

<p>Institution: University of Northampton</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 19 - Business and Management</p>
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The importance of purposeful research leading to impact with both reach and significance is part of the vision for the University of Northampton, spelt out in its Strategic Plan, <i>Raising the Bar</i>, a plan authored by the then new Vice-Chancellor, Nick Petford in 2011 which states that by 2015,</p> <p>“we (will have) transformed ourselves into an internationally facing university committed to delivering outstanding life-changing opportunities in education, underpinned by a culture of entrepreneurship, purposeful research and social enterprise recognized around the world for its originality and <i>impact</i>.”</p> <p>Business research here has followed these principles: it has been purposeful, original and has had significant impact on a range of end users from social entrepreneurs, marketing executives, auditors and users of E-technology to organic farmers and food processors in China. Meanwhile there has always been a conscious effort to identify impact and support dissemination of findings in a variety of ways to include internal REF funding of presentations at the conferences of professional bodies, direct contact with evidence-based users, to include the members affiliated to the university’s Enterprise Club (which has a mailing list of over 1000 people/organisations) and through NBS’s interactive forums on Twitter and Facebook.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Business Research as <i>Changemaking</i></p> <p>Curtis joined the University of Northampton’s Business School (NBS) in 2008 as the first Lecturer in Social Enterprise from the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, at the University of Oxford. His published research and allied activities, in particular his membership of, and participation in the International Social Innovation Research Conference over many recent years was distinguished. This, coupled with the expressed commitment to social innovation by the senior leadership of the University, to include the V-C, Nick Petford and the Executive Dean of NBS, Ian Brooks, led to the university being conferred with the status of Changemaker Campus by the Ashoka Foundation in early 2013. The university was the first to be granted this honour and <i>obligation</i>, and, as of time of writing, the only university in the UK to be so conferred. The Changemaker project is led by Curtis and Irwin, key members of the Social Enterprise team here and contributors to this submission. In applying for, and accepting Changemaker status, there was a clear statement of intent both by the University and by all its schools, <i>particularly by NBS</i>, in regard to its approach to research, that, as in all aspects of its work, it should <i>make a positive impact</i>, that its research should promote practice which leads to social justice, social innovation and social change. Thus the university committed itself to research which would involve recognising and identifying social problems, analysing and finding solutions to them, and research which would be people-focused, leading to practical outcomes, whether in the form of an enterprise, a revolution, a venture, a gadget or a policy solution. The Changemaker Strategy draws on many strands of work across the University as a whole but has been accentuated within the context of research in business, business entrepreneurship and social enterprise. <i>It means that research and practice within these fields are inextricably linked.</i></p> <p>For the University of Northampton to be accredited with Changemaker status, it had to prove that it upheld Ashoka values which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of responsibility to make positive changes in society • The practice of empathy by entering into the world of others, by a willed use of the imagination, without judgment • The taking of initiatives to bring about innovative change, local and systemic • The commitment to working with others to maximize impact, working in groups and networks

It is the above which informs the identification of its impact of research and its dissemination in business, business entrepreneurship and social enterprise at the University of Northampton.

Identification and Dissemination of Impact

Given the University's commitment to purposeful research which would *make a difference*, each of the research groups associated with the business school began a period of reflection early in the RAE/REF cycle as to how the research of its members could **identify social impact** and reinforce the commitments above. The initial mechanisms for identifying *the possibility of social impact* involve working at the interface between the university and end-users. Thus research *began* in most cases by identifying the problems faced by end users and, by working with them, to perceive ways in which those problems might be overcome. To take the China-based case study as an example, the identification of problems for end-users (farmers and subsequently food processors) to engage in organic conversion as opposed to conventional agriculture and food processing was *intrinsic* to the research. Research took place *with* the end-users and the problems of conversion were laid bare in discussion and dialogue with them. Social impact was subsequently identified as end-users adopted recommendation made as a result of the research, leading to changes in their practice. New research and dissemination of results then followed. The Social Enterprise Research Group have worked in a similar way: from the start, its members adopted a mission towards social innovation and social change the results of which could only be identified through changes in social practice in the community of social enterprise within which they work on an on-going basis. In both the cases above, the relationship between research and end-user has been a reciprocal one.

Other research groups also identified themes and issues where impact, involving social innovation, social justice and social change, could be achieved and identified through interaction between the research and end-user communities. Three examples of different kinds will illustrate the results.

1. The Finance and Accounting Group's leader and principal researcher leader, Kassem, has concentrated her research on financial corruption, on the role of external auditors in combating it and on providing external assessors with a framework which would help them properly assess and respond to risks arising from corruption. Fraud is a concern for all society's stakeholders in that it leads to a loss of credibility and investor confidence in the capital markets and the audit profession and damage to the economy as a whole in terms of market failure, loss of tax revenue and so on. Kassem is thus contributing to social change and social justice across the piece. Her research is accessible via LinkedIn where contacts include professional bodies, external auditors and professional accountants and is also available on the Social Science Research Network (www.ssn.com) with, at time of writing, one of her recent papers in the relevant Top 10 download list. However **dissemination** is principally undertaken through presentation of research at conferences of professional associations such as the British Accounting and Finance Association, sponsored by the main audit professional bodies to include the Institute of Certified Chartered Accountants and some of the Big Four audit firms, to include Pricewaterhousecoopers and Ernst and Young.
2. Quinones-Garcia is the leader of the Impact of the E-environment Group who, in 2012, won a British Academy- Leverhulme Trust Small Research Grant (for 2013-15) augmented by internal university REF funding to research the question of techno-addiction and *to support dissemination of her findings*. Quinones-Garcia's primary concern is the amelioration of potential health risks to employees, as well as any interference with their performance at work and in their social life. Quinones-Garcia presented some of her earlier work to the Occupational Psychology division of the British Psychology society's conference in 2012 and was subsequently interviewed by BBC Radio World Service, BBC Radio 5 and BBC Northampton, as well as having her work mentioned in national dailies to include the Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail. She will present further elements of her ongoing BA-Leverhulme financed research at the Conference of the British Psychological Society in 2014, a conference attended by a very large number of evidence-based practitioners and known for its extensive press coverage.
3. Within the China, Transitional and Developing Economies Research Centre (CTDERC), Burnapp and He Shaowei won funding from the British Council in China under the PM1 2

Initiative in 2009-11 in conjunction with Shaoguan University in Zhejiang province, China, to undertake a research project on 'International Employability and Entrepreneurship'. The aim was to help students of different cultures to work together as global entrepreneurs by enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills and knowledge of the business environment of other countries. The dissemination of the project outcomes included workshops and conferences in the UK and China and led to a series of conference papers and research publications in both countries.

Concerning *impact and dissemination* of the above project, the British Council's external consultant wrote "dissemination has been built into every stage of the project...there have been two international conferences.....the project website is of great interest" while her overall comment was that the project "may be considered to be an outstanding success and an exemplar for the PM12 Connect China-UK Initiative". End-users who have benefitted include, amongst others, the 1000-odd individuals and enterprises registered with the University's Enterprise Club through which the outputs have been disseminated.

c. Strategy and plans

Our strategy towards achieving greater impact for the future has six additional elements:

1. To raise the external profile of business research at the university through (i) improvements in our web pages to include an interactive public-facing section (ii) supporting staff in organising conferences for, and working with, non-academics.
2. To deepen the degree of expertise within the extant research groups by continuing to recruit new staff with a mission to engage in purposeful research.
3. To ensure our research continues to be disseminated more widely and deeply through collaborations with evidence-based end-users in the business field. As a current case in point, Mortimer's work in Marketing and Brand Communications on the IMC was picked up by the Campaign Magazine and she was the only academic to join a round table discussion on the subject involving both the client and agency sides in 2012 and 2013. This mission will be encouraged by the recent appointment of Dr Jacky Holloway as Deputy Dean of NBS. an executive member of the British Academy of Management (BAM), much involved in the interface between the worlds of business and academe (see REF 5)
4. In many cases, research groups have international links (e.g. CTDERC, Accounting and Finance, E-Environment, and Operations Management). Indeed, one of the ongoing missions of NBS is 'internationalisation' and this applies to all aspects of its work, to include research with overseas universities and enterprises in the public and private sectors.
5. To integrate *impact* even more deeply into the research plans of individual staff members through PDRs, partly as an *obligation* of the university's Changemaker status.
6. To engage more fully in interactive and social media while supporting the publication of research findings in open forums such as the University's repository, NECTAR.

d. Relationship to case studies

The opportunities for a business school to make a *positive, practical* impact on the world in which we live is immense and business research at the University of Northampton has striven to grasp those opportunities with both hands. In that light, it is unsurprising that the two impact case studies are both powerful testimonies to the way in which research can have the power to transform peoples' lives for the better, to *make a difference*. Thus, one relates directly to recent research and practice in social enterprise and the Changemaker status of our university, the other to a long-term commitment to a greener and healthier global natural environment through changes in agriculture and business strategy in China. Both involve the promotion of social justice, social innovation and social change. Both are examples of how research and practice go hand in hand.