

Institution: Durham University
Unit of Assessment: 19
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Impact activity for Durham University Business School (DUBS) extends across the full range of the school's research activities. Current activity builds on a particularly strong legacy of impact-generating scholarship from 1971, when the Small Business Centre was created. While small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a major group of beneficiaries specifically relevant to our research, our strategy has been to translate many of our wider research strengths (especially in Critical Studies, Finance, Leadership & Followership and Organizational Ecology) into impacts with a diverse constituency of users. These include national and regional governments as well as public sector groups and large multinationals, the full range demonstrating the reach of our impact. The significance of our impact is demonstrated in a diversity of ways, including increased company profits, improved practices and processes, as well as bringing practitioners together in new and innovative forms.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Our approach to impact has been to use the following models to provide pathways to impact: (i) Knowledge Production for Practitioners; (ii) Knowledge Mobilisation and Translation; (iii) Policy Research. Two of these models fit with end-user constituencies where we have particular research strengths: (i) has had particular relevance for SMEs and (iii) for research working in partnership with government agencies. And (ii) has enabled us to articulate and develop our approach to the impact of research that was originally intended primarily for an academic audience.</p> <p>Where knowledge production for practitioners has been the dominant model, research is typically directly commissioned by managers in outside organizations. Such managers decide to work with us because of the excellence of our research, and they themselves usually fund the projects (partially or fully). In this model of impact, for example, <i>Ellis</i> worked with BP Castrol in 2012 to study key account management practices, research that enabled the company to improve its use of IT and demonstrated the need to adapt their organizational structure by setting up cross-functional teams. In 2011, <i>Tsinopoulos</i> carried out research commissioned by the North East Procurement Organisation which identified the consequences of procurement practices on the local supply chain. Also in this model of impact, DUBS faculty have undertaken 13 Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) with a total value of £1,079K – research funded jointly by the ESRC and the organization (usually an SME) that benefits. The KTPs have had Durham faculty leading them, including <i>Adriani</i> (Durham to 2011), <i>Dixon</i>, <i>Huang</i>, <i>Nicholson</i>, <i>Redman</i> and <i>Stone</i>. Our experience since 2008 suggests that enabling impact in this mode of research requires: (i) a highly developed network of industry contacts (often including alumni and with support from the University's Business & Innovation Services); (ii) a willingness and ability to design research that address directly the requirements/interests of senior managers; (iii) an ability to produce research balancing high academic standards with practical relevance.</p> <p>Other areas of our research impact follow a knowledge mobilisation and translation model. In this model, the way research achieves impact is typically (at least initially) serendipitous as it was originally intended for an academic audience. For example, <i>McMurray's</i> work on the emotion management of GP receptionists (published in <i>Social Science & Medicine</i>) led the three surgeries involved to adjust receptionist training to account for the findings. <i>Lau</i> developed a field methodology to elicit individual attitudes to risk and time delay (published in <i>Journal of Risk & Insurance</i>). The Danish Insurance Association subsequently took advantage of the new experimental techniques to estimate citizens' willingness to pay. <i>Learmonth's</i> work on gender stereotypes and their effects on promotion prospects for female healthcare scientists was published in <i>Social Studies of Science</i>. Revised versions were subsequently published in practitioner publications, and the practical implications have sparked international debate in social media (e.g. http://www.zenyaveda.cz/na-malickostech-zalezi-aneb-proc-se-zenam-nedari-pronikat-na-vedouci-pozice). The lesson from knowledge mobilisation and translation is that <i>all</i> research can have impact. We must, therefore, consistently seek to take it beyond academic journals. This might include articles in practitioner journals, workshops, training events, and social media.</p>

Between knowledge mobilisation & translation and knowledge production for practitioners is **policy research** – often commissioned by government departments or other larger organizations. Unlike SMEs, such bodies typically require traditional academic research, albeit work that directly addresses their agendas. Among work of this nature, *Polos* and *Graham* are involved in a comparative study of police forces across the EU. The work involves a study of the cultural and societal pressures faced, and the challenges and processes involved in, organizational change for police forces within ten European countries. In July 2012, DUBS hosted (and funded) an event showcasing their research at which over 100 members of Durham Constabulary attended. Also involved with this model of impact is *Harris* whose extensive policy-relevant economics research has led to him joining the BIS/Foresight Lead Expert Group that will report in late 2013 on ‘The Future of Manufacturing in the UK’. Also, *Mawson*, is involved as the Director of DUBS’s Institute for Local Governance (ILG). The ILG started its operational programme in April 2010, as an intermediary bridging organisation between local authorities and many other public bodies in the North East of England who pay to be members of the ILG. The ILG’s role is to facilitate co-production between researchers and practitioners, identifying research requirements and then sourcing them. It is currently in the course of facilitating the delivery of 11 individual local authority projects of this nature, and has delivered a further 13 research projects utilising the partners and related stakeholders. Our experience suggests that enabling impact in policy-orientated work is best suited to academics with (i) a track record of research in a relevant field, and (ii) networks with the agencies concerned to develop trust so they commission the work.

The way we deal with impact emphasises the importance of **dissemination, engagement and networking**; the aim being to have as large a network of contacts as possible, so that multiple connections can be made and potential opportunities for impact can be maximised. Thus, we have sought to build up strong and influential partnerships with the senior managers of many organizations, both within the North East of England, and across the world. These relationships have been based, in part, on the active cultivation of alumni (748 people have graduated from our MBA programmes since 2008 and all alumni are sent the alumni magazines – *Agora* and *Executive News* – which always features briefings on the impact of our latest research). Regular meetings with managers from many companies and other organizations have also been important to shape agendas and meet the aims of knowledge exchange. Our approach here aims at enabling DUBS to be seen as an authoritative partner with the capacities and the interests to provide research-led guidance. Staff have been enabled to pursue such meetings by DUBS funding dinners and similar events, and by recognising particularly strong links with practitioners in workload allowances.

A further way in which we have achieved these goals is in the creation of a formal calendar of networking events at which DUBS academics meet practitioners. Such events showcase insights from our leading academics and the application of research to real-life business issues. One example is our bi-annual **Corporate Forum**, at which DUBS research is showcased along with practitioner perspectives. The first was held in 2008 when, chaired by the Vice Chancellor, an audience of over 100 business leaders heard presentations from the chief executive of Newcastle International Airport and from *Nicholson* (DUBS faculty). Subsequently, one event has been held in the UK, and, to maximise the reach of our impact, one international forum each year has also been held. Faculty involved have included, for example, *Bozionelos* [Durham to 2012]; *Dietz*, *Moore*, *Redman* and *Rizk*. These events are co-ordinated by DUBS professional staff and fully funded by DUBS. In addition, we hold less formal **Guest Speaker** events (a total of 23 in the REF period, with sessions held in Durham or London) where senior managers from a wide range of companies speak to an audience of business people, about their work and its relation to Durham research. For example in May 2013, having worked with *Redman* and *Graham*, Toni Mascolo (founder of TONI & GUY hairdressers) spoke at DUBS and provided delegates from business with an insight into how the DUBS research project has delivered impact. Indeed, Mascolo is one of 29 distinguished practitioners who are visiting fellows or professors at DUBS (others include Stephen Millard, a Senior Economist at the Bank of England). None of this more formal networking would happen without support from professional service staff. DUBS employs experts in marketing, alumni, PR, fundraising, corporate relations and research facilitation to support the dissemination and impact of research. (DUBS’s own team is, in turn, supported and strengthened by the wider University’s

professional staff within the award-winning Durham Business Innovation Services).

Our model of resource allocation and institutional support sees **research and impact as integrated, mutually reinforcing aspects of a core activity**. Thus, institutional support for impact comes primarily through mechanisms for research as a whole. For example, there is a DUBS seed corn fund through which competitively awarded small grants (totalling £20K per annum) can be used to get small projects off the ground; research clusters have access to ring-fenced funds (£5K per cluster) to develop research activities; and DUBS impact funds are supplemented by a University-wide fund for larger projects with impact – totalling £250K. At individual staff level, the development of a University Impact Strategy has led to a revision to the annual staff review arrangements. In line with wider university processes, staff reviews now include discussion of impact activities, while research leave, appointments and promotion all recognise impact. Furthermore, in 2012, *Stone* was appointed as DUBS’s “impact champion” (IC) and he receives 300 workload hours in recognition of his responsibilities to ensure that impact is mainstreamed as a key component of academic activity across the School.

c. Strategy and plans

The importance of impact is changing how we work. Previously, excellent impact often just happened as a routine part of research, but we are now much more strategic in identifying and supporting potential impact. Plans for maximising the impact of current and future research will rely on continuing commitment to research excellence within the context of a university-wide impact strategy led by the Dean for Knowledge Exchange and Impact. Such excellence provides a strong basis for impact with high reach and significance. Within this context, DUBS plans to ensure that research impact becomes fully institutionalised as a central measure of research excellence.

Institutionalising impact requires not merely effective systems to ensure that impact is continually considered, tracked and monitored through all research projects; it also requires a strategic approach ensuring that financial and human resources are effectively managed to support impact.

Systems for Impact: Developing the role of research clusters in achieving impact is central to our strategy. All research clusters have been required by the Research Committee to develop annual impact plans as part of their annual reporting cycles, and these plans will be formally monitored by the Research Committee. Each cluster will develop a plan for enabling impact that (i) fits with their research strengths; (ii) contains measurable targets; and (iii) becomes increasingly ambitious each year. Clusters will also be required to develop advisory boards – the advisory board for Economic Growth and Policy already being a strong example. Following *Basu’s* collaboration with them, the board includes William T. Gavin (vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank in St. Louis) and Simon Derrick (Managing Director of the Bank of New York Mellon). Advisory boards are important for our strategy because they enable clusters to develop long-term relationships with particular user groups, helping them reach out to the clusters’ key constituencies. Furthermore, drawing on experience from 2008-2013, we have in place a strategy to enhance the way we gather evidence of impact. Staff are now briefed on documentation requirements, and the research officer keeps a contemporaneous and systematic record of all evidence as new case studies develop. The proactive use of social media is also a part of our impact strategy. Advantages include its ability to reach a very wide audience, generate links with users, and inform the development of research, thereby increasing its impact. Indeed, *Hardey’s* research into the nature of the impact of social media informs our strategy (see <http://www.mariannhardey.com/research/>).

Allocation of Resources for Impact: Over the next five years, the IC will work with clusters and with individual faculty members to increasingly encourage an awareness of impact in their research and to identify where extra resources are required for impact to be maximised. We expect resources to be required both in (i) extra workload allowances to recognise staff time to develop the impact of their work fully; (ii) further funding over and above the budgets currently allocated for research to help work reach as wide an audience as possible. In addition, we plan to use DUBS’s honorary visiting fellows to facilitate impact, as well as encouraging, for example, short-term visiting placements within the department for practising managers, focused around the dissemination stages of key research projects. We also plan to provide support for user-seminars and workshops as a key part of the Department’s research culture, and have planned a budget of £50K for visiting placements from managers and user-seminars in 2014.

Human Resources and Impact: At an individual level, through presentations at Boards of Studies, induction events and conversations during staff reviews, we will continue to make it clear that every member of staff needs to engage in impact as part of their core activity. In DUBS, as in the wider University, achieving excellent impact is now a central criterion for staff appointments and for probation, promotion etc. This criterion enables us to target staff recruitment at applicants with strong impact portfolios. Our on-going aim then, is to facilitate a cultural shift so that the impact of research is as valued as its publication. One strategy for achieving this shift is training, such training building upon University-wide seminars in Partnership Working which were introduced in 2009. Experience from 2008-2013 suggests that some academics underestimate the potential audiences for their research, and still disseminate work exclusively in academic journals. Thus, we are working with staff and PGR students, both by organizing formal impact training workshops and by the provision of other practical support, to enable them to be able to reframe more of their research also to reach a non-academic audience. For example, staff are helped by professional staff to publish less technical versions of their articles in practitioner outlets and social media. Furthermore, building on similar work within the wider University (such as the introduction in 2010 of a knowledge exchange prize at “Celebrating Excellence” events) we will increasingly celebrate and reward the achievement of impact. An early example of the approach is a conference (organized by *Elliott, Ellis, Learmonth* and *Tadjaweski*) engaging in the national debate about impact in business schools. Entitled “Reclaiming Impact,” and supported by a £4,200 grant from the Society for the Advancement of Management Studies, it was held in September 2013, and featured an influential industry figure (John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB union 1986-2003), who, with international academics from a range of social sciences, debated how business school research can, and should, benefit society.

d. Relationship to case studies

The relationship between the ICSs and our support for impact is reciprocal, evolving with the requirements of the cases. Our strategy is informed by the lessons learnt in the development of the cases – the ICSs having confirmed our three models of impact as the models of choice. This process has, however, been iterative, shaped also by the development of our understanding of impact and pathways to impact. Our ICSs have thus guided our approach, and future plans.

- The Growth & Development of Eden Farm Ltd (GDEF) exemplifies the first model, Knowledge Production for Practitioners, in that impact followed directly from commissioned research. In GDEF, the company approached us to provide advice on specific problems with accounting and other business processes because of our reputation for high quality research in this area. Impact arose directly from the company’s implementation of our research-based recommendations that were tailored specifically to the needs of the company. A key learning point from GDEF – which was underpinned by *Dixon’s* publications – is the importance of strong, specific research findings to inform the project.
- Entrepreneurial Education (EE); and Building and Restoring Trust within Organizations (Trust), exemplify cases of knowledge translation & mobilization: research (originally intended primarily for an academic audience) achieved impact following dissemination and engagement activities. While EE achieved impact prior to this REF period because of the extensive informal networks built up by *Gibb*, its continuing impact was reliant upon the development of a spin-off company. Trust was first showcased at a DUBS Corporate Forum by *Dietz* but its impact relies upon *Dietz’s* commitment to produce training sessions for practitioners. Thus, both case studies demonstrated the value of translating academic research into forms with which practitioners could engage.
- Policy-orientated research is exemplified by the North East Economic Model and by Policy Mechanisms for Skills Development – the Growth & Innovation Fund. In both cases, *Stone’s* proactive approaches to the relevant bodies in suggesting the need for research was key to their success, as was his on-going involvement with the projects during implementation.

Thus, what our ICSs have confirmed as vital above all is the networked model of engagement cultivated at DUBS. All the case studies rely on the academics leading the case studies being known and trusted by relevant practitioners so that their organizations were willing to commission and use their work.