

<p>Institution: University of Westminster</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature</p>
<p>Context: The unit is located in the heart of London on the University of Westminster’s Regent Street Campus. Geographically, it is therefore in the midst of a diverse range of social, cultural and artistic organisations and institutions. With a long-standing tradition of engagement with these non-academic bodies, and benefitting from a number of researchers already oriented beyond the academic sphere, the unit is able to exploit the extensive potential for impact made available by the array of resources that central London provides. The unit’s vision for impact activity is best described as enhancing London’s public intellectual culture. It does this by regarding the impact arising from its research as having both local and international relevance: the impact of the unit places London in its global contexts.</p> <p>The main beneficiaries of the unit’s approach are cultural organisations (broadly defined) which themselves contribute to the dynamic artistic and historical life of London. The unit’s key non-academic users are therefore galleries and exhibition sites, historical institutions and places, new media organisations, and literary audiences. The main types of impact undertaken within the unit are equally diverse, but coalesce around public education, artistic engagement, urban heritage, and literary-historical knowledge transfer. Research undertaken within the different research clusters of the unit both define and support these types of impact. Research within English Language and Linguistics illuminates the history of the English Language for new audiences (such as Sylvester’s AHRC-funded research on the lexis of medieval cloth and clothing, which has been utilised by costume designers along with dictionary compilers) as well as providing a greater sense of London’s linguistic diversity (see Case Studies – Baker). Further educational impact has been realised in engagement with school-age audiences: e.g. Pons-Sanz organised two public symposia and a series of school visits on Anglo Saxon culture designed to engage with young students. The modern and contemporary group – based within the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture (IMCC) – focuses on cross-disciplinary analysis of literature, art, visual culture and new media. Its extensive research on the varied cultures of the modern city has led to collaborative activities with London art galleries and museums (including e.g. a Tate Britain study day to enhance the Modern Painters: The Camden Town Group exhibition), with new media creative industries, and with heritage organisations (see Case Studies – Cunningham & Mays). Staff have considerable expertise in London literatures and include practice-led researchers whose work has London as its focal point. Their research engages with London’s literary audiences to enhance public knowledge of city writing and its long history, and to bring that back into contemporary consciousness, as shown in Lichtenstein’s and Witchard’s contributions to the non-academic London Fictions book series and website, and Lichtenstein’s free Arts Council-funded ‘app’ that accompanies her book on Hatton Garden.</p> <p>While such research and its ensuing impact activities are often initially London-oriented, there is extensive additional value to be found in the internationalisation of the research findings. Just as the research itself has an international dimension so too does the impact of the research reach out to international institutions and audiences. Witchard’s work has influenced cultural groups across China, Cunningham’s work on urban media led to various invitations to address European public audiences, and has been translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese, Baker’s work on linguistic diversity has sought out underrepresented international audiences within the UK, while the work of Mays on old and new media technologies, and subsequent engagement events, has supported an ongoing relationship with historians at the Smithsonian Museum.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact: Impact is often delivered through specific nodes of research strength, such as the IMCC, which was created explicitly in 2008 to provide a platform for collaborations with London cultural institutions, and the new Centre for the Study of Science and the Imagination. A Departmental Research Management Group (DRMG) oversees all staff research plans and has a remit to advise on impact and engagement activities. DRMG also disburses departmental research funds which are employed partly to support remission from other duties that allows research projects to have greater time for collaborative activities with non-academic institutions and audiences. At Faculty level impact activities are supported by a dedicated Research Development Officer, with primary responsibility for horizon scanning and bid preparation, and a Business Officer with responsibility</p>

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for developing knowledge transfer. Institutionally, the University provides funding support which allows ideas with high social impact to be explored via small grants and entrepreneurial fellowships designed to stimulate knowledge exchange activities, supported by WestFocus (a collaboration of London and Thames Valley universities). This is in line with the current University Corporate Strategy (2009), which explicitly embeds impact in relation to research and knowledge transfer aims: 'The University will build on its broad-based strengths in pure and practice-led research with a focus on excellence with impact – a portfolio of research that makes a difference'.

A major focal point for the Department's impact-related activities has been the opening of Westminster's own historic building on Regent Street to a wider public. The Polytechnic Institution was founded in 1838, with the aim of demonstrating new technologies to the Victorian urban public. In its original mission to promote new innovations and scientific discoveries, the Regent Street Poly approached this task primarily via visual means, from spectacular lanterns shows to photography and cinema (currently the focus of a large-scale renovation project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund). This history is being extended by the unit in the promotion of public understanding of both the history of visual technologies and its contemporary legacies. One of the key activities emerging from this was the collaborative lecture series organised with the Magic Lantern Society which engaged substantial public audiences across the 2008-09 academic year (attendance calculated at approximately 500), initiated by Warwick. This was followed by a further series in 2009-10 in the context of an AHRC-funded project (see Case Studies – Cunningham & Mays). Creative writing staff also furthered such engagement with the historic buildings of the University by bringing back into use (for a period in June 2012) the former Soho Poly Theatre, a well-regarded venue throughout the 1970s, which is part of the University's site at Little Titchfield Street. This collaborative venture engaged with theatre professionals to create a 3-day festival for public audiences, which could also be followed via a blog site and by Twitter.

The development of relationships with diverse cultural institutions in London forms the centrepiece of the unit's approach to impact. Staff have undertaken numerous examples of this type of engagement in the present period. For instance, Cunningham led theory reading groups at the local Carroll-Fletcher art gallery; the IMCC instituted the Whitechapel Salon, a series of cultural dialogues held four times a year at the Whitechapel Gallery, with their Education and Public Programming department (the first podcast series of which has had more than 1500 downloads to date); Colby programmed the Arts Council-funded 'Death and the Contemporary' site-specific series. Writing both in and about London also plays a prominent role in such relationships. The unit developed and hosted, for example, 'Psychogeography', a conversation between Will Self and Iain Sinclair on London writing held at the V&A Museum, while Germanà leads the '21st Century London' series of public events at Westminster focussed on the challenges the city presents to writers today. Other staff have given related public talks on London literature and culture at, for example, the Museum of London (Lichtenstein, Warwick, Witchard), Cambridge LGBT Month (Avery on Queer Victorian London) and the Whitechapel Society (Warwick).

Approaches to impact are also enhanced by interdisciplinary collaboration with departmental colleagues submitted to other units (particularly sub-panel 34), and through the presence of the Department's MA and PhD students in London cultural institutions. The MA Museums, Galleries and Contemporary Culture is a partnership with the Museum of London and Tate and the result of long collaboration with those institutions, including study days open to the public (involving Nath, Warwick, Witchard and Willis, among others). In this way, research has produced historical and theoretical outputs and creative work in written and visual media that informs postgraduate teaching of students, many of whom are working professionals in the cultural industries. Museum staff teach and study on the course, creating a direct relation between research work and application in public display.

c. Strategy and plans:

Building on the strengths of its geographic situation and already-existing relationships with non-academic partners the unit will seek to enhance and extend its support for impact in the future. There are pragmatic strategies in place for this: primarily management mechanisms and impact-oriented research plans led by new senior departmental appointments. Mechanisms within the unit to make visible the importance of impact-focussed and user-engaged research have been strengthened through a redrafting of the Department's research remission criteria to further encourage funded research with impact. The unit's disbursement of research funds to individuals

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now requires the completion of an application document that invites details of the potential impact of research. Successful applications must therefore have considered the possibilities for impact activities prior to the start of research projects. This is being extended through the further integration of impact into the Professional Performance and Development Review process and into the new University Work Allocation Model which is being introduced in 2014/15. PPDR reviewers will highlight relevant training modules (e.g. media training), and exploiting and cultivating impact opportunities will form part of the formal mentoring process for staff. All research projects within the unit are being overseen from 2013-14 by two newly-appointed Professors (Beck and Willis), part of whose senior role is to encourage and support outward-facing research. Beck contributes to the expertise in modern and contemporary culture and takes responsibility for that research area and the colleagues working within it, while Willis has responsibility for bringing together the expertise in literature, science and medicine that already exists within the department and across the university. Willis also has research expertise in the history of visual technologies and supports the research and engagement activities in visual culture.

The rewards already emerging from these strategic appointments and new mechanisms for impact oversight can be seen in the following two examples. First, Beck is leading a unit-wide research project (beginning in 2013-14) on the area of London – Fitzrovia – within which the unit is based. Envisioned from the outset as community-based research, the Fitzrovia Atlas project will detail the historical and contemporary importance of this area of London for British and international creative arts and sciences. The project not only provides experience for junior academic staff in presenting their research to non-academic audiences but also offers non-academic groups and organisations access to the unit and its work with the intention of building future relationships. The project will host public events in local centres and will create an accessible website providing a historical and cultural map of Fitzrovia, partly curated by public participants. Second, Willis is leading the development of a new research group on literature, science and medicine. Created in 2013 the Centre for the Study of Science and Imagination (SCIMAG) will draw together academic expertise from within the unit, the wider university and from HEIs and other non-academic institutions across London, as well as internationally (such as the Smithsonian Institution), while also opening up to the public the range of historical materials to be found within the University's internationally-significant Royal Polytechnic Institution archive.

d. Relationship to case studies:

The case studies presented here both exemplify and have contributed to the development of the unit's overarching impact approach: London in global contexts. The focus of the impact emerging in the case studies of Witchard (British and Chinese Cultural Relations), Baker (Language Policy in London), and Cunningham & Mays (Informing Creative Practice and Heritage in Visual Media) is explicitly, although not exclusively, on London. Together they have drawn, as the impact of the unit as a whole has done, on the geographical position of the unit and the relationships it has developed with the varied institutions of the city. The impact evident in the case studies of Baker and Cunningham & Mays is particularly important as these reach back to reveal how the unit's research first engaged with non-academic users through public events held by various London organisations and thereafter exploited these connections to further advance the potential impact of the underpinning research. It is in this context that the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture was formed in 2008 to provide an organising structure for such activity. Witchard's case study highlights recent impact activities and in doing so also reveals the ongoing success of the unit's approach. This case study was aided significantly by the experiences of prior engagements, and while finding its own new audiences, developed out of the larger culture of London-based relationships already existing within the unit.

The case studies also typify a keynote of the unit's overall impact approach to provide opportunities for educational enhancement amongst communities both within London and further afield. These case studies take their lead from the University's own early history of knowledge production which the unit has continued to hold as one of its own key impact agenda items. While across the unit such educational impact has been directed towards a cross-section of the public interested in expanding their cultural knowledge, as well as school-age audiences (as in Pons-Sanz's activities), the case studies reveal how this approach has, in specific circumstances, also yielded wide-ranging benefits for national policy and creative industries.