Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: Bath Spa University

Unit of Assessment: UoA36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

a. Context

Our research explores and celebrates the intersection of media and culture. Our approach ranges from high-quality critical, social and media research to discipline expanding, cutting-edge research and creative practice, The distinctive frame of reference for this submission is **cultural experience**, **creative practice** and **social context.** These themes are evidenced in our research outputs and impact statements and embedded in our future research strategy. The subjects of our research include: games studies and digital preservation, popular music cultures, cultural work and practice, media pedagogy, gender and media audiences, work and social mobility and race and identity.

Our research has:

1. developed the general public's awareness of, and attitudes towards, issues of cultural identity; and

2. influenced national organisational and government policy surrounding cultural behaviour and cultural practice.

The diversity of research in this Unit of Assessment, as outlined in REF5, has allowed for a breadth of impact, on a wide range of user groups, including government bodies, cultural institutions, and public groups working with marginalised and 'at-risk' groups. At Bath Spa, the work focuses on current, and often challenging, issues in society, influencing and informing policy and practice (see Nicolls in particular). Our work has brought important social issues to the wider public in a sensitive and thought-provoking way, highlighting and critiquing the views towards sometimes marginalised groups held by wider society, professionals, scientists, and the academy (see A. Brown, R. Brown, and Smart's work in particular), resulting in wide-reaching impacts outside of academia.

Our work has been pivotal in developing new areas of academic study of relevance and interest to wider society. The cutting edge work of A. Brown and Newman, for example, has led the development of new areas of study that have both engaged the public and influenced policy and practice in music and game studies. Central to our work is engagement with local and national organisations, presence at and leadership of local and national events, and work with relevant media. We are particularly proud of our public engagement events, such as Ashton's local work with the Museum of Bath, providing the public with an opportunity to explore creative work, motivations, inspirations, and ways of working.

b. Approach to impact

Research planning: Impact is considered when planning research at institutional level, in research centres and individually. It is prioritised in the University's core strategy for research, which specifically promotes engaged research with impact. Staff are supported in developing impact plans when bidding for external research funds. The Research Office reviews draft proposals against impact requirements of specific funders and the Coordinator of Research in each School supports staff in developing bids to identify key non-academic beneficiaries.

Interdisciplinary links: The relatively compact nature of the institution and the community nature of our academic staff promotes interdisciplinary links between staff in this Unit, for example,

Devadson and Ashton's recent developing research collaboration and success in bidding for a University funded PhD studentship. A key part of our approach to impact has been to periodically review research groupings in order to support research, researcher development, and the wider engagement and influence of our work, bringing together strong and developing researchers who have mentored and supported one another.

Engagement with campaigning and policy organisations: In order to impact on the general public's awareness of, and attitudes towards, the experiences of marginalised groups and sub-cultures in UK and international society, we support staff in developing links with organisations and engagement in public forums for discussion and debate. For example, A. Brown's leading role in the development of 'metal studies' and the engagement of the public in debates around this genre, stem from his active contributions to research-informed interviews with media outlets including the Wall Street Journal and his role as an academic advisor for a documentary on the VH1 series 'Metal Evolution'.

R. Brown's sensitive and challenging works on the lived experiences of 'people on the edge', promoted through links with organisations including the National Autistic Society and the BBC, have been able to reach wide and varied national and international audiences. Nicholls' success in working with policy-makers led to his recent move from academia, when he was offered the role of Research Manager for Alcohol Research UK. Additionally, we aim to publish research findings not only within restricted access academic publications, but also through professional and open access outlets to help ensure key messages reach practitioners and policy makers.

Dissemination with a purpose: In all areas where our research has potential influence, we support staff to attend and contribute to relevant professional and public conferences and meetings. Between 2008 and 2013, staff attended events as diverse as the Games Marketing Forum, the London Knowledge Lab, Birmingham's Home of Metal conference, and National Autistic Society meetings. Staff are encouraged to become advisors and committee members in relevant organisations in order to influence policy and practice. Furthermore, we actively encourage colleagues to work with partner organisations to disseminate research. For example, Devadson's work on refugee populations published through the UN Refugee Agency and Ashton's work with A Manifesto for Media Education. The reputation and quality of our work, coupled with modest financial support and training for active engagement with professional organisations, has resulted in work that has, for example, influenced national policy and practice in preserving cultural and media artefacts, and alcohol policy. Newman's research and subsequent partnership with the National Media Museum and the Science Museum (see case study one) exemplifies this trajectory, as does Nicolls' work on British drinking cultures and alcohol policy (case study two).

c. Strategy and plans

Bath Spa's Research Strategy includes the following objectives for research excellence and impact:

- We will invest in key areas of strength which attract external funding and deliver high-quality research outputs with impact. We will develop strategic partnerships with national and international research collaborators and users. We will be a vibrant and well-connected centre for new ideas with no internal boundaries and an international profile for creativity, culture and enterprise in research.

- We will engage the public in our research, working with community networks and established partnerships across the creative and cultural industries. We will develop new initiatives in dialogue with stakeholders to maximise the benefits of public engagement and knowledge exchange. We will draw on our research strengths to enhance the quality

of our taught provision.

Within this Unit of Assessment we have translated these objectives as follows:

- To continue to develop the profile and activities of our Research Centres as a means of public engagement and knowledge transfer. This will be achieved through the organisation of conferences, public talks and engagement with the regional and national media and collaboration with other partners in the delivery of events such as the Bath Digital Festival. http://2013.bathdigitalfestival.com/

- To support staff whose research particularly lends itself to public engagement and knowledge exchange, such as Newman's collaborative work with the British Library (AHRC Creative Economies Knowledge Exchange Project), the National Museums of Science and Industry and GamesCity http://gamecity.org/ and R. Brown's films of social comment http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1588395/?ref_=fn_tt_tt_1.

- To communicate the excellence and impact of our media and cultural research, approaches and outcomes to a broad professional and lay audience. This will be pursued by enhancing our web presence and through press, broadcast media, social media and hosting events.

- Staff to contribute to the University's new annual 'Research Celebration Week', which aims to profile the School's research activities in the public arena.

- To continue to work with the University's Public Engagement Steering Group (link-person Newman) to take up and follow through on engagement initiatives and associated funding opportunities.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies exemplify and inform the approach outlined above, while also presenting clear examples of the range of our research and impact. Both case studies highlight our central approach in actively engaging relevant audiences and partners external to the academy.

For case study one (Newman's work on videogames and digital preservation), the research was disseminated widely at public events and served as the basis for partnerships with national agencies involved in the preservation of digital cultural artefacts. The role of this research in shaping policy and practice was a direct result of this initial dissemination and engagement with relevant organisations; namely the National Media Museum, Science Musuem, and GameCity international videogames festival. Case study two (James Nicolls' work on British drinking cultures and alcohol policy) provides a strong example of how our focus on active engagement with external organisations, including policy makers, has ensured our research has fulfilled its potential in influencing areas outside of the academy.

Our experience in both areas of work presented in the case studies has led to a fuller appreciation of the importance of early engagement with external partner organisations. The research presented within the case studies has attracted significant attention both locally and nationally, which has served to improve the quality of public debate surrounding marginalised groups and digital culture.