

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: University of Chester
Unit of Assessment: 19 Business and Management Studies
Context <p>Research in the Faculty of Business, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning operates mainly in the areas of: Public Affairs; Responsible and Sustainable Management; Performance; Work Related Studies and Management Learning and Leadership.</p> <p>The principal beneficiaries of the research conducted by the Faculty include organizations and business across the public sector, the not-for profit/charity sector and the private sector. The public and not-for-profit sector comprises research conducted for local government, central government, religious and charity-based organizations. Respective indicative illustrations include work conducted for Cheshire West and Chester and notably House of Commons Committees, Chester Cathedral and Tatton Park. Examples of private sector work are: MBNA (Bank of America), the Snowdonia Cheese Company and EA Technology.</p> <p>The main types of impact resulting from the research conducted in these areas involves provision of data that inform decision-making and policy formulation in local and central government, private boardroom and charity trustee settings. In the case of the work in public affairs this underpins lobbying and the organization of political communication. This has been applied to stimulate, reinforce and support business growth and wealth creation in the North West region of the United Kingdom. The research on work-based learning has furnished organizations with frameworks with which to engender training and development and consequently has enhanced organizational performance. Various aspects of the Organizations dealt with in the two case studies are underpinned by the broader span of research and expertise in the unit.</p>
b. Approach to impact <p>The approach to impact of the institution, faculty and individual contributors to the unit submission is one which is based on the identification of stakeholder needs and the nurturing of areas and spheres of high quality and excellence within their respective domains. Faculty researchers, in tandem with the University's overall strategic approach, develop and maintain high quality, close links with non-academic user groups such as businesses and public agencies. Research is frequently conducted, although not exclusively, with practical impact for an external partner or client as an express objective of the project.</p> <p>Within the Faculty, the infrastructure and mechanisms of research teams and groupings are constituted of a small cluster of key or lead researchers surrounded by a number of early-career researchers. The lead-researcher group of a given team has connections and relationships with bodies (- both beneficiary and non-beneficiary -) associated with the research area. Examples of such organizational relationships include the senior executives from member organizations and the associated networks of the University's Business Advisory Council (including Airbus, Vauxhall, Chester Cathedral and Tata Steel); the Local Enterprise Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the House of Commons. Furthermore, the Faculty organises and directs major external audience annual events including The Chester Forum, The Enterprise Awards and the High Sheriffs Awards.</p> <p>Staff are supported to achieve impact in connection with their research through a range of mechanisms and actions. Members of project-focused research teams are allocated workload time, expenses to travel and subsistence costs in order to build the research work. The Faculty operates</p>

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a monthly informal research seminar series in which work-in-progress research can be presented, discussed and evaluated. This provides a valuable setting for improving and enhancing the quality of research outputs. In addition, the Faculty provides a generous conference allowance for researchers to disseminate work at national and international conferences and to develop networks of potential clients. Over 150 conference presentations were made by a wide span of colleagues during the period of REF 2014. Furthermore, the Faculty has recruited and developed its body of doctoral students (including DProf, DBA, PhD and PhD by publication) many of whom have key roles in regional businesses. This cohort now numbers over fifty registrations and constitutes an essential and vital part of the research fabric of the Faculty.

In addition to these measures, the Faculty operates regularly scheduled research seminars which showcase research to a mixed internal and external audience. Presenters are composed of a mixture of Faculty, wider University staff and external speakers. The external guest lecturers have included, for example, the internationally renowned Etienne Wenger who presented on Communities of Practice. The Faculty is also complemented and by a number of high profile and respected visiting professors including Professors Peter Shaw; Bernd Britzelmaier (Hochschule Pforzheim) and John Mahon (University of Maine). This wider community of the Faculty assists in advising and shaping the impact of the Faculty's work. Furthermore, there is a core of mature researchers in the Faculty who have established reputations and profiles in their respective domains and this plays a significant role in supporting the impact of research work. These roles include: journal editorships (*Journal of Public Affairs*; *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*), membership of, and reviewing for, high quality journal boards (*Organization*, *Human Relations*, *Organization Studies*), invitation to provide key-note addresses at international conferences (AIMSEC), external research quality advisory panels (University College Cork) and governing roles on academic bodies of international standing (EuroMed Business Research Institute; British Academy of Management).

The Faculty encourages research impact by including it in the criteria for staff application for Reader or Professor promotions. The annual staff personal development process offers an opportunity for staff to use the university's structures to support their research, for example, referral to the commercial enterprise/innovations unit to explore dissemination and commercialisation of research findings. The impact of research is a key component in the reporting mechanism contained in the Personal Development Review documentation and acts as a focus to engage staff in the research agenda.

In relation to support offered by the wider University, the central Research and Knowledge Transfer Office (RKTO) provides significant and targeted assistance in offering advice on research approaches and environments, preparation of bids and monitoring and assessment of on-going research projects. The RKTO also works with the Faculty in assisting it to shape and develop overall research strategy and direction.

c. Strategy and plans

The Faculty has followed a strategy of building up and supporting clusters of research expertise in a range of subject areas including: finance, public affairs, sustainable and responsible business, human resource development and leadership linked to organizational performance. This has taken place alongside the establishment of the 4 research centres referred to in the REF 5 Environment document. In addition to these, there are also plans to develop centres in sustainable and responsible management within the next two years and a centre for the emergent Faculty domain of tourism, events, heritage and destination management. All of the above are underpinned by growing recruitment to the Faculty of established senior lecturer research active staff relevant to

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the established clusters and the emergent ones.

Key goals for the existing research capacity and related impact activity will be to build on the core of researchers in REF 2014 and to develop a critical mass of approximately twenty researchers of an international calibre by 2019. It is planned that the clusters will remain the same and that tourism, events, heritage and destination management will form an additional emergent cluster. Keeping in mind the strong and progressive growth achieved in the Faculty, since its relatively recent starting point, it is important to develop and also to introduce measures and initiatives to ensure that impact is both sustained and enhanced. Current measures in this regard include the introduction in 2013 for staff of professorial master classes on research methods and research generation. Plans for 2014-2016 include writing workshops, a focus on promoting a policy move towards converting conference attendance into agreed outcomes to be achieved within windows of six and twelve months following attendance. Colleagues in the Faculty are being supported and encouraged to undertake editorships, board memberships and reviewing, and international roles on academic and research bodies to enhance their visibility and accessibility to potential partners and clients. Recent additions to Boards are also noted e.g. Manchester Cathedral Development Board.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies are inextricably connected with the above outlined context, approach, strategy and plans.

The case study on public affairs illustrates the ways in which the developing expertise of the Faculty has been applied in a very practical manner to the regional economic context. While the front-facing aspect of this engagement with MBNA (Bank of America) concerned the lobbying and presentation of the case to national level decision makers, the underpinning strategic, performance management and sustainable and responsible issues were equally addressed by the Faculty team. The strategy put in place in the years preceding this period ensured that the knowledge and research resources to provide this commentary were in place. It was through the development of this plan and critical research mass that the confidential report on the impact of MBNA was able to be produced and this informed local, regional and national government decision making.

Equally, in relation to the case study on the development of work-based learning (WBL), it can be seen that WBL provides the overall vehicle through which a range of inter-disciplinary inputs can be achieved. The WBL expertise enables work to draw on, for example, research on human resource development, leadership and strategy. In turn, this allows research clients and stakeholders to derive rich appreciations and extensive value from the research in this area. Examples of application include: the Department for Work and Pensions, a NHS Hospital Trust and a significant number of businesses in the private sector. In addition, WBL has been applied and integrated into the development of leading-edge innovative qualifications such as the Chester Business Masters. This has seen high-capability and high-achieving individuals deliver consultancy projects for medium-sized-businesses and blue-chip companies through a WBL framework.

In the instances of both case studies, research capacity has been developed in line with the above-outlined strategy. Members of the Faculty are building a presence and recognition, in relation to journals, international bodies and conferences. This approach will lead to continued influence and impact through a growing network of relationships at national and international level within both academic and business communities.