

Institution: Aberystwyth University

Unit of Assessment: 20 - Law

a. Context

The Department has a long history of extending itself via its research activities beyond the academic world. In this REF period, the Department's research has had an impact (i) on law and policy makers at the Welsh, UK, European and international level and (ii) on the third sector and civil society – both, especially, within the fields of 'health and welfare' and 'culture and society'. The Department seeks to position itself between the higher/formal level of law/policy making and implementation, on the one hand, and action-oriented stakeholders, such as NGOs and charities, and the public more generally, on the other hand.

Our impact on both types of beneficiaries is designed to empower marginalised and vulnerable members of society as the core beneficiaries e.g. the older and victims of domestic abuse (J Williams, Clarke, Wydall), children (Sherlock, Odello, Kohl), victims of people trafficking (Piotrowicz) and the disenfranchised in developing countries (Emeseh, Blaustein) with the aim of reducing or preventing harm and risks and improving the responsiveness of local governance. The impact indicators have ranged from citations in public discussion and consultation documents (J Williams, Clarke, Wydall) or by international organisations (Piotrowicz, Odello); the generation of public debate in the media and significant audience numbers (Ireland); to more frontline indicators concerning the well-being of vulnerable people within the UK and internationally (Piotrowicz, J Williams).

(i) Impact on law and policy makers at the Welsh, UK, European and international level

At the Welsh governmental/assembly level the Department has contributed to the debate on, and the actual shape of, devolution since the Government of Wales Act 2006 through the activities of its Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs as well as individual members of staff (e.g. Sherlock was a member of the Standing Orders Commission which drafted the Standing Order for the Secretary of State). Furthermore the Department has also been active in shaping the emerging substantive law of the Assembly e.g. J Williams contributed to the development and the later scrutiny of the Social Care and Wellbeing Bill 2003 (see case study) and K Williams, as a member of the Welsh Government Effective Practice Development Panel, considers the treatment of youth offenders with a view to preventing youth offending and thereby reducing the cost on the criminal justice system. While in these instances government and the public sector are the direct beneficiaries, at the heart of the initiatives are the interests, equality, social welfare and inclusion of the disenfranchised. A similar impact on law and policy makers is evidenced by the Department's involvement in international regulatory activity and its local implementation: Sherlock, as a member of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Monitoring Group, advises on the Convention's implementation in Wales and helps to prepare the alternative NGO report on Wales to the UN Committee; J Williams, as a member of the UN Expert Group on Human Rights of Older Persons, advises the General Assembly's Open Ended Working Group on Older People's rights.

At the UK governmental level, the criminologists of the Department have advised the Ministry of Justice on publicly funded criminology research (Clarke) and contributed to Home Office policy on Anti-Social Behavioural Orders (Clarke, Wydall, Williams, see White Paper *Putting Victims First* 2012), whilst the Department has had an impact on EU policy making with respect to people trafficking (Piotrowicz, see case study) and education (Odello), and, internationally, on rights development and implementation through government-industry partnerships in Africa esp. Nigeria (Emeseh) and in Bosnia-Herzegovina within a UN Development Programme funded 'Safer Communities' project (Blaustein).

(ii) Impact on the third sector and civil society

The Department's role in terms of informing and empowering the third sector and civil society falls within three significant clusters: first, Ireland's public performances on Welsh legal history in the local community and nationally, second, J Williams and Piotrowicz's work for Age UK/International and the Red Cross UK/International respectively (see case studies); and third, the activities of the Centre of Welsh Legal Affairs which evidences the Department's assumed responsibility within Welsh society. The Centre has not just contributed towards law and policy making in Wales (see above), but also seeks to reach the wider public. For that purposes, it has put on public lectures addressing a topics ranging from the Welsh approach to the prosecution of domestic abuse, bilingual juries, to the creation and role of Police Commissioners. Beyond these clusters, the Department has interacted with the third sector in variety of contexts based on the research expertise of staff members [e.g. report on flavourings for the First Steps Nutrition Trust (Salmon)]

Impact template (REF3a)

and presentation on children on the transnational internet for the Children's Charity Coalition for Internet Safety (Kohl)] and with civil society more general through media contributions [e.g. on constitutional reform (Cox), super-injunctions, devolution and bilingual juries on Radio Cymru (Huws), euthanasia (G Williams), people trafficking (Piotrowicz), older people (J Williams)].

b. Approach to impact

The Department's approach to internal and external research drivers is designed to maximise the impact of our research at local, national and international levels and to encourage research active staff to appreciate the wider contribution their research can make when developing their individual research strategies. The departmental approach to impact has developed during the current REF period incrementally and to some extent reactively. However over the past two years, the Department has begun to adopt a more strategic and proactive approach to maximising the impact it has beyond academia:

- *Financial and other practical support for 'real world' activities:* the Department has facilitated the involvement of staff in local, national and international bodies and to respond to consultation exercises by bodies such as the Law Commission, Welsh Government, and the National Assembly for Wales. The Department supports this by making time available for members of staff to attend, for example, policy making meetings, conferences and evidence giving sessions. In some cases, particularly with third sector bodies, financial support for travel and subsistence is available. Other ways of supporting such impact include hosting third sector or local outreach events with input from departmental staff (e.g. carer, youth justice and older people's groups). Involvement in this work is considered to be a mainstream responsibility of those involved in research and not 'outside work' and thus integrates impact into the departmental research environment.
- *Impact as part of the research seminar programme:* staff are encouraged to discuss the impact of their research findings as part of their presentations in the departmental research seminar programme. Again, this emphasises the fact that delivering impact is embedded in the culture of the Department and is integral to its research.
- *Encouragement of media appearances:* staff have been encouraged to obtain media coverage for their work. The University External Communications office has assisted in this (see e.g. Ireland's impact case study, The One Show). A number of staff have contributed to newspaper reports, radio interviews and TV appearances in Wales and beyond (see above).
- *Creating international networking opportunities:* the Department disseminates its work internationally to ensure its impact is not confined to the UK, for example, through attending or organising international conferences. Although most of the conferences are academic many are linked to practitioners' bodies such as the American Bar Association, the British Psychological Society and the American Psychological Society. This, in addition to traditional research output, has resulted in invitations to participate in the development of international policy (see case studies)
- *Encouragement of strategic partnerships:* staff have been encouraged to seek membership in national and international organisations with a mandate for influencing law and policy developments (e.g. the Africa Capacity Building Foundations leading capacity-building workshops for the oil and gas industry)
- *Impact as an integral component of departmental activities generally:* the Department seeks to make its role outside academia an integral component of most of its activities, including its teaching activities. The Work Placement criminology module and the Access-to-Masters scheme are examples of how the Department involves students, building on the research experience of staff, to create value for the local community or, in the context of the Innocence Project, at national level (e.g. R Williams' project with Age Ceredigion on the effects of welfare changes for older people in rural areas).
- *Promotion of the Department as a resource for government:* the above strategies directed at staff are complemented by strategies that seek to engage external stakeholders directly. For example, through the Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs the Department has committed itself to the development of a law reform mechanism within the devolved government structure with Wales. Based on published research within the Department, it hosted a one day seminar involving the Law Commission for England and Wales and key stakeholders in Wales which led to the establishment of the Wales Advisory Committee of the Law Commission, which in turn will have a significant impact on law reform within Wales. The Centre will also be involved in the work of the recently established Public Policy Institute for Wales.

c. Strategy and plans

As noted in the research Environment Template, in the coming REF period the Department seeks to consolidate and advance its core research strengths in European and International Law, Information Technology Law, Social and Welfare law, Criminal Justice/Criminology and Devolution in Wales. These

Impact template (REF3a)

substantive goals will be supported by an 'operational strategy' that aims to closely integrate advancement in research activity with impact. The Department has learnt much from its experience over the past five years on how impact can be maximised and promoted. Based on that experience, our more strategic framework for the next five years is as follows:

- *Staff development:* the Department now incorporates research impact in its annual staff review process as this allows us to identify individual and collective support needs. It is essential that these individual and collective needs are met, in particular any training or development needs that are identified. In appropriate cases an 'impact mentor' will be appointed – in order to provide advice, support and encouragement to individual staff who are seeking to maximise their impact. The department has decided to hold an annual seminar to share good practice and experience. Similarly, impact is considered an integral part of the probationary compact for new entrants.
- *Individual impact strategies:* the twice yearly meetings between research active staff and the departmental Research Committee are now framed so to include discussion of impact and the setting of appropriate individual targets for impact. Impact targets will not be mandatory and opportunities for individuals to maximise impact from their research will be discussed.
- *Proactive engagement with the media:* in recognition of the importance of media exposure the Department is determined to work with the University External Communications office to ensure that departmental expertise is disseminated widely and that we respond to media requests for interview etc. Examples of high profile impact will be the subject of press releases.
- *Financial support:* the Department provides resources to develop relationships with external bodies where there is potential to achieve impact. It is recognised that the early stages of such engagement may involve a response to a general request (e.g. attending consultation events) which then leads to a specific invitation to contribute to the organisation's work on a funded basis.
- *Research seminars and research leave:* as part of research seminar presentations, staff are now required to address the actual or potential impact of their research. Similarly, research leave applications are expected to identify any impact potential their proposed research plan may have and how they propose to achieve it.
- *Production of an annual departmental impact report:* one specific problem encountered during the current REF period is that many good examples of impact are lost with the passage of time. Staff have are now required to keep a record of any impact event and this information will be consolidated into an annual statement for the departmental Research Committee.
- *Information:* In collaboration with the University Research Office, the department now uses the PURE database to record impactful research and impact opportunities, with a view to maximising these across the department. This will include information on consultation exercises, membership of external policy related bodies, local community group opportunities, collaborative opportunities (including with the third sector).
- *Role of the Departmental Research Committee:* a specific duty to review current activity and promote future impact will be added to the remit of the Research Committee. It will have overall responsibility for ensuring that this strategy is implemented. One member of the Research Committee should have specific responsibility for impact.
- *Utilising links with alumni and encouraging networking:* the Department has started to engage with its extensive alumni network to seek advice and identify opportunities for impact.

These plans will be incorporated into a formal strategy document considered and approved by the Departmental Board following consultation with staff.

d. Relationship to case studies

Our nominated case studies demonstrate the impact of the Department's research in three significant areas and the actual and potential effectiveness of the Department's mechanisms (outlined above) to support and encourage impact. These case studies were selected not just because of their individual merit, but also because collectively they illustrate the depth and breadth of the department's 'outreach' initiatives – vis-à-vis the two categories of beneficiaries ((a) law and policy makers and (b) the third sector and the general public) and the fields of impact ('health and welfare' and 'culture and society'). The two case studies of Williams and Piotrowicz show, in very different subject-areas, the department's involvement in, and representation at, national and international charities and policy committees with a view to improving the lives of targeted vulnerable sections of society. In contrast, Ireland's case study shows the department's close involvement with the local community. Through his extensive public activities, Ireland raises awareness amongst the public of the legal history of Wales and especially, its criminal justice history. In this respect, his work provides an example par excellence of the crucial role, indeed responsibility, of academia within community/nation building, and the values that support it.