

Institution: University of East Anglia

Unit of Assessment: 18 Economics and Econometrics

a. Context

Research in the School of Economics is organised in three primary clusters, on industrial economics, behavioural and experimental economics, and applied and financial economics. The profile and nature of the research conducted in each cluster indicates a different approach towards supporting impact for each group.

The Industrial Economics Group, with its close alignment with the ESRC Centre for Competition Policy (CCP) has traditionally been a primary centre of impact generation within the School. The CCP has continued, since its inception in 2004, to develop significant policy and practitioner impact. CCP members have ongoing advisory/membership links with competition agencies and regulatory bodies, including the Competition Commission, Office of Fair Trading (OFT), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Office for Rail Regulation, Department for Constitutional Affairs, the OECD, and the European Commission (EC). Other organisations that have consulted the CCP on its research include MONITOR (Department of Health), the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, the Treasury, Which?, Ofwat and Ofgem, amongst many others. Visits by practitioners have included senior staff from the BBC, Centre on Regulation in Europe, Office of Fair Trading, ORR, Yarra Valley Water, Consumer Focus, the African Forum for Utility Regulators, and the Competition Commission of South Africa.

The Applied and Financial Economics Group connects researchers who are active in a variety of applications. The beneficiaries of research conducted by this group are accordingly more diverse than those of the Industrial Economics Group. Members of this group participated in the UK National Ecosystem Assessment in 2011. Other recent beneficiaries have included the British Horse Racing Authority, British Medical Association, Carbon Trust, Defra, European Commission Directorate-General for Research, Norwich City Football Club, Anglian Water, Atkins Water, Archant and Sainsbury's.

The Centre for Behavioural and Experimental Social Science (CBESS) was organised in 2008 to support the School's and University's traditional strength in applying behavioural and experimental methods in the social sciences. There is strong current interest in policy-making circles, both in the UK and internationally, in incorporating the insights of behavioural and experimental economics into policy design. For example, the group's traditional strengths in measurement of preferences and valuations, and by extension cost-benefit analysis, benefited the UK Departments for Health, Transport and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Many areas of expertise represented in CBESS map onto current areas of policy and business interest, including "nudging", utility tariff design, product labelling, and indebtedness.

b. Approach to impact

While the tactical and practical details of nurturing and developing impact differ across the three main research clusters, at a strategic level the School provides strong encouragement and support for activities with the potential to generate impact.

- The School systematically tracks activities related to "enterprise and engagement," broadly defined. These activities are an integral part of the evaluation processes for confirmation of appointment and for promotion of staff.
- The School also encourages and incentivises consultancy income generation, with the possibility of time buyouts for consultancy projects that might lead, among other outcomes, to future impact.
- The School works closely with the UEA Press Office to publicise research outputs, both as a first step in making the specific results accessible to broader audiences, as well as to raise the general profile of the types of research and areas of expertise of members of staff at the School. A recent example is the interview given by a staff member to leading national newspapers in relation with the statement of objection issued by the Office of Fair Trading

Impact template (REF3a)

to certain pharmaceutical companies.

- From 2013, the School has set aside resources to pay for Gold Open Access charges for publications by its members, to support the visibility and dissemination of research publications which have the potential to generate impact.

At the University level, support, expertise, infrastructure and resources are provided to facilitate and enable impact in a number of respects:

- The Centre for Staff and Educational Development provides a portfolio of courses including engagement, enterprise, business skills and working with the media.
- A number of formal structures across the University support the nurturing and realisation of impact, including University and Faculty Committees for Research and Enterprise, a University Committee for Engagement, budgets for each Associate Dean for Enterprise and the creation of an integrated Research and Enterprise Service.
- CUE East (a HEFCE funded Beacon for Public Engagement) assists public engagement activities, including an annual Community Engagement survey, mapping of engagement activity by Faculty, and links with the Beacon and the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement network and resources.
- The CUE East Operations Manager and Project Director assists in developing formal partnerships with organisations via Faculty Business Development Managers. The Press Office provides support and professional writers for developing media exposure.
- The University provides an IP Fund, and further access to venture capital through the ICENI network, to support the commercial development of ideas and protection of intellectual property.

c. Strategy and plans

The Faculty of Social Science has implemented a number of initiatives to support the realisation of impact opportunities from current and future research. The Faculty will launch an internal “impact competition,” to run annually starting in 2015, where resources will be made available on a competitive basis to develop further the significance and reach of impact-generating research. School-level “impact champions” will be nominated, who will raise the profile of impact opportunities within the School, as well as liaise across the Faculty and University to share best practises on joining up research results with potential impact applications. Against the backdrop of this general strategic support, each research group has an impact-generation model reflective of its unique strengths.

The Industrial Economics Group benefits from the highly-developed infrastructure organised by CCP for encouraging and supporting impact. Research at CCP is rooted in competition and regulatory policy, where practice often runs ahead of theory. Its engagement with practitioners thus both informs its research, and leads to dissemination of results to a non-academic audience. For example, its research on price guarantees, policy evaluation, and anti price discrimination regulations, among other areas, flows directly out of a close understanding of the issues facing practitioners. Similarly, CCP researchers have been able to feed back research findings into commissioned reports and responses to consultations on such issues.

More broadly, CCP's interactions with and impact on both the public and private sector range from responding to consultations, invited attendance at ministerial meetings, inviting groups to UEA for “brainstorming” sessions, responding to media interest, and membership of the Centre on Competition in Europe (a Brussels-based consortium of regulatory authorities, industry operators and universities). A wider international projection of CCP's impact is achieved through its participation in the Competition Law and Economics European Network (CLEEN). As a result of these interactions, research undertaken at CCP has real-world application and value while retaining its academic rigour.

Since 2009, the launch of CCP's blog has provided access and insight into policy-making. This previously had been hard to achieve with more academically-focussed texts. As the blog is written with an emphasis on topical analysis, rather than on instant reaction, it is well regarded across a number of influential organisations who often make direct contact with the authors of posts on the blog. The EC, the OFT, the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and the U.S. Department

Impact template (REF3a)

of Justice (Antitrust Division) are among the correspondents blog posts have attracted. The blog has a growing profile (e.g., 25,752 hits in 2012 vs. 19,361 in 2011) and is proving its worth as a valuable pathway to impact for CCP's research programme.

The strategy for the Applied and Financial Economics Group reflects the diversity of potential pathways to impact arising from the diversity of research interests. The School is continuing to develop a model of joining up with researchers from other disciplines to encourage impact via cross-disciplinary fertilisation. The involvement with the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, which arose via links with the School of Environmental Sciences, is one illustration of how this approach can bear fruit in practice.

In support of continuing to diversify opportunities for impact, the School actively nurtures links in health economics via its involvement with Norwich Medical School in the Behaviour and Health Research Unit (BHRU) (a collaboration between experts from the University of Cambridge, RAND Europe and UEA) and in media economics through the media@UEA group. These are two areas in which our expertise in economics naturally complements other domains of strength at UEA. The School is also active in the recently launched Centre for Copyright and New Business Models in the Creative Economy (CREATe), an RCUK interdisciplinary research centre designed to help the UK cultural and creative industries become innovation leaders within the global digital economy.

The Behavioural and Experimental Economics Research Group has long been known for its agenda-setting contributions in basic research in areas such as the modelling and measurement of preferences and methodology of experiments. There is interest in policy-making circles, both in the UK and internationally, in incorporating the insights of behavioural economics into policy design. The idea of "nudging" individuals into behavioural change has received the most attention to date, but there are broader opportunities to apply to policy formation our understanding of how people perceive complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity, and, more fundamentally, the extent to which people have well-defined stable preferences, as opposed to having those preferences developed, or even "shaped," by economic interaction. These issues align cleanly with the group's historical area of research strength. As an example application, Professor Robert Sugden and colleagues used stated-preference methods for estimating valuations for quality-adjusted life-years (QALYs) for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. QALYs are a key component in conducting cost-benefit analyses of new treatment options for diseases; the group's work advised the Institute on the limitations of QALYs in being able to capture the preferences of patients.

Through CBESS the Group is a founding member of the ESRC Network for Integrated Behavioural Science (NIBS), which includes five senior members of UEA staff as co-investigators. This is a new cross-disciplinary centre, funded by ESRC to 2016, of researchers who develop and test models of human behaviour and behaviour change, and draw out their implications for the formulation and evaluation of public policy. NIBS benefits from an Advisory Group with representation from users in business, industry, media, and government. As part of NIBS, the Group will be involved in organising annual workshops targeted at bringing together researchers with potential users, with the objective of linking up research to potential impact opportunities.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies included in this submission reflect the historical profile of applied research within the School. They relate to the research on competition, cartels and mergers that was carried out by members of the Industrial Economics Group. This group has been a natural engine for generating policy impact prior to the current REF period. Both case studies, "Enhancing the effectiveness of competition policy by improved evaluation methodologies" and "Improving remedy design in merger control for the benefit of consumers", represent the particular expertise of this group in the area of competition policy and the success of CCP's infrastructure for supporting impact.