

Institution: University of Kent

Unit of Assessment: Economics and Econometrics (UOA 18)

a. Context

Research in the School of Economics is organised around three groups involving a number of cognate research areas: (i) **Macroeconomics, Growth and History**; (ii) **Labour and Household Economics**; and (iii) **Microeconomic Theory and Applied Microeconomics** (see REF5 for more details).

The main types of non-academic impacts arising from our research are focussed on practitioners and policymakers, on public policy debate, and on the environment. Our applied research has been used to support evidenced-based policy making nationally and internationally, and involves engagement with the media, financial institutions, advisory bodies and policy makers. Our goal is to influence positively the introduction of policy initiatives and to enhance people's decision making to improve economic and social welfare.

Our research has been used by: 1. Central Banks, including the Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the Bank for International Settlements; 2. Government Departments and Agencies involved with taxation, and employment, education and training, for example, the Treasury and the Department for Work and Pensions; 3. Industry-orientated Government Departments and Agencies such as Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Food Standards Agency, Department for International Development, the Department of Transport, House of Lords; and 4. European and International Non-Government Organisations, for example, the European Commission Directorate-General: Agriculture, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

b. Approach to impact

Our approach to impact has focussed both on the individual and on developing an environment to identify and further the potential impact of all our research activities. For the period 2008 to 2013 our impact strategy developed in two directions. The first was to strengthen our recruitment to bring in high quality research expertise which could lead to impact; and the second was to develop a stronger impact agenda among existing staff.

Recruitment

There were a number of developments in terms of new staff joining the School. The first was the appointments in Autumn 2008 of Imperial College's agri-environmental economics research group, which provided a world-leading level of engagement and impact on a significant user community (noted in the panel feedback from RAE 2008), including **R. Fraser** working with DEFRA on policy towards invasive species and disease, for example, Ash dieback, **I. Fraser** on environmental protection of species, and **Davidova** on EU CAP policy towards small farmers in eastern Europe (see our CAP case study). The second was the appointment in 2009 of **Heady** whose strong policy background was likely to strengthen our impact with government, particularly HM Treasury (see our Tax Policy case study). The third was in seeking to appoint younger staff with both research and impact potential, for example **Klein, Wahhaj, and Otsu** brought widespread engagement with external research networks, NGOs and a Central Bank.

Encouraging Impact

The second direction of our approach to impact has been to encourage a research impact agenda among existing staff. This has been facilitated through changes to our Early Career Researcher (ECR) probation system, and our Appraisal system for established staff which now specifically includes assessment of impact. To provide practical support we have introduced School personal research accounts. These personal grants of £3K per annum per member of staff (higher sums are negotiable) are independent of success in external funding. They are provided to support and develop impact or research that leads to it, for example in helping with research assistance, or in attending policy focussed workshops, or in additional training. In addition the School has set up a fund (£5K per annum) to support staff applying for large grants and projects with high impact potential. This can pay for support time, travel expenses to visit colleagues engaged in proposal writing. A Faculty fund offers sums of up to £5K for proposals that can lead from research to impact. University research accounts arising from successful external research bids are available

Impact template (REF3a)

to support more established staff to engage in impact activity.

PGR students have personal research accounts of up to £300 per annum (ESRC funded students receive £750 per annum), alongside a fund of £10K to support specific research needs of PGR students, which are peer reviewed by academic staff. PGR students are introduced to the relevance of impact as part of their training, and are actively encouraged to pursue research that is policy and socially relevant.

In addition to the funds to support impact, time is also provided and is tailored to the needs of the staff and proposed impact. For example, administrative duties can be reduced, and a teaching module can be reallocated (up to 40 hours of contact time). University study leave (1 term in 7) can also be used for impact activities. For early career researchers, additional training on impact is embedded in our PGCE qualification (Module UN812, "Developing as a Researcher in Higher Education") and with the support of our Research Services department with respect to training in writing funding applications with impact in mind.

The School believes it has responded effectively to the challenge of developing an approach to impact as part of its research activities (see also REF 5). Research in and of itself can have impact but beyond that we have sought to create an ethos of proactive engagement with stakeholders outside HE. In particular we encourage staff to consider impact at research planning stage and to engage with end-users as early as possible during a project in order to seek feedback to enhance impact.

Engagement with users

The School's growing track record in user engagement is testament to the success of the approach discussed above. Staff engage with users and policymakers through a number of routes including quality research in academic journals, conferences, editorships and media comment, all of which can lead to invites to participate in user and policy forums and to longer-term partnerships with practitioner and policy organisations. In addition staff are actively engaged with learned societies and with research networks, for example the Macroeconomics, Money and Finance research group, the Department for Work and Pensions research group, and the ECB.

The case studies submitted clearly demonstrate the material impact achieved through our engagement with these diverse groups. Other examples include: Cartwright participated in the **report by the Higher Education Academy on behavioural economics and student choice**. Chadha has been **special advisor to the Treasury Committee** including the LIBOR inquiry. León-Ledesma has acted as **an advisor to the European Central Bank** on specification of the supply side for macro models **and to the Asian Development Bank** providing training on country-analysis. Piracha was **Lead Economic consultant for DFID on their Regional Migration Programme in Central Asia**. We work with the university sponsored Kent Innovation and Enterprise Office to develop impact: for example, in I. Fraser's involvement in **research for the Ministry of Justice**; in **conservation projects with the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology at Kent**; and in the **Darwin Initiative project on the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher**.

We also believe that potential impact is important for new, early career appointments – not least because this contributes to the sustainability and vitality of our School. For example, Wahhaj engages with **BRAC, a non-government organisation, on gender and female adolescents in Bangladesh**, and has been awarded a large **grant from AusAid** in Spring 2013; Otsu has fostered **links with the Bank of Japan**, and has advised the **Domestic Economy Research Group, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan**.

c. Strategy and plans

Our plan for 2014-2018 is to build on what has been achieved in the transition period to 2013 and to continue to focus our support for impact at the level of the individual - a bottom up strategy - whilst at the same time providing a research impact culture that recognises and rewards these achievements. This will encourage the development of existing research activities that have demonstrated impact along with seeking new partnerships with external bodies and user communities that could lead to future impact in the areas that we have identified as our research

strengths (see REF5). As such we plan to encourage a higher level of engagement of staff with non-academic national and international bodies that can lead from our research to impact. One mechanism will be to embed impact fully into our annual, individual research plans which will be reviewed by the Director of Research and be coordinated by the research Impact Manager. We also plan to embed impact in our promotion and salary discussions with colleagues and there is an initiative to provide formal training under the direction of our Impact Manager. Staff will also be asked to develop an impact portfolio to keep track of their impact-related activities, gather evidence, and record potential end-users. This ambition is supported at University level through the new Research and Impact Strategy 2013-2016.

More broadly, we will encourage this research impact culture in all new staff appointments both in terms of job specifications and in terms of our staff development activities to emphasise the considerable scope for non-academic impact from economic research. We will invest more of our own resource to fund and encourage external engagements that can lead to impact. We also have a mentoring system for new staff that is distinct from our staff appraisal system and we plan to develop this into a longer term relationship between senior and junior colleagues that will include impact as part of the strategy; in particular how to develop links with users, including NGOs, and policymakers in important economic institutions, and how to engage in public debate through modern media like blogs and internet journalism. The impact mechanism operates through our Director of Research, Impact Manager and Research Committee with a remit to develop our impact activity more strategically.

We have a prestigious research centre in agri-environmental economics (CEAS), directed by **Davidova**, which has been very successful at connecting researchers with users and policymakers. For example, in order to increase the forum for public policy debate on subsistence farming in the European Union, **Davidova** used the reputation of the Centre to initiate and organise a large international conference entitled 'Small farms: Decline or Persistence?' at the University of Kent. We foresee considerable future opportunities for CEAS to develop impact in European agricultural land use debates, and building on the experience of Davidova and others, we plan to exploit such opportunities for future engagement with users and policymakers; for example, with the growth and success of our Macroeconomics, Growth and History group, we are creating a research Centre in this area led by **Leon-Ledesma, Klein and Otsu**. Our links with the ECB have enabled us to appointment **Alpo Willman** as an honorary professor, and we plan to use Alpo's research and policy expertise to help us develop future impact opportunities through this new research centre.

d. Relationship to case studies

As described above, our support for impact has had a number of strands and facilitated the case studies in different ways.

Tax Case Study (Heady) on the design of tax policy for economic recovery and growth arose from our recruitment strategy and our workload adjustment to enable engagement with users and policymakers.

CAP Case Study (Davidova) on improving the design of the Common Agricultural Policy support mechanisms for the benefit of the European Union's semi-subsistence farmers also came about from our recruitment strategy. It was helped by our personal research accounts and Kent Innovation and Enterprise Office, which enabled interactions with researchers and policymakers. It was further enhanced by the networking opportunities afforded by EU framework funding, leading to briefings to the European Commission Directorate-General: Agriculture on the implications of the research which led to policy changes by the EU parliament in June 2013.

Independent Schools Case Study (Zhu and Green) arose from our strategy towards existing staff to encourage research impact, which subsequently attracted media attention and then benefited from the University media department's support for engagement and impact activity, in particular writing for the media. It was also enhanced by study leave, and from Faculty funding for small research projects leading to impact, and from an external research grant.

Reflecting on how these case studies have evolved has informed our future strategy to undertake research that will have impact; in other words we have seen what has worked and will continue to enhance these support mechanisms.