

<b>Institution: Royal Holloway, University of English</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: English</b>
<b>Title of case study: Reforming English Literature through Literary Theory</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impacts of Professor Eaglestone's research fall into two main areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Education. Underpinned by his research into literary theory, ethics, and contemporary literature, and their place in the teaching of English, he has, by assisting Examination Boards, Subject Associations, and Parliamentary Bodies, brought significant and enduring changes to the A-level syllabi, benefitting teachers and students alike.</li> <li>2. Economic prosperity and cultural life. Eaglestone's publishers have profited from his internationally best-selling <i>Doing English</i> and his general editorship of the <i>Routledge Critical Thinkers Series</i>. This is enabled in part by his visibility as a public intellectual, by which he also contributes to cultural life.</li> </ol>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Eaglestone's first book <i>Ethical Criticism</i> (1997), alongside a series of related articles, argued that the institution of 'criticism', especially as it is researched and taught through the discipline of English Literature, has had a complex and indeed pivotal engagement with questions of ethics. He argued that controversies over 'theory' during the 1970s to the 1990s were, at their heart, controversies over ethics. By turning to the contrasting and influential philosophies of Martha Nussbaum and of Emmanuel Levinas (arguably the major influence on Derrida and therefore on the approach known as deconstruction), he analysed the deep philosophical structure of theory and its intersections with the 'ethical' aspects of English Literature. He suggested that this illuminated the nature of criticism and theory, and, importantly, the institutions and discipline of English, and the way English is taught. It meant that many of the ideas described as 'literary theory' had been misunderstood by both the opponents and, crucially, the advocates of theory. Central to this research was the question of how literary theory is, or should be, taught and disseminated.</p> <p>These areas of abstract debate assumed concrete ramifications in the teaching and study of English Literature, especially at secondary level. This became clear in his second book <i>Doing English</i> (2000), which, while it declares itself to be a guide for students, cannot be classified as a textbook. Eaglestone draws out a polemical argument from his insights into theory; he develops an original position about the place of theory in educational institutions, and the need to fill the gap between English HE and A-level.</p> <p>Further focus was brought to these issues in his subsequent research into representations of the Holocaust. His research here, especially <i>The Holocaust and the Postmodern</i> (2004) explored the relationship between literature, theory and history and considered how theoretical questions could be brought to bear upon historical events. These works of literary theory aimed to expand, clarify, or complicate, a range of topics central to the study of literature (eg. ethics; authorship; the relationship between literary texts and context; the nature of criticism as institutional practice). These topics have also been the subject of many of his research articles from 1997 to the present. One of his arguments is that representations of the Holocaust and other acts of genocide should be sourced not only in historical texts but also in literature. Only by including literary sources can such representations form a significant aspect of the memories of genocidal traumas. Literature, Eaglestone argues, is as important for grasping historical events, as history itself; in short, literatures provides culture with a crucial purchase on political and cultural context. This fundamental insight guides Eaglestone's many public engagements and has underpinned</p>

his impacts on curriculum review.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Robert Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism* (OUP: 1997)  
 Robert Eaglestone, *Doing English* (Routledge, 2000; 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition 2009)  
 Robert Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial* (Cambridge, 2001)  
 Robert Eaglestone, *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film* (2008)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The beneficiaries of Eaglestone's research can be grouped according to the two areas of impact outlined above: 1) Education; and 2) Economic and Cultural benefits.

1) Through long-standing engagement with curriculum reviews, Eaglestone has become a leading advisor about matters concerning the **English Literature A-level**, and transition to University. As his research has developed within numerous publications, so the number of advisory roles has increased. The beneficiaries of his work include:

- Government/public bodies: the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); OfQual and the Department of Education;
- Exam Boards (the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA exam board (OCR) and the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- Charitable Educational Organisations: the National Association for Teachers of English (NATE), the English and Media Centre (the EMC), and the English Association (EA).
- Teachers and students of A-Level English Literature

Eaglestone's research on theory and its place in the Academy, crystallised in *Doing English*: 'the first substantial engagement with the relationship between A Level and University English' which 'led to a resurgence of discussion about transition between A Level and HE English' (see References - NATE). His earlier research had led to an invitation to join the English Reform Group, which fed into Dearing's 'Curriculum Review 2000' and subsequently to the invitation in 2005 to advise the QCA/QCDA which was refining Curriculum 2000 for implementation in **2008**. In this advisory role Eaglestone helped to review existing specifications and syllabi, and to design a new set of specifications and assessment objectives. He played a major role in establishing, against some resistance, two of these new specifications. First, he argued successfully that there needed to be one set literary text dated post 1990. This position was based on his research into the mutually illuminating evolution of both Literature and Literary Theory. Secondly he argued, again successfully, that there should be an increase (from 8 to 12) in the number of texts studied, to diversify available methods of interpretation. Here Eaglestone promoted both theoretical and contextual approaches, reflecting his research into the dynamic relationship between literature, history and trauma. He also advised on reform of the Assessment Objectives to better reflect the kind of theorized work practised in Higher Education, especially AO3 and AO4. Direct impacts of Eaglestone's work are to have introduced critical theory and contemporary literature into the A-Level specifications. This has helped bridge the gap between A-Level and HE English Literature. It has also encouraged and facilitated the teaching of contemporary literature in Universities, a noticeable trend in recent years. Eaglestone, put simply, is at the forefront of transforming the subject of English Literature – in Secondary Schools and at University.

Responding to the new specifications, Examination Boards developed new syllabi. Eaglestone's expertise was here critical and both the OCR and the AQA consulted him and have continued to do so: he is advising both AQA and OCR in Autumn 2013 on their A-Level

Literature specifications. In 2010, after the QCA was dissolved, Eaglestone was consulted by Ofqual, the Department of Education, and AQA and OCR for advice on A-Level reform. It is a measure of the significance of Eaglestone's impacts that his earlier recommendations are being maintained by these Exam Boards under the new A-Level structure.

Eaglestone has also frequently been consulted about HE education by three leading charitable organisations for the teaching of Literature – NATE, the EMC and the EA. Two NATE reports in 2005 (see References), which drew extensively on Eaglestone's work were submitted to the QCA. Addressing the NATE annual conference in 2013 and now a member of the HE Committee of the EA, Eaglestone advises these groups who provide inputs to Ofqual and the DfE, thus ensuring further strong policy impacts.

Eaglestone's work has, of course, affected the c.50,000 students taking English Literature A-Level each year since 2008 (making a total of c.300,000). It affects the content of the A-Level, but also teaching practice, evidenced by teacher testimonials about his work in the third (revised) edition of *Doing English*. The book's influence is not just national: it has been translated into Japanese and Arabic and has been excerpted in Australian and American texts books. An edition is being prepared for the US market.

2) Eaglestone's research leads to economic and cultural benefits. These are by no means negligible impacts, especially to his publishers Routledge, who have benefitted from the high sales of *Doing English* (current total 23,150) and his General Editorship of the Routledge Critical Thinkers (a series that has sold in total upward of 140,000 books). Eaglestone appears at about 2 Literary Festivals a year, addressing audiences of between 50 and 100 and thus contributes to the Festival Industry, and to cultural life.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

##### Corroboration of Consultation by Exam Boards and Public Bodies:

1. OCR

*Qualifications Team Manager – English*

2. AQA Author

3. Head of Citizenship, PSHE and RE Team for The Department for Education / Ofqual A-level reform team

##### Examples of corroborative evidence of Professor Eaglestone's impacts on the Discipline of English at A-level, from Subject Associations:

4. National Association of Teachers of English Consultant

##### Books for A-Level Teachers influenced by Eaglestone's work:

5. Barlow, Adrian (ed.) *World and Time: Teaching Literature in Context* (CUP: Cambridge UP, 2009).

6. Carol Atherton, Andrew Green and Gary Snapper, *Teaching English Literature 16-19* (London: Routledge, 2013)

**For evidence of the impacts on a range of people outside academia, especially teachers,** see the testimonials provided in *Doing English* available at the Taylor and Francis website (go to page 3).

7. <http://www.ewidgetsonline.net/dxreader/Reader.aspx?token=saGz7lzTkUJ3u2iaOEa6sA%3d%3d&rand=1398499510&buyNowLink=&page=&chapter=>

##### Professor Eaglestone's Publisher can confirm impact of sales related to his publications:

8: Publisher from Routledge (Taylor and Francis)

