

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Exeter</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 23 – Sociology</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Research within the Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology (SPA) builds on the unit's history of public engagement in areas such as religion and science. In the REF period engagement has centred more systematically around the impact of interdisciplinary research in a range of domains, spanning public policy, professional practice, ethical business, and health and welfare. Principal groups of non-academic beneficiaries are: <b>public policy-makers, high-level military practitioners, medical practitioners, allied health practitioners</b> (music therapists), <b>ethical business organisations, media outlets</b> and <b>the general public</b>. Research achieving impact has been produced in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Public policy-making</b>, in the UK, the EU, and internationally: e.g. <b>Rappert</b> has contributed to emerging international policy over the humanitarian controls governing the conduct of war, and has collaborated with NGOs in this area.</li> <li>2) <b>The professional practice and training of military strategists, and engagement with politicians and civilians about military matters</b>: e.g. <b>King</b> has contributed to the re-formulation of British military strategy, informed the education and training of high-ranking British military officers, contributed to political and public debates in the UK about defence policy, and contributed to debates in the UK, US and NATO about women's roles in the military.</li> <li>3) <b>Medical policy-making and practice</b>: e.g. staff have advised bodies such as the Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development (<b>Kelly, S.</b>), and the UK, German and Austrian governments on stem cell science and genetics (<b>Hauskeller, C.</b>); <b>Hauskeller, C.</b> trained medical students in the South-West region (Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry) in developments in genetics; <b>Kelly, A.</b> worked with medical academics and practitioners in Sierra Leone, Tanzania and The Gambia to develop and spread innovative disease-preventative health technologies.</li> <li>4) <b>Allied health practice</b> in the UK and abroad: e.g. <b>DeNora</b> collaborated with, and informed training for, music therapy practitioners in the UK (Nordoff-Robbins Centre, London) and Norway.</li> <li>5) <b>Ethical business organisations</b>: e.g. <b>Varul's</b> ESRC-funded seminar series on Fair Trade products and ethical consumption involved practitioners from Traidcraft UK, and international FairTrade Foundations; <b>Kelly, A.</b> partnered in a Gates Foundation-funded project with Vestergaard Frandsen, an international Humanitarian Entrepreneurship company specialising in emergency response and disease control products.</li> <li>6) <b>Media outlets and the general public</b>, in the UK and internationally: e.g. <b>Skidelsky's</b> co-authored book on economics and ethics was covered in virtually every major UK newspaper and several influential radio programmes, like the <i>Today</i> programme (interviewed twice by John Humphries) and <i>The Moral Maze</i>, was favourably referred to publicly by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leader of the Labour Party, and enjoyed wide media coverage in the USA. <b>Dupré</b> and <b>King</b> have also been highly involved with the media (see the Impact Case Studies).</li> </ol>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Prior to 2008 there were already long-standing relationships between researchers and user-groups, such as <b>Rappert's</b> on-going relations with NGOs. These relationships became more systematically embedded within the research culture after 2008. The initial approach to impact after 2008 was to enhance and deepen existing relationships with user-groups at regional, national and international levels, and to identify new potential partnerships and opportunities for communication. An approach to enabling, supporting and prioritising impact was then developed in <b>three main ways</b> (below), all of which were designed to activate the principles of the RCUK <i>Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research</i>, which the University supports. These principles were put into practice in ways mindful of the unit's distinctive interdisciplinary research orientation.</p> <p><b>i) Knowledge exchange and embedding researchers.</b> Since 2008, SPA's approach to impact was based on the view that successful knowledge exchange, involving bilateral engagement between researchers and user-groups, is a catalyst for impact. Following this approach, academics have been embedded in user-practice organisations - e.g. <b>King</b>: the British Army at the highest levels; <b>Rappert</b>: the UN; <b>Hauskeller, C.</b>: the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry; <b>DeNora</b>: the Nordoff-Robbins Centre for Music Therapy, London. <b>DeNora</b> has also been a team-member in a long-running longitudinal music therapy research project, the practical side of which won the Royal Society for Public Health award in 2008, and her work is much cited in publications about music therapy training. The work of <b>Kelly, S.</b> on the social impact of genetic/reproductive</p>

## Impact template (REF3a)

technology led to her invitation to serve as expert advisor to NOWGEN, a UK centre of excellence in public engagement, education and professional training in biomedicine, and to the Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development on disability. **Hauskeller, C.**, with **Wilson-Kovacs**, has collaborated directly with stem cell researchers in the UK and Germany. **Leonelli's** expertise in bio-science databases has been tapped by UK and international plant scientists, Microsoft Research and bioinformatics users, and contributed to her being elected to the Global Young Academy group of exceptional early career scholars. Knowledge Exchange was also enhanced through media exposure of research (see above).

**ii) Formulating a clear impact agenda, and supporting its practical application.** The unit has developed and promoted to academics, especially ECRs, and to PGR students, a clear agenda about the importance and nature of impact and pathways to impact. The unit has drawn on College and University resources to realize this agenda in various practical ways - **Compulsory and optional training:** ECRs are required to attend the University's dedicated impact course, which stresses the importance of impact for successful career development. A similar course is available for PGR students, which they are strongly encouraged to attend as a core element of research training. Regular impact workshops are run centrally for the benefit of established staff identified by review processes (see below) as in need of augmenting their knowledge of impact strategies. **Formal reviews and incentivisation:** The University introduced in 2011 a dedicated section assessing impact activities into the **Performance and Development Review (PDR) assessment process**, undergone by all academics annually. This has defined impact as a significant determinant of career progression. As part of the PDR process, all staff are strongly encouraged to apply for impact-related funding from research councils and carry out knowledge exchange and engagement activities. The impact section of the PDR documents is reviewed by the unit's Director of Research (DoR), and systematically discussed with the individual, to integrate impact fully into future research plans, with the individual producing an **impact action plan**. As a result of the PDR process, the achievement of impact now plays a key role both in **promotion processes** and in applications for periods of **study leave**, providing strong practical incentives for staff to give sustained attention to impact issues. The unit supports this incentivisation by ensuring that impact-related work is now given **full weight in the staff workload model**. Incentivisation has been further promoted by the University creating the **Exeter Impact Awards**, which acknowledge and reward staff who have pursued outstanding instances of impact.

**iii) Providing infrastructure and support.** Supporting academics in identifying and cultivating impact is offered at unit level both by the DoR and by each staff member's Academic Lead, who advises on research development strategies. The University has invested in impact-supporting infrastructure in the REF period, as part of its commitment to the RCUK Concordat. A centrally-managed **Research and Knowledge Transfer (RKT)** unit was expanded, supporting impact activities being a central part of its remit. RKT staff assist academics in realizing the potential impact of research and in exploring how impact can be achieved by developing appropriate pathways. They also aid academics to prepare Pathways to Impact statements and impact summaries for RCUK grant applications. The University participated in the HEFCE pilot for impact, and exemplar material from this is available for academics to access on a **dedicated webpage**. The College of Social Sciences and International Studies, of which the unit is part, appointed in the census period a dedicated **Communication and Impact Manager** to support impact planning and development, further evidence of commitment to the Concordat. Throughout the census period, the Egenis Centre had a **Communications Officer** who was instrumental in ensuring that the Centre's research was effectively communicated to users and beneficiaries. Pathways to impact documents for RCUK and other funding bodies are subject to **internal peer review** by a committee led by the DoR. These are further discussed with members of the University-level **Policy, Impact and Performance Management team**, to ensure that the potential impact of the research is exploited as effectively as possible. There are dedicated **College funds**, competitively awarded and overseen by the Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Transfer, for enhancing impact from research. There are also central University funds for similar purposes, such as the **Open Innovations Fund** and the **Link Fund**, financing projects involving commercial or public partners.

**c. Strategy and plans**

An impact culture is now firmly in place. In the next 5 years, the aim will be to maintain and develop this culture, making it more inclusive, dynamic and responsive to change. The unit will: expand contacts with both user-groups and media outlets; fully mesh the impact agenda with the research

## Impact template (REF3a)

aims and strategies outlined in REF5; encourage and support the current cohort of ECR staff to pursue impact; maximise productive use of the impact expertise of senior staff, both long-standing appointments and recently-recruited individuals, cross-fertilizing this with the career aspirations of ECRs; ensure all staff draw fully upon the professional support offered at both College and University-level; cultivate more systematic sharing of impact-related good practice within the unit. The impact strategy is now being pursued concretely through a **Six-Point Plan**, which interfaces with, and draws upon the practical support offered by, the College's broader impact programme. The plan is led by the unit Director of Research and the College's Impact Manager. It involves:

**1) All staff organising and participating in regular impact-focused events.** Activities here include: *inviting external speakers*, both academic and extra-academic, to share good practice, foster inventive thinking about the pursuit of impact, and increase understanding of the needs of different types of user-beneficiaries; *bespoke staff development events* on impact; *impact sessions at research-focused away-days* (of which the first will occur in February 2014). Events will particularly focus on identifying ways in which i) interdisciplinary research, at the centre of SPA's identity, can generate uniquely effective and/or novel forms of **cross-discipline impact**, both across the social sciences, and between the social sciences, the humanities and the natural sciences; ii) **current and emergent areas** of impact can be fostered and supported (e.g. by strategically increasing numbers of staff in research fields with exceptional impact potentials). **2) Identifying and drawing on the experience of 'Impact Leaders'.** Staff members featured in Impact Case Studies in this REF assessment period will share their expanded practical knowledge of impact activities with all staff - especially ECRs and those who have not yet achieved impact - and PGR students, through giving impact **expert classes, leading workshops**, encouraging and supporting entries to the **Exeter Impact Awards**, and liaising closely with the DoR in **monitoring and periodic recalibration** of the impact agenda. **3) Redefining the role of the unit's Director of Research**, reframing it as **Director of Research and Impact**. The DoR will take up various opportunities for further training in impact, and will meet regularly with the RKT unit and the College Impact Officer. All staff operating as **Academic Leads** will be required to take regular impact awareness courses. **4) Recording impact activities more effectively.** Academics engaged in research with clear impact dimensions or potential will be required to keep an **Impact Diary**, recording the evolution of impact; this will be discussed annually as part of the PDR process and on a regular basis with the designated Academic Lead. **5) Consolidation of the impact agenda** within broader SPA research strategies, especially in **new areas for development** as outlined in REF5. The unit plans to expand expertise in areas such as **embodied cognition** and **criminology**, with a view to capitalising on impact potentials in these fields, as identified by the DoR in conjunction with senior staff. **6) Increasing effective use of ICT to promote both awareness of impact and direct interaction with users and publics.** An **on-line database** will be made available to the general public, showcasing work with diverse users and publics and constituting a virtual gallery of impact achieved by SPA; and increased use of **social media** by researchers will allow more instantaneous interfacing with user-groups and diverse audiences.

#### d. Relationship to case studies

The selected case studies illustrate central aspects of the unit's research culture and its specific orientation towards impact: 1) they exemplify **commitment to knowledge exchange principles**, and **embedding researchers in user-settings** to work alongside users; 2) they show the **vital awareness** of both impact, and of the practical means offered by the University which staff can draw upon to realise it, that the unit's procedures (described above) sought to instil in staff after 2008; 3) they illustrate **the potential of critical Sociological, Philosophical, Anthropological and STS analyses to catalyse change** in organisations, social domains and the public sphere; 4) they highlight how **interdisciplinary research** - a hallmark of the unit - can foster impact in ways consonant with, but which go beyond, mono-disciplinary research. Thus **Rappert's** ICS highlights how a focus on practical ethics, combined with expertise in STS and Cultural Sociology, can lay the groundwork for revision of public policy. **King's** ICS demonstrates the value of combining anthropological analysis and social theory to recast high-level military strategy and training, and inform political and public debate on military matters; **Dupré's** ICS evidences how critical perspectives drawn from the philosophy of science, which resonate with perspectives in STS, can examine key ideas in biological science, in ways which illuminate new aspects of scientific knowledge and practice, and inform media and public understandings of science today.