

**Institution: University of Oxford**

**Unit of Assessment: 27 (Area Studies)**

**a. Context**

Area Studies research at Oxford has many beneficiaries of different kinds across the globe. Research in the UoA reaches those on the high political stage, those active at the grass-roots of community life, and even those unaware of the research that has benefitted them, such as Japanese children in residential care. This is because the research involves a wide array of academic disciplines and investigates questions from the fourth millennium B.C.E. to the twenty-first century, and from the southern Americas to Syria.

Beneficiaries of this research include government bodies (especially diplomatic services), international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UK political parties, think-tanks, multinational corporations and advisory firms as well as other types of business, UK and international media, faith groups, foreign language users, and art houses and museums, as well as interested members of the general public. Interaction with these beneficiaries is an integral part of the work of the geographically focused centres and groups that constitute the UoA.

The types of impact include, in the policy sphere, facilitating dialogue between warring parties in conflict zones and briefing new ambassadors or heads of Chancery; in the world of business, informing company investment strategies in countries that require specialised local knowledge; in culture and the arts, guiding public opinion and enriching wider public debates through exhibitions of material and visual culture, and publication of findings through internet media, primary school teaching materials, and extra-academic lectures.

**b. Approach to impact**

The geographically focused centres and research groups within UoA27 pursue impact in three main ways: a) **Targeted impact**, built into the design of research projects; b) **Systematic impact**, generated over time through regular interaction with end users; and c) **Contingent impact**, arising from collaboration with beneficiaries in ways that were not originally envisaged. Examples of these approaches to impact are evidenced in the following fields of public policy, business activity, and society and culture.

**Contributing to public policy**

*Targeted impact* has taken two main forms: 1) Formulation of research and impact strategies in response to programmes and agendas of UK and other governments and NGOs. Thus, the African Studies Centre created the African Environments Programme and the Oxford Network for Governance in Africa (OReNGA) to engage with policy objectives of the UK Department for International Development (DfID). 2) Developing research projects that incorporate impact strategies for policy-makers. For example, the African, Latin American and Russian Centres have co-ordinated an ESRC-funded research project on presidentialism whose Advisory Board includes governmental and NGO representatives and provides briefings on research findings to end users in the policy sphere.

*Systematic impact* in the UoA includes: 1) Advising diplomats and researchers from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Both individuals and centres do this. For example, the Middle East and African Studies Centres provide regular briefings to diplomats before their postings in each region. Other centres organise seminars in partnership with the FCO, an example being workshops on Central Asian states hosted by the Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre. 2) Briefing UK political parties. Members of the Middle East Centre provide policy briefs for the Conservative Party, and the Centre is seeking to develop similar ties with the Labour Party. 3) UoA staff also participate in events organised by think-tanks that bring together policy-makers and academics. Area Studies staff regularly participate in events organised by The Ditchley Foundation, which is widely respected in international affairs and global policy-making.

*Contingent impact* has to date included providing expert opinion for UK and international media. Members of the geographically focused centres regularly comment on international developments in their areas of expertise. For example, Willis's research on the Maghreb received wide coverage during the Arab Spring.

*Outcomes:* The Middle East and African Studies Centres continue to facilitate dialogue between the warring sides in the Sudanese Civil War. Since 2002, they have organised the

internationally-recognised Sudanese Programme, which seeks to give representatives from both North and South an opportunity to air their concerns face-to-face, independent of ethnic, cultural and language constraints. Over the census period, the programme has focused on monitoring the progress of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudan Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army. Both sides in the conflict and the mediators value the rare opportunity for dialogue presented by the Programme, as shown by the high-level delegation that attended the 2009 conference on four years of the CPA: Sir Derek Plumbly (Chairman, Assessment and Evaluation Commission of the CPA); Pa`gan Amum (Secretary-General, Sudan People's Liberation Movement) Taj Al-Sirr Mahjoub (Minister of State, Government of Sudan).

### **Advising global business**

*Targeted impact* emerges from research projects conducted in partnership with public and private business organisations. For example, the Latin American Centre has developed a project on inequality in Latin America in partnership with the CAF Development Bank of Latin America.

*Systematic impact* emerges from consulting for advisory firms. Many Area Studies staff work as consultants for Oxford Analytica, an analysis firm which draws on experts to advise clients, such as the European Commission, World Bank, BP, and Shell, on strategy and performance. This work involves participation in the company's daily morning briefings and annual conference; writing daily briefs for clients; and special consultancy projects. Systematic impact also arises from providing advice to art dealers. For example, the Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Culture of the Middle East regularly consults with international auction houses and dealers.

*Contingent impact* emerges from advising multinational corporations and business analysts. For example, Area Studies staff have participated in scenario planning organised by Shell and events hosted by the business advisory SFA (Oxford), which is a world authority on the platinum-group metals market.

*Outcomes:* Oxford Analytica has reported that Area Studies staff have made an "indispensable contribution" to their clients' ability to "identify and manage risks to their strategic and operational interests". It was noted, for instance, that Cheeseman's work on inter-communal tensions and food insecurity in Kenya was used by UNICEF as part of an analysis and monitoring exercise that identified global hot spots with humanitarian implications; that Robins's analysis of Palestine-Israel conflict and Iran-Israel tensions was incorporated into an Enterprise Risk Management process by a major Japanese industrial conglomerate; that Lora-Wainwright's assessment of China's political economy was used by a global building materials manufacturer to produce a risk assessment of expected trends in the cement and construction industries; and that Chaisty's 25-year scenario analysis of Russia led one of the world's largest consumer goods companies to reassess its operational and legal standing in Russia in light of expected long-term volatility.

### **Enriching civic culture**

*Targeted impact* includes outreach initiatives that 1) Make texts, images and artefacts available for use by targeted constituencies of the public. Examples include the online resources of the Egyptological Topographical Bibliography, which are used both by specialist scholars and the world community of amateur Egyptophiles and tourists, and the Book of Curiosities project (Savage-Smith), which makes images, contextual information and translations of the eleventh century Arabic manuscript available online; 2) Provide professional training and expertise. For example, the 'Balkh Art and Cultural Heritage Project' (Herzig, Leverhulme), has the dual aim of undertaking new research on Afghanistan's early Islamic history and of building the technical capacity of Afghani colleagues in Afghan archaeology, coins, ceramics, and Persian and Arabic texts. The project partners with several research and cultural heritage organisations in Afghanistan, including the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Kabul National Museum and the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA).

*Systematic impact* involves 1) Facilitating outreach to cultural societies and faith groups. This is done by individual researchers in the UoA through links with Oxford-based independent centres that support the study of religious traditions other than those of Western Christianity: Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu. The independent centres have outreach programmes that support interactions with extra-academic groups, and are a conduit for contact with the public. The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, for example, brings leading scholars, authors, and rabbis to participate in the research culture of the UoA over extended stays. 2) Promoting ongoing

relationships with museums and art houses. This is done especially by the Khalili Research Centre for Islamic Art. The endowment of a new Professorship in Islamic Art included a commitment to second the Professor to Doha in Qatar for several weeks of each year, in order to consult at the new museum of Islamic Art, the creation and development of whose permanent exhibits the Professor has overseen.

*Contingent impact* emerges from the UoA's researchers spending long periods in the regions they study. There is often a synergy between their research projects and the priorities of user groups in those regions. Armbrust's unique expertise in Egyptian film, for example, led to invitations for him to curate a film festival that subsequently travelled to Europe and North America.

*Outcomes:* Area studies staff played an important role in the renovation of the Ashmolean Museum, which has resulted in permanent displays and temporary exhibitions that place great emphasis on global interconnections. The new building, designed by award-winning Rick Mather Architects, opened in November 2009 and attracted 1.2 million visitors within the first year, a multiple of previous levels. An example of associated impact in the new structure is Pollard's research, which provided a basis for the critically acclaimed 2012 exhibition 'Threads of Silk and Gold: Ornamental Textiles from Meiji Japan'. This was the first exhibition devoted to Meiji textiles ever to be held outside Japan.

The forms of impact sketched above are facilitated and encouraged by the UoA through: 1) Research Facilitators who advise on drafting impact statements for research applications, also acting as a pathway to central university impact support resources, for example the University's Knowledge Exchange and Research Services workshops for staff; 2) Contractual conditions that allow and encourage staff to work up to 30 days p.a. as consultants in the business and policy sphere; 3) Support for geographically focused centres that bid for cross-university initiatives funded by the AHRC, ESRC and HEFCE, which are designed to build links between Area Studies in British universities and user communities. Examples of the UoA's involvement are the British Inter-University China Centre and the Centre for East European Language-Based Area Studies (CEELBAS). 4) Cooperation with the Bodleian Libraries and the Pitt-Rivers and Ashmolean Museums provides staff with the opportunity to develop web-based resources such as prosopographies, archives, and exhibitions related to research projects. 5) Interactions with Colleges, in particular St. Antony's College, where many Area Studies centres are based and many users are frequent visitors – e.g. the Visiting Parliamentary Fellows programme for serving UK parliamentarians. The Warden of St. Antony's College is a member of the SIAS management committee. 6) Liaison with the University Press and Information Office; providing the Office with an up-to-date register of experts in Area Studies. This office connects national and international media to experts in Oriental Studies and SIAS. 7) Maintaining regularly updated websites and contact lists of end users, which area-specific centres use to publicise their events.

### **c. Strategy and plans**

The remit of the planning bodies of units in the UoA include the development of an impact strategy, building on the support that is already in place. In the Oriental Studies Faculty, the Research Committee advises the faculty chair and board on research strategy. The geographically focused centres that make up the Faculty are encouraged to develop their own impact strategies in five-year plans. In the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies (SIAS), impact strategy is set out in the department's five year plan of core activities, and its implementation is overseen by a departmental committee. The strategy of the whole UoA is to expand and enhance the three types of impact across the range of subjects, disciplines, and areas that the UoA supports, and to monitor results of colleagues' engagement and outward-facing work.

#### **Developing resources to facilitate *targeted impact*:**

*Goals and priorities include:* 1) Utilisation of available University resources to facilitate knowledge exchange. This includes involvement of professional support staff in helping researchers to think creatively about potential impacts of their research through research workshops and away days that draw on University-wide expertise in knowledge exchange and other available resources; participation in a newly created Centre, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH), which seeks to enable engagement with non-academic partners and the wider public through initiatives like Knowledge Exchange Placement Fellowships (supported by the Higher Education

Innovation Fund); and support for applications to the AHRC and ESRC Knowledge Exchange Opportunities Scheme, which is aimed at maximising the impact of humanities and social science research outside academia. 2) Commitment to research agendas that complement UK government funding priorities. The extension of DFID funding for development projects will continue to influence research strategies in a number of regional centres of expertise, in particular African Studies. 3) Involvement in the next wave of cross-university language-based Area Studies initiatives funded by AHRC and ESRC, which were devised to strengthen linkages between Area Studies researchers and end users. Area Studies in Oxford will continue to be a major participant in the next phase (Feb. 2014 – Jan. 2016) of the CEELBAS initiative, for example. CEELBAS remains committed over this period to initiatives that involve end users, such as a new internship scheme for postgraduate students and early-career scholars that gives researchers the opportunity to design their research in relation to the strategic priorities of non-academic users.

#### **Strengthening links that maintain *systematic impact*.**

*Our impact strategy extends to:* 1) Encouraging area-specific centres to maintain close relationships with governmental agencies, NGOs and think-tanks. Both departments remain committed to contractual arrangements that permit staff to work up to 30 days a year on a consultancy basis 2) Continuing the close collaboration with St. Antony's College and its user communities, in particular the FCO, UK parliament, foreign governments and NGOs. This will be enhanced by plans to develop an Area Studies cluster in North Oxford that will encompass TORCH, SIAS, Anthropology, and St. Antony's, St. Hugh's and Wolfson Colleges. 3) Helping to deepen the University's strategic relations with targeted regions of the world and playing a key advisory role to the central University in its interactions with governments, business, and NGOs in these regions. The new China Centre, for example, will provide an important focus for the University's developing relations with East Asia.

#### **Supporting researchers in achieving *contingent impact*:**

The strategy will promote movement in the following directions: 1) Developing the user-focus and reach of websites and social media. 2) Continuing to maintain a vibrant series of geographically focused seminars and conferences that include participants from user communities. 3) The development of training in Area Studies for research students through initiatives such as the language-based Doctoral Training Programme in the social sciences. Such training is increasingly valued by employers who operate in parts of the world that require local expertise and knowledge.

#### **d. Relationship to case studies**

The case studies included in the submission represent examples of the different types of impact generated by the Area Studies UoA.

**Targeted impact.** The impact of several case studies, including Cheeseman's research into *free and fair elections in Africa* derives from a targeted approach to beneficiaries – in his case, a strategy to engage with development programmes initiated by governments and NGOs on governance issues in Africa. Targeted impact has also been achieved, in the case of *the Griffith Institute*, through a long-term institutional commitment to making a scholarly resource available to the widest possible range of users.

**Systematic impact.** Carrier's research into *the stimulant drug khat*, and the work of the UoA's Middle East analysts on *the Arab Spring*, are just two examples of the ways in which regular interaction with decision-makers has enabled a range of impacts on policy. Similarly, Martin Goodman's scholarship on *Jews and Judaism in the Roman World* and Brock's work with *the Syrian Church* demonstrate how impact can be achieved through long-established relations with different audiences in the worlds of culture and history.

**Contingent impact.** The unintended impacts of Area Studies research can sometimes be the most significant: for example, Anderson's research into *Torture and Abuse during the Mau Mau Emergency in colonial Kenya*, and Roger Goodman's groundbreaking socio-political analysis of *the system for 'looked-after children' in Japan*, have both influenced important policy decisions in recent years.