

**Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University**

**Unit of Assessment: D35 Music, Drama, Dance and the Performing Arts**

**a. Context:** Following RAE2008 the Research Centre elected to focus its contemporary arts and performance research activity on strengths of practice in the staff base and taught curriculum: Practice-as-Research (PaR) and Practice-based-Research (PbR). PaR and PbR provide opportunities for locating the praxical nature of aesthetic performance practice both nationally and internationally, and, for the researchers here, articulates an approach to performance that has become embedded as normative over the past thirty years, in both academic and creative industry contexts engaged in promoting contemporary performance as a significant and substantive practice. The agendas employed are seen as a dissemination tool and measure of impact where practice remains a significant aspect of the research enquiry: both constitute a vehicle for articulating the research insights.

A relocation of teaching and research facilities to the Crewe campus of MMU provided an opportunity to restructure the Research Institutes and led to the formation of the Institute for Performance Research (IPR) that brought together colleagues from Exercise and Sport Science and Music, Dance and Theatre. Eligible colleagues were invited to be active members of IPR, and were provided with clear and transparent mechanisms for applying for internal funding to assist them in developing research projects. Group leads were identified for Music, Dance and Theatre to work at a more local level with colleagues on a regular basis, as well as mediating between the IPR and Department structure, and working directly with the research groups to identify impact pathways. Annual research forums were organised over the course of the six-year period that enabled all staff (research active or emerging) to be involved in discussion and debate about specific aspects of academic research activity; these events were also occasions to foster and support research ambitions as well as share research interests and achievements. IPR also programmed research seminars to assist with the dissemination of research; these seminars have effected a stronger arts and science research culture. In addition, funding has been available at Department level to support attendance at conferences thus ensuring that colleagues are able to connect to key research networks to disseminate research activities.

Understanding impact and examining how we might usefully and purposefully respond to the Impact agenda occupied discussions from the mid-point of the period and enabled us to conceive strategic practices to instigate and identify impact, such as optimising the use of individual web-sites, blogs, social media and social networks to promote research; *Fortnight* exemplifies this strategy as the project specifically exploits digital media communications. In addition, we determined that our very strong tradition of engaging with non-academic user-groups, specifically professional artists, through Axis Arts Centre (AAC), national and international arts networks, as well as audiences at arts events/venues, would effectively continue to provide a robust platform for both formal and informal knowledge exchange. Subsequently AAC received ACE funding (the Relocation and Expansion project received £160,000 in funding between 09-12) that enabled the permanent appointment of a Community Outreach and Development Director (Gibson); furthermore, MMU appointed a Business Development Manager (Brown) and both have worked to effectively promote and develop the impact of research generated by colleagues, for instance, by coordinating public engagement events, particularly with local communities; engaging research colleagues in regional arts related events and local media.

Other external beneficiaries of our research have and continue to include a national network of Art Centres and performance venues (e.g. Library Theatre, Lowry, Bridgewater Hall, Z arts, LICA, Arnolfini, Tramway, LPAC, The Sage), festivals (e.g. London International Jazz Festival, Manchester International Jazz Festival, Flare, Chester Up-The-Walls, Chester Performs), arts practitioners (e.g. Victoria Gray, Dogshel Theatre, Reckless Sleepers, Proto-type Theater), media (e.g. TV, Radio), cultural organisations (e.g. British Theatre Consortium, ACE, British Council), and local councils (e.g. Wandsworth, Cheshire East, Hulme, S-O-T, Islington). In addition, colleagues continue to engage with international practitioners and audiences in the development of their research, thus demonstrating that impact has had international reach, for example, in Australia (Turner, Woolley), Bali (Turner), India (Cacalano), Rumania (Kingham, Petralia), Spain (Macdonald), Portugal (Blain), Holland (Cacalano, Mackenzie), Germany (Mackenzie) and America

## Impact template (REF3a)

(Cacalano, Petralia, Blain, Woolley).

**b. Approach to impact:** We actively contribute to the health of the discipline and to debates about the role of research in policy and practice (SCUDD, NAMHE, Dance UK), notably, the NAMHE (2012) annual conference was hosted at MMU and focussed on REF and Impact (Keynotes included Simon McVeigh, Stella Hall, Robin Nelson, Andy Lavender).

As members of various research organisations (TaPRA, IFTR, ICMC), we seek to influence the field of performance research. This is achieved through developing a mix of theoretical, applied, evaluative and practitioner research, including co-production with key stakeholders; various forms of media engagement; and direct engagement with beneficiaries; our main beneficiaries are the general public who encounter our PaR events. A key driver to our approach to impact concerns our engagement with the cultural industries and cultural life. This approach involves promoting an informed understanding of arts-practitioner creative processes through the development and research articulation of new works, as well as developing new audiences for contemporary arts practices (e.g. Flare: Mackenzie and Egan). Inter-related to the impact our research has had on cultural life and society is the impact research has had on health and quality of life (Rimmer, Macdonald, Petralia, Boehm, and Wilkinson).

A key mechanism that has supported our approach to impact is AAC. AAC operates two seasons of professional arts performance as well as an innovative programme of outreach projects. As an indicator of impact on audiences over the period 2008 - 2013: 1958 people attended post-show talks; over 850 people (not enrolled students) participated in workshop events; 12,862 people attended live performance events. AAC has been a showcase forum for academics working in PaR throughout the period. In addition, Linden and Mackenzie's Curating Knowledge project has supported 48 residencies in the Open Space at MMU that have enabled colleagues to develop their research within an environment whereby they are constantly interacting and being tested by a range of both academic and non-academic users. The Flare International Festival (formally MIST) has been a further vehicle for colleagues to disseminate and develop their research (Mackenzie, Egan). Flare has run as a six-day festival (2011) and a 'Weekender' (2012) of radical theatre by new theatre artists from across Europe and the UK: 110 artists were involved in the six-day festival. Working with Contact Theatre, Z-arts, Word of Warning, and in conjunction with Manchester International Festival. Flare has reached and engaged with diverse audiences and provided a forum for discussing issues pertinent to both colleagues involved in research as well as the wider arts community (e.g. the function of festivals, arts funding).

Further activities, such as the AHRC- supported PaR Consortium North West (Parc Northwest), MIRIAD initiative, has enabled colleagues to further assess the impact of the PaR agenda and be effectively involved in steering it further (Blain, Linden are on the management committee; Blain is on the editorial team of *Tacit* the ejournal developed through this initiative).

The Manchester Science festival (2011), ProcessProduct International Festival of Dance Improvisation (2013) and the Text and Theatre Symposium (2011) have all strategically involved collaborations between colleagues (Cacalano, Rimmer, Macdonald, Turner, Kinghorn, Mackenzie, Egan, Deeney) other academics (e.g. Mary Prestige, Steve Bottoms, Cathy Turner, Robin Nelson, Nicola Shaughnessy) and arts practitioners (e.g. Melanie Wilson, Sven Steinhauser, Maida Withers, Tanuscree Shankar), to ensure that research dissemination specifically engages with non-academic users: those arts practitioners who are end-users and/or other collaborators in the research. The ProcessProduct International Festival of Dance engaged practitioners from India and USA in a weeklong series of events framed by the research activities of colleagues in the Dance area and subsequently has led to the proposal and grant application to support an international MA that will develop the on-going research on dance improvisation activated by Cacalano and Rimmer.

Several models of effective practice have emerged from researchers to support both their own and the research and development work of other creative artists: Sunday Lunch Club (Petralia) and Flare (Mackenzie, Egan). The Sunday Lunch Club hosted regular events throughout the REF period and provided a platform for artists to test new work and receive constructive critical

feedback; the event was significant in bringing together MMUle (Blain) and Proto-type Theater (Petralia), plus Turner as collaborators on *The Good The God And The Guillotine* project.

**c. Strategy and plans:** The key strategic plan for the next REF period includes: ensuring that research momentum is sustained for the duration of the next cycle and that long-term engagement with beneficiaries and research users is effectively optimized and more fully embedded in all our activities (a Faculty research day titled 'REF and Beyond' took place in April, 2013 and has already begun to foster research projects with impact at their core).

We intend to continue to exploit social and media networks, as they are strategically effective in communicating and engaging non-academic research users in our research projects, particularly on-line developments and web sites. We will also continue to support colleagues in the development of written outcomes to further articulate the rigour of the research enquiry.

A programme is being advanced to develop and support colleagues' skills in writing grant applications with the aim of significantly increasing the number of grant applications, beyond ACE funding. As is evident in the Environment statement, many colleagues have gained commissions and have submitted applications for research grants, and PaR colleagues have been successful in bidding for, and receiving, funds from ACE. An intention is to continue to develop income generation streams that enable projects to optimise and document impact. Staff will be required to have submitted a funding bid as a match for any application for internal research support. The Research Centre has been actively working with the UK Research Office seeking ways to further support international research events such as the Flare International Festival and the International Dance Festival, as well as other public engagement activities, to use them as effective opportunities to showcase colleague's research (e.g. Mackenzie, Egan, Cacalano, Rimmer, Macdonald) and demonstrable impact; in addition, graduate interns are being appointed to support these activities.

We intend to promote MMU Research and Knowledge Exchange policy to support inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional research, including projects with relevant cultural and commercial partners to strengthen our overall portfolio of research projects and impact activities (e.g. Flare Festival). We intend to promote and engage with a more outward facing programme of research activities (lectures, round-table discussions, workshops), particularly in conjunction with AAC's programme development. We are also exploring opportunities to engage with a wider provision of CPD and lifelong-learning opportunities to optimise impact across the Faculty; these initiatives will in part be enabled by the reorganisation of Research Institutes at MMU currently being undertaken.

**d. Relationship to case studies:** The two selected Case Studies are 1. 'Practice-as-Research and its Impact on the Professional Practitioner: changing models of creative practice' and 2. 'Space Engagers: The Impact of arts and technology on place-based research';

1. The first Case Study exemplifies the PaR group's effective engagement with PaR. Colleagues at MMU have been at the forefront of PaR, indeed Nelson's (2006) article, cited as underpinning research, and his current publication (2013), document his reflections and considerations of PaR projects that had been developed at MMU since the early 1990s. It is our contention that our work has had an impact on the REF process and wider academia itself in relation to the profile now given to PaR (note the extensive discussion of PaR on SCUDD in spring 2013). Fairhall's award-winning research is one example of how the PaR methodology was effectively progressed, to enhance the cultural knowledge and experience of beneficiaries, in this instance the jazz community;

2. The second Case Study exemplifies two strands of research and impact: public engagement and collaboration with cultural industries. Petralia's site-specific theatre project, *Fortnight* engaged with digital technologies and creative practice, and collaborated with the digital technologies sector. *Fortnight* demonstrated impact by influencing associations between participants that led to participants re-evaluating assumptions about place and the function of digital technologies. *Fortnight* received research and development support from ACE, iShed and NESTA.