

Institution: University of the West of England

Unit of Assessment: UoA21 – Politics and International Studies

a. Context

Although relatively small in size, the Politics UoA at UWE has had impact which is both broad in range and deep in significance. This impact has been at local, national and international levels.

The main non-academic users and beneficiaries of the Unit's impact are highly diverse and, include local government (e.g. Bristol City Council), national bodies (e.g. the National Farmers' Union [NFU], the Gangmasters Licensing Authority), national government (e.g. the Overseas Territories Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO]), and international bodies (e.g. the United Nations [UN] and Transparency International).

The main types of impact relevant to the Unit's activities are: (1) improving access to justice and related opportunities (e.g. **van den Anker** on migrants' rights); (2) stimulating or informing policy debate through research evidence (e.g. **Clegg** on good governance policies in UK Overseas Territories [UKOTs]); (3) shaping or influencing government, quasi-government bodies or NGOs' policy (e.g. Flynn shaping Northern Ireland's peace-building activities; **Greer** influencing the NFU's response to the development of co-decision in the Common Agricultural Policy); and (4) influencing public or political debate, including challenging existing practices (e.g. Flynn's work on peace-building in Cyprus; **Harrison's** work on women parliamentary candidates).

This range of impacts is directly informed by the Unit's research activity and in particular by the objectives of the Unit's research groups. For example, **van den Anker's** impact arises from her influential research on contemporary slavery, which was conducted in the context of the Human Rights Unit, and then its successor, the International Security and Human Rights Research Group. Flynn's impact arose from her innovative research on peace-building, which was facilitated by the Peace and Conflict Research Group, active until Flynn's departure in November 2012. Other types of impact were enabled by individual research agendas. For example: **Clegg's** research has led to impact on the UK's Overseas Territories; **Harrison's** work was cited in a House of Commons research paper; and **Greer's** impact resulted from him targeting events at which he was able to build up his relationship to key non-academic bodies, including the NFU.

b. Approach to impact

The Politics Unit has an approach to impact which is appropriate to its character and size.

Interaction and development of relationships with key users. The Unit approaches impact through identifying different sorts of relationships with various end-users. At the more formal end of the spectrum, a particular body (e.g. Bristol City Council; the European Social Fund) has commissioned a member of the Unit to conduct research with the specific aim of informing its views and policies. At the informal end of the spectrum, close relationships between members and end-users have developed over time by meetings in a variety of academic and non-academic forums (e.g. **Greer's** relationship with the NFU; and **Clegg's** relationship with the FCO). The trust built up in such informal relationships has enabled Unit members to have significant input to important policy debates.

Evidence of nature of these interactions and relationships. The following examples provide evidence of the nature of these interactions and relationships. **Van den Anker** has been able to build up an important range of contacts with Bristol City Council by running events in which members of the Council and associated parties participated. This led directly to the key role that she has played in the shaping of the Council's influential counter-trafficking policy. She did this by creating an ongoing coalition of organisations, meeting four times a year under the leadership of the UWE Human Rights Unit and Bristol City Council. **Greer** has spoken at primarily academic events at which members of relevant user groups have been present, e.g. *Workshop on the*

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Review of the EU Budget, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2009. He was later invited to talk about the UK and the EU budget for 2014-20 at the Federal Trust, an independent think tank, in London in 2013, at which EU officials were present. He has also met regularly with members of the NFU, strongly shaping their policy on a range of issues. Finally **Clegg**'s close relationship with the FCO is evidenced by his keynote address to its Overseas Territories Forum in December 2009.

The Unit's support for impact. The primary way in which the Unit has supported the achievement of impact has been through the funding of research. Such funding has not been exclusively linked to the quality of academic outputs but has also been available to support research which has non-academic impact. This funding has taken four principal forms: direct support for research; an individual allowance for conference attendance; the funding of other research expenses; and support for faculty-recognized research groups. For example: (1) **Clegg** received funding to attend a conference on the UKOTs which took place in Grenada in 2012. His work in this area has been facilitated more generally by the directly targeted support for research he received from 2010 to 2012; and (2) funding for the Human Rights Unit (and subsequently the International Security and Human Rights Group) has enabled **van den Anker** to organize various conferences and workshops which have helped her to build up an important network of contacts with members of local government and various non-governmental organizations. Specific events have also been organized in order to significantly enhance the impact of the Unit's research. For instance, in February 2012 the workshop 'Borders, citizenship and exploitation: Migrant rights violations in Bristol' brought Unit members together with representatives from relevant local NGOs, including the Bristol Counter Trafficking Coalition and the Migrant Rights Centre Bristol; and, in June 2011, the workshop 'Peace-building from an interdisciplinary perspective' included discussants from the International NGO Training and Resource Centre, and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Conflict Issues.

Institutional support for impact. The Politics Unit's impact has been strongly supported by various parts of the University, including in particular its well-established Research, Business and Innovation unit (RBI). This unit works closely with researchers across the University to help identify how best to involve users and beneficiaries in projects from the outset as a means of facilitating co-production and catalysing impact. Dedicated RBI staff support opportunities to translate research outcomes into a wide range of follow-on initiatives to ensure they make a difference to the economy and society. UWE has also provided important funding which has enabled the Unit's research to have impact. For example, **van den Anker**'s work as project leader for the Refugee and Migrant Support Hub was funded by UWE and the Bristol Legacy Commission to the value of £110,000. Her work as project leader for the Bristol Counter Trafficking Coalition was made possible with £4,000 of funding from UWE. The effective dissemination of research with potential for impact by members of the Unit is also facilitated by the University by making research findings public through the UWE Research Repository, maintaining dedicated web-pages which detail research findings, by publicizing these findings through the Press Office (e.g. a Press Release on 'Family fun day marks first anniversary of Migrant Rights Centre Bristol', December 2011), and by providing specialized training which has enabled Unit members to achieve wider publicity for their research (e.g. **Harrison** has worked closely with the UWE's Media Relations Team in support of her numerous media appearances commenting on election issues).

c. Strategy and plans.

UWE's Strategy 2020 includes the ambition 'to be known nationally and internationally as the best university for connecting and working with our local and regional economy, businesses and communities and international partners to advance knowledge, and to advance the health, sustainability and prosperity of our locality and region'. More specifically, one of its top four priorities is to have research with impact: world-class performance in selected areas of research that meets the needs of a sustainable economy and society.

At the level of the Faculty in which the Unit is located, the aim is 'to develop the impact of the research through focusing on a number of strategic priorities'. It seeks to do so by 'fostering an ethos in which the impact of research is enabled at every level of the organisation', by the 'creation of incentives' such as the celebration of success, by 'building on the UWE partnership strategy', by providing 'high quality training', and by 'effective use of UWE services' such as RBI, the Press

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Office and virtual repositories.

In line with these aims, the Politics Unit has achieved and will continue to achieve a significant range of impacts and considerable depth of influence of the type evidenced above. In this phase, the achievement of impact will be supported primarily by the funding of research and research groups, by ensuring that the goals of such research are not defined only in terms of high-quality academic outputs, but also in terms of its potential for positive influence outside of academia. Thus the key objective of Unit's research strategy is 'to consolidate and further develop a range of knowledge exchange, partnership and public engagement activities', which is enabled in part by 'appropriate recognition of research with "impact" in selected areas'.

The Unit now has a number of clearly stated aims for maximising the potential for impact from its current and future research: (1) the development and sustenance of partnerships with potential end-users; (2) the inclusion, where appropriate, of potential end-users in the shaping of research plans; and (3) the further integration of Unit members into various research groups, including, for example, UWE's Centre for Understanding Social Practices, in order to facilitate collaborative research.

In order to realize these aims, the more specific goals of the Unit are: (1) to continue to support its International Security and Human Rights Group and in particular to ensure that its activities enable its research to have the widest possible impact; (2) to focus available funding as appropriate on those research activities which sustain current impact and/or enable future impact to happen; and (3) to continue to work closely with various University bodies – especially RBI – in order to enhance the Unit's ability to undertake impactful research.

d. Relationship to case studies

Both of the case-studies presented in this submission can be seen as exemplifications of the Unit's approach to the achievement of impact. The impact described in these case-studies was made possible by a mixture of direct support for research with impact potential, and indirect support for the research groups in which the research activity which made the impact possible was located.

Van den Anker's research on contemporary forms of slavery, including trafficking in human beings, has had impact for both of these reasons; direct funding for her research activities and financial and institutional support for the Human Rights Unit, have created the conditions in which she has been able to have significant impact internationally, nationally and locally.

In a similar fashion, **Clegg's** research on the UK's relationship with its Overseas Territories shows how support for individuals' projects can help maximise the impact of that research. Direct support for research, and the funding of conference travel, has enabled **Clegg** to develop relationships with relevant parts of the UK government as well as with administrators and politicians in various Overseas Territories and the UN.

At the same time, these two case-studies have had a significant influence on the Politics Unit's future approach to impact. The Unit drew inspiration from **van den Anker's** impactful research in order to shape its impact strategy. In particular, the Unit's goal of supporting 'a range of knowledge exchange, partnership and public engagement activities' emerged from reflection on how closely these activities were integrated in **van den Anker's** research and research-related activities. The Unit's reflections on **Clegg's** achievement of impact led it to place considerable weight on the funding of individuals' research, where the criteria for obtaining such support includes the likelihood that impact will arise from it.