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| <p>Institution: University of Chester</p> <p>Unit of Assessment: 29: English Language and Literature</p> <p>a. Overview</p> <p>The English Department has benefited from the University of Chester's investment in its research infrastructure, strengthening the solid foundation recognised in RAE 2008 with new staff appointments in English, a growth in research activity, the development of new projects, and success in external funding bids. The Department's increased confidence and ambition are direct results of the enhancement of resources it received: 100% of the QR funds gained in RAE 2008 were allocated to English on an annual basis to support additional leave for research-active staff and fund impact initiatives. This has significantly improved the retention of researchers through promotions and an extended sabbatical rota: only one staff member has left the Department for another academic post since 2008.</p> <p>The Department's specialist expertise spans research areas in English Literature, Creative Writing and, from 2009, six new appointments in English Language have formed the basis of a new research grouping in Linguistics. Since 2008 a Director of Research in English (Wynne) has been appointed to oversee the Department's research strategy, the mentoring of ECRs, and the organisation of postgraduate support, ensuring that all staff, including hourly-paid lecturers and PGRs benefit from regular meetings, training events and seminars focused on research.</p> <p>The Department, situated in the Faculty of Humanities, occupies the Old Vicarage, an adapted, recently refurbished grade 2 listed Victorian building. Members of staff, including part-time lecturers, are provided with well-furnished offices containing networked PCs, printers and telephones; additionally staff have access to portable equipment (laptops, digital recorders and iPads). The Department's PGRs use a designated space with new IT facilities in the nearby Chritchley Building. Both the Department and Faculty offer mentoring services for ECRs along with training and support for PGRs. English at Chester promotes an active, inclusive research community for academics and postgraduates, while UG students benefit from research-centred teaching. The Department's impact activities and public engagement projects extend the reach of its research to wider communities.</p> <p>b. Research strategy</p> <p>Objectives since RAE 2008</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of research-active staff through targeted use of QR funding; • Producing research outputs of international significance; • Increasing PGR numbers; • Supporting staff in seeking external funding; • Enhancing the research culture through increasing opportunities for research leave, research seminars, and regular discussions of research-related topics; • Developing confidence through experienced staff mentoring less experienced researchers. <p>Since 2008 only one member of staff left for another academic post (Whiteley to University of Sheffield; replaced by Neary). This remarkable level of retention of research-active staff is the result of the successful implementation of a research strategy designed to foster an attractive research culture, increase the overall number of research outputs, and encourage more ambitious individual and collaborative projects. The strategic deployment of QR funding has thus enhanced the Department's rich research potential in terms of confidence and ambition. Researchers in English have been rewarded with promotions and improvements to the sabbatical system. The current system of research leave ensures that four colleagues are given leave in any one academic year; previously only two academics benefited each year from the scheme. These improvements have resulted in important research projects (monographs, public engagement projects, high-profile creative writing publications) being brought to successful fruition in a timely manner. Additionally two AHRC research leave awards have been granted since 2008 (both to Wynne). Importantly, the augmentation of the research culture since 2008 has inspired staff who</p> |
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had previously experienced a slowing of outputs because of heavy teaching and administrative loads. Some who were unable to submit to RAE 2008 are now included in REF 2014.

The success in RAE 2008 allowed English to focus on capacity building in research activity. As a (comparatively speaking) small Department (20 academic staff, plus visiting lecturers), English has selectively channelled research energies and resources to allow opportunities for dialogue between experienced researchers, early career researchers (including hourly-paid academics) and PGRs. The strategy has been refined through regular meetings and dedicated research days, enabling a productive exchange of ideas as a supplement to the more formal support networks in place. The Department's research culture is inclusive, supporting each of the Department's researchers, whether senior staff, ECRs, hourly-paid staff or PGRs.

English's objective for future development is to manage research by building on its increased confidence and more focused sense of direction. An ambitious research strategy has been formulated to sustain the Department's productivity and vision over the next five years and while staff prioritise the sustaining of areas of excellence and innovation, there is also a commitment to identifying areas where confidence and initiative can be strengthened. From 2014 English aims to:

- encourage staff retention (support for making funding applications; maintaining the improved research leave rota; regular workshops with invited expert speakers; making more use of external and Faculty research networks);
- support early career researchers by targeting funding for new research projects and implementing departmental and Faculty mentoring schemes; a particular focus will be on developing the research initiatives of the ECRs in Linguistics;
- expand existing links between departmental research and public engagement activities by targeting resources to existing impact projects (e.g. **Alsop's** *Handel's Literary Texts*) and plans to develop the impact potential of new projects (e.g. **Herrmann's** research on *Phonological awareness in children with cochlea implants*);
- increase routes to postgraduate research and offer more targeted mentoring support for less experienced supervisors;
- work with researchers in the Faculty of Humanities to develop interdisciplinary research projects (e.g. the establishment of a new Research Centre for Gender Studies in 2013-14).

The Director of Research in English oversees the implementation of the research strategy and liaises between the Department, the Faculty and Research Committee to support staff at all stages of the research, publication and funding application processes. Each departmental meeting includes the discussion of research-related topics; at least two designated departmental 'Research Days' will be held each year devoted to the delivery of work-in-progress papers and discussion of the research strategy and impact projects. Distinguished experts will continue to be invited to contribute to the twice yearly *Professor Glyn Turton Lecture* series (hosted by English, established in 2009). Regular departmental meetings will address key national and international developments in the management of research, as well as exploring ways of developing research in relation to impact initiatives. The research strategy is designed to nurture a sense of community and maintain the trajectory of a growing internationally significant research profile.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

English, targeted as a key area for development at Chester following its success in RAE 2008, has enjoyed an increase in resources, particularly in terms of staffing (12fte in 2008 to 20fte in 2013). It has thus directly benefited from the University of Chester's commitment to developing research, recognised externally by conferment of the HR Excellence in Research Award which demonstrates its implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

Since RAE 2008 the QR funds received by English have been spent on freeing up research-active staff to work on projects leading to publication. Newly-appointed staff have also been targeted for support, and some have now completed major projects. In Creative Writing **Haig** wrote her first novel, *The Fire Sermon*, recently contracted with HarperVoyager (forthcoming 2015), with two sequels to follow. The film rights have been purchased by DreamWorks Studio, and Simon &

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Schuster will be publishing the series in the US and Canada. Translation rights have also been sold in over 20 territories. In Linguistics, **Davies** (appointed March 2009, his first academic post) was supported in the completion of his first monograph, *Oppositions and Ideology in News Discourse* (published by Bloomsbury, 2012). Recently appointed ECRs in Linguistics will receive support for their research projects by means of mentoring and targeted research leave, with opportunities to bid competitively for additional leave each year.

The departmental support of new researchers is supplemented by a new university-wide network for early career researchers which meets once a term to encourage networking across subject and disciplinary boundaries, to enable ready access to research support staff, and to identify and address common problems and allow issues to be raised at policy-making level. All newly-appointed academics at the University are supported through an accredited programme leading to a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. A particular feature of the Chester programme is that the compulsory core modules include elements to train staff to understand the requirements and opportunities of research supervision. A further optional module develops skills in supervision to an even higher level. The probationary and induction programmes are interlinked to ensure that all new members of staff are introduced to a wide range of facilities and policies. These include access to colleagues from the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office, who are available to provide assistance in applying for grants, and to colleagues from the Graduate School who help with advertising research projects and the admission of potential PGRs. At departmental level, newly-appointed staff are helped by the Director of Research to establish long-term research goals, supplemented by regular meetings with the Head of Department.

Each year, all staff attend a Performance Development Review, a one-to-one meeting with the line manager, where current research projects and publication strategies, funding opportunities, impact initiatives and longer-term research ambitions are discussed. All academics in English have a research day each week and in any one year four colleagues can expect research leave, three on a rota basis and the fourth through a competitive bidding process. The University ensures that at least seven weeks are available each year for staff to engage in research and scholarly activity. All academic staff receive an annual professional development grant of £350 for attending conferences, supplemented by Faculty funding on a competitive basis. Staff are actively encouraged to participate in international conferences. The University also fosters research initiatives through its Annual Staff Conference, where successful research projects are showcased and workshops are held relating to grant applications, the management of research projects, and the development of impact potential.

Part-time hourly-paid colleagues, many of whom have recently gained their PhDs, are integrated into the Department's research culture by attending research days and seminars, funding application workshops and presenting research papers. They are also supported with resources such as office space, PCs and printing facilities, access to Library resources, including full staff borrowing rights, and allocated a mentor sensitive to their needs as researchers at the beginning of their careers.

ii. Research students

Training and support for PGR students is a shared responsibility at Chester, between the Graduate School, which is responsible for providing generic training and support, and the department, which provides supervision and specialist training. PGR students are offered face-to-face training sessions by the Graduate School, supported by a Moodle site providing on-line access to training materials written and designed by academic staff from across all subjects and faculties. Students experience both a central University induction, and a local induction within the department, so that they have a full understanding of the regulations and services provided by central support departments as well as an introduction to departmental support staff, subject-specific events and facilities. PGRs are invited to attend taught sessions from within the postgraduate English curriculum, as well as those seminars and training sessions specifically designed for researchers. A requirement to undertake a self-assessment skills audit, using the Researcher Development Framework, helps them to identify their training needs. The Department and Faculty offer tailor-

made training where possible, and refer students to the Graduate School or Student Guidance and Support for additional training and support. Students diagnosed with special educational needs are referred to a Disability Support Worker. International students have access to specialist language training, where necessary.

Each student is allocated at least two approved supervisors, one of whom is designated Director of Studies, and who will have supervised at least one student to successful completion of the award. Supervision meetings take place regularly, with at least one meeting per month being recorded with outcomes and targets. Following a probationary period of 6-9 months, student progress is reviewed formally. If the student's registration is confirmed at the 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) assesses progress against objectives and expectations on an annual basis before the Annual Progress Board meeting. Students must submit a written report, present a research paper before an audience and attend an interview before their upgrade from MPhil to PhD can be confirmed. There is a similar rigorous process to consider applications to transfer to 'writing up' status. Each PGR student in English is encouraged to take part in a recorded 'mock' viva following submission of the thesis. Those students who will be involved in teaching are expected to undertake specific training, and may, if they wish, undertake modules leading to Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, which provides a good basis for future applications for academic posts.

The Faculty of Humanities has a designated PG tutor who is available to see PGR students by appointment and to resolve any issues or questions they may have. Faculty tutors represent their Faculty and its students at the regular Graduate School meetings. The University recognises the value of conference participation for all PGR students and has established a fund to provide a contribution to conference attendance. Each year applications are invited and all successful applicants are provided with financial support. Annually, the Faculty of Humanities holds a PGR conference where papers are presented and invited expert speakers deliver workshops and training sessions. Academics in English have recently delivered training sessions and produced online training materials in the form of podcasts, including 'Preparing for the Viva', 'Time Management and your PhD', and 'Interdisciplinary Research'.

English at Chester has an excellent track record for PGR student support and a very high proportion of its PhD projects have been brought to successful completion (every student who has completed the programme has passed). 100% of PGR students have commented in feedback on how well-supported they have been in the Department. Since 2008, there have been seven PhDs awarded. Four of these were for fully-funded full-time PhD students; one part-time student was awarded a University fees bursary. The English Department continues to attract PGR students of a high standard in specialist research areas; currently seven are registered on the MPhil/PhD programme. The Masters programme in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture has offered a route to PhD study for some PGR students in English, while others have recently joined the Department's graduate community from Masters programmes in the UK (the Universities of Warwick and Liverpool, for example) and overseas (Canada).

The Department encourages its PGR students to disseminate their research by pursuing publishing opportunities and actively promotes participation in external academic conferences. It also encourages PGRs to organise conferences at Chester. In 2010 two PGRs organised a major international conference, *Queer Manifestations: Literature, History, Theory, Culture* (keynote by Prof. Sally Munt, University of Sussex), supported by departmental and Faculty funding. Departmental funds are also available to support PGR conference attendance when a paper is being presented and to support PGR students who organise in-house events and networks. Since 2011, English research students have been active in the cross-faculty Gender Research Network. Informal networking opportunities with PGR students at the University of Keele have been in place since 2010, when a reading group was established for researchers of nineteenth-century literature. Twice a year the reading group meets to discuss a relevant text; in the eight meetings held so far, approximately twenty postgraduates and academics have met on each occasion for lively discussions. This initiative offers an excellent networking opportunity for PGRs at both universities.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The University Library has 260,000 printed volumes in its collections and books can be borrowed from any of the libraries at the University's different sites. The collections also include 15,000 e-books which are core academic texts plus access to many other online materials. There are subscriptions to over 1,000 printed journals and more than 13,000 electronic journals which can be accessed online. The recent adoption of the *ProQuest* search engine offers comprehensive access to library and electronic resources, on- and off-campus. The English Department funds all Inter-Library Loans for its academic staff and offers 80% subsidies for PGR students. 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. Staff and PGRs in English avail themselves of the SCONUL system, which enables access to other university libraries across the UK.

In English, all full-time academic staff are provided with office space with desks, storage spaces, telephones and computers and, on request, the Department provides a laptop, digital recorder or iPad for off-campus use. Part-time staff can access a designated shared office, fitted with desks, computers, telephones and storage space. Photocopying facilities and stationery are also freely available to English staff. All English PGR students can borrow a laptop computer for the duration of their studies and have access to a dedicated central University secure PG study space, newly-refurbished in 2012-13. Wireless internet is available throughout the campus. Off-campus, PGR students have access to Graduate School Moodle sites and online resources.

English benefited from the external funding arising from **Wynne's** AHRC Research Leave Grant of £17,547 covering the period 01/09/2008 to 28/02/2009. The award allowed **Wynne** to complete her monograph, *Women and Personal Property in the Victorian Novel* (Ashgate, 2010) **Wynne** has also gained an AHRC Fellowship of £59,057 for the period 01/10/2013 to 30/06/2014 to complete her third book, *Literary Fabrics: The Textile Languages of Novels and Costume Dramas*.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

The Department has expanded from 12 fte staff in 2008 to 20 fte in 2013. It prides itself on maintaining a supportive and collaborative environment, fostering a wealth of diverse research specialisms and making important contributions to the disciplines of literary studies and creative writing. New appointments of promising Linguists working on well-formulated research projects augment the Department's research profile and promise significant contributions to the discipline in the next REF census period. Ongoing major projects for book length projects (**Fegan, Haig, Rees, Stephenson, S.West and Wynne**), are currently being supported. Since 2008 there have been 21 books published by members of the English team (as authors or editors) and all staff have published their research in the forms of book chapters, journal articles and online publications; some have edited journals. All staff have regularly presented their research at conferences and seminars, or performed their creative work at festivals and other events. The following details indicate some of the Department's main activities and achievements in research since RAE 2008:

External funding grants/ fellowships: **Wynne** gained an AHRC Research Grant, 2008-09: £17,547 and an AHRC Fellowship, 2013-14: £59,057.

External examination of doctorates:

Haig: Southern Cross University, Australia (2011); Brunel University (2011); Swinburne University, Melbourne (2012); Goldsmiths, University of London (2013).

Wynne: University of Sussex (2011); Macquarie University, Australia (2011).

External consultancy on boards, committees and panels:

Blair: External Assessor for promotion committee at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban (2009 and 2011); judge of the NYC Midnight Flash Fiction Challenge (2011).

Blair and Chantler: Judges of the NYC Midnight Flash Fiction Challenge (2010); the Gladstone's Library Short Story Competition (2013); the Chester Library Flash Fiction Competition (2013).

Fegan: External Assessor of applications for Humanities Research Funding for NWO

(Netherlands) Council for the Humanities and the Wellcome Trust.

Collaborations:

Alsop worked with internationally renowned Handel scholars as part of BBC Radio 3's broadcasts on Handel's operas as part of his Impact project, *Handel's Literary Texts*.

Close collaborated with Prof. Bas Aarts (UCL) on AHRC-funded project (2009), 'The changing verb phrase in present-day British English', and has co-authored subsequent related publications.

Herrmann is collaborating with Dr Blanca Schaefer (University of Sheffield) and Dr Bianka Schramm (Katholische Hochschule Mainz, Germany) on a research project, 'Phonological awareness in children with cochlea implants (multiple case studies)' - data collection took place in 2012. **Herrmann** also collaborates with Prof. Annette Fox-Boyer (Europäische Fachhochschule Rostock, FB Gesundheitswissenschaften, Germany) and Dr Blanca Schaefer (University of Sheffield) on the research project, 'Phonological development of German-speaking 2-year olds (longitudinal study)'; the project began in 2011 and outputs are currently in process.

Wynne and **Heaton** collaborate with Dr Amber Regis (University of Sheffield) on the *Textile Stories Project* (**Wynne's** AHRC Fellowship funds the 2014 public engagement events).

Invited Lectures, Keynotes, Creative Writing Readings:

Fegan: *Ireland in the Nineteenth-Century: English and Irish Novel*, Universita Roma Tre (2010); *William Carleton Summer School* in Co. Tyrone (2012); *Global Legacies of the Great Famine*, Radboud University, Netherlands (2013).

Haig: poetry reading, Cheltenham Poetry Festival (2013).

Siddle: *Anthony Trollope International Summer School*, Drumsna, Co. Letrim, Ireland (2010).

Stephenson: poetry reading, Derwent Poetry Festival, (2012); *Anphicon 1: Cognitive Enhancement and Other Technologies of the Mind*, Centre for Ethics in Medicine, University of Bristol, (2013).

Wynne: *Long Nineteenth Century Seminar*, University of Salford, Manchester Public Library (2009); *The Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research*, University of Cardiff (2010); The Daphne Carrick Lecture, *The Gaskell Society*, Manchester (2011); *Victorian Popular Fiction Association*, Annual Conference, Senate House, London (2012).

Recognition of achievements/ election to learned societies:

Wall: elected Fellow of the English Association and Member of the Welsh Academy (2012) in acknowledgment of the significance of his published work, which has now been translated into ten languages.

Davies: elected to the Executive Committee (2013) of the international Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA).

Reprinted publications:

Wall: *Myth, Metaphor and Science* (book of essays, 2009) was commissioned by the Royal Literary Fund as a worldwide resource and made available in full on the RLF website.

Wynne: chapter from *Women and Personal Property in the Victorian Novel* (monograph, 2010) is republished as 'Circulation and Stasis: Feminine Property in the Novels of Charles Dickens' in *Dickens, Sexuality and Gender*, ed. L. Nayder (Ashgate, 2012): 593-624.

Readers' reports/ peer reviews to the following publishers and journal editors:

Ashgate (**Chantler**; **S.West**; **Wynne**); *American Periodicals* (**Wynne**); *Atlantic Studies* (**Fegan**); Broadview Press (**S.West**); Cambridge University Press (**Walsh**); Continuum (**Stephenson**); *English* (**Rees**; **Wynne**); *English Language and Linguistics* (**Close**); *Irish Studies Review* (**Fegan**); *Journal of Family Studies* (**Wynne**); *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* (**Herrmann**); *Journal of Religion and Literature* (**Walsh**); *Language Variation and Change* (**Close**); Palgrave Macmillan (**Stephenson**); Quartet (**Blair**); *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice* (**Chantler**); *Victorian Periodicals Review* (**Wynne**); *Victorian Review* (**Wynne**); *Women's Writing* (**Wynne**).

Journals edited by members of the Department:

Blair and **Chantler** edit *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine* founded in 2008. It is the leading publisher of quality short-short stories and serious reviews of flash fiction. Writers from

thirty-five countries, including Booker and Pulitzer Prize winners and nominees, have contributed stories, amongst them translations from six languages.

Seed edits *Shadowtrain*, an online poetry journal selected by the British Library for preservation as part of its Literature Special Collection.

Reviews of staff research outputs:

Chantler's edited book, *Literature and Authenticity, 1780-1900* (2011), was reviewed in *The Byron Journal* (2012); *The Cowper and Newton Journal* (2012); *The Wordsworth Circle* (2012).

Rees's monograph *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History* (2013) was reviewed as 'Book of the Week' in *THE* and in *The New Statesman*; *Independent on Sunday*; *Library Journal*; *Publishers' Weekly*; and salon.com. The conference organised by **Rees**, *Talking Bodies: Identity, Sexuality, Representation* (2013) was reviewed in *THE* in the same year.

Stephenson's monograph *Gonzo Republic* (2011) was reviewed in *The Irish Times*, (2012); *Transnational Literature* (2012); *Choice* (2012); *American Literary Scholarship* (2011); *Inside Books* (2012); *Bookmunch* (2012).

Wall's novel *Sylvie's Riddle* (2008) was reviewed in *The Telegraph* (2008) and *Guardian* (2008).

Wynne's book *Women and Personal Property in the Victorian Novel* (2010) was reviewed in *Dickens Studies Quarterly* (2011); *Victorian Studies* (2012); *Dickens Studies Annual* (2012).

Book reviewing for the following journals:

Byron Journal (**Chantler**, twice); *English* (**Rees**); *English Historical Review* (**Fegan**); *Fiction Uncovered* (**Wall**); *Fortnightly Review* (**Wall**, twice); *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* (**Walsh**); *Irish Studies Review* (**Fegan**); *Journal of Religion and Literature* (**Walsh**); *Journal of Tourism History* (**Fegan**); *Language and Literature* (**Davies**); *Modern Language Review* (**Wynne**); *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* (**Wynne**); *PNR* (**Wall**); *Psychology and Sexuality* (**Rees** twice); *Review of English Studies* (**Fegan**); *Victorian Studies* (**Wynne**); *Victoriographies* (**Fegan**; **S.West**); *Women's Studies Quarterly* (**Rees**).

Public media recognition:

Stephenson: Interviewed about his monograph, *Gonzo Republic*, Talk Radio Europe, *Hannah Murray Show* (2012).

Rees: Interviewed about her monograph, *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History*, scheduled for BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* (2013).

Prizes and accolades:

Haig: Runner up, Yorkshire Open Poetry Contest (2011); Hawthornden International Fellowship for Creative Writing (2010).

Stephenson: Won the Iota Shots Award for his poetry collection, *Rain Dancers in the Data Cloud* (2012) and the Ravenglass Poetry Prize for his poetry collection, *Source Code* (2013).

Wall: *Doctor Placebo* (poetry collection) was chosen as one of the books of the year by the Welsh Arts Council (2010).

Conference organisation:

Since 2008 **five** major international interdisciplinary conferences have been organised: *Holocaust Representations Since 1975* (**Haig** 2009); *The Other Nineteenth Century* (**S.West** and **Wynne** 2009); *Spectres of Class: Representing Social Class from the French Revolution to the Present* (**Davies** and **Wynne** 2011); *Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End: Modernism and the First World War* Institute of English Studies, London (**Chantler** was co-organiser 2012); *Talking Bodies: Identity, Sexuality, Representation* (**Rees** 2013).

Archives established and managed by members of the Department:

The Flash Fiction Special Collection held at the University's Seaborne Library and managed by **Blair** and **Chantler** is the world's largest archive of short-short-story anthologies, collections, magazines, and secondary texts. This resource for students and researchers comprises current and back issues of nine periodicals and well over two hundred other works, including several rare books published in the USA in the 1940s and 1950s.