

Institution: The University of Edinburgh

Unit of Assessment: 27 Area Studies

a. Context

Events in Asia, the Middle East and the Islamic World generated unprecedented levels of public interest and demand for expert knowledge during the REF2014 period. Area Studies at Edinburgh is ideally placed to respond to these new challenges. We have a long history of engaging with policymakers and the public to inform policy, promote inter-cultural ties and counter simplistic stereotypes of Islamic, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. This strong tradition of public engagement is sustained by our unique expertise across classical and contemporary Area Studies disciplines and our position in Scotland's capital.

Over the REF period, we made a number of investments to build on this history and to enhance the impact of our responses to the growing demand for knowledge and expertise. We recruited, trained and supported staff in their outreach and impact activities, and invested in our three Centres as hubs for this work: the Confucius Institute for Scotland (CIS), the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW), and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World (see b. for more details). Our work was targeted at five main groups of beneficiaries: government, young people, the media, the general public and civil society.

1. Informing Policy-Making, Government and Law Enforcement (beneficiaries: Scottish/UK/international policymakers; Scottish judiciary/police; national/international security services).

We engaged in extensive consultancy and advisory work in policy, government and law enforcement. In 2012 Goddard, Goerke, Khan and Pierret produced the 'Equal Treatment Bench Book' for all Scottish judges for the Scottish Parliament Judicial Studies Committee. Peace and Pierret engaged with the local police on Islam and Islamic movements and Chinese religions, respectively, and Rosenmeier with Falkirk Council on Chinese culture. Goddard, Gorman, Newman, Peace and Pierret also advised both the Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on the Middle East and South Asia and Alistair Burt MP, Foreign Office Minister, on topics relating to Islam and politics. In 2011, Zachmann provided expertise on human rights in China at the 'China Plan – Consultation Workshop', organized by the Scottish Government. Pierret advised British, French and Belgian foreign office officials and parliamentarians on Syria. N Gentz is a member of the Scottish Cross Party Parliament Group on China.

We also informed policy-makers through conferences. For example, the 3-day 2009 international conference organised at Edinburgh by CASAW on *Re-Thinking Jihad: Ideas, Politics and Conflict in the Arab World & Beyond* had 240 participants including delegates from international governments, police, military, NGOs and the private sector, as well as Islamist activists, including former terrorists. A US intelligence official called this 'the most significant conference on the subject since 9/11' (CASAW Report to ESRC, 2009). The conference received substantial media attention, including extensive coverage in Islam Online, a premier Arabic website for Muslim intellectuals, and BBC Arabic, which screened a panel discussion with presenters from the conference. A 2012 conference organised by Peace on *Muslims' Identity in Scotland* at Glasgow Central Mosque (part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science) was attended by members of Strathclyde Police.

2. Reaching Young Minds (beneficiaries: school pupils/school teachers).

Engagement with school pupils and teachers focused on making accessible nuanced perspectives on Asia, the Middle East and Islam. The Alwaleed Centre organised six school study days during 2010-12, exploring Islamic Civilisation, Muslims in Britain, and 'Islam' and 'the West' (engaging 600 pupils and 25 school staff; Goddard, Newman, Peace and four IMES PhD students). Goddard organised CPD in Edinburgh and Aberdeen for some 40 teachers and others. Joe Walker, then an Religious and Moral Education teacher at Liberton High School and now Senior Education Officer at Education Scotland, commented: 'I hope to see those Islam lectures bloom and expand across the nation'. Dr Graeme Nixon, lecturer in Aberdeen's School of Education, who brought two groups of postgraduate students, commented: 'the scholarly presentations have been extremely valued by the students and it has greatly enhanced their understanding.' N Gentz organised CIS-based China Day workshops (20 schools; 5000 pupils). Since 2010 she has also been a member of the Scotland School Strategy China Group for the Scottish Government. N Gentz's work on Chinese Literature

and Translation allowed her scope to support the introduction of Chinese into the curriculum in Scotland. In 2007 she gained support from the Scottish Government to fund native Chinese speakers to undertake a PGDE in Mandarin, thereby creating a supply of qualified language teachers. So far 35 students have gone through the programme. CIS also organised a talk by Rosenmeier and activity day materials on China (more than 130 pupils attending, in 2011, 2012, 2013). Hammond, also via CIS, gave talks on China in 2011 and 2012 (60 pupils across Scotland).

3. Enhancing Public Discourse via the Media (beneficiaries: national/international audiences).

Media interest in Asia, the Middle East and Islam has reached unprecedented levels. TV, radio and print media (and their online forms) were crucial channels for Edinburgh's contribution to improving public understanding of these regions and their religions. For example, since the onset of the Syrian civil war, Pierret has made more than 200 appearances in more than 50 different media worldwide, including *Le Monde*, the BBC and France 24. He has been cited in the *New York Times*, the *FT*, and the AFP newswire. J Gentz and N Gentz have acted as commentators on Chinese religion and politics via numerous broadcasts on multiple BBC channels, *The Guardian*, *The Scotsman* and Chinese and German media. Newman appeared on Melvyn's Bragg's 'In Our Time' (Radio 4, 4 million listeners) to discuss Safavid Iran (1501-1722) and its legacy for modern Iran. Susam-Saraeva appeared on Açık Radyo (Open Radio) in Turkey 2010 to discuss her bestselling 2010 *Doğal Doğuma Doğru*, which is now widely used in Turkish maternity and childcare.

4. Creating Cultural Capital (beneficiaries: public at large, national and international).

The Unit made a unique contribution to understanding of the cultures and societies of Asia and the Middle East and their diasporas through public cultural and intellectual activities. Kadoi was lead project consultant working with the Edinburgh International Science Festival (EISF) to create four large poster panels forming part of the annual outdoor exhibition in St Andrew's Square (January 2013) on the legacy of Islamic art. As noted in the EISF report, more than 130,000 people viewed the exhibition, reviewed as 'mind-bogglingly good' (*The Herald*). In 2009 N Gentz helped the Beijing Film Academy to bring 90 performers and crew to present a multi-media adaptation of *A Mid-Summer's Night Dream* at the University as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Some 2000 people saw the show and it received 4-star reviews. In 2010, knowing that few in Scotland would be able to visit the World Expo in Shanghai that year, the CIS compiled a touring exhibition to introduce to a UK audience the story of Shanghai's evolution. Around 45,000 saw the exhibit over 6 months. Hammond and Ward used their expertise in Chinese Film to inform public screenings of Chinese films at the Edinburgh Filmhouse.

5. Service to Civil Society (beneficiaries: business/trade groups; community/advocacy groups)

N Gentz served on boards of the British Council China Group (2009-10), Scotland China Educational Network (2008-present), and the Scotland-China Chamber of Commerce (vice-chair 2009-present). N Gentz also worked with China-British Business Council and the 48 Group Club, earning praise for her work from Adam Dupre of the Club as well the Right Hon John Prescott. She has also organised CPD sessions for Baillie Gifford asset management. Other colleagues interacted with public intellectuals, professionals and the public at large in venues at the Edinburgh International Book Fair (N Gentz 2008, 2012) the London Book Fair (Booth, 2012) and Edinburgh City Council (N Gentz, 2011).

b. Approach to impact

We have adopted a three-pronged approach to impact over the REF period: (1) broadening and deepening our expertise in areas in which there is particular demand for expert knowledge and inter-cultural ties; (2) enhancing provision for training and supporting staff in impact-related activities; and (3) investing in our three Centres as vehicles for facilitating and delivering engagement with stakeholders via the financial and organisational resources on which they can draw. All three approaches form part of a strategy of embedding impact in research design and in fostering and expanding our relations with stakeholders.

(1) Since 2008, strategic investments have both secured research expertise in traditional areas of strength and also expanded our expertise into newer disciplines. A key priority has been to recruit researchers with specialisms that are in demand among non-HEI stakeholders. Thus we recruited staff and PDFs specialising in contemporary Islamic politics, Christian-Muslim relations, Islam in

Impact template (REF3a)

Britain, diaspora, trans-regional and gender studies, media and film. This increased range enabled us proactively to seek out opportunities to respond to and shape growing public discourse on events and trends in Asia, the Middle East and the Islamic World, both as individuals and through our Centres.

(2) We have intensified training and support for staff and research students in their individual impact activities. We have made effective use of the extensive University and College resources available to support impact, notably the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and the College of Humanities and Social Science (CHSS) Research Office and Knowledge Exchange Manager. The latter liaises closely with individual colleagues to support their impact plans. In addition, the Research Advisors and administrative staff in the two Subject Areas and in the School support the integration of impact planning into research development, as monitored through the Annual Review process for all staff. We have helped staff to access seed funding from the College's Knowledge Exchange Fund (staff successfully bid for £5k support for outreach /knowledge exchange projects). We supported Pierret in accepting secondment to Kofi Annan's UN-Syria team in the early days of the Syrian civil war (although the mission was later aborted).

(3) Our Centres act as hubs for our impact-related activities and we have been able to develop these substantially during the REF period. We established the externally funded Alwaleed Centre (£8m, 2008) and we secured further continued external funding for the CIS (£2.3m) and CASAW (£405k). Our Centres provide a range of services to support impact, including organising and hosting workshops and conferences, maintaining databases of contacts, and hosting and supporting our web-based dissemination. Alwaleed funded two Outreach Postdoctoral Fellows (Kadoi, Peace) and three outreach-focused PhD students (Stermotich-Cappellari, Munnik, Alibhai). Activities by the latter included 3 workshops: a day long session on calligraphy (Stermotich-Cappellari) and two for 70 student journalists exploring more nuanced approaches to reporting Islam and Muslims in Britain (Munnik).

c. Strategy and plans

Continued growth in interest in events and trends across Asia, the Middle East and the Islamic World will generate an ever-greater call for our research expertise. Our future strategy focuses on further embedding impact at all levels of research activity and on investing in, developing and maintaining reflexive relationships with stakeholders locally and internationally. The Centres, the School and wider University institutions are key to this strategy:

1. Further developing our Centres/Institutes: Our Centres will continue to be key in facilitating interaction with networks of stakeholders at home and abroad, and engagement with the public at large through the mechanisms outlined in b (3), above. They will work alongside the newly-established China Research Centre (CRC, 2013, £4.5m), which is a partnership with Peking University (PKU) and other Chinese HEIs in teaching, research, outreach and impact, including CPD courses for community, business, media and government.

2. Developing School-wide support structures: in 2013 the School appointed a new School Director for Knowledge Exchange and Impact, Professor Peter Dayan, who will chair the new School Impact Committee and be supported by a full time administrator.

3. Extending Media Training: We will extend training in media engagement (including new media), to ensure a wider pool of staff engage proactively with the media and with new media platforms at the Unit level and we will exploit the advice and training to be offered by the School's newly-appointed KE/Impact Director. Dayan will also facilitate learning from the experiences of other cognate units.

d. Relationship to case studies

Our three case studies demonstrate the extent and variety of our impact activities over the period. *Challenging Stereotypes* and *China/Scotland* show how we engage with national and international stakeholders through the outreach/impact initiatives of our several Centres. *Literary Translations* shows how, independently of our Centres, one colleague built and developed collaborative relationships with creative practitioners and other audiences.