

<b>Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: D28 Modern Languages and Linguistics</b>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The impact of research in Modern Languages (ML) at Birmingham derives from the long established practice of conducting research across a broad spectrum of <b>political, social, cultural and educational</b> issues affecting the peoples of Europe from Russia to the Iberian peninsula, and the diverse populations subjected to colonisation by continental Europe. The <b>benefits</b> to the target audiences and user-groups have been in the fields of: <b>(1) cultural life, (2) education, (3) policy making and civil society and (4) public discourse</b>. Of the numerous impact-relevant topics addressed by such research, the following have been particularly prominent in the current REF period: voluntary or enforced exile, 'inner exile' and migration; ethnicity and national identity; sexuality and gender; memory and memorialisation; colonialism and post-colonialism; the experience of life under and after various forms of dictatorship; European populist political parties; the interrelations between politics and the media; political and cultural theory. In addition to the informed general public, whose knowledge and understanding all humanities research must aim to enhance, particular <b>beneficiaries</b> of the research include: special interest groups; memory communities; social and cultural organisations; journalists; policy makers and educational institutions.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p><b>Policy of targeted engagement.</b> Key to achieving impact is to select the most appropriate and effective communication platforms and methods of interaction for the project in question, particularly in the 4 areas highlighted above. Indicative examples are:</p> <p><b>(1) Cultural life.</b> The impact of our research is most keenly felt in the sphere of cultural life, where our researchers contribute to <b>preserving, conserving and presenting cultural heritage</b>. <b>Hardwick's</b> research on Francophone communities in the Caribbean has influenced cultural understanding of the commemoration of slavery in the UK, France and internationally (via public lectures in the UK and France, introductions to film screenings (UK), print interviews (French Caribbean) and the online blog for an FP7-funded Marie Curie project). <b>James</b> has addressed local audiences at various Caribbean cultural festivals in Birmingham (e.g. Black History Month lectures on Spanish Blacks at the DRUM, Cuba Solidarity Campaign Poetry in the Tent) and in the Hispanic Caribbean (Festival del Caribe Santiago de Cuba, Cuban Poetry Festival UNEAC, Havana, Puerto Rican Vejigante celebration San Juan) on a range of inter-ethnic, political and gender issues in the Hispanic Caribbean. <b>Jato</b> (see case study) has engaged with on-line communities through her blog and documentary film, her work with reading groups of adult learners in Spain and the UK, and engagement with organisations involved with exile, commemoration and reconciliation in Spain and Mexico (including museums). <b>Kershaw's</b> book launches, public discussions and reading groups on Irène Némirovsky have raised awareness of the situation of French Jews deported to concentration camps during the Second World War by generating critical discussion of the cultural politics of Holocaust memory in France and the UK.</p> <p><b>(2) Education.</b> A range of our research has typically engaged <b>Educational institutions</b>. Examples include: the worldwide adoption of edited translations of Nietzsche and Weber (see <b>Speirs</b> case study); the international adoption in universities, colleges and schools of teaching manuals (<i>Aktion Grammatik!</i>, <i>Modern German Grammar, A Practical Guide</i>) based on pedagogic research (Klapper with MacMahon; <b>Klapper</b>, Glöckel, Whittle, and <b>Dodd</b>); and the adoption of <b>Dodd's</b> research on covert political discourse in the Third Reich as the basis for two undergraduate courses in Greifswald (2010-2012). In the field of <b>Memory and Exile</b> colleagues across the languages (French, German, Hispanic, Italian and East European) have engaged <b>memory communities</b> in educational projects in <b>collaboration with public organisations</b> such as schools and museums (e.g. <b>Sayner's</b> project 'Silence, Memory and Empathy in Museums and at Historic Sites' and collaboration with the Imperial War Museum, Jato's engagement with various museums in Spain, see case study).</p> <p><b>(3) Policy making and civil society.</b> In the area of <b>Sexuality and Gender Studies</b>, our researchers have engaged with <b>special interest groups</b> with shared experiences of LGBT issues in Italy and UK (<b>Ross</b>); queerness and medical diagnosis (<b>Downing</b>); and gendered politics and</p>

cultures in Afro-American and Caribbean countries (**James**). **Ross** further engages with **social and cultural organisations** and **on-line communities** (LGBT communities for whom the internet is a lifeline) by raising consciousness of LGBT issues in Italy and aiding the development of these communities (see case study). **Hardwick's** cultural engagement activities led to invitations to discuss her findings with the European Policy Center Think Tank in Brussels; the head of museums in Martinique; and public policy makers Maryse Conde (former President of the official Committee for the Remembrance of Slavery in France) and Daniel Maximin (Guadeloupean Regional Director of Cultural Affairs).

**(4) Public discourse.** A number of staff have worked closely with the media and media professionals to inform the quality and content of public discourse. For example, **Sèbe** has participated in over 90 broadcast interviews for the BBC and Al Jazeera on the Arab Spring, drawing on his historical research on North Africa to illuminate contemporary developments. **Albertazzi** similarly has had sustained engagement with **journalists and other media practitioners** concerned with contemporary Italian media, politics, and with populist movements across Europe more generally (see case study). **Rulyova's** research into the post-Soviet media has also engaged **journalists and other media practitioners** (e.g. her contribution to Radio 4 Women's Hour, with Jenni Murray and Bridget Kendall on the subject of Vladimir Putin in 2008); in similar vein **James** engaged the listening public of local community radio station Colour FM concerning Race in Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean. Engagement with interest groups is evidenced by **public lectures and workshops**: e.g. by **Dodd** in Greifswald (2010-11), **Speirs** in Athens and Bath (2009, 2011), **Forcer, Birkett and James** in Birmingham (2010) and **Wagstaff** in Oxford and Marseilles (2013).

#### **Support for Impact**

Consideration of Impact is achieved not by being prescriptive but by empowering members of staff. Colleagues work on their own projects, based on their research or the research of a group. The centrepiece of our approach is to encourage people to think about the impact of every aspect of their research activity and to make it possible for them to achieve it. We also recognise that not all excellent researchers can and should get involved in such activities and that not all primary research has an immediate impact.

**i) Organisational:** The longstanding commitment of ML colleagues at Birmingham to inter-disciplinarity and public engagement has been reinforced and enhanced by the creation of the College of Arts and Law (CAL) (see REF5) and a single Department of Modern Languages (2011/12). The ML strategy of promoting public engagement as an element of best practice in most research receives excellent practical support from the College RKT Office; from the University library; from IT Services and the University's Media and PR office, particularly for dealing with on-line media; and via the new communications strategy and platforms created by the University, most notably the 'Birmingham Brief' which reaches media outlets across the world, eliciting numerous requests for expert advice (as supplied e.g. by **Albertazzi** and **Sèbe**).

**ii) Developmental:** Scrutiny and approval of **study leave** applications routinely involve interrogation of planned Impact. All **new appointments** to research-active positions are required to consider Impact in their research plans. Regular **round table research workshops** share good practice across ML in all aspects of research, including Impact activities. **Research mentoring** schemes advise younger staff on engagement with user communities, including the heritage sector, broadcast media, and internet interest groups. Previous experience is made available to promulgate **best practice for future research**; thus **Jato's** experiences in designing impact activities, for example, have helped others planning AHRC Networking bids.

**iii) Financial:** To complement external funding, University resources are deployed to support impact-related activities in a variety of ways, including the targeted application of College and School research funds, financed periods of study leave and teaching relief; well-resourced impact-related training for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers; funding from the RKT budget for impact-focused studies and public interaction.

#### **c. Strategy and plans**

##### **General approach**

We have learned from recent impact-directed work (especially the examples described in the case studies) the importance of **recording and capturing evidence of the impact** achieved by research projects and activities either while they are being conducted or as soon as feasible

## Impact template (REF3a)

thereafter, and, where possible, to feed this into research plans. In response to this and to preparation for the REF, the UoA has reviewed its procedures with respect to Impact. Impact is at the centre of future research activities, as outlined in our research strategy (REF 5). The emerging strategy for Impact, which should be read alongside the strategy for research in the UoA generally, is based around the following points:

- All **new appointments** to research-active positions are required to consider Impact as a function of their research plans.
- As mentioned above, consideration of Impact activities will be focused, generally but not exclusively, on **applications for research funding**. Such applications are fully supported by the College of Arts and Law Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and require in-depth consideration of the Impact of the research in question.
- There will be increasing emphasis on consideration of Impact as part of **study leave applications**.
- The **promulgation of good practice** at College level will be systematised by the RKT Office, and feedback arrangements made to learn from and contribute to successful work on impact throughout and beyond the College
- Researchers are encouraged to engage with different user communities, heritage sector, on-line media and others through the **research mentoring schemes** of the UoA (see REF5c).

**Specific plans**

Clearly the possibilities for continuing or inaugurating new areas and forms of impact will depend on the larger research context and on the funding available to support projects. At present Modern Languages plans to build on work in established impact areas. Selected examples are:

**(1) Cultural life: Sayner** will aim to reach audiences at both national and local level as PI in a large, interdisciplinary project involving experts across the University and the region, to study and deepen understanding of the commemoration of World War I, and **Morris** will organize a touring exhibition and public symposium in 2014 in Dublin, based on research into memories and experiences from the first, second and third generations affected by the Hungarian uprising (1956) and its consequences. **Sèbe** has plans for impact activities including a touring exhibition and public lectures to be realised during the next REF period, in his role as PI in an international, AHRC-funded, interdisciplinary project entitled 'Outposts of Conquest', as has **Hardwick** for her next project on Francophone post-colonial culture, which will involve building on the public lectures.

**2) Education: Jato**, who has already had notable impact in the fields of education and public discourse (see case study), will continue in these areas through her work on Spanish exile and its legacy, with a project entitled 'Place matters: a topology of Spanish republican exile'. **Ward's** AHRC-funded project will incorporate material (e.g. interactive maps) for the teaching of history at all levels and also establish a crowdsourcing element for public participation in digital editing.

**3) Policy making and civil society: Albertazzi** will again target particular interest groups through a planned conference on contemporary Italian politics, to which journalists will be invited; he will also pursue EU funding for a comparative project studying the motivations and activities of members of populist parties across Europe, which will involve workshops with EU administrators, journalists and other opinion-formers.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The case studies selected for REF 2014 illustrate the range of types of impact generated and the variety of user groups engaged by research in Modern Languages. Thus, **Speirs'** research in the area of textual production has had impact, demonstrable through sales and other evidence, on an extensive educated readership internationally. **Albertazzi's** interaction with policy makers and a general non-specialist public, **Jato's** work with reading groups, museums and exhibitions, and **Ross's** impact on special interest groups in the UK and abroad have been achieved in a variety of different ways suited to the context (see case studies for detail). The experience garnered in these examples has helped to shape the strategy outlined above, both in terms of sharing good practice with colleagues and also in the development of interlocking supportive structures at School, College and Institutional levels. As a result, the mechanisms for delivering impact and future support for it have been formalised and greatly strengthened.