

**Institution: University of East London**

**Unit of Assessment: 20**

**a. Context**

The UOA's main areas of research interests and specialisms are: international law, human rights and conflict resolution; law and development; terrorism studies and youth and crime. Our work in these fields contributes to public awareness of these and related issues, and offers policy-relevant insights to the broad range of user groups with whom staff are encouraged to share research findings. Our research itself – as well as the principal non-academic audiences for and beneficiaries of it – incorporate local national and international dimensions. Specific beneficiaries of our research include London borough councils, national governments, the EU, offices and agencies of the United Nations, and NGO's including the Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy (IQD) (Holt), the Minority Rights Group International (Gilbert), Democratic Progress Institute (Hughes), and Givat Haviva in Israel (Strawson). The broader audiences for our research extend to sections of the listening and viewing public, community groups and policy-makers. Our contribution to and influence on public discussion and the formation of policy is effected, in part, through frequent contributions to broadcasters in both mainstream and specialist media. Equally, our expertise in the fields of international law, human rights, conflict resolution, and law and development has extended the reach of our impacts to a global scale, contributing to the work of the UN Habitat, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (UN FAO), the UN Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General coordinating the national dialogue process in Yemen and the World Bank. Those working in terrorism studies have provided specialist knowledge and advice to UK, EU and North American policy-makers dealing with terrorist threats. At a local level, our work on youth and crime (particularly on gangs) has informed policy and practice within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. There are time constraints on such activities due to the teaching, research and administrative commitments. Not all members of the UOA are equally involved in delivering impact which is seen a collective rather than individual strategy.

**b. Approach to impact**

The cultural and geographical diversity of our research users and the range of uses to which research findings are put, has necessitated our adoption of a similarly wide-ranging approach to engaging non-academic users in mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships. The cornerstone of many of these approaches is our transfer of specialist knowledge and expertise based on our research specialisms. This is delivered through different mechanisms: direct advice to governments, international organizations, local government and NGOs; participation in policy formation and media engagement.

The UOA pursues several interrelated policies: developing consultancies and training programmes that arise from academic research; encouraging joint projects between staff and groups of staff and potential user groups such as NGO's and community groups; assessing new research projects within the UOA for its impact factor; inviting representatives of potential user groups to participate in activities organized by the UOA; encouraging staff to participate in dissemination of research through the public and social media; creating a working environment that permits staff to engage in activities beyond the academy connected to their research, such as joining advisory boards; participating in policy formation and engaging with training programmes provided by organization outside of the university and creating an information data base for impact within the UOA. The School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the Law Research Forum monitor these policies.

The global reach of our policy impacts is particularly sustained by the development of long-standing research-based relationships with international organisations such as the UN and World Bank. Thus, work spearheaded by Sait and Lim on land and Islamic law has facilitated their development (both before and since 2008) of long-standing relationships with the United Nations community. Pathways to its impacts within that community have included the presentation of research findings to key policy-making bodies as well directly to relevant local actors as described

in UEL20-01. The Centre Human Rights in Conflict (CHRC), which was established in 2006 with a brief to provide policy-relevant research with the aim of influencing policy-makers. Through the nurturing of relationships with NGOs and individuals within existing research networks members of the Centre have been able to develop specific projects and consultancies that flow out of its research agenda. For example, in 2013 the Centre supported Holt in development of an e-learning module for the UN FAO on its “understanding and addressing disputes and conflicts’ (to be launched in 2014) to support implementation of the “Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests”, aimed at a variety of users including participants in conflicts. Holt on behalf the CHRC has also provided expert support to the European External Action Service (EEAS) on anti-discrimination policies, minority rights and hate crimes in the Russian Federation in the context of the on-going EU-Russia reciprocal visa dialogue (June-September 2013).

As well as taking our expertise to external organisations, the Unit also fosters relationships and shares its experience with those organisations by inviting their representatives into the University. Seminars run by the CHRC, for instance, have included invited contributions from Amnesty International (e.g. Widney Brown, on media incitement to genocide, February 2008) and Human Rights Watch (e.g. Clive Baldwin, on Human rights in post conflict situations, October 2013). Inviting external partners to contribute to these sorts of events provides a mechanism to consolidate existing relationships, promote our research expertise, and engage in dialogue that helps ensure the relevance of our work to our users’ changing needs, and forge wider networks by engaging new and potential research users with our work. Where appropriate, we also co-organise events with non-academic partners.

Our transfer of expertise impacting on the formulation and implementation of policy, both at home and abroad, is enhanced by our membership of and provision of advice to strategy and advisory boards. Sait’s expertise in law and development has led to his appointment – and direct provision of expert advice to UN Habitat and the World Bank (see case study UEL20-01). Another example is Salami who since 2011 has been an associate member of the American Bar Association (ABA) Financial Engineering for Economic Development task force (BAB Feed), which provides policy assistance and training for emerging market regulators and officials, and spoke on investing in Africa at the 2012 Spring ABA conference. Silke is a member of various international and national advisory bodies and Richards, Morrison and Windle have contributed expertise to local authorities and the police (see case study UEL20-02).

Members of the UOA regularly give interviews and participate in discussions on TV, radio and in the press. Together Briggs, Richards, Silke, Strawson, for example, have made over 200 media appearances in the census period through a wide variety of outlets: BBC News Channel, BBC Arabic TV, BBC World Service, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live, CNN, Sky, Radiotelevisione Italiana, Bloomberg TV, Press TV, Sahar TV and variety of local stations. Invitations to appear can be related to a publication, such as Strawson’s interview on Press TV about his book *Partition Palestine* (Press TV, December 20 2010) and Brigg’s about his book *Crack Cocaine Users* (BBC Radio 4 *Thinking Allowed*, April 18 2012) or in response to events that related to expertise such as Silke’s interview on the Breivik atrocities in Norway (BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme July 23 2011).

The UOA has in place an impact support strategy aimed at particularly supporting research with the potential to deliver strong non-academic benefits through appropriate workload modelling and network development and funding. Researchers follow individual annual research plans and are part of the staff development review, which includes discussion of the impact potential of their research. In addition, the unit has capitalised on centralised sources of support for and pathways to impact: Staff working on terrorism, for instance, have particularly capitalised on the opportunities presented by UEL’s organisation of several events connected to the 2012 London Olympics to develop new relations with potential research users involved in those events. The university press office is also at the disposal of staff that have completed a research project or published a book; press releases often lead to invitations outside the university and to interviews with the press.

### c. Strategy and plans

The unit sets out to promote the impact of its research through a combination of the following policies: (1) providing expert opinion to a range of international organisations, national and local governments and NGOs (2) working with NGOs (3) bidding for consultancies (4) engaging in public discussion and debate through the media (5) participating in community education.

This strategy is closely linked to each area of specialism. The appointment of Holt as a research fellow of the CHRC was particularly because of her record of working with NGOs that was thought critical in promoting policy-relevant research in the international law, human rights and conflict area. The appointment of Gilbert who has been a member of the Board of Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) since 2010 consolidated this approach. As a result we currently are engaged in early stage of a collaborative project with MRGI on minorities and conflict resolution. The centre plans to initiate work with the Democratic Progress Institute in the area of comparative conflict resolution and to extend its work with the USAID and the Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy (including the translation into Arabic of the handbook on land and conflict prevention). The CHRC is part of bid with the IQD to undertake paralegal training on land conflict resolution with the Kenyan NGO, Kituo cha Sheria. The CHRC is also planning a project in 2014-15 of community education in schools in the London Borough of Hackney on human rights in co-operation with the Hackney Museum.

Our work in Law and Development will build on the work that has been achieved with UN Habitat and the World Bank in particular to continue to provide expert advice and opinion especially in the area of gender and land rights. The creation of the Land and Human Rights research group (see REF5) will provide a vehicle between research and NGOs. A planned workshop of the group will bring together academics and NGOs in the spring of 2014.

In the area of Terrorism studies the unit plans to build a Centre on terrorism Studies (see REF5) with the aim of consolidating its work but also to provide a platform for offering systemic advice to international organizations, government and the security forces. Members of the unit working in the area of youth, drugs and crime will seek to build their delivery of consultancies from local and national government especially in the areas of gangs and social exclusion.

The unit will also work to increase the effectiveness of impact through (1) support for staff to network with international organizations, government and NGOs (2) providing systematic media training to increase the effectiveness of public dissemination and (3) integrating assessment of impact in the research element of the Staff Development Review. In this the unit will work closely with the university services including the International Office, corporate marketing, Knowledge Dock and the press office. The School Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the Law and Criminology Research Forum will monitor these policies and plans. An archive will be created to record all impact and to provide a source for good practice for future researchers.

### d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies demonstrate the way in which the UOA encourages work with international, national and local organizations both governmental and NGO with the aim of influencing both policy makers and the behavior of official and citizens on the ground. UEL20-01 illustrates the benefit of a long-term commitment to work with a key international organization (in this case UN-Habitat). It shows how this allows researchers to diffuse their work through an inter-linked network including other international organizations and governments to community groups. The case study offers helpful insights in the way in which the unit is committed to policy-relevant research that is capable of delivering social change. UEL20-02 demonstrates the challenges of working with a variety of multi-level organizations. It also shows that sensitive research on security issues can be aimed at influencing both international organizations and security professionals in confidence while at the same time making a contribution to public awareness through high profile media appearances. The latter particularly underlines the commitment of the unit to use its research generally in raising public knowledge in critical but complex areas.