

**Institution: University of the West of England**

**Unit of Assessment: 32 Philosophy**

**a. Context**

UWE Philosophy, through the Applied Philosophy Research Group, our branch of the Royal Institute of Philosophy and the individual initiative of staff members, engages in a wide variety of public engagement and impact-generating activities. A core element of our ethos is that philosophical inquiry is strengthened by collaboration with other branches of inquiry and the broader world wherein philosophical problems can have concrete resonance. Public engagement and other impact-related activities are therefore both highly valued and well embedded in the Unit's culture.

As a consequence, the Unit has links outside academe with a wide range of collaborators. For example, the Unit has strong local links with local cultural institutions and events, including the Bristol Festival of Ideas, the Bristol Philosophy Café, the Watershed Media Centre, as well as regional secondary education institutions such as Exeter College, whose students visit the Unit annually. Nationally, members of staff have worked with prestigious institutions such as the Tate Modern Gallery and the Royal Academy. UWE Philosophers have also had an international public impact (see below).

Philosophy at UWE reaches out to schools and to the wider public. For example, the Unit takes part in the University-wide Aim Higher Outreach programme and philosophy students teach in local schools. The UWE Branch of the Royal Institute of Philosophy organises a range of public engagement activities during the academic year in Bristol. A prominent example of branch activities was the *Philosophy Matters* event held in Bristol in March 2012, organized by the Unit. The event attracted over 750 members of the public (and is available on YouTube – see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gugWteQ6LFs>).

In the University context and in support of these activities, there is a well-established Research, Business and Innovation unit (RBI) tasked with facilitating partnership and impact through a wide range of activities, including knowledge and technology transfer, professional development, public engagement, and a range of different types of business and community engagement including innovation networks. Depending on the nature of the research, dedicated RBI staff support opportunities to translate research outcomes into a wide range of follow-on initiatives to ensure they make a difference to culture, economy and society writ large.

**b. Approach to impact**

The impact activities of the Philosophy team focus around three main areas: the fine arts, domestic and international politics, and health and medicine. Staff impact and public engagement activities, organised under these headings, have included:

**Fine Arts:** Seizing on his work on Schelling, speculative philosophy and naturalism, **Grant's** public reception in the context of speculative realism has given rise to a considerable web presence (see, for example <http://naughtthought.wordpress.com>) and a number of non-academic publications, with several invited contributions to the cultural review *Collapse* (2007-2011), an article in *The Philosophers' Magazine* (2010), and two publications in German (both 2013) on these topics. This public dimension of his work has resulted in public presentations at major arts institutions in the UK and Germany that have sought to integrate philosophical work into art production rather than art criticism.

The *Real Thing* (Tate Britain, 2010) presented speculative realist themes in the context of art production and was the first *Late at Tate* event to sell out. Having been a keynote presenter at the 2007 Speculative Realism event, Goldsmiths College, **Grant** addressed the problem of creation in art, philosophy and nature to a diverse audience of artists, curators (Sir Nicholas Serrota was,

## Impact template (REF3a)

apparently unusually, an attendee) and members of the public. From this arose a series of collaborations seeking common ground between philosophy and art via the Royal Academy, both public (*Object Oriented Thinking*, 2010) and to students (2011).

**Grant's** work on the philosophy of nature was the reason for his being asked to co-host a tour, forming part of the Royal Academy funded Falmouth Convention (2011), of sites still affected by Cornwall's 18th century mining history. Further presentations at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2012) and to the series of public talks run by the Kunsthochschule für Medien, Köln (2013) have furthered **Grant's** engagement with the art world and helped to create the vibrant open discussions currently visible on the blogosphere, as well as influencing discussions amongst art professionals.

Sellars worked closely with the San Francisco-based art collective Future Farmers on an 'open interpretation' of Simon the Shoemaker's atelier at the Guggenheim Museum in New York 2011. Sellar's work served as a basis for many of the concepts explored in the installation, (see <http://www.futurefarmers.com/footnotes/ShoemakersNewsletter.pdf>)

**Lewis's** main impact-oriented activities also contribute to this area. In December 2011 he spoke at the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, at a workshop on 'The Human Animal in Politics, Science, and Psychoanalysis'. The workshop was aimed primarily at people working in contemporary art. In May 2010 **Lewis** was an invited speaker at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht, Netherlands. The Academy describes itself as a 'multiform institute for fine art and design'. Lewis's talk was titled, 'Structure and Genesis in Derrida and Lacan: Animality and the Empirical Sciences' and attracted a diverse audience.

Chanter has also engaged wider audiences. For example, in June 2013, she gave a public talk at St. Martin's School of Art, London, entitled, 'For Reference Only: In conversation' and was interviewed for the journal *Critical Theory* on Cinematic Art.

**Domestic and International Politics: Assiter's** public engagement includes serving on the Executive Board of the Centre for Secular Space, a group that campaigns on human rights issues. She has also written for openDemocracy.net on issues concerning secularism. Her contribution, 'Code Pink, Multiculturalism and Relativism' attracted many comments and sparked a healthy public debate on the nature of multiculturalism. In June 2011, **Assiter** spoke at the 'Women and Violence' conference at Birmingham University. She has also been an invited speaker at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution and the Swindon Philosophical Society. **Assiter** has also been interviewed about her career in philosophy for the popular web magazine *3am* and recently recorded a podcast interview, also about the range of her work see: <http://www.uniofsurreyblogs.org.uk/english/2013/09/20/shakespeare-and-contemporary-theory-17-alison-assiter/>

In addition to the activities detailed in the impact case study, Darian **Meacham** writes regularly for openDemocracy.net and the Huffingtonpost on issues concerning international politics. He has also contributed to the Social Europe Journal ('Avoiding a Class Based Analysis of Greece is Pure Naïveté' September, 2012). **Meacham's** contributions to openDemocracy include 'The European Emperor Has No Clothes' (May 2012,), 'Science Funding, What Would Patočka Say?' (openDemocracy September 2009). Contributions to the Huffingtonpost include 'Does Privatisation Threaten Democracy?' (December 2012), 'A Progressive Wish List for the EU Budget' (December 2012) 'White Guys Want Stuff Too' (November 2012), 'Some People May Choose to be Gay, Get Over It' (November 2012). **Meacham** also co-hosts a bi-weekly political and cultural radio programme, '*Historias Minimias*', on Radio Panik (Brussels, Belgium). A editorial letter of **Meacham's** on the policy of 'extraordinary rendition' was one of three published in the New York Times, the other two were from the president of Amnesty International and a former US Senate foreign policy advisor.

**Lewis** organised a public talk at the Watershed Media Centre Bristol in May 2013 with Professor Mary Beth Mader (Memphis, USA) on the topic of race, racism, and biology.

**Health and Medicine:** The impact case studies of **Meacham** and Carel are on this topic. Carel's case study focuses on the work that she has done informing and influencing medical practitioners and patients on varying concepts of health and disease, and the value of both patients and practitioners adopting some phenomenological perspectives in the clinic. **Meacham's** case study focuses on informing public debate on concepts of health, normality and disability. The particular focus is on informing the contemporary public debate over 'liberal eugenics' and various forms of 'human enhancement', specifically 'cognitive enhancement'. In addition to their work in the health arena, **Assiter** works as a trained volunteer counsellor using counselling approaches that are derived from existential and Socratic philosophy.

### c. Strategy and plans

The strategy for supporting impact in the Philosophy Unit reflects UWE's overall emphasis on impact and public engagement. University support includes: organising public events (via the Faculty and the University events team); Faculty funding for public events; help with advertising and press contacts (via marketing and the Press Office) and support for funding bids related to public engagement and impact activities. The University jointly operates the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement with the University of Bristol, funded by RCUK, the UK HE Funding Councils and the Wellcome Trust.

The Philosophy Unit will continue to develop its ethos of supporting engagement with the public, practitioners, and various stakeholder groups. Developing on past success, the aim of our impact strategy is to actively do philosophy outside of its traditional disciplinary boundaries making it accessible, relevant and enjoyable to practitioners (e.g. artists), political activists (e.g. human rights campaigners), professionals (e.g. health professionals), and the general public. In this sense everyone is a stakeholder in philosophical reflection and analysis. Our impact activities aim to show the importance of doing philosophy as an integral part of the areas named above. In this way our activities have a direct impact on practice in a very wide range of areas.

In particular, the Unit's future impact strategy will be to further develop and strengthen the three strands of impact activity mentioned above. In relation to the fine arts, the emphasis has been intervention and impact on artistic practice itself, not on art theory. This has been accomplished by working directly with groups of artists and fine art institutions. We aim to expand these activities (new member of staff **Mitcheson** already works with the Tate Modern and has plans to work with the Arnolfini Centre for Contemporary Arts in Bristol). In the political domain, the strategy has been to intervene directly in the political debates of the times through public-facing media outlets. The issues that members of staff address will relate directly to ongoing research in human rights, European construction, and democratic practice. In health, **Meacham** will continue to focus on the increasingly widespread and significant public debates on enhancement and new biotechnologies. **Meacham** has also submitted a funding bid to the British Academy to support a longer term editorial partnership with openDemocracy.net on the theme of 'Europe as a philosophical idea'.

### d. Relationship to case studies

The Unit's approach to supporting and nurturing impact is epitomised in the two successful case studies included in this submission. Both Carel's work which has widely informed and influenced medical practitioners and patients on varying concepts of health and disease and **Meacham's** focus on informing public debate on concepts of health, normality and disability, are drawn from the Unit's 'Health and Medicine' theme but also fit within the overall impact strategy of the Unit. The emphasis on innovation, engagement with bodies outside academia and funding bids for this purpose have proven successful and supported a range of engagements and impacts as evidenced in this document and in the case studies. Both case studies have also involved collaboration with other parts of the University, reflecting the Unit's and the University's strategy of promoting impact-generating activities through fostering cross-disciplinarity as well as external engagement. The close link between the case studies and research in the Unit is a clear illustration of the institutional emphasis on the mutually-reinforcing benefits of research and impact activities.