

## Impact template (REF3a)

**Institution:** Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge

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

**a. Context**

In the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES) our mission is to research and teach a variety of disciplines (literature, history, anthropology, politics, religion and linguistics) on the basis of knowledge of the languages of Asia and the Middle East. The main non-academic audiences and beneficiaries of our research can be divided into four broad categories, each of which is international in scope:

(i) Community groups: Organized community groups that share a common language, culture and/or religion are the natural non-academic audiences for much of our research, especially linguistic research and research on literature and historical artefacts. The major type of impact in such cases has been the raising of awareness in such groups of their linguistic and cultural heritage and their being incentivized to engage directly in its preservation.

(ii) The general public: The engagement of members of our unit with the public through public events and the media brings about greater understanding in particular in the historical dimensions of cultures, the existence of cultural diversity, including minority groups, and details of regional politics. Such impact on the general public is difficult to monitor, but evidence can be gained from various types of public feed-back, such as on-line blogs, website hits and attendance at events.

(iii) Policy makers: The research carried out in our unit in the fields of modern politics, international relations and religion is of particular relevance for policy-making and legislative bodies. The unit actively disseminates its research to policy makers through reports and our researchers have been invited to speak to, sit on or lead policy-making bodies. The evidence of impact on these audiences include positive feed-back from policy makers, the use of research findings by such bodies and changes in policy attributable to our research.

(iv) Schools: The research that has an impact on school audiences is mainly historical in nature and constitutes teaching materials and delivered courses or exhibitions that have utilised their research findings to enhance the learning experience of school age students.

**b. Approach to impact**

Our Faculty actively encourages and facilitates researchers to have contact with the non-academic audiences mentioned above. Our research is being made more accessible to non-academics by the development of our website, public- and community-facing events and secondments in bodies outside the university (e.g. Chatham House). We have created a fund that is dedicated to supporting such outreach activities, currently £5K per annum, which is administered by our Research Committee. Researchers also take advantage of various facilities in the University, such as the Fitzwilliam Museum, the computing service, various outreach services and training courses offered by the University in public engagement.

Central to the Faculty's approach to impact is **the cultivation and maintenance of strong links with community groups**. Several members of the unit have given popular talks about their research to community groups in the UK and abroad and also interviews and presentations on community media outlets, such as television and radio channels. Research results relating to cultural heritage are also made available to non-academic members of the communities through on-line databases and websites, supported by the University Computing Service and the University Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies (CARET). In a number of cases our researchers have worked with established national and community organisations to facilitate the impact of their research. For example, Kumar, a research-active Hindi teaching officer, forged a collaboration with the Indian High Commission and the Hindi Geetanjali organisation to offer a community workshop in the Hindi languages. The Faculty has also had particular success in working with minority groups who have become separated from their original homelands. Examples of these means of interaction can be found in the case studies of Khan (Aramaic-speaking communities) and Melville (expatriate Iranian communities). Close engagement with these communities has helped to heighten their self-esteem, build greater security in their identity and cultivate an enthusiasm to become involved in the preservation of their cultural heritage. This has also been an incentive for the communities to support such research work in our unit financially and Khan and Melville have both received funding from these community groups,

helping to create closer and more sustainable relationships.

The unit also seeks to develop impact through encouraging staff **to actively communicate their research to the general public**. This has been carried out mainly by means of public lectures, popular articles, podcasts, broadcasts on radio and television and exhibitions. Press coverage and public blog feedback indicate impact. Kushner, for example, actively promoted his research on the history of Japanese noodle soup to a global audience and received positive feedback from the media and public ([www.barakkushner.net](http://www.barakkushner.net)). Steger's anthropological research of sleep in Japan has had exceptionally wide outreach and positive reaction

(<http://www.research.ames.cam.ac.uk/research-groups/japanese-korean-studies-rg/Japanese-korean-studies-rg-projects/Steger2>). Some of our scholars have also made use of organizations that bridge between the academic and non-academic communities, such as Asia House. Sterckx, for example, has given talks there concerning his research on ancient Chinese food culture.

Researchers in the Faculty develop **the educational impact** of their research in a number of ways, often with support from our outreach fund. One particularly fruitful approach has been to develop educational material designed to convey knowledge from research to schools. This applies, for example, to the Civilizations in Contact (CIC) project, which is an online history learning resource for schools prepared in collaboration with experienced teachers. It has been very well received by pupils and teachers ('brilliant initiative', 'much more engaging and memorable than textbooks alone'). CIC is representative of a wider tendency amongst scholars in our unit to communicate their research findings through teaching material. Shin, for example, has made podcasts on topics relating to his historical research designed for 'A'-level students

([http://www.history.org.uk/resources/student\\_resource\\_5646\\_95.html](http://www.history.org.uk/resources/student_resource_5646_95.html)). Steger has edited a volume of undergraduate essays on Japanese society that will be used in schools

(<http://www.research.ames.cam.ac.uk/research-groups/japanese-korean-studies-rg/Japanese-korean-studies-rg-projects/Steger3>). Similarly Yuan and Peleg have developed textbooks, for Chinese and Modern Hebrew respectively, for use in schools.

Some of the unit's interaction with the general public and with school audiences has been facilitated by the Cambridge Festival of Ideas, an annual outreach event at which several members of our unit have made popular presentations about their research projects. Many of our researchers also disseminate the findings of their research through museum exhibitions, such as Chau's on the Mango cult of Mao (<http://www.rietberg.ch/en-gb/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/mao%27s-mangoes.aspx>). The Faculty makes use of external funding opportunities, such as the AHRC Cultural Engagement Fund which supported a ballet production associated with the research of Charles and Firuza Melville (<http://www.westroad.org/event-info/zahhak-the-dragon-king-of-persia/>).

**Interaction with policy-making and legislative bodies** is a prominent aspect of the work of several members of our unit. In a number of cases our researchers play an active role in think tanks and policy making bodies, for example Kushner's research on modern Japanese history has had an influence on the policy debate in Japan through his role in the 'Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation', which offers advocacy for managing social, political and economic crises in Japan (<http://rebuildjpn.org/en/japans-lost-decades/>) and has been ranked in the top 25 of world think tanks. The Faculty recognizes these activities as an important component of the duties of researchers in the field of modern history and international relations and allows researchers leave during term time to carry out these duties. Other unit members take different approaches to interaction with such policy makers, for example Allen has lectured and written about her research for Middle Eastern public policy bodies (e.g. Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs). Some of our research, such as that of Melville, has also been regarded as a beneficial resource by the FCO.

The Centre for Islamic Studies, the Director and Assistant Director of which belong to our UoA, plays a major role in connecting the work of academic staff with non-academic audiences. It interacts with non-academic audiences through the publication of reports on the results of research, mainly concerning social issues relating to Muslims. A recent major report is 'Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain: Female Perspectives', which received extensive press coverage (and there have been nearly 40,000 downloads to date) since its launch in May this year. The Centre also convenes academic-practitioner workshops. One example is the 'Faith in Social Action' workshop, run in conjunction with the Woolf Institute in Cambridge, which was a joint structured discussion between faith-based charities and institutions, public sector personnel, and academics

resulting in a proposal to the Department for Communities and Local Government for a multi-faith social fund. It has now become policy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/baroness-warsi-launches-together-in-service-the-next-phase-of-support-for-multi-faith-volunteering>). The Centre also runs public-sector training programmes for graduates of Islamic seminaries in Britain and Muslim prison chaplains/imams, and organizes conferences bringing together academics with media representatives and third sector organisations.

**c. Strategy and plans**

In the future we plan to increase our interaction with the four categories of non-academic audience described above. The Faculty will build closer ties with community groups and formalize the interface between our research and their cultural heritage programmes. This will seek to replicate existing joint initiatives such as that between Khan and the modern Assyrian community. A wider range of researchers will be encouraged to speak about their research to community groups and the wider public through offering financial support from our outreach fund and raising awareness of other external support, such as the AXA outreach fund (Steger has been nominated for this by the University this year). Outreach and fundraising will be undertaken within communities the languages and cultures of which are currently not researched in our Faculty with a view to generating new research to ensure that new research areas benefit from strong community links from the outset, facilitating future impact. We have already had success in this regard through fund raising from the Azeri community.

Measures will be taken to communicate the results of a wider range of our research to the general public and schools. This will include posting summaries of our research on our website for general audiences, which will be updated regularly. We shall also upload podcasts of a representative range of the diverse research fields in our Faculty. We will work closely with our University's Office of External Affairs and Communications to ensure that these presentations of our research have maximum exposure to the general public and school audiences. Other means of dissemination will be used, such as the University's weekly research e-bulletin and research features website, and University channels in iTunesU, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. We shall make efforts to ensure that policy-makers and policy-making bodies have greater access to the expertise of researchers in our unit who specialize in the modern period. One way in which this will be achieved will be by working more closely with our University's Centre for Science and Policy, which will help set up meetings between visiting policy-makers and relevant regional specialists in our Faculty.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The four impact case studies that our unit is submitting are broadly representative of the four main approaches to impact described above. Khan's case study focusing on interaction with Aramaic-speaking community groups is a prime example of how our research can help incentivise communities to engage directly in the preservation of their linguistic heritage. This has become a model for other research initiatives in our Faculty, notably the new research project on dialects of the Azeri language, which will involve interaction with Azeri-speaking community groups. The case study of Melville describes interaction with community groups (mainly expatriate Iranians) and also with the general public by communicating the results of research by various means, in particular by a major exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum. Museum exhibitions, and the Fitzwilliam Museum in particular, are key to our approach to engaging with the public and a number of researchers have developed such exhibitions from their research (e.g. Sterckx, [Fitzwilliam Museum], Chau [Rietberg Museum]). The impact described in the case study of Sterckx is an example of the educational impact had by many researchers in the UoA, but unlike CIC it was unsolicited and was not the result of a direct interaction with a non-academic community. Rather, the posting of a summary of his research on a BBC Chinese service web-page resulted in his work becoming a component of the school teaching and examination syllabus across China and being used to train Chinese civil servants. This demonstrates the potential pathway to impact of posting non-technical summaries of research on the web, which is part of our future strategy for enhancing the impact of our research. The research of Swenson-Wright in the field of East Asian international relations involves extensive interaction with a wide variety of policy-making and legislative organizations, fora and individuals. His case study demonstrates how expertise resulting from research can drive policy debate, in this case regarding appropriate mechanisms for resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis.