

**Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**
**Unit of Assessment: C21 Politics and International Studies**
**a. Context**

Established in 2008, the School of Government and Society (G & S) comprises four departments: Politics and International Studies (POLSIS); International Development (IDD); Local Government Studies (INLOGOV); and Russian and East European Studies (CREES). Staff within the School are a trusted source of research-based advice and information to a wide range of governments, non-governmental organisations, and trans-national bodies.

The development of intensive and sustainable relationships with stakeholders is an explicit component of high-quality research premised on academic rigour and user relevance. Our work connects to the following constituencies: **policy-makers and officials in UK central government** (e.g. the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO], the Ministry of Defence [MoD], the Department for International Development [DFID], the Department for Communities and Local Government [CLG], and H.M. Treasury); **Committees of the UK and EU Parliament; overseas government ministries and agencies** (in Australia, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Nepal, Sierra Leone, and Moldova); **international organizations** (e.g. the World Bank, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]); **local government** (e.g. Birmingham City Council, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives [SOLACE], and the Local Government Association); **think tanks and lobby groups** (e.g. the Royal Institute of International Affairs [RIIA], the Institute for Government [IfG], and the Overseas Development Institute [ODI]); and **the general public** (through print, radio, TV and web-based materials). Through these networks, we have had a significant impact in the formulation and implementation of policies at the local, national and international levels. We have also shaped debate on matters of public and political concern.

**b. Approach to impact**

Our approach is premised on maximising the opportunities for impact in our research through the creation and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders. During the REF period we have achieved this through the recruitment of additional staff with a track-record of impact activities (e.g. Durose and Staite in INLOGOV; Webber, Wheeler and Wolff in POLSIS), by allocating funds to a dedicated School impact budget, and by ensuring robust institutional arrangements are in place to facilitate and sustain relationships with users. The latter is critical. Here, the G & S Research Committee, supported by a College Research Support Office and Marketing and Communications Team (as well as University facilities such as a dedicated Brussels-based office), provides resources, advice and strategic direction for impact generation through two principal organizational mechanisms.

The first relates to the School's four departments. Two of these, **INLOGOV** and **IDD**, have a record of providing research-based policy advice over five decades. Impact is enhanced by the involvement of Associates (and in INLOGOV's case an external advisory board) who bring high-level managerial experience and work alongside academic staff to facilitate effective research design, delivery and dissemination. **POLSIS** and **CREES** also have a long history of interaction with users. The latter was formed in the 1960s specifically as a source of expertise on the Soviet bloc available to the UK government and agencies such as NATO. It continues to provide expert advice on the post-Soviet states in areas of domestic politics, economics, security and defence. POLSIS, meanwhile, has built up a reputation for engaged scholarship evidenced by long-standing relationships with users from across government, NGOs and the armed forces.

The second mechanism relates to policy-focused institutes which connect directly to stakeholders. The **Governance and Social Development Resource Centre** (GSDRC), directed by Marquette, is funded by a range of external clients (including DFID and the Australian Aid Programme [AusAid]) and carries out commissioned research specifically to provide policy-relevant findings. The **Institute for German Studies** (IGS), directed by Hertner until October 2013 is part-funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and is a centre for enhancing cultural understanding of contemporary Germany through initiatives such as the Zeitgeist project. **The Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security** (ICCS) directed by Wheeler was created as a

## Impact template (REF3a)

successor to the Centre for the Study of Security and Diplomacy with a particular remit to engage in policy-relevant activities - evident in work on the Iranian nuclear issue and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles ('drones'). The remainder of this section provides an indicative selection of the impact activities supported by these two organizational mechanisms.

We have had an **impact on public policy**. Our Case Studies show that our expertise has shaped a diverse range of policies: on co-production, energy tariffs, conflict resolution, democracy promotion and anti-corruption.

On a range of other issues of major policy salience, we have provided **direct advice to policy actors** in parliament, government and international organizations. The spread of our expertise is evident in published oral and written testimony to House of Commons Committees on Transport (Raine), Communities and Local Government (Bovaird and Staite), Foreign Affairs (Averre, Dunn) Defence (Webber) and Public Administration (Skelcher), as well as House of Lords Committees on the EU (Averre, Cooper, Menon), the Pre-Emption of Parliament (Skelcher) and the Barnett Formula (Thain).

With UK government, we have developed a long-standing and fruitful relationship with the FCO. Staff have provided a succession of UK Ambassadors with briefings before their postings to Ukraine and Poland (Wolczuk), Russia (Cooper), Kazakhstan (Yemeljanova), Slovakia (Haughton), and Moldova (Wolczuk, Wolff). Haughton worked as an advisor to the UK Ambassador to Slovakia during the 2010 elections. In 2009, Cooper provided briefings on the Russian economy to Foreign Secretary David Miliband and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral James Stavridis. Fisher has given briefings to the FCO on the ways in which African leaders use image management in their relationship with Western policymakers. The Africa Research Group in the FCO invited Fisher to take up a six-month part-time fellowship in 2013 to research Uganda's regional role in East Africa. DFID, meanwhile, has sourced advice regularly from staff in IDD: Marquette and Jackson are Expert Technical Advisors to Heads of Profession on Governance and Conflict, and Fisher and Batley wrote DFID-commissioned reports on democracy in Uganda and the effect of private schools in developing countries. Similarly, the MoD has a long-established relationship with Averre (in the provision of expert advice on chemical weapons' proliferation) and Moore, who is a Subject Matter Expert to the MoD's Defence Science Technology Laboratory (DSTL) on the North Caucasus. Cooper, in September 2011, provided advice on the Russian economy to economists within the MoD (extended also that same month to a briefing at the US State Department, Bureau of Intelligence and Research). Examples in relation to other UK government agencies include: Durose, appointed in 2012 as an Independent Advisor to the Office of Civil Society attached to the Cabinet Office; and Thain, who provided advice to the Treasury on the preparation of its 2010 Strategic Review.

We also have productive relations with international organizations. Wolczuk has prepared reports for the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee on the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) in Ukraine (2010) and energy security in the Eastern Partnership countries (2012); Connolly has provided advice to the International Trade Committee of the World Trade Organisation; Raine has acted as an advisor to the Council of Europe on criminal justice; and Cabrera has briefed EU border agency (FRONTEX) officials on ethical codes of conduct for border security personnel.

At the local level, Smith's work has informed the design of a strategy by Birmingham City Council to improve access to sexual health services. Durose has led two policy reviews on community governance and redefining public services co-commissioned by the CLG. Bovaird and Skelcher served as members of the Government's Expert Panel on Local Governance in 2008-2010; Staite and Bottom provided evidence in 2011 to the Commission on the Future of Local Government (sponsored by Leeds City Council), and Durose and Bovaird have, since April 2012, been members of the Analytical Advisory Board for the Neighbourhood Community Budget pilots of CLG.

We also **engage with stakeholders from NGOs and professional associations** such that our

## Impact template (REF3a)

activities and research findings influence public and political debate. Sullivan (now at the University of Melbourne) led the first University of Birmingham Policy Commission, part of a £300k University initiative to enhance public understanding on issues of current concern. The Commission's work and 2011 report *On the Future of Local Public Services* was overseen by Deborah Cadman, the Chief Executive of the East of England Development Agency, and involved as commissioners two MPs, the Chief Executive of Lambeth Council and the regional director of Bernardo's. Its focus on youth in society entailed close work with ENVISION, the national organization for youth empowerment, and its findings are being translated into policy and practice through the Public Service Academy, an innovative partnership between the University and Birmingham City Council.

Much of our work is commissioned by nonacademic users. This is the specific remit of GSDRC (see above), but individual researchers also undertake such work. Webber was the lead author of a 2013 report on the defence and security implications of Scottish independence commissioned by the Scotland Institute and overseen by a panel of experts chaired by Major-General (rtd.) Andrew Douglas Mackay, CBE (this report was subsequently referenced in the MoD's own analysis of the subject published in October 2013). Viera produced a report on behalf of the Institute for Global Dialogue in Johannesburg on Brazil's stance on climate change, a report that subsequently influenced the South African government's position in climate change negotiations. Durose has contributed to a series of reports for the Association of Public Service Excellence, work cited in a CLG Select Committee report of December 2012. We also engage with stakeholders through membership of advisory boards. These include the European Centre for Minority Issues (Wolff), the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (Gilson), Governance International (Bovaird), the National Criminal Justice Council (Raine), Transparency International Gateway Project (Marquette), and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Jackson).

The School has also had an impact on society by **informing and shaping public and political debate** through the dissemination of its research. All Departments and research institutes have active web sites involving blogs (e.g. <<http://iddbirmingham.wordpress.com/>>), Twitter feeds (e.g. <<https://twitter.com/iddbirmingham>>) and Facebook pages; and the School produces regular web-based bulletins of its work - *INLOGOV Informs*, *GSDRC Issues Papers* and *ICCS Brief*. It is commonplace for individual staff to engage in radio and television broadcasts. Typical examples include Bates' contribution to Radio 4's *Westminster Hour* (broadcast 10 February 2013) commenting on research findings on Prime Minister's questions published in *Parliamentary Affairs*; and Raine's appearance on *Panorama* (broadcast 12 June 2013) commenting on road traffic fines derived from work published in *The International Journal of Public Administration*. More sustained exposure also occurs. Engagement through meetings with civil society organizations is central to Cabrera's work on the Board of Directors of Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP). ASAP is the academic representative in 'Beyond 2015' a coalition of civil-society organizations from more than 80 countries that is consulting with the United Nations Development Programme on a replacement for the Millennium Development Goals. Smith's expertise on male sex workers has been carried forward through the Under the Radar website (for which she is a Trustee) launched in March 2013 and the Queer Sex Work website which she founded and which promotes awareness of, and debate on, the sex industry. Similarly, Stean's expertise on gender is reflected in her role in co-founding the Gender in Global Governance web site, a cross-over forum for academics, NGOs and policy practitioners.

**c. Strategy and plans**

Our strategy is guided by **four key objectives**: (i) to develop robust and sustainable organizational frameworks that support impact in research; (ii) to provide incentives for staff, including early-career academics and PhD researchers, to exploit the impact potential of their work; (iii) to cultivate and extend user networks; (iv) to ensure that underlying published research continues to be of the highest possible quality.

Our strategy for the next five years is designed to further the progress we have made against these objectives. This will be achieved through **refining our strategy** in the following ways:

(i) The School will give greater priority to its dedicated research institutes to enable them to attract and retain appropriate staff capable of, and with sufficient opportunities for, producing world-class

**Impact template (REF3a)**

research and generating impact. In this connection, both GSDRC and ICCS will be able to take advantage of significant external income streams: the former through a major grant from AusAid to fund a Developmental Leadership Programme (directed by Marquette); and the latter through an ESRC Science and Security award under RCUK's Global Uncertainties programme (with Wheeler as PI) on the deployment of drones in conflict situations. The ICCS project, in turn, will complement a new University of Birmingham Policy Commission launched in September 2013 and chaired by Sir David Omand (formerly Director of GCHQ and Permanent Secretary in the Home Office and Cabinet Office).

(ii) The School will place greater emphasis on best-practice among early career researchers and its recently appointed research-focused Birmingham Fellows (Floyd and Yakinthou). The exacting probation and mentoring processes of the University will also be utilized to give greater prominence to knowledge transfer and impact generation. The School (and the College of which it is part) also provides research incentive schemes (prizes and awards) which will be adapted in a similar manner.

(iii) We will further enhance impact-related development for our DRs. This will build on our strong PhD training resource including the 'Getting Research into Policy' PhD Summer School (see REF5), which was initiated and directed by School staff and DRs, the ESRC DTC Placement module (where students undertake short policy projects for government, business or NGOs), and policy relationships of staff. We will work with our PhD community to design new opportunities, thus enhancing their further integration into the School's academic community, their research skills, and their employability.

(iv) We will progress a lessons-learnt process whereby staff who are intrinsic to Impact Case Studies share their experience with colleagues. We will also ensure that impact activities that overlap the REF reporting period are sustained. Thus, Webber and Quinn are PIs on separate ESRC Seminar Series which run in 2013-2014. The former has involved participation by MoD, FCO and NATO officials with a closing session planned at NATO HQ in Brussels. These connections will be rolled forward to support the work of the ICCS, as will the contacts generated through two further ESRC Seminar Series commencing in 2014: on British policy toward Africa (Beswick as PI) and the 2015 UK Strategic Defence Review (Dunn as Co-I).

(v) We will seek greater involvement of associates, initially extending the model of engagement used by INLOGOV, GSDRC and IDD to ICCS. We will also more fully engage alumni who occupy positions in government, NGOs, and the voluntary sector internationally. Similarly, we plan to make use of placements in order to build personal and institutional connections. This will allow individual stakeholders to be placed within departments and research institutes for short periods of mutually-beneficial engagement.

(vi) As part of a forward-looking approach to identifying impact opportunities, we will develop an on-line horizon scanning facility using Delphi software through which researchers will be able to identify emerging issues of public and policy concern.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

Our Case Studies have been selected on the basis of activities that exemplify a marriage of focussed and significant impact with excellence in underpinning research. That our six Cases extend across all four Departments within the School is reflective of the breadth and depth of our work. Each Case Study has distinct sources of external funding and modes of user engagement but all are the outcome of a coordinated approach, which accords priority to a facilitative institutional framework. Each has thus benefitted from support at Departmental and School level (through seedcorn funding and the granting of leave to principal investigators) as well as advice on the planning and implementation of activities from the College Research Support Office and Marketing and Communications Team. Staff are thus well-versed in the practical aspects of impact generation such as engagement with the media, networking within governmental bodies and the articulation of clear pathways to impact in research bids.