

## Research Environment (REF5)

### UoA 22: Social Work and Social Policy

#### Overview

Over a period of some forty-five years staff in this University have established a record of conducting excellent research into important areas of social policy, with strong returns to all RAEs. In 2013 there is a thriving and diverse research culture reflected in world-class outputs, a strong record of high-quality external funding, a notably successful Research Graduate School and extensive contributions to the discipline through international collaborations, membership of editorial boards and conference activity. Most staff submitted to this REF (20.9 FTEs including four ECRs) belong to the Faculty of Social Sciences, and most are based at Jordanstown, near Belfast.

Sixteen come from the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy and four from Sociology and Applied Social Studies, with two from the Ulster Business School. All except two hold 100% long-term contracts with the University. The UOA Research Coordinator is Offer. There are ten professors, one reader, four senior lecturers and seven lecturers. Research concentrates on three thematically focussed areas:

<b>Governance, Performance and Public Policy</b>	<b>Welfare, Poverty, Health and Social Care</b>	<b>Crime and Punishment</b>
Dr Nick Acheson Professor Derek Birrell Dr Johanne Devlin-Trew Dr Susan Hodgett Dr Markus Ketola Professor Colin Knox Dr Gordon Marnoch Professor George Tridimas	Professor Vani Borooh Dr Ann-Marie Gray Professor Deirdre Heenan Goretti Horgan Dr Roger Manktelow Professor John Offer Professor Julia S O'Connor Professor Siddiq Osmani Professor Brian Taylor	Dr Kristian Lasslett Professor Patricia Lundy Dr Rachel Monaghan Dr Linda Moore Dr John Topping

The chief research interests of staff in these three areas are –

*Governance, Performance and Public Policy:* Acheson (voluntary action), Birrell (devolution, social policy), Devlin-Trew (migration), Hodgett (narrative and public policy), Ketola (migration), Knox (governance, racism), Marnoch (implementation issues), Tridimas (choice, governance).

*Welfare, Poverty, Health and Social Care:* Borooh (economic analysis), Gray (health, social care), Heenan (social care, social work), Horgan (children, poverty), Manktelow (mental health, social work), Offer (policy and theory, policy history), O'Connor (comparative social policy, gender and employment in the EU), Osmani (inequality, poverty), Taylor (risk, care, social work).

*Crime and Punishment:* Lasslett (power and crime), Lundy (policing the past), Monaghan (informal justice), Moore (young offenders, punishment), Topping (policing).

#### Research Strategy

The University's *Strategy for Research and Innovation, 2009-2015* commits to the strong support of research through Research Institutes (RIs). The RIs provide structures and support for researchers in all Faculties, across disciplines in which a core of excellent achievement is present and future excellence is predicted. RIs are embedded within the University organisational system, represented on key policy-making committees and allocated significant annual funding to support research.

At University level the Research Office, headed by a Director and within the portfolio of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation (PVC, R&I), works closely with Deans and Heads of Faculty Research

Graduate Schools to provide guidance and support (infrastructure and funding) to Schools and RIs to implement the University's research strategy. Performance review meetings with the PVC (R&I) and RI Directors monitor and ensure the progress of RIs. Staff returned here belong to the Institute for Research in Social Sciences (IRiSS). UOA 22 is the largest of the UOAs forming IRiSS: <http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/irss/>

IRiSS covers social policy, social work and criminology (including the staff returned here), linguistics, education, politics and international relations. IRiSS is one of the sixteen Research Institutes created to enhance the management of research. It sustains a culture of excellence through seminars, colloquia and public lectures involving visiting leaders in their fields, and the funding of participation in North-South, UK and international conferences. Full membership of IRiSS requires meeting explicit criteria designed to promote the highest excellence in research performance.

Associate status supports others in fulfilling their potential as high performing researchers. In respect of UOA 22 the IRiSS Director, UOA Coordinator and the Heads of School work closely together in relation to the research, teaching and administrative duties of Institute members.

Annual review meetings with members and associate members are held to ensure that there is equity in workloads and to discuss and agree research plans. Within IRiSS, the Director and Coordinators provide strategic leadership. Its terms of reference are to: develop and implement a research strategy in line with the University's research strategy; create, sustain and promote a vibrant culture of research; use resources effectively to maximise research performance; promote the dissemination and implementation of successful research initiatives; and, monitor research performance.

Our academic-led strategic research focus is on selected themes as listed above, often orientated toward user experiences. Interdisciplinarity is encouraged: we draw on sociology, history, economics and political studies, according to topic. With growing diversity in social policy in the UK, accompanying devolution of powers to regions, the UOA regards it as particularly important that one part of its mission is to undertake research with an island of Ireland, Northern Ireland or regional point of reference. However, it is accepted as essential that all of our research must aim at the highest possible standards of excellence in originality, significance and rigour.

The IRiSS Director and UOA Coordinator closely monitor quality and progress in delivery through meetings with individual staff at regular intervals, which focus on six performance areas:

1. Competing successfully for the most highly respected sources of funding.
2. Publishing research with publishers and journals of established repute and influence.
3. Appropriate complementary collaboration within the UK and internationally.
4. The recruitment of research students with interests in topics directly complementary to our own areas of study, and rigorous expert supervision to enhance their full potential.
5. The mentoring and practical support of early career staff to achieve agreed aims and outputs.
6. Maximising wider awareness of our research strategy and achievements in terms of academic impact and practical impacts of benefit to service users and providers, and the public more generally, by such means as dissemination through major annual social science conferences in the UK, the EU and beyond.

Members of the three thematic groupings of research meet regularly. The groupings operate in an open and participatory manner, acknowledging that projects often involve crossovers between groupings. Membership of the groupings is flexible, responding to the evolving interests of individuals. Some strengths bridge the groupings, including aspects of research into social care policy (Birrell, Gray, Heenan - both Birrell and Heenan contributed to the *Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care*, OUP, 2013), the focus on Canadian studies, enhanced since RAE 2008 (Acheson, Hodgett, Devlin-Trew, and Taylor) and specific conceptual, theoretical, or historical interests, for instance in the work of Borooah (social issues and econometric evidence), Hodgett and Osmani (Sen and capabilities), Lasslett (state-crime), Offer (social theory, Herbert Spencer), and Tridimas (constitutions and rational choice).

Since 2008 the Unit has also adopted three specific *strategic priorities*:

1. To broaden research on the social policy and social problem variations in devolved administrations. In response, the scope of such work now includes comparative perspectives to strengthen its significance for understanding the principles and practices of the devolution of policy in UK and international contexts. This is particularly evident in outputs from Birrell, Heenan, Horgan, Gray and Knox.
2. To enhance research on state crime, policing in the community and the treatment of female offenders. Outputs from Lasslett, Lundy, Moore and Topping exemplify the progress achieved.
3. To continue to develop the ARK (Action, Research, Knowledge) Policy Unit (the impact of this ESRC-funded initiative is described in REF 3a). The research and events associated with the Policy Unit embody the recognition that policy issues have often received little attention in NI because of a lack of capability around policy making, exemplified by the under-use of academic research and weak links with academia. While there had been considerable emphasis on the process of determining policy in consultation with civil society, responses to policy drafts often lacked a thoroughly researched evidential base. See: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/intro/policy.html>

*Future research strategy* will maintain a strong commitment to our established areas of excellence in addition to these specific priorities. It also prioritises building on emerging strengths in youth and social exclusion (Horgan), and migration (Devlin-Trew and Ketola). Adoption of these strategic aims does not exclude the development of appropriate new opportunities.

Publication highlights which demonstrate the strength of achievements within the general research strategy include 11 books: Birrell's influential studies *The Impact of Devolution on Social Policy* (2009), *Direct Rule and the Governance of Northern Ireland* (2009), and *Comparing Devolved Governance* (2012), and books jointly authored with Heenan, *Social Work in Northern Ireland* (2011), and Gray, *Transforming Adult Social Care* (2013); Knox's *Devolution and the Governance of Northern Ireland* (2010); Offer's *Herbert Spencer and Social Theory* (2010); Taylor's *Professional Decision Making and Risk in Social Work* of 2013 (first edition, 2010); Ketola's *Europeanization and Civil Society: Turkish NGOs as Instruments of Change?* (2013); Devlin-Trew's *Leaving the North* (2013) and Moore's jointly authored *The Incarceration of Women* (2013).

Since 2008 there have also been substantially growing achievements in external research funding and PhD enrolments evident across the priority areas.

### **Staffing Strategy and Priorities**

In this submission 20.9 FTE staff are returned, a significant increase over the 2008 figure of 15.6. It has been a notable element of the University's **staffing strategy** to appoint seven early career staff since 2008 to enhance staffing levels in respect of social policy and policing/criminology/criminal justice research, with succession planning needs in terms of research excellence the key criterion for appointment. Four are returned in this submission (Devlin-Trew, Ketola, Lasslett and Topping).

Some other appointees, however, are at the earlier stage of building research publications at post-doctoral level. The breadth of the research areas covered has increased during the review period, now including policing and state crime, and most recently, youth and social exclusion, and migration. Early in 2010, associated with the new appointments, IRiSS and the Research Coordinator implemented a strategy whereby individual senior researchers mentored intensively the **development** of early career researchers and others with a potential shortfall in high quality publications. This has resulted in a rise in acceptances of articles in world-leading journals. Profs Williamson and Osborne have retired since RAE 2008, with Prof Birrell in post on a 20% contract. Prof Carmichael has served as Head of School and now Dean of the Faculty, well-placed to influence University policy on research in the social sciences. He contributes here as co-author with Knox of an Impact Case Study. Our demographic profile entails that in 'traditional' terms at least five staff returned in the 2014 REF may retire relatively soon in the years following.

All staff members combine undergraduate and/or postgraduate teaching and administration with research. In line with equality of opportunity, all staff whose research and publications record satisfies established internal criteria for inclusion in REF 2014 are eligible to receive some support for their research and publications through teaching assistance, relief from administrative duties and financial contributions towards research visits, subject to approval by the Research Coordinator/Head of School/ IRiSS Director as appropriate. For staff

to be returned in REF an entitlement to study leave on the basis of a one year in five years sabbatical has now been agreed, provided their work is covered on rotation among colleagues.

Distinction in research is linked with promotion. Since 2008 Lundy and Taylor have been promoted to Chairs, and Monaghan and Moore to Senior Lecturer, promotions acknowledging world-class contributions to research in the fields respectively of the pursuit of justice in a post-conflict society, older people and risk assessment, social conflict and terrorism, and youth custody.

In the period under review there have been several **prestigious Fellowships awarded**, and other marks of distinction. In 2008 Heenan secured an ESRC Fellowship, spending nine months as policy adviser in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). This led to publications on social capital and older people and cross-border cooperation to promote mental health. Knox (2010) and Offer (2012) were elected to the Academy of Social Sciences in acknowledgement of their contributions to research and are now Academicians (AcSS). Lundy held a Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship, out of which grew publications on aspects of transitional justice and also impact reported in REF 3b. Horgan has held a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship.

Visiting Professors (VPs) are valued appointments to enrich research perspectives, networks, and public profile and impact. Sir Hugh Orde (former Chief Constable of the Police Service for Northern Ireland), Kathleen O'Toole (Chief Inspector of the Garda Siochana) and John McNeill (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, working with Marnoch on police performance) are VPs in criminology. Professor Robert Pinker is a VP in social policy and social theory. Dr Denis McMahon, Under Secretary in OFMDFM has also been appointed. Professor Aron Shlonsky, University of Toronto, was VP in social work during 2012. Rachel Laforest, a specialist in third sector studies, was a Visiting Research Fellow in 2010-11. The School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy hosted Frank Rusciano, Fulbright Scholar and Professor of Political Science, Rider University, New Jersey during 2012.

### **Research students**

Research students are recruited from a variety of geographical backgrounds, including mainland Europe and Africa. They are individually interviewed, selected, given access to appropriate training and monitored in conjunction with the Faculty Research Graduate School (RGS) which, together with the University's Research Office, provides the administrative framework. Each student has two supervisors with at least one being an IRiSS member, an arrangement to facilitate a stimulating research experience for students and good progression rates (an additional specialist Advisor can be appointed to accommodate interdisciplinary or methodological requirements). The RGS ensures in line with the University's *Strategy for Research and Innovation* that students receive training in relevant research methods and generic skills, organises the progress seminars during the first year of study, confirmation seminars for doctoral research and progress thereafter, and provides good access to office space and relevant equipment. The RGS in conjunction with IRiSS provides funds to enable data collection/use of archives as appropriate and to attend and present papers at conferences and seminars. The University and the RGS is now implementing the Researcher Development Framework which articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages students to aspire to excellence in their development. The Framework is a comprehensive new approach to enhancing the employability and careers of researchers.

The recruitment of new full-time and part-time research students remains steady at about five per year. The new arrangements for supervision, training and monitoring should yield further significant enhancements to progress and outcomes. The explicit and publicised identification of specific projects associated with the active research commitments of individual staff members [http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/gradschool/policy\\_projects.html](http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/gradschool/policy_projects.html) is yielding improved alignments of interests. The RGS monitors and assesses reasons for non-completion and rigorously examines evidence of performance at each formal measure of student progress. Research students are encouraged to participate fully in RI seminars and conferences. PhD completions for this UOA in 2013 compared with the position for RAE 2008 are:

RAE 2008 Completions	Annual RAE 2008 Completions	REF Completions for 2008 to 2013	Average Annual REF Completions for 2008 to 2013
17.83	2.74	21.33	4.23

## Income

External income associated with research and attributable to this UOA from 2008 to 2013 amounts to £1,955,233.

Income Source	Percentage	Total
BIS Research Councils, RS, BA	52%	£1,018,367
UK-based charities	11.23%	£219,562
UK central government bodies	21.15%	£413,544
UK industry, commerce and public corporations	0.60%	£11,940
EU government bodies	3.55%	£69,312
EU other	1.72%	£33,877
Non-EU other	1.50%	£29,175
Other sources	8.25%	£161,458
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£1,955,233</b>

It is a major achievement in the period to have secured over half of our external funding from what are often regarded as the most prestigious sources: Research Councils and such bodies as the British Academy. Annual income has been rising since 2011-12 and in the current year is £386,482. IRiSS carefully monitors application and success rates for external funding, with agreed targets set at meetings between the IRiSS Director, the UOA Coordinator and individual staff members. It is anticipated that the upward trend will continue as ECRs become established in their careers. Principal funders have included: Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM); ESRC; Atlantic Philanthropies; Leverhulme, Academy of Public Administration Kazakhstan; European Commission; Leverhulme; Northern Ireland Prison Service; Police Service of Northern Ireland; Foundation for Canadian Studies in the UK; and British Academy.

Successful submissions to all our main funding sources were peer reviewed and secured in open competition. Individual awards of note include Gray and Horgan's funding from the Methods and Infrastructure Committee of the ESRC and from OFMDFM to develop the Policy Unit within ARK; Gray's funding for collaboration with Gingerbread (funded through the EU Equal Programme) to investigate the employability of lone mothers with research partners in four EU countries; Heenan's ESRC Fellowship; Horgan's Leverhulme Fellowship; Lundy's Leverhulme Fellowship; Marnoch's, ESRC Public Services Programme Fellowship for work on Scottish parliamentarians as end-users of health care metrics; Lasslett's award of a British Academy Small Research Grant for work on state crime; and Offer's two BA Small Research Grants, for work on Spencer and on Robert Pinker.

## Infrastructure and Facilities

Between 2006 and 2012, under the ESRC large grant programme (£2.7m Building Research Capacity in Northern Ireland, RES-060-23-0015, 2006), the new ARK Policy Unit was developed (from 2008) as an arm with a unique role in developing the infrastructure through which social policy research could be disseminated to enhance policy-making capacity within NI (on the Policy Unit's research impact see REF3a). The main objective of the Policy Unit is to build robust connections between academic researchers and the NI Assembly, the civil service, the voluntary sector, and business, thereby enhancing both engagement with research and evidence-informed policy making. Gray and Horgan lead the research conducted within the Policy Unit, but its regular seminars are planned so as to nurture and disseminate policy related research projects drawn from across the UOA. The Policy Unit's value has been recognised by the award of a further grant, from OFMDFM (2012-2015, £298,758), for an associated project.

## Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

In terms of *collaboration at an institutional level*, Access Research Knowledge (ARK) is a noted NI focused research unit, of which the Policy Unit is one arm, jointly managed by the University of Ulster and Queen's University, Belfast. Core funding for ARK was provided, as noted, by the ESRC. From this UOA, Gray and Horgan are closely involved (Gray is Research Director). Established in 2000, it is dedicated to conducting research and to making available new and newly re-evaluated social and political information to the widest possible audience. The institutional structure of ARK has been supported by major grants from research councils, trusts and government. ARK runs its own suite of surveys, provides social data on its website, facilitates seminars and roundtables, and, in partnership with the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), regularly publishes guides to the policy landscape ([www.ARK.ac.uk](http://www.ARK.ac.uk) and <http://eprints.ulster.ac.uk/10235/>). ARK's survey work has been highly influential within OFMDFM in developing gender equality indicators while its statistics on community relations inform government strategies such as the programme *Together: Building a United Community* (2013, for example p.19) <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community>

Some *collaborations involving individual researchers*, first from *Governance, Performance and Public Policy and Welfare, Poverty Health and Social Care*, must also be indicated. Acheson is the NI lead academic in the ESRC-funded Third Sector Research Centre at Birmingham and Southampton. Birrell has extensive links with devolution specialists in social policy in Scottish and Welsh universities. Devlin-Trew undertook AHRC-funded research on migration in collaboration with National Museums NI <http://www.dippam.ac.uk/> and is a partner in the AHRC Project 'Digitising experiences of migration'. Hodgett collaborates with the Spanish National Research Council and Prof Francisco Colom Gonzales. They held a seminar at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, where Hodgett is an Associate Fellow. She is Adjunct Professor and a Visiting Scholar at Dalhousie University Nova Scotia, working with Prof M Cassin. She also works with colleagues at Cambridge's Centre of Development Studies and the Human Development and Capability Association <http://hd-ca.org>. Horgan researches with the European Anti Poverty Network. Knox has been involved in a professional research network with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), in a collaborative research network with the Academy of Public Administration in Kazakhstan (which recently sent PhD students to Ulster for a 2-week internship): he was a funded mentor for Dr Sholpan Yessimova (who spent 2011-12 in Ulster), with whom he collaborates. Through the Faculty Internationalisation Initiative, Knox has research partners in Kazakhstan, Bangladesh and China. Marnoch, as joint grant-holder, collaborated in 2010-12 on an ESRC-funded seminar series 'Innovation in public services'.

In 2008 O'Connor collaborated with medical epidemiologist, Vaida Bankauskaite, Department Inteligencia Artificial, Universidad de Politécnia Madrid, on health policy development in the Baltic countries, leading to publications in the *European Journal of Public Health* and in *Health Policy*. She is a member of an international panel on 'Gender justice and global policy translation' convened by Payne and Kennett, University of Bristol. The October 2012 workshop was ESRC-funded: papers will appear in a special issue of *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*. Offer is reassessing the publications of Emeritus Prof Robert Pinker of LSE, working with him on the history of their development. He has developed the Herbert Spencer Archive at the University following gifts from Emeritus Prof Tim Gray of Newcastle. Taylor's work on the NI Single

Assessment Tool in the field of health and social care and older people (noted in REF 3a) involved complex cross-institutional cooperation which included: liaison with the DHSSPS Steering Group; consultation with a stakeholder group drawn from Trusts, Boards and professional bodies (including the BMA, RCN and BASW); consultation with service user and carer groups (involving the voluntary sector); and managing a team across professional disciplines. Taylor and Aron Schlonsky of Toronto and Melbourne collaborate on risk and decisions in child protection.

Within the *Crime and Punishment* grouping, Lasslett is on the Executive Board of the International State Crime Initiative, involving Ulster, King's College London, Harvard and Hull. Their largest funded project is an £830,000 ESRC award for studying resistance to state crime. Lasslett also has research networks with organisations in Papua New Guinea, facilitated through a grant from the University's Research Impact Award Scheme. Lundy collaborates with Impunity Watch (IW), a Netherlands-based, international non-profit body researching human rights abuses in countries with violent pasts. Funded by IRiSS, she has met with IW to map research themes with NI human rights groups and the legal profession. Moore is co-author of a new book on the incarceration of women with Scraton (QUB).

The nature and significance of our developmental *contributions to the discipline* is also extensive and indicated in the following selective summary. Gray and Heenan are members of the ESRC Peer Review College and Gray of the Executive of the Social Policy Association. Gray was also an evaluator of the impact of the Big Lottery Young People's Fund, 2008-2010, and has been invited by JRF to serve on a Taskforce to advise on £2.2m of research on a UK anti-poverty strategy. Heenan, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Provost of the University's Coleraine and Magee campuses, frequently comments on social policy issues in the media. She was appointed by the NI Health Minister to the panel of advisers to assist with the NI Executive-commissioned Review of Health and Social Care Services, which reported in 2011. In 2012 the Irish President appointed her a member of his advisory Council of State. Hodgett is a member of the AHRC Peer Review College, reviews for the ESRC and the German Research Council, is Past President of the British Association for Canadian Studies (BACS), and Chair of the UK Council for Area Studies Associations (<http://www.ukcasa.ac.uk/>). O'Connor was elected Vice-President of the Research Committee on Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy (RC19) of the International Sociological Association until 2009. She served on the Research Council of Norway: Strategic Projects Assessment Panel 2012-13, and the Academy of Finland Social Policy/Social Work International Assessment Panel in 2012. Offer is Advisor to the RUC George Cross Foundation Oral History Project. Taylor has been a member since its foundation of the Child Protection Research and Knowledge Transfer Sub Committee of the North South Ministerial Council, tasked with promoting research-based knowledge in social work decisions.

Staff serve on journal editorial boards to a much larger extent than in 2008: Acheson for *Voluntary Sector Review*, Hodgett for the *British Journal for Canadian Studies*, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, and the *International Journal for Canadian Studies*, Knox for *Administration*, O'Connor for the *European Journal of Social Policy*, Taylor for the *British Journal of Social Work* and *Research on Social Work Practice*, and Tridimas for the *European Journal of Political Economy* and *Constitutional Political Economy*. Lasslett is joint editor of *State Crime*, launched in 2011 by Noam Chomsky, and a board member of *Global Discourse*. Monaghan is on the editorial board of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* and associate editor of *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (editing issues in 2011 and 2012). Offer, on the editorial board of *Sociology* since 2008, is now Chair of the board. Osmani is on the international board of *Bangladesh Development Studies*. Taylor edited the *European Journal of Social Work* issue on innovation in research.

Members are also active in *organizing and addressing conferences* (with IRiSS financial support). We list first noteworthy *conferences organized/hosted*. In 2013 Acheson organized the IRiSS/Third Sector Research Centre (Birmingham)'s conference in Belfast on 'Northern Ireland Voluntary Action Futures'. As President of BACS, Hodgett organized conferences in Cambridge (2010) and Oxford (2009). She also served on the Scientific Committees for the Canadian Studies Bi-Annual Conferences in Canada in 2010 and 2012, and organises the IRiSS/Government of Canada/Foreign and Commonwealth Office Canada-UK Joint Declaration (2011) Seminar Series: the inaugural Seminar, on 'Women, Peace and Security', was held in the University in May 2013. Taylor organised the 'Decisions, Assessment, Risk and Evidence in Social Work' (DARE) conferences held in June 2010 and July 2012 in Belfast (and is planning for 2014). Topping was co-organiser of a joint University/PSNI/Policing Board conference 'Change and challenge: a new conversation for policing in NI' in November 2011. It must also be recorded that this UOA is hosting the 2014 UK Social Policy Association (SPA) annual conference, to be held in Belfast. Major *conference presentations* on *Governance and Devolution* included: Acheson on governance policy to the International Society for Third Sector Research (Istanbul, 2010 and Siena, 2012), and 12 papers presented by Birrell since 2008 on public bodies, devolution and governance in the UK at conferences including those hosted by the PSA Public Administration Committee and the Territorial Politics Group, and by the Scotland Office in Brussels (2012), the David Hume Institute and Edinburgh University (2012, ESRC sponsored), the King's Fund (with Heenan, 2012), Exeter (2009, ESRC sponsored), and Manchester Business School (2009).

Presentations relating to *Welfare, Poverty, Health and Social Care* included joint papers by Birrell and Gray to SPA conferences in 2009, 2011 and 2012 on devolved NHS systems, adult social care, and welfare reform; Gray on 'Social policy in NI' (SPA, 2010) and lone parents and employment (Budapest, 2010). Horgan was a keynote speaker at the 2011 North-South Social Welfare Summer School (involving collaboration with NUI and government Departments). Hodgett addressed the Japanese Association for Canadian Studies in Osaka (2012), spoke at the Human Development and Capability Association Conference in Indonesia (2012), gave a keynote lecture to BACS (Birmingham, 2011) on capabilities, multiculturalism and integration in Canada, and participated in the Canadian Finance Minister's Policy Retreat (2010). O'Connor gave a plenary address to the SPA in 2013. Offer spoke on Spencer to the 60th BSA conference at LSE (2010) and Pinker and pluralism to the SPA in 2012.

Conference presentations relating to *Crime and Punishment* included Lundy's papers in the USA and Yemen on the legacy of conflict in NI, and from Topping, who coordinates and contributes to a series of Roundtable sessions with PSNI, NIPB and communities on policing and public order. Many staff members are, through external appointments, engaged in the reviewing of research submissions to journals or research councils, a major practical commitment enhancing the standard of published work in social policy and allied disciplines. There is plentiful evidence of commitment to national and international research collaboration, including collaboration with government and third sector organisations. The UOA routinely disseminates its research and subjects it to scrutiny, attracting potential users and benefitting researchers themselves, notably through events held by the ARK Policy Unit and the new Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS), which formally partners a legislative arm of government, the Northern Ireland Assembly, and academia. By encouraging debate and improving understanding, KESS provides a forum to disseminate research in a straightforward format, across the Programme for Government; making the findings easily accessible to decision-makers such as MLAs and Assembly committees, as well as the wider public sector <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Research-and-Information-Service-RaISe/Knowledge-Exchange/>. The series is co-delivered by UU, QUB, the Open University and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Overall, the objectives adopted within the UOA in line with the University's research strategy and the institutional management of their implementation have produced an environment in which research and wider disciplinary contributions are diverse and thriving. The present strategy has delivered research and research outputs of the highest calibre. Substantial and prestigious external funding for research has been gained through competition. With the planned additional development in the future of research into young people and social exclusion, and migration, and with the continuation of supportive institutional priorities, reflected in, for example, the seven new research-related appointments, and the strong infrastructural framework provided by IRiSS and the RGS, we anticipate with some confidence that the vitality of the Unit's research activity will be sustained and enhanced over coming years.