

**Institution: University of Kent. Unit of Assessment: 20 – Law**

## **A Context**

Kent Law School (KLS) has long taken seriously the need for sustained, reciprocal research relationships with non-academic partners and we benefit greatly from working closely with a wide range of collaborators both domestically and internationally. These groups not only provide significant audiences for our research but, in many cases, inspire, support and, on occasion, directly commission it, shaping our research questions and having direct input into research design. This collaborative approach has greatly enhanced the salience, significance and reach of our work beyond academia. As might be expected of an internationally focused, leading critical law school with strong expertise in socio-legal research and a focus on questions of social justice, the work of KLS has had significant impact not just on the work of law makers but also on other professional groups, activists and NGOs. Our key audiences and partners include:

**a) Law and policy makers.** In the UK, KLS faculty have worked with government departments, to inform, for example, new Welsh housing law and environmental regulation (REF3b). Further, our research has directly influenced legislation: for example, the arguments of Sheldon (with Wilkinson, Lancaster) on ‘saviour siblings’ are cited in Hansard as the direct cause of a significant change to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (2008). Internationally, KLS researchers have played far-ranging roles in informing significant constitutional reform (e.g. Magaisa was seconded to work on the new Zimbabwean constitution, drawing on his research in constitutional and land reform, and Albi’s research served as a key source for the drafting of amendments to the Croatian Constitution during EU accession). Our work has also informed EU law (e.g. Oduntan’s work on vehicle licence monitoring systems underpinned development of EU fisheries law) and the law of other jurisdictions, with Conway and Walsh’s research informing recent debate of an Irish police reform bill. KLS research has also informed development of international policy, including that of the World Bank and various development organisations (see REF3b).

**b) Judges and other legal practitioners.** KLS research has been relied upon in a wide range of UK judgments from the Supreme Court downwards. The close, ongoing links that maximise impact have been fostered through the work of our multiple award-winning Law Clinic (see B, below); as well as through Laleng’s competitively awarded Academic Fellowship of the Inner Temple (2013-16, which recognises outstanding contribution to legal teaching and research and aims to build stronger ties between barristers and legal academia); Messineo’s two year secondment to the International Court of Justice; Hunter’s appointments to the Family Justice Council Domestic Abuse Committee, Kent Family Justice Board and the Ministry of Justice’s Virtual Group of Experts in Family Justice; and Carr’s part-time appointment as a judge in the First Tier Tribunal (Land).

**c) NGOs and activists.** KLS researchers work with a wide range of NGOs and activists, with a particular focus on groups interested in gender and sexuality and the environment (see REF3b). These links are further developed and entrenched through a range of formalised networks and the significant work of our research centres (see B, below, and REF5).

**d) Other professional groups.** Our research has also informed the work of development, environmental (see REF3b) and health care professionals. For example, Mackenzie’s membership of the NICE Guideline Development Group on Managing Autism in Children and Young People has allowed her directly to feed in her work on autism, neurodiversity, assistive technologies and consent to sexual relationships. Further, advice drafted by Sheldon, drawing closely on her published research, led directly to both the GMC and RCOG revising the erroneous guidance initially published in the immediate aftermath of the Telegraph sex selective abortion ‘sting’. An expanded version of this advice is now published in a widely available, free practitioner guide (disseminated as a pdf download, supplemented by a print run of 1,000), published by the charity, BPAS, and launched at an event attended by over fifty service providers, doctors and Care Quality Commission inspectors, at Wellcome in June 2013.

**e) Influencing critical public debate through targeted interventions.** Since 2008, we have

**Impact template (REF3a)**

given numerous presentations to non-academic audiences and made nearly 300 media interventions, including in prime time news broadcasts and major broadsheet newspapers.

Our impact strategy, discussion of the non-academic impact of our work, and links to all media interventions are on designated webpages highlighting the difference that KLS research seeks to make beyond academia: see <http://www.kent.ac.uk/law/research/beyondkls/index.html>.

**B Approach to impact**

KLS is committed to working with a wide range of non-academic partners to reach the broadest possible audience and to benefit from sustained relationships with a full and appropriate range of collaborators and advisors. Our impact strategy, which is overseen by a senior academic, who has extensive experience of collaborating with a broad range of non-academic partners (Bedford, see REF3b), is characterised by the following features:

**a) Development of highly collaborative, long-term relationships with research users** is actively encouraged through grants, secondments and flexibility in arranging teaching. Since 2008, Carr, Magaisa and Messineo each took 6-24 months secondments to work, respectively, at the Welsh National Assembly (REF3b); Zimbabwean Parliament; and ICJ. Flexibility in arranging teaching allows for significant external commitments (e.g. Ramsay's work for the World Bank has been supported through agreed absences from Kent, REF3b). KLS also fosters the development of relationships through specific provision for non-academic visitors and a speaker programme that has been graced by diverse practitioners, civil servants, judges, activists, novelists, and artists. The significance of long-term collaborations is also illustrated by our Law Clinic, a partnership between students, staff, NGOs and lawyers, which draws on the expertise of academic staff and provides free representation and legal advice. Since 2008, the Clinic has been listed for many awards for its work, including winning the prestigious 'LawWorks' Attorney General's Award for best new *pro bono* activity in 2012, and being shortlisted for the legal industry leading 'The Lawyer Awards' three times (2010, 2012 and in 2013), alongside a number of 'magic circle' law firms.

KLS is at the heart of a range of other networks, many of which include a strong role for non-academic partners. Current initiatives include Cloatre's *Network on Law, Science and Technology*, organised collaboratively with Arts Catalyst (funded by Arts Council England) (AHRC, 2013-15); Enright's *Public Life of Private Law*, bringing together critical practitioners, activists and academics (ESRC, 2013-15); Jivraj's *Decolonizing Sexualities Network*, involving a range of international LGBT groups (AHRC, 2012-14); Vigneron's *Network on Trafficking Cultural Objects*, drawing heavily on the experience of international and domestic heritage preservation groups (AHRC, 2012-15); and Casey's research associate membership of The Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law project, which makes theoretically and empirically informed policy recommendations for improving transnational private regulatory regimes.

**b) Using our research centres as key hubs for development and formalisation of relationships, and influencing policy.** For example: the *Kent Centre for Law, Gender and Sexuality* (KCLGS) and the *Centre for Critical International Law* (CeCIL) have each worked closely with non-academic partners and engaged in diverse activities including submissions to relevant public inquiries and consultations (including e.g. Chilcott; and consultations on proposals to introduce fees into Employment Tribunals and the Same Sex Marriage Bill). Lewis-Anthony, CeCIL's Co-Director, has also designed human rights and gender training materials for judges and prosecutors in a range of countries, including Iraq, Côte d'Ivoire and Montenegro.

**c) Involvement of research users in research design.** KLS academics have been directly commissioned to conduct research for a wide range of organisations including, for example, the World Bank (Ramsay); the United Nations (Bedford); and the Ministry of Justice (Hunter). In addition, the salience of the research design (and, thus, their potential future impact) of many other projects is ensured by the close, ongoing involvement of users in their design and conduct, with such involvement encouraged and supported by the initiatives discussed below. Three current projects illustrate:

## Impact template (REF3a)

- *Bedford's work on gaming regulation* involves working closely with government agencies, businesses, and third sector organisations in a range of jurisdictions to deliver appropriate policy recommendations (ESRC, £533,292, 2013-6).
- *Grabham's research on precarious workers* was designed in consultation with relevant union, NGO and other non-academic actors (ESRC 'Future Leaders' grant, £163,137, 2013-15).
- *Hunter's 'Mapping Paths to Family Justice'* draws on an advisory group including key non-academic stakeholders and will produce findings to inform the work of policy-makers, lawyers, mediators and funders (ESRC, £149,264, 2011-14).

**d) Strong, specific support and training for impact at University and School level.** Operating in parallel to the general support mechanisms described in REF5, the University offers specialist support for staff undertaking consultancy work; training in impact as part of its 'Grants Factory' programme; access to a new Public Engagement with Research Fund to support engagement projects (£10,000 in 2013/14); and support in dealing with the media (including training classes and liaison), contributing to wide-ranging dissemination of KLS research since 2008. Kent Promotions procedures encourage and reward impact activities, with 'impact' (broadly defined) one of three criteria to be met by all candidates. At School level, regular KLS workshops allow for reflection on how to achieve effective engagement with non-academics, and how to maximise research impact. An additional designated £5,000 'impact fund' is available to support relevant initiatives. Kent's recognition as an ESRC Doctoral Training Centre was grounded partly in strength in socio-legal work, with empirically grounded work particularly suited to produce impact. Our PGRs are invited to impact workshops, and training in impact forms part of their compulsory induction training.

**e) Influencing a range of audiences through creative use of online media.** KLS was an early advocate of Kent's online academic repository, reflecting a strong commitment to making research freely and widely available. Colleagues have also published online work specifically targeting non-academic audiences, sometimes in multiple translations (e.g. Bedford's *Towards a Vision of Sexual and Economic Justice*; Story's *CopySouth*). Others have pioneered dissemination through twitter, blogs and other online media (using our official KLS blog and external sites). KLS has also created an online, open access journal, *feminists@law*, which is freely available to everyone.

## C Strategy and Plans

Over the next REF period, we aim to build on the solid foundations described above in order to extend the reach and significance of the impact of KLS research. Specific strategies include:

**a) Further development of the research centres and research networks, which play a central role in building and maintaining relationships.** KLS is committed to maintaining and expanding the funding, personnel and infrastructure that will support the success and full range of activities of our research centres. Our three existing centres play a strong role in developing and entrenching international, interdisciplinary networks of academics and non-academics. A key objective for the next five years, is to develop and obtain funding for a new Centre for Critical Regulation and Governance, which will aim to provide a similarly significant home for development and dissemination of work in this area, with engaging relevant new user communities and audiences forming a priority. KLS is also at the heart of a range of further important, interdisciplinary, international networks, which are, as yet, less formalised but which nonetheless draw upon, and significantly contribute to, the expertise of non-academics in the UK and beyond (see the four examples in B(a) above). Success in obtaining external funding for a wide range of these networks represents a step change since 2008. Further growth and formalisation of them will be a significant objective for the next period, to be achieved through targeted follow on grants, support in obtaining external continuation funding and, where appropriate, developing networks into formal research centres. Strong new appointments in the area of criminal justice (Walsh, Conway, Ring), bringing experience of impact activities, will also ground significant future development of this specific area.

**b) Further development of infrastructure to support impact activities, including training and development of online resources.** An ongoing programme of KLS workshops will focus on sharing experiences of collaboration with non-academic users; outreach strategies to ensure better

## Impact template (REF3a)

dissemination; and working with key research user groups in framing research questions. PGRs will be invited to all workshops, with one event per year specifically tailored to their needs. Discussion of impact is already a routine part of the induction of new staff and we will continue to support staff engaged in inter-institutional work (the significance of which is seen in REF3b) and actively to facilitate the ongoing international reach of KLS research. To take just one example: the Feminist Judgment Project (REF3b) continues to influence the evolution of other, similar projects internationally, which in turn, will hopefully enjoy similar non-academic impact. KLS staff actively support such developments: Hunter is a consultant for an Australian project; Enright is one of three leaders of an Irish project; and Sheldon was invited to Nanterre University, *inter alia*, to advise on the development of a potential French project. Key objectives over the next five years include rolling out a programme of specialist in-house, media training; further development of web pages devoted to impact, featuring examples of collaborative work with non-academic user groups; and enhanced use of KLS and other blogs, twitter and Facebook. KLS has also recently appointed an external communications coordinator (from November 2013), who will further assist with ensuring the reach and influence of KLS research within non-academic audiences.

**c) Further development of our award-winning Law Clinic.** In 2012, KLS won £180,000 of charitable funding to appoint a solicitor specialising in immigration and asylum law, underpinning development of an area that meets compelling local need and further cross-fertilisation between the Clinic's practice and KLS research. The post-holder has specific publication targets built into her contract and will be supported by an experienced research mentor, to produce intellectually rigorous, practically relevant, transformative academic research. We are fundraising for a larger and purpose-built home for the Clinic, providing space for the future consolidation and extension of its activities (as well as space for medium sized research events), and achieved £3,280,000 of the necessary £5,000,000 in this period, with the University providing matched funding.

**D Relationship to Case Studies**

Our case studies demonstrate the significant impact of research across all areas of KLS activity, foregrounding the interdisciplinarity and international relevance of our work, and the significance of sustained, reciprocal working relationships with non-academic partners. While they are united in evidencing a concern for social justice (broadly construed), the case studies draw on a wide range of substantive areas of law and methodological approaches. They include some areas (Gender and Sexuality in Development, Feminist Judgments, Water and Environmental Law, Credit and Personal Insolvency) where we might claim to have particular strength alongside others where our expertise is more narrowly confined (Housing Tenure). The case studies describe both international and regionally focused impact and illustrate different 'types' of impact including:

- Drafting of primary legislation (Housing Tenure).
- Drafting of significant policy guidance (Credit and Personal Insolvency, Housing Tenure, Water and Environmental Law).
- Influential support for the work of activists and leading NGOs seeking to contribute to the public good (Gender and Sexuality in Development, Water and Environmental Law).
- Significant influence on public, professional and practitioner debate (Feminist Judgments, Gender and Sexuality in Development, Water and Environmental Law).
- Wide use of the research in teaching beyond Kent, both in the UK and internationally (in particular, Feminist Judgments, Gender and Sexuality in Development).

The case studies each benefited from the support mechanisms identified above, including: clearly protected time for research and impact activities and strong administrative support (all), secondments and teaching buyouts (Feminist Judgments, Housing Tenure), and small grants from the discretionary Research Support Fund to support specific aspects of the programmes of work described (Credit and Personal Insolvency, Feminist Judgments, Gender and Sexuality in Development, Housing Tenure). The case studies also illustrate the range and diversity of the research user communities that seek out colleagues' expertise.