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Institution: Brunel University

Unit of Assessment: 23 Sociology

a. Overview

The intellectual research environment and strategy of the Department of Sociology & Communications enables us to make a notable national and international contribution to both the maintenance and renewal of the discipline. We are a medium-sized, highly productive community of 12 scholars who place great emphasis on the development of all staff, particularly early career researchers. Building on Brunel University's signature interdisciplinary and applied research approach, our research is organised around three internationally recognised and University supported Research Centres: the Centre for Biomedicine & Society; the Centre for Culture, Media and Regulation, to which our Moral Panics Network is linked; and the Centre for Comedy Studies Research. Since 2008, this dynamic research base has produced 22 books and edited volumes, 202 articles and chapters and has generated over £1million in external research funds.

b. Research strategy

The organisational structure of the Department facilitates a research culture representing some of the major sub-fields in sociology. A distinctive feature is our commitment to viewing the media and communication as central to understanding modern social life. All staff and PhD students are part of at least one Research Centre. Although the Centres are active in their own right, our structure encourages interdisciplinary activities around common research agendas. We are at the forefront of several areas of interdisciplinary research and innovative research methods, producing high-quality theoretical and applied work. Close interaction between research, teaching and theoretical innovation is a key element of our research culture with, for example, students making documentaries/films that combine theory and practice. Our research and impact activities are organised through three interdisciplinary Research Centres and one international Network: The *Centre for Biomedicine & Society* (CBAS) examines the social practices and social shaping of science via four core themes: *innovations in biomedicine, science and technology; sociology of health and illness; sociology of bioethics; professional practice and expertise*; The *Centre for Culture, Media & Regulation* (CCMR) focuses its activities around three areas: *cultural economy; cultural regulation; cultural representation*. Following the successful 'Moral Panics' Conference (130 attendees), in 2012 the international *Moral Panic Research Network* (MPRN) was founded, affiliated to CCMR; *The Centre for Comedy Studies Research* (CCSR), established June 2013, clusters its research around overlapping themes including *comedy and identity; comedy, taboo and offence; comedy, power and ideology*.

Achievement of Strategic Aims: Since the last RAE we have maintained staff numbers but have focused on the strategic appointment of three highly research active Chairs (Seale, Wainwright, Williams), a substantial financial investment illustrating that sociology is seen as integral to Brunel's future strategy and development. Through the activities of our Centres and Network, we have increased our national and international profile and reputation in three important interdisciplinary areas of research (health and science; media and culture; comedy studies).

Evaluation of RAE 2008 Strategy: Our 2008 strategy detailed three main goals:

1. To further enhance our international reputation in sociology of health and illness, at that time focused around the Centre for the Study of Health and Illness (CSHI);
2. To consolidate the Centre for Media, Globalisation and Risk (CMGR);
3. To seek University status for a new Centre on Governance and Popular Culture – this and the CMGR were transfigured into the Centre for Culture, Media & Regulation (CCMR).

Each goal have been achieved and expanded upon within a revised structure, in the light of career mobility and new research expertise brought to the Department:

(1)The Department's profile in sociology of health and illness has significantly increased through the relocation of CBAS from KCL and with the three Professorial appointments. With its developing focus on the social studies of science and technology, CBAS strengthens and revitalises the Department's traditional strengths in sociology of science (RAE 2001) and health (RAE 2008). The group also adds a new domain of expertise, sociology of bioethics, which bridges the key areas of

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science, technology and health. Williams/Wainwright's ongoing research on medical/scientific bioethical issues is one example of this work. Funded by a five year £810,000 Wellcome Trust Strategic Award, this interdisciplinary programme contributes to medicine, policy, sociology, ethics and law. For example, a publication critical of consent to the use of fresh embryos for stem cell research has resulted in a UK-wide audit of consenting processes by the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority, with potential international policy consequences.

(2 & 3) The second two goals have been refocused and incorporated within the CCMR, established in 2012, which better reflects our core research strengths. This is in part illustrated by our successful MSc Media & Communications which recruits 30 students/year, and the affiliated MPRN. This transformation also relates to the strategic appointment of staff whose work cuts across both Centres, for example, Seale, health media expertise; Weaver, media representations of disability; Riesch, science communication and public engagement. Good examples of CCMR's work are that of Henderson, whose AHRC study exploring the links between media, young people and democracy resulted in a book, 'Television News, Politics and Young People' (Palgrave, 2010); and Degen, whose ESRC grant examining how digital technologies are transforming architectural practice culminated in a major exhibition at the Building Centre, London, with a conference attended by 50 urban practitioners and academics.

Five Year Objectives: Building on the University's Strategic Plan (2012-17) and the School of Social Sciences 2012-15 Plan, our 5-year research strategy focuses on further developing internationally recognised academic innovation and excellence within and across the substantive fields of research outlined above and below. Our key objectives are: to maintain the highest standards of academic excellence in research, enabling increased knowledge transfer and impact; and to expand our research collaborations and diversify and increase our external grant income. Research quality will be enhanced by a focus on selected priority areas, and effective processes which drive quality.

Selected priority areas:

1) We will develop the rapidly expanding CCSR into an established international, interdisciplinary Centre with an MA programme and high quality PhD students. This unique Centre builds upon Departmental research strengths in comedy, culture and media. For example, Lockyer is collaborating with Dave's Leicester Comedy Festival on a Sir Halley Stewart Trust funded project exploring the relationship between stand-up comedy and disability; Weaver's research examining race, ethnic and racist humour resulted in an award winning article (BSA Sage Prize) and a sole authored book. Teaching activities include a very successful 3rd year undergraduate option, Comedy, Culture and Media.

2) Drawing on wider Brunel University research strengths including the new £12million National Centre for Sustainable Energy, we will further extend our CBAS expertise in health technologies and ethics into areas such as environmental science, thereby opening up new priority interdisciplinary funding streams from, for example, the BBSRC and EPSRC.

3) There is a range of research areas and expertise linking our three Centres including Professional practice and expertise (CBAS/CCMR/CCSR); Cultural regulation and representation (CCMR/CBAS/CCSR); Disability and comedy (CCSR/CBAS); Media and comedy (CCSR/CCMR). These links will be maximised in order to win research grants in areas linked to key contemporary debates in major funders' priority areas. For example, CBAS and CCMR will further develop ongoing Wellcome Trust funded research on public engagement around Understandings of the Brain, one of Wellcome's five Major Research Challenges (2010-20).

New and Developing Initiatives: We have identified a strategically important area for development, Innovations in Methodology, which cuts across existing strengths and facilitates new synergies. Examples include the development of digital methods exploring the challenges of researching race and racism online (Sharma, BA, ESRC funded); the use of innovative Ethics Discussion Groups as a new social/philosophical research method (Williams/Wainwright, Wellcome Trust, ESRC funded); pioneering work on the development of key word analysis (Seale, ESRC funded); and a strong theoretical interest in the relationship between the philosophy of social science and empirical methods (Roberts, Wilkin, Wainwright).

Priority Development Areas include: the retention of high achieving Masters students for PhD research in our priority areas by ensuring that, where appropriate, grant applications have PhD students funded within them; and further facilitating international exchanges in order to enhance research collaborations and grant success. For example, we currently have three Australian

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Visiting Professors (Broome, Queensland; Petersen, Monash; Waldby, Sydney), all of whom visited in summer 2013. As a result of these links Petersen and Wainwright successfully applied for an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant exploring stem cell tourism, whilst Waldby and Williams are collaborating on Wellcome Trust/ARC funded research on embryos, both of which enhance our Departmental strengths in this area.

Major drivers in the implementation of our research strategy are, firstly, a Brunel policy of recruiting only high-quality staff who have an excellent track record or show very high potential of achieving excellence in research (Seale has an international track record; Weaver shows high potential for achieving this). We carefully monitor individual teaching loads (@ 12 hours per week) in order to ensure time for research supervision and conducting research. Brunel's probationary scheme has a formal commitment to lighter administration and teaching loads for junior staff, to enable them to build up their research and publication profile (Malik won two AHRC grants during her probationary period). We have extensive support for drafting proposals including grant writing workshops for staff/PhD students run by the School and University; peer-reviewing of all proposals at Department and School level, with ESRC proposals reviewed by an expert cross-University Panel; a dedicated School Research Office. In addition to a University Knowledge Transfer (KT) Scheme which funds impact and KT activities, generous personal research budgets for research and dissemination activities (@ £800 per year) enable staff to network and to present their work internationally. We also have an Impact Co-ordinator (Williams), to maximise public and academic engagement with research findings. Research Centres can apply for University Seminar funds of £2.5k (CCMR and CCSR were both successful in 2013) which facilitate new collaborations connecting the Department with national/ international scholars and stakeholders. Our Centres organise a variety of events which connect with users of our research, including: monthly Department research seminars open to all University staff, students and public, featuring leading external speakers; monthly Research Centre workshops which encourage the presentation of research findings, draft grant applications and papers amongst staff/students.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

Our staffing and staff development strategies support our achievements and underpin our 5-year research objectives.

Staffing policy: Excellence in research with all staff entered in a high quality REF submission are now key criteria for Brunel appointments. High quality research outputs are central to Brunel's promotions criteria which are conveyed to all staff during mentoring and Annual Reviews. Since 2008, we have revitalised and expanded our research base through the strategic replacement of staff with outstanding new appointments. For example, the replacement of Lunt in Media & Culture with early career researcher Weaver, who has excellent publications in high-ranking international peer reviewed journals; and the integration of the health and science research streams through three appointments at Professorial level (Seale, Wainwright, Williams). These reflect stability, renewal and a commitment to succession planning and the promotion of early career researchers. The Department and University pay great attention and commit substantial resources to the development of demographic profile and sustainability in terms of research leadership. For example, the one-year ASPIRE Programme focuses on developing strong leadership skills in the next cadre of research leaders. Our succession planning policies have ensured the long-term development and high quality of our research leadership team with, for example, the promotion of Lockyer from lecturer to senior lecturer and Director of CCSR (2013-). Williams from Director of CBAS (2008-2012) to Deputy Head of School, Research (2012-); Seale from PhD Convenor to Head of Department (2013-);

Equal opportunity promotion and career development: University Staff Development includes obligatory training in equality and diversity for all staff and this is reflected in our Departmental strategies, which include, for example, monitoring of teaching workloads for equity. All new staff are required to attend equality and diversity training and to formally update their knowledge annually. In recognition of its commitment to equality of opportunities Brunel received an Athena SWAN Bronze Award, which supports staff who have returned from maternity leave, statutory adoption leave etc, in the continuation of their research career. Brunel participates in the UK Aurora Programme for women in leadership (Henderson); and the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) London Universities Mentoring Scheme (Malik). In addition to annual appraisals with the Head of Department, termly mentoring enables staff to develop research plans and outputs which reflect

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and shape our research targets, and which also monitors and supports the attainment of individual targets and research quality and integrity. Our research strategy is evaluated at termly Away Days where changes in research environment are reviewed, new initiatives proposed and policies formulated. The School Research Committee supports the Department by connecting its research strategy with the broader aims and objectives of the University, which in turn offers financial, development and management resources.

We have one staff member (Riesch) on a **fixed-term contract**, and Brunel staffing policies ensure he is treated as a tenured member of staff, including being central to our CBAS research grouping.

Postdoctoral researchers are fully integrated into the Department and are mentored as part of the process of career development. The Graduate School provides a Research Development Training Programme which integrates with the national Researcher Development Framework. Brunel was awarded the European Commission's 'HR Excellence in Research' badging in 2011 in recognition of its commitment to the recommendations of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The success of these supportive policies is demonstrated by the deployment of our postdoctoral researchers to prestigious posts on project completion (Porter to a BBSRC funded post, Leeds University; Brosnan to a lectureship at University of Newcastle, Australia). Specific early career mentoring for **probationary staff** is provided to advise them on the University's expectations of teaching, administration and research, and to develop personalised career and probation strategies. Reduced teaching and administrative loads are mandatory for probationary staff, the success of which is illustrated by Malik, who won two AHRC grants whilst on probation. Additional teaching relief for **early career** and probationary staff can be applied for through the competitive £15k Brunel Research Initiatives and Enterprise Fund (BRIEF), which provides a unique opportunity to write a first grant proposal (Malik, Weaver). A competitive research leave scheme of up to one year (awarded to Degen, Henderson, Lockyer, Rojek, Roberts, Sharma since 2008) enables staff to devote a consolidated period to high quality, impact generating research after which they submit an assessed report to the Pro Vice-Chancellor-Research. In her two term's leave Lockyer, for example, carried out comedy research in Romania and submitted three peer-reviewed papers, an AHRC proposal and a successful application for University recognition of the CCSR. Applications for **personal research fellowships** are encouraged. For example, Williams's 1-year Wellcome Trust Fellowship (2012) enabled her to make contributions to both the discipline and to a key area of our research strategy (sociology of bioethics) which included a new entry on Empirical Ethics for 'Key Concepts in Medical Sociology'; a new chapter on The Fetus and Embryo for the international Handbook for Medical Sociology; and a Virtual Special Issue for Sociology of Health and Illness journal on a new area, Selective Reproductive Technologies. **Research integrity and quality** is maintained through robust procedures including regularly updated authorship policies based on BSA guidelines and University audited ethics processes and training. Building on Brunel's Code of Research Ethics, we have effective mechanisms in place to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards, including formal approval by the Research Ethics Committee for research involving human participants.

ii. Research students

Research students play a key role and are involved in many aspects of our research. We have 22 PhD students (versus 13 in 2008), with eight completions since 2008. Many of our students have been awarded competitive studentships e.g. Wellcome Trust (Gardner, Samuel), Government sponsored funding from Nigeria (Dumbili) and New Zealand (Rohloff), which strengthens our international and funding council links. We facilitate research excellence at PGR level with intensive supervision based on two personal supervisors, a minimum of eight supervision meetings annually and formal confirmation of PhD student status at 12-14 months full-time. An independent reviewer is responsible for assessing progress annually and progress targets are assessed every six months by a Departmental panel which includes the Head of Department. Through these mechanisms, we encourage full-time students to submit their dissertations within a three-year period. The School supports our PGR environment with an innovative research skills Doctoral Master Class programme facilitated by leading researchers from the Department (Sharma, Weaver, Williams, Wainwright, Seale, Roberts) and School. This enables PhD students to develop a breadth and depth of social science research knowledge in an interdisciplinary environment, essential for future employment. These structures ensure that our students are highly sought after for postdoctoral fellowships – for example, Rohloff won a highly competitive Wellcome Trust

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funded postdoctoral position. More generally, the Department, School and University support students through a wide variety of measures, including:

Department: Participation in monthly Research Seminar series, annual PhD presentation days and PhD Reading Group (organised by students); part-time mentored teaching opportunities which enhance employment prospects; students are encouraged and supported to publish in leading journals (e.g. Gardner, Samuel, Rohloff); are co/lead organisers of Centre conferences and national/international conferences (e.g. Gardner is co-organiser of the BSA Medical Sociology conference; Samuel and Gardner co-organised a national conference on Interdisciplinary Ethics in Research at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor; Rohloff was lead organiser of the international Moral Panics conference, which she developed into the Moral Panics Network); students are actively encouraged to apply for funding for wider initiatives and awards e.g. the cross London Universities PGR Interdisciplinary Studies Group (Gardner, Samuel £1500); competitive Wellcome Trust Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology three month fellowship to enhance awareness of policy processes (Samuel).

School: Participation in the annual Staff/PhD Students' Research Conference, which develops cross-Departmental research links; School studentships (nine in 2011/12, Dermody); three induction events per year (new students October and January; returners, October); peer mentors for those who come outside the normal cycle; working spaces; personal research funds (@£300 per annum); School Research Office with two full-time staff.

University: A dedicated Graduate School with six staff, £500k annual funding and a fully equipped 674 sq metre social and study facility which supports all postgraduates through the provision of a comprehensive skills development programme containing key employability skills; workshops and networking events; research prizes and social facilities; advanced library skills training plus access to special book collections, for example, Moral Panics Collection (funded by the MPN); students are given frequent opportunities to attend events organised regionally through the Graduate School's collaborations with other London Universities and through Vitae and the Vitae London Hub; six Vice Chancellor's Travel Prizes have been awarded enabling students to present their work at national/international conferences (e.g. Dunning, Jugureanu, Rohloff), and our students regularly receive competitive University Awards – for example, Rohloff was awarded the 2012 Jock McEwan Prize for outstanding Brunel PhD student.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Since 2008 we have received competitive externally awarded research funds of £986k and £30k consultancy income focused primarily on our current and developing research areas, thereby validating our emphasis on building up core specialisms and competencies. Highlights in

Sociology of Media and Regulation include two AHRC projects (£93k) examined the *role of diasporic film and communities* and *how community filmmaking practices in culturally diverse contexts contribute to the wider film ecology*, in collaboration with British Film Institute (Malik PI); and an AHRC project (£207k), *Noise of the past-a poetic journey of war, memory and dialogue* (Sharma CI). In the **Sociology of Health, Science and Bioethics** stream successes include a five year Wellcome Trust Strategic Programme Grant (£810k) on the *social, ethical, clinical, legal and policy issues around translational research* (Williams PI, Wainwright, Seale CI's); an NIHR Research for Patient Benefit grant on *patient experiences of electroconvulsive therapy* (Seale CI, £245k); and an Australian Research Council grant (Wainwright CI) on the *sociology of stem cell tourism*; \$240k. **Innovations in Methodology** highlights include an innovative BA grant on *Twitter racial discourse* (Sharma PI, £10k); an ESRC grant on *digital social research* (Sharma PI, £5k); and an ESRC grant exploring the *Impact of digital technologies on architectural design practice* (Degen CI, £232k);

All of our grants relate directly to high quality research outputs which fully reflect our research strategy. For example, Degen's 2008 book, 'Sensing Cities: Regenerating Public Life in Barcelona and Manchester', was the first piece of research and academic writing to apply a study of sensory sociology on current day urban phenomena such as urban regeneration, bringing together urban politics, experiential sociology and issues around place-making; whilst *Noise of the Past* resulted in a *Memories of the Past* performance in Coventry Cathedral with 450 attendees, a Special Issue for The Senses & Society Journal and a high quality REF Impact case study (Sharma).

Grant Income Generation Strategy

One of our major strategic objectives is to increase and diversify our external research income. In

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line with the School and University we have developed a comprehensive programme to achieve this, including regular, enhanced grant application workshops for staff and PhD students at School and University levels. A new three-step peer review of all external funding applications provides improved support and quality assurance, and includes detailed feedback from two Departmental colleagues, assessment by the School Research Director and for ESRC applications, additional reviews by an expert cross-University Panel. We encourage applications for postdoctoral fellowships through personal contacts and the Departmental website. The School assists external income generation with three research administrators, and the University's Research Support and Development Office (RSDO) facilitates grant income generation with 14 staff who provide specialist training and assistance, including for European Framework applications and KT. With RSDO, Williams helped initiate and attended networking meetings to encourage interdisciplinary research links between Brunel scientists, engineers and social scientists, which has already resulted in one major BBSRC/EPSRC bid on synthetic biology being submitted, with PhD studentships incorporated (Wainwright/Williams CI's). A monthly research bulletin is circulated to the School by RSDO, and our Head of Research (Williams) highlights any relevant funding opportunities to individual staff.

Research Infrastructure

The University supports high-quality research and builds capacity in a number of key ways. Specific schemes to support staff have already been highlighted e.g. BRIEF, Research and KT Leave, as have structures to support and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration such as Research Centre Seminar funding. Research Centres also benefit from marketing and promotion via the Brunel website and through access to additional University research funds – for example, the CCSR launch, attended by 250 academic, stakeholder and commercial delegates, was supported through this. The University's Research Development Fund also supports networking and the writing of major grant applications. A revision of annual performance management and appraisal processes took place in 2010, and there is now a greater emphasis on research, with publications one of the key criteria for promotion. Graduate School programmes including Core Skills and on-line Research Training which are available to all staff. The RSDO Business Development Service offers support in developing collaborations with industry. Research dissemination and impact are enabled by the University's Open Access Publishing Fund of £100k per annum. Postgraduate study is supported through central marketing activity focused on driving traffic to Open Days. The University provides a wide portfolio of public events and the third Public Lecture series which ran in February 2013 was highly successful, with around 300 people per lecture (Sharma, 2011; Roberts, Wainwright, 2012; Williams, Seale, Malik, 2013). Within the School we have a dedicated team of technical support staff, including computing and web support and expertise. Our research environment has been enhanced by University investments of £350 million on the redevelopment and expansion of the campus, including a departmental PGR student office with networked computing stations and an interdisciplinary social space for School staff and PGR students.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline and research base

Contributions to the discipline and research base are driven by a vibrant interdisciplinary research culture reflecting broader University values that promote both collaboration with the national and international community and direct engagement with the process of research production, evaluation and dissemination. This results not only in quantifiable examples of research activity including conferences and collaborative ventures, but also demonstrates our depth of commitment to enhancing research quality.

Interdisciplinary Research: A culture of **interdisciplinary engagement** is central to our approach to research, innovation and impact, and the development of long term research collaborations, stakeholder involvement and impact generation are facilitated by our Centres/Network. To establish new networks, we make effective use of Research Leave, KT and BRIEF awards and Research Development Fund. New appointments made which underpin this interdisciplinary commitment include Seale, Williams and Wainwright, whose research programmes contain numerous successful projects involving multidisciplinary teams of co-applicants (e.g. clinicians, scientists, lawyers, ethicists, charity representatives) who are involved from project inception. This close, ongoing involvement has enabled clinical, legal and ethical policy outcomes to be taken forward to enhance patient care (e.g. Seale's death and dying research is one of our Impact case studies). Lockyer's grant in collaboration with Dave's Leicester Comedy Festival explores the

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potential of disabled comedians in improving the lives of disabled people; Malik is Advisory Panel member for the British Film Institute's Unlocking Film Heritage project, determining decisions about films to be digitised. These collaborations enrich our research environment in numerous ways, including increased grant success due in part because stakeholders help identify and shape the research focus; and collaborators are frequent speakers at research events, for example, disabled comedians and the Director of Dave's Leicester Comedy Festival at the CCSR launch. Recent **interdisciplinary workshops and international conferences** include Moral Panics (2011); Sociology & Bioethics (2011); Media Regulation (2012); Philosophy & Social Science (2013); Gender and Communication Technology in Iraq (2013); Seminar Series on 'Networks, New Media and Digital Democracy' (2013); Comedy Matters (2013). These provide opportunities for networking which help improve grant application success and also lead to the production of high quality outputs such as the establishment of the *Moral Panics Network* with a linked Special Issue of *Crime, Media, Culture* on moral panics (2011).

Contributions to the wider research base: Staff have made extensive contributions to the discipline through their work on editorial boards, grant review panels and visiting professorships, examples of which include: **Editorships:** *Sociology of Health & Illness* (Seale, Wainwright, Williams, 2006-2012); *darkmatter Journal* (Sharma, 2007-). **Editorial Boards:** *Sociology* (Wainwright); *Clinical Ethics* (Williams, which included setting up this Royal Society of Medicine journal); *Journal of British Cinema and Television* (Malik); *European Journal of Cancer Care* (Seale); *International Journal of Humor Research* (Lockyer); *Qualitative Research* (Seale); *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* (Degen); *South Asian Popular Culture* (Malik); *Subjectivity* (Sharma). **Research Panels:** DoH NIHR Senior Fellowships Board and Policy Research Board (Williams); DoH NIHR Programme Grant Board (Seale); Wellcome Trust Society Research Awards (Henderson); Wellcome Trust Biomedical Ethics Awards (Williams); UK representative, EU COST Committee Individuals, Societies, Cultures & Health (Williams). **Professional Associations:** Chair, Race Network, MeCCSA (Malik); Fellow, Royal Society of Medicine (Henderson); Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (Henderson, Lockyer); Parliamentary Media Literacy Group (Henderson); Runnymede Trust Academic Forum (Sharma). **Visiting Professorships:** Barcelona University, Gothenburg University (Degen); Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania (Lockyer); Monash University, University of Sydney (Williams & Wainwright). **Prizes:** 2011 BSA Sage Prize for Innovation/ Excellence (Weaver). **Keynote Addresses:** Wilkin (Imperial War Museum: 10 Years in Iraq); Williams, Wainwright (Russian Academy of Sciences, furthering research links with the Dept of Science & Innovations, St Petersburg); Degen (comparative urbanism at Roskilde, Gothenburg, Barcelona); Lockyer (social aspects of comedy, Poland, Romania, USA); Seale (death and dying, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, USA); Cendeac Arts Centre, Spain, on the changing nature of the public sphere (Roberts).

Advice on policy and practice: In line with our commitment to **policy relevant research**, we have made a number of important contributions including: Evidence to Commission on Assisted Dying, UK (Seale, 2010); Advice to UK Stem Cell Bank Steering Group on legality and validity of consent for embryo donation (Williams 2012); Expert reviewer for Nuffield Council on Bioethics Report on Ethical Aspects of Information Disclosure for Donor Conception (Williams 2012); MRC nominated UK representative on International Stem Cell Forum Ethics Working Party, the first social scientist to hold this role (Williams 2013-); consultant to charity *The Abundance Lab* on social media in post-Saddam Iraq (Wilkin, 2011-); advising BBC Media Action on the impact of story lines (Henderson).

National/ International academic collaborations: Wellcome Trust project links with University of Sussex; Monash University, University of Sydney (Williams, Wainwright); NHS collaborations with Guy's Hospital (Williams); Evelina Children's Hospital (Williams, Wainwright); collaborative programme of urban-cultural research in Barcelona (Degen); Griffith University and CEU Budapest (Wilkin). Seale's research on end of life care involves collaborations with the Netherlands, Belgium, and Nottingham University, UK; Lockyer's comedy research with Romanian scholars.

Media work: Drawing on University and School PR expertise, media is seen as a key way of promoting the discipline, which includes: a Department twitter feed; extensive newspaper/TV coverage on death and dying (Seale); *eFM Primetime South Korea* on Speakers' Corner, Russian online news agency on free speech site in Moscow (Roberts); *Al Jazeera* documentary contribution on Chomsky (Wilkin); Radio 4 *Thinking Allowed*, research ethics (Williams); *New Statesman* on social implications of comedy research (Lockyer); Roberts assisted filmmakers with a documentary about Speakers' Corner; regular contributor to the *Guardian Blog* (Malik).