

Institution: University of Gloucestershire
Unit of Assessment: UoA 30: History
a. Context
<p>Staffing in History is detailed in REF5. The present-day university has resulted from the merger of a number of different colleges and institutes founded in the nineteenth century, and it retains today its original commitment to teacher training and worker education, which includes the subject of History. The current composition of the Unit of Assessment's staff team reflects also the institutional commitment both to the delivery of the undergraduate degree programme and to postgraduate research across a broad chronological timespan and in a number of different geographical areas (primarily Britain, Europe and the United States).</p> <p>Alongside their academic publications in books and journals and their participation at local, national and international conferences and colloquia, the History staff team has also achieved significant levels of impact in a range of areas directly connected to their research. This is reflected, for example, in the level of wider community, public and non-academic individual engagement and the development of oral history, memory studies and heritage-related projects, in the arts and theatre, collaboration with museums and archives, and consultation in the making and delivery of films, television programmes and radio broadcasts. Some of the research projects undertaken by members of the unit actively encourage external community and individual participation and are devised with a broad public audience in mind.</p> <p>In line with the University's strategic plan and its first-class awards in the People and Planet Green League, some History research projects are founded on principles of sustainability and relate directly to contemporary environmental concerns, social and community memorialisation, landscape appreciation and heritage issues. Likewise, the University's strategic goal of community engagement is reflected in on-going History research projects that advance public history initiatives, heritage and historical commemoration events.</p>
b. Approach to impact
<p>The History Unit of Assessment's approach to research impact is in line with the University's strategic aims to direct research to audiences both within and beyond academia, to foster links with non-academic partners and to work alongside local communities. These principles are maintained in the conduct of research and in the dissemination of research findings and outcomes to a broad range of external users, including such organisations as the Historical Association and to local schools. Much of the research is conducted within the framework of extended international collaboration and the findings are disseminated and broadcast to audiences in this country and overseas.</p> <p>Strategic staffing appointments have been made to create and enhance research synergies within a relatively small team. These synergies provide support not only in framing research projects but also, crucially, in considering the ways in which the research impacts on the world outside of academia, though such activities as the promotion of public history and heritage projects, the commemoration of key historical events (as, for example, by Ilic: on the fiftieth anniversaries of the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's <i>Secret Speech</i>; and by Wynn: Bamber Bridge Commemoration) and the writing of life stories.</p> <p>Currently, research synergies can be identified within the History team in the areas of women and gender (French, Ilic), race relations (Morrisroe, O'Connell, Wynn), social protest and civil rights (Robertson, Wynn), landscape, environment and heritage (Copeland, Jones, Robertson), new approaches to the study of the Cold War (Ilic, Whitham, Wynn), music (O'Connell, Wynn), oral history, life stories and memory studies (Ilic, Robertson). Some of this and other work involves collaboration across the university, as is reflected in the areas of intellectual history and the history of ideas (Morrisroe; Religion, Philosophy and Ethics), religion and spirituality (French; Theology and Religious Studies), environmental history and heritage (Jones and Robertson; Human Geography), and the history of music (O'Connell and Wynn; Popular Music). It is possible to enhance existing research synergies by the nomination of Visiting Scholars to the School in a</p>

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policy promoted by the University to enhance research and its impact. These synergies extend both the scope research and the potential avenues for dissemination and impact.

The approach to impact is reflected also in acquisitions to the University of Gloucestershire Archives (UGA), which have been accessed and used not only for staff and postgraduate student research, but also by external users. In addition to the institutional archive (supporting the work of a number of History postgraduate students), UGA has acquired the archive of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society (supporting the work of Copeland), materials from the Paul Oliver collection (used by O'Connell and Wynn), and the Local Heritage Initiative (supporting the work of Robertson). The University has a close association with the Dean Heritage Centre (located in the Forest of Dean) and supported the acquisition of the Dennis Potter collection, now held at the Centre. The Dean Heritage Centre also supports a research student scholarship, currently awarded to a member of University of Gloucestershire staff, Jason Griffiths, who is registered for MPhil in History. The acquisition of and access to archival collections is designed to encourage public engagement with the University's special collections holdings.

In developing an approach to impact, the History Unit of Assessment has forged links and collaborative projects with colleagues in the Victoria County History (VCH) of Gloucestershire and VCH Herefordshire. These collaborations have resulted not only in the publication of a number of important 'red books', but also in the publication of volumes in the 'England's Past for Everyone' series. The work of the VCH involves not only documenting the history of local communities, but also engaging present-day local communities in the documentation and commemoration process.

In order to disseminate information about their current research activities, the History staff team has recently set up an online blog (historyglos.wordpress.com), which is steadily building a profile of 'hits'. History runs its own seminar series and contributes to the work of the Centre for Writing, Place and History (CWPH), both of which attract an audience external to the University and engage audience members in the research process. The History UoA collaborates directly with the Cheltenham and Gloucester Historical Association in the organisation, promotion and running of their seminar series, which attracts a broad-based non-academic audience to its activities.

c. Strategy and plans

The strategy and plans for impact are underpinned by the structural and financial support provided for research at University, Faculty and School levels, as outlined in REF5. The Faculty of Media, Arts and Technology Research Committee (FRC) is the primary body with responsibility for overseeing research activities and, with the support of the relevant Head of School and Faculty Lead for Research (currently the Head of Humanities), for the allocation of research monies and other funds. The FRC disperses funding with the outcomes and anticipated impact of research projects as an identified and stated objective. The FRC is able to remit time from teaching and other duties to allow staff to progress their research and to disseminate research findings with the strategic goal of impact taken into account. Applicants for internal research funds are encouraged to gear their bids with the capacity for impact of their research in mind and through the identification of the constituencies of end-users beyond the academy that may benefit from the project outcomes. The UoA aims to increase the number of postgraduate research students registered in History, and to encourage currently-registered students to be mindful of the potential impacts of their research outcomes.

Future plans include building on the University's recent strategic initiative to inaugurate a number of new research priority areas across the institution, including one established by the School of Humanities in which History sits: 'Being Human: Past, Present and Future'. The new research centre plans to run a series of 'research cafes' during 2014, at which History staff will be given the opportunity to outline their current research interests and projects with the aim of identifying possible research synergies across disciplines and institutions to form the basis of future research projects and funding bids. Any proposed bids to national and international funding bodies will be required to identify strategies for impact through the dissemination of research findings to a range of potential non-academic constituencies, a requirement History is well placed to meet.

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Beyond the immediate confines of the University, members of the History UoA will endeavour to continue, and to build on, their engagement with international research and practice networks in order to foster and promote a broad reach for their research findings. One example of this is the central role played by Jones and Robertson in the recent inauguration of a European Rural History research organisation with the strategic aim to examine the links between rural land use in the construction of identities in a range of different geographical settings, including the Scottish Highlands and aboriginal Australia. Their work, as is the case also with Copeland, examines the use of the past in contemporary constructs of public history and has a direct impact on community, commemoration, resilience and sustainability.

Copeland's work in Heritage Education, which plays a vital role in raising public awareness of the importance of historical interpretation and cultural preservation in a range of post-conflict European contexts, is similarly on-going and builds on his successful record of presenting keynote speeches and lectures to a range of organisations across the European Union.

Likewise, Ilic has a number of on-going research projects that involve extensive collaboration with international teams of scholars in the broad areas of Soviet and post-Soviet studies, transnational histories and new approaches to the historiography of the Cold War. These projects aim to have an impact on post-Soviet understandings of the influence of the Soviet past in terms of contemporary individual identities and in the emergence of post-war international organisations that operated across the East-West divide.

It is envisaged that all of these research projects will have an impact on academic and public awareness of the critical role played by reinterpretations of the past in determining understandings of the present and in forging contemporary, sometimes conflicting, personal, institutional, national and international identities.

d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies have been selected to reflect two of the different approaches to impact reflected in the underpinning strategies taken by members of the History Unit of Assessment and to demonstrate the reach and significance of both the conduct of the research and the research outcomes to a range of constituent audiences in the UK and abroad. It should be noted, however, that these case studies highlight only a small selection from the broad range of activities undertaken by staff within the unit.

Firstly, in the case of Robinson's research, supported by strategic institutional investment, impact is demonstrated as an outcome of research conducted directly with the respondent community in the Scottish Highlands. This has resulted in a reflective impact in terms of raising public awareness concerning the role of local communities in constructing 'heritage from below', and has highlighted the role of historical and cultural intervention in working towards collective and community memorialisation. As is also evident in the work of Copeland and Jones, with whom Robertson collaborates, working with local communities to promote cultural heritage and memorialisation provides evident benefits in terms of expanding the scope of social and cultural capital, as well as in building community resilience. The impact and reach of this research are identified also in the recognition of the importance of walking and recording the landscape, both in its practical forms and in its artistic representations.

For the second case study, Wynn was selected to demonstrate the impact of historical research on raising public awareness of issues relating to race relations, and more specifically, on the socio-cultural impact of the black American presence in the UK during and after the Second World War. As such, this research has an impact through developing public awareness of the ways in which the incidence of war has an effect on race relations. By providing historical evidence to enhance public debate and contemporary discourse on race relations, in addition to his publications, the outcomes of Wynn's research have also had an impact. Their dissemination has been to a broad range of academic and non-academic audiences, from presentations in schools, through collaboration on film projects and to broadcasts on local and national radio.