Institution: Middlesex University (UKPRN: 10004351)

Unit of Assessment: 36 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

a. Context

This UoA at Middlesex regards the shaping of impact as an integral element of research value. The varied approaches to research within the Unit are grounded in a commitment to social change and the enhancement of professional practices in the creative, cultural and education sectors through the development of interdisciplinary, practice-led and problem-based forms of enquiry. The people and organisations that have benefitted from this approach to research impact, both within the UK and internationally, have included: media and heritage organisations and practitioners adapting to the digital era; politicians and diverse communities responding to economic and cultural change; and young people in formal and informal education settings. Recent appointments at every level have enabled the Unit to expand the range and depth of its impact activities.

b. Approach to impact

Middlesex's Research and Knowledge Transfer Office (RKTO) has supported impact development by offering training, expertise and advice on how to engage with stakeholders, including funding bodies, the media, business and third sector organisations. Impact is part of the induction and training of all new researchers and recognised in appraisal and promotion processes. Self-assessment is used to identify training needs, drawing on toolkits from VITAE and the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). Staff with experience of successful, often RCUK funded, projects delivered in partnership with the creative, cultural and education sectors share their expertise within the School. Staff are also encouraged to take up industry placements and external engagement activities, such as official roles in relevant professional organisations. The aim is to create porous boundaries across sectors, which is further enabled by a staffing strategy oriented to appointing staff with high level, ongoing industry and public sector experience and extensive networks beyond academia. The Unit's three main approaches to impact, detailed below, have been identified as: enhancing creative and professional practice; promoting the interdependence of teaching, research and impact; and direct engagement with publics, special interest groups and communities.

1. Enhancing creative and professional practice through an exchange of research and professional expertise is enabled, for example, by the appointment of senior broadcasters and print journalists as Professors of Professional Practice (Aaqil Ahmed, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Kurt **Barling**). They join a number of other practitioner researchers in broadcast, print and digital journalism (**Jones**, Francis, McLachlan), television production (**Kerr**)**,** film and new media (**Bendon, Heinemann,** Boddington UoA 35**)** and writing (**Butt**, **Gibb, Wardle, Winch).** For practitioners, research and impact are often interwoven in an iterative process where proof-of-concept projects test innovations that can then be upscaled, as in Boddington's NESTA funded research into performance, technology and education (see Case Study), or in **Bendon**'s contribution to *Scratch*, developed with BBC Radio 3 and Hewlett Packard, investigating the technical and scriptwriting challenges of translocational drama using mobile devices, which was evaluated through audience research. The co-creation of research with external professional partners has been a feature of the new media projects developed by the Lansdown Centre, founded in the 1980s through the development of groundbreaking computer animation and with a contemporary focus on interactive, pervasive, physical and multimodal media. Other examples are Drakopoulou's *New Media Memory: Digital London 1994-2013* which brings online and physical collections of London's digital history to a public audience, in partnership with commercial companies (Easynet, Story Worldwide, RAAK) and arts and community organisations (Furtherfield, Arts Catalyst, Wikimedia Foundation, Raylab); and **Butt**'s Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £59,400 awarded to produce a film and mobile app on Alexandra Palace's use as a prison camp during the First World War in partnership with Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust. **Bendon** has also worked with the University's redLoop design and innovation centre in a strategic partnership with the RAF Museum to create a virtual presence for a salvaged World War Two Dornier bomber.

2. Promoting the interdependence of teaching, research and impact with our research-informed media and writing courses support the professional development of practitioners and the currency of their knowledge and skills, through, for example, interactive digital media projects

enabled by the specialist expertise of our researchers. Another example is the support given for language, writing and film studies academics to promote innovation in the school curriculum through working with policy makers, examiners, teachers and students to grow and sustain these disciplines. In addition to **Clark**'s Case Study, **Butt** has worked with the HEA Subject Centre on writing at school, chaired the National Association of Writers in Education and helped to develop the new AQA A Level in Creative Writing. Phillips helped develop the WJEC Film Studies A Level, has been Chief Examiner since 1998, responsible for writing the syllabus, examination papers, teachers' Notes for Guidance and nationwide CPD (the largest single initiative in film education in England and Wales) and he influenced two BFI policy reports: *Making Movies Matter* and *Film: 21st Century Literacy: A Strategy for Film Education Across the UK*.

3. Direct engagement with publics, special interest groups and communities is achieved through dissemination of new evidence and ideas. Examples include Drakopoulou's *Cybersalon*, a real and virtual think tank produced in partnership with the Lansdown Centre, for creative professionals in digital media to share ideas, with regular events at the ICA (1998-2003), the Science Museum (2003-6) and, from 2013, at Arts Catalyst and the Brick Lane Creative Agency. Our creative writers have been engaging with new audiences through initiatives such as **Wardle**'s poetry for Transport for London's project to improve people's experience of travelling and through poetry readings at mental health charity Rethink. **Attwood**'s AHRC *Onscenities* network included practitioners in various sexual health fields and a number of high profile journalists; she subsequently chaired a Wellcome Trust seminar series on public engagement, sexual health and sexualisation, and was expert witness in three extreme porn and obscenity cases. The public impact of her work was evident in the national press coverage of the launch of the journal *Porn Studies*. **Kerr**'s AHRC funded research on the economic and cultural role of UK and digital independents in the transformation to multi-platform public service broadcasting culminated in a conference in 2012 at the BFI, co-organised with the Producers Association in Cinema and Television and attended by executives from the BBC, C4, Skillset, DCMS and independent production companies. A research report was circulated to all the stakeholders with a view to informing the current review of the 2003 Communication Act. Shaw's ESRC funded project on Gender and Linguistic Participation in the Devolved Parliaments of the UK showed how linguistic behaviour and parliamentary rules can both reflect and promote more inclusive discursive norms. It was disseminated to politicians and journalists and led to Shaw's appointment as a specialist advisor at the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales.

Our researchers also engage directly with the public via the media. **Barnard** is a regular contributor and has been a live guest appearing on BBC Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour', and BBC World Service news. She has also presented features, including on BBC Radio 4's 'Traveller's Tree'. **Clark** appeared on BBC Radio 4's 'Word of Mouth' and on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio programme 'Main Street PEI'. **Wardle** appeared on a recent edition of the 'Today' programme on BBC Radio 4. Ahmed, Alibhai-Brown and **Barling** are world-leading practitioners in press and TV journalism and broadcasting. Ahmed is Commissioning Editor Religion and Head of Religion & Ethics at the BBC. Alibhai-Brown is a regular contributor to *The Independent* and *Evening Standard*, and is frequently invited to appear as a cultural commentator on radio and television. **Barling** is a senior investigative correspondent for BBC News, broadcasting several times weekly on BBC News outlets on television, radio, online and in social media.

c. Strategy and plans

The Research Development Group, with a newly appointed Research Director (**Cobley**) and Research Degrees Director leading the School's expanded team of researchers, has agreed a strategy for impact enhancement. Our priorities are: (i) To further develop our expertise and global reputation in Practice as Research (PaR), initially through mounting an international conference led by the Centre for Research into Creation in the Performing Arts (ResCen). (ii) To consolidate existing external networks into longer-term dynamic relationships with co-created research agendas. In the field of digital media this will be a primary goal of the Lansdown Centre. For example, it will expand its work into the area of digital journalism informed by **Jones**'s previous work as Chair of the BBC Anchor News Group on local digital services via news sharing, and her more recent AHRC KE Hub funded project with games company Auroch Digital on making 'playable documentaries' in partnership with the BBC's manager of interactive gaming. (iii) To gain wider public circulation for our research through a programme of events, exhibitions, and media

exposure in liaison with the University's RKTO, press office, and website. For example, a series of inaugural professorial lectures are being widely publicised to highlight new areas of staff expertise, and media training is offered to help researchers address public audiences more effectively. (iv) To train researchers to integrate impact more effectively into research design, drawing on materials from the NCCPE and VITAE followed by bespoke mentoring support from within the School and from the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office. Areas identified as a high priority are partnership development, how to evidence impact, and the critical evaluation of impact projects. (v) To enhance the infrastructure for interdisciplinary research through the formation of a new research centre in Gender and Sexuality, alongside the existing Lansdown, ResCen and redLoop Centres, in order to generate high impact from externally funded team projects drawing on the large cluster of experienced and early career researchers within this field. (vi) To encourage access to HE and to writing and publishing careers through an integrated set of initiatives in addition to existing work on school curricula and the annual North London Literary Festival held on campus. The emphasis will continue to be on raising ambition in hard-to-reach communities and creating pathways into HE. Existing collaborations between our language specialists and researchers in Education and Psychology are to be strengthened through a formal seminar series. The effectiveness of this strategy will be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis by the Research Development Group with a view to amending and developing our approach to impact in the light of this evidence. In addition, new opportunities for research-led impact will be continually under review as staff appointments bring new capabilities and as rapid changes in the creative, cultural and education sectors bring new issues to engage with.

d. Relationship to case studies
We have chosen one impact case study arising from each of our strategic research themes: 'Politics and Policy' arises from our work on cultural studies; 'Language, Linguistics and Literature at School' arises from our work on language and writing; 'Robots and Avatars' arises from our interdisciplinary work on the creative potential of new media. These case studies exemplify sustained work in building and developing relationships with individuals and groups who benefit from the research.

   'Politics and Policy' exemplifies a history of public engagement with contemporary cultural politics informed by the significant contribution made by Middlesex researchers to the emergence and widespread influence of cultural studies. The case study demonstrates a broader commitment within the Department to theoretically informed public interventions in relation to identity and citizenship, the ideological role of public discourses, and the promotion of social inclusion and equality through critiques of hegemonic culture and politics. A tradition of engaged cultural studies has strong roots at Middlesex, for example in work on racism in film and visual culture by Professor (Baroness) Lola Young, whose expertise and influence on cultural policy is now continued in her membership of the House of Lords.

   'Language, Linguistics and Literature' exemplifies long-term engagement with the education sector through curriculum and pedagogic innovation. **Clark's** influence on English at Key Stage 5 is one of several interventions made by Middlesex researchers, including work by **Butt** in creative writing and by Phillips in film studies, which have benefited from staff development funds to support consultancy and attendance at relevant committees, workshops, conferences, courses and events designed to engage with teachers, examiners and school students. This support recognises the important contribution that universities can make to modernising school curricula and to enabling better preparation of students to progress successfully into HE and professional practice in the creative and cultural industries.

   '**Robots and Avatars**' exemplifies the School's international impact through interdisciplinary research using the creative potential of digital technologies. Supported by ResCen, the project explores key themes in new media and cultural studies through virtual communication and performance. These include the potential for communication and creativity through the blending of virtual and physical worlds; the processes of collaborative authorship in non-hierarchical networks; the affordances of new technologies and platforms such as web-streaming, social media, virtual worlds and gameplay; and the impact of these practices on cultural and educational experiences and social identities. An orientation to future generations in a globally connected context underpins its programme of engagement with young people across the world.