

Institution: Ulster University
Unit of Assessment: Social Policy and Social Work
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>Overview</p> <p>Our research is focused on the nexus between social administration and social policy, organised through six research clusters: social policy and public administration; social work; social economics; politics; peace and conflict; sociology and criminology. By embedding the design, implementation and delivery of our research in the everyday lives of state and civic society, we have developed and sustained an excellent reputation for producing high quality research outputs that examine, document, theorise and tackle emerging social challenges. Through meaningful collaborations with policy-makers and civic society, we have influenced evidence-based policy and practice. We have a strong track record in producing knowledge that reaches beyond academic boundaries. We have built close working relationships with government departments, international NGOs, human rights bodies, trade unions, national and international oversight bodies and communities directly impacted by our research. Our research is driven by a desire to understand social change and ensure that the social sciences have social value. We seek to produce research that has meaningful relevance and impact for real world issues in areas such as human rights, access to justice, politics, commerce, industry, civil society and the public and NGO sectors.</p> <p>Aims and Goals 2014-2020</p> <p>Social Work and Social Policy at Ulster has strongly rooted its research in understanding and contributing to regional challenges, typified in the last REF cycle by a strategic focus on devolution, policy making and public administration, equality and social justice, and our longstanding tradition of work on health and social care. Since 2013, our Unit has undergone a process of thematic renewal that echoes Northern Ireland's (NI) own process of opening up in the post-conflict period. This has presented us with challenges, but also opportunities and responsibilities to play a role in understanding social transformation beyond our borders. Building on the previous works of Knox and Osmani, our research in Central Asia, Bangladesh, Ghana and Papua New Guinea, has expanded considerably with research also commenced in South Africa, the Middle East, New Zealand and Latin America. The foundation for our work on social justice, developed by Borooah and JS O'Connor, has expanded to include work on language justice, institutional abuse and reproductive rights. To achieve our overall aim of ensuring our ongoing relevance regionally, while expanding our research profile internationally, the Unit adopted a conscious strategy of building on these core strengths, while expanding our expertise in a number of thematic areas.</p> <p>Thematic and staff renewal has been supported by a programme of institutional support and resourcing strategies as outlined in the institutional level environment statement (also see <i>People</i> and <i>Funding</i> sections in this statement). Since REF2014, there have been important changes to our research structure designed to strengthen the Unit's management and facilitate Unit level strategic development and innovation and more dedicated resource and support. The development and monitoring of our research and impact strategy is overseen by a Research Director (RD) working with the Faculty Associate Dean for Research & Impact (ADRI). An active research and impact committee (comprising all staff) worked with the RD to set and monitor targets for grant applications and income, publication output, impact and mentoring and support.</p> <p>A key strategic goal has been to sustain a lively and stimulating environment, to support transformative and 'risky' research and enhance the development of early career staff, contract research staff and PhD researchers. Linked to the achievement of our overall goals we set six objectives:</p>

- focus on improving the vitality and sustainability of our research;
- increase our grant income through extending and strengthening our funding base;
- increase the volume of high-quality research publications and consolidate our intellectual leadership in the key themes outlined below;
- build and expand on our core strengths by appointing new staff within these strategic priorities;
- build on our reputation for policy relevant and user-focused work by increasing collaboration with users, policy-makers and civil society;
- grow our PhD community and enhance support for ECRs.

As detailed through this submission, we have met these objectives. In REF 2021, we are returning 31 members of staff compared with 22 in 2014, a **41% increase**. **Eighteen books** have been returned in this submission, compared to eleven in 2014. The submission includes ten new members of staff, **three of whom are ECRs**. We have significantly extended and strengthened our **funding base**, attracting total grant income of £5,790,471 (compared to £1,955,2335 in 2014) – a **238% increase**. This includes **research council funding of £2,588,121** as compared to **£1,016,367** in 2014, a 155% increase.

Research and Impact strategy

Our strategy centres on three core impact-oriented themes.

1. ***Policy and practice in contested societies*** – Continuing a strong and distinguished tradition, the Unit produces research that documents and analyses how heightened forms of political contention associated with conflict and conflict legacies mediate and influence policy and professional practice. This can be seen in explorations of political representation and policy making (Aughey, Braniff, Gilmartin, Morrow), and **analysis of the politics of responsibility and public management and contested spaces** (McGrattan, Byrne and Morrow). We are enhancing our reputation for work on the performance and functioning of policy making and administrative reform approaches (Carmichael and O'Connor) and their impact on the delivery of services. Birrell, Gray, Knox and Heenan have been instrumental in highlighting the **relationship between structures of government and the fragmentation of public services**. We have invested in new appointments which adds capacity to develop comparative public policy analysis and bridge public administration and social policy (Gazzola's work on language and social justice; O'Connor's work on education).
2. ***Emerging socio-economic challenges*** – The Unit has developed diverse and thriving currents of research that document, illuminate, and theorise, key social challenges **historically pushed to the margins by post-conflict priorities**. These include reproductive rights, education and inequality, professional judgement in social work and policy in multi-ethnic societies. An important strand of work on reproductive rights (Bloomer, Horgan and Gray) facilitated by ESRC and Open Society Foundation grants, has been instrumental in developing new understandings of abortion and effectively challenged traditional political and religious discourse refuting the need for policy reform. Work in this cluster has also emerged in response to **politically charged debates** concerning education inequality, segregation and performance in divided and contested societies and has influenced policy in Northern Ireland (Knox; O'Connor; Birrell; Carmichael). Health and Social Care has remained an important theme. Taylor's Health and Social Care (HSC R and D Office funded) work with partners from the Max Planck Institute has made a significant contribution to how concepts of risk in dementia care is understood and communicated from the perspective of persons with dementia, their families and professionals. The appointment of new staff with expertise in inter-personal violence perpetrator interventions (McGinn), conceptualisation of elder abuse (Killick) and the resilience and wellbeing of social workers (McFadden), signifies our commitment to expanding our social work research.

3. **National and global social justice** – Since 2013, the Unit has proactively leveraged a rich body of locally-rooted knowledge, experience and expertise **to expand our national and global portfolio of work**, which centres on health and social care, good governance, sustainable development and human rights. Lundy's pioneering study of redress for victims of historical child abuse (facilitated through her success in being awarded a two-year Leverhulme Major Fellowship), used a bottom-up participatory action research approach and **directly led to legislative amendments**. Moore's work on the post-Corston women's penal crisis provides insights into the failure of prison reform in England and Wales. Lasslett's award-winning work (2017 Justice Prize for best paper award by the Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy) on investigative methodologies has systematically uncovered transnational corruption and human rights abuses taking place in Papua New Guinea and Uzbekistan, facilitated through grants from the Christensen Foundation, Open Society Foundation, and the National Endowment for Democracy. MacGiollabhui's work on political succession and police surveillance in South Africa further demonstrates how **our Unit is extrapolating the lessons from Northern Ireland and applying them elsewhere**. Osmani has co-authored with Dr Mahmud, a member of the UN Committee for Development Policy, on the macroeconomics of poverty reduction in Bangladesh for the World Bank. O'Connor's research on education in active conflict areas has fed into reports for the International Committee for the Red Cross (with Smith, Education) and for the OECD on reform of public administration (Central Asia).

At the heart of our research strategy is the Unit's applied approach to research in multi-ethnic societies - the questions asked, the methods used, and the outputs generated are coproduced with stakeholders and practitioners, with a special emphasis on marginalised communities adversely impacted by different forms of direct and structural injustice. For example, strategies have been codeveloped with trades unions (Bloomer: abortion as a workplace issue); Lasslett's decolonizing work was coproduced with indigenous communities in Bougainville and human rights monitors in Uzbekistan; work on peace walls (Byrne and Gormley Heenan) was codeveloped with local communities and the Department of Justice. Lundy's work on redress in the area of historical institutional child abuse was codesigned and coproduced with victims, leading to legislative change at Westminster.

Epistemologically, our Unit aims to, and has succeeded in, opening up academic knowledge to communities, activists and grassroots beneficiaries by creating pathways that distil practice-based knowledge. The central mission of our **Access Research Knowledge (ARK)** research centre has been to make academic research accessible to the widest possible audience. This includes open access to large scale survey data sets which have been used by government, journalists, NGOs and academics across the world to monitor progress on key government indicators, with regard to political attitudes, community relations and attitudes towards minority ethnic groups. Kelly's and Braniff's work with local community groups in the area of peace building has linked their theoretical approaches to the practical 'sustainable peace' challenges facing our society. This approach opens critical pathways to knowledge and insights from below which shapes the novel aims and questions at the heart of our research. It is also critical to the University's role as Northern Ireland's civic university and its mission to widen participation.

Future research and impact strategy

Moving forward to our future research strategy, our focus over the 2014-20 cycle has now solidified into a shared commitment to critical social policy research that explores the relationship between structural violence, socio-economic justice and building resilient, sustainable and secure societies in Northern Ireland and beyond. This represents a maturing intersection between the core three themes underpinning our REF 2021 submission. It is most boldly articulated in the new *Graduate Academy for Policy, Peace and Social Justice* being launched in 2021. The Graduate Academy is an **interdisciplinary** multi-unit of assessment centre of applied research and practice, which is committed to delivering a suite of research-led postgraduate degrees promoting social justice, human rights, change-leadership, community development and peacebuilding through inclusive, approaches to learning and research.

A number of recent initiatives will generate visible outcomes over the next five years. For example, through EU Peace and Reconciliation funded projects we will be able to assess the impacts of Brexit on migrant worker populations (Hamilton: EU funded £203K) and will secure evidence led policy and practice developments for peace building architectures that are inclusive of marginalised young people (McArdle £474K). A strategic aim will be to **expand our interdisciplinary work**. There is a basis for this in O'Connor's interdisciplinary GCRF grant with Education (£1.8m). Gray's interdisciplinary project on gender budgeting with the Ulster Business School and Wise Centre for Economic Justice at GCU and in partnership with the Women's Budget Group is funded by JRCT to explore gender budgeting as a policy tool for addressing gender inequality.

We will maintain our strategic commitment to infrastructure that supports direct engagement with policy-makers, users and practitioners. This includes **investment in the Conflict on the Internet (CAIN) digital archive**, the most independent and internationally respected resource on the Northern Ireland conflict, social policies and peacebuilding processes. We will also maintain our civic partnerships through a recently introduced Professors of Practice Scheme and ARK civil society partnerships and fellowships (See section four).

Support the highest standards of research integrity and Open Research Data

Ethical governance, regulation and training is overseen by a **University level Committee** (chaired by Gray). There is a School Ethics committee with responsibility for ensuring that all staff are aware of ethical standards and adhere to these. It considers all applications with those that require further scrutiny proceeding to the University level committee or to the relevant NHS ethics body. All staff in the Unit are required to complete the University's **research integrity course**. Completing this course is also a requirement for all post-graduate researchers. The course reflects the University's Code of Practice for Professional Integrity which, in turn, reflects the UUK Concordat.

The University has a range of practices in place to comply with the principles of the Concordat on Open Research Data. All staff participate in open access initiatives through the use of the PURE system. At Unit level, we are committed to the accessibility of our research and to transparency in the research process. ARK makes all annual survey data available **free of charge** on the ARK website. The data is also deposited with the UK Data Service at the University of Essex. The Conflict on the Internet (CAIN) archive ensures open access to a range of textual, statistical and visual data on the Northern Ireland conflict, social policies and peace building. Recent investment by the University, government and philanthropic funds are supporting a **modernisation of the archive**.

2. People

Our Unit is located in a large school with research and teaching split across two of the university's four campuses. Since 2013, we have seen a number of our most distinguished and experienced scholars retire but we have recruited an exciting contingent of early and mid-career researchers who have been at the heart of the strategic themes pursued by the Unit. Our staffing strategy is guided by our research strategy in terms of recruiting new scholars **to expand the international dimensions of our research** (Gazzola and MacGiollabhui), **develop our work on social work interventions** (McFadden, McGinn and Killick) and **consolidate our expertise on politics, governance and policy making in divided societies** (Gilmartin; Coyle). We have been fortunate in being able to retain two of our most distinguished professors, Birrell, on a 0.2fte contract and Offer on a 0.4fte. In addition to their research outputs, they have had a pivotal role in mentoring ECR staff, leading PhD supervisory teams and, in Birrell's case, providing important analysis on devolutionary and constitutional issues and health and social care integration to Westminster and devolved governments.

Staffing strategy and development

We encourage and support research participation and career development for staff pursuing a career in research at all stages of their career. The University and Unit have made a firm commitment to the principles outlined in the Concordat for the Career Development of Research Staff. This support is in place through a number of initiatives:

- **A policy that ensures staff have protected time for research through keeping teaching and administrative loads relatively low and equal.** Our Unit level Research and Impact Committee has developed and introduced a **transparent workload model** across the School. Those with significant research responsibility have a **six-hour teaching load per week over the 2 x 12 week semesters**, but senior research staff in this category also hold leadership responsibilities (such as Impact champion, course director or chair of ethics committee). All **newly appointed staff** have six hours teaching per week for the first three years of their employment, without a significant administrative task. Within this probation period, they are also supported to complete their Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and gain HEA membership. Staff in the School with a primarily teaching and learning role – mainly practitioners supporting professional degrees - are encouraged to build their research profile, through PhD research (including by publication). They can also apply for **developmental support** which includes a reduction in teaching load to 8.25 hours and access to full researcher development support.
- **Collaboratively developed research goals, focused on quality not quantity.** The School and our Unit Level Research and Impact Committee has replaced a system of individualised, annual research targets with a shared set of medium-term goals all staff with a significant research responsibility commit to. They include development of quality outputs over a REF cycle, and a focus on applying for ambitious collaborative research grants, without individualised income generation targets.
- **A university ‘Research Income and Grant Opportunities for Ulster Researchers’ (RIGOUR) scheme provides training/events to improve success rates of grant applications.** At Unit level, each staff member has a research allowance as part of our researcher development programme, which includes conference funding. Staff are encouraged to attend the conferences of learned societies (Social Policy Association, Political Studies Association, the British Society of Criminology, the British Sociological Association, the Sociological Association of Ireland and the Joint University Council for Public Administration and Social Policy). In addition, the University has established a GCRF challenge fund, where numerous substantial inter-disciplinary pilot awards were made (Braniff, Ketola, Morrow and O’Connor).
- **A formal institutional staff mentoring scheme is overseen at Unit level by the Research Director. This collegiate mentoring process supports new colleagues, ECRs and those returning to study following a period of leave or administration or intensive teaching.** Support is provided for the development of research grant proposals, journal articles and research collaborations. Where mentoring expertise was not available from our existing staff (due to the voluntary exit scheme or unforeseen professorial departures), we drew upon our existing networks in other universities to formally link ECRs with established professors. These professors, for a set fee, provided feedback on academic writing, monthly mentorship meetings and associated support. Staff in the Unit have also benefited from the university’s Significance and Originality of Academic Research (SOARING) training on quality of research outputs and publications and UCommunicate Training which supported effective engagement with the media and other stakeholders.
- **Provide regular forums for intellectual exchange.** The Unit has four distinct, regular seminar series: Pushing Boundaries, aimed at PhD researchers in their final year and

academic staff; DARES (Decision, Assessment, Risk and Evidence Studies) aimed at practitioners and academics in the field of Social Work; and our Social Science Lunchtime Series, aimed at PhD researchers and staff interested in discovering new theories and methodologies. Our research centre, ARK, has a seminar series focusing primarily on public attitudes data from ARK's suite of social attitude surveys.

- **Supporting academic writing and publication through peer-to-peer learning groups.** The Committee has also established a 'Shut up and Write' group. It meets regularly on the first Friday of the month and consists of staff at all career stages. On occasion, talks are given by more experienced members of the group in response to queries raised by ECRs and those returning to research.
- **Facilitating research grant application mentoring through an action learning group to support colleagues developing grant applications.** This group consists of ECRs, those returning to research following a period of leave and those returning following a period in University administration. This group is coordinated by our dedicated faculty-facing Research Development representative. The internationalization of our research agenda has been encouraged through direct financial support to staff to participate in inward and outward exchanges and research leave for staff to spend a semester at a different institution (for example, O'Connor at Nazarbayev University to examine administrative reform in authoritarian regimes; Gazzola to University of Ottawa to research a German funded project examining "Managing Multilingualism in the Public Administration").
- **A strong focus on enhancing impact at institutional and Unit level.** The university Impact Development Series workshops provide training on generating and tracking impact; two staff from the Unit (Gray and Gormley Heenan) led workshops. This support was complemented by a civic impact fund, received by Horgan and Bloomer (engagement with MPs at Westminster on Reproductive Rights through seminars and policy briefs) and Lundy. Lundy hosted an international seminar on institutional abuse with participants from Canada, US, Australia, Uganda and local/national colleagues and NGOs/groups etc. This event showcased the research on institutional abuse, facilitating knowledge exchange ideas leading to the development of an international research grant. Each of our three impact case studies emerged from a University pump-priming award. At Unit level, an impact support working group develops and implements a systematic approach to achieving research impact. Professor Lundy, who was awarded the University's Award for Public Impact (with Amnesty International) in 2019 for her work on achieving justice for victims of institutional child abuse, leads this work as Impact Champion for our team, with the support of our dedicated Faculty Impact manager. Impact is also supported through ARK where all staff, but ECRs in particular, are supported to write policy briefs and features and engage with policy makers through policy roundtables.
- **Ulster University research and impact awards.** The university recognises outstanding achievement through high profile awards, including *Distinguished Research Fellows* (achieved by Lasslett) and Senior Research Fellows and high-profile Impact Awards, which recognises outstanding partnerships (awards in the Unit include Lasslett for *Social Renewal Impact Excellence Award* in collaboration with Jubilee Australia (2017); Lundy for the University's Award of *Research Partnership of the Year*, with Amnesty International (2018)).

Returning an **additional ten staff** in REF2021, and a **significant increase in research funding, outputs, PhD completions and engagement with civil society** reflects a culture over the REF cycle that has been about ensuring the provision of opportunities and support at institutional and Unit level.

Research Students

In order to maintain and strengthen research culture for postgraduates and to develop further as a centre for training future generations of researchers, we have invested substantially in various PhD research initiatives. In total, over this REF period, the Unit has awarded **50 national and 20 international funded PhD scholarships**, which includes a tax-free stipend, coverage of tuition fees, and an annual research budget.

In line with this significant investment since 2013, **30.14 PhD degrees** have been awarded in the Unit with a further **33 full time and 14 part time researchers** currently undertaking PhDs. Demand for the PhD programme remains high. In 2019, we received 50 applications for six scholarships. The Unit participates in two prestigious doctoral partnerships. We are part of the *COFUND Doctoral Training Alliance* through which we have secured 4 international Marie Skłodowska-Curie PhD researchers, since 2018. In addition, we participate in the *ESRC-funded Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Partnership (NINE DTP)*, offering a range of opportunities across the 1+3/3.5/3 pathways. These partnerships augmented our university funded scholarships. A further 20 university funded international PhD scholarships were awarded by our Unit (2014-2020).

Since REF 2014, a new MSc in Social Policy has been specifically designed to support research training and directly supports the PhD programme within the Unit. This has also been recognised as a valid pathway for the ESRC 1+3/3.5 awards as part of NINE DTP, attesting to the quality of research training within the programme.

All PhD researchers in the university are registered with the Doctoral College which offers a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme, closely aligned with the Vitae framework, that consists of workshops (approx. 150-200 sessions each year), online training and numerous other, more bespoke development opportunities which complement subject specific research training and within which there is a strong focus on employability. Post graduate researchers have a **tailored supervisory team** chaired by an experienced PhD supervisor and including less experienced supervisors to expand supervisory capacity. Within the Unit, our PhD researchers benefit from significant tailored support offered by the Postgraduate co-ordinator (MacGiollabhui) who provides additional pastoral care and organises a weekly PhD researcher seminar for all researchers. This is a new role created during the REF cycle to ensure PhD researchers received such support within an active research environment. Peer support and the building of collaborative networks across year groups is encouraged through the location of researchers in open plan accommodation. PhD researchers are fully integrated into the research environment with the Unit and School; they present at School seminars where they receive constructive feedback and are strongly encouraged to present at conferences - and are financially supported to do so. All scholarship students receive between £900 (RTSG) and £1,500 (Co-Fund) in addition to their annual stipend to support their research. When the School hosted the UK's SPA Annual conference in 2015 and 2016, a number of researchers were on the planning committee, many provided support at the conferences and presented papers. Murray, a PhD researcher in Criminology, organised the 2016 Irish Post-Graduate Criminology Conference. The Unit also hosted the Sociological Association of Ireland Post-graduate Conference in 2017.

Our students are encouraged to join the learned societies for their discipline and have benefited from this. For example, one (Chapman) was selected to take part in the SPA **Insight into Publishing Scheme** run with *Social Policy and Society*; Simpson, an inter-disciplinary student within the Law Unit was awarded SPA Event Funding for a seminar on social security and devolution.

We have invested heavily in our PhD researcher environment at a School level. This has resulted in 5 students (Kazanoglu, Noira, Nugent, Kyle and Murray) being successful in attaining a Santander International Mobility Award and Gstrein being awarded a fieldwork travel grant from the Canada-UK Foundation. This highlights the international nature and calibre of their work. Students are encouraged and supported to publish in ISI journals and the majority of graduating

students have at least one article accepted, for example, Best had five articles published before his viva (including in Children and Youth Services Review and Mental Health Review Journal), Olsen (Disability and Society), Chapman (Health and Social Care in the Community), Rouse (Nationalism and Ethnic Politics), Foster (Public Money and Management), Stanton (International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution), Simpson (Journal of Social Security Law), Mullan (Routledge), Bell (International Review for the Sociology of Sport) Gstrein (International Journal of Drug Policy), Fusheini (Journal of International Health Management and International Journal of Public Administration). Many have had their PhDs published as monographs by: Routledge (Kazanoglu, Rouse, and D. McKeever [also awarded University best thesis prize, 2018]) Palgrave (A. McKeever).

This commitment has resulted in many of our researchers gaining lectureships, positions in regional/local government and with NGOs: PhD researchers have gained positions at prestigious universities: University of Liverpool (C. Pierson); UWS (A. McKeever); University of Ontario (Fusheini); Koç University (Kazanoglu), Edge Hill (Martynowitz), Coventry (Nugent), Gloucestershire (El Masri), (Hagan), Glasgow (D. McKeever), Best and Hill (QUB) Simpson (School of Law, Ulster). Stanczak and Murray were appointed to permanent Criminology lectureships within the School, Roddy and McGinn to lectureships in Social Work at Ulster and Mackle to a permanent post in social work at QUB. McGill and Rouse were awarded postdoctoral fellowships at Oxford and Ulster respectively. Gstrein was appointed Asst Director for Strategy, Canberra Regional government; Perry is Office Manager for the Democratic Unionist Party, a number work as policy and research managers (for example, Chapman at Employers for Childcare, Palli at Playboard NI, and McElhinney at the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action).

Employability is also enhanced as all PhD researchers have the opportunity to teach. This is particularly important if they are considering lectureship positions. They enrol on the *First Steps to Teaching and Learning Programme*, a 20 credit level 7 module on the PG CPD framework. The module is accredited by Advance-HE at Descriptor 2 of the UKPSF and following successful completion the PhD researchers are awarded Higher Education Academy Associate Fellowship (AFHEA). They then have the opportunity to develop their teaching skills on under-graduate courses under the supervision of a member of staff.

Equality and Diversity

Themes of equality and diversity are central to the research agenda in our areas of strategic focus. Staff are passionately committed to research in these areas, for example, work on gender (Gray and Bloomer, funded by ESRC, RCT and Open Society); socio economic inequality (Osmani funded by Leverhulme) and disability and discrimination (Horgan funded by JRF). The Unit has a strong outreach ethos. Women in the School have a high profile and are supported by the institution with regard to civic engagement; this being reflected by three of the four recipients of the University's Civic Impact Fund in the Unit being female and all bar one of our Impact Case Study contributors being women (4). Much of the unit's research and civic engagement addresses the needs of deprived and marginalised communities, for example: the work of Horgan with civil society organisations and with the Department for Communities on the Anti-Poverty Strategy; Braniff's and McArdle's work with marginalized young people; Kelly's work on peace building; Gray's work on the Northern Ireland Gender Equality Strategy; Lundy's work with victims of institutional abuse and Bloomer's work on female reproductive rights.

Diversity and inclusivity are valued, actively promoted and embedded in all research processes and policies as outlined in our Code of Practice, placing people at its centre and ensuring barrier free processes to maximise inclusivity and participation in REF. We used it as our roadmap for identifying SRR staff and selecting outputs for REF2021. All University staff undergo equality and diversity training; anyone involved in recruitment and selection must undergo regular selection training that includes an equality and diversity component. Those involved in REF have had specific REF equality and diversity training. Staff have also undergone optional training (e.g. neurodiversity training), and the Unit has provided reasonable adjustments and support in cases

of disability or specific learning differences. The University respects the full array of Northern Irish equality legislation and, as a public authority, must have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in respect of nine protected characteristics. Hamilton and Horgan have contributed to policy work on equality in the University. Hamilton served on the widening access and participation and racial equality working group.

The University has an Institutional SWAN Bronze award and plans to submit a Silver award application in 2021. The School is working towards Athena SWAN accreditation in January 2022, working with the newly appointed Faculty Athena SWAN coordinator. Carmichael is on the Advance HE National Committee for Athena SWAN. Four members of the School have participated in the Aurora leadership development programme, a programme specifically designed to encourage women to think of themselves as future leaders and actively engage in developing their leadership potential.

During the REF cycle, two women in the Unit were promoted to Professorships (Gray and Gormley Heenan and three to SL level (Bloomer, Hamilton and Braniff).

In addition to institutional policies on flexible and/or remote working and support for staff with caring responsibilities, ill-health or other equality-related circumstances, the School has recently put in place an agreed set of actions at School level to prioritise equality and diversity. This includes the development of a workload model and additional support (including equipment grants) to help to ensure that those with caring and other responsibilities are proactively supported to maintain a research profile.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Overview

Our research income strategy derives from our aforementioned thematic foci and is in keeping with the university's Research and Impact Strategy. We have succeeded in our objective of expanding and strengthening our research funding base with a sustained record of grant awards. As noted in Section 1, our research income has increased **by 196%** over this REF cycle, (£5,790,470 compared to £1,955,233 in 2014).

Our research grants reflect our longstanding tradition in the arenas of social justice, policy and practice in contested societies and emerging socio-economic challenges. While we remain responsive to local and regional challenges, over this REF cycle, we have consciously targeted our grant applications to develop the global aspect of these themes. We also encourage a flexible and reactive approach to grant opportunities that may arise, as demonstrated through our H2020 and EU Peace and Reconciliation funding. This demonstrates the flexibility within our Unit to provide academics with the space necessary to contribute to large multi-university applications at short notice.

Working with institutional support, our Unit Research and Impact Committee has set up a wide range of initiatives to support academic colleagues **at all career stages** applying for research funding. Evidence of this includes the 'research grant action learning group', peer mentoring, and reviewing of large grant applications by third parties before submission. We are acutely aware that funding in the social sciences is increasingly competitive and have therefore deliberately refrained from imposing income targets on staff. Through peer support, and dedicated support from Department for Research & Impact, we have created an environment where academics are encouraged to apply for grant income through tangible, meaningful interventions. The evidence presented below demonstrates that this approach is effective.

We have secured funding from a diverse range of sources, including (£136K) research council grants for work on policy and practice in contested societies (ESRC, Morrow, Gormley Heenan and Byrne: £115K, the results of which were commissioned by the BBC World Service), from the AHRC (Braniff £95K to research communities' commemoration and memory with regard to the

Northern Ireland conflict). The ESRC also funded a body of work on attitudes to abortion and the illegal use of the abortion pill in NI, which contributed to reform of abortion law (Horgan, Gray Moore, £200K).

Substantial funding has been acquired from the Health and Social Care Research and Development fund for work on dementia and risk (Taylor £252K and McGinn £80K) and on the social work workforce and Covid-19 (McFadden £70K) demonstrating our ability to respond quickly to our subject specific research calls. A proportion of the NI Life and Times annual survey is funded by the Northern Ireland Executive Office (£493K over the REF period) and the results are used for policy indicator monitoring purposes (community relations and attitudes to ethnic minorities). Reliance on this robust and independent data has increased considerably since the adoption of the Outcomes Accountability Based Framework by the NI Government.

Projects recently commenced will continue to develop these themes. For example, £474K (Peace IV) has been awarded to a team led by Ulster (McArdle) advising on future youth work policy, and the quality and effectiveness of interventions across the island of Ireland; £203K has been awarded to examine migrant workers and workplace justice in the border regions of the north and south of Ireland (Hamilton) while, in collaboration with Education, a £1.8m GCRF Networking plus project will examine the administration of education in Africa and Central Asia (O'Connor). Funding from the AHRC (£202K) has also been allocated to examine the relationship between Northern Ireland's divided history and the development of future public policy.

Other notable sources of funding include charities and philanthropic trusts: Lasslett was awarded grants from National Endowment for Democracy for work on kleptocracy and forced labour in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan £136K and the Christinsen Foundation (£147K) for work on land resistance and heritage in Papua New Guinea. Funding from the Open Society has been received for numerous projects on a Victims of Corruption Rights Network (Lasslett, cumulatively totalling £222K); and Bloomer (£19K) for her work surveying doctors and their attitudes to abortion. Our work on gender equality and social justice, in collaboration with NGO partners, has been supported by awards from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for work on gender budgeting (in collaboration with Ulster Business School and NI Women's Budget Group) (Gray: £124K) and for work on the role of liberal faith groups with regard to abortion (Bloomer: £59K, with University Alliance).

The Leverhulme Foundation have funded Lundy's Historical abuse inquiry work, co-designed and co-produced with victims (£94K), and Osmani's poverty alleviation work with civil society in Bangladesh (£43K).

Infrastructure and facilities

The Unit's research infrastructure is headed by a Research Director who works closely with the Head of School for Applied Social and Policy Studies and Faculty Associate Dean for Research and Impact and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research. Research is managed with the support of a PhD coordinator (MacGiollabhui) and a Research Ethics Committee (chaired by Convery). The University has invested in a bespoke online ethics application system at Unit level, easing administrative burdens while maintaining a rigorous peer review process. The Research Director has a budget, calculated on the basis of the unit's research performance in REF2014 and other performance indicators. This is used to support a range of activity including to support individual research needs of staff and PhD researchers (as outlined above in section 2). A number of central Research and Impact departmental staff are 'spoked-in' to the unit, and we provide an office for Research and Impact staff to work in our building with our staff and researchers.

Synergies between Units and Centres are driven at a Faculty level through a Research Directors Forum which meets monthly to develop strategy, stimulate an interdisciplinary research environment, and share best practice.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Within the Unit we have a **strong tradition of collaboration and partnership working for high impact policy research**. The RD and the Department for Research and Impact provide funds to support specific impact-oriented activities and Lasslett, Bloomer and Horgan were recipients of university impact awards. The Faculty has a dedicated Impact Manager who assists with the development of tailored project impact plans.

Facilitating our research through thematic areas rather than traditional disciplinary silos has encouraged multiple cross disciplinary collaborations. Our intra institutional collaborations have emerged from institutionally organised sandpit events such as an event in 2017 which brought together researchers from a range of disciplines under the heading of 'cognitive science and mental health' and which led to Heenan's collaborations with Psychology and Computing and external NGOs from both the north and south of Ireland, researching policy and youth work initiatives to improve young people's mental health (£590K). Other examples include O'Connor's collaborations with the School of Education examining the challenges facing integrated education in Northern Ireland (£27K); Gray's collaboration with law which has led to an impact case study (in UoA18) that brought about meaningful change in Scottish social security law; Braniff and Byrne have worked closely with Geography investigating dealing with the past in Northern Ireland (cumulatively £97K); McGinn has collaborated with the School of Computing and Built Environment (NHS R&D £80K) examining the role of technology in developing care pathways for people with dementia and learning disabilities.

The Unit has also supported regional, national and international inter institutional collaborations. Regionally, within our unit, the Access Research Knowledge (ARK) research centre, a joint Ulster University and Queen's University Research Centre focusing on social policy and politics in Northern Ireland (Gray is Co-director and Horgan is Policy Director), is a flagship example of university collaboration in the jurisdiction. Since 2000, it has conducted a suite of social attitude surveys (of adults, 16 year olds and 11 year olds), conducted empirical research on a wide range of topics and provided an independent forum for critical policy debate in an often unstable and highly charged political environment. McFadden is the lead on a multi-disciplinary research project looking at the wellbeing and coping of 4,000 health and social care workers during COVID-19 study, in collaboration with partners at Queens University Belfast (QUB), Kings College London and Bath Spa University.

We have run **numerous AHRC and ESRC funded collaborative research seminars** and projects including Marnoch's successful ESRC Brexit seminar series, and corresponding YouTube informatic in collaboration with Glasgow University's Law School; Braniff's ESRC seminar series with Huddersfield and Southampton on Memory and Identity, with a forthcoming edited book (MUP). Lundy's **Boston College research** exchange resulted in a two-volume publication *Eire-Ireland* on historical abuse bringing together academics from a range of countries, Irish victims/groups and the Irish government's Minister for Children together for a two-day conference and dialogue. Birrell collaborated with academic colleagues from Birmingham, Glasgow and Edge Hill universities on a comparative analysis of the integration of health and social care across the jurisdictions of the UK. Lasslett is co-founder with Professor Penny Green (QMUL), Professor Tony Ward (Northumbria), and Dr Thomas MacManus (QMUL) of the International State Crime Initiative (ISCI), an interdisciplinary centre for research, reportage, training and debate on state violence and corruption. The Social Work departments at QUB and Ulster University collaborated in developing the **Northern Ireland Social Work Research and Continuous Improvement Strategy 2015-2020**, and are now collaborating in ensuring a harmonised university contribution to the 2020-2025 Strategy in areas such as identification of the research needs of the social work service; targeting of PhD projects towards worthwhile service development topics; and building supportive networks between service providers and academia to facilitate research projects and their dissemination so as to build a research culture in the profession.

Bloomer's collaboration (based on £34k government grant) with colleagues at University of Liverpool, Rhodes University and the University of the Philippines led to a book on global abortion

politics published by Policy Press. McFadden's work with colleagues in Ulster University Business School and the University of Malaysia has resulted in the design of a school based mental health promotion programme for adolescents. The expansion of our focus on global social justice has been supported through staff undertaking research visits and engagement in international networks. Bloomer, Lasslett, Lundy and Osmani have spent considerable periods at institutions in South Africa, Uzbekistan, Australia, USA and Bangladesh. Taylor is an Honorary Associate of the Harding Centre for Risk Literacy, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, while Carmichael and Birrell are visiting Professorial Fellows at Humboldt University.

Throughout the period 2014-2020, our programme of visiting scholars has contributed to research excellence. **Visiting Professorships** have been held by: Jill Manthorpe, Robert Pinker, Kathleen Mahoney, Penny Green, Chris Dolan and Nicholas Whyte. Jill Manthorpe is Professor of Social Work at King's College London and is Director of the NIHR Health and Social Care Workforce Research Unit. While visiting Ulster (2014-2018), Manthorpe co-developed our research on safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse, as well as helping to develop our REF capabilities across the School. **ARK hosted a number of visiting fellows** including: Prof Sue Yeandle, Director of Centre for International Research on Care and Labour, Sheffield University, June 2015; John Williams, Aberystwyth University, Oct 2015; Anna Tarrant, University of Lincoln, June 2017; Dominic Campbell, Creative Ageing International, 2016. These appointments bring high quality input to the unit, through research seminars, workshops, joint publications (eg, Offer and Pinker; Green and Lasslett), informal mentoring of staff and PhD researchers and facilitate access to wider networks such as Lundy's regional work gaining international recognition and emulation (Canada). A specific focus of the ARK visiting professorships was knowledge exchange with policy makers, NGOs and PhD researchers facilitated through seminars, workshops, policy briefs and research updates. The ARK Ageing PhD students also benefited from working with the visiting professors (for eg, Chapman codesigned a workshop and published a policy brief with Anna Tarrant).

Non-academic collaborations, networks and partnerships

Our extensive collaborations with NGOs, policy stakeholders, public sector bodies and users are critical to our research and impact. That academic evidence is **accessible to a lay audience** has been particularly important in this region where a media focus on Social Policy issues is relatively new and where the structures and culture of governance have not always made scrutiny or accountability easy. At regional level, Lundy's collaboration with the Committee on the Administration of Justice (a leading NGO) and victims of conflict groups resulted in the development of gender principles for addressing the legacy of the conflict in NI. Bloomer, Horgan and Gray's work with NI and GB NGOs (Family Planning Association, Alliance for Choice, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform and the Women's Resource Centre) formed the basis of ESRC, Open Society and JRCT funded work on reproductive rights. Gray's earlier work with the Women's European Platform and, through it, engagement with the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, underpinned the application to the CEDAW Committee for an Inquiry into abortion in Northern Ireland (one of only five enquiries conducted by the CEDAW Committee using the Optional Protocol). Gray's research on social care and collaborations with AgeNI and other NGOs led to her being asked to lead the academic input into the Northern Ireland Citizen's Assembly on Adult Social Care (Nov 2019). Payne's work with the NI Consumer Council resulted in a range of recommendations related to illegal money lending that are currently being considered by statutory agencies and law enforcement. Braniff has worked in Belfast and Derry City urban areas to co-produce community tourism experiences and exhibitions in partnership with the NI Executive's Urban Village Initiative and with cross-community groups to help explore, understand and share their history and heritage.

Over the period, our international collaborations with NGOs and our external networks have grown as can be seen through: Gazzola's involvement in the design of the new General Language Policy Plan for the Friulan Language (2021-2025) with the Regional Agency for the Friulan Language, the executive body for language policy of the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia.

As part of his civic contribution to business and human rights in the Pacific and Central Asia, Lasslett sits on the Cotton Campaign's steering committee, Jubilee Australia's Board of Directors, Trócaire's Business and Human Rights Advisory Group, and contributes to The Guardian (Australia), PNGi (PNG), openDemocracy (UK), Radio Ozodlik (Uzbekistan) and El-Tuz (Uzbekistan).

A UN Department of Political Affairs' Policy and Mediation Division workshop (11 December 2018, New York) featured Kelly and Hamber's (Law) definition of reconciliation as the most important. This work has also been presented to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (26-28 June 2019), the Catalan Institute for Peace, and by the Irish Representative in Colombia.

A **strategic aim of our Unit** is to make a **significant contribution to policy** and this is factored into our grant applications and dissemination plans and opportunities actively pursued. Birrell's expertise in the area of devolution is recognised in invitations to provide evidence to government committees. He presented written and oral evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution on Subjects of Inter-governmental Relations in the UK (2014) and the Union and Devolution (2015). He also presented evidence to Northern Ireland Assembly Committees on subjects relating to: an opposition in the Assembly; the Barnett Formula; public administration and reform of operation of devolution, to the National Assembly for Wales on the review of the Barnett Formula and the Scottish Parliament Committee on Finance and the Constitution on the impact of Brexit on devolution in Northern Ireland. Kelly was invited to contribute as an Expert Advisor to the Northern Ireland Party Leaders' discussions on the implementation of an Oral History Archive in the context of the Stormont House Agreement, February 2015. Lundy provided expert oral evidence to the Westminster Affairs Committee and twice to the Committee for the Executive Office on historic institutional abuse. Knox's work on education was presented to the Education Committee at Stormont (2014); while Gray, Horgan and Bloomer provided written and oral evidence to the Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry on abortion in NI. Lasslett made a submission on Corruption and Human Rights in Uzbekistan to the Uzbekistan UNHCR Universal Period Review (Third Cycle, 2018) and made a submission 'Addressing development by challenging impunity: The social impact of state and corporate crime on Papua New Guinea', to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee inquiry: "The delivery and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid program in Papua New Guinea" (April 2015).

Our work influences the role of international organisations including the UN CEDAW Committee and UN Special Rapporteurs. The UN Special Rapporteur for Children invited Lundy to brief the Special Rapporteur and UN member countries at the 34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on the issue of historical institutional abuse. Gray (with Fitzpatrick and Simpson, Law) submitted evidence to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty during his visit to the UK. Bloomer, Horgan and Gray supported the UN CEDAW Committee during their visit to the UK to conduct an Optional Protocol Inquiry into abortion in NI. They advised the Committee on its itinerary and submitted expert evidence based on the unit's body of research on abortion.

Colleagues from within the Unit have taken on significant societal leadership roles. The action-oriented and applied nature of our research has formed the basis for appointments to civil society, public sector and international bodies. Between 2012 and 2015, Morrow was Chair of the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism and in the 2016 chaired the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Tackling Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion. Morrow was also a member of the EU Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). Braniff is an Academic Friend of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and is a board member of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. Horgan is a director of, and formerly Chair of the NI Anti-Poverty Network. Gray was a member of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Anti-Poverty Strategy Taskgroup (2013-2016) and sits on the Regional Health and Social Care Research and Development Strategic Advisory Group. Lundy was appointed by the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs in the Irish Government to advise on the establishment of a collaborative forum on historical child abuse. O'Connor was commissioned by the UNDP to

evaluate how effective administrative reform efforts were in changing the mindsets of civil servants in Central Asia.

Extensive knowledge research exchange activities have been supported, directly involving collaborations between academics, policy makers, practitioners, the media and publics. One such is the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS), an initiative run in partnership with the NI Assembly and other universities in the region, the first of its kind in the UK formally partnering a legislative arm of government – the Assembly – with academia. Gray represents Ulster University on the management panel and numerous staff in the Unit have participated on topics such as: transformation in social care (Gray, 2014/15), peace walls (Gormley Heenan, 2014/15); the independence of the voluntary sector (Ketola, 2015/16), economic inequality and societal wellbeing (O'Connor, 2015/16) and outcomes based accountability (Gray and Birrell, 2017/18), delivering shared education (Knox, 2017/18). The Unit, in collaboration with QUB, has supported and been involved in managing the annual ESRC Festival of Social Science from 2016. For the past six years, it has also co-funded the Imagine Belfast Festival which provides a showcase for new ideas on politics, society and activism in Northern Ireland and seeks to encourage the participation of under-represented groups in debate and discussion. Large numbers of our staff and PhD researchers have participated in these festivals.

Contribution to the discipline: learned societies, the research process and peer review

Staff have actively engaged with learned societies and professional bodies. They have served on the executive of the SPA (Gray, Ketola, Hamilton, Saunderson), on the executive of the PSA (Carmichael and Gormley-Heenan) and on the Sociological Association of Ireland (Lundy). O'Connor, Gray and Carmichael are also members of the EMPA (European Masters of Public Administration Network) and in 2020/2021 will hold the presidency. O'Connor and Carmichael serve on the Public Administration Committee of the Joint University Council.

National and international conferences have been organised by our Unit within the REF cycle, including the discipline's primary national conference, the SPA (in 2015 and 2016). The Unit also hosted the Sociological Association of Ireland Conference in 2017 and Morrow, supported by the Impact Team and colleagues from Law, brought the international conference 'Build Peace' to Belfast in 2018; Braniff with colleagues from Law brought International Peace Museums Network conferences, international policymakers, activists and researchers to our Belfast Campus. We will host the 2023 global Q Methodology conference.

Our staff contribute extensively to the discipline through their editorial roles, peer review, grant review and membership of advisory panels. Horgan is on the editorial board of *Social Policy and Society*, Tridimas is managing editor of *The German Greek Yearbook of Political Economy*; Taylor is on the editorial board of the *European Social Work Association Book Series*; Kelly on editorial board of *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*; Bloomer is a member of the editorial board for *Culture, Health & Sexuality*; Gazzola is editor of *Language Problems and Language Planning* and a member of the scientific board of *A'dam Multiling* working paper series; Kelly co-edited a Special Issue of *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, (8, 1, 2016); Duffy was editor for the *International Network for Economic Research (INFER) Working Paper Series* 2015-2018; Carmichael is a member of the advisory board of Public Policy and Administration; Offer is on the editorial board of *Frontiers in Sociology*. Braniff is on the editorial board of *Irish Political Studies*.

Staff in the Unit peer review and regularly review work for leading journals in Social Work, Social Policy, Criminology, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Area Studies and Public Administration. Seven members of staff serve as peer reviewers for the ESRC/AHRC/ERC and GCRF (Braniff, Kelly, Gray, O'Connor, Lasslett, Lundy and Horgan).