

<b>Institution: University of Aberdeen</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA 32 Philosophy</b>
<b>Title of case study: NIP Public</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>NIP Public is the Northern Institute of Philosophy's (NIP) programme to propagate the benefits of NIP's own collaborative research models to local non-academic communities, specifically schools, charities, and non-academic institutions. These benefits include enriching the cultural lives of users in the local community, encouraging users to challenge their own and others' views, and informing educators working in schools of northeast Scotland. The programme includes <i>Café Philosophique</i>, a series of public engagement events, a <i>Philosophy with Children</i> teacher-training course designed to show in practice how philosophical discussion can be incorporated in school settings, and collaborations with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HM Prison Aberdeen;</b></li> <li>• <b>AberdeenFoyer</b>, a charity helping homeless and unemployed youths;</li> <li>• <b>St Peter's Primary School</b>, Aberdeen;</li> <li>• <b>Albyn School</b> (secondary school), Aberdeen;</li> <li>• <b>Robert Gordon's College</b> (secondary school), Aberdeen;</li> <li>• <b>Dyce Academy</b> (secondary school), Aberdeen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The impact for the NIP Public case study arises from two separate but interacting sources: the collaborative <i>research model</i> distinctive to NIP and followed in all NIP projects; and the <i>research outputs</i> stemming from this model. Here we will first describe the research model; then we will describe some of the research outputs (A Case Study Part 1), whose impact is presented in section 4 (A Case Study Part 2).</p> <p><i>(a) The Research Model</i></p> <p>Since the start of NIP in late 2009, research teams for each pilot or funded NIP project—comprising the PI, postdoctoral fellows and project students—met during term-time in weekly two-hour seminars. In each seminar a definite cluster of research questions was investigated, with team members critically assessing existing reasons and proposing new reasons for various answers to these questions in collaborative group discussion.</p> <p>The key premise for exporting this model of philosophical inquiry to a non-academic setting is that no prior expertise is needed in order for someone to benefit from it: even complete novices to philosophy can, when properly exposed to research themes in a clear and accessible manner and properly guided by an expert, profitably engage with philosophical research questions and enjoy the intellectual and social benefits of so doing.</p> <p><i>(b) Research Outputs</i></p> <p>The research outputs underpinning the impact came from work undertaken on NIP projects. One of the main foci of the AHRC-funded “Basic Knowledge” project, which ran at NIP in the period 2009-2012, was <i>external-world scepticism</i>. Several research seminars were dedicated to the topic or issues directly relevant to it. Four key research outputs arose from these seminars and from the research presented in two “Basic Knowledge” Conferences and eight two-day project workshops held during this period. The research outputs concern ways in which we might respond to the</p>

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challenge of external-world scepticism, the view that we know very little of what we think we know about the world around us. One recent shape this view has taken is ‘lottery scepticism’. The main argument in favour of lottery scepticism starts from the common intuition that when you hold one ticket of a large fair lottery, you do not know—after the draw but before the announcement—that your ticket has lost, despite its being *extremely* likely that your ticket has lost. The problem generalizes dramatically. If the reason why you can’t know in the lottery scenario is that there is a very small chance of being wrong (i.e. there is a small chance that your ticket has won), then because there is a very small chance that our senses deceive us, we can’t know anything about the world around us. Four key outputs from this project (Dodd (2011,2012), McGlynn (2013), Moretti (2012) underpinned the lesson plans on external-world scepticism used in our collaborations with local schools, HM Prison Aberdeen and the charity AberdeenFoyer.

The NIP “Truth and Paradox” project and **Berto’s** (2013) work on dialetheism—the view that there can be true contradictions, developed as a response to central semantic paradoxes—underpinned the *Café Philosophique* event ‘What Can Paradoxes Teach Us?’, while the NIP “Relativism and Rational Tolerance” project and **Baker’s** (2012) work on disagreement underpinned the *Café Philosophique* event ‘Should We Tolerate Moral Disagreement?’ and the development of lesson plans on disagreement used in our collaborations with local schools, HM Prison Aberdeen and the charity AberdeenFoyer.

### 3. References to the research

- Baker, C. (2012). Indexical Contextualism and the Challenges from Disagreement, *Philosophical Studies* 157: 107-123.
- Berto, F. and Priest, G. (2013). Dialetheism, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/dialetheism](http://www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/dialetheism)
- Dodd, D. (2012). Safety, Scepticism and Lotteries, *Erkenntnis* 77: 95-120.
- Dodd, D. (2011). Against Fallibilism, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89: 665-685.
- McGlynn, A. (2013). Believing Things Unknown, *Noûs* 47: 385-407.
- Moretti, L. (2012). Wright, Chandler and Okasha on Transmission Failure, *Synthese* 184: 217-234.

“Basic Knowledge” – 5-year project (2008-2012) funded by the AHRC (in Aberdeen 2009-2012)

PI: **Wright**, post-doctoral fellows: **Zardini** and **Dodd**. Grant value: £650,000.

“Relativism and Rational Tolerance” – 3-year project (2011-2014) funded by Leverhulme

PI: **Wright**, post-doctoral fellows: **Baker** and **Plakias**. Grant value: £250,000.

### 4. Details of the impact

NIP has been committed to developing channels that lead its research projects to benefit non-academic partners. This process is overseen by the NIP Outreach and Knowledge and Transfer Officer (**Luzzi**), who is primarily responsible for creating partnerships with non-academic organizations and for research dissemination. The process is clearly collaborative, with members of the research teams contributing their research expertise, their presentational and discussion-facilitation skills and suggestions of ways their research can achieve impact. The main aim of these activities is not simply to disseminate research by exposing non-academic groups to cutting-edge research issues in philosophy; it is also—and crucially—to involve such groups in the NIP-inspired practice of collaborative discussion, where views are put forward, revised and sharpened in the light of friendly criticism in order to reach a deeper understanding of genuinely puzzling issues. This attitude encompasses the methodology underpinning our *Café Philosophique* programme, our Philosophy courses run in schools, in prison (HMP Aberdeen) and with unemployed persons and ex-drug abusers (AberdeenFoyer). NIP Public activities to date have engaged roughly 400 individuals and can be divided broadly into four streams: **social partnerships**, **public engagement**, **teacher training** and **school collaborations**.

**Social partnerships** take the shape of a series of weekly group discussions on Philosophy

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research themes with prisoners (HMP Aberdeen) and young unemployed, homeless or ex-drug abusers (AberdeenFoyer). In the period 2012-2013, **Luzzi** ran three six-week courses with AberdeenFoyer involving a total of 26 participants and one three-week and one six-week course with HMP Aberdeen involving 11 prisoners overall. A prison-based social worker said:

*'I think it was great for the guys to have access to learning that wasn't dumbed down and that was outside the box, but relevant. Professionally I think being involved with your group enabled me to think about the guys' lives in a different way and enabled me to develop my working relationships and touched on my own professional reformist beliefs'*

The *Café Philosophique* **public engagement** programme was launched in Spring 2012 and the second series took place in Spring 2013. In these events, researchers present their recent research to the public in an accessible way and, in those led by Aberdeen researchers, small tutorial-style discussion on research themes *with the public* (facilitated by a faculty member) take place. *Café Philosophique* comprised five events led by Aberdeen researchers: **Baker/Plakias** ('When Should We Tolerate Moral Disagreement?'), McGlynn ('How Do We Know Ourselves?'), **Jezi** ('What Are Our Moral Obligations to the Global Poor?'), **Torre** ('Is Time Travel Possible?'), **Berto** ('What Can Paradoxes Teach Us?'); and two NIP Public Lectures delivered by Prof. David Chalmers (NYU/ANU) on 'The Matrix As Metaphysics' and Prof Jennifer Saul (Sheffield) on 'Implicit Bias Against Women'. Roughly 210 people attended the events led by Aberdeen researchers overall, while a total of 230 attended the Public Lectures. The sessions led by Aberdeen staff were particularly well-received. Testimonials from the public on these sessions (available at <http://tinyurl.com/kg1phd8>)

include:

*'Thought-provoking discussion.'*

*'The group discussion was very interesting. It was also well-moderated. This allowed a range of views to be expressed.'*

*'Excellent initiative—organisers should be congratulated. Overall I thought it went extremely well, a great example of innovative public engagement.'*

*'The theories well-introduced in a lively, open and accessible way. Very appealing for non-academic philosophers to get involved.'*

*'A very lively, informative evening of hearing and sharing thoughts and views on Philosophy.'*

*'I really liked the informal, friendly atmosphere and how others at the talk shared their views.'*

For the **teacher training** stream of NIP public, **Luzzi** designed and twice taught the one-day Continual Professional Development course 'Philosophy in the Classroom' (Nov 2012 and May 2013). The aim of the course was to introduce primary and secondary schoolteachers to the benefits of using the collaborative group discussion model of NIP in a classroom setting. Both courses were fully booked, with a total of 38 educators in attendance. Evaluation sheets from participants (available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/nip/page?id=47>) provided evidence of impact:

Evaluation Question: *'Attending this course will probably have effects on my teaching/work' (Possible answers from 1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree).*

Answers: *one 6, one 7, two 8s, three 9s, eleven 10s.*

Further comments indicate that the course proved valuable for participants:

*'...raring to go and work with my class on this!'*

*'I enjoyed learning about the process of how to run a Philosophy with Children inquiry and would use this model in a primary classroom.'*

*'I found the inquiry sessions to be excellent both for engaging in discussion but also to look at how to manage philosophical discussions.'*

*'All areas very good but Inquiry sessions were very helpful as they gave practical ideas of how to go about this.'*

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The **school collaborations** stream includes several partnerships with local primary and secondary schools. Since January 2012 **Luzzi** has run twenty-eight hour-long Philosophy group discussions with pupils from St Peter's Primary School. From January to July 2012 he worked with a P5 class while from January to March 2013 he worked with a P3 and a P6 class. A total of 60 pupils were involved.

Since 2011, NIP has obtained funding from the Royal Institute of Philosophy to run Philosophy courses of 15 contact hours in local secondary schools. The courses' topics are taken from areas of strong research expertise and the NIP model of collaborative group discussion is typically implemented in these sessions. Collaborations have taken place with Dyce Academy (**Luzzi**, Spring 2011, 60 pupils), Albyn School (**Melis** (PhD student), Spring 2012, 70 pupils; Spring 2013, 70 pupils), and Robert Gordon's College (**Luzzi**, Spring 2011, 50 pupils; **Melis**, Spring 2012, 35 pupils).

The NIP research model of collaborative discussion of central philosophical questions encompasses all four streams. The specific research outputs mentioned in section 3 were used as foundations in the development and refinement of lesson plans with accompanying activities and stimuli for group discussion that were used in three of the streams: social partnerships, school collaborations and public engagement. For example, in the wake of research activity on the "Basic Knowledge" project, NIP developed a lesson plan centered on the topic of so-called 'lottery' scepticism for use in non-academic settings. Initially, this was tested as one of the Philosophy sessions of five five-session mini-courses running at Robert Gordon's College (22, 23 and 24 March 2011) and two five-session mini-courses at Dyce Academy (23, 25 March 2011). On the basis of this experience, the lesson plan was revised and adjusted for use as part of five five-week Philosophy courses at Albyn School (March 2012); as part of three five-week Philosophy courses at Robert Gordon's College (March 2012); as part of two six-week Philosophy courses on the *Lifeshapers* programme for young unemployed persons and ex-drug abusers run by the charity AberdeenFoyer (25 June 2012, 05 Sep 2012); as part of a three-week Philosophy course for prisoners at HM Prison Aberdeen Grampian (6 July 2012); for an *Aberdeen Sceptics in the Pub* public engagement session (22 November 2012, Cellar 32 pub, audience of 23).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

The following people may be contacted to corroborate the impact of the initiatives conducted by the Unit.

- Two Social Workers, HM Prison Aberdeen (corroborating statement with University and available on request)
- Head Teacher, St Peter's Primary School
- Head RMPS Teacher, Albyn School (corroborating statement with University and available on request)
- AberdeenFoyer Support Worker (corroborating statement with University and available on request)