

Institution: University of West London

Unit of Assessment: 36 | COMMUNICATION, CULTURAL and MEDIA STUDIES, LIBRARY and INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

a. Context

Of the two researchers whose work forms the basis for the claim to impact in this UOA, Dowd works between the areas of film, literature and philosophy, while Zubillaga is a film maker. The main areas in which the unit has achieved impact are cultural enrichment and the promotion of awareness, influence on teaching and curriculum beyond the submitting HEI and influence in cultural life beyond academia.

The impact of Dowd's research (Case Study 1) is constituted through a combination of its influence on teaching by peers in the University sector and its uptake among students as well as in the extent to which the same body of research has been responded to and engaged with outside the domain of academic literature and commentary.

The thesis in the second case study is that the work of Zubillaga (Case Study 2) has had impact on civil society, cultural life and public discourse. His work has illuminated a repository of cultural capital (through archival research) and interrogated cultural values (specific to a Latin American context); enriched the imaginations of those who have viewed his films; enhanced sensibilities with regard to the cultural themes they explore and extended the range and improved the quality of evidence, argument and expression to enhance public understanding of Venezuelan, Argentinian and, more broadly, Latin American cultural and political memory.

b. Approach to impact

The unit and staff contributing to the research environment in which Dowd and Zubillaga conduct their research has been responsive to University strategy implemented in an incremental manner since the period just before RAE 2008. In 2011 the University established the Institute for Practice, Interdisciplinary Research, and Enterprise (INSPIRE) with the ambition, *inter alia*, of developing a synergistic approach to the generation of impact. Much of this energy is now beginning to take effect.

In this respect the establishment of the Institute was the culmination of plans laid by the University in 2008 to develop the research infrastructure, research services and a research-active staff base across the university. Dowd was invited to join the management committee of INSPIRE in order to be the conduit between the Institute and the School (ESADM) which houses the submitting unit. A School Research Scrutiny and Development Panel was established under Dowd's leadership. The Institute and the School, via its panel, have sought, since the details concerning Impact in REF 2014 were publicised, to develop staff in the light of the Impact requirements.

The unit has successfully sought financial and infrastructural support from INSPIRE and has sought to benefit from the funding administered by the Institute. The aim in doing so was to facilitate and support research activity amenable to *both* recognition of quality standards within academe *and* with the potential to exert influence beyond. This includes achieving the widest dissemination possible deemed to be valuable both to the School and the University. Where staff research was not to be embodied in the form of publication or conference participation – that is when their research outputs were typically embodied in the form of performance, art-works or curatorial endeavours – there was a parallel School strategy to encourage staff to aim for avenues of and platforms for display and distribution of a level likely to maximise exposure, economic benefit, critical reception and public engagement. Audiences for screenings of Zubillaga's work – 500 people for *Music for a Missing Film* and *The Arousing of Thought* at their Michigan Theater screenings, Ann Arbor, for example – attest to its success.

Impact template (REF3a)

The unit aimed to have a presence at key conferences in the respective fields of the research active staff likely to produce outputs. Through seed-corn funding administered by INSPIRE, Dowd has been supported in attending and presenting papers at conferences in Lisbon (2012, 2013) and Bordeaux (2011). Zubillaga has, similarly, been supported to attend film festivals in the U.S.A, South America, and Europe (2009-2013).

c. Strategy and plans

Strategy and Plans for supporting and enabling impact for the current REF period and beyond comprise several related strands:

Growing and consolidating links with cultural (and other) institutions beyond Higher Education:

In 2013 UWL launched W5 Productions, an independent production company within UWL Enterprises. Working as a delivery agency for cultural activities and programmes (for both internal and external clients), W5 Productions takes the skills and outputs of UWL academics into the community, delivering solutions grounded in their practice-based research across the sub-region. The Southall Regeneration Partnership (with UWL's initial funding of £129,000 coming from the Greater London Assembly, via the London Borough of Ealing) is an early example of UWL academics delivering enhancements to the public realm that arise from their research and skills. Southall Great Street will be transformed through media and design (lighting, murals, animation, film). W5 Productions will serve the same function for Music at UWL, submitting as a separate UOA in this REF.

ESADM staff will continue and expand the on-going policy of engaging with schools in the region, in which academics share, explain and discuss their research with younger learners. The combination of visits to schools, school groups attending bespoke events at UWL, and facilitating the attendance of schools at art/media events where staff outputs are disseminated is intended to create a learning experience (beyond UWL programmes) where colleagues' work generates interactions, discoveries, and shapes understandings in/of their fields.

Appointing and retaining staff with connections to national and international networks:

With the aim of promulgating high-quality research originating from UWL, the University has sought latterly to appoint research-active staff with established profiles (as well as continuing to support equivalent 'internal' staff). Two new key appointments are Professor Strong (appointed 2013) who is chair of the Association of Adaptation Studies, and Dr Anna Gough-Yates (starting January 2014) who will be the new Head of ESADM. A noted researcher specialising in the television and magazine industries, Gough-Yates is a member of the Steering Committee of the Network for Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change and has regularly been a consultant or interviewee for programmes on Channel 4, BBC2, Radio 4 and 5 Live. Both appointments contribute significantly to the objective of enhancing the vitality and sustainability of research in the unit.

Commitment to the ongoing interpretation (and re-interpretation) of cultural artifacts, periods, and practices:

A sustained element of the impact strategy for staff associated with this UOA is a shared enthusiasm to re-visit and interrogate significant texts, moments, and movements with the intention of shaping current and future understandings. In the case of Zubillaga's several artistic interventions that engage with Venezuela's short-lived *avant-garde* (presented as an impact case study in REF3b), this includes the recuperation of that historical juncture (in fact, the insistence upon its very existence) for both domestic and international interpretation. His *oeuvre* and the institutional impact strategy that facilitates it, aims to ensure a broad public appreciation of a cultural moment deliberately foreclosed upon and excised from history by right-wing regimes, then accidentally elided by subsequent examinations of the period that have focused on equivalent phases in other South American countries – notably Chile and Argentina (to which latter Zubillaga nonetheless turns his attention in his most recent film).

Impact template (REF3a)

A notable proportion of Dowd's work (presented as an impact case study) also participates in the strategy of re-examination-and-dissemination, insisting upon a revised understanding of individuals, theories, and bodies of work, in the light of parallel analyses (for example Carax/Deleuze, Deleuze/Daney). Strong's work (though not conducted at UWL 2008-September 2013) frequently re-visits both little-studied texts/groupings. (The impact of Strong's work is not presented as a case study, but parallels Dowd's in key respects. Namely, it merges the inclusion of his work in relevant HEI syllabi as well as his engagement (by invitation, on panels etc.) in more popular and industry-focused events alongside filmmakers and cultural commentators, for example as an invited speaker at Bridport's *Page to Screen* Film Festival in 2012).

d. Relationship to case studies

Infrastructural support in the shape of funding to attend conferences, time to dedicate to external research collaborations and strategic shaping of workloads had material effects in the achievement of the impact described in each case study. That element of the approach to impact linked to funding enabled Dowd both prior to and during the census period to enhance his visibility and reputation, which led to the impact claimed. In the case of the second case study, the approach to impact in the unit facilitated long-distance travel for location shooting and dissemination (in Latin America in particular) which would have been impossible without the supportive approach to work loading which was undertaken as part of the unit's overall approach to impact.

The School supported Dowd in his participation in the AHRC funded Genre Studies Network, part of whose remit was to engage with non-academic users, by agreeing that he could devote two days per month for a year to his role in the project. The response to the facilitation of this impact was grounded in research conducted in the unit prior to the census period for REF2014. In 2002 the unit held a conference on Genre, publishing material originally presented there in a 2006 book co-edited by Dowd, Stevenson (submitted in the equivalent UOA in 2008) and Strong (who left the University prior to 2008, but was submitted as a category C participant, and who has now returned to the institution).

The first case study (focused on the work of Dowd) can therefore be related to REF3a for UOA36 in the following ways: the unit's approach to impact has been informed by a commitment to publication of outputs and dissemination via conferences, public presentations and cultural institutions with a view to gaining recognition from peers, students and interested parties from outside academia. By virtue of such exposure and by virtue of the unit's commitment to rigour and ambition to produce outputs of the highest quality possible, the unit has been driven by a belief that over time the disseminated outputs will make an impression on colleagues in other HEIs to the extent that they are included in reading lists for courses and that they will in time also have an influence among the film literate public in particular. The latter has occurred and the involvement of Dowd in dissemination of outputs and research related to these outputs in such locations as art galleries and cultural centres testifies to a further element of reach beyond the HE sector. In this way the unit's strategy as outlined can be said to have resulted in the desired outcome.

The second case study (focused on the work of Zubillaga) relates to REF3a for UO36 in that it illuminates the success of supporting – through time and funding – an individual whose research outputs demonstrably achieve the ambitions of a) being of a high standard, b) alignment with the unit's collective aim of interrogating key cultural moments, and c) delivering a quantifiable 'reach' by virtue of consistently securing a critically engaged viewership through well-attended festival screenings and DVD release.