

**Institution: University of Roehampton**

**Unit of Assessment:** Panel C, UoA 23 Sociology

**a. Context**

Sociology at Roehampton has a tradition of applied policy-orientated research and knowledge exchange stretching back more than a decade. The Crucible Centre for Human Rights Research and the Social Governance Research Group support the communication of research findings to wider public and policy-making audiences, underpin consultation with the users of research through commissioned research and in advisory capacities, and establish collaborative partnerships that develop and enrich the impact of our research on policy-making, the work of practitioners and service delivery. Crucible and the Social Governance Centre have well-established links with the end-users of research in governmental and non-governmental agencies internationally. The types of research impact include:

- **Changing attitudes and awareness through the communication of research to policy and wider public audiences** through traditional and new media, and other dissemination activity. Examples include: research on patterns of new migration to the UK were reported in *The Guardian*, *Economist*, *Daily Telegraph*, Reuters, *Datum* (Austrian daily) and widely in the Polish media; and through work commissioned for BBC Newsnight and the Institute for Public Policy Research (see 'Localising migration' case study); and research on violence against women and forced marriage has been widely communicated on Sky News, Al Jazeera and the BBC (including Crimewatch, Radio 4 Today, Breakfast, World Tonight, World Service, BBC Asian Network and the Politics Show) (see Gill, 'Preventing violence against women' case study).
- **Informing and shaping policy and practice through commissioned research.** Examples include: research on human rights policy coverage in Scotland for the Scottish Human Rights Commission (2009-10) informed the future strategic direction of the commission; research on youth participation for Amnesty International (2008-9) shaped a shift in support for youth and student members by Amnesty; research supporting a review of the provision of personal, social and health education in schools for Wandsworth Council (2009-10); research on A level subject choices at schools in East London for Linklaters (2010) informed their social responsibility activity; and research on the impact of new EU migration to London had wide-ranging influence on service provision across local government in London (see 'Localising migration' case study).
- **Expert advice to legal and policy communities in the UK and internationally informing national policy, as well as individual cases.** Examples include: Gill on 'honour-killing' and forced marriage to the UK Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Crown Prosecution Service, criminal justice agencies in Belgium and the Netherlands, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the European Commission (see 'Preventing violence against women' case study); expert advice by Schwandner-Sievers to the UK's Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) on cases dealing with the Western Balkans; and expert advice by Eade in 2013 to a planning enquiry concerning the use of a former cinema by a Brazilian Pentecostal church, UCKG in Walthamstow.
- **Creating new policy tools through action research and knowledge exchange projects.** For example, in action research funded by the European Commission under the Leonardo da Vinci programme to support the social inclusion and labour market integration by new migrants across the European Union. This research led to the development of a policy 'toolkit' to empower disadvantaged groups by giving them the skills to operate in the labour market (see 'Localising migration' case study).

**b. Approach to impact**

The approach taken by sociology at Roehampton during this REF period has been to embed impact in the research strategies of Crucible and the Social Governance Research Centre. These centres of research have established relationships with a wide range of local, national and international policy networks. These policy networks create opportunities for researchers to engage with non-academic audiences and the potential users of research including professional bodies, practitioners and policy-makers in government and non-governmental organisations. In turn, these non-academic audiences and user groups inform research in sociology at Roehampton in the co-

production of knowledge. These policy networks facilitate research impact on three levels:

1. The **communication** of research findings to wider public and policy audiences, in particular, through the media (see above) and intermediary organisations. For example, researchers on migration to the UK from Eastern Europe worked with the Polish Embassy to disseminate research findings from a special issue of *Przegląd Polonijny – Studia Migracyjne* to a policy-making audience in London (November 2011); and Gill presenting research to United Nations Expert Group Meeting on good practices in legislation to address harmful practices against women (May 2009).
2. **Consultation** between researchers and external users through commissioned research and in advisory capacities. For example, in August 2013, a report by Gill for the European Union on effective approaches by member states and promising practices to address forced marriage; research by Loewenthal on improving access to psychological services for Bengali, Urdu and Tamil populations in London funded by the NHS (2008-9); two pieces of research on the effectiveness of integrated family support services for the Prisoner's charity PACT (2011-13); research on substance abuse among new migrant communities for the Methodist Church (2009-11); and a performance evaluation of a voluntary sector organization providing support and housing to ex-offenders and people with mental illness for Penrose (2010-11).
3. **Collaboration** to develop and enrich the impact of research through longer-term partnerships. We have worked with local partners in London bringing our research expertise to projects addressing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training through social enterprise (funded by London Development Agency, 2009); and enhancing the communication with people with learning difficulties by Wandsworth Care Alliance (also funded by the LDA). We have also led or been a partner in international multi-partner projects under the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci (see above and 'Localising migration' case study) and Tempus programmes.

The work of Crucible on three Tempus projects exemplifies the approach taken by sociology at Roehampton to research impact. Roehampton is the lead on two Tempus projects and a partner in a third. These knowledge exchange projects are founded on the research expertise of Crucible staff. The projects bring together academic and non-academic partners to effect social change in two regions: the Middle East and the Western Balkans. Project 1: Developing Service Learning and Civic Engagement in Jordan and Lebanon (2010-2014, total £788K) brings together nine academic partners across the EU and the region to develop local community projects with civil society partners (<http://www.tawasol.org/>). Project 2: Developing Human Rights Education at the Heart of Higher Education (2013-15, total £899K) brings together 15 academic partners across the EU and the Balkans to support human rights education in universities and civil society agencies (<http://www.humanrightsteaching.org/>). Project 3: Developing Policy Oriented Training Programmes in the Context of European Integration (2013-2015, Roehampton share £65K) brings together academic partners from Belgrade, Alicante, Sarajevo, Leiria, Montenegro, Nis and Tuzla to impact on the process of European enlargement and integration in the region.

This approach has enabled us to have a significant effect on policy and practice by responding to the needs of users. This approach to impact is supported in a number of ways. Central institutional resources at Roehampton and localised support mechanisms in sociology work together to facilitate the engagement of users of research through to capturing the impact of this work. An impact officer chairs the impact advisory group, which oversees the strategic development of this work, and also a dedicated rapid response fund. The university has provided training to support engagement strategies since 2012, and the unit has also commissioned localised training programmes and attendance at training events to enhance this area of work. There is a formal workload provision for impact related work, allocated according to annual research plans and appraisals, and external engagement is recognised in promotions (e.g. Lamb and Gill in 2011). One member (Gill) of the unit's Research Advisory Group takes the lead on research impact. Sociology also provides financial support for research and knowledge exchange events. The Research Facilitator in sociology supports the research environment in general (see environment statement) and the development of external partnerships and research impact in particular. In addition, the Crucible research centre has a dedicated Project Officer to support the

communication of research, via new media (<http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/crucible/>).

### **c. Strategy and plans**

An absolute commitment to research excellence will underpin the development of sociology's impact strategy in the future. This strategy is focused on continuing to embed impact in our research. This requires a strong research environment that supports high quality research and engages with non-academic audiences and user groups as a matter of course. We are committed to deepening the links between our established fields of research in human rights, social governmental studies and migration and multiculturalism. Future plans include hosting the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy conference in 2014 on the theme of Security in Social and Personal Life; and a research project on EU human rights governance and the European Court that seeks to influence future policy-making on EU-wide human rights legislation. Sociology also plans to develop existing research that cuts across social governance and human rights through a new criminal justice research group that will build on existing impact-led research on prisoners, mental health and drugs policy.

Our plans for the future will feature strong and continuing relationships with the public, policy and practitioner audiences for our research. These are, in part, built through wider public and policy engagements. Crucible will build on its success in delivering research-informed events that attract national and international audiences. For example, in December 2013, Crucible co-organised a high profile event at Methodist Hall in London to mark Human Rights Day with speakers including Baroness Kennedy, Conor Gearty, Francesca Klug, Stephen Bowan and the lawyer Imran Khan. This work enables the flow of people and expertise between our researchers and external organisations to effect change.

These public and policy engagements will be reflected in how we work with the users of our research at the inception of projects, for example, through commissioned research, research bids to grant funding bodies and in continuing to establish longer-term partnerships around research and knowledge exchange. We will use visiting fellowships and dedicated impact sabbaticals to encourage the exchange of good practice and the consolidation of research impact relationships with external partners.

To support this future strategy, the unit has invested in a Research Facilitator and a Crucible Project Officer to capitalise on current research and knowledge exchange activity, including bidding activity to a wide range of traditional and non-traditional funding sources. Working alongside our research impact lead on the Research Advisory Group, the research facilitator will support future research impact by helping to establish relationships with the users of research; by supporting the communication of research to wider public and policy audiences; and by ensuring the impact of our research is recorded on an on-going basis (and Roehampton is developing a bespoke database to capture and record evidence of impact across the university). To carry out this work, the Research Facilitator will work closely with the centralized Research Dissemination Coordinator at Roehampton and the university's communications department to enhance the profile of our research strengths via social and traditional media, as well as through more targeted communication and public events directed at specific audiences.

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

The case studies exemplify our strategic approach to research impact. They illustrate how research impact operates at three inter-linked levels: in the communication of research findings to public and policy-making audiences; in the consultation between research at Roehampton and external users through commissioned research and in advisory capacities; and by establishing longer-term partnerships that shape policy and practice and research agendas. 'Localising migration' demonstrates how academic research has developed through collaborative partnerships with user groups, and as part of broader policy networks through the commissioning of applied research and the funding of major capacity-building projects. 'Preventing violence against women' illustrates how researchers in the unit have worked with legal and policy communities to provide expert and policy advice and to successfully disseminate research to wider public audiences.