Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: Institution: University of Cambridge

Unit of Assessment: UoA32A

a. Context

The Faculty of Philosophy produces research in most of the main areas of the subject, including aesthetics, ethics and political philosophy, feminist philosophy, history of philosophy, formal & philosophical logic, metaphysics, philosophy of language and linguistics, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of mind and psychology, and philosophy of science (especially of physics).

Philosophical research can have impact on society in a variety of different ways. Research in ethics clearly has a major role to play in public discourse about major ethical questions. Political philosophy has a similar role in relation to questions of policy-making and discussions of the values of civil society. Work in all areas of philosophy can have educational impact, either in the production of university textbooks based on research, or in a less direct way as the impact of philosophical ideas affects (for example) the teaching of science and questions about objective knowledge and truth.

More generally, research in philosophy should make a contribution to broader cultural life by introducing new or unusual ideas into the cultural sphere and by stimulating rigorous debate about large questions which are of intrinsic interest and importance to any culture, for example: what can we know? What is the basis of morality? How should we live? Does life have a purpose? What is truth? What is meaning? What is the place of the human in the rest of nature? The rigorous and systematic investigation of these kinds of abstract question is something which is of intrinsic value to our culture as a whole. This assumption must underpin any approach to the impact of philosophical research. The Faculty of Philosophy encourages and facilitates approaches to impact understood in this way.

b. Approach to impact

The Faculty is committed to the dissemination of its research to non-academic beneficiaries, and to the communication of ideas to the widest possible audience and readership, where appropriate. It actively pursues the impact of its ideas through this kind of dissemination.

The main non-academic beneficiaries of the Faculty's research are: (i) governmental and non-governmental organisations, especially in public inquiries relating to policy-making; (ii) think tanks; (iii) businesses; (iv) the general public; (v) students and academics in other universities.

Faculty members engage within these groups in a number of ways in order to achieve impact from research:

For group (i) impact is achieved through contributions to public discussions and inquiries, based on the ideas developed in their research. For example, research-informed contributions have been made by members of the Faculty to the Leveson Inquiry and the Commission on Assisted Dying, to the Medical Research Council's Ethics, Regulation and Public Involvement Committee, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

For group (ii) impact is achieved in similar ways. For example, contributions have been made to the activist group UK Feminista and the Institute of Public Policy Research.

For group (iii), impact is achieved through joint conferences and meetings between Faculty members and the relevant business communities. For example, the following businesses participated in meetings run by the Faculty's Forum for Philosophy and Business between 2003-9: BT, IBM, KPMG, Microsoft, and Pfizer. These meetings concerned issues such as intellectual

property and trust – topics on which members of the Faculty have published research. Some of these meetings were within the REF period, but others preceded it, demonstrating the Faculty's relatively long-standing commitment to impact activities. The Forum laid the foundations for some of the Faculty's latest impact projects, in particular the new research project on trust in banking, run by one of the Forum's founders (Alex Oliver). This latter project is the latest stage in the evolution of the Faculty's engagement with business and the financial sector.

The Faculty's researchers approach impact on groups (iv) and (v) in three main ways:

(1) Through the publication of accessible philosophical texts, which are popular among general readers, as shown by sales figures, and which change the way that university philosophy departments teach their courses, as shown by the appearance of these books on many departments' reading lists. Examples of texts which have had this kind of impact, based on research by their authors, are Simon Blackburn, *Being Good* (2002) and Tim Crane, *The Mechanical Mind* (2004).

(2) Through podcasts and journalism: for example, Simon Blackburn, Clare Chambers, Tim Crane, Raymond Geuss, Hugh Mellor, Alex Oliver, Onora O'Neill and Huw Price have all produced podcasts in the well-known *Philosophy Bites* series; Tim Crane and Rae Langton have written for the *New York Times*'s popular Philosophy Blog, 'The Stone'; Simon Blackburn, Tim Button, Tim Crane, Rae Langton and Michael Potter have written for newspapers such as the *Financial Times*, the *THE*, and the *TLS*.

(3) Through invitations to appear in the media and at public events, and to act as consultants, as a result of (1) and (2): Blackburn and O'Neill are regular contributors to BBC radio on philosophical topics, and Chambers has also appeared on BBC Radio 4 to discuss her work. Blackburn, Crane and Potter have given public talks at the popular philosophy festival in Hay-on-Wye, *How the Light Gets In*.

The Faculty supported its staff in these endeavours by (e.g.) providing facilities for the meetings of the Forum for Philosophy in Business, providing office and IT support for the new Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER), and by emphasising the value placed on dissemination, outreach and impact work in its support for senior promotions.

c. Strategy and plans

The Faculty's Strategy Group, a committee of three senior members, is responsible for formulating its impact strategy. The Faculty's impact plan has two components. The first is to actively encourage all Faculty members (in individual meetings with the Chair of the Faculty relating to promotion, probation and appraisal) to disseminate their work to as wide an audience as possible: e.g. by accepting (where possible) invitations to give public lectures, to appear in the media, and to participate in other public discussion forums (e.g. book or arts festivals).

The second, more specific component of our plan is to develop the impact of our research in three areas over the coming years:

(1) The first is to continue and enhance the engagement with the wider community in discussions of the applications of feminist theory. The recruitment of Rae Langton from MIT – one of the world's leading feminist philosophers – in 2013, adds to the strength the Faculty already has in this area. It is planned that those doing research in this area will continue to publicise their findings through public discussions in think tanks and other public forums, as well as in podcasts, influential blogs and media appearances, as they have done in the assessment period.

(2) The second area relates to the Faculty's engagement in the research project, *Trusting Banks*. This is a 5-year (2012-17) collaboration between the Faculty of Philosophy in Cambridge and the University of Groningen, led by Boudewijn de Bruin (Groningen) and Alex Oliver (Cambridge), and

funded by the NWO (the Dutch Research Council). The project investigates ethical and epistemological aspects of trust in banking, in the light of the recent global financial crisis, with the aim of assessing ways to restore trust and trustworthiness in banks. The Faculty intends to support the project by providing facilities for a series of international conferences to which UK and Dutch bankers will be invited. Impact will be established and traced through the on-going communication with the members of the banking community who attend these conferences.

(3) The third area in which the Faculty aims to promote the non-academic impact of its research is in connection with the interdisciplinary project on 'existential risk': that is, the large-scale risk to humanity (such as those posed by technology and global warming). In 2012 Huw Price from the Faculty of Philosophy set up the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER) together with Martin Rees (Emeritus Professor of Cosmology in Cambridge) and Jaan Tallinn (one of the founders of Skype). Tim Crane and Jane Heal are also on the Board of Advisors of CSER. The aim of the centre is to investigate the nature and mitigation of risks across all areas within the scope of the project. CSER is currently seeking funding from various sources. If these applications are successful, the Faculty will continue to support CSER by providing research and administrative facilities for postdoctoral researchers and for seminars and conferences. CSER will work together with the University's Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) and will make use of CSaP's networks and connections to communicate its findings to policy-makers, and to develop robust links with relevant politicians.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies submitted derive from the Faculty's commitment to disseminating its work and making concrete interventions in public discussions. Our broad strategy is to achieve impact on groups (i) – (v); but in these specific cases, we sought to achieve impact on groups (i) and (ii).

The three submitted case studies all derive from work by members of the Faculty in political and moral philosophy. These are research areas in which the Faculty has had particular strengths in recent years, and it has long been one of its research priorities. Onora O'Neill's contributions to the Commission on Assisted Dying and to the Leveson Report were explicitly based on her research in moral philosophy.

The third case study details direct public engagement with Clare Chambers's work on the idea that freedom to choose can reinforce attitudes and practices which can be damaging to women. Her research was taken up by the UK Feminista Group and received considerable media attention, thus achieving the Faculty's aim of enabling research to inform public debate. We will take into account the experience of preparing this case study when moving forward with our future work in feminism and philosophy.

Our selected case studies are by no means the only examples of high quality impact developed from research produced by members of the Faculty. In particular, a number of projects completed outside the assessment period have continued to have significant educational impacts (e.g. Tim Crane's book, *The Mechanical Mind*, Simon Blackburn's *Being Good*). Similarly the Forum for Philosophy and Business, the existence of which straddled this and the previous assessment period, enabled our researchers influence business and policy makers in ways that are not reflected in our case studies.