

<p><b>Institution: Aberystwyth University</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: 21: Politics and International Studies</b></p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Research in the Department of International Politics has generated three main types of impact during the assessment period. These impacts have been generated across the diverse range of projects and research groups within the Department and are exemplified in the range of impact cases submitted by the Department.</p> <p><b>i. Impact on society</b></p> <p>Impact on society has been promoted by bringing research conducted in the Department to the attention of societal beneficiaries such as citizens, media representatives, and civil society actors to improve their knowledge and understanding of topics of societal consequence. Examples of impact on society include the impact on public discourse on, and understanding of, Welsh devolution generated by the ESRC-funded research on public attitudes in Wales conducted by the Institute for Welsh Politics; and the impact on public understanding, discourse and debate on nuclear proliferation, nationally and globally, of the research associated with the ESRC/AHRC-funded 'Challenges to Trust-Building in Nuclear Worlds'-research project. Evidence of societal impact has been primarily through citation in the public sphere by journalists, members of the public and civil society actors.</p> <p><b>ii. Impact on public policy</b></p> <p>This impact has involved influencing beneficiaries associated with public policy formation in governmental, quasi-governmental, and inter-governmental bodies as well as public policy-related NGOs and private organizations. Research conducted in the Department has shaped public policy discussions, processes, or decisions by informing, challenging conventional conceptual frameworks or suggesting reforms. Impact on public policy has been generated, for example, by the research conducted in the Centre for Health and International Relations (CHAIR) and the research group on 'Security Beyond the State in Africa'. Evidence has taken the form of citations in policy documents and other private and public communications which document impact.</p> <p><b>iii. Impact on practitioners and services</b></p> <p>Research in the Department has also had an impact on diverse sets of practitioners and service providers situated in a variety of governmental, non-governmental, inter-governmental and public organizations. Impact on practitioners has been generated, for example, by the European Research Council-funded project 'Political Economies of Democratisation', which was designed to have an impact on the capacity of democracy promotion practitioners to reflect on the conceptual foundations of their practice. Impact has also arisen from the dissemination of pedagogical research conducted in the Department on learning and teaching in the field of international politics. Teachers as practitioners of higher education, nationally and globally, have benefitted from specialist research on teaching subjects such as Islamic Studies and Ethics of War. Evidence of impact of this type has been generated through surveys, testimonials, references in practitioner reports or private communications, and other materials available in the public domain.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>During the assessment cycle the Department has evolved a comprehensive approach to impact promotion and support that now forms a cornerstone of the Department's research strategy. The Department's objectives have been to: build awareness of the potential for impact promotion amongst staff; facilitate concrete support for impact generation; and incorporate strategies for impact into the Departmental research culture. Substantial progress in these areas has been achieved through the following mechanisms:</p> <p><b>1) Departmental impact meetings</b></p> <p>These have been fundamental to developing and sharing good practice in generating impact and have brought together the exponents of the diverse research projects undertaken in the Department. The objective of these regular meetings (16 were held during academic year 2012-13) has been to ensure that the Department has a collective awareness and ownership of the impact agenda that is relevant to each individual member of staff. These meetings have also functioned as key sites of dissemination of best practice (see 'Refined practices of public engagement' below).</p> <p><b>2) Impact fund</b></p> <p>The Department has introduced a fund to which members of staff and research groups can apply to promote the impact of their research. This is in addition to individual research budgets, and is essential to facilitate dissemination and impact-related activities of research projects not attached</p>

to externally funded projects.

### **3) Impact component of twice-yearly research monitoring meetings**

Discussions on the impact generated by research, and on the potential for future impact, have been incorporated into the bi-annual research meetings between the Director of Research and each individual member of staff. Assessment of impact activities, and planning for them, has thus become integrally tied to the research implementation and assessment within the Department.

### **4) 'Impact' presentations as part of our International Politics Research Seminar Series and workshops with postgraduate students**

Including annual seminars focused on impact within our successful weekly seminar series reinforces the importance of this aspect of our research, raises awareness of routes to impact amongst members of staff and research students, and provides valuable feedback to researchers on how they might further promote impact. Workshops with postgraduate students have also been organised. We view the involvement of postgraduates as an essential part of their professionalization as well as ensuring that their research can have maximum impact.

### **5) Regular reporting of impact generated by research**

A policy, with two key principles, has been formulated, and is being gradually implemented, as a way of ensuring that we continue to promote, and record, the impact generated by research. First, all members of staff are to routinely add impact information through the 'activities' function of the PURE software system that now is the central repository for all our research data. Moreover, members of staff who have been awarded periods of Departmental research leave will, in addition, complete detailed impact reports, which explain their research findings, map their impact strategies, track impact generated, and provide evidence of this impact. These are to be submitted to the Director of Research. Second, when relevant, those reports are to be circulated amongst the broader research group within which the project is situated. The promotion of impact for a particular research project will then serve as a model for consideration by the relevant broader research group. These procedures will help effectively to integrate impact into everyday research practices, and to ensure full documentation of these activities in the event of staff departures.

### **6) Support for early career researchers in formulating and implementing impact strategies and, where appropriate, promoting the impact of pedagogical research**

This is provided through our Departmental mentoring programme and the developmental aspect of our bi-annual research meetings with the Director of Research. Moreover, through the three-year Teaching in Higher Education Certificate, the Department has been able to enhance its reputation for pioneering critical approaches to teaching within the field by encouraging the impact promotion of this research. The University's 'Teaching and Learning Fund' provides funding for the dissemination of this research and has been used to support workshops and conferences for engaging with higher education teachers outside Aberystwyth.

### **7) Refined practices of public engagement**

Public engagement is something that has been central to the Department's research strategy for a long time. Indeed, the Department was founded to 'tell the world about the world'. However, this work has evolved. First, the Department has increasingly benefitted from the HEI's support in this area, for example, the development of an institution-wide Directory of Expertise, which has enhanced the public profile of research staff, and the training which has been made available by the University's Communications and Public Affairs Department. Second, the research monitoring process and especially the Departmental impact meetings have been key to disseminating best practice in, and planning effective strategies for, public engagement and active involvement of non-academic beneficiaries and stakeholders in research projects.

### **8) Active contributions to regional and national impact-related initiatives and debates**

The Department has sought to actively contribute to regional and national initiatives for impact-generating social science research. Thus, not only has the Department contributed to the University's outreach to non-university students through the organisation of a number of 'schools sessions' each year but also staff in the Department have been involved in the creation of the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIfW) commissioned by the Welsh Government in May 2013 to produce reviews of evidence to support policy-making. Representatives of the Department have also sought to inform and shape national debates on the impact agenda. For example, in June 2013 Departmental staff took part in debates on impact at the British International Studies Association annual conference and, in September 2013, a Departmental representative took part in a workshop which aimed to develop a national discipline-wide statement on 'critical impact'.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The Department has developed a distinctive approach to impact. In the early part of the assessment cycle, impact-generation was encouraged but was not Departmentally co-ordinated. In the course of the cycle the Department has developed a clear vision of how this agenda fits within our research strategy. The Department now has a deeper understanding of how impact-generation can be facilitated through standard and routine activities, and how it can be supported by robust procedures and funding. Distinctively, the collective ownership of the impact agenda – facilitated by the regular impact meetings – has been a particularly important aspect of the Departmental approach. Collective discussions, strategizing and mutual learning will continue to be at the heart of on-going efforts to enhance the impact of our research.

In the years to come, we will seek to further embed the current policies and support structures into Departmental practices through: a) continuing Departmental impact meetings to discuss impact strategy and case development; b) financial support to staff for impact-generation; c) inclusion of impact in research monitoring; d) presentations of impact at research seminars; e) support for early career researcher impact engagement; f) involving individuals as well as research groups in the collection of evidence about impact progress; g) honing of best practice in dissemination, engagement and stake-holder involvement in research process through institutional support and Departmental discussions; and h) contributing to initiatives and debates on impact. Directors of Research as well as the organisers of research groups will closely monitor the successful implementation of impact strategy and support mechanisms.

A central indicator of the effectiveness of the existing support structures is that the research projects, and research grant applications of individuals and groups within the Department, now incorporate robust and innovative impact promotion strategies. The collective ownership-based approach has shown great strengths in fostering flexibility and innovation in engagements with impact. However, we also recognise the need to further develop impact support. Thus, we intend to discuss the possibilities for further institutional and Departmental support in building partnerships with public and private bodies. While the role of non-academic partnerships in planning research has been the subject of many discussions in collective meetings and best practice has been shared across research projects, development of further support in managing such partnerships might provide opportunities to extend the already existing collaborations. In future years we also intend to increase the dissemination of research findings through further investment in the Departmental website and associated blogs. Furthermore, we intend to use the collective meetings on impact to explore new areas and types of impact. One example of our thinking into the future is our aim to explore the viability of the Department developing a research-based strength in the provision of professional training not only for diplomats and the civil service but also global civil society practitioners. Planning in this area builds on previous experience in provision of advanced training for professional analysts at Government Communications Headquarters (2005-2008).

An important context for the consolidation and further development of our impact strategy is provided by the Department's incorporation, as of August 2013, into the Institute for Geography, History and Politics. We look forward to utilising this context in facilitating greater inter-disciplinary exchange on 'best practice' in impact generation.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

During the assessment cycle a total of seven case studies have been drafted. Four cases are submitted to illustrate the impact of the Department's research in the three primary impact type categories set out in section (a). One of the cases ('Public Opinion and Devolution in Wales') straddles two of the impact categories (impact on society and public policy), whereas the others record primarily impacts on society, public policy, and practitioners respectively. The differences in the modes of engagement employed and the types of impact generated in the cases demonstrate the broad range of avenues to impact developed in the Department.

All the case studies, including the four submitted, were supported by the Department's impact strategy. Their development has reflected the Department's refined strategic thinking and the development of new support mechanisms. A particularly important context for both support and strategy-building for the cases has been our regular 'impact meetings'. Our collective analysis of how different bodies of research have had, and can have, effects has provided the Department with both more sophisticated tools and a more confident approach to translating our research findings into strategies that lead to impact.