Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science

Unit of Assessment: 36: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

a. Context

The Department of Media and Communications has achieved significant impacts on policies and media practices since its inception. Our research on transformations in the media and communications environment influences evidence-based policy making processes and journalism practice. Our impacts on policy design, implementation and practice are highly visible in the UK and throughout the European Union, and extend to the global level. Our strategies to achieve impact include acting as advisers on government and third sector committees, serving as expert witnesses and consultants, working directly with media practitioners, and creatively using social media and events to shape public discourse and to promote the visibility of our research within policy and practitioner networks. Our key users and beneficiaries include media and communications organisations (BBC, BT, European Broadcasting Union, ITN, Vodafone), social media companies (Facebook, Google), business organisations (World Economic Forum), third sector organisations (Christian Aid, Gates Foundation, Hansard Society, Open Rights Group), government departments (DCMS, BIS), the sector regulator (Ofcom), DG-Connect in the European Commission, intergovernmental organisations (UNESCO, UNICEF) and mid-sized consultancies (Enders).

b. Approach to impact

The Department encourages its academic staff to engage with policy makers and other stakeholders by fostering an environment that positively values outreach activities, sustaining these during, rather than just at the end of, research projects.

Supporting staff impact activities: The Department's efforts to ensure that its research attracts attention and influences policy and practice are channelled particularly through two major initiatives – POLIS and the Media Policy Project (MPP). These provide numerous internships for post-graduate students and draw on research across the Department's four current research foci - knowledge construction, mediated political agency, cultures and identities, and governing mediated environments.

POLIS was established in 2006 as a forum for the Department and School to debate and research international journalism practice and ethics. From the outset, POLIS benefited from founding director Charlie Beckett's (non-eligible REF contract) background as a senior journalist with the BBC and ITN. A Professor of Practice from 2013, Beckett's leadership has enabled us to influence media practitioners by promoting open and substantial dialogue on changing structures, policies and practices. Members of the Department join with external experts on POLIS's advisory board. Beckett regularly meets with academic staff to create seminar and conference events and to collaborate on reports, articles and blog posts. The aim is to devise ways that POLIS can facilitate researcher efforts to maximize the impact of their research. This creates an ongoing interface between academic research and impact activities and an influential network with news media practitioners, policy makers and the public.

The MPP was established in 2010 to promote broad engagement between academic research, civil society and policy makers in relation to media and communications policy and regulation. The aim is to increase mutual awareness and develop innovative ways to ensure that our research specifically has an impact on policy and regulatory debates. MPP Director, Damian Tambini, who also chairs the Department's Research Committee, and MPP staff regularly solicit policy reports, blogs and academic participation in public and private events for key stakeholders. This ensures timely and influential responses to media and communications policy issues as they come onto the public agenda. MPP staff maintain a watching brief on policy and debate in the UK, European Union and internationally, alerting us to current debates. MPP uses online analytics tools to gauge the impact of its activities. It regularly assesses the effectiveness of its communication strategies and its impact on the issues it tackles. It promotes debate among stakeholders in the UK and overseas by providing professional advice and expert testimony, undertaking consultancies, giving frequent talks and participating actively in meetings with practitioners.

The Department receives substantial support for its impact activities from LSE facilities, expertise and resources. The LSE events office supports our conferences, workshops and public lectures. Our membership of the LSE Knowledge Exchange Committee provides opportunities to learn about innovative approaches to maximising the impact of research. Close links with the LSE Press Office alert us to issues and assist us with press releases and dissemination. The POLIS Director's salary is now fully funded by the Department and MPP receives significant HEIF resources for its Director, events and research assistance. Department resources are also specifically allocated to individual researchers to facilitate project-based approaches to impact.

Interaction with the media industry, policy makers, and the third sector
We achieve substantial influence through a variety of activities to maximise the likelihood of impact. Sustained relationships are developed through workshops and seminars, often planned collaboratively with stakeholders. We circulate and promote policy briefs and reports widely, feature academic staff at events, and welcome guest blogs on our lively social media platforms. A high priority is always given to debate, engagement and impact. We undertake consultancy work via LSE Enterprise, achieving impacts through specialised reports for business, government and civil society organisations. We maintain close relationships with industry stakeholders including the BBC Strategic Partnerships Executive and Academy and news organizations, e.g. Chouliaraki sits on *The Guardian's* International Development Journalism Evaluation Committee. Our capacity for advocacy and influence is enhanced by Beckett's role with the World Economic Forum, e.g. leading debate on 'the informed society'.

Our relationships with policy makers and the third sector involve activities with a set of stakeholders involved in policy making in the UK, continental Europe and intergovernmental agencies. Examples are: Helsper's research on digital inclusion and literacy which was the basis for a formal assessment of the Race Online Campaign leading to changes, and her recommendations which influenced the Go On Consortium's Digital Skills Charter in 2012. MPP policy briefs on copyright and file-sharing (Cammaerts, Mansell and Meng), published during and after the Judicial Review of the Digital Economy Act in 2011, informed the debate on the Act's implementation. MPP collaboration with ARTICLE 19 and others on government transparency and democracy lead to a joint report on mobile Internet filtering that received significant press coverage and advocated restraint during debate on the Communications Data Bill in 2013. Research on media plurality and press regulation underpinned invited testimony at the Leveson Inquiry (Tambini) and MPP sessions attracting 200 influential decision-makers (Lord Inglewood, Chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications) and top-level executives. An MPP seminar on the Communications Review seminar led to a request for further advice by the DCMS.

Public engagement
Our impact strategy has heightened our visibility and boosted the take-up of our work outside the academy. We are very successful in attracting senior thought leaders, including MPs, to our events and appear regularly as speakers at external events. POLIS has achieved a high profile as a forum for public debate and policy intervention and as a showcase for academic research. The reach achieved by POLIS is evidenced by Beckett's 54 public speeches aimed at achieving impact on creative practice and policy, his Twitter account with more than 15,500 followers, and unique annual visits to POLIS's blog increasing from 50,000 in 2008 to 150,000 in 2012. The annual POLIS journalism conference attracts some 500 media practitioners and is supported by the BBC and the European Broadcast Union, demonstrating our success in attracting stakeholders and influencing media practice. MPP's external profile has grown rapidly with 2,200 Twitter followers in 2013, a blog achieving 4,000 unique visits per month with entries contributed by academic staff, private, government and other guests, and regular alerts via email.

In addition to the efforts of POLIS and MPP, individual researchers are actively involved in initiatives to influence policy and practice across the Department's research foci. The Department's Twitter account has 4,200 followers and academic staff (excluding Beckett) have 9,000+ followers. Academic staff make frequent appearances in YouTube interviews, e.g. Rantanen's The Aftermath of the Financial Crisis, with 45,000 views. We make many contributions to high visibility LSE and external blogs, achieving over 1,070 named mentions in external blogs, and appearing in over 400

national and international media outlets (excluding Impact Case Study 1 appearances). Our potential to achieve impacts is enhanced by a remarkable ten-fold increase since 2008 in use of the LSE Online Papers by people with identifiable addresses (growing to 135,278 in 2012).

c. Strategy and plans

Our forward strategy is to further develop our engagement, visibility and timely impacts through POLIS and the MPP, and to strengthen the capacities of our researchers to maximise the impact of their research in the policy-related areas where we have major strengths - digital literacy and exclusion, journalism ethics, internet privacy and security, and media governance. To achieve this: **i)** we are increasing support for POLIS to include a half time assistant to coordinate an increasing number of events; **ii)** POLIS is developing an Executive Education programme for media practitioners; **iii)** based on LSE's distinctive and significant investment in the MPP up to 2015 through the award of HEIF4 and HEIF 5 funding (£232,000) for knowledge exchange and impact activities, our plan is to create an online hub for media and communications policy debate using an open Media Policy Web platform to store policy data and documents, increase the frequency of Policy Briefing papers, and expand our already strong profile on social media (Twitter and the blogs of the POLIS Director and MPP), all with the aim of supporting wider and timely dissemination of policy-relevant research produced by the Department; and **iv)** POLIS and the MPP will seek new sources of external funding to support research collaborations with our key stakeholders and an increased programme of public events or private briefings aimed at strengthening our capacity to make authoritative inputs to policy debate.

The plan is also to continue to encourage academic staff to contribute to POLIS's impacts on journalism practice and the MPP's impacts on media and communication policy and regulation. In line with the LSE's emphasis on impact and knowledge exchange, we aim to ensure strong and lasting impact through: **i)** robust recruitment, mentoring and review practices, taking into account, as appropriate, staff impact records, **ii)** ensuring that impact criteria are among those used to allocate the Departmental seed funding available from LSE's new research incentives policy; and **iii)** actively participating in the LSE's new measures to enhance knowledge exchange and impact through an expansion of its Institute for Public Affairs (to which new Department research on the mediatization of government led by Couldry, recruited from September 2013, will make a major contribution). We will draw on the School's resources to ensure that our academic staff and research students receive mentoring and administrative support to bring their research to external bodies in a sustained way. We plan to increase our influence by strengthening connections with selected stakeholders, e.g., through Tambini's continuing leading role as co-organiser of the annual Oxford Media Convention and his work with the Open Rights Group on influencing debate about communication and information rights and internet governance; and developing Couldry's links with third sector organisations that are using digital platforms for knowledge exchange to influence their use of these platforms to foster socially beneficial relationships among their stakeholders.

d. Relationship to case studies

Independent research grounded evidence-based advice and recommendations to policy makers, private sector and third sector stakeholders in our impact case studies. The impacts benefited from structural investments extending the reach of our work very substantially by complementing directly funded research with POLIS and MPP public-facing opportunities to influence stakeholders. Case study 1 impacted public discourse and directed initiatives from industry codes of practice to multi-stakeholder awareness-raising as evidenced by numerous initiatives aimed at empowering children online through literacy and safety measures. Policy makers, third sector organisations and companies were successfully influenced to take up ideas and recommendations based on the research. Case study 2 shows how persistent evidence-based advocacy of a citizen-centred approach to the application and governance of digital technologies and services was effective in responding to the need for inclusive and equitable policy. This advocacy work persuaded those charged with establishing information society-related policies to justify why certain policy pathways or practices have not been taken up and successfully encouraged policy makers to explain or defend why certain policy measures were not given a high priority.