

**Institution: University of Manchester**

**Unit of Assessment: 17a (Geography)**

**a. Context**

Geography at Manchester has a distinguished history of impact. In 2008 Brian Robson and Bob Barr were awarded OBEs, for services to Urban Policy and applied GIS respectively, and in line with this recognition we continue to advance the role of our research in addressing contemporary environmental and social challenges. Accordingly, our research in *Political Economy and Ecology*, *Urban Change*, *Environmental Processes* and *Quaternary Environments and Geoarchaeology* has been translated into three main types of impact:

- Shaping **policy**, at both governmental and non-governmental levels;
- Providing an **evidence** base, in particular for the work of environmental managers;
- Improving **public awareness**, appreciation and understanding of contemporary issues.

Our impact activities take place at a range of scales, including work with local communities, authorities and nearby environments (e.g. Manchester City Council, Peak District National Park) and with organisations at both national (e.g. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Scottish Government, etc) and multi-national levels (e.g. European Commission, International Labour Organization, United Nations). We engage with a broad spectrum of potential research users, including but not limited to environmental regulators and utilities, government departments, quasi-governmental bodies, nature conservation agencies, NGOs, charities and a range of other international bodies.

**b. Approach to impact**

Our commitment to impact is grounded upon the belief that meaningful influence on non-academic organisations, wider society and our environment has its origins in the production of high-quality, academically-validated research. We aim to maximise the value of our primary research findings to users through six key approaches:

**Enabling, encouraging and supporting staff in engaging in impact activities:** We foster an environment that allows staff to become leading proponents of user and public engagement in a variety of forms, via: **(a)** The formulation of individual impact and outreach plans for all staff, within their annual Performance and Development Reviews (PDR). Early Career Researchers are mentored in impact activities by experienced staff, and this is monitored on an ongoing basis; **(b)** A one-semester-after-six sabbatical leave policy, with impact activities explicitly supported in sabbatical criteria and planning; **(c)** The embedding of Geography within the School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED). This has providing dedicated administrative support for impact-related events, including the organisation of over 50 workshops, conferences *etcetera* (during the census period) in which Geography staff engaged with external organisations (e.g. the 2012 NERC sponsored 'Knowledge for Wildfire' workshops involving >80 delegates and >30 non-academic stakeholder organisations); **(d)** The strengthening of skills for achieving impact, through the University's professional development programmes for staff and researchers, specifically focusing on those in their early career through the Research Development Framework (RDF) and impact training/advice on the Humanities New Academics Programme; **(e)** University promotion criteria which explicitly recognise knowledge exchange (KE) and transfer as one of four key criteria up to Professorial level (along with research, teaching and service/leadership). In accordance with this policy, KE activity and associated impact were significant factors in the 2013 promotions of **Allott** (to Chair) and **Jayne** (to Reader).

**Developing strong relationships with users of our research:** We have developed **strategic partnerships** with key user organisations in order to maximise knowledge interchange and enhance the effectiveness of our impact activity. Links with research users have been initiated through a variety of mechanisms, including: strategic approaches by our Research Groups to potential partners; initial approaches for advisory work from external organisations themselves (often facilitated by the School's positive consultancy policy); invitations to project advisory groups; CASE studentship projects; and the elevation of external involvement as a key criterion within research bids. This has resulted in: **(a) Key partnerships** such as a memorandum of understanding with Manchester City Council facilitating Lindley's impact work on urban climate

## Impact template (REF3a)

adaption, and a long-standing association with the Moors for the Future Partnership (incorporating the Environment Agency, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Severn Trent Water, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water) which has transformed conservation practice for peatland restoration (see section d); **(b) Researchers acting as formal advisors.** Since 2008, staff have held over 60 advisory positions, within: international organisations (e.g., Belgium Science Policy Office, European Union, International Union for Conservation of Nature, United Nations); UK Government (e.g. DCLG, DEFRA, Scottish Government, Welsh Office); NGOs and charities (e.g. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Runnymede Trust); and environment and conservation organisations (e.g. Environment Agency, Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage).

**Targeting funding to facilitate impact:** Our strategy of actively promoting dialogue between our Research Groups and potential research users, aligning Research Group plans with the needs of these different stakeholders and encouraging external involvement in grant applications, has resulted in 35% of our research funding since 2008 coming from impact related sponsors, including grants from government departments, the environmental and conservation sector and from charities. Key exemplars are: **McMorrow's** leadership of the NERC/ESRC FIRES seminar series (2009), and her subsequent NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellowship on 'Knowledge for Wildfires' (2012-14); **Lindley's** funding for impact work on urban climate change adaption from EPSRC, the European Commission and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008-15); and funding from DEFRA to **Evans/Allott** for work feeding into UK carbon accounting and budgeting methods (2010-13).

**Adopting a wide range of materials and media for research dissemination:** To communicate directly with potential research users and the public we have used: working papers and reports (e.g. **Allott and Evans'** series of reports to Moors for the Future); policy briefs (e.g. briefs by **Ward's** Geographies of Temporary Staffing Unit resulted in invitations to present at practitioner events and to report to the UN International Labour Organization); user workshops and conferences (e.g. **McMorrow's** Wildfire network); web communication (e.g. **Dodge's** blogs on Cybergeography); and finally, press releases, social media and public activities. The 2009-10 'Mapping Manchester' exhibition (**Dodge/Perkins**) was the best attended exhibition in the history of Manchester's John Rylands Library (75,000 visitors), and **Hughes's** innovative input into the Whitworth Art Gallery's Ruskin exhibition (2010-11) helped enhance public understanding and appreciation of glacier research by focusing on Ruskin and ice.

**Translational networks to realise indirect impact from theoretical research:** A significant element of our primary research focuses on developing and challenging existing understandings of political economy, ecology and urban change (**Castree, Kaika, Swyngedouw, Ward,** etc). Our strategy for communicating the implications of this work for policy and practice has been through the leadership of collaborative networks bringing together academics, policy makers and practitioners. This is exemplified by **Swyngedouw's** central role in two major networks: the €1.4M EU SOCIAL POLIS platform bringing together stakeholders on questions of cities and social cohesion; and the Leverhulme WATERLAT network on governance and citizenship in water management in Latin America, involving >200 academic and stakeholder organisations.

**Shaping the next generation of policy makers through teaching and PGR programmes:** Our research-led teaching portfolio, at both UGT and PGT levels, is training the next generation of environmental managers, public policy professionals and practitioners. The focus is not only on developing evidence-based approaches to public action, but also on ensuring that graduates understand and appreciate the values of social justice and environmental sustainability, taking with them the knowledge and skills to practice and promote these goals through professional and civic action. Our placement programme for PGT students has also led to engagement and direct work with user organisations. We have been awarded six RCUK CASE awards since 2008, with partners including ARUP, Manchester City Council, Natural England and OurLife. Accordingly, impact and engagement training is an increasingly explicit element of our PGR skills programme.

### c. Strategy and plans

Impact beyond academia is a key element of the University's *Strategic Vision 2020*, and we have a clear local strategy (*SEED Research Strategy, 2011-2015*) which highlights "the 'impactful' nature

of our research as a key strength of our strategic focus”. During the REF2014 period Geography sought to ‘mainstream’ impact activity, and our future strategy builds upon existing procedural and substantive strengths, further enhancing the impact of our research through four mechanisms:

1. Expanding resources for impact development in Geography, SEED and the Faculty of Humanities. From September 2013 five new appointments will be made. Geography will appoint an impact co-ordinator, SEED a Deputy Director for Research (Prof Dan Brockington) with a brief dedicated to impact, and the Faculty three Impact Officers. This team will work closely with individuals and the four Geography Research Groups to ensure that impact pathways are identified and supported. In SEED impact activities will be supported through an annual ‘Research and Impact Stimulation Fund’ (c. £80K pa) prioritising support for Early Career Researchers, and additionally we will benefit from the University’s £3.2M EPSRC, £1.4M ESRC (2013-18) and £100K NERC awards of Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAAs) to support knowledge exchange and impact activities.
2. Enhancing support for impact activities, and increasing incentive and reward by incorporating impact into the SEED workload model and defining Geography-specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the research review process – including CASE submissions, Knowledge Exchange activity, researcher-practitioner publication goals and grants targeted for user involvement. Monitoring and review of impact activity will also be facilitated through the University’s Research Profiling and Performance Review exercises. We aim to hold at least two externally funded KE Fellowship positions at any given time.
3. Improving channels for research dissemination, specifically focusing on opportunities arising from the new SEED website (launched September 2013), the impact ‘extranet’ of the UoM Directorate of Research and Business Engagement and the policy@manchester blog, and with associated monitoring of dissemination activities. We aim for sustained 25% annual growth in our use of online tools and social media outlets including: electronic research dissemination and promotion through greater use of blogs and Twitter, alongside accompanying podcasts and videos. There will also be a presumption that all new research will incorporate the production of public/practitioner-focused materials on the website.
4. Investment in the development of new areas of impact activity with particular societal significance, emerging from recent academic findings. For example on *Energy Vulnerability* associated with the new Centre on Urban Energy and Resilience (**Bouzarovski, Petrova**), and on *Urban Asylum* (**Darling**) and *Community Intervention Programmes* (**Wilson**); associated with new European Research Council, ESRC and British Academy initiatives respectively. Together these projects aim to make a specific contribution to two of the University’s key institutional priorities; social cohesion and carbon reduction.

#### d. Relationship to case studies

The submitted cases were selected from a wider range of our impact activities, including substantive programmes on drinking cultures (**Jayne**), improving urban social cohesion (**Swyngedouw**), labour regulation in Asian garment factories (enabled by **Hess**’s 2012 sabbatical at the International Labour Organization), public understanding of Quaternary environmental change (**Hughes, Fletcher**) and visualising urban histories (**Dodge, Perkins**).

**Deprivation Indices and Urban Regeneration** represents an example of a long established Knowledge Exchange agenda, developed at Manchester within **Robsons**’s Centre for Urban Policy Research (Director 1983-2007), and sustained through our commitment to impact. **Wildfire Management and Contingency Planning** illustrates our effective approach to supporting staff impact activity, with the PDR process identifying the value and significance of this research to user organisations and pathways to impact developed via a period of sabbatical leave, leading to **McMorrow**’s success in securing funding for impact work and the growth of a large network of user organisations. **Urban Climate Risks and Adaption Responses** demonstrates how collaboration with colleagues in cognate disciplines, fostered by opportunities for multi-disciplinary research available through SEED, can lead to large, multi-disciplinary research projects based on a series of research grants and major ongoing impact generating activity. **Peatland Erosion and Restoration** arose from our strategy of formal partnerships with user organisations, leading to the alignment of research with the conservation community’s need to provide scientific justification, and a clear evidence base, for multi-million pound investments in landscape restoration.