Institution: Loughborough University

Unit of Assessment: D36b Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

a. Context

Research context. Staff submitted to this unit are based in the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University. Over the last 25 years, this interdisciplinary department has reached a critical mass of expertise in communication, cultural and media studies. Research activity is organised under the auspices of the Communication Research Centre, which has two research strands: the Cultural and Media Analysis Research Group (CAMARG) and the Discourse And Rhetoric Group (DARG). These groups have developed expertise in political communication, journalism and news production, social interaction, applied conversation analysis, discourse analysis, memory studies, comparative analysis, cultural history, media history, visual anthropology, digital surveillance, political economy, feminist media studies cultural policy and media ethnographies.

Research Application and Range of Beneficiaries. Both CAMARG and DARG have established a wide range of contacts with external user groups and audiences over the REF period. The accompanying case-study documents (3b) report four narrative cases of impact on institutions outside of academia, but these are just a selection of our work. The four selected cases lie within a range of real-world impact on such groups as: media regulators (e.g., the BBC Trust, OFCOM), media managers and practitioners (e.g., the BBC Executive), government bodies and public agencies (including the Department of Health, Leicestershire Constabulary, the National Crime Academy, the US Superior Court, the UK Drug Dependency Commission, the National Social Marketing Centre, Health Direct), commercial enterprises (e.g., IPSOS/ MORI, Resolution), charitable and public help line services (including NSPCC, NHS Direct, Mind Infoline and Kids HelpLine [Australia]) and assorted other non-governmental organisations (e.g., the Family Mediators' Association and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education).

Scope of Impact. Our primary impact has been on *policy making* and on the *delivery of public services*. For example, the development of 'applied conversation analysis' and evidence-based training on how to communicate most effectively in a range of public, private and third sector organizations has been adopted by a diverse range of mediators, police officers, medics, and help line services in their training to provide support for a wide range of vulnerable groups. Elsewhere, our technical expertise in systematic 'real time' auditing of news output, across a range of topics and for a wide range of commissioning bodies, have been used by these organisations to change, or at least seek to influence, editorial policies and practices (see for example, Loughborough University's central contribution to the recent impartiality review of BBC coverage of the Arab Spring [see impact case study 4]). These and related studies have also had impact on public discourse (for example, the high public profile of the General Election news audits conducted by the department since 1992 have helped increase public and political awareness of the degree of agenda balance, stopwatch balance and directional balance in mainstream UK election reporting).

b. Approach to impact

University institutional context.

In developing its pathways to impact, the unit has profited from facilities, expertise and resources provided by the University as it pursues its 'enterprise' agenda. Just before the start of this REF period, in 2007, Loughborough University established a new Pro-Vice Chancellor role covering 'Enterprise activity'. It is important to emphasise that LU's definition of 'enterprise' is broad and inclusive, and reinforces research that connects directly with the impact agenda. Enterprise at LU is defined as 'academic engagement with business, public and voluntary organisations to create social, cultural and economic impact through knowledge exchange'. Further restructuring in 2011 included a new role in each School of Associate Dean (Enterprise), sitting alongside an Associate Dean (Research) and Associate Dean (Teaching). University committees exist to encourage and support both research and enterprise, and each academic school is represented respectively by Associate Deans for Research and for Enterprise. The unit also makes regular and routine use of the Enterprise Office for contractual and legal advice, and for communicating research outcomes

and expertise to existing and potential research users. We also have organised professional training and consultancies through Loughborough University Enterprises Limited (LUEL), which provides a flexible response to research users as 'clients'. Several staff have also attracted follow-on funding from the ESRC to develop the impact elements of their research (For example, *Developing Media Literacy: From Research to Practice* [David Buckingham, 2012-13, £98K] and *Mediating and policing community disputes: Developing new methods for role-play communication skills* (Elizabeth Stokoe, ESRC, £48K, 2011-12)

Use of external funding to promote engagement with users and agencies

During the REF assessment period, Loughborough University was awarded an EPSRC Knowledge Transfer Account (KTA) of £3M and an EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account of £2M. In 2012, these funds supported several initiatives in the unit. As examples, these funds allowed staff to make overtures to, and engage in training programmes with, representatives of national mediation services and representatives of telephone helpline charities. These two initiatives set in train what has become one of our most successful applications in the field of public service communication, as evidenced by their uptake of recommendations for our research. Other examples of the use of external pump-priming funding are given in greater detail in section (d) below, and full accounts of the uptake of research by users and other agencies are given in the individual Impact Narratives on form 3b.

Departmental-level facilitation of research with impact

The working practices and support structures of the wider department within which this unit is based have also encouraged the pursuit of impact. These include:

(a) Acknowledging impact-related activities formally (alongside teaching and administration duties) within academic workload models

(b) Providing strategic internal funds within the unit to develop research and impact (see section d. below for examples), and subjecting proposals to peer-assessment at initial stages of research projects to ensure they are creative and feasible

(c) Providing financial support to colleagues to attend national and international conferences and meetings to promote research and its outcomes, discuss possible new ventures with user communities and develop networks that facilitate impact

(d) Hosting conferences and short courses that are solely or significantly orientated to user groups (over the period, staff have organised over 60 such meetings, for example short courses on medical communication, neighbourhood mediation workshops and training days for NSPCC helpline call-takers)

(e) Engaging with institutional support for public relations and marketing opportunities to celebrate and publicise outcomes. Examples include Professor van Zoonen's research team on 'identity management' making presentations at the Research Councils' Parliamentary Showcase at the House of Commons in December 2012 and at the British Science Festival of 2012.

c. Strategy and plans

Goals.

The objective of the unit is to strengthening pathways to impact as a major priority over the next five years. The unit is committed to pursuing research which, as the case studies demonstrate, apply high-quality social scientific research to applied problems, and make a difference in real-world activities to a range of users and agencies in the public sector.

Strategic planning

The strategy is two-fold. On the one hand we intend to secure large grants which will guarantee funding over a period of years, and so provide a framework for engagement with users (a process that can take a great deal of time and negotiation). This part of the strategy is already evident within existing research within our work. For example, Professor Liesbet van Zoonen is leading a three-year, cross-institutional £1.36m project examining taboos and desires around future technologies of 'identity management'. Another example of this large-scale funding strategy is

Professor David Buckingham's follow-on funding from the ESRC to develop teaching materials on media literacy for use in primary schools, working in partnership with the English and Media Centre and Centre for literacy in Primary Education These two cases represent the kind of security of funding that allow patient and long-lasting partnerships and collaborations to develop with end-users and stake-holders. A promising future development is the bid to ESRC for a five-year Centre in Communication in Service Delivery, which has passed the initial round of decisions at time of writing.

The other arm of our strategy is to encourage a larger number of shorter-term research projects that have already made links with external partners, but require resources for development. Specifically, the unit is committed to:

(a) Ensuring that colleagues are given appropriate resources to develop impact-related activities, both in terms of time (including enterprise activities in work load allocations) and financial support (e.g., travel grants; subsidizing other impact-related work).

(b) Providing professional incentives for impact activity by including it as a key pathway to achieving academic promotion.

(c) Sharing good practice with the unit and across the wider school and university. (e.g., running annual half-day School-wide enterprise surgeries to showcase best practice, especially those triple-line projects that are stakeholder-led, enhance research excellence, and deliver intended benefits.

(d) Strengthening the training and mentoring of probationers in documenting evidence of impacts from their research, and to help them to draw on this inventory of case studies in teaching and supervisory practice, and rewarding impact activity in annual performance reviews and personal research plans.

d. Relationship to case studies

All four impact case studies demonstrate how our approach to impact has been implemented since 2008.

[1] Changing Communication skills training with the Conversation Analytic Role Play Method (CARM). This case study was initially supported by £8K funding from the EPSRC KTA/ITA accounts in 2012 to finance a fully funded one-day training conference at LU. Thirty national organisations were represented at the meeting. Professor Stokoe also received additional departmental resources prior to this date to gain training accreditation from the College of Mediators for the Department and to cover travel costs to assorted mediation services across the UK. In May 2013, Professor Stokoe received the LU award for Social Enterprise. With departmental support, her CARM programme has now been rolled out nationally.

[2] Improving helpline effectiveness through analysing interaction. This case study received £5k funding from the EPSRC KTA/ITA accounts in 2012 in part to fund the evaluation of the new End-Of-Life information line operated by the charity *Compassion in Dying.* This evaluation was completed in June 2013 and the charity has identified on its basis internal uses to inform changes in institutional practice and underpin their attempts to influence policy around end-of-life issues. The funds were also used to run a series of workshop activities in Edinburgh attracting representatives from 12 Help line organisations involved in parenting and family protection issues. Here also, the department has provided several tranches of supplementary funding to cover travel costs for meetings with potential research partners and beneficiaries.

[3] The Mediation of Politics and Policy in the UK, and

[4] Improving the impartiality of the BBC's coverage of the Middle East and North Africa.

In 2010, the Department committed £5K from its own resources to a General Election news analysis. That ensured the continuity and public profile of the Communication Research Centre's work in this area, which had begun in 1992. EPSRC KTA/ITA and departmental seed-corn funding was also used to arrange meetings with, and presentations to, representatives from the UK Drug Dependency Commission, IPSOS/ MORI and other non-academic users to discuss existing and potential research in these areas.