

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: University of Strathclyde
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Over the period 2008 to 2013, our research has been shaped so that it is utilized by a growing number of non-academic groups that include the press and media, educational professionals, policy makers, cultural commentators, third sector organizations, creative writers, heritage organizations, lobbyists and policy forums. Not only has the audience grown, but the geographical reach of impact has extended beyond the United Kingdom to North America, China and the European mainland. The type of impact produced is varied and can be categorized under the following three broad headings: firstly, communication, reporting and synthesizing research findings to a non-academic audience; secondly, collaboration with other professionals who wish to utilize research outputs in a non-academic context; and thirdly, providing advice and consultation on historical matters for private and public bodies.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>At Strathclyde, History's approach to impact has been shaped by the University's long-term commitment to Knowledge Exchange. As a 'Place of Useful Learning', the University has been proactive in collaborations with agencies beyond the walls of academia and highlights this as one of its distinctive qualities; a fact recognized in it being named <i>THE</i> UK University of the Year in 2012. Knowledge Exchange activities have been part of academic appraisal from 2008 and in an environment that places such an emphasis on public engagement and outside collaboration, it has permeated History's approach to Knowledge Exchange activities as this evolved into what we now understand as Impact. Evidence of this evolution can be seen in the fact that the Centre for Oral History was one of the first units to win a large AHRC grant on Knowledge Exchange in 2009 for its collaboration with Glasgow City Council. History was also active in pursuing AHRC competitive Knowledge Exchange collaborative doctorates and was successful in bids with Glasgow Museums and the National Library of Scotland. This demonstrates a commitment to push beyond the bounds of academia even before the notion of research impact had been properly defined for the Humanities. Although we recognize that Knowledge Exchange is different from impact, our commitment to Knowledge Exchange has formed a solid base from which to develop a coherent Impact strategy.</p> <p>Historians at Strathclyde are encouraged and supported by the Faculty to engage in impact activities through a wide diversity of approaches, which are reviewed annually through the University's staff appraisal process. An important approach to impact relates to the public profile of the subject and staff are actively encouraged to promote the importance of History whenever possible. More often than not, this involves providing comment, information or a summary that relates to their area of expertise rather than information on a specific published piece of research. While it is impossible to quantify the actual impact of such activity, there is no doubt that it raises the profile of historians and the work that they do, and as such makes a contribution to the wellbeing of the subject. We believe that this is an important dimension of our work that benefits the profession as a whole and ought to be encouraged.</p> <p>At the most basic level, staff provide comment and information to the media and press on topics relating to their research expertise. The University Press Office often acts as an intermediary directing enquiries to the relevant expert, although a number of staff (Cathcart, Finlay, MacInnes, Mills, Smith, Young) have now built up extensive media connections independently. In this regard, the impact of any individual comment, interview or quote is not particularly significant, but if taken together as a whole, it represents a fairly constant presence in the Scottish media. It provides an important public service by providing correct and informed comment on historical matters. Although difficult to quantify, increasing historical awareness is a fundamental aspect of the historian's role. Collaboration with others to utilize historical research forms another mainstay of impact strategy. An example of this can be demonstrated by the activity of the historians of medicine who have been proactive in promoting the significance of this topic in the Scottish School curriculum. Funded by a University Knowledge Exchange grant and an award from the Wellcome Trust, Barton, Johnston, McIvor, Mills, and Smith have collaborated with education professionals and the National Library of Scotland to upload appropriate images and text to a resource website for teachers. In addition, Finlay has a number of interviews on the impact of the Great War uploaded to the Education Scotland website, which acts as a resource base for both teachers and pupils.</p>

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The aforementioned examples do not involve impact directly related to any individual's research but are largely based on a synthesis of recent work. It is now part of the unit's research culture that staff be proactive in promoting their own individual research impact and **Bartie's** work on the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference capitalized on its fiftieth anniversary to hold an event at the Edinburgh Book Festival 2012. This directly led to wider impact through a series of similar events taking place around the world. **Cathcart's** AHRC award 'Living on the Edge' had an important pathway to impact designed into the project which involves engagement with local community groups in the Western Highlands and Isles who are keen to utilize her historical research as a means of promoting tourism and heritage as a means of economic development, but also as a source of cultural capital. **Mclvor's** work on Asbestosis has led to his invitation to speak in China on the dangers of poor health and safety policy. **Heimann** was extensively engaged in public debate regarding her book on Czechoslovakia and how that nation's history was assessed

Our approach to impact is predicated upon two distinct categories; the first is 'predicted' impact, the second 'unpredicted' impact. In the former, this is a case where it is expected that there will be a predicted form of impact that is anticipated and is an intrinsic aspect of the research programme. In the latter, impact develops in ways that were not predicted or perceived, but has beneficial outcomes nonetheless. In reality most impact often has elements of both routes. An example of the first approach can be demonstrated by those historians whose work has a direct relevance to contemporary debates, such as **Mills'** work on cannabis. As expected, there was media interest in charting the historical evolution of drug policy in the United Kingdom, and in particular, if there were any lessons to be learned from the past. As part of impact strategy, **Mills** actively engaged with media and broadcast outlets to demonstrate how policy is shaped by historical circumstances. Similar examples could be cited to show research and public engagement linkages involving **Cathcart, Finlay, MacInnes** and **Young** on Scottish constitutional change, **Bartie** on gang culture, **Mclvor** on occupational health and **Smith** on medical policy. The University Press Office plays an important part in facilitating this outreach and there are regular communications to all staff regarding media and broadcast activities. Another example of designed impact is the work carried out by Oral History staff on work with the Scottish Council on Deafness. The designed impact was to give a voice and a sense of empowerment to a group in society that believed it had been disenfranchised from history.

Dissemination of research activity is a necessary precursor to 'unpredicted' impact as the more widely the research is promoted, the greater the opportunity to develop and enhance the impact. An excellent example of how impact opportunities can escalate its effect is to be found in the activities of the Scottish Oral History Centre (SOHC). Reaching out to the community to record interviews has helped spread the nature of its work in the locality and that has helped generate public interest and engagement. In addition to generating new research questions and proposals, it has stimulated others to adopt the technique of oral history as a method to preserve local and group heritage, and in order to facilitate this, SOHC now (with lottery funding) provides training in oral history methodology to organizations such as the Tall Ship Museum in Glasgow, the Inchinnan History Group, the Rainbow Lives Group in Kirkcaldy and the Scottish Council on Deafness. SOHC now acts as a central hub that provides local communities with the tools to generate their own research impact. It also acts as a repository for oral history archives. Local companies and businesses have also become increasingly aware of the use of oral history as a method of preserving heritage and enhancing corporate identity; for example, Clydesdale Bank and Inver House Distillers have commissioned histories from SOHC. The experience of SOHC is that the greater the dissemination, the more likely there will be opportunities for impact development and exploitation. In 2012, **Smith** from the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare (CSHHH) was chosen out of 500 candidates as one of the twelve participants in the BBC/AHRC New Generation Thinkers Initiative by presenting the policy implications of his published research on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Food Allergy. Through public lectures, blogging and media interviews, the public reach of his research has been considerably enhanced and contact with BBC producers, editors and presenters has afforded new opportunities to directly promote the policy implications of his established research. This has led to spin offs and the Department for Education has invited Smith to examine the educational policy implications of his work on ADHD. This is an example where a process of maximizing dissemination has set in train a process of impact opportunities that will develop in the future.

c. Strategy and plans

Future planning is being built around pooling collective experience and examples of best practice. Improved coordination is central to the University's Strategic Plan, which places a greater emphasis on impact, and the Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government, which sets targets for research impact. The University has set up a number of mechanisms that are purpose-designed to support impact generation, including the faculty's Research and Knowledge Exchange Team, and historians are actively engaged in a variety of ways. A number of examples can be cited to show how impact will form a central aspect of future research activity. In particular, much thought has been directed towards attaching history research towards projects that have potential commercial opportunities, as outlined in the Outcome Agreement. Historians have won seed core funding from the University to explore the cross-disciplinary potential of working with academics in other faculties that have already extensive private sector collaboration. For example, **Cathcart** has been working with Mathematics and Statistics on a project on Scottish fishing from the 16th century. The object behind the project, which has a dedicated PhD student, is to use historical evidence to shed light on issues relating to fishing sustainability by exploring the issue over a longer timeframe. **Cathcart** provides historical data that can be used by the mathematicians and statisticians to develop sustainability modeling. Another early stage project that has received University funding is collaboration with Mechanical Engineers to research the history of space exploration. What is being demanded of the historians is to provide case study evidence of the space industry in the past which will subsequently be used to assess the strategy for growing the industry in Scotland. **Barton** and **Mills** have been collaborating with Pharmacy to highlight the ways in which the historical experience can cast light on current concerns regarding drug adulteration. **Perchard** and **Mackenzie** are currently exploring ways in which the rich records of business archives can be utilized to refine business modeling techniques. A key aspect of future strategy is to think creatively about how historical research can be attached to disciplines that already have a high impact factor. The commercial application of historical research is an issue that is being explored. SOHC work for companies to provide oral histories and archives, and this is an area of activity that we expect to grow. As an example, **MacInnes** and **Young** have been working with McClelland's Distilleries to provide historical information that can be utilized in their advertising campaign, especially in the overseas market. The relationship has been cemented by McClelland's funding a post-graduate seminar series in Early Modern History.

d. Relationship to case studies

The three cases studies were chosen because they are emblematic of the unit's approach to impact as a whole. One is drawn from the research centres, one is an example of inter-disciplinary approaches and the third might be regarded as impact from a more traditional scholarly output. They also represent the career structure of the unit with one case from each of a senior, mid and early career researcher.

McIvor's case study was selected because it is the most longstanding of the three and illustrates in a practical way how our impact strategy has evolved and developed over time, and how it has capitalized on the opportunities presented. It also is a case study that has designed impact, but also developed a significant 'unpredicted' impact. It is a good exemplar of how impact can be managed, developed and promoted.

Heimann's case is one that is an exemplar of impact which was intended, but had a much wider extent than originally predicted. It is used to show the ways in which impact can be enhanced through extensive engagement with the public. It demonstrates a commitment by Heimann to public engagement and the promotion of the research significance of her work to an audience beyond academia.

Bartie's case is an exemplar of research impact maximization in that the initial study was used as the basis for an outside agency to exploit and advance in ways that allowed the agency to self-determine its development. Of the three case studies, this is an exemplar of close collaboration with a non-academic body.