

## Impact template (REF3a)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Wolverhampton
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 29 – English Language and Literature
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The English Unit draws together staff from Literature, Creative Writing, and Film Studies. The relatively small size of each subject team inhibits the development of specialist research centres, so the strategic approach has been to support impact along lines of common generic activities and research interests. This strategy initially aligned itself with wider HEI commitments to serving the region and to widening participation. Therefore, activities that supported and developed the cultural life of the West Midlands in terms of public participation and access were encouraged. In addition, pedagogic research that drew upon and developed professional practice within the HEI was fostered for dissemination across the HE sector.</p> <p>In 2010, a review of the School Research Strategy saw the establishment of the Centre for Transnational and Transcultural Research (CTTR) and the Centre for Film, Media, Discourse, and Culture (CFMDC) within which members of the Unit currently reside. These Centres administer individual research plans to identify impact opportunities and provide the support required through travel grants, remission from teaching, and project administration. Under their stewardship, three areas of cognate research activity have been encouraged: transnational/transcultural writing, intercultural media, and English Studies pedagogy.</p> <p>The Unit accommodates interests in mainstream and marginal cultural heritages with research in travel writing, the United States, South African folklore, the Black Country, popular and visual cultures, and black British identity, with recent appointments supporting developments in Welsh writing and marginality. It also retains an ongoing commitment to pedagogic innovation and research, particularly with regard to the employment of digital resources.</p> <p>This research expands and enhances cultural life; creates economic well-being through for-profit as well as non-profit wealth creation; and informs education through applications of pedagogic research. Its main users, beneficiaries or audiences are: the general public (including media audiences and cultural consumers); not-for-profit charities and creative industries; and teachers and students (at all levels) in the UK and globally.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The Unit has sought to support and enable impact through four areas of activity. Its <i>public outreach</i> strategy is intended to raise the profile of the HEI within the region and to encourage public interaction with the HEI in order to contribute positively to the civil and cultural life of the West Midlands. It has established a <i>media presence</i> in order to extend the reach of its activities to a national and international level via commercial and social networks. It has engaged with <i>external partners</i> to apply and transfer knowledge gained from research to the service, creative, and cultural industries. It has engaged with the <i>subject community</i> beyond the HEI to influence and inform educational policy and practices at both secondary and tertiary levels. For example:</p> <p><b>Public Outreach:</b> The CTTR public outreach programme, instituted 2010, comprises an annual event in conjunction with the HEI's International Day as well as public lectures. In the inaugural event, <b>Ellis</b> organised a writers-in-conversation session between <b>McDonald</b> and Sathnam Sanghera, whose bestselling memoir, <i>The Boy with the Topknot</i> (Penguin, 2009), recounts life growing up as a Sikh in Wolverhampton. Subsequent public lectures have included speakers such as Fred D'Aguiar and Jack Zipes. <b>Hockenhull</b> and <b>Pheasant-Kelly</b> have worked with Light House Media Centre in Wolverhampton on exhibitions and film screenings. <b>Pheasant-Kelly</b>, an expert on trauma cinema, curated an exhibition of photographs from the site of the World Trade Centre, <i>Spirit of Steel</i> (04-06/2010), at Light House's Lock Works, viewed by 1800 visitors (Lighthouse 'People Counter'). <b>Miles</b> has a poem etched into a paved swirl leading to a labyrinth in King's Heath Village Square, Birmingham as part of a £430k Big Lottery Community Spaces Fund. Miles read the poem</p>

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'You Enter' at the official opening with 500 people in attendance (15/10/11). **McDonald** is a regular contributor to numerous public events (see REF3b, below) and has published local recovery scholarship in *The Blackcountryman*, the journal of the Black Country Society, comprising a diverse membership of around 2,000 dedicated to preserving regional heritage.

**Media presence:** Unit members have appeared as experts in a variety of print and broadcast media aimed at general audiences. **Colbert** contributed to a National Geographic Channels International documentary on Marco Polo ('Mystery Files', Series 2, aired June 2011, and syndicated worldwide, including Canterbury TV New Zealand, Smithsonian Networks USA, and CCTV9 China). **McDonald**, commissioned by UKTV to research the world's oldest joke, was subsequently interviewed on BBC Breakfast (TV), BBC World Service, and Sky News, while the story (via Reuters) reached an estimated global audience of 196 million (Taylor Herring, 2008). **Miles** was commissioned by *The Guardian* to write 'Teaching with Twitter' (11/06/12), an article retweeted over 800 times from the *Guardian Higher Education Online*. One of her poems was published in Carol Ann Duffy's column in *The Daily Mirror* ('Cuts', 28/10/10). **Jones** and Carlin (not entered) are exploiting published research on popular music through a newly launched online database of Helter Skelter covers (06/2013; <http://helterskeltercovers.wordpress.com/>).

**Engagement with external partners:** **Miller** has been working closely with a South African charity, the Kalahari People's Network (KPN), and other stakeholders to develop an enhanced e-book that will help preserve a threatened folktale tradition, building on research that underpins her two novels (*Salt & Honey*, 2006; rev. ed., 2011; *Kalahari Passage*, 2011), the first of which has been translated into French, Italian, and German, and reprinted in India. She is also Tertiary Education Advisor, UK, for the KPN. **Jones** hosted the international Heavy Metal and Place conference (09/2011), one of a series of events 'aimed at a broad audience, from music fans, social history enthusiasts to cultural tourists', produced by the arts management company Capsule in its Heritage Lottery-funded 'Home of Metal' project to 'celebrate the music that was born in the Black Country and Birmingham' (<http://www.capsule.org.uk/project/home-of-metal-2/>). **McDonald** was part of a campaign to promote Dave TV, the Dave website, and a stand-up performance at the Apollo Theatre, London; the publicist Taylor Herring reported that results 'surpassed our original target' (TH, 2008). **Hockenhull** shared research on film and painting with 42 delegates from the US and Europe at the 29th Annual Summer School (2009) of the Mary Webb Society, a non-academic literary society ('a totally fresh take on our favourite film *Gone to Earth*'; Summer School Report, online). **Allen**, Carlin, and **McDonald** have lectured to pupils and teachers for Sovereign Educational Ltd, a private A-Level training company (average audience 200, with 3-4 teachers). **Miller** and Pieterick (not entered) are currently commissioned to contribute content to 'Heroes and Guises' for Horbury and Goffe: a smartphone and tablet app designed to help young people with life-threatening illnesses to explore their creativity through creative writing.

**Subject networks:** **Colbert**, **Ellis**, **Miller**, and especially **Miles** established a close working relationship with learning consultants at the former English Subject Centre (ESC) and are pursuing similar arrangements with the HEA, of which Miles is a National Teaching Fellow. They have designed online discussion activities for VLEs that have been taken up by teacher training programmes and lecturers in HEIs and other educational environments (see REF3b, below). **Ellis** published an ESC report on the First-Year Experience in HE (2009), which led to external appointments (e.g. BA English Revalidation Panel, Swansea Metropolitan University, 05/2010) and an invitation to speak on 'English in a New Era: Strategies for Changing Times' at the CCUE OGM in December 2012. Pieterick is co-author of *Giving Students Effective Written Feedback* (with Deirdre Burke, Open University Press, 2010) and has provided creative writing workshop sessions and online resources for the HEA ([http://humbox.ac.uk/2944/3/cw\\_workshop\\_ind.pdf](http://humbox.ac.uk/2944/3/cw_workshop_ind.pdf)). **Colbert** addressed 50 professionals and retirees at the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education Day School on The European Grand Tour (02-03/03/13), with the organiser reporting overwhelmingly positive feedback (email).

## c. Strategy and plans

The Unit plans to support and extend both existing research activities and those areas of expertise

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not sufficiently developed currently to be entered here. In both instances, the emphasis will be upon supporting research with the capacity for influencing civil, cultural, and economic life beyond the HEI. **McDonald**, the Unit's Impact Officer, will be leading a series of workshops and offering mentorship with which to share best practice and discuss ways of extending reach, by capitalising on established networks as well as by building projects to exploit research expertise. Individual research and publications will still play an important part in generating research impact over the longer term, but the Unit is placing growing emphasis on collaborative project research where impact opportunities can be identified and planned for at an early stage.

For example, the Unit will continue to support the development of **Miller's** e-book to promote and conserve the cultural heritage of the San peoples of South Africa. The CTTR is working in collaboration with the University's Project Support Office (PSO) to explore commercial applications for the current prototype and to sustain collaboration with experts at Meraka Institute (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa). Similarly, **Hockenfull** is working with the Wolverhampton Business Solutions Centre on a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) examining the role of independent cinemas and Media Centres, both in the UK and internationally, given the perceived monopoly of the multiplex cinema.

The Unit will also seek to extend its research into cultural identities. **Colbert** has brought in Boutonnet (not entered) and Hambrook (Area Studies) to investigate online coverage of the London Olympics as part of an international project on linguistic representations of the foreign. ALTERAE (2012-15) is funded by the Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation (€25,000), whose international partners are seeking to contribute to Spanish and wider-European policy debates on migration, foreignness, and identity. Additionally, the recent appointment of **Griffiths** as Professor in Creative Writing, with a background in the regional novel, screenplay writing, and travel writing is intended to expand the impact capacity of the English unit. Griffiths's media profile will enhance the reach of the Unit nationally and internationally, for example through personal appearances at film-screenings of his work and commissioned writing for the national press. He will also play a lead role in promoting the creative and cultural industries through outreach literary events in the West Midlands and Wales and through an inaugural annual Wolverhampton Book Prize which will showcase literature that preserves and promotes regional identities.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The two case studies illustrate creative output, critical research, and pedagogic practice that have achieved impact beyond the HEI.

'Humour, Culture, and Identity' demonstrates how **McDonald's** interests in humour and humour writing have informed his scholarly publications, led to media commissions and appearances, and influenced his creative writing as a prize-winning poet and novelist. His engagement with regional audiences through workshops, speaking events, festivals, and other venues has also been a key factor in media recognition of his expertise and further uptake of his research for conservation purposes. The Case Study illustrates the Unit's commitment to creating, inspiring, and supporting the cultural life of the West Midlands via the wider application of humour research, and exemplifies the bridge between scholarly research, outreach activities, and national/international media response.

'Integrating Virtual Learning Environment Discussion Activities into the English Studies Curriculum', is based on original research conducted and exploited previous to, or during, the early stages of the census period. It combines pedagogic practice with collaborative research that can be developed to the point of attracting external users, beneficiaries, and audiences and links the HEI to wider subject networks. There is evidence of reach and impact in education that engages users through personal appearances, published research, the national press, web-based articles, and social media. In addition, it indicates avenues of continued enquiry into the deployment of digital resources and platforms as an on-going activity.