

Institution: Birkbeck

Unit of Assessment: 19 Business and Management

a. Context

The Departments of Management and Organizational Psychology, part of the School of Business, Economics and Informatics are returning 31 academic staff who have published in the REF period 40 reports for government, other public bodies, NGOs and business associations as well as over 280 articles and 30 books. Our research is rooted in the application of social scientific theory to a wide range of contemporary issues and problems that are central to academic debates and of major importance for policymakers and practice. Topics include the governance and regulation of sports organizations, the role of universities in innovation and entrepreneurship, and the links between well-being and bullying at work.

Our main non-academic user groups and beneficiaries of our research are in government, international organizations, such as the European Commission and the OECD, and employers and employer organizations. For example, our research on corporate governance has influenced best practice in the governance of sports organizations, benefitting sports fans, players and club officials; our research on intellectual property rights has influenced legislation in several countries, benefitting music companies, performers and consumers; and our research on bullying at work has influenced the content of health and safety guidelines issued by government, benefitting both employees and employers.

b. Approach to impact

The UoA approach to impact has five main elements, the most important of which is the construction of networks of academics and practitioners through which problems can be surfaced, collaborative research proposals can be drafted, research undertaken and research findings disseminated. Colleagues in the UoA have been highly successful at building enduring networks with a wide range of practitioners in the UK and overseas. Research impact is further promoted by the School's appointment of a Business Engagement and Impact Manager in 2012; the role of the School Research Committee in monitoring the likely impact of ongoing research and research grant applications; the provision of School financial support to facilitate impact; and the role of our students – most of whom are mature, part-time and in employment.

Some of our highest impact research has been conducted within one of the four research centres in the UoA. The centres have evolved as a key mechanism in our approach to impact by creating a critical mass of researchers able to build links between academics and practitioners in order to increase the impact of our research findings on firms, governments and agencies. The oldest research centre, the *Sport Business Centre*, was established in 2005 and its five staff have extensive contacts with policymakers in national and international sporting organizations such as UEFA (the Union of European Football Associations). The *Centre for Innovation Management Research* (CIMR) was established in 2008 and includes nine academic staff, as well as academics from other countries and has links with staff in organizations such as the UN and UNCTAD. The *London Centre for Corporate Governance and Ethics* (LCCGE) was also created in 2008 and comprises three academic staff as well as practitioners and academics from elsewhere in the UK and overseas. Finally, the *Centre for Sustainable Working Life* was launched in June 2013 following the recruitment of two new staff to bring together the Unit of Assessment's research on work, well-being and stress.

Many of the activities of the Centres bear directly on research impact. Colleagues in the Sports Business Centre, for example, host a weekly seminar addressed by outside speakers at which they discuss issues such as the distribution of television broadcasting income, the role of supporters' organizations in the governance of clubs and the regulations around the appointment and monitoring of club directors. Central to many of the discussions amongst colleagues in the Innovation Research Centre is the issue of how groups of managers in firms can develop the capacity both to diffuse and to absorb product and process innovations within their sector. A number of research projects have emerged from these discussions and have been able to attract

internal and external funding because of the ways in which the research questions have been framed and because of the close involvement and support of practitioners. For example, the Sports Business Centre obtained money from UEFA and the Centre for Sustainable Working Life is currently undertaking research on work and well-being jointly funded by two well-known private sector firms, Primark and Macmillan Cancer Care. These projects constitute a form of high impact, action research in which academic theory and expertise is brought to bear on issues such as the governance of football clubs and work stress and well-being. In other cases, academics such as Lawton Smith from the Innovation Management Research Centre have sought the support of practitioners for research access and have, in return, committed to dissemination of findings to practitioner audiences with a view to making an impact.

The Centres contribute to our approach to impact by providing a vehicle through which to transmit research findings to non-academic audiences. Some findings are distributed through Working Papers (Sports Business Centre). All the Centres have dedicated websites that are maintained by the Centre Director with the support of the UoA's two IT officers. The websites showcase the latest research findings but aim to link these to ongoing policy debates, about football finance or about the banking crisis for instance. On the basis of our research we have built very good relations with senior staff in some key national and international organizations, including the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, European Commission, European Union: DG Enterprise and Innovation, OECD, the World Bank, UEFA, UK House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, UK Accreditation Source UK Intellectual Property Office and the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. All these links in turn feed into the discussions within the Centres and help shape research agendas and research proposals.

In some cases collaboration between academics and practitioners is formalised through decision-making structures. Practitioners are involved as 'stakeholders' in the Innovation Management Centre and as Research Associates in the Corporate Governance Centre. The former centre further cemented its ties to practitioner networks by successfully bidding to host the practitioner-focused journal *Strategic Change: Briefings in Entrepreneurial Finance* (Wiley); the Editor-in-Chief and founder is a venture capitalist and a Birkbeck alumnus.

Network building is not the exclusive preserve of research centres: Pritchard and Whiting, for instance, have researched Age at Work since 2011 and have been highly innovative in their use of social media, including a blog and a Twitter account to build a network with practitioners and campaign groups. The blog has generated 5800 views and the Twitter account (@ageatwork), launched in 2012, has over 120 followers.

The second main element in our approach to impact rests on the activities of the School's Business Engagement and Impact Manager who is at the core of the School's Business Engagement and Impact Group (BEIG). The Group oversees research impact and disseminates knowledge and understanding of impact to academic colleagues, directly and through the School Research Committee. It provides a resource for academic staff; embeds our approach to impact in the culture of the Departments; and enables stronger relationships to be built with employers and institutions outside of academia, hence increasing opportunities for impact. It liaises with the External Relations Unit, a College body which oversees contacts with practitioner organizations including companies, government agencies and departments and the mass media. The Unit maintains an Expert Database which is accessible to journalists and which has led in recent years to many media requests for interviews. Hamil, Kelly, Lawton Smith and Walters have given TV and radio interviews about their research which help disseminate their findings to a wider audience beyond academia and potentially contribute to impact. There is an Entrepreneur-in-Residence in the School who heads the Entrepreneurial Innovation Programme and whose role includes increasing staff and students' awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities.

The School Research Committee works closely with the Business Engagement and Impact Manager and since 2010 has made available small grants specifically targeted on research impact. The twice-yearly call for funding applications now offers support for measures designed to promote

research impact as well as for data collection and analysis. The Committee also plays an oversight role in monitoring research grant applications to external bodies and part of its remit is now to offer advice on research impact. For example, a recent School grant of £10,000 was awarded to Trenberth to replicate a New Zealand study on bullying; the original research made a significant impact on government policy and the Research Committee was keen to help replicate impact in several Asian countries. Konzelmann was awarded a £10,000 grant to conduct research on UK industrial strategy with the objective of informing policy aimed at strengthening the productive side of the British economy and rebalancing it away from a reliance on financial services. The Committee helps plan the School's annual Business Week of open lectures, an opportunity to showcase our research to members of the public through presentations and debates among academics and practitioners.

The final element in our approach to impact revolves around our students, many of whom are already active in a range of practice and policy areas when they join our academic programmes, since 85% are part-time students who work during the day and study in the evening. Many become valuable members of UoA-industry-government networks: they bring to the UoA their own issues and topics which then feed into research agendas, and they pass on research findings to colleagues and undertake projects based on their employment.

c. Strategy and plans

The Departments' approach to research impact is part of the overall School and College level strategy for research. One of the preconditions for research impact is that academic staff conduct, publish and disseminate high quality research and thereby build up strong academic reputations. These endeavours will continue to be supported by the UoA through the provision of sabbatical leave and support for conference presentations. Second, the concept of research impact, including reach and significance, is embedded in research centre, Departmental and School decision-making. For example, applicants for School research grants are required to describe the steps they will take to enhance the impact of their findings. Staff are required, in School and external grant applications, to report their plans for dissemination of research findings to academic and non-academic audiences. Third, financial support will continue to be offered by the School specifically for activities designed to promote the impact of their research. Fourth, given the critical role of the Research Centres in the impact agenda, they will continue to be strongly supported. Fifth, the Business Engagement and Impact Manager and the BEI Group will continue to play a key role in promoting research impact. We plan that the BEIG will collate the impact experiences of researchers across the School and compile guidance on achieving impact. It will use this information to help existing research projects enhance their impact and to assist in the preparation of new research proposals. Finally, the School and the College will continue to maintain links with alumni as they provide a valuable source of ideas for research and channels for dissemination and impact of research findings.

In addition, we plan to consider modifications in a number of procedures in order to strengthen research impact: Research Centres in their annual reports could be required to discuss the impact of their research; and presenters at seminars within the UoA could be encouraged to discuss the actual and potential impact of their findings.

d. Relationship to case studies

All four of the case studies exemplify the Departments' approach to research impact. Three of the four cases emerged from research conducted within the framework of the Research Centres: Lawton Smith, Frenz/Andersen from Innovation Management and Hamil and Walters from the Sports Business Centre. The final case – Trenberth – is the type of work that will now be conducted by the newly-formed Sustainable Working Life Centre. The cases reflect the networks of academics and practitioners built up over many years through the Centres and the ways in which discussions between them help frame research questions that are high on theoretical significance and on potential impact.