

<p><b>Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: D27 Area Studies</b></p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) is an interdisciplinary department in the School of History and Cultures, within the College of Arts and Law. Our research is based on in-depth fieldwork, frequent visits to the continent, and long-standing collaborations with African institutions and individuals. This enables us to achieve impact on many fronts and with a diversity of beneficiaries, both in the UK and in Africa itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In Africa</b>, beneficiaries include <b>local communities</b> where development initiatives have been informed and enhanced through our collaboration with <b>NGOs and government agencies</b> to promote understanding of local problems. <b>African students</b> are a second important group of beneficiaries, as our strong collaborative relationships with a number of African <b>HEIs</b> have enabled us to have a significant impact on the content and structure of teaching programmes.</li> <li>• <b>In the UK</b>, two of our main constituencies are <b>school pupils</b> and the <b>general public</b>, where our focus is on raising awareness of Africa's rich history, cultural heritage, and contemporary social and political issues, through cultural exhibitions, public communication and education. In this way we challenge their imaginations and enrich their lives culturally and educationally.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>We have developed different but complementary approaches to impact in the UK and Africa.</p> <p><b>(1) In Africa</b>, impact has been achieved through <b>work with development agencies</b>, through input into African HEIs to <b>shape the content and form of educational programmes</b>, and through links with <b>organisations in the UK representing African interests</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DASA has a long track record of actively contributing to the work of <b>NGOs</b> which operate in Africa. For a detailed example, see Impact Case Study 1, which was developed from a partnership originally established in the 1990s and subsequently carefully maintained and strengthened through exchange visits and joint workshops. Other examples are Bolt's advisory role with Concern International on monetary policy in Malawi, and Rossi's membership of an international partnership funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada which focuses on Sexual Slavery and Forced Marriage and works with international lawyers and NGOs from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, DRC, and Uganda; they are currently interviewing victims of war-related sexual abuse in each of these countries to raise awareness of the problem in national governments and international organisations.</li> <li>• DASA staff have developed long-standing links with a number of <b>African HEIs</b>, and collaborative work with them has helped to shape the content and form of their postgraduate programmes (see Environment Template for details of partnerships). Two examples, from a longer list, are Cline-Cole's collaborative project (Impact Case Study 1) which feeds into the design and delivery of Masters programmes at Bayero University Kano, and Rossi's graduate course at CARTE (a Dakar-based partnership between West African universities for research on slavery and the slave trade), which breaks new ground in terms of content and perspective.</li> <li>• We work to bridge the gap between UK and African constituencies by collaborating with organisations <b>representing Africans in the UK</b>. We organise training events, e.g. with the Ghana Midlands Union, and promote representation of African points of view on politics and development, e.g. with the Amilcar Cabral Institute of Guinea Bissau, on whose behalf we organised and hosted a visit by Guinea Bissau's then-President Raimundo Pereira and then-Vice President (now President) Manuel Nhamago, November 2011. The latter event attracted an audience of about 50 Lusophones, including many from outside the University, and provided a forum for discussion of the difficult political situation, and on-going attempts at reform, in Guinea-Bissau.</li> </ul> <p><b>(2) In the UK</b>, our emphasis is on enhancing public understanding of Africa's cultural richness and socio-political realities. We thus counter historically-derived stereotypes and promote cross-cultural appreciation. We achieve impact through presentations on <b>art and culture</b>, through <b>public communication</b> on current issues in Africa, and through input into <b>education</b>.</p> <p><u>Art and culture:</u></p> <p>Our approach has been to increase and sustain public interest in African literature and visual arts by developing a relationship with primary and secondary schools in the region, and with non-</p>

## Impact template (REF3a)

academic organisations such as museums and film festivals.

- DASA houses the **Danford Collection of West African Art and Artefacts**, one of the finest collections of its kind in Europe. Working with the University's Research and Cultural Collections unit, Bolt and Barber have drawn on their ethnographic research to develop accurate and illuminating texts (on-site descriptive placards, brochures, website) to increase intellectual access for the public. We host school parties and other groups of visitors, and open the Collection to the public on University Open Days and throughout Black History Month, when numerous activities and visits are scheduled. We give talks on the collection (Barber: Nigerian Field Society, April 2012; Black History Month, October 2012; Retired Staff Members' Association, October 2012) and help curate displays within it (Bolt, Ghanaian gold weights). Our strong links with public museums have extended the impact of the Collection: for example, textiles from the Collection were the focus of an exhibition at the Birmingham Museum, "Style Africa" (open to the public April-September 2012), organised with the participation of students from DASA and Birmingham City University; and Rossi and Bolt organised a half-day symposium on key pieces in the Danford Collection (January 2013), attended by members of the public, where the two speakers were both museum professionals (Fiona Sheales, British Museum, and Zachary Kingdon, World Museums Liverpool).
- DASA runs a programme of **cultural events** open to the public; these usually take the form of readings by African, Caribbean and Black British writers. Formerly funded by the West Midlands Arts Council, these events are now sustained from the department's own resources and continue to attract participants from the local multicultural Birmingham community. They are organised by Brown, himself an artist and poet, drawing on his research on African and Caribbean literature. This has led to literary events - including a talk by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and a reading by Sarah Manyika - co-organised with the Drum Arts Centre in Birmingham, the major multi-cultural arts venue in Europe.
- Brown's **art exhibition**, BABEL: '*beautiful, unsayable, meaningless, profound*', an installation of collages, paintings, digital prints and sculptural boxes inspired by his research on African and Caribbean 'visual language', has reached a wide audience in the UK and beyond. It has been shown in the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, in the Drum Arts Centre, which attracts several hundred visitors each week (September-December 2010), in Tanzania (2009), Guyana (2011) and Barbados (2011). The beneficiaries in all of those places included school parties and the general public. Several of the images have been used for book and record sleeve designs and there have been local newspaper and on-line reviews of the exhibition, and radio and television coverage.

#### Public communication

- Public communication of DASA research is a rising priority. In 2012, with College support, we launched a new series of **weekly talks**, open to the public and made available online. In 2013 we launched the annual **Face Lecture** to be given by distinguished speakers on African topics. DASA staff give **public lectures** outside the university context: Shear organised the Journal of Southern African Studies lecture (2012), and Shear (September 2011) and Bolt (October 2012) have both spoken at the West Midlands Human Rights Film Festival; Rossi spoke at Islamic Relief's discussion event: "Feeling the heat: The human cost of poor preparation for climate-related disasters" (November 2012).
- The new **Africa Hub** website, funded by the Annual Giving Programme of University of Birmingham Alumni, and launched in 2012, positions DASA at the centre of a network of available Africanist expertise across the University, and in the region as a whole. It provides information on Africanist expertise in fifteen Schools and departments, from Accounting & Finance to Theology & Religion, and on a growing list of outside bodies including community organisations such as the United Nigeria Welfare Association, artistic associations such as the Midlands Artists in West Africa Forum, and official bodies such as the "Connecting Histories" programme of the Birmingham Central Libraries. It includes pages for students putting them in touch with outreach and volunteering opportunities, and links to Facebook alumni groups in Ghana and Nigeria. It carries podcasts of DASA conferences, events and weekly seminars. After further development it is set to become a key resource for anyone in the West Midlands seeking to participate in informed discussion or requiring expertise or contacts on Africa. The **Alumni Newsletter** has been relaunched online to a wide range of former students of DASA, now found in all walks of life and all parts of the world.

## Impact template (REF3a)

Education:

- DASA staff have a sustained track record of outreach to **schools**, including events for marginalised and excluded youth in the West Midlands. Skinner runs an annual two-hour master class on colonial medicine in Africa, attracting c. 25 GCSE (years 10 and 11) students to the department. In 2013 DASA was represented for the first time, by Bolt, at the London Anthropology Day, an annual event held at LSE to bring anthropology to schoolchildren. Brown gives talks on African and Caribbean literature in several schools in Birmingham, and organises primary school visits to the department. His outreach activities extend to Barbados, where he gives school talks; his anthologies of African and Caribbean poetry are on the Caribbean Examination Council's syllabus and he receives hundreds of emails from Caribbean school pupils every year.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The department has always been committed to enhancing public knowledge about Africa, and to making a difference in Africa itself. In the last four years we have developed mechanisms to organise and plan for enhanced impact, rather than pursuing it spontaneously as opportunities arose, as was the usual pattern in the past.

- We have started to **embed impact planning**, monitoring and evaluation in all our processes. This is in line with overall School, College and University strategy, and is supported by the appointment at University and College levels of dedicated fulltime research impact officers, one of whom is assigned to our UoA, to offer specialist support to staff. Both the College's Research and Knowledge Transfer (R&KT) office and the School R&KT committee advise staff on how to build impact into grant applications. Senior staff advise colleagues, through Staff Development Review meetings, mentoring, and more informal means, on ways of making their research available to a wider public. Such support was crucial in Nolte's successful application for major ERC funding (Impact Case Study 2), and will be vigorously mobilised in future funding applications (see below).
- A heightened awareness of the need to plan for impact is evidenced in the **new research projects** which we are currently designing with impact at their heart. One of these is a collaborative community-based project which will create a living archive of the family histories and cultural activities of West African migrants in the West Midlands; the second is a project on forced marriage and slavery in West Africa which involves collaboration with NGOs from the outset.
- **Recruitment criteria** now have impact as a non-negotiable requirement in all appointments of academic staff and this will continue. Our newest appointments (Bolt 2012, Rossi 2012, Pype 2013) demonstrate the effectiveness of this new emphasis: their strengths in public communication, website development and collaboration with non-academic bodies underpin our plans to increase the visibility and accessibility of the department's research.
- Central to our plans for impact within the UK is the energetic expansion of the **Africa Hub** website, increasing its capacity to provide internal and external users with access to information about available Africa-related expertise and activities, and provide links with outside organisations.
- Impact in Africa will be intensified through collaborative work with **African HEIs**. Two new partnership programmes (a British Academy-funded partnership with two Ghanaian HEIs, led by Skinner, and an ESRC International PhD Partnering Scheme award which supports stronger links with the Universities of Ibadan, Ghana, the Witwatersrand and Dakar) will lead to the creation of new taught modules, programmes and teaching methods in these institutions.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

Our two case studies were both chosen from the "African" side of our sphere of impact: both demonstrate how DASA expertise and research feeds directly into environmental, educational and organisational engagements that benefit African communities. We chose them because they demonstrated most clearly the impact produced by the department's commitment to working in Africa, in depth, long-term, and in collaboration with African partners. This is the core and inspiration of our department's collective project, which animates all our cultural, educational and public communication activities including those aimed at constituencies within the UK. But both case studies also provide evidence of impact on external development agencies and policy makers. The projects focus on the promotion of dialogue and understanding between constituencies both within and beyond Africa. The two case studies thus connect directly with other bridge-building initiatives promoting the impact of our research on a wider public through Africa-focused events and the representation of African points of view, within the UK and beyond it.