

Impact template (REF3a)

<p>Institution: The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 35 – Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Deriving from its historical positioning Central has <u>two main categories of users and beneficiaries</u>: those associated with the theatre industries and those who are in some way socially disadvantaged. The former includes sub-groups: design and production teams; performers; specialist manufacturers. The latter includes those who deal with trauma, transgendered youth, prisoners and disabled people. The <u>expressions of impact activity</u> include new thinking that influences creative practice (devising methods at Complicite, instrumentalist performance for Brodsky Quartet and Tambuco); creating and supporting new forms of artistic expression (puppetry with ephemera, installation design for museums); contributing to development of new technology (sound equipment by d&b audiotechnik, Yamaha; digital lighting); contributing to CPD (Brown, Hougham, Low); influencing design and delivery of curriculum (textbooks in various theatre practices; development of subject areas such as drama therapy and sound); influencing methods of the theatre profession (drafting protocols for professional theatre sound; work with Camden People's, Little Angel, National and Royal Court Theatres); changing policy and practice of charities (Gendered Intelligence, Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), Orphan Arts Assemble Organisation (Dar es Salaam), Sesame Institute). Always historically close to real-world theatre industries and practitioners Central has built on this relationship to develop a culture that emphasises 'impact agency'. This is rooted in the work of the nodes of Central's 'Practitioner-Researcher' network, to which all academic staff belong. These include 'Acting, movement and voice', 'Music theatre and sound', 'Contemporary dramaturgies', 'Concepts and contexts', plus the Research Centres in Applied Theatre, Intermediality and Puppetry and Object Theatre. Our culture not only works to deliver 'impact agency' but also, crucially, values it as a concept.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>We use three interrelated concepts for thinking about impact agency: a) the impact delivery role, b) the partnership arrangement, c) the benefit conversion. The concept of <u>delivery role</u> originates in response to, and seeks to build on, specific research practices. It identifies four distinct roles in which researchers might operate: <u>consultant</u>, <u>creative professional</u>, <u>facilitator</u>, <u>co-creator</u>. As consultants Brown helped revise, through the Association of British Theatre Technicians, the National Council for Drama Training standards to reflect new thinking about sound; Grochala, working with the Writers' Guild, advises theatres on best practice in dealing with writers. As creative professionals Barker founded Optemus to introduce chamber opera in Mexico; Donger designed productions and installations for Theaterhaus Jena, the Victoria and Albert Museum (Craig exhibition) and the Jelinek <i>Sportsplay</i>. As facilitators for theatre industry Alexander's workshop on sound-led script-based processes led to the formation of an international collective, Isle of Noises; Astles gives specialist advice to the Puppet Centre Trust. Facilitators of social engagement include McNamara and Stuart Fisher (see impact case studies) and Low, who developed better practice in sexual health communication strategies at Etafeni Centre, Nyanga Township, Cape Town (2008-9). Through its co-creators Central research has influenced the work of internationally pre-eminent companies: Blast Theory (Adams), Complicite (Alexander), Fevered Sleep (Harradine), Station House Opera (Maynard Smith).</p> <p>Delivery roles create, and underpin, <u>partnership arrangements</u>. These take several forms: individual commissioned consultancy (Hougham and HCPC, Donger and V&A); establishment of</p>

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a new network (**Mackey's** work with Oldham Theatre Workshop and Cyrff Ysthwyth); regular partnership (**Alexander** and Complicite); practice embedded in a specific company (**Adams** in Blast Theory, **McNamara** in Gendered Intelligence). We see regular partnerships and embedded practice as the most effective bases for long-term impact, and staff are encouraged to work towards these.

Our modelling of the benefit conversion helps us work with external beneficiaries over time to deliver more effective impact. By looking at the roles and situations of beneficiaries we seek to identify those points at which beneficiaries might convert into, themselves become, agents of impact delivery. In these circumstances a new partnership arrangement emerges (a good example of this is seen with Mosac in **Stuart Fisher's** case study). This is subject to the same strategic drive as all other such arrangements, giving the potential not only to spread the impact wider but to sustain its delivery over time.

The drive towards sustainable external relationships for impact is accompanied by internal focus on regenerating the potency of delivery roles. New staff are inducted into impact delivery through working with established researchers: **Hougham**, as leader of drama and movement therapy, appoints Coleman, who takes forward the research into therapy and groups to new NHS settings and children with life-limiting conditions, collaborating with Croydon Hospital to develop protocols for children's hospices. Established staff learn how one delivery role may be used as a platform to launch others: **Alexander's** work with Complicite led on to workshops for professional artists at the Barbican Theatre, Tate Modern and the Royal College of Art and INSET workshops with Professor Marcus du Sautoy (Oxford University). New roles lead to new partnerships, which again can lead to new beneficiaries, and from here, potentially, yet more partnerships.

c. Strategy and plans

We have noted that the culture of impact agency, and its beneficiaries, derive from Central's historical proximity to those who use its specialisms. This closeness has, over time, been strategically managed in order to achieve maximum benefit for all. Whereas once the relationship with the theatre industry may have been assumed to be one in which the School simply services the industry, Central has aimed strategically to transform and extend that relationship. As a researching specialist college, Central has sought both to change the practices of the theatre industries and to develop the use of theatre techniques in ways that benefit wider communities. It has drawn on its historical legacy to model a range of relationships between industry and higher education. Where historically much of the professional theatre has been indifferent if not actively hostile to higher education and especially research, Central has sought to develop new respect. It has enabled new communities, within the UK and beyond, to benefit from theatre work. Identified in RAE2008 as a new sort of research institution close to industry, Central has sought to shape ways that arts HE can impact on industry.

To deliver its strategic aims Central has made changes that strengthen connections between research and impact and that promote awareness of the role of impact agent. Its plans will develop greater precision in identifying projects for long-term development. In 2011 it created a Fellowship in Research and Enterprise who worked with an informal partnerships group, reporting to Academic Management Committee (AMC), which identified potentially impactful projects. In 2012 came Central Connects (CC), a new business/outreach instrument in which the partnership roles were formalised (a Partnerships manager and officer). CC's strategic plan, working in parallel with the Research strategy, and both overseen by AMC, will seek to enhance impact and add value. Awareness and discussion of, and possible transitions within, the role of impact agent are supported by the research nodes and annual performance reviews. The impact strategy and

its infrastructure will seek over the **next five years** to identify with greater precision the different sorts of benefit, types of beneficiary and relationships between regional and international applications. The work is made **sustainable** not only through structural embedding but through continuous efforts, via the research nodes, to draw more staff into projects relevant to them, in order to learn about the research and thus become agents for developing its various impacts.

d. Relationship to case studies

One case study helped to develop the institutional approach to impact and the other two benefited from the new culture around impact agency. The Sound case study had its gestation over the longest period of time. What it shows, in terms of impact agency, is how **Brown** builds on the role of practitioner-researcher, working very closely to the theatre industry, to become consultant and then facilitator. This trajectory is of interest for two reasons. First, many of Central's specialist staff are employed primarily because they are practitioners with credibility in the theatre industry, so the extension of practitioner-researcher to industry consultant offered a model to follow. Second, because it builds on the professional credibility of the practitioner-researcher, this trajectory confronts the strategic challenge, identified above, of penetrating an industry that is notoriously resistant to higher education and 'research', thereby enabling Central to take forward its overall aim of changing the relationship between theatre industry and higher education.

The Sound trajectory influenced Central's approach by modelling the difference between short-term and longer term, local and international impacts (industry groupings through to wider disciplinary change). In specific terms it confirmed the value of building on already existing connections while formulating the possible roles of the impact agent (as described above), which might then lead to new partnerships and beneficiaries.

The two other case studies gained from the more structured thinking about, and resourcing of, impact delivery roles and partnerships. Just as the Sound trajectory worked through creating informal gatherings (as colloquia) and a formal association (of Sound Designers), so the impact development of Transgender research made its key move in establishing a formal community interest company, Gendered Intelligence. Here the researcher could also be a facilitator, and in that role the project could create a large new network of users and beneficiaries. By contrast the Trauma impact was developed through an iterative process which moved beyond helping its beneficiaries. Thus, while members of Mosac were initially helped to think about issues of abuse, they in turn became organisers of a conference that modelled new possibilities for others dealing with trauma. The beneficiaries were themselves converted into new impact agents. Trauma and GI therefore do two things: they develop new partnership arrangements on the basis of the research and from here they facilitate their beneficiaries in themselves working with the research. In short they create a process that produces not only benefit but also impact agents.

All case studies showed capacity for longer-term evolution, leading to institutional provision of material and financial support to enhance the range of impacts. Central facilities hosted events, it matched National Theatre funding to support the first Sound colloquium and, working with Pride (London), it bought the publicity for the first Gendered Intelligence conference of transgendered youth in 2007. The script at the centre of the Trauma project was written on a short-term sabbatical, made available as part of a small flexible grants scheme set up precisely to enable the rapid and productive exploitation of impact opportunity.

Between them the case studies show how the impact approach was developed and put into practice. All have in common an institutional commitment to the proper support and personal development of a researcher who becomes, at the same time, an agent of impact.