

Institution: Newman University
Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature
<p>a. Context</p> <p>As a small group of academics, our approach has concentrated on organizations and beneficiaries in the local region, where we can maximise the reach and significance of the impact of our research. Partners that we work with include public bodies such as The Library of Birmingham, not-for-profit organisations such as community drama groups, and small and medium size enterprises in the local community working in the arts and humanities such as The Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Writing West Midlands and Digital Ink Drop. For the particular case studies submitted, the main non-academic user groups/beneficiaries/audiences for our research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre in Education companies and their audiences in eight European Countries and China. • Theatre practitioners, trainee teachers, and members of community drama groups in the Midlands area. • Teachers of English and their students in the Midlands area considering issues of otherness and identity. <p>The principal types of impact relevant to our research have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the understanding and performance practice of theatre groups such as the Big Brum Theatre in Education Company; • Influence on the professional practice and effectiveness of teachers in the Midlands so that their teaching of otherness and of Theatre in Education is better informed by current research. • Impact on the cultural understanding of those attending the performances of theatre companies, and the theatre in education sessions. • Impact on school children in the Midlands whose cultural understanding of issues of otherness is developed through attending the events we host. <p>These principal types of impact are related to the spectrum of research activity in the unit in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As outlined in the UOA Environment Statement, staff research outputs relate specifically to Theatre in Education, to the aesthetics of theatre and to issues of otherness and identity. • Staff work very closely with both their associate artist Edward Bond and Big Brum Theatre in Education Company in rehearsal and in other ways reflecting on theatrical practice. • Members of the UOA actively disseminate their work to teachers, theatre in education specialists and school children, as well as community theatre groups, through the holding of one day conferences and seminars.
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The unit's approach to impact is derived from the institution's focus on widening participation and of making a contribution to the wider society that we serve and work with. It builds on our strategic aim to offer a broad formative education which looks at the whole person and derives from our commitment to support, in particular, those from economically disadvantaged locations. The English and Drama Department at Newman undertakes a considerable amount of public engagement work, collaborating with such partners as The Library of Birmingham, Big Brum Theatre in Education Company, Digital Ink Drop, Writing West Midlands, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and community drama groups. Our approach to impact is two-fold. Firstly, we seek to influence and have impact on key agents such as Big Brum Theatre in Education Group and</p>

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school teachers who, by taking on board the implications of our research, then, themselves disseminate it more widely to their audiences including the school children they teach, the audiences they perform for, and the participants of their workshops and sessions. By working in rehearsal with Big Brum, by offering continuing professional development sessions and through the conferences that we run, we influence these groups. Our other approach, via the lectures, seminars and workshop sessions that we ourselves offer is to influence those groups of school children and workshop attenders directly. The questionnaires and feedback demonstrate the effectiveness of the research work and of the impact it creates on these different groups.

As our expertise in achieving impact develops we will diversify our approaches by developing online resources for school staff and students community theatre groups and by working in partnership with other media. This will extend the reach of our impact beyond the geographically local enabling a larger number of the groups we seek to work with to benefit from the research.

c. Strategy and plans

The English UOA's strategy and plans for the development of impact are multifaceted. Supported by the recently appointed Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Scholarship, the English UOA will work with units in both the humanities subject areas (specifically History and Theology) and social sciences (specifically Education) to work collaboratively with a variety of key groups outside of HE. These will include the education sector but also the public, cultural and heritage sectors and community groups. Our focus will continue to be on extending cultural understanding of the groups we seek to influence.

The strategy involves helping staff who have not entered REF 2014 but who are research active and who undertake significant public engagement work based on their research to achieve a more equal balance between research outputs and community engagement work. Other staff, who have entered the REF, are now actively participating in impact projects through collaboration with partners such as The Library of Birmingham, Digital Ink Drop and Writing West Midlands. Where impact projects are on-going they will diversify their routes to impact to ensure further reach and they will also work in partnership in different ways in order to achieve greater depth.

The English unit's specific plans to support impact from our research in the future are to:

- Use a range of digital media and other media outlets (including radio, podcasts and television) to disseminate the impact of our research more widely so that it has greater reach to those who cannot be reached face-to-face.
- Extend and diversify our programme of continuing professional development opportunities and workshops for education professionals and their students and to run conferences with schools to extend the reach of our work through face-to-face contact.
- To disseminate more widely through working with drama in the community groups, practitioners and networks, the impact of research undertaken in English.
- To diversify the number and nature of the partners we work with to include archives and museums, libraries, heritage organisations and those engaged in cultural and arts sectors by collaborating in exhibitions, community projects and performances.

Our goals for impact from the unit's research in the future are to:

- Extend the number of researchers whose impact work can be included in the next REF;
- Diversify and extend the scope and reach of our impact;
- To implement more effective evaluation mechanisms for the measurement of impact.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies relate to the unit's approach to achieving impact, as described in (b) above, in that, firstly, they build on already established contacts, such as local schools, community groups and Big Brum, a partner organisation. The sixth-form conferences are part of our commitment to

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the education sector outside of Higher Education and they sought to enhance the cultural understanding of the community we work with. Similarly, the work undertaken with Big Brum sought to influence understanding of aesthetics in a performance group and thence their performances. Both of the impact statements are representative of the diversified approach of a) seeking to influence key agents (see evidence from Leek High School and Big Brum, Theatre in Education Company, in the statements) who then disseminate the results of that impact through their own work as e.g. teachers or performers and b) seeking to influence people directly such as school children, community groups and theatre practitioners (see evidence from students provided in impact statements) to develop their thinking and cultural awareness. The effectiveness of these approaches was evaluated with the audiences, and this feedback is already informing the planning of future events and activities.