

Institution: University of Bedfordshire
Unit of Assessment: 20 – Law
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The activities of the researchers, visiting fellows and postgraduate research students within the Centre for Research in Law (CRiL) are organised around four diverse interest groups: (1) human rights, counter-terrorism and national security; (2) human rights and religion; (3) corporate governance; (4) investment treaty arbitration and international commercial arbitration.</p> <p>The main beneficiaries and non-academic user groups for CRiL's research are: UK and foreign law-making bodies; EU institutions and their individual members; law enforcement agencies; the business community (domestic and international); arbitrators and parties to commercial arbitration (including States); civil society organisations, in particular human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs); specialized agencies of international organisations; practitioners; and various categories of individuals (e.g. victims of cyberstalking; individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism; victims of torture and other human rights abuses; refugees and asylum seekers).</p> <p>One of the main functions of CRiL is to seek to increase the societal impact of research produced within the Law School, including by providing an institutional contact point for non-academic stakeholders and external users of our research. As a growing research centre, CRiL has designed and adopted a clear strategy to ensure that our researchers' work generates a positive impact beyond academia. The School of Law and the University are supporting CRiL to meet that aim.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>During the assessment period, CRiL has adopted a multi-pronged approach to support its strategic aims of (a) creating knowledge that is of tangible benefit to society and (b) maximising the impact of the research carried out within CRiL. Relevant measures and activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff development <p>CRiL organises staff development activities aimed at enhancing the quality of the research produced by its researchers, including by raising awareness of the importance of the non-academic impact of research and the ways in which such impact may be achieved. These issues constituted the focus of a research development workshop, which discussed the notion of 'impact' in the REF (December 2010) and a further workshop on research funding, which highlighted the importance of impact assessment in the context of the preparation of bids for funding (February 2012). CRiL researchers are also given the opportunity to explore in detail the latest thinking on impact in the social sciences through support for attendance at external training events. Borelli has received extensive training on the notion of impact, impact-generating research, and knowledge exchange activities, including in her capacity as a Member of the AHRC Peer Review College (2011-15). This has proven to be invaluable when mentoring ECRs and devising impact strategies for CRiL's research. Lang has also attended training events on the impact of research in the social sciences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for consultancy activities <p>CRiL views consultancy activities which make use of the results of academic research as a particularly effective means of ensuring that legal research has a direct impact upon non-academic beneficiaries. CRiL encourages and supports consultancy activities carried out by its researchers, e.g. by providing coordination and administrative support in the preparation of bids for consultancy work. This is exemplified by the consultancy contract, led by Lang, concluded in 2013 with the European Parliament involving the provision of expert advice on fundamental rights to the European Parliament's Petitions Committee. Further, CRiL researchers who engage in academic consultancy work for civil society organisations are supported through the provision of periods of research leave and funds for research assistants. This approach has resulted in fruitful collaborations with civil society organisations. For instance, in 2012 Borelli was granted a period of teaching relief and funds for research assistance for the preparation of an extensive report, commissioned by an organisation specialising in the defence of victims of torture, on the impact of security legislation upon the effective prohibition of torture (see Case Study 1).</p>

- **Encouraging researchers to identify and incorporate non-academic impact in planning their research**

The role of the Director of CRiL includes encouraging colleagues to identify in advance how and to whom a proposed project may be relevant beyond academia. This is done principally in the context of discussion of the annual Individual Research Plan of each member of staff, but also on an *ad hoc* basis. This process of reflection is not only crucial for Early Career Researchers (ECRs), but is also of value to more experienced researchers. The aim is to ensure that impact is built into the project from the outset (as in Case Study 2) and not merely as an afterthought. An 'impact checklist', setting out the factors which need to be taken into consideration when planning and embarking on a new piece of work to maximise its usability and impact, was produced and disseminated to all CRiL researchers in 2013.

- **Organisation of events with the participation of non-academic stakeholders**

To increase opportunities for collaboration between CRiL researchers and non-academic actors and to ensure dissemination of our research beyond academia, CRiL organises events which bring researchers, practitioners and officers of civil society organisations together. The Law School and CRiL have been accredited as CPD providers by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board. Since 2012/13, the *CRiL Research Seminars* have included presentations by practitioners and other non-academic experts, including NGOs representatives, who are thus able to meet and interact with our researchers who work in relevant areas. In June 2013, CRiL organised a successful international conference on corporate governance which saw the participation of speakers and delegates from a range of backgrounds, including individuals in private practice and stakeholders from government agencies.

- **Inter-disciplinary collaboration with colleagues from other UoB research centres**

During the assessment period, CRiL researchers have forged productive collaborations with colleagues in other UoB research centres, which, due to their specific remit and their reputation in their field of expertise, engage with a broad range of stakeholders and non-academic actors. By collaborating with colleagues from those centres, CRiL researchers have been able to identify legal issues of particular relevance to specific social groups, or in a particular geographic area, thereby ensuring that their research was of immediate practical relevance. In addition, they have made use of the broad network of contacts of other centres to disseminate the findings of their research to target non-academic audiences. For instance, CRiL has collaborated with the UoB National Centre for Cyberstalking Research (NCCR) on research on the legal aspects of protection of victims of cyberstalking (Case Study 2). Researchers at CRiL are also currently involved in a joint project with UoB's Centre for International Media Analysis, Research & Consultancy (CIMARC) which aims at developing research links with journalists from English-speaking African countries reporting on war crime trials.

c. Strategy and plans

The production of research which is relevant and beneficial to society constitutes one the key strategic aims set out in CRiL's Research Strategy, adopted in 2011. As described in section (b), CRiL has already successfully deployed measures to implement this strategic aim; these measures will be maintained in the coming years. In addition, CRiL has identified three strategic actions which will apply post-2014 to continue support for the production of impact-generating research. Implementation of some aspects of these actions has already commenced.

- **Project planning: 'impact by design'**

Moving forward, CRiL will adopt an 'impact by design' approach for more of its research projects. Appropriate sources of external funding will be identified to support projects which are expressly designed to address the needs of specific groups of non-academic beneficiaries. Such planned consideration of the impact of our research, including through early consultation with stakeholders and end-users, will ensure the relevance and uptake of its outcomes. An example of this is the project on 'Asylum and Access to Justice', which was designed in consultation with practitioners working in the field of asylum and immigration to assess the effect of recent cuts to legal aid upon refugees, asylum seekers, and failed asylum seekers. The project obtained seed funding of £4,900

Impact template (REF3a)

from the University in October 2013 and will form the basis for further applications for funding from external sources.

- **Strengthening institutional links with non-academic actors**

The creation of new and productive links with local law firms, local businesses and civil society organisations is one of the strategic priorities identified by the School of Law in the context of an internal review carried out in early 2013. To this end, in October 2013 the School recruited a Principal Lecturer whose remit is to forge links with local and national businesses and other relevant non-academic stakeholders. The links of the Law School with external non-academic actors will provide new opportunities for CRiL researchers to engage with a range of societal actors and to undertake projects which are relevant to its community. An example of this approach is the strategic partnerships established between CRiL, a barrister specialising in asylum law, and the representative of a charity providing support to refugees which led to the design of the project on 'Asylum and Access to Justice' mentioned above. A further example is the research collaboration between Lewis and Mortimer and the National Firearms Centre of the Royal Armouries, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and Essex Police. Research activities resulting from this collaboration focus upon the impact of regulation and legislation in respect of civil and corporate resilience, including the harmonisation of EU legislation on the transportation and management of explosive materials and their precursors, the trafficking of small and medium-sized arms and the funding of criminal activities through abuse of the wider financial services sector.

- **Consolidation of institutional research links with other UoB research centres**

In the light of the success of the collaborative projects carried out by CRiL researchers with colleagues from other UoB research centres (including in particular in terms of their extra-academic impact), one of CRiL's strategic priorities for the post-2014 period is to place those types of collaborations on a firmer institutional footing. This will be done by (a) consolidating those collaborative links which were created in a relatively *ad hoc* fashion during the present assessment period, and (b) forging new institutional collaborations between CRiL and other research centres at UoB.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies showcase the positive results already achieved through the impact strategy outlined above.

Case Study 1, *Promoting effective protection of human rights in situations of exception*, provides an illustration of how CRiL researchers ensure that their research is put to effective use through collaboration with civil society organisations. The case study shows how the process of collaboration with NGOs in the preparation of joint publications and briefs generates impact beyond academia, involving close collaboration with non-academic stakeholders who have direct contacts with the final beneficiaries of the research. The case study also illustrates how some of the measures (e.g. the provision of funds for research assistance) which have been adopted by CRiL in order to support the engagement of our researchers with civil society organisations have facilitated the production of research which is relevant and has a beneficial impact beyond academia.

Case Study 2, *Strengthening protection of the rights of victims of cyberstalking*, details the impact of interdisciplinary research carried out in conjunction with the National Centre for Cyberstalking Research at UoB. The research was designed from the outset to produce impact in the context of the EU legislative process leading to the adoption of new EU-wide legislation on victims' rights and the case study illustrates the merits of this 'impact by design' approach. It further illustrates the merits of interdisciplinary collaboration with other research centres at UoB in terms of producing research which responds to the needs of specific societal actors. Finally, it shows how the targeted dissemination of the research findings and the researchers' proactive engagement with relevant stakeholders have resulted in the research having an impact on new prosecutorial policies and the practice of law enforcement agencies.