**Birkbeck College: Impact Strategy[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**1. Introduction**

In November 2014, the College approved its Research Strategy 2014-2019 which made the following observations about the impact of our research, which has been operating as the de facto College Impact Strategy since that time.

* 1. **Impact and Birkbeck College Research Strategy 2014-2019**

***Introduction:***

*“Birkbeck, University of London is a research-intensive university. Central to our mission is the aim of maintaining and developing excellence in research and providing the highest quality research training in all our subject areas, and also of making available the results of research and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate. It is embedded in the culture of Birkbeck that we should carry out excellent research across the entire range of disciplines represented in the College’s Schools; that this research should range across ‘blue skies’ scientific work, cutting edge scholarship in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and highly applicable interventions in technology, social policy and artistic work; and that we seek to offer research-led and research-informed teaching at all levels…*

*Birkbeck has a long history of engagement with social and political issues as well as with scientific matters that demand fearless and innovative approaches and ways of thinking. The College supports independent-minded researchers willing to question normative assumptions and accepted ways of doing things…*

*Birkbeck values research that engages with social and political issues as well as with novel scientific matters. It will continue to support such work particularly through its interdisciplinary Institutes in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and through actively seeking out opportunities to engage with and influence policy and policy makers as well as those involved in critical communities of practice (NGOs, social movements, etc.)”.*

*Birkbeck is also committed to promoting research that makes a positive difference to society whether it be offering artistic insights and critical commentaries on social and political events to exploring the basic science underlying health and environmental problems. The College seeks to provide the infrastructure required to facilitate the work of its researchers and to further the application of their research, facilitating the development of new applications and of applied research, and for making constructive partnerships that might allow research findings to be developed and exploited creatively.*

**IMPACT AND THE BIRKBECK RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT**

**2. MONITORING**

2.1 In line with its mission, the College seeks to promote research that makes a difference to society by seeking out opportunities for its public dissemination and for its applications.The College Research Committee and its REF Working party are responsible for approving the College Research Impact Strategy and for reviewing and amending it in the light of changes to the Higher Education and Research environment such as the evolution of UK Research Funders, Governmental initiatives (such as the new Industrial Strategy, the national Digital Strategy, as well as the REF). The Research Committee also monitors the development and implementation of the research and impact strategies produced by each Departments (or REF Units of Assessment) to ensure that they are familiar with, and responsive to, potential impacts upon, for example, government policy, commercial applications, cultural life, social movements, or other discipline-specific indicators.

**3. PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

3.1 The College is committed to maintaining an infrastructure within Schools that

monitors and promotes the applicability of the College’s research and the impact agenda. Each School has a dedicated Impact Officer responsible for providing necessary specialist advice and, in addition, the Schools can draw upon the expertise of the College Research Support Office as well as the Public Engagement Team (who support researchers to develop their plans to engage with relevant publics in line with the Colleges Public Engagement Strategy) and the Development and Alumni Office (who work directly with benefactors who are interested in our mission and our research), to help ensure that impact is built into research in a planned way, that potential impact cases are identified early on, and that effective archiving systems are set up within research projects, UoAs and Schools so that impact data is collected in an ongoing manner.

3.2 In order to support individual researchers and research groups to develop the

impacts arising from their research through proactive and structured engagement with potential beneficiaries, the College provides guidance on the integration of impact considerations into their preparation of research grant applications via the specialist support of the Research Support Office and School Impact officers. The roles of the impact officers are:

* to establish and facilitate links with beneficiaries outside the academy.
* to support impact-related initiatives, to communicate our research to third parties and to assist individual researchers and research groups to develop their impact strategies.
* to enable individual researchers to collect better data and to provide basic data for subsequent evidence claims.
* to support our researchers to proactively identify potential stakeholders, to secure their support for our aims and to find channels of influence within these stakeholder organisations.
* to engage with our (current and future) strategic partners across civil society and cultural organisations, professional bodies, industries and policy makers, governmental, public and third sector organisations, students and members of the public.
* to develop effective impact appraisal, mentoring, monitoring and evaluation strategies to maximise the reach and significance of our research and outreach, especially where the nature of the work results in indirect or unpredictable impacts.
* to improve researcher support processes to ensure that individual researchers both understand the impact process and engage with it and to make impact an important aim for every academic.

3.3 Whilst each School and Department/UoA will be aware of their primary target sectors to deliver impact from their research, the College Research Support Office and Impact Officers can help to facilitate contacts with, among others:

* third and voluntary sector organisations, public bodies, and civil sector organisations
* NGOs, campaign and pressure groups
* policy makers, advisory boards and panels – and other decision-making bodies
* practitioners, professionals and professional bodies
* employers and employer organisations
* individual stakeholders and direct beneficiaries
* parliamentarians and government departments
* cultural organisations, the cultural sector and creative economy
* industry
* think tanks
* international agencies and (agencies for) developing countries
* technology transfer networks
* the general public or specific communities

3.4 The Research Support Office, Public Engagement Manager and Impact Officers are also expected to provide assistance in signposting potential funding and in supporting individual researchers to apply to these Funders. In addition, they may help to prepare accessible summaries of each research grant application to enable relevant non-academic departments to support the dissemination of research results and will pro-actively inform the Communications team within External Relations of any research that may be of interest beyond the discipline. They may also notify the School(s) of consultancy work undertaken on behalf of the College, for recording and publicising as appropriate and to ensure that such work is taken into account when developing ‘Impact Statements’.

3.5 The College aims to share best practice across its academic base and professional service departments to support researchers in identifying sources of funding to develop the impacts from their research by, for example, strengthening links between the Research Support Office, the impact officers and the Development and Alumni team in order to assist researchers in preparing applications for funding.

3.6 The College makes resources available to extend the reach and significance of impacts deriving from research, once the trajectory of the impact is clearly articulated and such an investment can be justified through, for example, the provision of seed corn funding to develop new approaches to strengthen the reach or the significance of the impact

3.7 The College recognises the value of networking events to develop contacts both within and beyond the HE sector and to facilitate the delivery of research findings to the relevant stakeholders. Whilst it is reasonable to expect that it is possible to do some of this work during the funding period of an external grant, the College also recognises that some impacts may develop after the funding period has ended and that impacts arise from research which has not been funded by an external funder.

**4. TRAINING**

* 1. In order to raise awareness of impact the College promotes regular training

programmes and workshops designed to share best practice at the Departmental (or UoA), School and College levels and to develop training provision. In addition, a termly impact newsletter is produced to highlight good practice across Schools, to maximise efficiency, minimise duplication and support the ready sharing of knowledge across the academic base and to ensure that some of this provision is pro-actively targeted towards early career researchers.

* 1. To assist in the dissemination of best practice, the College seeks to offer mentoring

from researchers with prior experience in this area and is considering how best to integrate it as part of the academic review and research review processes.

* 1. As part of the training portfolio, the College has developed and maintains a range of

impact tool kits and support materials for researchers to help them to understand how to develop, deliver and describe impacts from their research and make these readily available –e.g. on-line. Specific provision will also be targeted at PhD students and early career researchers in recognition that we need to develop our younger researchers in this area.

* 1. Training is also designed to encourage individual researchers to develop impact plans

for their research holistically (rather than on a project by project basis), and includes a range of possible themes including:

1. working with the College’s External Relations Department to make it easier for researchers to interact with the media.
2. Making it clear what the anticipated audience is for a non-academic dissemination activity, and how this dissemination process could be progressed to become a knowledge exchange process.
3. Supporting our researchers to build sustainable knowledge-based relationships with non-academic partners, for example through the provision of department/’industry’ networks and to engage in collaborative practice where relevant.
4. Encouraging a discussion about the potential impact of the research to be a normal feature of academic seminars.
5. Recognising that it takes time to cultivate the links necessary to deliver the knowledge exchange which ultimately delivers impact from research and that there are also intermediary steps along this path (which may include, for example, acting as an advisor or consultant to a non-academic organisation) and supporting our researchers to undertake such activities.

**5. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

5.1 In order to make publications and findings available to other researchers and the public nationally and internationally, the College seeks to ensure that its website, output and data repositories and other forms of communication are easily accessible, while improving internal and external awareness of the national and international media coverage achieved by the College. To support our researchers to develop briefings, summaries or other lay outputs using language appropriate to the target audience(s).

5.2 The Birkbeck ‘Experts Database’ and other sources of College information

and publicity are designed to ensure an accurate record of consultancy work undertaken within the College and to help increase the amount of this work offered to staff of the College. They are also intended to act as mechanisms for new stakeholders to access our knowledge base and to encourage wider participation and utilisation of our expertise and evidence bases. The College also maintains an Intellectual Property register and is committed to publishing a webpage detailing the College’s invention disclosures and patents.

5.3 The College produces an annual research showcase (BBK Magazine) which is circulated to our alumni and other interested stakeholders in our research.

5.4 The College seeks to produce targeted information about, and to promote, the

activities of, its more than 40 Research Institutes and Centres, and for this data to be improved as our internal systems and processes evolve.

5.5 The College seeks pro-actively to learn from the Higher Education sector about effective models to manage stakeholders whilst recognising and looking to protect the collaborative nature of the relationship that the individual stakeholder will have with an individual academic. It also aims to apply best practice from the sector by proactive engagement in suitable networks and communities of practice and, where necessary, by seeking to understand any existing barriers to collaboration and by improving processes to make the collage a collaborative partner of choice, and by ensuring a professional approach with all our external partners.

**6. RECOGNITION**

6.1 As part of its commitment to embedding knowledge exchange and impact within its research environment, the College recognises the significance of knowledge exchange, research impact, and impact-generating activities as part of its induction, appointment, academic review and promotion procedures, and it also promotes public engagement and cross-college collaboration and provides evaluation guidelines and training.

7. **MEASURING PROGRESS, EVALUATING OUTCOMES AND IDENTIFYING LESSONS LEARNT**

* + 1. The College recognises that a successful research impact strategy must be flexible and responsive and seeks to develop its mechanisms for measuring progress, evaluating outcomes and identifying lessons learnt from the work undertaken to develop identified potential impact case studies. There is also a need to develop methods which allow individual researchers to check their progress against impact plans at both the project level and in terms of their wider research trajectory.
	1. A successful research impact strategy needs to balance the needs of individual

researchers, or groups of researchers, with those of Departments. As part of the local strategies that they need to develop Departments/UoAs are encouraged to develop key performance indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) and exemplar guidance about the nature of suitable evidence of impacts (whilst recognising that the College does not have a constrained view of what impact should be, and that no type of impact is prioritised over any other).

1. For the purposes of this strategy, the definition of impact used is that the findings of our research result in an effect on, change to or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond academia. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)