

Institution: Newman University

Unit of Assessment: 30 – History

a. Overview

The History UOA is part of the multi-disciplinary School of Human Sciences. The staff team consists of Dr Ian Cawood (Head of Subject), Dr Juliette Harrisson (Lecturer in Ancient History), Dr Noelle Plack (Reader in French History), and Dr Chris Upton (Reader in Public History), although Upton is not submitting to REF 2014. The unit's research interests span areas of 19th and 20th century British political history, 18th and 19th century French social history, Roman cultural history and the local history of the West Midlands. Governance, citizenship and power are key themes that link Cawood's work on Victorian politics and political culture with Plack's work on the social and economic impact of the French Revolution, while religion, memory and reception are themes that occur in Harrisson's work on dreams and cultural imagination in the Roman Empire.

Newman University College became Newman University in 2013. The research mission of the University is to continue to broaden the base of research active staff across all areas of academic activity, to support staff research and scholarly activities through the development of an inclusive culture and supportive environment. The benefits of the University's policies of supporting research remain evident, with financial support for members of staff in Units of Assessment, with scholarships for postgraduate research students, and protected staff time for research and scholarship. We can point to substantial improvements in the quality and quantity of our research publications and a rising research profile, which will see more History staff returned in the Research Excellence Framework than in previous Research Assessment Exercises.

The University's Research Committee promotes research development and monitors its progress. This includes overseeing the supervision arrangements for postgraduate students and managing the research strategy for academic staff. The budgetary system of the University gives financial responsibility to the Research Committee. A number of measures have been taken by the University to bring about a significant change in the profile of research in order to situate it as an integral feature of activity. These measures culminated in the appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Scholarship in 2013 to take a leading role in promoting research across the institution for the future. Over the reporting period, History has flourished as an area following a substantial increase in the resources available to support staff scholarly activities, the development of a new institutional research strategy to encourage and facilitate research, and a programme of training and staff development to support and refine research practices. As previously, funding towards the cost of further academic study is offered through an annual bidding process managed by the Research Committee, and monies secured in the last Research Assessment Exercise have been used to expand the University's areas of research excellence recognized in 2008, including History.

b. Research strategy

History is a dynamic research area within the University and has made substantial progress since its submission to RAE 2008. Since that time, when only one member (Plack) was submitted as an early-career researcher, the History unit has consolidated and expanded its research activities and interests and is making a more wide-ranging submission to REF 2014. The department has grown in size and there are currently two Readers and two other research active staff; 75% of staff are entered in REF 2014. Professor Martial Staub (University of Sheffield) was recently appointed as a Visiting Professor in History and has brought significant research expertise and guidance to the unit. Newman University is also in partnership with regional research repositories and organizations such as Birmingham Central Library and Archives, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Black Country Living Museum. Dr Chris Upton, while not submitting to REF 2014, leads on these partnerships and continues his work of public engagement and research into the local history of the West Midlands.

In line with the University's research strategy, both the volume and quality of research outputs has increased during the assessment period as each submitting member has a monograph and several substantial journal articles/book chapters. While research in history is continuing to develop, each individual brings to the culture the external activities, networks and influences with which they are involved, thus enriching and enhancing the internal environment. They all attend and present at local, national and international seminars and conferences as well as organizing conferences at Newman and other HEIs. Invited seminar/conference papers have been given at Universities in Bangor, Cork, Dublin, Leeds, London and Paris. UOA members are also regularly commissioned to peer-review work for international journals and to contribute book reviews to leading journals in the field, such as *American Historical Review* (NP), *The Classical Review* (JH), *English Historical Review* (IC), *European History Quarterly* (NP), *French History* (NP), *Journal of Labour History* (IC), *Journal of Liberal History* (IC), and *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* (NP).

The unit's research strategy for the next five years is to enhance its profile and capacity for research in key areas of its work.

- Increasing and sustaining both the volume and quality of monographs and journal articles is a priority. Plack, Cawood and Harrisson are working on research monographs that will be published within the next assessment period for REF 2020.
- Applying for external research funding from bodies such as the AHRC, The British Academy and The Leverhulme Trust is also amongst the targets for the unit in the next five years.
- Organizing and hosting conferences and workshops at Newman University is another strategic goal. Dr Cawood is planning a major conference on Joseph Chamberlain in July 2014 in partnership with Birmingham City Council and with financial support from the Council, the Liberal History Group and Severn Trent Water.
- Developing a PGR student cohort within the humanities is another priority within the University. The University plans to support its goal of achieving Research Degree Awarding Power by investing in PhD studentships in areas of research strength. History is one such area and it expected that the number of PhD students and staff with supervision experience would increase over the next census period.
- Growing the dissemination and impact of our research externally. Members of the unit also contribute to and regularly attend the University's Humanities Research Group Seminar Series, currently organized by Dr Plack.

As set out in its Research Strategy for 2012-2015, Newman University aspires to be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally for the quality of its research and scholarship. Our vision for research in History is underpinned by the University's core values as outlined in its Strategic Plan and its mission to make a positive difference to individuals and communities through the contribution of its staff, students and graduates. Building upon the positive outcome of the RAE in 2008, the Research Strategy has particularly focused investment funds on units such as History submitting to the Research Excellence Framework, whilst enabling early-career researchers to develop their capacity. Against a background of tighter fiscal constraints we are also making links with other aspects of third stream activity. Knowledge transfer, consultancy and related forms of employer engagement are creating opportunities and funding for research and income generation, as well as broadening the student experience and providing staff development. An example of this is the development of postgraduate provision in partnership with local heritage organizations, such as the Black Country Living Museum and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

The University's Research Committee, which includes Dr Plack, takes as its remit a strategic role in all aspects of developing and sustaining a successful research culture and research performance. The Committee's major function is to ensure that the University's areas of research strength, such as History, are protected and enhanced, that research potential is recognised and nurtured and that resources are strategically targeted to build an externally recognised research presence. A detailed action plan for the implementation of these objectives is provided and reviewed annually. Since the last RAE, we have strengthened our academic leadership through the internal promotion of six further staff to the position of Reader, including two members of the

History UOA, and through the external appointment of several new professors, who have extensive successful PhD supervision experience; two new professors have been appointed as Deans of School and other professors have been appointed as senior academic leads, such that the University now has a Professoriate which meets periodically throughout the academic year to advise the Vice-Chancellor on matters of research.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The History Team has expanded since RAE 2008 with an appointment of a lecturer in Ancient History (fixed-term 0.4 FTE) while another permanent lecturer in Early Modern British History will be appointed in January 2014. In addition, Cawood completed his PhD in 2009. Since RAE 2008 the appointment of research active staff has been made a significant priority with lecturer level positions requiring doctoral qualification and evidence of research potential in the form of peer-reviewed publication. At interview, applicants are required to demonstrate a clear and achievable three-year research plan. Discussion of progress towards research goals forms an important part of the annual appraisal process, and Early Career Academics are assigned a designated mentor. These developments have increased the subject expertise, temporal breadth and research capacity of the unit.

The University's Research Committee operates a Small Grants scheme. Sums of up to a maximum of £600 are made available to subject areas, research groups or individuals. A significant number of awards are allocated every year to encourage members of staff to pursue small-scale research projects individually or as a group. This allocation is based on a highly competitive bidding process. Dr Plack received a Small Research Grant from the University's Research Committee to carry out archival research in France, which aided the completion of her first monograph. In addition, the Research Committee invites research groups to bid for a maximum of £3,000 as a contribution towards more substantial research projects.

The University has also operated when possible a scheme of negotiated sabbatical support for staff, who must identify clear and measurable targets to be achieved at the end of the sabbatical period. Both Cawood and Plack have been afforded periods of sabbatical leave: Cawood to finish his PhD on the Liberal Unionist Party in Britain at the University of Leicester, while Plack was Visiting Professor at the Centre de Recherches historiques, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris in 2010. Financial support of up to £2,000 is provided for staging conferences at the University and funding is also given for conference presentation to a maximum of £400 per conference; support may be given to multiple presentations in any one year. More general support covers both advice to the research community and information to the Research Committee and is provided by the Research Office Administrator as part of the range of support offered by the Graduate School. This involves organising regular research seminars, research training workshops and inaugural-professorial lectures, as well as enabling suitably qualified academic staff to engage in postgraduate research supervision. Both Cawood and Plack are approved postgraduate supervisors and have successfully supervised at both MPhil and PhD level during the assessment period.

Staff development on research-related issues is organised by the Head of the Academic Practice Unit; all matters of staff and student research ethics are overseen by the Research Ethics Committee, which scrutinizes several hundred research proposals each year. Regular staff research seminars are held throughout the year, some organized centrally and some within the School. Contributors to these seminars are University staff, research students and invited speakers from other institutions. The University has now long maintained a Visiting Professor scheme for distinguished scholars. As well as delivering research seminars and workshops, the Visiting Professors play a pivotal role in developing the research and scholarship potential of staff through appropriate forms of advice, training and support.

ii. Research students

The University's research culture is being enhanced by the on-going development of the Graduate School which has the primary responsibility for postgraduate research student training and social and intellectual integration while playing a key role alongside Schools, Subject Areas, and Programmes in developing career pathways for successful research students.

During the assessment period, there has been one PhD and two MPhils awarded in History in partnership with the University of Leicester. Jonathan Atherton was funded on a three year studentship from Newman's Research Committee (2008-2011) and successfully completed his PhD in 2012 with a thesis entitled 'Rioting, Dissent and the Church in 18th century Britain: The Priestley Riots of 1791'. Dr Plack was co-supervisor with Dr Nigel Aston at the University of Leicester, the institution that currently awards Newman's research degrees.

The History team are aware of the need to provide PGR students in a small Department with access to wider networks. They are therefore expected to engage with the postgraduate student community at other institutions and organizations, such as Centre for West Midlands History at the University of Birmingham, the Birmingham Branch of the Historical Association and The History Lab at the University of Leicester. Students and supervisors are also able to access the resources of the CREST network, a consortium of 22 small HEIs which supports research within the member institutions, provides opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration, offers training to PGRs and their supervisors, and enables PGR students to present their work in the early stages to a wider audience through regular research symposia.

Development and support for research students is thus provided by the Graduate School, while pastoral support and mentoring is provided by the Postgraduate Research Coordinator, a role currently undertaken by Dr Plack. While attracting self-funding students, the University has operated a flexible policy of offering research studentships through a competitive bidding process. The University offers training to PGR students preparing for a career in Higher Education and opportunity is sometimes available for students to gain hands-on teaching experience.

PhD students benefit from close and systematic supervision in line with Newman's student-centred approach. They also have an excellent formative experience as each PhD student has a Director of Studies and second supervisor and their progress is monitored and reviewed by the Postgraduate Research Coordinator in the Graduate School. PhD students have dedicated office space adjacent to the new University library with their own desk and computer. Opportunities for publication of postgraduate research are provided by the Newman hosted journal *Critical Commentary* which is now also an outlet for research for all members at GuildHE/CREST institutions. The Art and Humanities subjects at Newman were part of an AHRC block grant partnership bid - CREST BGP2 Consortium. This bid was ultimately unsuccessful in securing funding from the AHRC, but working in partnership with other GuildHE institutions was fruitful and these networks will be developed in the future.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

As outlined above, staff are able to apply for internal funds to support their research activities to the Research Committee. In addition to this, staff have been successful in securing competitive internal and external research funding. Every year since 2009, RAE funding has been devolved proportionally to UOAs in preparation for REF 2014. This funding, totalling more than £10,000 over the census period, has helped members of the History unit to conduct archival research both in Britain and France, attend national and international conferences and support initial project planning and development. Dr Plack was also awarded a €3100 stipend attached to her Visiting Professorship at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris in 2010.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

The History unit is actively involved in a range of national and international research collaborations

that extend across all areas of its research interests and provide a significant contribution to the discipline.

Dr Ian Cawood is a leading historian of Victorian politics and has contributed, for example, to *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Times Literary Supplement*; he has also been invited to submit articles in French and Canadian journals. Cawood is on the editorial board of *The Journal of Liberal History* and he organized a one-day conference on political culture in Victorian Britain at Newman University in November 2012. In addition to the outputs submitted to REF 2014, Cawood has published a review article in *Parliamentary History* (2011) and a policy paper and opinion piece for the website *History and Policy* (2013).

Dr Juliette Harrisson has made contributions to *The Encyclopaedia of Ancient History* and the *Cultural Memory and History in Antiquity* Series published by Bloomsbury. In addition to the outputs submitted to REF 2014, Harrisson has a chapter in *Cultural Memory and Identity in Ancient Societies* (Volume One of the series *Cultural Memory and History in Antiquity*) (London: Continuum, 2011) and articles in *Rosetta* (2010), *Journal of Hellenic Religion* 3 (2009/10) and *New Voices in Classical Reception Research* (2010).

Dr Noelle Plack has an international profile in the social and economic history of the French Revolution. She served as the Society News Editor for *French History* (2008-2011) and is currently the Membership Secretary for the Society for the Study of French History. Plack is also a member of Alcohol and Drugs History Society and Warwick Drinking Studies Network. She was on the organizing committee of the international conference, *Under Control? Alcohol and Drug Regulation, Past and Present* held in London in June 2013; she also externally examined a History PhD on British travel writers in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France at the University of Birmingham in 2008. Plack has been invited to contribute chapters to *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution* (forthcoming, 2014) and *Alcohol: Social, Cultural, and Historical Perspectives* (forthcoming, 2015). In addition to the outputs submitted to REF 2014, Plack has published articles in *Annales du Midi* (2012), *History Today* (2013), a review article in *European History Quarterly* (2009) and a chapter in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to The French Revolution* (2013).