

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Unit of Assessment: C19 Business and Management Studies

a. Context

The Birmingham Business School (BBS) has demonstrated a strong commitment to engaged research throughout its history, at local, national and international levels. It is committed to undertaking and promoting research excellence that creates wider economic, business and societal impacts through the nourishing of trusted and valuable relationships with non-academic stakeholders. BBS' primary user groups include: in the business community, **small and large private firms, individual practitioners, business confederations and other business stakeholders such as labour unions**; in the policy community, **policy-makers and officials in local and UK government**, (including HM Treasury, BIS, DWP, Bank of England, Dept of Health Birmingham City Council), **overseas government ministries and agencies** (including the European Commission, the EU Committee of the Regions, and the African Development Bank), as well as **NGOs, charities, public sector organisations and the general public** (through print, radio, TV and web-based materials).

Faculty research and relationships with users and beneficiaries have generated **a range of impacts** during this REF period. These range from: informing and steering the public debate to shape policy at the national and international level; shaping the policy design and interventions triggering specific regulatory changes; addressing societal issues and initiate policy changes through projects developed with NGOs; and working with companies to enable the adoption of new technologies and processes leading to performance improvements.

BBS includes the departments of **Accounting and Finance, Management, and Marketing**. Impact derives from our **key areas of research**: (a) global value chains in relation labour standards, innovation and business systems, as well as firms' clusters and global network collaborations; (b) entrepreneurship and enterprise development; (c) social marketing, strategic marketing and business market networks; (d) digital reporting and (e) global finance.

b. Approach to impact

BBS is constantly undertaking and promoting research that creates wider economic, business and societal impacts. Our approach is based on mutually beneficial relationships where our research addresses policy and businesses practice concerns as much as the latter being shaped by our research. Our approach seeks to maximise opportunities for our research to generate impact. This includes: (a) the active engagement with stakeholders that enables the co-design and implementation of research; (b) a continuous dialogue with policy and business opinion leaders on current and controversial issues; (c) public engagement through media visibility and pro-active leverage of social networking; and (d) the institutional impact support infrastructure available to staff which ensures that project grants embed realistic and compelling impact strategies with clear audiences and end-users that are engaged in the research design process as well as benefiting from the research findings and recommendations.

BBS' **impact activities** are overviewed below.

1) Impacts by changing business and regulatory practices

BBS has built a range of **long-term links with individual businesses as well as intermediary organisations**. This has enabled user collaboration and the co-development of relevant knowledge matching the distinctive themes outlined in our Research Environment Template.

For example, in 2008-09 BBS joined the *Advantage West Midlands* scheme to provide SMEs with £3,000 vouchers to purchase academic support for innovations. Further, BBS is playing a leading role in the Engaging Research for Business Transformation (EREBUS), a joint ESRC-funded Capacity Building Cluster delivered by a consortium including Aston, Birmingham, and Warwick. The initiative aims at shaping and driving business transformation in the fields of energy, health technologies and finance. It is implemented through CASE studentships, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, vouchers and student placements.

BBS' research has led to recommendations to **develop new processes and new business practices** in a number of cases, including: (a) A widely-reported economic impact study of Cadbury[2008-09]; (b) Collaboration with BAE systems, guiding a review of its global engineering

strategy [2008-09]; (c) Work with Siemens PLM, PTC, IBM UK, BP exploitation & production, in the area of engineering network design [2008-09]; (d) Joint projects with Bao Steel and the Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation on high value engineering and manufacturing services [2011]; (e) Research on international mergers and acquisitions and technology innovation with MG Motor UK, JSB Tech Private Limited Singapore and Xiyi Industrial Group, China [2011-12].

Research has also focused on the critical analyses of business practices to **stimulate policy/practitioner debate**, as in the case of an ESRC project on *Structural change in the car industry and the collapse of MG Rover* (2008-2010). Research that has led to **changes in Corporate and Social Responsibility and labour practices** in the global banana supply chain with the World Banana Forum [2006-11] provides another illustration of this approach.

2) Continuous dialogue with business leaders and policy makers

BBS is constantly engaging with the wider business community by playing an active role as a **'critical friend' or as an expert, through conducting rigorous analyses, the unpacking of contentious issues, raising awareness of current trends and steering the debate with evidence based recommendations**. One element of our approach is to **host high profile public events**, underpinned by faculty research to provide a forum for debate across interest groups. Examples include: a debate held during the ESRC festival of Social Science in 2011 on 'Ethical Dilemmas' focusing on food retailing and impacts on suppliers (Robinson with representatives from food chain distributors and producers, district councils and the Fair Trade foundation); a panel discussion on the pros and cons of foreign ownership of British businesses led by Sir Dominic Cadbury and Jerry Blackett, head of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (Collinson, Clarke and Robinson); a forum on the opportunities for British businesses in India with representatives from UKTI and the Confederation of Indian Businesses (Collinson). Another approach is to **build effective and sustainable relations with key business communities**. The Marketing Department seminar series is jointly organised with a West Midlands based advertising agency, Cogent Elliott, and it provides a medium for scholars and business people to engage on topics such as non-traditional media, the internet, brand development and customer insights.

In 2009-10, BBS ran the "Breakfast Briefings": a series of regular **business-friendly events initially** designed in response to the Credit Crunch to provide a focused and distinctive forum for academics, business leaders and policy makers to share knowledge and experiences over the impact that the financial crisis was having on the regional economy, including financing recovery, innovation and sustaining competitiveness. Hosted by BBS, speakers have included Government Ministers (Health and Energy), West Midlands MPs, journalists, the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and representatives from business.

The Centre for Corporate Governance Research (CCRG) in the BBS hosted in 2012 the 10th annual International Corporate Governance Conference. This provided a **regular forum for an international mix of academic and business communities engaged in the corporate governance debate**. CCRG was closely related to key policy developers in this field thanks to the role that Sir Adrian Cadbury has been playing as CCRG External Advisor for more than 10 years. CCRG is reviewing its activities following the departure of its Director Prof C. Mallin.

BBS also leads a range of **collaborative** initiatives that facilitate business impact. The Midlands Excellence Organisational Improvement Programme ('MidEx'), is a key example. In 2011 the School won a competitive bid to collaborate with a prominent local business-support organisation in building on its 20-year history of promoting operational excellence in the region's small and mid-sized manufacturing firms. BBS has taken on the leadership of a programme of activities to conduct operations management research and disseminate 'better practices' to a range of businesses in the region. The initiative will impact on the regional economy through improvements in public, private and third sector organisations. Another example is the practice-based research carried out in the AHRC project on cultural intermediaries (De Propriis). Research underpins the co-production of academic and artistic outputs jointly with creative organisations (museums), artists and scholars to deliver mobile touch-table technology enabling museums to scale up their content to wider audiences.

3) Engaging with policy communities

BBS influences the strategic context for business and wealth creation by engaging in public policy debates and by shaping the course of policy making. **Staff have contributed to**

national and international policy making, notably for the Bank of England, HM Treasury, the World Bank, EU-US trade missions, the OECD, the International Labour Organisation, the African Development Bank and the European Union. Policy engagement has occurred through formal advisory channels (Parliament Select Committee hearings (Clarke) or the EU Commission (O'Mahony, Siebert)) or through dovetailing research with the agenda-setting of pressure groups. Members of the Centre for Research on the Economy and the Workplace (CREW) have actively engaged with UK Government departments, the European Commission and the International Labour Organisation in relation to the EU-FP7 funded SERVICEGAP and INDICSER projects' findings, through various policy-focused meetings and participation at high-level colloquium in preparation to policy formulation.

Policy impact has also been achieved through direct involvement of BBS faculty with international institutions, as in the case of a faculty secondment to the African Development Bank to oversee the implementation of regulatory changes which emerged directly from academic research in the field (Murinde). Greene contributed to the OECD publication on 'The Missing Entrepreneurs' (2013) and was a keynote speaker at a parliamentary meeting on business regulation, as well as helping shape the UK government debate with his report 'Enterprise 2050' detailing the case for a UK Small Business Administration and a business bank. A NESTA-funded project on creative industries also contributed to the debate on the creative economy, with the UK Minister for Culture, Ed Veizey, helping launch the report at an event in London (De Propriis).

Research on regional economic development has fed directly through to current policy via active engagement with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in the design of their strategy following the Heseltine report 'No Stone Unturned' (Bryson). BBS also hosted a visit by Lord Young to explore the potential for strengthening the role of Business Schools and Universities in small business development and faculty are playing a central role in shaping national policy in this area (Collinson, Green, Trehan).

Mechanisms to support impact

An important mechanism to actively engage stakeholders is the **BBS Advisory Board**: an active international group led by Lord Jones of Birmingham (formerly Director General of the CBI and Trade Minister in the UK government) which also includes Sir Dominic Cadbury and Lord Karan Bilimoria. It provides links with local, national and international businesses as well as the highest levels of government. BBS leverages such links to gauge topical concerns in the business environment, to access and engage key stakeholders for the purpose of research. BBS also leverages the **Advisory Board of CHASM** (the Centre for Household Assets and Savings Management-a joint BBS/School of Social Policy research centre) chaired by the former head of HM Treasury's Financial Inclusion Taskforce, Sir Brian Pomeroy, alongside senior figures from the national Money Advice Service, Birmingham City Council and Co-operatives UK. Further, **the panel leading MidEx** includes membership of local business-support organisations, as well as a variety of large and smaller business executives.

BBS' roles and mechanisms to generate impact include the **External Relations Manager** who is involved in the formulation, management and delivery of BBS' corporate and external relations activity, with responsibility for developing cross-department services and records. He is also the first port of call for all companies seeking to work with BBS faculty, be it employer engagement, research or consultancy activity, CPD enquiry or wider collaboration. He then leads this activity or co-ordinates and collaborates with the relevant department to take forward. At College level, the **Research and Knowledge Transfer Officer** support academics to meet their impact agenda including: (a) Training on impact for RCUK bids; (b) Making use of University mechanisms including: Public Engagement working group; Stakeholder Relations, including the University press and media relations teams, and the College marketing team; and University events and initiatives; (c) Supporting for the ESRC's Festival of Social Science initiative; (d) Facilitating the collection of impact evidence to assist in the recording of impact. **Public Engagement working groups** and **Stakeholder Relations departments**, alongside the University **press and media teams** support BBS faculty in building purposeful relationships with a range of audiences internally, locally, nationally and internationally.

BBS has a very **distinctive and highly respected media impact** and we have proved to have an expert insight into a number of specialisms. Just to mention a few, Szmigin is regularly called to comment on current retail business from a consumer perspective, including interviews

with The Guardian, BBC Breakfast live, BBC Newsnight and BBC Midlands Today. Robinson is called to engage with the media on issues related to production value chain: recently she was interviewed in relation to the horse meat scandal by the Telegraph, New York Times, Sky News – ITV, and BBC.

c. Strategy and plans

Our strategy is guided by five key objectives: a) to ensure **excellent quality research** whilst continuing to address economic, business and societal needs ;b) to **engage** with interest groups, end-users and key decision makers from the design of a project to its development and the formulation of recommendations; c) to maximise **impact** in a number of ways, namely to inform, improve, develop, influence, shape, change and enhance **policy and business practice**; d) to implement a research strategy around **Research Clusters** where impact is core; and e) to develop an **institutional infrastructure that supports research impact**. BBS has recruited additional staff with a strong track record in and commitment to stakeholder engagement [e.g. Trehan, Ram, Greene, Edwards, Robinson, Binner]

Indeed, recent strategic investment by the University in **Research Clusters in BBS incorporated user engagement as core principles to underpin relevance, substantial funding and ensure impact**. A key criterion for the selection and investment in individual clusters was the identification of specific user groups that would be integral to the development of the core research themes and targeted collaborators for co-funded initiatives. The selected Research Clusters are *Global Value Chains for Sustainable Development* and *Enterprise and Diversity* – the latter is associated with the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME) that joined BBS in 2013 with Ram. Research clusters' objectives are both to increase BBS capacity for engaged research in selected areas, and to improve our ability to secure large scale research funding from UK and international sources to extend the scope of our relevance. In addition to pump-priming funds of over £1million for the selected Research Clusters, funds have been dedicated for four post-doctoral, 2-year 'Engagement Fellowships' to link faculty research with user groups. Research Clusters will strengthen scholars' scope and expertise for delivering projects where **research is co-produced with users to maximise impact**.

BBS is also committed to **equip faculty with tools for the implementation of impact strategies from research**. These include: (a) funding for pilot fieldworks that enable research to be co-designed with user-groups at the pre-bid stage; (b) expert advice from the Research and Knowledge Transfer Officers on how to access, link to and engage a variety of user groups and policy decision makers; (c) further training for faculty to exploit the potential of an increasingly diverse range of visual, social and interactive media channels via which different user constituencies can be reached; (d) pro-active support for initiatives that involve joint collaboration between academics, businesses and public/private organisations; (e) support of a senior Business Engagement Officer.

d. Relationship to case studies

The impact case studies selected for our REF submission relate to the approach to impact adopted by the School outlined above. Research that included collaborations with businesses aimed at measureable improvements in their internal and external processes led to the Impact Cases by Sanderson, Lymer and Zhang. Sector-based research co-designed and developed with key sector stakeholders that led to improvements in the regulatory framework led to the Impact Cases by Lymer, Szmigin, Zhang and Murinde. We also want to highlight research that has addressed controversial societal concerns and was co-developed with key pressure groups and led to raising awareness and a better understanding of options and compromise solutions in the Impact cases by Szmigin and Zhang. Research that generates the Impact Case by O'Mahony contributed to shape policy debates on the drivers of EU growth.

The processes in place in the BBS for generating business, societal and policy impact have contributed to inform our future strategy. **Successful approaches to be further enhanced include co-developing research with users and stakeholders; collaborations between academics and firms around business-led concerns; evidence-based critical analysis of controversial issues and a broad spectrum of open research diffusion across policy and practitioners communities.**