

Institution: University of Stirling
Unit of Assessment: D32 Philosophy
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Philosophy is generally regarded as a pure or abstract discipline, whose research results are some long way removed from immediate application to social, cultural or economic issues; and within philosophy some centrally important areas of research are yet further removed from practical questions. We recognize the problems this perception poses for maintaining the relevance of our research efforts to social needs, and so have consistently emphasized avenues of research that promote real engagement with the understandings of the issues they address that exist outside the academy, and the forms these issues take in decisions faced and policies adopted by non-academic practitioners. However we also recognize that, for these efforts to be realistic and effective, different expectations concerning both the types of impact that can be achieved and the users or beneficiaries of our research will be appropriate to our three clusters of research strength.</p> <p>These clusters are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal, Moral and Political Philosophy • Mind and Knowledge • Philosophy of Logic and Language, including the history of analytic philosophy <p>Many of the problematic questions addressed within the first cluster are already recognized as such outside the academy: they take practical form in the work of governments, public policy-makers, national and international non-governmental organisations and charities. So here we expect, and will illustrate below, direct contributions to the work of such bodies.</p> <p>The case study based on WHEELER's work for the SmartData initiative illustrates that similarly direct contributions to the work of policy-makers and legislators can arise from within the second cluster. However, much work in Mind and Knowledge addresses problems that need to be translated into a more concrete form even to be recognized as problems by a wider audience. Hence here a typically more realistic aim is to contribute to public discourse and cultural life by providing a more informed context for public debates over such issues as multi-culturalism and forms of relativism.</p> <p>Impact from the core work of the third cluster will be at best indirect and diffuse. While work in logic has of course had enormous impact in bringing about the 'information age', typically the route to this impact has been via other academic disciplines – linguistics, psychology, mathematics and computer science – and much of the extra-philosophical engagement of the cluster follows this pattern. However, even here some of our work on probability and partial belief is directly applicable to practical questions – for instance, on whether a long record of avoiding accidents should give one confidence in the competence and safety of a mountain guide – and staff have exploited the opportunities to address special interest groups on such questions and to publish their results in an accessible form – e.g. in mountaineering journals and yearbooks.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The priority we accord to the extra-academic relevance of our research is reflected at every level of activity, from appointments and the consequent balance of expertise between and within the three clusters, to the design of specific funded projects that have often crossed disciplinary boundaries and have directly involved specialists from outside the academy.</p> <p><i>Appointments</i></p> <p>While maintaining a necessary core strength in moral philosophy, as providing its binding intellectual centre, our Legal, Moral and Political cluster gave priority early in the assessment period to legal philosophy, under the leadership of DUFF and Sandra Marshall. In replacement appointments we shifted the emphasis to political philosophy, judging this to be the clearest route to maintaining its engagement with issues of pressing practical significance. The basis for this cluster's impact lies first in the configuration of research interests thus achieved. So, for instance, CRUFT is concerned, not merely with the abstract or logical analysis of notions of rights, but with their implementation in legal and other less formal frameworks, and with the special force that appeals to rights carry in political and legal contexts. HOPE and BAUMEISTER are concerned,</p>

not merely with the traditional questions of state legitimacy, but with the practical implications within a culturally diverse society of the state's need to address its citizens in terms that can be recognized as explaining and so justifying its demands. Other work in this cluster deals, not only with the correct understanding of the concept of democracy, but with the practicalities of representative and electoral constitutions.

Work within our Mind and Knowledge cluster necessarily addresses some central issues, such as the problem of scepticism, that are famously (perhaps even infamously) of no obvious practical relevance. While not neglecting these problems we have a distinctive strength, especially in the work of WHEELER, in issues to do with the ways in which knowledge is constructed, manipulated and exploited through cultural and technological extensions to the lonely and isolated subject of traditional philosophical reflection. The recent appointment of DRAYSON has strengthened these aspects of the cluster's work.

While logic perhaps constitutes the abstract core of philosophy, the approach of our third cluster is distinctive in the prominence it gives to issues in applied logic. For instance, MILNE's long-standing concern with inferentialism as an approach to the foundations of semantics and the theory of consequence has been pursued in directions leading to active collaboration with computer scientists. PEDRIAL's recent appointment reinforces this specialism.

Early engagement with practitioners

We believe that impact, for a discipline such as philosophy, is best conceived as one half of what is essentially a two-way engagement between academic researchers and extra-academic practitioners. Too often divergent understandings of the core terms of debate, and a disregard by academic researchers for the political and social burden of these terms, have posed obstacles to any real extra-academic uptake of philosophical research, even in areas where it has the most obvious relevance to the concerns of practitioners. To counter this we have sought to involve research users wherever possible in the earliest stages of research, so that theory development is from the beginning sensitive to the forms in which the issues investigated confront research users. Thus projects such as those led by DUFF on the criminal law, and by CRUFT on human rights and their implementation, have involved practitioners – lawyers, civil servants and policy advisers, NGO representatives and activists – in their research meetings.

Supporting routes to impact

Specific and influential contributions, such as CRUFT's input to the Leveson Enquiry, are possible only against a background of engagement, through which a researcher establishes the value of his or her ideas to research users. In its early stages this engagement relies primarily on internal support, and we have allocated departmental workshop funding and other resources to its development. In CRUFT's case this began before the assessment period, with funding for a workshop bringing lawyers and NGO representatives to reflect on issues raised by the 2005 G8 Summit at Gleneagles. Connections established then, supported through further local workshop funding, led to CRUFT's AHRC Network on Rights (2009-11), involving legal professionals (e.g. from Matrix Chambers, the High Court in Edinburgh, the Scottish Centre for Human Rights), NGOs (e.g. the PEN Organization, Jubilee Scotland), and civil servants and policy makers (e.g. from the House of Lords and the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel). Expert roles arising from this include advice to a People's Tribunal on debt relief in the Scottish Parliament, contributions to discussions on business and human rights coordinated by the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Department, and a briefing paper on a Right to Social Inclusion, co-authored with HOPE and submitted to the UK Commission on a Bill of Rights. Similarly, DUFF's role as Chair of a British Academy project on Crime, Punishment and the Prison draws on an earlier background of expert roles, e.g. as adviser to the Action for Children (formerly NCH) inquiry into the Scottish children's hearing system that originated from the Kilbrandon Report, as adviser to a Scottish Council Foundation project on public interest in criminal and youth justice, and as a lecturer on sentencing theory for Judicial Studies Committee refresher courses. We also recognize the additional time and effort involved in developing research projects that will involve and be relevant to research users, and so have sought to allocate teaching and other workloads so as to make space for these activities. An impressive (but unfortunately unsuccessful) proposal of this kind was WHEELER's major ARHC Research Grant application for a project on the Philosophy of the Web, which gained the active involvement and support of Tim Berners-Lee (inventor of the web and leader of the

WWW Consortium) and Peter Norvig (Research Director of Google). A more modest (but successful) grant application that leads us into the new assessment period is for a series of RSE-sponsored Workshops on organ donation policies, which will again involve legal and healthcare professionals alongside academic researchers.

c. Strategy and plans

The Environment Template describes the various formal mechanisms and informal practices that support the development of researchers in the unit and nurture ideas into completed projects. Our strategy for maximizing the impact of our research is, in its simplest form, to ensure that impact is accorded proper weight in all of these mechanisms and practices.

Because our appointment priorities have created a body of researchers whose interests lead naturally towards applications, no major thematic shift is needed or envisaged. Instead, we will ensure that recognition of the potential for impact and the value of achieving it pervades the detail of what we do. For example, in the mentoring of early career researchers we will make plain that focused and telling contributions to current debates, particularly in areas of political and legal concern, have a value alongside that of papers developing a broader theoretical vision. Similarly, in the allocation of funding for workshops and research travel we will ensure that engagement with and dissemination to practitioner constituencies is supported equally with the more traditional forms of academic exchange. Finally, in career progression we will ensure that the impact of research is valued and rewarded as much as the development of abstract theory.

Valuing impact properly includes recognizing that high quality impact can emerge only from research of intrinsically high quality. It must also include the recognition that in many areas philosophical research has an essential generality, and that its results typically stop short of translation into specific policy initiatives suited to one or another specific institutional setting. Thus, for example, DUFF's project on criminalization has been directed towards establishing principles that collectively offer a normative theory of the criminal law; these principles have implications, *inter alia*, for how far, and in what range of ways, one might reasonably aim to shift the emphasis of systems of criminal law towards models of restorative justice, and more specifically whether such models are particularly appropriate in dealing with young offenders; but local factors are equally relevant to their implementation in specific jurisdictions. Drawing on the experience and understanding of practitioners in the motivation and direction of our research projects contributes importantly to reducing such gaps between theory and practice. Equally important, though, are routes of dissemination that aim to reduce the distance from the other side, fostering amongst practitioners a deeper understanding of principles applicable in their work, and providing a forum for them to explore, with academic researchers and practitioners in related fields, the challenges to their implementation. Promotion of interactions of both of these kinds with research users will therefore continue to have a central place in our research plans.

d. Relationship to case studies

The sections above have aimed to describe the general approach of the unit to fostering relationships with practitioners that can both inform our research and create channels for that research to reach and influence policy and practice outside the academy. The two case studies have been chosen to illustrate in detail, and to evidence, two very specific areas of impact. The case study focusing on CRUFT's evidence to the Leveson Enquiry explains how the ideas taken up by Leveson are grounded in projects designed from the beginning to be informed by and respond to practitioners' understandings of concepts that are as central to political and legal as to philosophical debate; section (b) illustrates the range of policy contributions arising from these projects. The case study detailing WHEELER's involvement with the SmartData initiative illustrates how impact can be maximized by the researcher's continuing engagement in the extra-academic development of the initiating ideas. In these ways the case studies provide evidence of the effectiveness of the broad approach to impact described here.