

UNIT 30 HISTORY : ENVIRONMENT TEMPLATE

Section 4

a. Overview

Unit of Assessment 30 History is within the Research Beacon for Cultural and Regional Studies, in the Department of Culture in the Faculty of Education and Society. Following the successful RAE of 2008, the University created four interdisciplinary Research Beacons and three Research Centres in order to foster research activities across the institution. The titles reflect 'themes' which are 'designed to be sufficiently broad to capture most research interests in all Faculties, but sufficiently focussed so as to highlight areas of research strength and to act as an enabling framework' (University Research Plan, 2012: 13). The Beacons were therefore established to provide an 'inclusive framework within which to accommodate and rationalise the research activity of the University, providing a strong, externally-visible, indication of areas of strength' (13-14). Their activities include creating academic collaboration, external partnerships, and knowledge exchanges. History was a founder member of this Beacon, and History staff have been represented fully on its management.

Individual Units of Assessment are therefore nurtured and supported by Beacon and Centre funding, and in this way a research culture involving staff and research students from cognate disciplines has been created. Through this framework the relatively small UoAs avoid isolation and are able to build on their established multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work, 'united by an interest in the understanding of culture and cultural practices in diverse forms and at all levels of society' (Cultural and Regional Studies, Beacon Plan, 2009:1). The Cultural and Regional Studies Beacon seeks 'to unite the regional and the global through programmes of research that are locally relevant and foster a wider cultural awareness in the region'. A further important ambition was 'in keeping with Sunderland's status as a civic university', to 'seek to engage in dialogue not only with our academic peers but also with our community in the region through regular and sustained outreach' (Beacon Plan, 2009:1). The commitment to equality of opportunity and developing academic quality which is fundamental to the Beacon has been vital to sustaining the growth of both academic activities and wider community engagement in History. The Cultural and Regional Studies Beacon embraces English and Linguistics as well as Politics (all in the Department of Culture) – which provides for fruitful interactions and the development of common interests in terms of historical approaches and topics, particularly in the areas of cultural representation and identity.

The History Unit includes staff who teach French and Sociology as well as History, indicating the wide range of quite a small unit. History staff teach the full range of degree programmes, at BA, MA and postgraduate research. The MA team includes staff from Politics and Sociology. Historically-informed curricula therefore are widespread, and all staff in the Unit aim to implement the University's commitment to a 'research active curriculum' by providing a vehicle for exploring research in their teaching. The University Research Plan emphasises research, which is to underpin the academic standing of the University as a seat of higher learning and scholarship. Research is undertaken which both enhances the learning experience of our students, and delivers impact.

b. Research Strategy

In a relatively small team, there are wide and often overlapping interests which provide a supportive academic atmosphere for all colleagues. These interests are often shared by colleagues in, for example, the English Unit, particularly in American Studies or early modern literature and ideas.

In a small Unit there cannot be distinct research groups, but the strengths of our interests can be summarised under a number of headings (references in brackets are to submitted outputs):

1. Culture and Society in the Early Modern Period, England, the UK, France and the Atlantic World [Rushton 2011(0000820-2) and 2013 (0000820-3); Hayes 2008 (0003787-1)]
2. Law and Society, including policy and social change [Hayes 2011 (0003787-4); Rushton (2013a (0000820-3) and 2013b (0000820-4) ; Yuill 2009 (0008505-2) and 2013 (0008505-3)]
3. Intellectual History of Ideas, Scientific Discourses, and critical perspectives on liberalism [e.g. Hayes 2008 (0003787-1 and 0003787-2) and 2010 (0003787-3); Yuill 2013 (0008505-2)]
4. Problematic Identities, including memory and history, and social change. Partly focussed on NE England [Rushton, 2009 (0000820-1)] but this interest also includes nationalities and national histories [e.g. Rushton 2013a (0000820-3), McCormack 2008 (0021106-2) and 2011 (0021106-4); Yuill, 2008 (0008505-4)]

The framework of monitoring and accountability in the University means that Unit 30 is embedded in a structure of reporting to both Beacon, Faculty and University. The individual grants of support to staff provided by the Beacon for Cultural and Regional Studies are subject to scrutiny as to output and successful completion of projects. Beacon expenditure and its outputs, the policies of equal opportunity and investment, are all subject to monitoring and report to the Faculty of Education and Society. The Associate Dean (Resources and Research) is part of the Beacon's management group.

The University, through its REF Core Group, has oversight of the progress of Units of Assessment within their Beacons and Centres, and shapes the strategic aims of research within the University and for the Units. In addition, the University, through this REF Core Group, has invested funds in a University Research Development Fund which is open to all members of staff to apply for support, on a competitive basis.

Since 2008 the aims of the Unit have been

- To promote the research development of new staff in the early stages of their careers with a view to their being submitted in 2013.
- To build upon previous achievements by supporting the research of those already established.
- Through the Beacon, therefore, there has been an explicit commitment to open competition and equal opportunities in applying for resources to initiate and develop new projects
- To invest in the resource base for research in History, through enhanced provision of online research resources such as digitized newspapers and original printed publications, particularly for the early modern period, and improved access to key academic journals in the University Library
- To develop the archival base of the University following the gift of the pit deputies' and Durham miners' trade union records (leading to the formation of the NE England Mining Archive and Research Centre or NEEMARC) through digitization and web-based open access to key records.

The Unit does not have a policy of limiting the scope of historical research, but encourages a wide diversity of focus and method. During the period 2014-2019 we aim to build upon current achievements and

- Increase our provision of opportunities to postgraduate research students
- Enhance our archival base and widen public and academic usage through online services

- Develop the research-active curriculum at all levels
- Ensure all academic staff in the area are submitted next time
- Build upon our regional networks, both academic and with the public, to engage with, and have an impact on, the wider community.

c. People

We are submitting four people out of a possible seven. There are two early-career researchers in the postdoctoral phase of their careers, in French and European history, one a recent appointment (Dr Laura O'Brien September 2013) who form an essential part of the future strategy for the next period: their interests build on both the early modern interests (above) and the history of French intellectual life, history and memory. We are determined to see these colleagues develop as full academic researchers post-2014; one (Dr. Delphine Doucet) has already received a semester's research leave to work on a major book project for the future. The seventh member of staff has been central to the publicly-funded development and administration of the NE England Mining Archive and Research Centre (D Stuart W. Howard).

i. Staffing Strategy and Development

The policy of recruitment of new staff has been aimed at fostering a research-active curriculum, with successful applicants expected to have their PhDs at or near completion. On appointment, staff participate in areas such as supervision of postgraduate students (through University training schemes), research publication and reaching out beyond the institution in academic and community networks.

Applications for promotion to senior lectureships, Readerships and professorships are invited annually, and one professor (Rushton) has been appointed during the current period. In addition, new roles such as Research Student Manager have been created to support postgraduate research undertaken by staff and students in each department.

Of the four staff in the current assessment, one is of longstanding academic achievement (Rushton), while three have built on their former achievements (Hayes, McCormack and Yuill).

Beacon funding has supported staff during the current period, providing buyouts from teaching for Doucet, Rushton, Yuill and former colleague Sarah Hackett. The Beacon has also provided seedcorn funding for the Bernician Studies Group within the Centre for Lifelong Learning to assist former colleague Colm O'Brien to develop a landscape archaeology project in the Republic of Ireland. This is now in its early stages, with collaborations established in the Republic.

Three staff have also been supported with funding for research travel and conference attendance (Yuill, Doucet and Rushton).

The Beacon hosted a funding workshop to supplement the informative visits to the University by funding bodies, to brief less experienced staff on ways of developing projects and funding bids.

Staff Development

With regard to equal opportunities policies and monitoring, policies of supporting early careers staff have therefore been essential to the progress of staff not previously in a research assessment exercise, and to the development of long-term projects for 2014 onwards. This is in accordance with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers which forms a fundamental part of the University Research Strategy.

ii. Research Students

Training opportunities have been provided centrally by the University Postgraduate Research Student Development Programme, which spans the VITAE researcher development framework. All research students are required to attend this programme, and annual reviews of their progress. Staff within the Unit also provide additional training, depending on individual needs. The generic training centrally provided has therefore been continually supplemented at the Department level as student projects have developed. In addition to local provision, Sunderland is part of a regional consortium of five universities which offer training to each others' postgraduates.

The PRES (research student feedback) survey in 2011 showed good scores for student satisfaction with their skills development, ranging from 73% for transferable and research skills to 85% for analytical and project management skills and 87% for independent learning. The recent university-wide PGR review identified this as "a comprehensive skills training programme". Moreover, the cross-disciplinary collaboration in supervision arrangements was highlighted as good practice.

There are currently four students in History, one of them funded by the Beacon for Cultural and Regional Studies; two are part-time and two full-time. In addition, History staff provide significant supervisory support for historically-related postgraduate research elsewhere in the University, such as in Health. Six PhDs were completed during the period of assessment, ranging in topic from the history and development of Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage, the Tyneside Irish community (co-supervised by English colleagues), to the problems of democracy in Uganda since independence. Current students focus particularly on topics in the twentieth century, ranging from politics and urban renewal in the USA, to women's rights in Bahrain and patterns of Muslim identity in England and Scotland. One has been awarded a Fullbright scholarship to fund the essential archival research in the United States for his doctorate.

Postgraduate students are supported by a Research Student Manager in the Department of Culture, and by the funds of the Regional and Cultural Studies Beacon.

Postgraduate students, whether full- or part-time, have a dedicated room and computer facilities. Recruitment has largely been of those with either significant undergraduate achievements or an MA in a relevant area. Annual monitoring is organized across the Faculty, incorporating staff from neighbouring departments, and this has provided support from the wider body of staff in the regular monitoring and advice available to students.

d. Income, Infrastructure and Facilities

For History, the Beacon for Cultural and Regional Studies has provided the financial support for many of the activities undertaken since 2008, including both investment in enhanced research resources (see below, Section d.1.) and funding staff on research leave (see Section c.1 above), conferences, and archival visits.

In terms of building resources for the wider community, the development of the NEEMARC mining archive [see *Impact Template*] has been a key aspect of the use of staff and resources. In addition to the initial external funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Beacon has provided £6000 for digitization of the union records of meetings and minutes, and the construction of online access for scholars and other interested members of the public.

Grants –

A number of important grants were obtained or deployed during the assessment period. The

Heritage Lottery-Funded 'England's Past' project, reviving the Victoria County History for Sunderland, was completed in 2009 (£108,061 spent that year) – this led to major publications by the staff involved and laid the groundwork for the current completion of the Sunderland volume of the VCH; former colleague Dr Dennis Wheeler gained a major grant to study climate change in the Arctic (£166, 692, in the years 2011-3, with smaller grants to examine evidence on climate history from ships' log books); Dr Stuart Howard, with his colleague from the University Library Service gained £88, 419 from the HLF to set up the NE England Mining Archive and Research Centre; Prof Peter Rushton (with former colleague Dr Gwenda Morgan), received a British Academy small grant (Reference: SG 46114), for £5,800, April 2007 – September 2008, for a project entitled, 'Threatening the State: Treason, Sedition and Rebellion In Britain and North America between the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution' (of which Rushton (item 3) 2013 is first major outcome; Dr Peter Hayes, obtained an ESRC grant, Ref: RES-000-22-1840, on the topic of 'Intercountry adoption: a comparative analysis of its effect on domestic adoption', 2006-9 amounting to £58,011, whose results can be seen in his publications and other activities.

d.1. Library

University Library Services, (ULS), support research and researchers through the provision of high quality library environment and facilities, appropriate print and electronic information resources and support from professional staff.

d.1.a. Environment and facilities

ULS has two libraries offering approximately 900 study spaces, including areas for silent, quiet and group study and more than 200 PCs and Mac workdesks.

d.1.b. Resources

The Library book fund for 2012-3 is £205,000 with allocation to the Faculty of Education and Society being £77,900. History and Politics' expenditure from this fund was £14,400. As well as print books, the library purchases ebook versions of textbooks when available.

The Library subscribes to over 2000 print and electronic journal titles. Usage is monitored and the portfolio of titles is continuously reviewed. Search and retrieval tools include a federated search engine ('Discover') and a range of online databases.

d.1.c. The Beacon for Cultural and Regional Studies has also invested more than £19,000 in purchasing access to key sources and increased subscriptions to journals, such as *Project Muse – Humanities Collection*, the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers and enhanced subscriptions to JSTOR.

In addition, subscriptions to specialist journals have enhanced the provision, notably: *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, *Wasafiri*, *Postcolonial Studies*, *Interventions*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Early Medieval Europe*

d.1.d.

Researchers may also make up to 65 Interlibrary loan requests each academic year for items not in library stock.

The Library subscribes to Journal Citation Reports for journal ranking and ISI Highly cited and Web of Science citation analysis tools.

Researchers may join the Sconul Access Scheme, enabling access and borrowing from up to 170 university libraries in the scheme, including those of Durham and Newcastle Universities.

SURE, the Sunderland Institutional Repository is the digital collection of the research output of the university and includes journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and

PhD theses. ULS also subscribes to the British Library's EthOS service where an increasing number of UK HE theses are available in full text.

d.1.e. Support

As well as a library website for researchers, professional librarians provide support to researchers via the 'library buddy' service. Librarians also contribute to the university's training programme for new researchers and deliver sessions on accessing, searching and retrieving information from online databases and using the Internet to communicate ideas and research outputs via social media tools.

d.2. History Lab

An essential part of the research culture for both students (at all levels) and staff has been the development of the History Lab. The aim of the History Lab is to create a space for undergraduate and postgraduate students to enjoy History outside of the classroom. It is about getting together to decide on activities, including trips, lectures and conferences. The Lab is run by the students and they choose topics and speakers they are interested in. These topics could be some not found on the university's History curriculum or those that tie in well with our modules. The Lab hosted a hugely successful one-day conference on British History in 2011, which attracted both staff and students from the university, as well as members of the general public. Past speakers have included Prof. Keith Wrightson (Yale University), Prof. Robert Colls (University of Leicester), Prof. Panikos Panayi (De Montfort University), Prof. Jo Fox (University of Durham) and Dr. Alan Craig (University of Leeds). Topics covered in papers have included Second World War propaganda, English Elizabethan society, immigration and race in Britain, European political thought, the Russian Civil War, American foreign policy and state formation in Darfur.

The Beacon for Cultural and Regional Studies assisted in funding a conference on British History in 2010, and is underwriting a major multi-disciplinary conference on the global implications of World War I in April 2014. The History team held a special conference for schools, both teachers and students, in September 2013, and there will be a session in the WWI conference to explore the problems of teaching the history and memory of that war.

In addition, the Lord Lawson Memorial lecture, in association with the NE England Mining Archive and Research Centre (NEEMARC) has formed a crucial opening for public participation in mining and industrial history, bringing in many members of the public. Speakers include David Douglass (2010) and Professor Paul Younger (2011).

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline and other disciplines

e.1 The NE England History Institute (NEEHI), an alliance of the six universities of the region (Teesside, Northumbria, Durham, Sunderland and Newcastle, plus the Open University) was founded in the 1990s, and Sunderland has been an active part of its activities ever since. The primary aim is to promote research, dissemination and publication on the theme of regionalism and regional studies, with an aim of broadening out the focus to other regions and areas. The publication series, *Regions and Regionalism*, is published by the Boydell Press. The series is currently at its 14th volume since 2000, and the Publications Secretary (Rushton) is based at Sunderland. The series has extended its interests from the original focus on the NE of England to embrace the wider empirical and theoretical problems of regionalism in the UK.

e.2 NE Early Modern Group:

The North East Early Modern Reading Group developed out of common research interests among staff from the universities of the region (Sunderland, Newcastle, Northumbria, Durham and Teesside). The group has been meeting since May 2011. It holds regular meetings in which the most recent historiography on the period is discussed. It involves staff

from different departments (History, English) researching different aspects of the period (political thought, religious ideas, social history, etc.) trying to encourage inter-disciplinarity and a variety of approaches. It aims to create research links among staff working on the early modern period in the North East. The responsibility for the organisation and running of the meetings is at the moment with Dr. Delphine Doucet (Sunderland) with support from Dr. Rachel Hammersley (Newcastle).

Esteem

Staff in the Unit have examined doctorates in Sussex, Newcastle and Northampton Universities, and served as external examiners for Masters level programmes at Durham. They have also refereed articles submitted to *Law and History Review*; *History, Medieval Archaeology*; *Archaeologia Aeliana*; *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*; *Vernacular Architecture*; *Perspectives on Science*; *Political Theory*; *Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics*; and *Social Epistemology*. In addition, Kevin Yuill referees grant applications to the Nuffield Foundation, and Peter Hayes for ESRC Peer Review College 2010-2013. Rushton has acted as reader and referee for book proposals for Bloomsbury Publishing (formerly Continuum Books) and The Boydell Press.

History staff have given papers at many international institutions. Hayes has spoken at the Asian Research Institute, Osaka University of Economics and Law, Japan, and given a public lecture on 'Multiculturalism in Britain' at Busan National University, Korea. In addition he has spoken on TV and radio. Yuill was invited to speak on the BBC R4's *Today* and the 'Moral Maze' about his recent study of assisted suicide, and given papers in academic conferences in Athens. Yuill has written for newspapers on contentious issues in the light of his work, in *The Spectator* and the *New York Times*, on assisted suicide, and Hayes's work has been influential in parliamentary discussion of adoption in a multi-cultural society. Rushton has given papers at the European Social Science History Conference (Ghent, 2020; Glasgow, 2012).