

Impact template (REF3a)

<p>Institution:</p> <p>Writtle College</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment:</p> <p>UoA 34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The research produced by the Centre for Arts and Design in the Environment (CADE) within Writtle School of Design is broad in nature and serves several different groups within the Art and Design sector and has had a significant measurable impact on interested parties and across a number of fields of specialisation. For example, staff have worked with local, national and international organisations such as Chelmsford City Council, regional Primary and Secondary schools, Furtherfield, the Japanese Garden Society, the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange, the Landscape Institute, to name a few, to offer several channels to stakeholders to engage with the research in Art and Design that WSD produces.</p> <p>WSD's approach has bridged the gap between the academic community (including the research produced by students at all levels) and the wider art and design sector. Work by staff and students from the School has informed developments in practice and dissemination that are recognised and accessed worldwide. Some examples are presented in b below.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The College collaborates with several institutions in the UK and abroad for research and has a long tradition of creating links outside of the scope of traditional academia. WSD/CADE's staff are encouraged to contact the sector beneficiaries, to develop and to maintain these relationships and collaborations. A database with these links is kept centrally within the School. Some staff are engaged in consultancy, knowledge transfer and outreach. These activities are recorded in annually-updated staff curriculum vitae and discussed during Periodic Development Review meetings. Work is reported to Research Committee which monitors and follows the impact that the research achieves.</p> <p>Research undertaken at WSD has primarily a practitioner focus as well as informing and underpinning the curriculum. The School's links with non-academic beneficiaries, whether through professional accreditation of current programmes, engagement with artists and relevant organisations, or via alumni forging successful careers and continuing to engage with the College, enrich the knowledge base and relevance of the research environment. These are highlighted through the College's flagship magazine Arena and on the College's website as well as referenced</p>

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in relevant media relations opportunities.

Evidence of current work undertaken that is leading to impact (and that are not featured in the impact case studies) include the development of research projects on the Landscape Architecture of urban green spaces in cities in the Netherlands and Sri Lanka. Collaboration with the Japanese Garden Society has produced a number of conference presentations at several fora including the the Suffolk Garden Trust, the Essex Garden Trust, the North American Japanese Garden Association and the Japan Foundation. Other commissions that are leading to impact include collaborations with Chelmsford City Council and the Royal Society for the Arts and Manufacturing on a public commission called "Changing Chelmsford. Some of the research mentioned above is being carried out in the specialist School of Design infrastructure (see REF5).

c. Strategy and plans

Research has become a significant part of the HE Strategy at Writtle College and teaching is underpinned by research and scholarly activity. The College has committed to the implementation of the Research Strategy with the purpose of not only increasing the research activity, but also ensuring that this activity leads to impact. This in turn enhances the delivery of Postgraduate and Undergraduate education at WSD. These commitments have contributed to the development of the research profile of the College.

The Unit recognises that the value of its research activities will be reflected by making a positive impact to the industries it serves by increasing commercial consultancy, commissions, research and employer-responsive training. The Research Strategy 2014-2020, which will be implemented shortly, recognises the importance of impact on research activities. Nevertheless, the importance on maintaining relationships with non-academic beneficiaries has been recognised since the implementation of the previous Research Strategy (2008-2013). In both documents, the need for staff to create and maintain relationships with non-academic beneficiaries is emphasised, as evidenced in the impact case studies (REF 3b) and section e on REF 5 Environment template.

The Unit is also aware of current developments on the allocation of funds for research by different funding organs. Therefore, the College has highlighted the importance of collaborations, not only with other Higher Education Institutions, but also with non-academic beneficiaries, and in this way is ensuring to meet national and international demands on Art and Design.

d. Relationship to case studies

The development of innovations in networked media and digital arts practice and its ability to reach new audiences has proven very powerful. Furtherfield has an established long tradition of engagement with national and international art platforms and communities to deliver new forms of collaborative practice with national and international artists, technologists and thinkers. Similarly, the breadth of the engagement that the production of the collection of short films entitled “Scenes of Provincial Life” has underpinned, ranges from local primary schools to several national and international art galleries and exhibitions (see Impact case studies) and demonstrates the direct relationship with the College’s strategy and plans to achieve impact from its research activities.

These case studies demonstrate how members of staff of WSD have recognised national and international needs and have approached different sponsors and participants to offer solutions to young people’s learning and community living by applying their individual research outcomes. In the case of the Furtherfield case study, it also demonstrates how the Unit has followed closely the development of the interaction of digital art and media to enrich the life of different communities of practice, develop and reach new audiences, and most important it offers a forum for the expression of art and design both in form of an art gallery and in digital media (in the form of a website) to enhance and strengthen the public’s relationship with the UK Arts sector and international digital arts culture.

The “Scenes of Provincial Life” case study, also provides evidence of how the Unit’s approach has been developed. The collaboration of staff from WSD with other educational institutions (e.g. London primary schools brokered through the Creative Partnership programme) has informed processes of collaborative working that have contributed to building the core skills and confidence of children by working with moving image, games, and drama, highlighting the impact that the work being developed within WSD is having on the learning process at an early key stage by using art and design as an influential tool.

Thus the Unit has demonstrated that a commitment to excellent research can create a positive and significant impact. As a consequence, the College is raising its profile, fulfilling its aim to be recognised for the excellence of its research in specialist fields within the Art and Design and also demonstrating a growing impetus for its research activity, a cultural shift towards research informed teaching and public engagement over recent years, and the serious commitment that research is at the heart of Writtle’s HE objectives for excellence.