

Institution: ULIP

Unit of Assessment: Modern Languages and Linguistics

a. Context

The mission of the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP) is to promote the study of the culture, language and literature of Paris and France. With this in mind, the Institute is currently repositioning itself as a centre for international level research, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in French Studies.

ULIP is a new Institution with a young research culture, reflected in its staffing profile and the research interests of the staff. ULIP was founded as a new Department of French and Comparative Literatures in 2007, when the former British Institute in Paris was restructured and reshaped as ULIP. This process was led by Professor Andrew Hussey, who has since then sought to staff ULIP with appropriate expertise and take the Institute towards a new research culture. From the outset there has been a stated emphasis on impact as a key part of the Institute's activity, with the specific remit of maximizing the opportunities offered by ULIP's unique location in Paris. This has meant developing close partnerships with the British Council, the British Embassy and media outlets with operations in Paris (the BBC, The UK, US and French print media, France 24, France-Culture).

Although the underpinning research behind the two Impact Case Studies pre-dates the current REF exercise, there has been a concerted effort to ensure that Impact has played a key role in ULIP's activity since 2007. More to the point, ULIP has sought to 'punch above its weight' with regard to 'impact', fostering activity with a high media profile and political significance reaching beyond the Academy. Hussey is the lead academic but all the researchers in ULIP's relatively small team are mentored and encouraged to develop 'impact' as an integrated part of their individual research strategies. ULIP runs workshops on 'impact' and has funded younger researchers' participation in ULIP activities in Morocco, the Netherlands, Sweden, the US and the UK.

b. Approach to impact

The challenge for ULIP, and part of its stated research mission, is to bring together the best of the Anglo-American academy alongside French and European perspectives. To enable and accelerate this process ULIP in 2008 established the roles of Director of Research and Director of Postgraduate Research, with the brief to develop the impact agenda. Financial and logistical support for attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars was sought and forthcoming from the University of London (UoL). From these activities mentoring and training seminars were put in place in ULIP.

Apart from these internal infrastructural mechanisms, The Board of ULIP has monitored the development of impact activity, firstly by appointing an appropriately qualified assessor from the Board to liaise with the Director of Research; secondly, by appointing an experienced external assessor to guide and shape development of the impact agenda.

The Director of Research has also supported staff (with funding and mentoring) in making

Impact template (REF3a)

connections with key users (the BBC, the print media, non- HE educational providers), which has meant that all senior staff in ULIP have been involved at some level with the impact agenda; junior members are similarly mentored in developing links with key users appropriate to their fields.

c. Strategy and plans

The development of research activity with 'impact' has been a key part of ULIP's research strategy since the restructuring of 2007. This is evidenced in strategy documents approved by the Board of ULIP through 2007 and 2008 and then consistently monitored by the Board. ULIP has had two sources of funding from the University of London and the British Council to pump-prime activity such as conferences and workshops alongside those detailed in the Case Studies. The funding has always been released with the stated purpose of connecting research activity with 'impact'.

Within its core research activities areas ULIP has identified two main research strands for present and future development. These are the areas of 'Literary Extremists' and 'North African Cultural Studies', both of which are interdisciplinary fields already present within ULIP.

These are areas which reflect ULIP staff's current expertise but which have also been instrumental in recruiting the new, younger generation of researchers in ULIP who, it is anticipated, will take the lead in the post-REF 2014 environment. Already, beyond 2013, there are funded plans in place for British Council projects in Morocco and Algeria related to YAANI (see Young Arab Analysts Network International <<http://ya3ni.org/>>) which will involve younger researchers at ULIP.

d. Relationship to case studies

As stated above, the long-term objectives of ULIP are to establish an international centre of excellence for teaching and research within the UK framework but with a genuinely international research culture, focusing primarily on the French, European, and North African context. Although ULIP is a small team, the research priorities of ULIP are wide: they include the visual arts, French and European history, French and European literature and philosophy, gender studies, postcolonial studies, film, urbanism, politics and political science.

The areas for the impact Case Studies have been chosen firstly because they best reflect the link between support given to researchers from ULIP, UoL and the British Council, but also because they are intended not as an end but as part of the longer, ongoing strategy of ULIP to develop an inter-disciplinary centre of excellence. This represents a generational shift not only in ULIP's activities, but also in the defining of what we mean in the UK by 'French Studies'. In its size, scope and location, ULIP is very different from a traditional UK French Department. This, however, should be seen as an advantage rather than a disadvantage: the sustained proximity to the intellectual life of Paris, France and North Africa, must necessarily shape and determine the nature and quality of research at ULIP. The two Case Studies chosen here are clear demonstrations of this ambition.