

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: University of Dundee
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
a. Context

The University of Dundee is a civic institution, located in a city that has undergone profound change in the last half century. The historians in the University have taken very seriously their role in providing the community with the tools to understand that process of change and to put it in the context of the longer-term history of the city. The three-volume history of Dundee, edited by Harris, **McKean, Tomlinson** and **Whatley**, is the result of that commitment. That work, and other publications such as **McKean's** *Lost Dundee*, have opened up the self-understanding of Dundee beyond the decline of jute to inform the contemporary regeneration of the city.

The Dundee context, and experience, underpins and inspires the work of the unit, even when researchers tackle issues that are broader in scope and produce work with national and international impact. Dundee's experience of waves of innovation and global engagement, followed by periods of challenge and adjustment, speaks to a wide variety of contexts. **Whatley's** general editorship of the *History of Everyday Life in Scotland* has illuminated these connections with particular clarity. Historical research has underpinned the considerable outreach work done in a wide variety of contexts in the region. The beneficiaries for our impact include members of the local, Scottish, UK-wide and international communities engaged with public discourse about the interpretation and significance of historical events. The opportunities for such impact have, of course, been enhanced by the contemporary political arguments in Scotland about the country's past, and the extensive mobilisation of competing narratives which have been a prominent feature of these debates (for activities in this area, see next section). University of Dundee historians have had significant, measureable impact on constitutional debate, particularly through the *5 Million Questions* initiative.

Our work has direct impact on policy-formation and implementation as well as in civil society. Examples of this kind of impact include **Kenefick, MacDonald** and **Patrick's** collaboration in the reconfiguration of the Scottish Higher history school curriculum and the membership of **Whatley** and Fiona Watson on the History Excellence group that reported to the Scottish government in February 2011. Another example of impact on the state, policy and governance is the work of **Frame, Johansen** and **Ward** with the Scottish Institute for Policing Research which has had direct input into the Stevens Commission on the Future of Policing in England and Wales. **Johansen's** work on complaints procedures was included in the briefing on complaints procedures when the commission recently considered that topic.

Our research improves the cultural life of citizens by creating and interpreting cultural capital in a variety of forms, including in international contexts. The case study of **Willson's** work is a particularly striking example of the powerful impact of synthetic historical analysis in provoking normative debate, in this case on the role of women in Italian society and politics. Her work, and all the work cited in our impact case studies, illustrates how the passion and insight of well-designed fundamental research can inspire and engage a variety of communities when impact is integrated as an element of research design.

b. Approach to impact

The starting point for our impact work has been based on three propositions:

- (a) Impact is an intrinsic quality of engaged, well-designed research in the humanities and social sciences, not an extrinsic addition to the research process.
- (b) Public dissemination of our research is a necessary but not sufficient condition for impact, and;

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- (c) The best route to impact is to build on and develop existing public engagement activities rather than to start planning for impact *ab initio*.

The Unit has used institutional facilities outwith History to help it achieve impact at two levels: the University and the School of Humanities. Linking to the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, the University has set up *Five Million Questions*, a knowledge exchange programme in 2012, providing a platform in different formats for informing Scotland's voters on how academic research, including historical research, can help us all understand the issues around possible independence. Historians including **Tomlinson** have presented in the 'Arts Café' which is a public forum specifically designed for academic staff to engage a public audience with their research at Dundee's McManus Gallery and Museum. [The Great War Dundee](#) project is an important element of the University's impact agenda conducted in partnership with the Unicorn Preservation Trust, the Black Watch regimental museum, the Tayside branch of the Western Front Association, publishers DC Thomson and the City Council and is chaired by **Kenefick**. The School of Humanities' Arts and Humanities Research Institute (AHRI), established in 2008, has also provided a forum for public engagement by sponsoring a public lecture series.

c. Strategy and plans

The strategy of the Unit on impact in the sense used by the REF began to develop in 2009. Funds and staff time were set aside by the Unit for impact-related activity, and the first discussions began on the meaning of impact in our particular context. An audit of dissemination activity at that time revealed that this was being developed at three distinct levels:

- a) **Locally**, through the active engagement of several staff members, including, for example, **Kenefick** and **MacDonald** with the Abertay Historical Society; **Kenefick** and **Patrick** with the Dundee Great War Commemoration Project, and **McKean**'s engagement with local issues concerning the built environment. In addition a three-volume edited history of Dundee, overseen by **Whatley**, was published by Dundee University Press between 2000 and 2011, and a second edition of the volume on 'Victorian Dundee' was published in 2011. This level of activity will be sustained through the [Engage Dundee](#) initiative that organises and advertises the local outreach activities of the College of Arts and Sciences.
- b) **At the Scottish and UK levels** with **Whatley**'s engagement with issues surrounding the Union and the role of memorialisation in constructing modern Scottish identity, and **McKean**'s multifarious engagement with re-defining Scotland's architectural and urban heritage. In addition, **Frame** and **Johansen**'s [Royal Society of Edinburgh funded research network on Scottish Policing](#) (Crime and Policing in Scotland: Past and Present) supported a full calendar of public events including an exhibition. Their work is integrated with the research of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), which is partly funded by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, and is closely involved in policing policy formation. **MacDonald**, **Patrick** and **Kenefick**'s contribution to revising the school curriculum on Scottish history, covering the period from the early modern controversies over religion and politics, through the Union of 1707, down to modern labour and social history, is another example of work at this level.
- c) **Beyond the UK** : **Regan** and **van Ittersum**, along with **Willson**, have pioneered our international impact agenda. All three researchers exemplify how fundamental research can and does have impact on civil society, building cultural capacity through critical reflection. **Van Ittersum**'s work has contributed to the public understanding of the Dutch tradition of human rights through a series of public lectures, most notably at the [Nieuw Waldeck Public Library](#) in the Hague. **Regan**'s work is challenging public attitudes to violence and historical memory in Ireland. His work was at the centre of a major public debate sponsored by the [National Museum of Ireland in 2012](#). The significance of this debate for public history was underscored in a [Times Higher Education piece](#) that year.

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Plans for the future reflect the recognition that impact can be achieved in a wide variety of forums, with variable geographical spread, and with different combinations of reach and significance. Dundee's strong history of global connections gives us confidence that our research in global history will have impact on public debate and policy in areas such as human rights, the politics of race and drug discovery. The recent appointments of **Bhattacharya** and **Graham** illustrate the commitment of the Unit to supporting the careers of young researchers involved in questions of contemporary global relevance. Our new research centres will support the impact of these young scholars, as well as our more experienced researchers.

Overall our impact strategy rests on the proposition that fundamental research, addressing intellectually important topics, driven by the highest standards of scientific and scholarly evidence, will be the research with the greatest probable impact, particularly when paired with vibrant engagement efforts. In the future we will continue to draw inspiration from our local context but also address wider audiences and new partners.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies exemplify our intensive engagement with local and national audiences (**McKean** and **Whatley**), as well as the capacity of high quality research to have an impact on public discourse in a more 'remote' national polity, in this case, Italy (**Willson**). **Whatley** and **McKean**'s case studies are linked to research activity, some of which significantly pre-dates the 2008-2013 REF period, while the particular piece of work at the heart of **Willson**'s case study has largely developed within that time frame, and is, indeed, still very much on-going. **Whatley**'s case study is also related to his involvement in the re-design of the Scottish History school curriculum, covering broadly similar areas of Scottish history.