

<p><b>Institution: University of Oxford</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Unit of Assessment: 32</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Philosophy's capacity to challenge basic values and assumptions, its pursuit of clarity of thought and judgement, and its exploration of the fundamental questions of life already suit it to having an impact beyond academia. Beneficiaries include public policy makers, educationalists, and anyone who is interested in the 'big questions'. Work by members of the Oxford Philosophy Faculty testifies to this. In <i>public policy</i>, for example, research in political philosophy by Bernard Williams—including research that he undertook in 1994 as a member of the Institute for Public Policy Research's Commission on Social Justice—has been the focus of seminars organized under the auspices of the Centre for Political Ideologies and attended by members of a think tank involved with issues of justice. In <i>education</i>, Marianne Talbot, known for her interest in the philosophy of education, was invited to chair the National Forum for Values in Education and the Community, which was responsible for the values that inform the national curriculum. And in <i>the life of the mind outside academia</i>, Faculty members give many presentations in which they stimulate debate on questions of general interest that relate to their research.</p> <p>Among the special strengths of the UOA, however, there are two that are particularly well suited to addressing practical issues that require an element of <i>a priori</i> deliberation: <i>applied ethics</i>; and <i>philosophy of the cognitive sciences</i> (including neuroethics, where the two fields converge). A very significant part of the UOA's research impact arises from five major research centres that it hosts in these areas. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, sponsored by the Uehiro Foundation, whose aim is to encourage and support reflection on practical ethics;</li> <li>• the Future of Humanity Institute, sponsored by the Oxford Martin School, which is the world's leading research centre looking at 'big-picture' questions for human civilization, and which explores the risks and opportunities that arise from technological advances;</li> <li>• the Institute for Science and Ethics, sponsored by the Oxford Martin School, which is based on the conviction that 'without practical ethics, our knowledge of what we can do will radically outstrip our understanding of what we should do';</li> <li>• the Oxford Centre for Neuroethics, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, which aims to address concerns about the effects that neuroscience and neurotechnologies will have on various aspects of human life;</li> <li>• the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, sponsored by the Oxford Martin School, which analyzes the possible effects of long-range technological advances and their potential social impacts.</li> </ul> <p>These centres, though multidisciplinary in nature, are all built around a core team of philosophers, and each of them is part of the Philosophy Faculty.</p> <hr/> <p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>A major part of the UOA's approach to impact lies in the work of the five research centres mentioned in §(a). All five of them have impact beyond academia as one of their stated objectives, as their respective websites indicate. The Uehiro Centre, the Centre for Neuroethics, and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology all have management committees that normally meet once a term. Part of their brief is to ensure the pursuit and update of this objective. They do this by receiving their members' annual activity reports and by reflecting on newly emerging issues of practical significance (usually involving new developments in the natural sciences) that call for philosophical commentary. When an issue has been identified that is especially ripe for commentary, one or more members of the relevant centre with suitable expertise typically present a case about it in the press or on a blog, and, where these interventions and/or the reactions to them are significant enough, they are further researched and developed into published articles, with an eye to further media coverage, public debate, and input into public policy. A recent case in point is a series of articles by research fellows in the Uehiro Centre on the use of neural imaging to detect consciousness in patients in a persistent vegetative state. Also noteworthy is the Uehiro</p>
---

Centre's lead involvement in the new ESRC funded project *Climate Geoengineering Governance*, which is helping to shape public policy in geoengineering and which was initiated in the way described.

All five centres also attach considerable importance to engaging with the wider public. They host events for the public, including lectures, such as the annual Wellcome lectures in neuroethics and the annual Uehiro lectures (which are published). Members of all five centres regularly speak at conferences and other events that are targeted at business leaders and policy makers (as evidenced in four of the impact case studies). All five centres have active, up-to-date websites which provide user-friendly guidance for anyone keen to explore in greater depth practical issues being addressed by their members, thereby raising awareness of these issues, enhancing understanding of them, and stimulating debate about them. The Uehiro Centre hosts a blog that provides a daily ethical analysis of the latest developments in science, technology, and other current affairs. It also links to the series 'Bioethics Bites', a series of ten podcasts in which leading thinkers discuss a selection of ethical issues: six of the interviewees, as well as the interviewer, are associated with the Uehiro Centre.

The UOA's approach to impact beyond that which is generated by the five centres can be classified under the following three heads.

Policy and Practice in Various Professions: To date, this has been largely steered by individual initiatives. Since 2010 Edward Harcourt has run the 'Meaning and Mindedness' seminar, initially funded by the Wellcome Trust and based in the Institute of Psychoanalysis, in which philosophers and psychoanalysts discuss topics of mutual concern. He also lectures to mental health practitioners: e.g. he lectured to Camden Psychotherapy Services in 2011 and to Confer UK in 2013, the latter on working with ethically difficult patients. In 2012 Tim Bayne organized a one-day workshop on mind-reading to which various journalists, legal theorists, and bioethicists were invited. The work of individual members of the UOA is also frequently applied to matters of public policy: e.g. Peter Hacker's work in the philosophy of mind has been used to cast doubt on the use of neural imaging in court cases and John Tasioulas was invited to give evidence to the Leveson inquiry, drawing on his expertise in the philosophy of rights. At an institutional level, the Faculty joined forces with the University Department for Continuing Education to present a Philosophy of Psychiatry Summer School on mind, value, and mental health in 2013. This was concerned with ways in which philosophy of mind and ethics come into contact with issues about mental health; it offered opportunities for substantial dialogue and networking between philosophers, scientists, and mental health practitioners.

Primary and Secondary Education: The UOA's Outreach Officer promotes interaction between the UOA and schools. The work of the Officer (Dave Leal) has included being involved in a consultation exercise on the UOA's possible involvement in setting A Level curricula and writing associated textbooks. In a related initiative, Edward Harcourt organized a one-day workshop 'Philosophy for Schools' in 2013, aimed at teachers of post-sixteen philosophy pupils, to address questions about A Level and AS Level curricula and to enrich the teachers' teaching practices with new materials and approaches. Members of the UOA also interact with schools in various more direct ways. For instance, they frequently accept invitations to speak in schools. The UOA strongly encourages them, when they do, to request that other schools in the locality are invited. Cecile Fabré has taken her own involvement with schools a step further: for three years she has run philosophy sessions in a local primary school; some of these have concerned general philosophical issues, while others have introduced the pupils to basic philosophical ideas about war in the context of their studying the two world wars. Peter Millican has exploited his research into teacher-friendly and learner-friendly computer programming both through the teaching of programming to primary school children and through his involvement in consultations on Michael Gove's plans to develop the teaching of computer science in schools (both of these are further described in one of the impact case studies).

Engagement with the Public: Members of the UOA have been prominently involved in 'Philosophy Bites', a series of podcasts in which leading exponents of all branches of philosophy are interviewed about their areas of special interest. This is a national enterprise, but more than twenty of the interviewees (out of some two hundred in total) are Oxford philosophers. 'Philosophy Bites' has had around eighteen million downloads and spawned two successful OUP publications. Several Oxford philosophers have also conducted interviews for iTunes U. In 2009 and 2010 two of Marianne Talbot's lectures—'A Romp Through the History of Philosophy' and 'The Nature of

Arguments’—became the global number one on iTunes U. Together they have been downloaded over three million times. Members of the UOA regularly give talks to the media and participate in events such as the ‘How the Light Gets In’ festival in Hay-on-Wye. Many members of the UOA have also allowed details of their research interests to be made available on databases such as *Find an Expert* and *Media Diplomat* to facilitate approaches from the media. Cecile Fabré is an academic adviser to the Soldiers of Oxfordshire museum, and she has been particularly involved with their exhibition on children at war. Simon Saunders has developed a website on philosophy of cosmology, based on a joint Oxford/Cambridge Templeton-funded project to explore questions in philosophy of cosmology, aimed at a general audience. Many members of the UOA participate in events at the Department for Continuing Education, which offers weekend courses, lecture series, and a variety of interactive online courses in basic philosophical issues for the wider public. The Oxford Forum for European Philosophy was established in 2009 as a branch of the educational charity Forum for European Philosophy. Its events take various forms, but the Forum deliberately avoids academic papers in favour of dialogues, panel discussions, public lectures, and provocations, all of which are open to the public. There is an annual Faculty magazine, with an update of research activity within the UOA, which is distributed to all alumni and is made available on the Faculty website. Also on the Faculty website is a section entitled ‘Research’ that gives a more detailed account of the UOA’s research activity.

The UOA monitors the actual and potential impact of its research in various ways, but primarily by compiling records of its engagement with the public which it makes available on the relevant websites. For example, the Future of Humanity Institute publishes a biennial ‘Achievements Report’ on its website, detailing its members’ media appearances and other activities. This report also gives the average number of unique visits per day to the various other websites and blogs to which the main website has links. (A particularly striking example is a blog on applied rationality, sponsored jointly with the Machine Intelligence Research Institute and the Center for Applied Rationality, which has attracted over five million unique visitors since 2008.) The Uehiro Centre has on its website a continually updated list of examples of its input into public policy of the type identified at the beginning of this section.

There is also on-line evidence of follow-up which helps the UOA to identify impact. For example, the webpage devoted to the ‘Bioethics Bites’ podcasts includes a link to an on-line survey where people are encouraged to give feedback. We solicit feedback in other ways too. Thus students at the Department for Continuing Education are invited to comment on the courses they attend, and the UOA urges its members to make use of feedback forms when they give public presentations.

### c. Strategy and plans

The UOA’s impact strategy is to capitalize on the distinctive potential for impact of philosophy in general, and of Oxford philosophy in particular, as identified in §(a). So far, this strategy has been based largely on developing the profile and external reach of the five research centres. These will continue to be important. The centres themselves will continue to have impact as part of their mission and their management committees will continue to monitor and promote it.

More specific plans are as follows.

**Policy and Practice in Various Professions:** The Mental Health Foundation, which is the UK’s leading charity concerned with mental health and learning disabilities, was encouraged by the AHRC to look for a University partner for collaborative research. Because of the special interest within Oxford in philosophy of psychiatry, they approached Oxford. After initial meetings between Faculty members and members of the Foundation, from which many shared areas of interest emerged, we agreed that we should hold scoping seminars as a step towards defining a specific area for a collaborative research funding proposal to the AHRC. Three of these took place in 2012 – 2013 (on hallucination and delusion, on old age, and on personality disorders) and they were attended by philosophers, service users, clinicians, and policy makers. We now intend to submit a proposal that will have considerable potential for impact (akin to the impact on prison staff training of Hanna Pickard’s research into personality disorders, which is described in one of the impact case studies). The new Blavatnik School of Government in Oxford offers a Master of Public Policy which is designed to prepare students ‘to serve the public good, whether in government, non-governmental organizations, or the private sector’. Members of the UOA involved in related areas

of philosophy, such as the theory of politics, are exploring ways in which we can participate more fully in the development of this school (a good start having been made with a recent appointment in Political Philosophy and Public Policy).

Primary and Secondary Education: Edward Harcourt plans to build on his work on philosophy in schools by establishing a mentoring scheme that pairs members of the UOA with teachers. Cecile Fabré also plans to develop her work in schools on philosophical issues associated with war, with project material appearing on the schools' websites and associated news items appearing on the Faculty's website. Under her direction, the Faculty's Research Committee will implement formal training in methods of communicating with schoolchildren. This training will be targeted at graduate students and it will be designed to enable them to pursue similar initiatives to hers. Peter Millican will continue his work in connection with computing in schools.

Engagement with the Public: The Uehiro Centre has established a quarterly on-line open access journal named *The Journal of Practical Ethics*, aimed at the public. It is now exploring the possibility of participating in a Wellcome Trust public engagement initiative by putting up an interactive web platform to bring issues about ethics and neuroscience to the attention of a broad international public.

The UOA will also exploit three new initiatives recently introduced by the Humanities Division, of which it is a part. First, the newly launched Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities intends to provide opportunities for engagement with non-academic partners and the wider public. (For example, the Centre will be hosting a scheme for nine short-term Knowledge Exchange Fellowships from the beginning of 2014. The UOA will encourage members to apply for these.) Secondly, the Division has appointed a long-term Knowledge Exchange Fellow, who is supported by a full-time Knowledge Exchange Officer, to support researchers in implementing activities that seek to engage with audiences, constituencies, and beneficiaries outside academia. The third initiative is a series of week-long workshops for early career researchers, piloted in 2013, on 'Cultural Connections: Exchanging Knowledge and Widening Participation in the Humanities'.

Finally, the UOA will exploit all the other opportunities for impact identified in §(b). Its Research Committee will assess impact potential when evaluating and developing bids for research grants and will encourage bids to internal funds for projects with impact potential, such as the writing of textbooks, for which outside funding is especially hard to obtain.

#### **d. Relationship to case studies**

Five of the eight impact case studies are based on research by members of the five research centres. Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom between them direct four of these research centres, so it is perhaps unsurprising that they also feature prominently in the five case studies in question, but the work of other members of the centres is very relevant too.

In all but one of these five case studies the impact is of the kind that one would have anticipated given the nature of the centres. That is to say, they concern ethical issues affecting public life: in one case, issues arising from threats to our very future; in another, issues about the enhancement of human beings; in a third, issues about the scope and limits of responsibility; and in a fourth, issues arising from the fight against poverty in the developing world. (Although the initiative behind the fourth of these is that of one individual, Toby Ord, who founded the organization 'Giving What We Can', the Uehiro Centre has been keen to support the initiative, providing administrative help of various kinds, actively promoting Dr Ord's organization on its own website, and hosting events for the public or the media that are associated with the organization.) The one exception is 'Are We Living in a Computer Simulation?', in which work by Nick Bostrom had impact simply through the power of the idea involved in the work and the way in which it captured the public imagination.

The three remaining case studies, which are not connected to any of the centres, arise directly and straightforwardly from the nature of the work of the three individuals concerned. John Broome's research on the ethics of climate change led to his being invited to work for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; Jeremy Howick's research on evidence-based medicine was used to change the levels of evidence used in clinical trials; and Peter Millican's research on the philosophy of computation resulted in various new computing applications, as well as to his involvement with the teaching of computer science in schools that was cited in §(b).