

Institution: University of Westminster

Unit of Assessment: UoA 21; Politics and International Studies

a. Context

The Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) has an established culture of exploiting opportunities for impact: one that is distinctive in both its global reach and significance. The Department has identified four distinct pathways to impact: media engagement; participation at policy-orientated events and briefings; co-production of activities and outputs; and organisation of impact-orientated events (see (b) for details). All three research groups in DPIR – Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD), Security and International Relations Programme (SIRP), and the Emerging Powers Programme (EPP) (see REF 5) – are active in cultivating and exploiting these pathways and searching out new modes of dissemination and impact. For many members of DPIR, including senior appointments with strong impact records such as Blaug, Dannreuther and Smith, the opportunities to contribute to this active culture was a significant factor in joining the Department. The ethos and activities of DPIR exemplify the University of Westminster's record of excellence in 'research that makes a difference' and takes advantage of the supportive institutional culture and structures that are in place.

Drawing on high quality, internationally-recognised research, DPIR focuses its attention on two main forms of impact:

- Shaping and stimulating public debate in a variety of local, national and international contexts.
- Contributing to improved political decision-making by engaging and building capacity of relevant actors at different levels of governance.
- The non-academic user groups for DPIR's research are varied, and include: policy-makers in public authorities at all levels (international organisations, national governments and local authorities); non-governmental organisations, in particular think-tanks based in the UK and further afield; journalists and media outlets; the engaged public.
- Particularly striking is the range of contexts in which research from DPIR has had – and continues to have – impact: not only in the UK, but further afield including in Argentina, India, China, Muslim majority states in Africa and the Middle East.

b. Approach to impact

The approach to impact established within DPIR takes advantage of the broader supportive environment for such activities in the University. The current University Corporate Strategy published in 2009 explicitly embeds impact in relation to research and knowledge transfer aims: 'The University will build on its broad-based strengths in pure and practice-led research with a focus on excellence with impact – a portfolio of research that makes a difference'. Specifically one of the objectives of the Strategy is 'to ensure that our practice- and policy-informed research agenda is both shaped by, and the outputs disseminated to, corporate stakeholders from the private, public and not for profit sectors'.

DPIR is pragmatic in acknowledging that impacts on public debate and political decision-making processes cannot be guaranteed: there is a degree of contingency as to whether engagement and dissemination of research advances impact. We recognise, however, that the likelihood of achieving impact is increased by the presence of the following prerequisites: (a) strength of underlying research; (b) capacity to make research findings accessible to non-academic audiences; (c) making systematic and flexible use of the different pathways (or routes) to impact, including the on-going cultivation of contacts and funding opportunities that support engagement; (d) giving a high priority to impact-related activities.

The output submission to the REF panel indicates the standing of the research produced by member of DPIR across areas of public and policy relevance, including intervention and state-building, Islam, democracy and social movements, peace-keeping, democratic innovation, Russia

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and Islamic radicalisation, Tibet and the Himalayan region, governance and sustainability and development. DPIR has identified a number of pathways that it actively exploits (see below). A culture of exploiting these pathways is promoted at an institutional (University) and departmental level through: the practice-based research mission of the institution; mechanisms of recognition and reward associated with impact-related work; advice and mentoring by the departmental Director of Research; and impact-focused funding streams such as the Strategic Insight Programme (exploited for example by Greenwood to support his engagement with the Zero Carbon Hub Energy Working Group). The three research groupings within DPIR – CSD, SIRP and EPP – also provide a supportive environment for developing impact strategies as each of the groups includes senior members of staff who are experienced in combining academic research with sustained and focused impact activities.

While the pathways to impact can be distinguished for the purposes of this exercise, in practice a number of different pathways will be exploited at any one time: the Anand Case Study is a particularly pertinent example. The practical examples provided here are indicative and exclude detailed discussion of the activities presented in the two Case Studies, thus providing a sense of the extent and range of impact activities in DPIR:

- **Media engagement:** *Solicited and unsolicited contributions to printed, audio visual and new media outlets; response to requests for background information / advice from journalists; exploitation of new media channels.* Evidence of the global reach of media impact includes contributions to numerous TV, radio and social media channels in over 15 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and North and South America. Particularly notable, and reinforcing his standing as a public intellectual and commentator, is the 50-minute interview with Osman on Al-Jazeera in 2010.
- **Participation in open and closed policy-orientated commissions, events and briefings organised by public authorities, civil society organisations, etc.** Highly significant is Osman's role as a seconded advisor in 2009-10 to the African Union High Level Panel on Sudan (AUHIP), led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, with additional briefings to the UN Mission on Sudan and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Other examples include: Land Intelligence Fusion Centre (Afghanistan), Oxfam, Chatham House, Swedish Institute of International Affairs (Chandler); FCO, Chatham House, International Institute for Strategic Studies, UK-Russia Forum, Scotland-Russia Forum, (Dannreuther); FCO India Office and Legal Advisors, Ministry of Defence, Minority Rights Group Council (Hehir); Council of Arab-British Understanding, IPPR (Holt); Good Work Commission (Blaug).
- **Co-production of activities and outputs with civil society organisations (CSOs) aimed at building capacity and influencing policy process:** Examples include two events with Chatham House on aspects of energy policy that attracted international representatives from major resource companies (e.g. Rio Tinto, BP), civil society organisations (e.g. Friends of the Earth, Revenue Watch Institute) and government (e.g. Indian Ambassador, FCO) and one with NATO as part of the Polinaris project (see REF5) (Dannreuther); Blaug collaborated on reports with Work Foundation (as research associate) and the Good Work Commission.
- **Organisation of events under the auspices of the University.** The Islam and Democracy Programme (CSD) has organised a number of policy-focused conferences, including: 'The Role of the Intellectual' that was attended by Rashid al-Ghannushi (intellectual leader and co-founder of the Ennahda Movement, the largest party in Tunisia) and Saad El-Katatni (the first Speaker of the People's Assembly following the Egyptian revolution and first General Secretary and now Chair of Freedom and Justice Party).

c. Strategy and plans

Impact is already embedded in the practice of many members of DPIR and is enabled by the existing research groups. It is one aspect of the recognition and reward mechanisms of the University and funds are made available at Departmental and University-level for colleagues and PhD students to organise events and disseminate research to non-academic audiences. The choice of DPIR Director of Research has been led not only by the desire to further embed the academic research culture, but also impact: up until late 2013 this was Anand (subject of Case

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Study 2); currently Smith (previous impact activity is basis of U. of Southampton Case Studies).

DPIR is in the process of developing a departmental impact strategy that builds on existing effective practice, links with the enabling framework of the University and ensures the systemic exploitation of the variety of pathways to impact. Our developing strategy includes:

- Further integration of impact into the Professional Performance and Development Review process and into the new University of Westminster Work Allocation Model which is being introduced in 2014/15. PPDR reviewers will highlight relevant training modules (e.g. media training) and exploiting and cultivating impact opportunities will form part of the formal mentoring process for junior staff.
- Exploitation of opportunities and resources associated with the enterprise and entrepreneurship framework being developed by the University.
- Organisation of regular workshops (also open to PhD students and administrative staff) on enhancing impact. A particular focus will be on (1) learning lessons from colleagues with a track record of sustained impact (e.g. Anand on social media); and (2) presentations from journalists, policy makers and activists on how they make use of academic research.
- Impact will become an established criterion in hiring, particularly for senior appointments. This already affected a recent senior appointment decision (Smith)

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies focus on the activities of two members of DPIR whose impact has been of exceptional character and which have been enabled by the broader supportive culture within DPIR and the University. Both case studies illustrate the way in which different pathways of impact have been exploited.

Case Study 1 Agonism and politics: theory meets politics: The impact of Mouffe's work, in particular on democratic consolidation in Argentina, rests on: the development and exploitation of personal contacts with key political actors (including the President, Cristina Fernandez); an impressive number of media articles on her work that have contributed to public debate; and participation in a range of public events. It builds on a tradition of impact-orientated activities by political theorists within the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) initially championed by figures such as Keane and Parekh and embraced by more recent appointments such as Blaug, Smith and Tambakaki.

Case Study 2 Speaking out on Tibetan politics and international relations: Anand's impact on policy of, and towards, the Tibetan Government in Exile exemplifies the exploitation of all the pathways to impact, including: the exploitation of solicited media opportunities; organisation of high-profile events (most significantly hosting the Dalai Lama); engagement with policy makers and civil society organisations in India, China, the US, UK and EU; and prolific social media activity. His work emerges from a supportive research culture within the Emerging Powers Programme (EPP - that includes the public-facing activities of Dannreuther).