

**Institution: Staffordshire University**

**Unit of Assessment: 34 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory**

**a. Context**

Art and Design research is cultivated and co-ordinated by the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies' two Applied Research Centres (ARCs): the Institute for Applied Creative Thinking (I-ACT) and the Centre for Media Arts and Technologies (C-MAT). The ARCs have a broad range of functions. They decide how to distribute research funding; organise events to share best practice such as presentations of research projects to research active staff and sessions on funding application skills. They also encourage collaboration; raise awareness and enthusiasm for research and enterprise projects; organise staff development related to research, impact or enterprise; set up mentoring programmes for early-career researchers, or for staff returning to active research work; act as spokespersons for research-related activities in the area and advise Faculties and the University Research and Enterprise Committee about research and impact policy and implementation. With regard to the functions of the ARCs it should also be noted that UoA34 research and impact overlap to some degree with UoA36 (work submitted under both UoAs is represented in each of the two ARCs) which points to the increasing interdisciplinary orientation of research and impact culture within the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies.

The main non-academic user groups and audiences on whom UoA34 research impacts are:

1. The public gallery system and arts festivals via exhibition and curation.
2. Communities beyond the public gallery system, via out of gallery, community-oriented art activities and web-based publication of accessible art critical texts.
3. The general public who become users of artefacts that are the outcome of research in ceramics, product design, graphic design, and games design.
4. Impact on public policy via the use of arts as a tool in solving significant community problems.

There is a broad spectrum of staff involved in UoA34 and a degree of overlap with the areas being submitted under UoA36. This broadening has resulted from a restructuring of the University, which increased the size of the Faculty, to include areas such as Games Design, Film Production, and Music Technology. As the restructuring took place two years ago, the synergies are in progress rather than being fully in place but connections are being made between sound art and visual art and visual poetics, and between visual art and film. We are confident that the fruitful collaborations that are beginning to take place now will help diversify the impact of our research. Interaction between different groups of researchers allows each group to realise that there is a greater span of impact opportunities than if they remained focused solely on their own discipline.

**b. Approach to impact**

The general approach to impact in UoA34 is affected by the applied nature of most of the research at Staffordshire University and this is evident in the Impact Case Studies that we are submitting. Most of our UoA34 research does not result in academic written outcomes. Instead it results in: engagement with community and public bodies such as the police and health services, the production of domestic artefacts, participation in design exhibitions and festivals, participation in art exhibitions and festivals, participation in film festivals, public lectures, the organisation of art festivals, the curation of exhibitions in public galleries, the creation of artefacts for a general public, the creation of educationally oriented computer games. In short a significant element of non-academic impact is intrinsic to most of the UoA34 research we are engaged in. One can cite numerous instances of UoA34 staff engaging in impact oriented activities:

- One effective impact strategy encouraged by I-ACT has been the establishment of a biennial art festival 'Conjunction' in Stoke-on-Trent, which has taken place November-December 2008, 2010, and 2012. From the start this festival has used non-art gallery venues in order to reach a broader public. Fine Art staff members Anna Francis and Ian

Brown are especially involved in this impact-oriented project. See: <http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/2666684>

- The Conjunction Biennial has alternated, since 2008, with the British Ceramics Biennial, also staged in Stoke on Trent. Staffordshire University is both a sponsor of, and a partner in the British Ceramics Biennial, and the team who run this event on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent City Council is based in offices provided by the University. The first British Ceramics Biennial to take place in Stoke was in 2009, the second took place in 2011 and the third and most recent iteration in 2013. Both of the Biennial's Creative Directors, Barney Hare-Duke and Jeremy Theophilus are Visiting Researchers, attached to I-ACT, and staff and students regularly exhibit within the Biennial. See: <http://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com/>
- The Creative Communities Unit (whose research relates to the 'Working Together to Create Change' impact case study) has been engaged with a number of initiatives that bring artists into local communities to produce participatory projects that promote civic engagement; grow audiences for the arts and value the stories of peoples' lives and local history. See: <http://ccustaffs.wordpress.com/>
- Currently Dr Bobbie Fletcher, in Games Design, is engaged in a project (funded through the EU's Grundtvig programme) in teaching/learning using innovative IT and multimedia technologies focusing on e-learning, m-learning (mobile learning), gaming and simulation to support educational purposes. See: [http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/art\\_and\\_design/gamesdesign/able-project/](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/art_and_design/gamesdesign/able-project/)
- Heather Minchin's solo exhibition 'Representing Refugees' at the Matrix Chambers, Gray's Inn, London from 28.02.08 to 30.04.08 used mixed media to illustrate the asylum process from the viewpoint of an advocate. See: <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/928/>
- Colette Dobson contributed to a group exhibition and experiential workshop 'Challenging Communication: Cancer and Sexuality' at Manchester Conference Centre 15th February 2013. See: <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/1069/>
- James Fair's collaborative film making '72 Project' involves shooting and editing a feature-length movie in seventy-two hours using non-professionals from specific locales followed by a screening to the local audience. See: <http://the72project.org/>
- Ben Ramsay's organisation of the NoiseFloor public festival at Staffordshire University annually in May. This hosts in the region of 40-50 composers from the UK and from the rest of the world. See: <http://www.benramsay.co.uk/noisefloor/>
- The Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies has staged a public-facing festival, in each of the past two years, that centres on the Art and Design Degree Exhibition and acts as a showcase for the work of academics across the full range of disciplines represented in the Faculty. In 2013 this was attended by 1300 people. See <http://www.fringefest.org.uk/>

**c. Strategy and plans**

The University's ARCs, such as I-ACT and C-MAT, are constitutionally required to support the various dimensions of impact. Particular strategies to achieve research with impact include:

- Encouraging work to set up Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and similar arrangements with external businesses or organisations;
- Requiring public-facing dissemination of research findings;
- Encouraging enterprise activity founded upon research work;
- Granting PhD studentships for applied research and impact generating projects. (For instance, a full PhD bursary co-funded between the university and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, for a comparative study of the social impact of regeneration measures in Salford and in Stoke-on-Trent.)
- Hosting a series of events designed to disseminate best practice in the above areas, encourage impact-oriented research for staff who are not currently research active, and discover opportunities for inter- or cross- disciplinary avenues of impact. Such events include:
  - ARC exchange events (please see discussion in REF5)
  - Staff Fest (the university's annual two-week long programme of staff development events)

**Impact template (REF3a)**

- Visiting speaker events, which are advertised outside of subject areas and to postgraduates.
- Fringe (the Faculty's annual programme of public-facing events, to coincide with the Art and Design Degree Show)
- Public exhibitions, shows, lectures or demonstrations.

In conformity to its remit, when approving support (financial or otherwise) for a particular project, the ARC will require an impact-oriented outcome as a condition of its support.

In exercising the above functions, the ARCs have support from the wider University. Such support includes:

- Regular meetings of Associate Deans for Scholarship, Enterprise and Research
- The allocation of a member of the University's Enterprise and Commercial Development unit to each Faculty and ARC, who can then filter and tailor information about research opportunities to the expertise and experience of that group. This colleague can also give concrete support with respect to HEIF, for example, and business oriented research activities such as KTPs.
- Vice-Chancellor's teaching-led research grant scheme, which has funded more than 20 projects designed to produce research work with a direct impact on teaching and learning innovation or quality.
- The University Research, Enterprise and Advanced Scholarship Committee, with membership from all four Faculties and all Services. This Committee has demonstrated its commitment to impact by, for example, recently and enthusiastically adopting the use of the VITAE Researcher Development Framework, and has done so in part because that Framework encourages researchers to think in terms of impact. This committee has also implemented the ePrints archival service to create a public-facing database of staff research in order to facilitate its dissemination and thus also the formation of external partnerships for research and impact.
- The University Research Degrees Committee, which is currently redesigning doctoral recruitment, supervision and examination procedures to ensure that the impact of research is considered at every stage.
- Research Informed Teaching initiatives, designed to create an immediate local impact for research activity by integrating research-related skills into the curriculum.
- See REF5 for a more full elaboration of University policies and procedures designed to support applied research, enterprise, commercial development and impact.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The selected case studies indicate the applied orientation of research in our UoA34 submission and its diversity. One case study deals with leading edge ceramic design and the other relates to the applicability of community art to a serious social problem. In our research culture we do not perceive fine art practice as more 'elite' than community art practice and this is evident in the existence of overlaps between the two. For instance, Anna Francis' fine art practice-led research is community oriented as are aspects of another early career researcher in Fine Art, Michael Branthwaite. One can also see a community-oriented approach in James Fair's 'The 72 Project' which applies an innovative participatory methodology to the making of film. And the production of design artefacts that impact on real world users is also evident in Dr Bobbie Fletcher's work in games design focused on e-learning and m-learning with a view to social inclusion, as well as in all of the work of the Creative Communities Unit.