

Institution: University of Sussex

Unit of Assessment: UoA 21 Politics and International Studies

1. Context

Sussex's approach to International Relations is intellectually critical, politically engaged and interdisciplinary. In line with this, the objective of our impact activity is to deploy our scholarly insights and resources to interrogate public and policy orthodoxies, and assist in the development of new frameworks of thought and action. We have a longstanding tradition of formulating and conducting research in articulation with users, whether in collaboration, critique or, more usually, in an unfolding mix of critical engagement – whilst always retaining an uncompromising independence. We work with a wide range of governmental, inter-governmental and civil-society organisations, as well as directly with various publics. We pursue this engagement and impact work across all three of our research areas: international theory, global political economy, and war, violence and security.

2. Approach to impact

Since 2008, we have implemented a five-part strategic approach to impact, involving: (1) creating an impact architecture focused on research centres, whilst (2) simultaneously building staff capacities; on the back of this, (3) enhancing and consolidating relationships with non-academic partners, including (4) by responding to user needs; all this enabling us (5) to challenge public and policy orthodoxies across a wide range of areas.

Research centres

These are our primary institutional vehicle for engagement and impact, as well as disciplinary and interdisciplinary research collaboration (see REF5). The Centre for Global Political Economy (CGPE), the Sussex Centre for Conflict and Security Research (SCSR) and the Centre for Global Health Policy (CGHP) all continuously undertake engagement and impact work. All benefit from core funding and part-time administrative support, and were created (and are maintained) with School of Global Studies and/or University Strategic Development Fund investment. This enables the Centres to provide:

- *impact leadership*: Centre Directors lead in promoting extra-academic collaboration and engagement, working together with School and Departmental Directors of Research;
- *organisation*: supported by paid administrators, our Centres have, since 2011 alone, organised over 30 events involving policy-makers and practitioners; and
- *communications*: Centre administrators work with the School Research Communications Manager (RCM) to publicise projects and events, to maintain Centre websites and large databases of non-academic contacts, and to translate and disseminate research material.

Staff capacities

We have made a sustained effort to enhance staff capacities via:

- *Impact-sensitive recruitment*. We have recruited faculty with strong impact records into all three of our research areas. Of our three senior appointments, Weber uses film to promote public debate on citizenship and security, both Weber and Owens have had significant impacts within HE through the production of textbooks, and Newell has an extensive record of non-academic engagement on climate-change policy (see case study). We have invested particularly heavily in war, violence and security, partly to enhance impact capacities in this area.
- *Secondments*. Staff have been supported to use their study leave on secondment with non-academic institutions (e.g. Stavrianakis was seconded to Saferworld).
- *Visiting Practitioner Fellows*. We have appointed a series of Fellows to this innovative new VPF role for three-year terms, to contribute to Centre research events and projects, plus to provide extra-curricular teaching. Appointees have included Jamie Shea, NATO, and Henry Smith, consultant to the UK Stabilisation Unit.
- *Impact seminars*. We have also innovated in holding designated seminars on impact portfolios and plans, both in order to support individual staff, and to share lessons and promote Departmental

Impact template (REF3a)

learning about impact and engagement.

- *Engagement and impact* have been fully integrated into research planning and appraisal processes.

Relationships

We promote two-way processes of engagement and, where possible and appropriate, fully embed potential users in the research process. We do this via:

- *Fieldwork*. Since 2008, staff have conducted fieldwork in more than 30 countries, including Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Colombia, the DRC, Russia, South Korea, South Sudan and the US, maintaining links with potential users in each of them.
- *Formal collaborations*. This includes collaboration in research projects as well as in research communication and dissemination (e.g. SCSR collaborates with International Alert in organising regular 'Peace Talks' events in London).
- *Informal discussions*. For example, our researchers have regular discussions with FCO officials on a wide range of areas, including Russia, Israel–Palestine, UK grand strategy, wartime sexual violence, climate security and peace-building.
- *Conferences*. Many of our research events involve extensive extra-academic participation. For example, CGHP's September 2012 workshop on the Eurozone crisis and global health included participants from the World Health Organisation, the Departments of Health and International Development, the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and World Vision. CGPE events have featured participants from, for instance, DFID, DECC, the EC, Greenpeace, and the Clean Clothes Campaign.
- *Invited practitioner lectures*. SCSR runs monthly New Security Challenges lectures which, in the last two years, have included speakers from the FCO, UK Defence Academy, Reporters Without Borders, the *Guardian*, the Dialogue Society and Conflict Armament Research.

User needs

We regularly undertake 'response mode' impact and engagement work, responding to user calls or needs. This work sometimes has direct impacts, but also builds networks and trust that sustain links beyond the research phase. Examples include:

- *Research* for government, NGOs and IOs: Petito is leading a project on religion and international relations for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ford has undertaken research for the MoD on stabilisation policy and operations; Stavrianakis has produced reports for Saferworld and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade; Newell has written reports for UNDP and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plus a chapter for Transparency International's *Global Corruption Report 2011*; and Kirby has undertaken research for International Alert on the DRC.
- *Events* feeding into policy processes: the SCSR hosted a one-day conference on the International Commission on Missing Persons, featuring ICMP representatives, to discuss its work and strategy. The report from this conference was fed into a major diplomatic conference organised by the ICMP in The Hague, which SCSR researchers also attended.
- *Training*: the SCSR has collaborated with Sussex's Centre for Gender Studies to provide training on wartime sexual violence to FCO staff, and Stavrianakis has provided training on EU arms-export control policy to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- *Research-activist collaborations*: Coleman established and coordinated a three-year human-rights protection programme in the Casanare region of Colombia with a local NGO and European activist network, which is locally credited with significantly lowering the rate of extra-judicial executions.
- *Expert testimony*: For example, Stavrianakis has provided expert witness statements for trials of anti-arms trade protestors.

Challenging orthodoxies

This is the ultimate goal of our impact and engagement activity. Our case studies show this at work in relation to climate-change policy, Israeli–Palestinian water politics, and international policy on chemical and biological weapons. But, beyond these major instances, our work of challenging orthodoxies has also included:

- Weber's '*I Am An American*' films, which seek to encourage reflection on the meaning of US citizenship. These 21 films have been widely exhibited in the US, Canada and the UK, have been

Impact template (REF3a)

acquired by the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York, and have been the subject of numerous radio interviews and debates (including 15 radio interviews in August–September 2011 alone).

- Coleman’s two-volume book project with a Colombian NGO. Against official narratives, this documents local historical memories of armed repression and environmental damage around BP oilfields; it has been extensively drawn upon by Colombian grassroots organisations in recent campaigns and mobilisations.
- Kirby’s critiques of the UK’s new Open Access (OA) policy, including a 2012 position paper which has been viewed more than 10,000 times online, and a submission to the House of Lords Science and Technology Enquiry into OA, which is cited in the final report.
- The SCSR’s Rethinking Climate Change and Security conference, which sought to contest emerging policy orthodoxies on the subject, and involved participants from the EC, NATO, FCO, Greenpeace, and International Alert, amongst others.
- Media work, including Weber’s regular appearances on Radio 4’s *Woman’s Hour*, Selby’s criticisms of donor funding in HE (featured on the *Today* programme and BBC *World*); and Matin’s regular appearances on BBC *Persian* (more than 30 times since 2010, on programmes with audiences of up to 6 million) to discuss issues of Middle East politics.

3. Strategy and plans

Commensurate with our ambition of becoming the leading centre for critical IR research in the UK, our impact goal for the next census period is to become the leading centre for dialogue and debate between critical IR and the public and policy worlds. Our strategy for achieving this parallels our research environment strategy (see REF5, Section 2) and also builds upon our current approach to impact, as outlined above. Highlights include:

- *Research centres*: These will be our primary vehicles for engagement and impact. Post-seedcorn funding for them has already been secured for well into the next REF period.
- *Partnerships*: We aim to expand our ties and establish formalised partnerships with a wider range of non-academic bodies. Again, our Centres will be the main conduit for building these relationships. We also hope to deepen our links with alumni for these purposes.
- *Funded research*: Projects secured for the next REF cycle involve a wide range of non-academic partners and audiences. These include not only the major projects noted in REF5, but also two HEIF-funded SCSR networks on Strategy and Austerity, and Rising Powers and Peace Processes. We will take advantage of a new School of Global Studies *Pathways to Impact* scheme, which will provide co-funding for impact activities and extended study-leave opportunities. We also aim to expand our consultancy income.
- *Staff development*: Internal processes for reviewing grant applications will be expanded to include the School RCM, specifically to enhance each proposal’s impact strategy, and the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange will undertake an annual review of Departmental impact activity.

4. Relationship to case studies

Our three case studies display three common features of our approach to impact: a grounding in high-quality inter-disciplinary research, a record of long-established engagement with non-academic partners and audiences, and an uncompromising commitment to revealing mistruths, interrogating orthodoxies, and supporting progressive social and policy change. Two of the case studies involve discrete research projects, while the third, on the Harvard-Sussex Program on chemical and biological weapons, involves a research programme of more than 20 years standing. All three case studies have been supported by the research centres and staff-development activity discussed above. Though HSP is institutionally located outside Sussex’s IR Department, HSP researchers are active participants in the SCSR, and contribute regularly to Departmental research events (and teaching).