

Impact template
Institution: Plymouth University
Unit of Assessment: 19 Business and Management Studies
<p>a. Context</p> <p>An integrated and dynamic group of staff with a strong emphasis on policy-based research and interdisciplinary thinking work through three Research Centres (RCs) established under the University's Research and innovation Strategy. These are the Centre for Maritime Logistic, Economics and Finance (CEMLEF), the Services and Enterprise Research Centre (SERC), and the Research Centre for Sustainable Leadership, Governance and Policy (SLGP). The diverse range of our non-academic beneficiaries and partners reflects our wide spectrum of research. Beneficiaries range from International Companies such as Cosco, to regional and local bodies such as Falmouth Harbour Commissioners and the former SWRDA, and to local councils and private sector decision-makers and UK Government such as Defra; the types of impact include both commercial benefit and policy formulation and development.</p> <p>CEMLEF, SERC and SLGP have historically strong regional, national and international collaborative research links through SWRDA, DEFRA, international businesses and NGOs. This is evidenced by numerous partnership research projects that are providing clear benefits for grassroots organisations and regional businesses, especially where these relate to the University's strategic commitment to marine and maritime issues and the environmental consequences of systems of management. Indeed, such is evident in our submitted case studies, which involve research that has devised a low carbon plan that has informed a local climate action plan, discovered ways of managing and reducing the risk of oil spillage in Falmouth Harbour, and developed a container fleet management model that has informed the formation of an in-house decision support tool.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Our approach to impact is based in a dynamic research environment and culture which fosters community participation, and practical application. Our general approach to impact is underpinned by a philosophical position stressing interaction between theory and practice through precise methodological strategies. This brings new perspectives to historic problems that provide practical solutions for social and organisational difficulties as well as providing individuals and institutions that add value in terms of both effectiveness and efficiency. This is sustained by Plymouth University's culture of enterprise that facilitates and encourages the active maximisation of opportunities wherever they may arise. We recognise that engagement with key external users may often be serendipitous and that the wider benefits of academic research may often be unexpected. For this reason, and given the diversity of our research, we follow no single model for engagement with key users, but do coordinate and share our best practices through our underpinning philosophical position and the governance structures of our RCs.</p> <p>Specific and appropriate approaches are followed within SLGP, SERC and CEMLEF, but all are based on the promotion of enterprise and direct engagement and on the development and application of new approaches for improving our understanding of environment-business/society interactions. Impact is achieved by staff-led research that focuses on outcomes with practical applications for specific stakeholder groups and wider society. The mechanisms adopted include informing practitioners, targeting research for specific companies or organisation, improvement of management practice, understanding of the practitioner environment, and emphasising the empirical element of doctoral research. All RCs publish regular reports that disseminate to the user community new approaches for understanding the linkages between environmental change and communities. They are represented on regional, national and international organisations; undertake consultancy work in the public, voluntary and private sectors; produce professional publications; engage in KTPs with the public and private sectors; hold workshops and conferences</p>

for external stakeholders; and contribute to parliamentary reports, submissions, and select committees. Examples of this include relationships with the sustainability management systems for smaller ports in Cornwall and Devon Falmouth Harbour Commissioners, Sustainable Maritime Developments Officer (funded jointly by NERC and ESRC and the Falmouth Harbour Commissioner). We were also involved in a SWRDA project, "Socio-economic factors of the Cornish Wave Hub". This is part of the Wave Hub research conducted within Peninsula Research Institute for Marine Renewable Energy (PRIMaRE) which involved Universities of Plymouth and Exeter. Furthermore, we are involved with sustainability, shipping and logistics projects which, means close collaboration with numerous partners, these include an EU project entitled "Hybrid Freight Sailing: Sustainable Approaches and Innovative Liaisons (SAIL)". Governance and sustainability projects have been undertaken with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) in relation to crime and responses to social unrest- and with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on government funded projects to design community-driven governance for Localism. Colleagues advised the Stevens Commission (an independent commission looking at the roles and responsibilities of the police in the 21st century). Plymouth is also part of a five university consortium led by University College London, (plus Strathclyde, Newcastle and Hull) in an EPSRC, *Low Carbon Shipping: A Systems Approach*. Professor Lewis closely collaborates with both Cardiff and Manchester Universities whilst undertaking ESRC funded research with the TUC and NHS, as well as the Welsh Assembly, House of Lords and Commons when disseminating the outcomes of these research projects.

Impact and engagement are monitored through Personal and Group Research Plans, Personal Development Reviews, which are identified and recorded for reporting to the Faculty Research Committee. As well as ensuring that targets are met, this allows the spreading of best practice. We actively use the RC web-pages to ensure that good practice is disseminated and made fully available across the UoA. Workload allocations clearly and transparently cater for engagement and impact activity, both achieved and planned, and this is supported through pump-priming funding and sabbaticals for impact-driven projects.

We are active participants in the annual Vice-Chancellor's Community Research Awards that provide financial support for research projects undertaken in partnership with local organisations with a view to developing spin-off applications and further collaborative projects. An example of our success in this scheme is the Women in Social Enterprise project, run with local social enterprise company Iridescent Ideas in 2012. Larger and multi-disciplinary research that serves wider strategic priorities is developed in conjunction with the Institute for Sustainability Solutions Research (ISSR) and Marine Institute (MI), with support from the University Research and Innovation Division, and involves a number of successful KTPs and commercial projects. For example, we have developed projects on 'Risk Appetite' in the wake of the recent financial crisis and 'Green Operations Management'. A new development is our Futures Entrepreneurship Centre, which identifies possible projects and liaises between academics and the wider community. The FEC facilitates interaction between businesses through participation in the University's Growth Acceleration and Investment Network (see REF 5a).

c. Strategy and plans

A strategy for supporting impact has evolved since 2008 through the development and synthesis of pre-existing strategies regarding research engagement. It has built on our long-standing understanding of the close relationship between theory and practice and the need for socially relevant praxis. In line with the University's Strategy 2020, our goals for supporting impact are to:

- (1) continue to embed an enterprise approach throughout our research to ensure impact and engagement,
- (2) create further partnerships with individuals and organisations to engender solutions for communities and business,
- (3) increase conditions that support knowledge exchange with businesses and other organisations, including the commercialisation of research outcomes for public good,

(4) enhance public engagement in, and the understanding of, research and innovation through a range of channels and media

(5) engage with national and local government, professional and statutory bodies, business groups, and key opinion-formers to inform and influence policy developments.

The achievement of our strategic objectives is monitored at RC level and at Faculty-level, allowing a constant revision and fine-tuning of the strategy. This has informed our plans for the coming period. Our plans for the future post 2014 are to continue to pursue our strategy through the RC mechanisms that enable leadership and support structures to encourage impact activities. RCs will further their involvement with GAIN. The Faculty Research Committee and professoriate will continue to play a key role in leadership activities in terms of mentoring and facilitating funding bids and projects. There will be a continued emphasis on developing research-led impact through employing research active staff, professorial leaders and ECRs with high level potential. The mechanisms identified above will be enhanced through continued funding and the doctoral programmes improved in qualitative and quantitative terms. Our overall balance between research and impact will be enhanced through a strengthening of work in governance, where key appointments are already being made.

d. Relationship to case studies

Two of the case studies involve policy driven economic studies and two maritime logistics regarding sustainability and efficiency. The latter illustrate a strong team developing research around shipping and logistics and the cases here identify our close relationship with the industry at both local and international levels. The two regional and national economic case studies evidence the research in areas relating to economic modelling of finance and post-positivist research paradigms of inquiry. These case studies exemplify aspects of the research approaches adopted, especially the close engagement with specific stakeholder groups, including practitioners and businesses, and a focus on research goals that aim to aid and influence societal processes or responses. The case studies also reflect the degree to which the research within the UoA has an impact not only at a local level, and on the cultural life and civil society, but informs debates on the future of public policy in the area of logistics, and the strategic development of the regional, national and international economies. These case studies exemplify different aspects of our strategy and approach to impact; they show the engagement with different stakeholder groups, including practitioners and businesses and a focus on assisting and influencing social processes. The case studies have been selected because they reflect best practice across the range of researchers in the UoA and are based on research that has been developed through the RCs. The case studies reflect an important element of our impact strategy, and are exemplary of wider practice in relation to impact demonstrated across the entire team. The cases illustrate our over-arching research themes with important non-academic audiences and end-users in terms of sustainability, maritime logistics, regional economic impacts and economic performance. Research projects undertaken that are typified by the maritime case studies include those on ‘Sustainable Maritime Developments and Low Carbon Shipping: A Systems Approach’, ‘Socio-economic factors of the Cornish Wave Hub’, and ‘Coordination Mechanism and Cooperative Optimization and Scheduling in Green Container Shipping Supply Chains’. Furthermore, research projects typified by the economic case studies include ‘Risk Culture in Financial Organisations’, ‘Managing Wind Farms’, ‘Work Place Bullying’ and ‘Development and Education in Africa’.

The case studies have informed the development of the research philosophy and strategy, so helping to develop our evolving approach to impact. They have informed the development of CEMLEF, SLGP and SERC as the foci for our research activity. All case studies have informed economic, public and social policy. They have been underwritten through external funding, which illustrates funding accrued through the RCs and the capability that resides within them. Each case identifies impact while at the same time exemplifying the range and depth of research in progress at PBS. The development of our engagement agenda since 2008 has ensured that impact is now a central consideration when developing funding proposals and research projects in general. Our approach has thus been characterised by emergent and mutually reinforcing processes that are adapted to establish strong impact case studies.