

Institution: University of Wolverhampton
Unit of Assessment: D27 Area Studies
a. Context

This section of the UoA's submission will refer to impact and impact potential identified by both internal review and external consultation deriving from the research of four of the seven researchers whose outputs are logged in REF2, and one of the UoA's affiliated developing researchers, Opinderjit Takhar, a specialist in Sikh studies, whose developing publications portfolio is already underpinning impact.

Impact has derived as a matter of course from researchers' established and current research activity that operates at the interface between academia and other sectors. Evidence of impact has been identified in researchers Dangerfield, Dhanda, Dickins, Hambrook and Takhar. The current impact profile can be described as follows:

- Of the impact types consistent with Panel D research, those related to cultural life, civil society, economic prosperity, public discourses and public services are identifiable in the UoA. The main non-academic user groups are not-for-profit organizations (Dhanda, Dickins, Takhar) and to a lesser extent for-profit firms; new clients (Takhar) and a wider public (Dangerfield, Dhanda, Hambrook) with specific reference to regional and international levels; the public via public knowledge creation, albeit to a limited extent (Dhanda, Hambrook) and similarly, teaching and learning (Dhanda, Takhar); policymakers and funding bodies (Dangerfield, Dhanda).
- Identifiable impacts derive exclusively from individual research, the UoA's researchers' predominant mode of operation, rather than from formal collaborative projects. It is nonetheless possible to identify two domains of impact, which may be defined as 'European Identities' and 'Asian Identities'. These offer fruitful channels through which to develop more substantial and collaborative impact outcomes in the future, and evidence of this is readily to hand (See REF5).
- Differential translation of researchers' work into impact can be explained in part by impact's absence as a criterion in the RAE.
- Public advocacy provides an important context for the realization of impact, as impacts arising from Dhanda's and Takhar's in particular demonstrate. The spectrum of public engagement in the case of both researchers is broad: international significance and reach, campaigning, education, socio-political, religious, cultural and legislative engagement.
- Actual and potential impact displays an international and transnational dimension, i.e. impact outside the UK or between the UK and beyond, as befits a UoA that defines itself in terms of international projection. The UoA considers most opportune the British Academy's recommendation, expressed in the REF consultation exercise, that due consideration be given to international and non-UK impact.

b. Approach to impact

As regards specific staff interaction with key users, Dangerfield has participated in an advisory and expert capacity in forums that bring together researchers and EU policymakers and acted as an expert assessor for projects on EU policy with reach beyond academia; Dhanda's research has supported campaigns and lobbying, guided politicians and political researchers, through research-grounded public advocacy, and prompted participation as an expert in discussions with policymakers and appeared in an expert capacity in the media (TV and radio); Dickins has collaborated with a Czech learned society in matters of linguistic identity and language planning; Hambrook has shared his research with a regional library, a non-academic publisher and journalists in Asturias, northern Spain, to preserve literary documents. Takhar's public engagement and advocacy follows a pattern similar to Dhanda's, particularly in relation to lobbyists opposed to caste discrimination (CasteWatch UK, Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance, Sikh Council UK) and embraces interfaith issues via involvement with organizations such as the Faith and Regeneration Network..

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Evidence of follow-up is found in Dangerfield's continuing participation, by invitation, in the aforementioned forums and increased involvement as an expert project assessor; Dhanda's and Takhar's contribution to a change in UK law that will protect against discrimination on the grounds of caste; and Hambrook's contribution, by research publication, to the preservation of literary documents.

Use of institutional facilities has for the most part been channelled through UoA support deriving from research centre developmental resourcing of research-related activity. This has enabled or supplemented external support for participation in events at which researchers and end-users or other sector representatives meet, travel to pursue impact-underpinning research, and access to institutional or external training to develop understanding of impact. In these cases, funding has been provided by research centre or School research budget. Institutional facilities have also been used to host public engagement events related primarily to the activity described in the two impact case studies.

c. Strategy and plans

Approach: The UoA's approach has concentrated, not surprisingly, on

- reviewing thoroughly UoA eligible researchers' impact-generating outputs in order to identify evidence of impact as currently defined;
- seeking systematically means by which to gain a better understanding of impact and its manifestations, particularly in the subjects, disciplines, and areas of research and related activity represented in the UoA, as the foundation of a more systematic strategy and orientation for future research;
- distinguishing between impact-generating and non-impact generating other-sector engagement with a view to understanding how such engagement creates an environment conducive to impact generation without necessarily guaranteeing it.

Audit: This approach may be formulated in terms of more precise questions that have informed the UoA's audit of existing impact:

- What kind of research has generated impact?
- What significance, range and types of impact has this produced?
- Has the predominance of individual over collaborative research influenced the significance, reach or type of impact?
- Where has impact potential been underexploited or under-articulated?
- What are the consequences of any proposed changes, in the interests of impact generation, to research as currently undertaken by the UoA?

Implementation: In accordance with the above, the UoA, in a spirit of pragmatism, has worked with demonstrable impact during this assessment period while putting in place plans and mechanisms that will enhance awareness of impact potential in the future while respecting the scholarly integrity and expertise of the UoA's researchers.

Current strategy and plans comprise the implementation of procedures at institutional and UoA level. At institutional level, two important steps have been taken. Firstly, a two-phase mock REF exercise initiated in 2010 has prompted systematic, sustained and consistent UoA engagement with and rehearsed articulation of the impact of researchers' work. Secondly, external evaluation has been commissioned in order to provide an informed third-party perspective on impact.

At UoA level, a section on impact has been added to the template for the bi-annual review of research activity that researchers of the Centre for Transnational and Transcultural Research, with which the UoA Area Studies is aligned, are required to complete.

Key aims of this process are:

- To improve understanding of impact within the context of the REF and to promote familiarization with the relevant documentation from HEFCE and other sources;
- To determine how researchers' work displaying potential impact can reach a stage of actualization;
- To sift critically underpinning research in order to trace clearer impact trails.

Future: It is anticipated that Takhar's research on caste amongst Punjabis, including migrant communities, with a focus on the Sikhs, will provide, in combination with this researcher's ongoing commitment to public advocacy and engagement, the foundations of a compelling impact case

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study in the next REF that will align itself beneficially with the on-going impact-orientated research of Dhanda. The potential for convergence and collaboration is clearly high.

As regards the currently more limited traces of impact identified in other UoA researchers listed in REF2 (e. g. Dickins, Hambrook), a substantial or contrived reorientation of current and planned work would not be required for existing impact currency to be enhanced. These researchers' potential impact factor consequently merits further monitoring and development.

d. Relationship to case studies

The UoA has sought to identify all manifestations of impact generated by the UoA REF2 and affiliated membership, and to select from these two adequately stipulated examples by way of case studies, which in this instance represent the two orientations of the UoA's research-underpinned impact – 'Asian Identities' and 'European Identities' – identified in Section a (Context, bullet point 2) of this template. Their selection derived from the application of the approach described in Section c (Strategies and plans: Approach, Audit) and the REF-predicated institutional and UoA-specific monitoring procedures described in the sub-section Implementation of the same section.

Dangerfield's work on regional cross-border cooperation in post-communist Europe, supporting and supplementing European Union integration processes, focuses on the role of research expertise in an advisory capacity at the interface between academic research and the activity of other sectors in the generation of impact. This case study demonstrates a long 'impact trail' based on underpinning research dating back to 2000. Current debates in Europe regarding nationhood and geo-cultural identity and the future of the EU render likely further impact from this research.

Dhanda's work on gender, caste and ethnicity with reference to South Asians (particularly *Dalits*) including diasporic communities, demonstrates a more recent impact trail the gathering momentum of which nevertheless leaves little doubt to the further fruitful evolution and consolidation of impact beyond the current REF cycle, particularly within a UoA context in which South Asian studies is an expanding area of research activity with substantial transnational scope.