

**Institution: Staffordshire University**

**Unit of Assessment: 36 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management**

**a. Context**

Within UoA36, research with impact is undertaken by staff in several different academic groups (including journalism, geography, sport psychology, law, history and politics, philosophy, information services), across all four Faculties of the University, plus the Information Services branch. This research activity is monitored and encouraged by Applied Research Centres (ARCs); in the case of this UoA, primarily but not exclusively by the Institute for Applied Creative Thinking (I-ACT) and the Centre for Media Arts and Technology (C-MAT). The remit of the Centres is either directly applied research (research activity that takes place in and through 'real-world' problem-solving, such as KTPs, consultancy, or prototyping and testing), or the application of research (using 'pure' research to inform and guide problem analysis and solution). The ARCs were formed, then, to encourage research with impact.

I-ACT and C-MAT are located in the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies, but their members work collaboratively with colleagues across the whole University. Membership of the ARCs is by the coherence of research activity, and not by administrative division. There are eight other Applied Research Centres alongside I-ACT and C-MAT, and these cooperate to support inter-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary research and to pursue enterprise developments and other forms of impact. As an example of such cooperation across the University, Professor Cashmore's work was funded by the Centre for Health Psychology. Within each Faculty, overall responsibility for research activity and its impact falls to the Associate Dean for Scholarship, Enterprise and Research.

I-ACT and C-MAT (and their sister ARCs across the University) have several key functions: deciding how to distribute research funding; funding and appointing a senior researcher position (whose job it is to support bid-writing and help organise research and impact oriented activities); organising events to share best practice (for example, concerning funding bid application skills) and encourage collaboration; raising awareness and enthusiasm for research and enterprise projects; organising staff development related to research, impact or enterprise; setting up mentoring programmes for young researchers, or for staff returning to active research work; acting as a spokesperson for research-related activities in the area, and advising Faculties and the University Research and Enterprise Committee about research and impact strategy, policy and implementation.

As discussed above, the staff in this UoA come from across the University. The diversity of different departments, schools and services is a challenge, of course. The research centre meets these challenges in a number of ways discussed below. Importantly, this diversity is also a strength, especially in regard to impact. This is because it facilitates individual researchers thinking about and working towards the impact of their work from disciplinary directions, and in contexts, that they might not otherwise have been aware of. The reorganisation of the University in recent years now means that all these staff (with the single exception of Dr. Kevern) work on the same Campus and this is important in making the Centres work well. Associate Deans are aware that research staff work across Faculties, and therefore meet regularly to coordinate strategy. Likewise, the two Chairs of the ARCs located in the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies meet regularly, together with the senior researcher, the Professor who leads on Scholarship and Research in the Faculty and the Associate Dean (making up the Faculty's Research and Enterprise Group).

Here are several key examples of research with impact that have been achieved by collaboration between different research centres and also different UoAs, which demonstrate that the above arrangements work well:

- Film-makers have collaborated with colleagues in the Business School on, for instance, a

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- documentary about the economic state of Staffordshire farmers;
- colleagues in Geography are working with staff in Fine Art, English and Drama on a range of projects that explore the human geography of creative and cultural practices and their impact on social well-being.
- staff in philosophy are working with colleagues from the Health Sciences on issues concerning alternative strategies for the management of moral character in the NHS;
- staff in Information Services work with colleagues from Law to create bespoke information literacy tools.

### b. Approach to impact

All staff submitted in this UoA have generated impact on the basis of their research. There are three main non-academic user groups and audiences that UoA36 research focuses on:

1. *Education.* Educators at various levels in need of resources and tools. Impact here is the way research feeds into the development of new tools, methodologies, or valued sets of resources. Examples include research work that informs the current curriculum at GCSE and A-level, in geography, history and in philosophy; research work that has fed into the new standard textbook on visual methodologies; the work of Information Services researchers concerning information literacy – one instance of this forms a case study submitted in REF3b.
2. *Public policy.* Governmental agencies or other institutions with a representative or governance role, in the UK and internationally, concerned with policy or the evaluation of policy. Impact in this area concerns informing and influencing the debate and decision-making with respect to various cultural or social problems. Examples include consultancy for Baltic States' cultural interactions across the border with Russia; a member of the team providing evidence on journalism and education to the Leveson enquiry; work on sport, homophobia and racism, which greatly informed public and institutional debate on the subject – this latter is one of our case studies in REF3b.
3. *Public understanding.* The wider public in their views of the workings of culture and media, or the nature of their communities. Here impact has to do with public understanding and the capacity of non-academic audiences to engage meaningfully with cultural or social issues. Examples of this include public lectures and non-academic writing concerning media distribution and new media technologies; citizen and local journalism; culture and communication of and about wine and social values (published in trade magazines); the media of communication and action in intelligence work; celebrity and race in politics and sport; communication technologies in their relation to sport and leisure practices.

Again, *each and every member of staff* submitted in this UoA can provide instances of impact under one or more of these three headings. That is, the research work of *all staff* has a demonstrable impact dimension. It was this coherence of applied work that led to the formation of the Applied Research Centres in the first place, and it is clear that the work of the Centres has been entirely successful in encouraging impact-oriented research.

### c. Strategy and plans

The ARCs, such as I-ACT and C-MAT, are constitutionally required to support the various dimensions of impact. Particular strategies to achieve research with impact include:

- Encouraging work to set up Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and similar arrangements with external businesses or organisations;
- Requiring public-facing dissemination of research findings;
- Encouraging enterprise activity founded upon research work;
- Granting PhD studentships for applied research and impact generating projects. For instance, a full PhD bursary co-funded between the university and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, for a comparative study of the social impact of regeneration measures in Salford and in Stoke-on-Trent.

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- Hosting a series of events designed to disseminate best practice in the above areas, encourage impact-oriented research in staff who are not currently research active, and discover opportunities for inter- or cross- disciplinary avenues of impact. Such events include:
  - ARC exchange events (please see discussion in REF5)
  - Staff Fest (the university's annual two-week long programme of staff development events)
  - Visiting speaker events, which are designed to include other subject areas and postgraduates.
  - Fringe (the Faculty's annual programme of public-facing events, to coincide with the Art and Design Degree Show). In 2013 this was attended by 1300 people.
  - Public exhibitions, shows, lectures or demonstrations.

In conformity to its remit, when approving support (financial or otherwise) for a particular project, the ARC will require an impact-oriented outcome as a condition of its support.

In exercising the above functions, the ARCs have support from the wider University. Such support includes:

- Regular meetings of Associate Deans for Scholarship, Enterprise and Research
- The allocation of a member of the University's Enterprise and Commercial Development unit to each Faculty and ARC, who can then filter and tailor information about research opportunities to the expertise and experience of that group. This colleague can also give concrete support with respect to HEIF, for example, and business oriented research activities such as KTPs.
- Vice-Chancellor's teaching-led research grant scheme, which has funded more than 20 projects designed to produce research work with a direct impact on teaching and learning innovation or quality.
- The University Research, Enterprise and Advanced Scholarship Committee, with membership from all four Faculties and all Services. This Committee has demonstrated its commitment to impact by, for example, recently and enthusiastically adopting the use of the VITAE Researcher Development Framework, and has done so in part because that Framework encourages researchers to think in terms of their public role and in terms of impact. This committee has also implemented the ePrints archival service to create a public-facing database of staff research in order to facilitate its dissemination and thus also the formation of external partnerships.
- The University Research Degrees Committee, which is currently redesigning doctoral recruitment, supervision and examination procedures to ensure that the dissemination, impact and implications of research, and the employability of research students, are considered at every stage.
- Research Informed Teaching initiatives, designed to create an immediate local impact for research activity by integrating research-related skills into the curriculum.
- See REF5 for a more full elaboration of University policies and procedures designed to support applied research, enterprise, commercial development and impact.

### **d. Relationship to case studies**

Part of the underlying research for the case studies pre-dates the formation of the Applied Research Centres at the University, and was supported by different mechanisms. Nevertheless, at later stages, the underlying research and the generation of impact for both of the case studies received funding and other support from I-ACT and/or C-MAT (or in the case of Professor Cashmore's work, from the Centre for Health Psychology). The case studies were selected, from a number of possibilities as listed above in section (b), because they were mature (i.e. the research had taken place long enough ago for the impact, its range, and its duration to be clear) and because of their importance.