year-long sabbatical for the successful applicant. However, due to the increasing size of the Department, and to ensure an appropriate frequency in opportunity, from 2013/14 the scheme will offer two colleagues a semester's leave of around 15 weeks.

In addition to the sabbatical scheme, the Department has also been able to reduce teaching loads for all staff through RAE QR funding. Under this plan, in each academic year all colleagues are provided with relief from teaching affording them at least two days per week dedicated entirely to research and impact activity. Such is the Department's commitment to these two areas that it has been able to allocate each colleague an annual research budget of £450. This can be used for conference attendance and research expenses. Supplementing this important scheme, the Faculty also runs a competitive bidding process for up to £1,000 of additional staff development funding for research.

The Department's research environment also accommodates a comprehensive conference and seminar programme. The research seminar series meets a minimum of eight times per year and attracts a mixture of internal and external academics. Recent speakers have included academics from the Universities of Leicester, Bangor, Birmingham and University College Dublin. During the current REF cycle, the Department has also hosted several international events which have received financial and administrative support. The largest of which was the 2009 Gladstone Bicentenary International Conference, organised by Emeritus Professor Roger Swift. This was a

vigorous and lively four-day conference that attracted keynote speakers from Europe and North America. The edited volume that resulted from the conference, *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives* (Ashgate, 2012), has already made a considerable mark on the field.

Running alongside these Departmental initiatives is the University's Annual Staff Conference. This is an all-day event which includes a series of parallel sessions focusing on examples of successful research projects, opportunities to develop impact, and a sharing of good practice in grant applications and management.

ii. Research students

The supervision and mentoring of postgraduate research students is one of the three areas (alongside research and impact) that the Department has placed at the centre of its development strategy. Since RAE 2008, the number of PGR students has increased by 100% to stand at seven full-time and seven part-time. This is not only a testament to the research atmosphere within the Department but also a sign of its commitment to future research and the Academy itself. Of the two students who were carried forward from the previous RAE cycle, one has submitted and successfully completed a viva.

Both the Department and the University more generally has made a firm financial commitment to supporting its MPhil/PhD students. Currently all 14 history PGR students receive a Faculty fees bursary. From 2013/14, the Department has introduced a fully-funded history PhD studentship. Named in honour of our deeply missed colleague Dr John Doran, who sadly passed away in 2012, the memorial scholarship will fund one new history PhD student each year for the next five years.

When they first embark on their PGR programme, students experience both a central University induction, and a local induction within the Department. This ensures that they have a full understanding of the regulations and services provided by central support departments as well as of the local support staff and facilities. At the same time, students undertake a skills audit, which helps them to identify their training needs. Students can access a range of support designed to develop both subject-specific and transferable skills. The Graduate School, which is responsible for providing generic skills training, offers offered face-to-face sessions that align with the Research Development Framework. These are supported by a Moodle site, which provides on-line access to training materials written and contributed by academic staff from across all subjects and faculties.

Alongside the Graduate School's programme, the Department encourages students to attend both internal and external training seminars; amongst the most popular of the latter being those run by the Institute of Historical Research. Internally, the Department runs several research workshops through the academic year on subjects such as submitting journal articles or running conferences. These are always run by a member of the Department in an informal manner to allow both colleagues and PGR students to share their own thoughts and experiences. In addition, the Department requires students who are employed as Graduate Teaching Assistants and/or Visiting Lecturers to undertake the specific training offered by the University's Learning and Teaching Institute. They may, if they wish, also undertake modules leading to Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

PGR students at Chester have the support of at least two approved supervisors, one of whom is a designated Director of Studies, and who has supervised at least one student to successful completion of the award. Supervision meetings take place frequently, with at least one meeting per month being recorded with outcomes and targets. Following a probationary period of between six to nine months, student progress is formally reviewed. If the student's registration is confirmed at this probationary review, a termly meeting of the full supervisory team reviews progress with the student subsequently and an Annual Progress Review (chaired by an independent academic staff member) reviews progress against objectives and expectations on an annual basis. Students must submit a report, give a seminar and attend an interview before their upgrade from MPhil to PhD can be confirmed. There is a similarly rigorous process to consider applications to transfer to 'writing up' status.

To ensure PGR students are able to play a full role in both the Department and Faculty more generally, students elect representatives to a PGR forum. These students then have the responsibility of representing their peers at Research Committee, the Faculty's Board of Studies as well as feeding back information from the Graduate School itself. Within the Faculty of Humanities,

there are also two designated postgraduate tutors (Llewellyn, Theology & Religious Studies and Ewence, History & Archaeology) who are available to see PGR students by appointment and to resolve any issues they may have.

The Department places great stead on PGR student conference and seminar attendance. In addition to the Department's seminar series at which PGR students attend and often deliver papers, the Department also runs an annual day-long PGR conference. This highly stimulating event provides students with a friendly and constructive environment in which to present their research to an audience of peers and more senior academics. Students themselves take the lead in organising the event, from issuing the call for papers through to shaping the panel sessions. This ensures that as well as honing their presentation abilities, they also gain valuable conference management skills. It is a Departmental requirement that any PGR student seeking an upgrade from MPhil to PhD presents a paper at the conference. Students benefit from dialogue and debate on the day and written feedback provided by their supervisors after the event.

In addition to the Departmental conference, there is an annual Faculty PGR conference. As this event includes contributions from PGR students in the Departments of English, Modern Languages and Theology and Religious Studies, it offers another forum for fostering inter- and multi-disciplinary research dialogue. PGR students are also actively encouraged to attend subject specific conferences and seminars outside of the University. To this end both the Department and the University's Graduate School have established funds to support conference attendance. Each year applications are invited and all successful applicants are provided with funding. The Department's own funds also extend to research expenses incurred by PGR students in the course of visiting and working within archives and libraries. Applications are invited termly and must be accompanied by a supporting statement from the supervisor.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Besides the research sabbatical scheme and the provision of lighter teaching timetables through the RAE 2008 QR funding (both detailed in sections above), additional leave is honoured where external research grants and/or funds have been awarded. Within the current REF cycle Grady was awarded funds from the British Academy and Huggins received international funding from the American Antiquarian Society. The fruits of these awards have allowed both scholars to make significant inroads into their new research projects.

Finance, of course, only accounts for part of the Department's recent research success. The library and research facilities available to students and staff alike have also contributed to the Department's wider research culture. The main University Library holds approximately 260,000 printed volumes and subscribes to over 1,000 printed journals and more than 13,000 electronic journals. The collections also include access to online source collections and over 15,000 e-books, which are core academic texts. At the main campus library there is 24/7 access to computers, printing and quiet study space throughout the year and extended access to all collections across all sites is provided during term-time and at peak periods.

Supplementing these resources, the Department is proud to have its own specialist research collection of rare and high-demand books that are made available to both students and staff studying history or archaeology. Within the Departmental library, a suite of computers provides additional access to online material. PGR students also have access to a dedicated secure study space, newly-refurbished in 2012-13 and benefit from an enhanced interlibrary loan budget as well.

Within the city of Chester itself, the Department enjoys excellent links with heritage, museum and archive agencies, including amongst others the Cheshire Record Office, the Cheshire Military Museum and the Grosvenor Museum. The links with the latter two are particularly strong. The Cheshire Military Museum, whose archive contains a rich seam of source material on the nineteenth and twentieth century military, has a formal partnership with the Department. Not only does the University fund half of the Museum Officer's annual salary, but the Department also stages a 'Military Miscellany' lecture series in conjunction the Museum which is held in the Grosvenor Museum's lecture theatre.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

Editorships

EWENCE: Book Reviews Editor, *Jewish Culture and History* (2012-); GAUNT: Editor, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (2006-2012); GRADY: Book Reviews Editor, *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture & History* (2009-2013).

Positions on Subject Associations/Learned Societies

GAUNT: Chairman and Chief Executive of The Cromwell Association (1990-2009); President of The Cromwell Association (2009-); Trustee of The Cromwell Association; Governing council of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (1994- 2009); GRADY & EWENCE: Honorary Fellow of the Parkes Institute for Jewish / non-Jewish Relations, University of Southampton; JACKSON: Treasurer, American Politics Group; Academic Consultant for National projects at Speke Hall and Mendips (2010-2011); McLAY: Co-convenor, History UK (2011-).

Collaborative Partnerships/Networks Joint Research Projects

EWENCE: Co-editor with Helen Spurling of *Image Conscious: Jewish Visuals and Visualising Jews through the Ages* (Routledge, forthcoming); GAUNT: Part of University of Cambridge editorial team producing a new edition of Oliver Cromwell's writings; *English Historical Documents, 1603-1660* (with Barry Coward, Birkbeck); McLAY: North West Early Modern Seminar – co-organiser; PICKLES: Converting the Isles project (with Cambridge, UCD); The Social Church project (with York, Oxford); WILSON: Luxury Textiles of Italy and the Low Countries Research Network (with University of York); Economies of Quality and the Material Renaissance Research Network (with University of Antwerp).

Examination of Doctorates

McLAY: Exeter PhD (2012); PICKLES: Birmingham PhD (2013); WILSON: York PhD (2012).

Organisation of Conferences

EWENCE: 'The Image and Prohibition of the Image in Judaism', British Association for Jewish Studies Annual International Conference, University of Southampton, 2010; GRADY: 'The Future of Holocaust Studies', 2013 (with Universities of Winchester, Southampton, Edinburgh and the Holocaust Education Trust); GAUNT: Organiser of 7 Cromwell Day Conferences; SWIFT: Gladstone Bicentenary International Conference, 2009; WILSON: 'Tapestry in the Round', 2012/13 (with Glasgow University and the Burrell Collection); 'The Production, Commercialisation and Consumption of Luxury Textiles in Italy and the Burgundian Netherlands c.1400-1600', 2010/11 (with Universities of Glasgow, St Andrews, Ghent & European University Institute Florence); 'Possessions and the Material Renaissance', 2011 (with Universities of York & Antwerp).

Refereeing Academic Publications/Research Proposals

GAUNT: Reviewer for Edinburgh University Press, University of Chester Press, Longman, Yale University Press; GRADY: Reviewer for *Journal of Historical Sociology*, *Holocaust Studies*, Routledge, Longman, Berghahn; HUGGINS: Reviewer for Liverpool University Press, Continuum; McLAY: AHRC reviewer; reviewer for Pluto Press, Ashgate; PICKLES: Reviewer for *Early Medieval Europe*, *Catholic Historical Review*; WILSON: Reviewer for Pasold Research Fund for Textile History.

Scholarly Awards/Fellowships

EWENCE: Rothschild Foundation, Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, 2011 (£28,000); AJS Women's Caucus, travel grant, 2009 (\$800); AHRC, travel grant (£250); GRADY: Monograph awarded proxime accessit in the Royal Historical Society's Gladstone Prize (2011) and Faculty of Humanities, University of Chester, Research Monograph award (2012); British Academy, Small Research Award, 2011 (£2,920); HUGGINS: American Antiquarian Society fellowship, 2012 (£600), University International Research Excellence Award, 2012 (£1,000).

Invited Keynotes/Lectures

EWENCE: Queen Mary (2011); University of Southampton (2012); GAUNT: Palace of Westminster (2009); GRADY: Keele University (2009); University of Portsmouth (2010); University of Manchester (2010); University of Southampton (2010); Imperial War Museum (2011); HUGGINS: Oxford University (2011); National University of Ireland, Maynooth (2012); American Antiquarian Society, Massachusetts (2012); JACKSON: University of Pennsylvania (2009); PICKLES: UCL (2010); University of Nottingham (2010); Oxford University (2012) WILSON: University of Ghent (2008, 2011); University of Edinburgh (2009); St Andrews (2010).