



**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**.

**Total Exposure** is a new initiative that speaks directly to each of these principles:

**ambition** –  
it builds bridges with global broadcasters;

**professionalism** –  
it cultivates new translational skills and networks;

**visibility** –  
it offers the chance to put the very best political science in front of mass audiences.

## The context

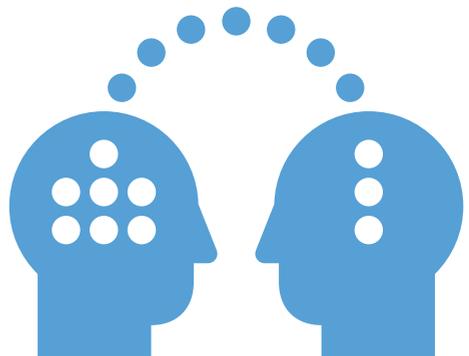
The nature and demands of higher education are changing both nationally and globally. Academics are under more pressure to demonstrate the ‘relevance’ and ‘impact’ of their research and to reach out to new audiences in order to cultivate greater public understanding about society, politics and the challenges 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, 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.

It is the first initiative of its kind to be led by a learned society and the Political Studies Association is grateful to all the companies and broadcasters that have agreed to contribute.

**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 which therefore underline exactly why the study of politics matters.**



## 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 at the end of this document 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 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 2015. 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 an event on 28 January 2016.

## The panel

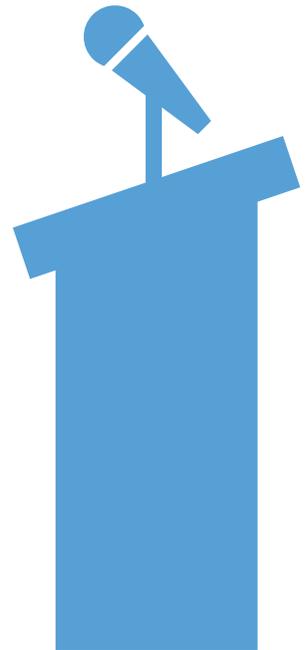
**Jonathan Brunert**  
*Producer, BBC*

**Tom Garton**  
*Assistant Producer, BBC, ITV, Shiver*

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

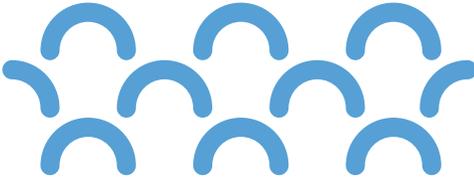
**Siobhan Sinnerton**  
*Commissioning Editor, Current Affairs, Channel 4*

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



The deadline for initial pitch ideas is 31 October 2015 and the second-stage panel event will be held in a Central London venue on 28 January 2016.

**Go for it!**



## 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 Dragon’s 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** by 31 October 2015. It couldn’t be any easier!

Keep an eye on our official YouTube channel for extra tips and guidance on writing your pitch and the PSA website for more information on Total Exposure.

The deadline for initial pitch ideas is 31 October 2015 and the second-stage panel event will be held in central London on 28 January 2016. Entrants will be notified if their pitch has been successful in early December 2015.



## 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 meet and discuss their ideas with a panel of experienced broadcasters and one or two ideas might just get taken forward.

### **Should I pitch for TV or radio – of 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.

### **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 for ideas 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.

### **So does that mean political theorists should 'pitch' their ideas?**

Yes, it's the idea that matters and the role of the panel is to help you take your idea and consider how – as a team – you can make it work.

### **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?

### **How many pitches are generally accepted?**

This depends on a large number of issues and would merit a research project in its own right. However, the simple fact is that – just like research grant application and manuscripts sent to top journals – most pitches are rejected. In fact the vast majority of pitches are rejected and the formal commissioning round rarely provides explanations. The issue, however, is not really that most get rejected but that a significant number get through and are developed into programmes that reach millions of people.

### **Hold on! Are you really sure its worth submitting an idea?**

If you need to ask that question then Total Exposure might not be for you. Academics cannot give up on submitting funding applications or manuscripts to journals and working with the media is – for most people – a new frontier but the relative effort is very small but the potential benefits are massive. There is no doubt that engaging with the media takes persistence and the creation of long-term relationships.

### **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 thousands 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. However, the bottom line is that media work can be very time intensive. It also depends how much time you want to put it and whether you are happy to see your ideas developed by other people.

### **Is it fun?**

Yes, working with the media can be great fun and its 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?**

The PSA will work with shortlisted teams in terms of offering advice and training. Rehearsals with feedback can be arranged, as can more informal forms of support. However, the face-to-face 'panel pitch' is not intended to be a gruelling ordeal and the aim of the event is to establish positive relationships.

### **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 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 lots of young women and BME members getting involved.

### **Everyone tells me I have a face for radio! Is it worth offering a new idea for TV?**

Yes, yes, yes.

### **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!

## **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 2015.
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.

## 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 that 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 emphasizing 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 be it 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 get's 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; (3) and your pitch should be set out on no more than two sides of A4.

#### More questions?

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



## Total Exposure

Political Studies Association  
113A Jermyn Street  
London SW1Y 6HJ

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

0207 321 2545

 @PolStudiesAssoc



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