

**Institution:** Birkbeck, University of London

**Unit of Assessment:** 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics

**a. Context.** The Modern Languages and Linguistics unit of assessment at Birkbeck is committed to sharing its research with non-academic partners and audiences locally, nationally and globally (as illustrated by the case studies submitted). Being embedded, conceptually and practically, in the understanding of verbal and visual language as cultural phenomena –manifested, for example, in multilingualism, and cultural forms such as literature, film, museum exhibitions and textiles – our research provides a strong foundation for creating active partnerships with a variety of potential stakeholders.

The unit (made up of three Departments – European Cultures and Languages (ECL); Iberian and Latin American Studies (ILAS) and Applied Linguistics and Communication (ALC)) spans a very wide range of research and its impact is delivered mainly, though not exclusively, through three research centres representing key areas of work: the *Centre for Iberian and Latin American Visual Studies* (CILAVS – based in ILAS) , the *Centre for Multilingual and Multicultural Research* (CMMR – based in ALC) and *Birkbeck Research in the Aesthetics of Kinship and Community* (BRAKC – based in ECL).The impact of the unit's research is routed through user groups such as policy makers, other educational collaborators, professional bodies, as well as a variety of cultural and community organizations. During the assessment period these have included:

**Policymakers.** Professor Li Wei (of the CMMR) collaborates with the All China Association for Overseas Returnees and Council for Ethnic Minority Affairs (China). Dr Mari Paz Balibrea's research on urban cultural development led to a CILAVS-organized public forum for social activists and artists on *Art, Real Estate and the Pre-Olympic City: A Dialogue Between London and Barcelona* (which was also featured on national Catalan TV, TV3, and on Spanish and Catalan radio).

**Educational Institutions.** Professor Zhu Hua (of the CMMR) has worked with several kinds of institutions concerned with multilingualism, such as complementary schools, schools for multilingual children in Paris, Coram Fields Children's Centre, the psychotherapy agency Multilingual Living, Raleigh International, and the UK Department of Education. In addition, collaboration between Professor Naomi Segal (ECL) and the Translators Association of the Society of Authors on the AHRC-funded project *Use your Language, Use your English* developed an online programme and annual summer school to facilitate the training of aspiring bilingual translators. Meanwhile, Dr Arnold-de-Simine's ground-breaking research in memory and museum studies has led to significant collaboration with museums such as the Imperial War Museum.

**Professional Bodies.** CMMR members are frequently invited to speak to professional agencies such as the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and the American Speech Language and Hearing Association (Professor Lorch), the Swiss Speech Therapists Association (Professor Dewaele), the Teacher Development Agency and the British Council in the UK (Dr Morton), on multilingual language development and disorder and on professional development of language teachers. More recently, colleagues in both CMMR and BRAKC have sought out and are establishing partnerships with immigrant communities and professional institutions in the UK (for example, Camden Council and CILT, the National Centre for Languages) as well as community artists, as has CILAVS in Peru and Bolivia.

**Cultural and Community Organizations.** Based on their research in visual and/or cultural studies, colleagues from CILAVS have engaged with a number of local communities in Europe and Latin America: organizing film festivals (for example, Drs Trindade and Martins have played an active role in the UK Portuguese Film Festival since 2011); collaborating with museums and local agencies (for example, Dr Balibrea's participation in debates on urban development in Barcelona – with the Fundació Tàpies, Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona – and London – with the London arts institution/museum Gasworks; and Professor Kraniauskas's participation in the conference for anti-populist art activists held in the De Baile centre, Amsterdam, in 2011: 'The Populist Front: On the Role of Myth, Storytelling and Imaginary in Populist Politics'); establishing an ongoing research collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (initiated by an AHRC student research award) and with the British Museum through the AHRC funded Communities of Weaving project. (For relationships established with native communities of weavers in Bolivia and

Peru, see the related case study).

**b. Approach to impact.** Each of the Departments in the unit of assessment encourages an active approach towards public engagement. Colleagues are involved in an on-going dialogue with stakeholders and audiences working in the unit's key research areas to establish the relevance of their research to the contemporary world – and to sharpen the Departments' strategic approach to impact-led research. This approach has developed – and is developing – in the following ways:

**Partnerships and Networks.** The Departments work to sustain and expand existing partnerships and networks while actively identifying new collaborators, encouraging proactive and responsive personal engagement with non-academic beneficiaries. A number of our research projects have grown out of long-term engagement with specific communities, as exemplified in the case study on multilingual code switching. We also harness the breadth of our interdisciplinary and multicultural research in order to engage with user groups in diverse areas, including community and professional bodies, cultural organizations and educational institutions (as, for example, in the Andean Textiles project).

**Research Centres.** Our three research centres engage with potential users and beneficiaries and establish partnerships and collaborations by hosting conferences, workshops, exhibitions and other events to which non-HE users contribute. (For example, as part of BRAKC's 2011 conference 'Visions of the Coming Community in French and Francophone Culture' two London artists collaborated with the research centre on a project that took inspiration from the conference papers to explore the connections between academic theory, practice-based approaches to the concept of community, and potential areas of innovation within contemporary arts.) The research centres apply for external funding to build on existing relationships with user groups. (For example, the Brazilian Embassy is now an important partner in CILAVS programme of events.)

The university's interdisciplinary research centres, Birkbeck Institute of the Humanities (BIH) and Birkbeck Institute for Social Research (BISR), allow us to share experiences in identifying and establishing partnerships and engaging with communities of users.

**Dissemination and Public Engagement.** In keeping with Birkbeck's ethos, we disseminate our work in the public sphere through journalism, media and digital communication. Recent highlights includes a piece on the East German spy Günter Guillaume in *Die Zeit* (4<sup>th</sup> July, 2013) by Dr Eckard Michels. We showcase our research in public facing events such as Birkbeck's annual Arts Week and Social Science Week, the ESRC's Social Sciences festival, and the Bloomsbury Festival, and at public events throughout the year. In recognition of his work in Latin America, Professor Rowe (ILAS) is the recipient of the Peruvian Congressional Medal of Honour (2010) for his 'services to Peruvian culture'.

**Supporting research for impact.** Birkbeck's External Relations Unit provides press, social media and internet support, including the development of dedicated websites for the research centres, a research blog (<http://blogs.bbk.ac.uk/research/>) to which our staff contribute, and podcasts of public seminars, lectures, workshops and interviews. Digital, Online and Social Media coordinators publicise research and dissemination events. The recently established Birkbeck Forum for Arts at 43 Gordon Square, with a cinema, gallery and theatre studio, provides showcase space for research (CILAVS, for example, used the space to display the photographic work of a student carrying out practice-related research, and to launch the Weaving Communities database and website).

Staff are encouraged and supported to develop research impact through internal grants, teaching relief, and professional development seminars and workshops on media training, writing for a general public and developing research impact. Since early 2012, an Impacts and Knowledge Exchange Manager has worked with staff to develop a strategic and co-ordinated approach to impact. Birkbeck maintains a searchable online database to promote staff expertise for non-academic users. An open access online repository was established in 2010.

**c. Strategy and plans.** The Departments' forward strategies build on the experience of the past five years. The Languages Departments will continue to coordinate activities to support the development of the UoA's impact in the context of a strong research culture, extending its reach and significance in the following ways:

## Impact template (REF3a)

**Staffing strategy.** The enhancement of impact and knowledge exchange is now a key dimension of the Departments' recruitment strategies. Knowledge exchange work will continue to be rewarded and incentivised, with support for colleagues preparing KE funding bids. Staff, especially early career researchers, will be encouraged to enhance their collaborative and networking skills, and to work with the Impacts and Knowledge Exchange Manager to develop impact pathways for their research.

**Public Engagement.** The research centres will build on the success of the past years by developing a wide range of conferences, screenings, symposia and workshops open to communities beyond HE – for example a Picturing Latin America Symposium (November, 2013) which includes curators from the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Royal Academy of Arts – and particularly contribute to the development of activities in the Forum for the Arts as a space for public engagement. In consultation with the School Impact Officer, the External Relations Office as well as the School and Departmental Research Committees, colleagues will also be encouraged to think more creatively about engaging target audiences, with interests in distinct research areas, within the wider public.

**Research Centres.** Building collaborations and partnerships will continue to be a major priority of the research centres which will develop the multicultural and transnational dimensions of their work through cultivating relationships with new user groups in the UK and internationally:

- BRAKC will extend its research into kinship and community through engagement with community-oriented professionals (e.g. social workers, healthcare workers) and museum and heritage groups in both Germany and the UK.
- CMMR will develop its research into language and communication to engage with transnational individuals, families and communities and relevant social practices and policies including family language policy, identity development amongst young people, multilingualism and emotions (e.g. in psychotherapy), and the role of 'minority languages' in the community. Current examples include new research projects with a counselling and psychotherapy service for immigrant and ethnic minority communities (Mothertongue), and with a communication agency working for the financial and utilities sectors to improve communication with multilingual clients (The Quiet Room).
- CILAVS will increase its engagement with communities in Spain, Portugal and Latin America by developing its research into urban activism and planning, the formation of national and regional communities (further examining the political and social role of literature, film and photography in such formations), and the impact of journalism on the experience of history.

**d. Relationship to case studies.** Each case study is embedded in the Departments' research environment, demonstrating in particular the importance of the research centres to our approach to impact.

**Case study 1:** 'Andean Textiles and Cultures in the Digital Age' developed out of research begun within the context of CILAVS (of which the case study's author, Luciana Martins, is Director). It demonstrates our work with museum practitioners and rural communities.

**Case study 2:** The research underpinning Silke Arnold-de Simine's case study 'Mediating Memory in the Museum' was supported by BRAKC, a forum in which she regularly presented aspects of her work to interested parties from within and beyond the university sector. It shows how researcher/practitioner networks have been used to cultivate collaborations with non-academics.

**Case studies 3 & 4:** Both 'Policy and practice of complementary schools for multilingual, transnational, and minority ethnic children' and 'Developing intercultural communicative competence amongst young people' were fostered within the context of CMMR working with children, teachers, parents, educational experts and foundations.