Institution: Queen's University Belfast

Unit of Assessment: 28 - Modern Languages

a. Context

Impact from research across the unit may be identified in a number of areas. In the period 2008-13, the strongest impacts, as evidenced in our case studies, correspond to the following categories in the indicative range: cultural life, civil society and public discourse. These have not been mutually exclusive and, indeed, in some cases, research has generated impact in additional domains, notably where there has been evidence of economic prosperity and/or where research has contributed to policy making in education. For instance, in the contested context of cultural identity in Northern Irish society, the impact of research in onomastics has created a shared space in which diversity can be accommodated and inclusivity promoted. As well as enhancing public understanding and the quality of evidence in relation to place-names, this research has generated economic benefits in the tourism sector. Research in applied linguistics has underpinned the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy which, in turn, has influenced public discourse and government policy on language teaching and the promotion of minority languages.

Impact has emerged from research projects across the range of individual language areas that comprise the UoA. While there was a planned impact dimension in the case of both projects mentioned above, in other instances, impact emerged as an organic outgrowth of established research strengths. For example, research in eighteenth-century Spanish book history led to impact in the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage and contributed to innovation in graphic design. Research projects in Translation Studies were conceived with a planned impact component around cultural value but produced additional positive impacts for the creative economy.

The main non-academic user groups, beneficiaries and audiences include: Government departments and agencies such as Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI), Land and Property Services (formerly Ordnance Survey), Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (ROI); NGOs such as Foras na Gaeilge, Colmcille, Iontaobhas Ultach and POBAL; Creative Industries, including theatre practitioners and audiences, BBC NI; cultural and community groups such as local history societies; the publishing industry and the information technology sector (Microsoft).

b. Approach to impact

Interaction with non-academic users and beneficiaries can be broadly categorised in four ways, although in practice, there is inevitable boundary crossing:

(i)   **The academic researchers are responsive to specific needs and requirements of the user group**.

This is the case, for example, with the *Ibarra Real* project, where Microsoft required specific academic expertise in order to validate the legitimacy of a new font that would be launched and promoted as emblematic of Spanish literary culture. Follow-through included measuring indicators of reach such as the number of websites from which the software can be downloaded, the footfall at the exhibitions and the number of presses using the font for publications. This type of user interaction is also evidenced in Johnston's and Ó Baoill's contribution to the development of language policy. Johnston was co-investigator on a DENI-funded project where his role involved an analysis of language provision in NI. Key recommendations of the resulting Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (*Languages for the Future*, 2012) have been adopted by DENI, including the establishment of a Languages Council (2013) and the incorporation of languages into core education priorities ('STEM-Languages' initiative). Ó Baoill has twice been commissioned by POBAL to contribute to education policy and Irish-language strategy: (a) the recommendations of his DENI-funded report examining special educational needs in the Irish-medium sector (2009) have been adopted and (b) he chaired the working group that produced the *Strategic Framework for the Irish Language* (2012).

(ii)   **The relationship between the academic researcher(s) and the benificiary is largely conceived and developed in partnership.**

This is the case, for example, in the construction of the online place-name database (www.placenamesni.org). The underpinning research on onomastics provided the academic input

to the database: LPS provided the detailed electronic mapping and technical expertise which were necessary in order to develop the site as an interactive platform for the general public. As the impact of the project gained momentum, this initial collaboration was extended to involve Foras na Gaeilge (street names) and the Lough Neagh Partnership (local history and tourism). A different type of partnership is represented by Programme for Government studentships which are awarded by DEL to QUB for impact-generating doctoral projects (3 awards to the UOA in the census period).

(iii)   **Relationships with beneficiaries emerge organically from existing research activities.**
Underpinning research in the field of Translation and Performance led directly to engagement with theatre directors and companies (see case study). Follow-through from interactions of this nature include a contribution to cultural diversity in the form of increasing the repertoire of English-language theatre in the UK, the USA and elsewhere. This has had positive ramifications for the creative economy through increased footfall in theatre audiences and through translation sales.

(iv)   **The researchers provide diverse types of research-led advice and/or service to beneficiaries.**
Ó Mainnín sits on the Irish Place-Names Commission in Dublin (2009-) which determines Irish forms of place-names for use in official documents and postal addresses; agreed forms are posted on the web (www.logainm.ie) where they can be accessed by all end users, including the public. Muhr sits on the Council of the NI Environmental Agency where expertise in place-names is used to identify and contextualize sites of potential archaeological significance (see *Historic Monuments Council Northern Ireland: Report 2003-2009*, p. 48). Dillon has provided expert advice to the Irish Terminology Committee (2011-). Approved new terms are published online (www.focal.ie) and are used in official translations, the media and by the general public.

The Unit has a number of **support mechanisms** in place to encourage and enable staff to develop impact. There are a number of routes through which potential projects can emerge: focused discussion at staff training days or research away days; through mentoring or appraisal; or work-in-progress seminars. Once credible projects are identified, time is created through the work allocation model and applications can be made at School level to an earmarked fund within the Research budget. For example, £3000 was spent in the current cycle to support evidence gathering for the three case studies. There is now a further minimum of £1000 available per annum going forward. These funds can be substantially augmented through the University's Research Support Fund: for example, the Place-Name project obtained a grant of £8000 to develop its website with the aim of enhancing user experience, both locally and internationally. Staff are also enabled to provide expertise to non-HEI bodies such as the BBC through participation in courses offered by Queen's staff training and development programme: most recently, selected staff have taken part in media awareness training. Recent examples of staff interaction with the media include: *Sruthanna* (BBC television: Toner and Ó Mainnín on place-names), *Wolfland* (BBC and RTE: Toner on medieval literature), and *Amhráin Aduaidh* (BBC: Dillon on songs), all in 2012. Jeannerod's work on Frédéric Dard on French crime fiction sparked media interest in France and his research was featured in discussions in *Le Nouvel Observateur, Lire, Le Figaro, K-Libre* and *L'Express*, and in television programmes on *Canal+* and *TV5*.

c. Strategy and plans

The unit's overarching goal in support of impact is to develop and promote a sustainable culture that maximises both potential and opportunity. We have identified the following specific objectives:
(i)   to embed impact as a key element in all core research management systems, both strategic and operational;
(ii)   to increase the number of research projects in which impact is a key component;
(iii)   to foster a culture of impact amongst research students and to encourage them to incorporate an impact dimension, where appropriate, into their preparation of PhD proposals and into post-doctoral projects. A number of current research students are working with non-HEIs in Europe, Africa and Asia and others have received special awards for research in Government priorities including Sign Language, translation and the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy.

The unit proposes to realise the key objectives of our impact strategy as follows:

(i)   we will build on productive elements of our current approach to impact in order to identify potential impact at an early stage. Successful practices have included the incorporation of impact into mentoring, appraisal and staff training, and the prioritisation of impact in School research strategy discussions. Taking this forward will now form part of the job description of the Director of Research;

(ii)   we will continue to provide dedicated School funding for impact-related activity and will encourage more staff to avail of financial support at Faculty and University level. The £8000 grant from the University's Research Support Fund (see above) has funded one of Queen's spin-out companies, Kainos Digital Technology Solutions, to enhance the user experience of the Place-Names website, thus paving the way for the development of a substantial interactive element as part of an imminent bid for further major funding. The unit will also increase staff participation in Faculty Research Showcase events and the University Impact Award scheme: to date, three projects have been involved across both schemes;

(iii)   we will promote a more pro-active engagement with impact-driven opportunities such as cross-cutting research council themes, AHRC funding calls and collaborative doctoral awards. This will be greatly facilitated by recent investment in the Research and Enterprise Directorate, the establishment of the Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities (where two of the five Fellows have strong links to the UOA), and the framework provided by BGP2;

(iv)   we will encourage staff to increase the visibility of their research expertise beyond academia, e.g. through enhanced participation in the Queen's Experts Directory.

At this relatively early stage in the development of a more dynamic impact strategy, we have identified several projects with potential to generate impact in the future. These include:

- introduction of a Place-Names component in the Year 7 curriculum (Ó Mainnín);
- contribution to the outworkings of the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy, adopted by the Department of Education, 2012 (Johnston);
- enhancement of the partnership with the *Centre de Littérature Orale* (Carruthers);
- contribution to the shaping of public debate around popular crime fiction in France and Ireland (Jeannerod);
- development of projects relating to the interrogation of cultural value – on migration (Topping) and on literary festivals (Bowskill);
- analysis of urban representation in Brazil through digital media (Holmes).

d. Relationship to case studies

The selected case studies exemplify core aspects of the Unit's approach to impact. In each case, recognised excellence in research has enabled different types of relationships with non-HEIs as outlined in (b) above. In the case of the Ibarra Real project, for example, a beneficiary commissioned research on the basis of established expertise in a given field, i.e. eighteenth-century book culture in Spain. Impact was therefore planned and anticipated when the research was first undertaken. The Place-Name project represents the unit's approach to supporting the initiation and ongoing development of partnerships with non-HEIs. A track record of rigorous research, combined with established links with local government facilitated collaborative projects with government bodies and NGOs such as LPS (formerly the Ordnance Survey), language agencies and the Lough Neagh Partnership. The impacts which emerged from these collaborations satisfied a demand among the general public and in the media for an informed approach to heritage that promotes a shared sense of space. The Translation case study illustrates how impact that is an integral component of a research methodology (in this case, questions around performativity) can be more fully realised when its potential is strategically oriented outside higher education and resourced appropriately. For instance, substantial funding (from the AHRC, School and University) helped to concretize Johnston's links with the creative industries and allowed him to establish a performance tradition of Spanish theatre translation that positively promotes intercultural encounter.