

Institution: Nottingham Trent University

Unit of Assessment: D28 Modern Languages and Linguistics

a. Context

The French Unit conducts research on contemporary French society, culture, politics and public policy. Research is organised under the umbrella of a research centre: [ReFrance: Centre for the Study of Contemporary France](#). The group consists of 8.6 FTEs, of whom 6 have been in place throughout the full REF period and all of whom work on the modern and contemporary period. The UoA focuses on ensuring that its research and subsequent outputs exhibit a substantial impact on non-academic user-groups and audiences. The principal beneficiaries are:

- *Public Policy and Services*: NTU's track record of engaging with public and private bodies ensures that relevant new insights drawn from our original research are effectively communicated and produce material and distinct benefits. In one of our case-studies, Allwood shows impact in the areas of policy making, public discourses/public services and civil society. For example, her work on prostitution policy and women in politics has been cited in numerous government and European Parliament documents and debates.
- *Engaging Young Audiences*: The Unit's impact also extends to activities in education, outreach, policy shaping and widening participation in Modern Languages. This can be seen by the institutional support for community engagement and also discreet engagement with organisations as outlined in case studies. In one, we show how O'Shaughnessy has promoted and expanded film and media education for school children, for example through his work with Film Education since 2009.
- *Shaping Public Attitudes*: The impact of research in French at NTU has enriched cultural life and civil society, cross-cultural communication and understanding. Staff have used the media and a range of public events to enrich cultural life and shape public discourse. The unit has contributed to public engagement and widening participation strategies, such as the European Day of Languages and the 'Eurostars' summer school.

Our approach to impact aligns with the wider university mission to undertake research that shapes lives and society, and that addresses the needs of communities from local to international levels. The scope of research within the UoA, supported by institutional investment and planning, has made possible the material and distinct impact of our researchers detailed here.

b. Approach to impact:

Within the period of assessment, monitoring processes have helped the UoA to refine its approach to impact and its utilisation of institutional support, specifically since 2008. An initial inventory and evaluation of impact activities supported by NTU revealed that it was essential to recognise that impact activities were already embedded in our research culture and that approaches to impact are not uniform and occur in a variety of ways. It was recognised that the unit's approach to impact can and does benefit the public engagement agenda, and would continue to do so by:

- ensuring the research agenda is constructed in association with external voices/partners;
- ensuring that reflection processes are built into research activity;
- legitimising the creation and development of ongoing stakeholder and public relationships.

Five key impact routes were identified in the unit's existing practices:

1. **Creating and Maintaining a Valuable Open Access Resource**. A team project on *la Crise* (the financial crisis as experienced in France and its socio-cultural implications), became the theme of the 2010 annual conference for the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France (ASMCF) hosted at NTU. A free open-access website <http://lafranceetlacrise.org> was launched in 2010 to provide a space for continuing debate, discussion and collaboration. As of 13 November 2013, the website had reached 16,841 hits, demonstrating considerable reach, enhancing public understanding of this major issue and also influencing public discourse. One of the blogs by McCaffrey (24 November 2010) was also published by French online newspaper *Mediapart*, which has 60,000 subscribers. This 'digital footprint' outlines its formative role in public discourse and also indicates the significance of outputs related to this collaborative research.
2. **Broadening Access to the Outcomes of Research and Education**. Activities in education, outreach and widening participation in Modern Languages were also recognised as having a

material and distinct impact on our local community and beyond. Key events have been the European Day of Languages, to help pupils in Years 8 and 9 understand the importance of learning languages, and the annual 'Eurostars' summer school in July for post-16 students to improve their skills, try new languages and gain an insight into university teaching methods. The UoA in French has had a profound impact on local schools like Parkside Community School in Chesterfield, where interest in studying French had dwindled. After engagement with the unit, the number of pupils subscribed to the course has quadrupled. [Network for Languages East Midlands](#), is led by Pratt as Director and provides CPD in French and other languages for primary and secondary practitioners. Our outreach and widening participation work is innovative and the research outputs and teaching methods of the UoA have directly contributed to the success of these initiatives.

3. **Shaping and Guiding Policy.** Impact in the areas of policy making and public discourses is evidenced by Allwood's engagement with NGOs, refugee agencies in the UK and France including associations such as the Prostitution and Policy Advisory Group, public bodies (state funded), government agencies, refugees' fora and lawyers' associations (see case-study). The findings of the research and the expertise of the researcher informed policy decisions as evidenced by references in copious policy documents, as evidenced in our Case Study. The UoA can also look to Pratt's involvement in policy fora (e.g. Alliance Universities initiative on languages, November 2012), which drew on Pratt's research to inform policy documents submitted to HEFCE designed to encourage targeted support for Modern Foreign Language. This is demonstrative of a varied engagement with public and private policy making organisations.
4. **Enriching Cultural Life and Supporting Engagement Organisations.** Researchers achieve this by engaging in talks, debates and public engagements, nationally and internationally. This allows feedback on research outputs to shape future research, a strategy that aims to ensure that cultural engagement leads to material impact. Specific research activity is also used to broaden the audience (and hence reach) of cultural engagement organisations through special events including at The Alliance Française in New South Wales, Australia, (Boulé, July 2009, Pratt 2010), the French Institute in London ([O'Shaughnessy 2009](#), [Boulé 2010](#)); the Bedfordshire Student Screen Film Festival (O'Shaughnessy, February 2012), the Lancashire International Film Festival (O'Shaughnessy, June 2010), and [Nottingham Contemporary Art Centre](#) (McCaffrey July 2011, Pratt May 2012). The aim here is to ensure that new insights arising from original research are effectively communicated to a non-specialist audience, maximising the potential for outputs to shape public discourse and impact upon cultural life.
5. **Developing our Media 'Footprint' to Communicate Research.** The Unit has a strong 'footprint' in the media that has allowed it to shape cultural discourse and further communicate the outcomes of original research. For example, Boulé in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 16/05/2008; 06/09/2013 and in the [Observer](#), 21/09/2008; the team project 'The Crisis in France', BBC Radio Nottingham (20 October 2010) and in France, [Aligre FM.](#); (Voix Contre Oreille, 19 October 2010). The reach and significance of this engagement has generated a considerable 'footprint' for the unit's research and has been instrumental in ensuring that the desired impact upon public discourse has been achieved and is measurable.

We believe the unit is well-placed to achieve maximum impact by accentuating these existing routes to impact and developing future research outputs in line with our stated strategy. Identifying the key beneficiaries of research helps the UoA to develop relationships and seek new avenues to engage with society, developing an already vibrant Research Environment and building on institutional support.

c. Strategy and plans

The unit has created a research strategy to accentuate research impact from 2013 onwards. We recognise that impact will continue to be the result of individual or collaborative research, including collaboration with researchers beyond NTU or the UK. We believe that the two main distinctive impact strands within the team are and will continue to be:

- Enriching the cultural life of the local community and broader society, and

Impact template (REF3a)

- Influencing policy making and public discourse nationally and internationally.

The evidence for the reach and significance of all impact routes suggested below will be maximised by maintaining a strong presence in the media and by continuing to engage in talks, debates, and public engagements with key beneficiaries.

1. Embedding impact as part of our research culture

Impact is now in place as a key part of existing mentoring and research review processes in order to assess how best to assist all researchers to maximise the potential impact of their research. This also supports staff developing internal sabbatical applications and external funding sources where routes to impact form part of the process of evaluating both applications and outcomes. Each researcher can apply for project funding (up to £500) and this has been used in the past by researchers to attend meetings with practitioners or NGOs in Western Europe (Allwood). From 2012-13 onwards (and beyond the current REF period) a proportion of the Unit's QR budget will be used to cover financial costs of impact. This is supplemented by School initiatives. Since 2011, additional funds have been available to support activities that will increase the impact of published and forthcoming outputs.

Collaborative Impact and Impact as ReFrance

We intend to develop more extensive collaborative projects following the success of initiatives undertaken by Allwood and Reynolds with other collaborators, end users and/or beneficiaries, some of which have impacted on policy and are exercising an enduring impact on policy debates (see Allwood's case study). Networking is an important first step in collaborative projects, in which the institution can support the development of relationships with key beneficiaries of research. We intend to carry on hosting visiting scholars within ReFrance who can help develop these relationships. Building on the success of the website/blog 'La France et la crise', the institution has made funds available and begun to work on establishing an online, open-access 'Observatory on France', designed to broaden the focus as a portal for research on social and cultural change in Contemporary France, with blogs and interviews, a tangible example of research guided by collaborative involvement.

2. Impacting the local community

We aim to further develop our impact in the local community and economy by making full use of the Network for Languages, East Midlands, and exploring links with public and worker education (on 'Cinema and Work'). We are currently planning a range of research-related cultural events in collaboration with local cultural centres and regional secondary education providers, including Nottingham Contemporary and Broadway Cinema in Nottingham.

3. Potential users or beneficiaries involved in the research process

We intend to accentuate the involvement of potential users and beneficiaries in the research itself, following the example of Allwood. For example, Pratt is working on a 4-year project requiring on-going collaborative research activities with European (including French) budget airline stakeholders with the capacity to contribute to economic prosperity and to a better understanding of civil society, Framework Programme 7, Marie Curie/People, International Reintegration Grant (IRG) 'Where We Fly'.

d. Relationship to case studies

The selected case studies (Allwood and O'Shaughnessy) exemplify the unit's approach and illustrate the range of impacts and beneficiaries. Both case studies underscore how the unit has been able to broaden access to the outcomes of research and education through interaction with different institutions and public fora. With its strong social science grounding, Allwood's research has helped shape and guide policy and responded to the needs of public institutions and NGOs. More culturally based, O'Shaughnessy's work on cinema has made a significant contribution to film and media education and to public debate. Together, the two cases give the unit a sense of the kinds of impacts it can deliver and thus help shape its strategy and plans.