



**Political Studies**  
Association

*Promoting political studies  
in the twenty-first century*



# Total Exposure

Achieve impact by reaching  
new audiences

In 2014 the Political Studies Association embarked on a new phase of development, **PSA+**, based on a renewed and reinvigorated emphasis on **ambition**, **professionalism** and **visibility**.

In 2015 **Total Exposure** was launched to bring top political research to new audiences, and at the same time help PSA members develop their communication skills.

After two successful years, resulting in one programme production and over 15 different rounds of commissioning talks, **Total Exposure is BACK**.

## The context

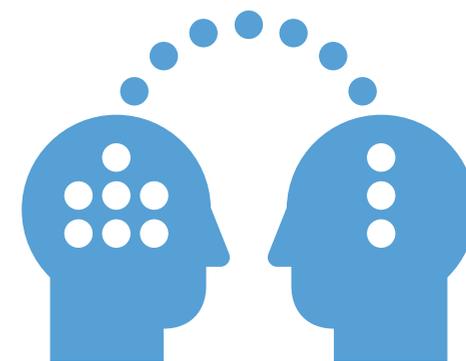
The nature and demands of higher education are changing both nationally and globally. Academics are under more pressure to demonstrate the 'relevance' and 'impact' of their research and to reach out to new audiences in order to cultivate greater public understanding about society, politics and the challenges that will shape the twenty-first century.

Although the relationship between the social sciences and social impact is rarely simple or direct, the 'engagement emphasis' that has emerged in recent years is unlikely to decrease in the foreseeable future. Indeed, if anything, the impact agenda is likely to become a greater element of research grant assessment and external audit processes.

In this context the social and political sciences must evolve in order to underline and demonstrate the value of their disciplines. Put slightly differently, the impact agenda creates new opportunities and forms of leverage through which to promote and advance the social sciences, in general, and political science, in particular.

Total Exposure is the first initiative of its kind to be led by a learned society and the PSA is grateful to all the companies and broadcasters that have contributed to its success.

**Total Exposure has been designed to bring international broadcasters and the very best political scientists together in order to create TV and radio programmes that showcase the discipline and underline exactly why the study of politics matters.**



## Success Story



Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan, our Total Exposure Project Lead, achieved success with her 2015 pitch for 'A World Made of Walls'.

Cathy said: "Making my programme was a wonderfully exciting process that involved travelling the world and working with my producer for both on-location recording and post-production work. I've learnt a lot along the way, building on the great fun and training I enjoyed at the Grand Pitching Event. I would strongly encourage anyone considering making a pitch to go for it - you have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

**Cathy's programme aired on BBC World Service in April 2017. You can listen back at [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04yzrw1](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04yzrw1) and contact Cathy for advice at [c.gormley@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:c.gormley@ulster.ac.uk).**

## The challenge

Total Exposure is a very simple initiative. Individuals or groups of up to four academics from the broad world of political studies and international studies are invited to submit a short written 'pitch' for a new programme for TV or radio that either showcases a specific piece of research or draws-upon existing research in order to examine an issue or topic.

A guidance note on how to write a programme pitch is provided on pages 7 - 8 but what really matters is being able to engage with an issue in a fresh, stimulating and accessible manner. Remember, it is often the personality, energy and enthusiasm behind the idea that is more important than the actual idea itself in terms of securing a commission. The Top Tips for Pitching on page 6 may help you with your delivery!

The process for Total Exposure is very simple. Get involved by sending in your pitch (or pitches) to [totalexposure@psa.ac.uk](mailto:totalexposure@psa.ac.uk) by 31 October 2017. Ten submissions will then be selected by a panel of commissioners from the broadcasting industry and the academics behind those pitches will be invited to pitch in person to a panel of media producers, commissioners and executives at our Grand Pitching Event on 29 January 2018.

Remember, you are not trying to convince the judges why your field of research is interesting or persuade them how smart you are! The focus needs to be on a research-based idea that is not only original and distinctive but that can also be developed into a media format.

## The panel

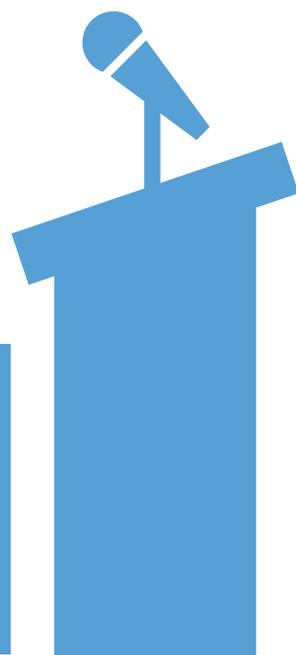
**Jonathan Brunert**  
*Producer, BBC*

**Tom Garton**  
*Producer, Pulse Films*

**Siobhan Mulholland**  
*Commissioning Editor, Factual and Features, Sky*

**Ian Rumsey**  
*Head of Topical Programmes, ITN Productions*

**Steve Titherington**  
*Senior Commissioning Editor, BBC World Service*



## Media Training: New for 2017/18



With the support of ESRC, we are pleased to be introducing a media training day for shortlisted pitchers to help them sell their ideas in a way that will appeal to the panel.

This will take place in central London on 8 December 2017, and costs will be covered for the successful candidates. This will also be an opportunity to hear from Cathy Gormley-Heenan about her pitching and production experience!

## Key dates:

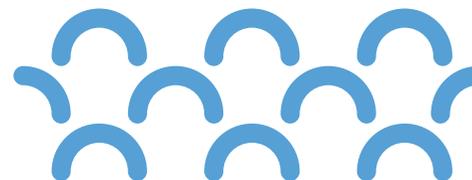
**31 October 2017**  
*Pitching deadline.*

**17 November 2017**  
*Pitchers to be notified of the outcome of their pitches.*

**8 December 2017**  
*Media training day for shortlisted pitchers, London.*

**29 January 2018**  
*Grand Pitching Event, RSA, London.*

## Ready, set, pitch!



## The panel

The aim of Total Exposure is to create a fun and friendly environment in which academics at any stage in their career, from any institution and from any sub-field of the discipline, can learn about the media commissioning process, develop the skills to add new dimensions to their career and – through this – promote the discipline for the benefit of all its members.

Training will be provided if you are selected to make a pitch for your idea in person in front of the panel. However, appearing before the panel is not supposed to be a scary or intimidating process – it is not Dragons' Den – and the aim of the event is to cultivate new skills and new relationships that could lead to a pitch being taken forward to the commissioning round of one of the main broadcasters.

## What next?

Write your pitch and send it to [totalexposure@psa.ac.uk](mailto:totalexposure@psa.ac.uk) by 31 October 2017. It couldn't be any easier!

Visit our YouTube channel and the PSA website for extra tips and guidance on writing your pitch.

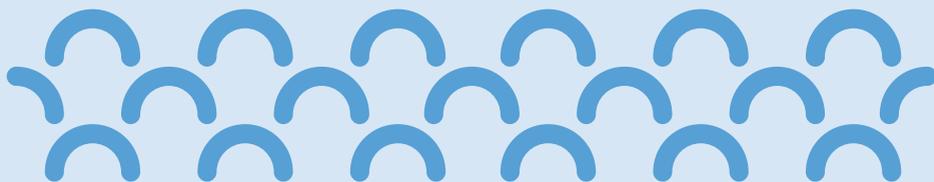
The deadline for submitting pitches is 31 October 2017 and entrants will be notified if their pitch has been successful by 17 November 2017.

## Top Tips for Pitching

If you are successful in making it to the Grand Pitching Event you will have just three minutes to get your idea across, so mastering conciseness is important. Don't worry if you don't get every small detail in: you will have around 7 – 10 minutes to respond to questions from the panel and discuss your idea in more detail.

Here are some pointers to help you make the most of your precious moments in front of the panel:

- **Keep it simple.** If you try to include too much you risk confusing the panel and diluting the quality of your idea. Remember this is not for an academic audience - you ultimately want to appeal to the general public.
- **Be very clear about what your programme is for.** Are you addressing a knowledge gap? Raising questions? Changing public opinion?
- **Spell out the story.** Explain why your pitch is original and interesting to the public. This should not be a summary of your research; focus more on the narrative rather than the theories and arguments behind it. You need to break new ground to win a commission.
- **Imagine and explain how your idea could be executed on TV/radio.** Think about things like casting, format, audience and presenters in detail – if it needs to be short, say so. If it's aimed at teenagers, make that clear. What will people hear? What will people see?



## Writing your pitch

A pitch is a short presentation – given either in writing or orally – in order to generate interest in a specific idea or proposal. This might concern a new product, a new pop band or – as in this case – an idea for a new programme or series of programmes on TV or radio. The aim of this project is to use the results of the latest state-of-the-art social science as the basis of new programmes.

The following two pages provide some guidance on how to write a good proposal or 'pitch' for anyone who is considering entering this competition. The simple fact is that a pitch should be fairly short, succinct and have a very clear 'hook'. One way of writing a pitch is to consider your idea in relation to a set of five questions:

### 1. What is the 'Hook'?

The golden rule for pitch presentations is generally summarised as 'Hook-ABC' (that is the definitive focus, original twist or specific argument of the project – followed by Audience, Benefits, Competition). The 'hook' might be technical, political, social or psychological in focus – or combine a number of elements – but there needs to be some central focus around which the programme(s) is made.

Secondary questions therefore include: Is this 'hook' actually novel or distinctive? How could I make my hook sharper? Will this 'hook' encourage the public to 'tune in' or 'turn off'? What options or flexibilities surround the hook? Is the hook multi-barbed in the sense that it speaks to a wide range of potential audiences? What ideas do you have for the name of your programme or series?

### 2. What is the context?

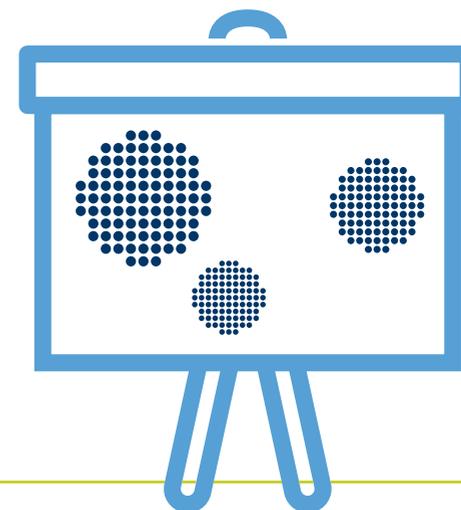
After emphasising the hook, the pitch might then proceed to very briefly setting out the broader context in which this specific idea seeks to make a specific and original splash.

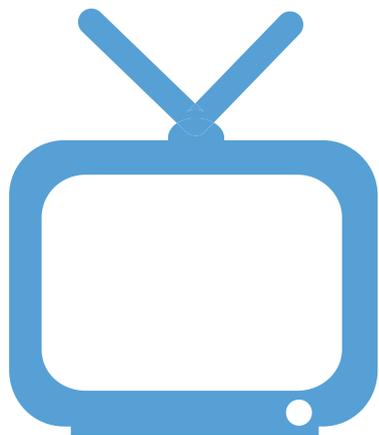
Secondary questions therefore include: What is missing from the current schedule? How would this idea complement other elements of programming without overlapping? If this idea was a fish would it be swimming with the shoal or would it be swimming alone and against the tide? Are there issues that make the next eighteen months particularly timely for this project?

### 3. So what and who cares?

There is a big difference between academic relevance and broader social relevance when it comes to generating an audience so there is a real need to frame the 'hook' in a manner that forges a connection or relationship with a potential listener or viewer.

Questions to consider include: How would a ten-second trailer pique the public's interest in this idea? Is this a topic of broad public interest? Is it of relevance to an international audience or solely within the UK? Is this project connected to any other activities that might make this topic salient in the future (an anniversary or event, for example)?





#### 4. What's the market?

Broadcasting on the television or radio allows you to disseminate your ideas and research to an audience of tens and hundreds of thousands – possibly millions – of people but who are you really aiming at? What would the ideal output be for this project (TV or radio, which channels, etc.)?

Is this a project that can really attract a broad public audience or is it a specialised niche topic? If it is a niche market does it offer potential in terms of demonstrating a broader relevance? Who could you get involved with the project (as a presenter or guest, for example) in order to generate greater public interest? Are you offering an idea that could fit as a topic within an existing series or a standalone idea?

#### 5. What do you want?

Dealing with the media in terms of getting a project for an idea off-the-ground can be a long and demanding process (often involving one-step-forward and then two-steps-back) but it is also process that demands new skills and ways of thinking. It also involves the generation of a realistic set of expectations.

It is therefore worthwhile considering the following questions: How flexible am I willing to be? Am I being too ambitious with my first pitch? Are the structures and timescales I am proposing realistic? Is my proposal ambitious and lively enough to captivate an audience? How will I respond if my first pitch gets knocked-back? What do I do if someone likes my idea?

Total Exposure is not a competition. There is no guaranteed prize in the form of a programme commission. It is, however, offering an opportunity to learn about interacting with the media and to learn new skills.

Some short listed applicants will get the chance to discuss their ideas and proposals with a panel of commissioning editors and producers and this may lead to one or two ideas being taken forward into a formal commissioning round.

This project is therefore about learning and linkage: learning in the sense of the art of translation and taking academic knowledge into the public sphere; linkage in the sense of creating an annual and prestigious competition through which cutting-edge social science can be offered as the basis for cutting-edge broadcasting.

Remember, (1) the strangest ideas can sometimes be the best ideas; (2) boring ideas will never get through; and (3) your pitch should be set out on no more than two sides of A4.

#### More questions?

Email: [totalexposure@psa.ac.uk](mailto:totalexposure@psa.ac.uk)



## FAQs

#### I don't understand. Is this a competition? Is there a guaranteed prize for the winner?

No, this is not a traditional competition and there is no guaranteed prize. However, all the shortlisted applicants will get the chance to discuss their ideas with a panel of experienced broadcasters and one or two ideas may get taken forward.

#### Should I pitch for TV or radio – or both?

It's up to you but don't worry if you don't understand exactly how your idea can be broken down or framed for radio or TV. What matters is the core idea and the approach. The panel of media experts will help you explore the options in terms of actual programming and production- and the key is to be flexible and open to their ideas.

#### Is this all about the UK?

No not at all. They can be about the UK but ideas with a broader international appeal are just as likely to succeed.

#### Do you think political theory has much to offer?

Yes, political theory has far more to offer than we sometimes think. The media market place is desperate for new ways of thinking about perennial or new challenges and the issue is not so much political theory but how that theory is translated for public consumption and reflection. This might be where some consideration of specific markets and broadcasters might be useful but at the same time the whole aim of this initiative is to challenge conventional ways of thinking.

#### Can I put in more than one pitch?

Yes, you can put in as many as you want but the emphasis should be on quality and innovation.

#### Can I have team members from abroad or other disciplines?

Yes, that's fine and working with other people

can be a really good way of developing and refining ideas. However, at least one member of the team must be based at a UK university and be a member of the PSA. It's also a good idea to think through how the team would operate if you were offered a commission – what roles would each team member want to fulfil?

#### Can engaging with the media really help my research?

Yes. The media is a fickle beast and there is nothing we can do about that but most outlets are also under pressure in terms of needing to fulfil their statutory public service broadcasting requirements.

The research-media link is multi-dimensional in the sense that translating your research into a publicly digestible form can be valuable in terms of redefining what you do, how and why. It can also be valuable in terms of the sort of public response and feedback you receive and, in terms of future funding opportunities, having worked closely with the media in the past is a sign of impact potential for the future. Media work also has a rather odd tendency to create new and unexpected research opportunities!

#### But isn't it all about dumbing-down?

No, quite the opposite. The art of translating academic knowledge into a publicly digestible form that is informative, accessible and stimulating is a real skill. All of the media professionals on the panel have a track record in commissioning or producing cutting-edge public service broadcasting.

#### Will I make lots of money and be famous?

It's possible but highly unlikely. Even if you write and present a series on TV or radio your fee is unlikely to be more than a couple of thousand pounds. The financial benefits for an academic are likely to be more indirect in terms of adding to your CV, offering demonstrable impact activities, bringing positive publicity to your institution, etc.

#### What's actually involved in making a programme?

This depends on your specific role and this can

vary from writing and presenting a programme, at one extreme, to acting as an academic advisor, on the other.

#### Is it fun?

Yes, working with the media can be great fun and it's wonderful to see or hear your research being broadcast all around the world. In many ways the media provides a useful professional reference point that adds new insights for those working in higher education. There is a synergy that needs to be exploited for mutual benefit. A large number of commissioners and producers are 'wannabe' academics!

#### What sort of support and training will be provided?

Cathy Gormley-Heenan and PSA HQ are happy to provide advice or feedback before you submit your pitch - just email [totalexposure@psa.ac.uk](mailto:totalexposure@psa.ac.uk). Plus, this year, we are pleased to be introducing media training for shortlisted pitchers before the big day!

#### I'm worried about submitting a wacky idea. Will all the submissions be published?

No, only the pitches of those shortlisted to attend the final pitching event in London will be published.

#### What happens if they like me but not my idea?

This is actually quite common. In this case a broadcaster might work with you to develop other ideas that they think you might be able to lead and develop.

#### What's to stop one of the people on the panel pinching my idea?

That is a good question and to be honest 'not a lot!' However, all the panel members are highly respected and experienced professionals. They have agreed to contribute to this project in order to build relationships with the academic community and they also need the expert academic knowledge that the person or team making the pitch is offering. In many ways this is exactly the same risk as someone pinching an idea or theory you might discuss at a conference or seminar.

#### Is the PSA looking for specific people to apply?

No, not really. This opportunity is open to all members of the PSA but it would be great to see members from underrepresented groups within the discipline getting involved.

#### Why is this opportunity only open to members of the PSA?

PSA members pay their annual subscription in order to access a specific range of services and opportunities. Total Exposure is therefore part of a broader attempt to increase the proportion of the profession who are members of the PSA by offering new services that make joining even more attractive!

#### For more information and guidance please refer to the PSA website:

[www.psa.ac.uk/totalexposure](http://www.psa.ac.uk/totalexposure)

#### The boring bits...

1. The competition is open to individuals or teams of up to four people drawn from any area of political and international studies (broadly defined).
2. All applicants must be members of the Political Studies Association.
3. At least one of the applicants must be based at a UK university.
4. Entries should be submitted by e-mail to [totalexposure@psa.ac.uk](mailto:totalexposure@psa.ac.uk) or by post to the PSA Head Office in London by 31 October 2017.
5. All entries should include the names, addresses and contact details for each applicant plus a separate 'Pitch' document of no more than two-sides of A4 (11 font or larger).
6. Multiple entries by individuals or teams are allowed but should be submitted as separate applications to the competition.
7. Ten entries will be shortlisted and invited to discuss their 'pitch' with a team of commissioning editors, producers and writers in London.
8. Unsuccessful entries will not be returned and feedback cannot be provided on individual ideas. However, the successful projects will be put on the internet, as will details about next year's event.

The aim of **Total Exposure** is to cultivate **new skills** and **new relationships** that could lead to a pitch being taken forward to the commissioning round of one of the main broadcasters.

"Total Exposure has been extremely helpful in terms of getting feedback and thinking about different ways of presenting my research."

**Dr Jennifer Thomson, De Montfort University, Leicester**

"Total Exposure has helped me think about the relevance of my work... It's important to get out of the ivory tower."

**Dr Nikita Sud, University of Oxford**

"It was a wonderful and engaging experience. It was not a bear pit competition - everyone had an equal chance to put forward what they think is the key concept that might grab the public's imagination."

**Professor Marc Weller, University of Cambridge**



# Total Exposure

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