

**Impact template (REF3a)**

<b>Institution:</b>	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b>	20 - Law
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>This Unit provides professionally focused legal research and education. Many staff have strong and lengthy records of professional practice and there is a strong emphasis on research that enables professionals to provide practical solutions to community legal problems involving debt, civil rights, education and health. Our innovative and leading approach to legal education, and particularly to experiential education, has long-standing influence on professional standards, guidelines and training and is itself subject to, and a beneficiary of, pedagogic and related research.</p> <p>Research impact has been maximised through this philosophy, by first integrating the research-informed experiential approach into educational programmes, then into legal services in the North East region (The Student Law Office and associated projects) and then disseminating that research and experience to external stakeholders in the UK and internationally, through a variety of mechanisms, summarised below.</p> <p>The Unit's clinical legal education research has been integral to the provision of free access to justice to the wider community. This has widespread implications for the landscape of legal education and training and beneficiaries of our experiential research impact include: The Bar Council of India; the Dutch Government; the Solicitors Regulation Authority; the Attorney-General's Pro-Bono Committee; and the Law Society. The partners in, and direct beneficiaries of, our clinical legal engagements are extensive: Age UK; Shelter; Victim Support; Justice for Children; MacMillan Welfare Rights; Crisis Skylight; Newcastle Law Works; and via our Streetlaw programme a wide range of stakeholders.</p> <p>Investigation of legal regulatory behaviour and practice has also been a key part of our research, notably in work on privacy, breach of confidence and data protection by our Information Rights Research Interest Group. This has resulted in the formulation of new policies on information sharing between public authorities and stakeholders and has contributed to a major change in information handling, beneficial to both organisations and the general public.</p>	
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The Unit's strategic approach to impact has developed across the REF period and builds upon pre-existing high quality legal community engagement and research into clinical legal education and regulatory behaviour. Our research findings are used by professional bodies to define best practice and formulate policy and have led to changes in public authority practice and the policies of private organisations. Our commitment to innovative legal education practice and pedagogical research has facilitated the building of the largest in-house university law clinic in the world, the Student Law Office. This community service deals with up to 400 cases per annum on a full representation basis and annual compensatory awards now approach £400,000. Our pro-bono activities and related research have altered the attitudes and practices of a cadre of national and regional law firms and other stakeholders, and have been recognised by the award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2013.</p> <p>Our approach over the period has had three objectives: (i) Enhancing awareness of how to optimise impact to promote engagement by researchers in professional, charitable, policy-making and legislative spheres. In this regard, new relationships have been fostered and promoted. Examples of the benefits of this approach include; clinical legal engagements and voluntary services; mental health law research and integration with Newcastle University and the NHS to support improvements in residential care and treatment of dementia; developments in food regulation and whistleblowing; regulatory improvements to the Legal Ombudsman scheme (the Unit is the main provider of training, consultancy and research for this large statutory regulator); and engagements in aspects of environmental reform; (ii) Sustainable building of the existing community impact of the student law office while developing new projects that involve the Unit</p>	

**Impact template (REF3a)**

working extensively with partner agencies and undertaking outreach work both nationally and internationally, based on research into clinical legal education; (iii) Supporting our existing research centre and research interest groups by providing £75,000 per annum for individual and collective engagement in clinical legal education and regulatory behaviour impact research. This has, for example, facilitated our legal regulatory research impact engagements with the Department of Constitutional Affairs and Law Society.

These objectives have been supported in six ways: (i) allocation of time within staff workload models for outreach and impact work; (ii) matching investment in providing staff resources to support co-produced events rather than relying solely on external funders, so that there is positive collaboration between colleagues and external agencies; (iii) significant investment in international and national conferences and symposia dissemination (an annual research fund of £75,000 for the group); (iv) support for colleagues to engage in research-informed external outreach, consultancy and CPD activity with a range of local, regional and national organisations to embed the breadth of our community impact activities across a variety of developing research specialisms. The Research Centre in Evidence and Criminal Justice studies has provided leadership of the Forensic Science and Pathology Unit at the Home Office (**Wilson**) and inter-disciplinary research has examined transnational exchange of forensic bioinformation; (v) establishment of the Eldon Lecture Series at Northumbria Law School, hosting a programme of freely available public lectures delivered by leading legal practitioners, academics and policy makers and directly linked to legal education research and impact; and (vi) appointment of a Reader in Legal Education and Research Methods to directly support all of our impact activities in experiential and clinical legal education research, including conferences, mentoring and publications. This has been complemented by investment in new Associate Dean appointments within the School, addressing Research and Innovation as well as Business Engagement, to focus on linking together and translating our research into wider community engagements.

To support the achievement of these objectives we have, in the REF period, (i) appointed a public engagement and impact champion to promote impact activities and ensure their effectiveness and rigour. This role is supported by a central University Public Engagement and Impact Manager charged with developing a community of practice across the institution; (ii) regular impact workshops, centrally supported and also delivered by internal colleagues; (iii) continual engagement of the Unit's Executive Committee in reviewing impact development as part of overarching research governance; and (iv) employment of a consultant, Emeritus Professor from Cardiff University, to provide advice and develop systems relating to the evidencing of impact both in the short-term for REF 2014, but also in connection with our medium and longer term objectives.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The aim of the Unit is to strengthen our public engagement around research, by ensuring two-way exchange of knowledge and understanding between academic staff and external stakeholders, including professional practice contacts, user groups and business as well as the wider public. Research will continue to reach out to regional, national and international practice and policy partners, in order both to help shape research priorities and also to generate the application of research findings to policy and practice. Impact engagement of the Unit in Clinical Legal Education has extended in this regard: establishing the European Network of Clinical Legal Education throughout partner states; globally co-hosting clinical legal education conferences for the Bar Council of India and in Singapore as part of capacity building in South East Asia; leading the Clinical Legal Organisation in the UK; and influencing the Attorney-General's Pro-Bono Committee.

Support will be provided centrally by the University Research and Business Services (RBS) department, which provides support throughout the research process and has a dedicated Impact and Public Engagement Manager. In addition, there is a Faculty Impact Champion who works with RBS (as part of a University-wide community of practice) to support impact initiatives, help staff understand the diverse pathways to impact at the inception of research projects, develop an impact and public engagement training programme and act as an ambassador for research impact across the faculty. Department Research Leads will work with the Faculty Impact Champion to extend the

significance and reach of impact arising from their departments' current research portfolios.

The impact element of Personal Research and Innovation Plans (annual online documents prepared by all academic staff recording both achievements in and plans for outputs, research funding, postgraduate research supervision and research promotion and dissemination) will be used to plan and record impact activities, to ensure staff have the support they need to undertake these activities. To help staff to extend the reach and significance of research, we will hold training workshops on impact and related activities selected from a menu of tailored opportunities offered by the University Research and Business Services Department. These will ensure staff have a good understanding of impact, its importance and methods of achieving/monitoring impact.

The Unit will also build on experience in the period of developing impact case studies for the REF, to maximise the beneficial impacts of current and future research.

The Unit is continuing to increase its use of digital media to communicate with different user audiences (for example the Schools' Webcast and Webinar projects and the creation of a web-based international resource for clinical legal education). We have developed specific web pages in order to advertise and disseminate events, but also to make available presentations given at events, research reports and other information about the research being undertaken. We produce a Research and Impact newsletter which is circulated within and outside the University to communicate current news about our research and impact activities and work together with the University press office to promote our research locally and nationally and through different media.

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

d.1. The clinical legal education case study '*Access To Justice Through Education: Building A Law Clinic Culture In The UK And Beyond*', exemplifies the Unit's approach to legal education research and its broader relationship with community engagement. Rather than legal education being seen as something apart from and prior to engagement with community, business and professionals, our view is that educational legal research and clinical experiential law can be transplanted into an authentic, real life context to directly contribute to voluntary legal services in the region. Our pedagogical research model, integrating supervised legal service into the law curriculum, has directly impacted in providing a national and world-leading role influencing HEIs, the legal profession, regulators and policy makers and built the capacity of law clinics in other HEIs to provide a free legal service. The Unit's approach to impact has coalesced with our perspectives on clinical legal education research: supported over the last decade by our international conferences addressing current issues in pedagogy; the legal profession and social justice reform; twenty law colleagues being directly engaged in the Student Law Office activity and related research; and publication of a leading peer-reviewed bi-annual journal – The International Journal of Clinical Legal Education – providing inter-disciplinary analysis and engaged in critical reflection of experiential legal education research.

d.2. Our commitment to the advancement of legal research in the area of information rights, and regulatory behaviour more broadly, has culminated in the '*Information Rights: Applying Research to Help Public Organisations to Navigate Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Environmental Information Requirements*' case study. The Unit, in conjunction with the Department of Constitutional Affairs and the Law Society, has addressed a public authority requirement to change the skills and knowledge base of employees engaged in the administration and management of the new discipline of information rights. Our facilitative research methodology has consequently addressed the challenge facing public authorities in disclosing information in the public interest without compromising private information and impacted policy review change by the Marine Management Organisation and Durham County Council. The Unit's Information Rights Research Interest Group, supported by strategic new appointments and an annual national conference hosted at Northumbria, has engaged in applied, doctrinal and theoretical research into information rights that has also been complemented by bespoke training courses to public authorities, embedding the implementation of new policies and practices within these organisations.