

<p>Institution: St Mary's University College</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 29: English Language and Literature</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The English Language and Literature programme is delivered by a teaching-focussed team of six people, covering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate modules as well as doctoral supervision. Two of the programme team have been consistently and productively research-active at SMUC since well before RAE 2001, a third since well before RAE 2008, and a fourth has been encouraged over the last few years to become research-active and is included in the REF 2013 for the first time. It is possible for staff to apply to the School Research fund for monies to pay for replacement teaching, but only one of the programme team has ever made such a bid. Rather, an informal arrangement is made whereby a team member takes on more teaching in order to give relief to another who needs time to write a paper, give a presentation or to travel, for example, to consult an archive. This is arranged in a collegial and supportive manner.</p> <p>Under a new College Principal in 2010, increased investment in research led to the appointment in 2012 of a Research Professor and three 0.5 Professorial Research Fellows in Language and Literature. Because the impact of the bulk of their work belongs to their previous institutions (where the research was carried out) we have built our two impact case studies from the work of the four active researchers in the programme team. Given the nature of our research specialisms in literature and linguistics – Romanticism, Gothic, the Long Eighteenth Century, Joseph Conrad and Second Language Acquisition – it was not immediately obvious how impactful applications arising from these could best be developed and accounted for through some kind of metric. Nevertheless, we feel we have been able to respond to the challenge in innovative and interesting ways, as outlined below. The beneficiaries of our approach are the members of the general public and the teachers of foreign languages who, as a direct result of our impact activities, have begun to feel and think differently about topics within these research areas.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The unit's approach to impact between January 2008 and July 2013 has been two-fold: that it should serve to make available to non-specialists ideas and insights which are otherwise accessed mostly by scholars; and that it should seek to engage with the public in face-to-face dialogue. The former reflects the broader rationale of impact to connect academia with the world beyond, while the latter reflects what, realistically, a small team with limited resources of time and money might achieve. The latter also builds on what we consider ourselves (as teachers) to be very practised in: delivering complex ideas in engaging ways to audiences with limited knowledge and nascent curiosity. In this way, the impact potential of our research seemed best directed at the expansion and enrichment of 'the lives and imaginations' (Panel Criteria & Working Methods, Section D3, para. 83) of individuals and groups, and of public services such as education. We are especially keen to reach individuals and groups in the local area, as our way of fulfilling the strategic aim 3C of the SMUC Corporate Strategy 2011-16 'to engage in knowledge exchange activities that generate impact beyond the academic context'.</p> <p>Some examples follow here of the growing 'impact' activities of the programme team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2012 and 2013, Peter Howell curated Gothic film seasons in association with Strawberry Hill Trust, the Richmond Film Society, and the British Film Institute's own Gothic season. The films shown, which were predominantly early cinema with live piano accompaniment, or films connected in some way to Strawberry Hill, were preceded by a talk by a member of the programme team. The 8 evenings attracted over 1200 audience members, mainly from the local community. The University College has also provided reduced-price tickets for residents at Penny Wade House, a hostel for the homeless in Richmond. • Our two Joseph Conrad experts, Allan Simmons and John Stape, were involved in the first production of the chamber opera, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>, by Tarik O'Regan, at the Linbury Theatre of the Royal Opera House in 2011. Stape wrote the programme notes and Simmons gave a pre-performance talk on Conrad and music, which engaged the public audience by inviting questions. • As part of their Adult Education week in the spring of 2012, Pauline Foster was invited by the local Borough of Richmond upon Thames to give public talks on child language acquisition at the public libraries in Hampton, Barnes and Twickenham. The audience comprised largely parents and grandparents of young children. The feedback, collected by the Council officer in charge of the

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arrangements, was very positive and the following year a further invitation was issued, this time at Teddington library.

- In a similar fashion, but with an audience from higher education outside of St. Mary's, Pauline Foster presents her research in second language acquisition (SLA) two or three times a year to MA TESOL groups in UK universities such as Southampton, Bristol, King's College London, Birmingham, Warwick, Reading and Edinburgh. These groups are largely made up of experienced teachers of English who seek to broaden their understanding of research-led teaching, and who are becoming familiar with the research literature and are eager to see how it might impact on their teaching practice.

The talks mentioned above were interactive to some degree, and guided by small audiences who were invited to feed back into the presentation with their own questions, thereby getting a more individualised understanding than they could have arrived at through a lecture or solitary reading. Seeking engagement through interaction with small groups runs through our strategy to support impact.

Dissemination is not necessarily impact, of course. Ultimately, if we aim to change people's understanding and attitudes through knowledge of our research, we cannot rely on single talks that take a cross-sectional approach. Ideally, we need to build in something more longitudinal, as through a series of meetings that would enable us to engage more deeply. This would not be easy for some of our activities (for example, MA groups are a new intake every year) but longer term relationships can be fostered with other groups, especially the teaching staff at local schools. For this to happen, the unit depends on SMUC supporting such initiatives through some degree of teaching remission, travelling expenses and production of slides and handouts. For the two impact case studies described in REF3b, this support has already been offered through central SMUC funding.

c. Strategy and plans

A specific strategy for impact was not in place for the beginning of the 2008-2013 assessment period, but has evolved in the last few years. As noted above, the Unit has been able to draw on institutional resources to aid us in the organisation of our 'impact' presentations. The University College has also been helpful in enabling us to work off-campus in this way. Largely, the costs in time and money are low and thus serve as no great barrier. We recognise that in concentrating on face-to-face interactions with small groups we will not have impact with a long reach, but we feel that quality and sustainability of the impact is likely to be greater. In collecting comments from our audiences, (see case studies reported in REF3b), we have been struck by the positive and enthusiastic reactions, and the invitations to return.

Our plans for the future are threefold:

1. We intend to build a regular in-service training presence, led by Pauline Foster, in local adult education and private language teaching establishments (such as the Richmond Adult and Community College, and British Study Centres). The aim would be further to influence pedagogic practice in line with the research findings in task-based language teaching, with the main beneficiaries being the teaching staff and their students. Additionally, Pauline Foster is developing links with the Hounslow Language Service (www.ealhls.org.uk), a training and consultancy service which specialises in supporting the language of English learners in schools, and is giving a plenary at their summer conference in 2014.
2. We will look to develop further the relationship between Strawberry Hill House and our programme team's research in the literature and culture of the long eighteenth century, and its legacy to the present day. We envisage a further Gothic film series, and joint conferences to which Cian Duffy, Peter Howell and Fiona Robertson will be key contributors. The chief beneficiaries would be the Strawberry Hill Trust which maintains a programme of activities and exhibitions at the House, the general public who attend such events, and the wider academic community.
3. We will contribute to the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Adult Education weeks by offering more talks in local libraries, expanding the subject matter from child language acquisition to adult language acquisition. The beneficiaries would be the local people attending these talks who would get a much better and more accurate understanding of language acquisition, a topic which in the public mind is very often coloured by myth, misconception and mis-selling. We can extend such talks to include other research specialisms in the unit likely to appeal to a broad audience, such as the lyrics of Bob Dylan, and the legacies of Romanticism and the Gothic to contemporary popular culture. Again, the beneficiaries would be local people whose knowledge

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and understanding of these topics would be broadened and whose attitudes to such 'popular' culture would be challenged and enlightened. Additionally, all future research bids, to external bodies or the School's research fund, will be required to include detailed mention of impact and dissemination possibilities. This requirement will help us more deeply embed considerations of impact into the unit's programme of research.

d. Relationship to case studies

Clearly the most promising locus for meaningful impact is in second language pedagogy because of the existence of a large language teaching profession and the perceived benefit to teachers of empirical investigations into the nature of adult language learning. It has long been acknowledged that claims for 'pedagogical best practice' are not often informed by research. Indeed, given the variable and individual nature of any of kind of learning, a simplistic over-arching 'best practice' in language teaching can be described as essentially undefinable. Pauline Foster's work since 1996 in collaboration with Peter Skehan (one of our new Professorial Research Fellows) is nevertheless situated firmly in classrooms and explores particular influences on second language use that can be relayed to and exploited by teachers. The case study (REF3b) is a good illustration of our plan to bring research findings to bear on the assumptions and practice of a group of people. Bringing the researcher to present and discuss the findings directly with groups of potential research 'consumers' is a further aspect of our face-to-face approach to impact.

The second case study (REF3b) arose from Peter Howell's research on an anonymous 17th century poem ('*Tis a mad world at Hoxton*) which can be read as a source for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The specific relationship of the poem to Hoxton suggested working to engender local interest in the poem. The dramatization and production of the poem in Hoxton Hall theatre in 2013 and the accompanying talk by Peter Howell characterizes our approach to impact by inviting local people to engage with the outcomes of academic research through live interaction with the researcher. According to the members of the audience who filled in the questionnaire, local people were well represented, were curious about their area, pleased to be made aware of the connection to *The Tempest*, and, in the light of what they had seen and heard in the theatre, very open to reflecting on their existing conceptions of Shakespeare and 17th century London.

We have been pragmatic in our approach to delivering impact from our research, developing a variety of ways to bring understanding and appreciation of academic work to people who may never otherwise encounter it, or who have misconceptions about it, changing personal views and professional practice as a consequence. At the same time, the 'live' and interactive nature of the contact has meant that we collaborate directly with our non-academic audiences so that they guide us as much as we guide them in exploring the relevance and reach of the research outcomes. Impact, in this sense, requires dialogue. Its precise nature is not always possible to anticipate, and the non-academic audiences we encounter give us the possibility of discerning impact potential more clearly. Hence, not only does impact involve the programme team reaching out to the wider public, but also that public influencing the way we think about, and conduct, our research.