

**Institution: University of Wolverhampton**

**Unit of Assessment: UoA19 Business and Management**

**a. Context**

Research and business engagement activities have traditionally been co-located in the university under a Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise to reflect the university's commitment to being "an educational hub supporting the economy through employment, entrepreneurship, creativity, knowledge transfer, research and development" (University of Wolverhampton Strategic Plan 2007-2012). Supporting this are structures, such as the university's Business Solutions Centre, and plans which facilitate interactions with key stakeholders to ensure the relevance of our research and its application to achieve and sustain social and economic impact.

Applied research has been a central plank of the Business & Management research strategy since the 1990s (see RAE2001 and 2008). In practice, that has meant focusing on selected areas of research (see REF5) which are capable of producing rigorous management research that also have practical utility. The table below summarises the main user-groups and beneficiaries of the different research clusters, in addition to the main types of impacts sought.

Research cluster	Main non-academic users, beneficiaries and audiences	Types of impacts
HRM and Industrial Relations	Trade unions, public sector organisations, professional associations and their members	Effects on labour relations and employment conditions Inputs into policy debates on public sector pay and conditions Changes to managerial behaviours
Enterprise and Small Business Management	Small business managers, small business development agencies	Commercial benefits for SMEs through KTPs Contributions to development or implementation of SME policies at regional or national levels
Corporate Governance and Ethics	Directors of public, private and voluntary sector organisations	Improvements to governance and board effectiveness
International Business	Governmental and public sector agencies	Policies on supporting incoming Foreign Direct Investments

There is not a single model for research impact in our work, rather there are a variety of processes through which our research findings have come to inform and influence practice and policies. At one end of the spectrum there is the traditional knowledge transfer model where research findings were communicated to key stakeholder audiences, and are subsequently taken up and implemented by end-users leading to changes in policy or management practice. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there is the co-production of knowledge where researchers worked together with practitioners in addressing specific knowledge gaps and/or organizational problems, such as in the case of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) or the board development work of the corporate governance scholars. The following sections outline these impact processes in more detail by describing our approach to impact, as well as strategy and plans for supporting impact.

**b. Approach to impact**

Our approach to impact of research takes the following three forms:

**b1. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships:** Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) are designed to aid competitiveness of UK companies by facilitating their access to knowledge generated within universities. The University of Wolverhampton has been involved in KTPs right from their inception and in 2009/10 we were nationally the second largest academic contributor to KTPs in Business and Management. Specifically aligned with our research cluster on Enterprise and Small Business Management, we have strategically focused on working with SME partners to help build organisational capabilities that are informed by our research base (case study 2). The KTPs also served as a vehicle for initiating new research projects, most recently on processes of learning in small business management teams (McKeown). Support for KTPs and the network of our partner SMEs is provided through the Wolverhampton Business Solutions Centre, a strategic partnership

## Impact template (REF3a)

between the University, Wolverhampton City Council, the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and City of Wolverhampton College. The Centre won the 2013 Knowledge Exchange/Transfer Initiative of the Year in the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards. The strategic work of this Centre is supplemented in the Business School by a business development team, led by an Associate Dean (Peak) and a principal lecturer in charge of KTPs (Harris). In the REF census period, we have completed 14 classic KTPs, 13 with small firms and one large company KTP. On completion, the immediate economic impact of the KTPs reported by the participating firms included the creation of 227 jobs and increases in profits of approx. £ 5 million.

**b2. Research-informed CPD:** Our research is translated into practice through research-informed continuous professional development (CPD) and professional body links. We deliver a range of professional-body accredited courses where students translate research-underpinned teaching into their own professional practice through work-based projects. For example, between 2008-2013 758 HR practitioners were enrolled on our postgraduate CIPD programmes supported by staff from the HRM & Industrial Relations research cluster. We also use publications in practitioner journals and professional body websites, to stimulate and inform practitioner debate. For example, Hamlin's research on managerial and leadership effectiveness was seen as so influential and impactful that it won the 2013 International Federation of Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO) Research Excellence award, was showcased to 800 delegates at their 2013 World Congress in India, and was featured in the IFTDO newsletter sent to approx. 500,000 HR professionals in over 30 countries. Our executive training programmes are another mechanism for facilitating impact on practice. For example, Anosike utilised his links with Nigerian companies, politicians and senior university managers to set up a series of 3-4 annual executive training programmes around entrepreneurship education and development. Delivered by researchers from the Enterprise and Small Business Management cluster, the programmes culminated in the set-up of an Information Technology Laboratory for SMEs and a Network for African Students of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria (case study 2). Further, the Centre for African Entrepreneurship Research and Training (CAERT) is now working with our researchers, the Nigerian Small Business Corporation and the African Development Bank to review SME development policy in Nigeria.

**b3. User-funded research projects:** Based on the user's knowledge and evaluation of our research (see c2 below), individuals or teams of researchers are contracted by an organisation to conduct research into a specific phenomenon and/or organisational problem. Approximately £313,500 (or 20%) of our research income in the REF census period was derived from direct end-user funding. The outcomes of the research feed directly into the following:

a) *Organisational practices.* Research commissioned by [REDACTED] (case study 1). Research funded by Ernst & Young into dynamic capabilities of family firms in the UK and China will feed into their consultancy practices towards family businesses.

b) *Governance and board effectiveness:* Machold and colleagues have worked with directors and boards in UK organisations on improving board effectiveness. One project on corporate governance communication influenced the re-positioning strategy of the company away from that of a traditional print company (of corporate annual reports) to a corporate communications company. Another project with [REDACTED], resulted in immediate changes to the content and conduct of board meetings, and [REDACTED] also initiated a wider governance review to act on recommendations to streamline their boards and governance structures.

c) *Public debate.* Worrall's research on quality of working life was originally funded by Wolverhampton (1999, 2001, 2006, 2007) and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), and later taken up by Simply Health, a UK health company that in recognition of the research's importance funded a follow-up survey in 2012 (case study 1). The results of the research have been disseminated to 90,000 CMI members, and debated in the national and international media. At a more local level, research funded by the BBC on poverty in Shropshire (Haynes) has been discussed in the local media.

In sum, the outcomes of such user-funded research created economic and societal impacts for the users as well as stimulating new research projects that lead to academic publications.

**c. Strategy and plans**

Our impact strategy revolves around three incremental stages through which impact is realised. Specifically, we focus on the following areas:

**c1. Rigour and relevance in research:** We strategically develop research in clusters which produce high quality outputs and have resonance with our key stakeholders. Annual research evaluations of staff combine traditional academic metrics (output rankings) with impact evaluations, i.e. identifying implications for practice within research papers, publications resulting from collaborative research with end-users, and uptake of research through citations in practitioner publications.

**c2. Bringing research into practitioner domains:** In recognition that few practitioners will regularly read papers in academic journals, we aim to raise users' awareness of research findings through publications in practitioner journals, national and international media and a series of workshops and public lectures. For example, Seifert is a regular contributor to national and international news and programmes on industrial relations, whereas Cook, Haynes and Farquhar have featured on regional news on the Eurozone and recession. W.Wang's research on comparative sickness absence in the UK, France and Germany was reported in over 50 UK national and local newspapers. W.Wang and Machold also contributed to the 2011 BAM/CMI 'Top Management Article' initiative. Further, to build lasting relationships with professional associations we developed a series of joint seminars and events. Examples include regular and ad hoc joint seminars with the Chartered Institute for Marketing; the West Midlands Economic Forum; the Chartered Management Institute annual Crystal Lecture; Business in the Community; and Shropshire Academy. We also run in conjunction with the Business Solutions Centre annually about 8-10 breakfast seminars for SMEs where recent research results are presented and discussed.

The Business School also has a business advisory board comprising 5 directors of large national and international PLCs (4 of which are CEOs), 2 MDs of local SMEs (including one of our KTP partners), the CEO of Wolverhampton City Council and the principal of a leading regional FE college. The advisory board creates strategic links to practitioner networks, and plays an ongoing strategic advisory role on the impact of our research.

**c3. Involvement of businesses and management practitioners in the design, conduct and dissemination of research:** Because impact is not always linear or homogeneous, we aim to involve practitioners at different stages of the research cycle, from project conception via collaborative conduct of the research to implementation of research findings in organisations. We achieve this by building strong links with practitioners through honorary research positions (currently we have 5 such affiliated practitioners) and increasing the volume of collaborative research projects. For example, Hamlin has co-authored 14 refereed research outputs based on his ongoing collaboration with HR directors, executive heads and HR consultants. Further, an international research project on women on boards involved policy-makers, board directors and advocacy organisations. It resulted in the publication of a book (Machold *et al.* eds., 2013) which has received accolades from the president of Catalyst and the former Norwegian Prime Minister. It is currently being followed up with a joint EU research bid involving our researchers, three employer associations in the Balkan countries and a consultancy company in Slovenia in order to improve gender balance in the upper echelons in the participating Balkan countries.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The case studies are reflective of two different approaches to impact. Case study 1 focuses on how research into employment conditions and employee relations in the public sector has impacted on the conduct, practice and efficiency of unions and other labour associations, contributed to government policy reviews on police pay, as well as informing practitioner debate via professional associations such as CMI. This case is therefore reflective of a number of routes to impact from traditional uptake of disseminated research to user-funded research projects.

Case study 2 focuses on how research into critical success factors in small and medium-sized businesses was translated into commercial impacts via knowledge transfer partnerships. The case study details the commercial impacts of KTPs, as well as impacts on public policy.