

## REF3a: Impact template UOA: 19 Business and Management

### 1. Context

The mission of the University of Sunderland is to be a civic university, leading in the development of our city and the region. The University has a tradition of applied research in business, and in recent years has developed work which is having increasing local and national impact. This takes several forms and includes impact on local individuals and their companies, and more recently impact upon large public sector organisations, including the police and the health service. This has emerged from fundamental research into management development techniques and personal and business transformation, collaborative working and the application and evaluation of the research within partner organisations including the police, the fire service, Nissan, the NHS, and BT. During the assessment period these developments have taken place as part of broader corporate activities. More recently the unit has placed increased emphasis on the link between research excellence and impact, and encourages staff to work collaboratively to produce economic and social benefits from research projects by developing links to improve the economic competitiveness of business partners and the region, and increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy.

### 2. The Unit's approach to impact during the period 2008-2013

Staff in the unit have established strong partnerships with local companies and national organisations. These have been nurtured as part of the development of corporate programmes. Examples include the development of management development programmes for the police, the fire service, BT, Nissan, and NHS managers. These links have enabled our staff to evaluate and apply their research in work-based learning, storytelling, and coaching within an organisational context. Although there has not been a formal impact strategy, we have been working to engage academic staff in meaningful collaborations with industrial partners, and this has succeeded, with strong, deep, and long-standing partnerships now in existence.

Our approach has the following critical elements:

- *Collaboration*: Our approach is founded upon strong and long-standing city and regional collaborations. These partnerships integrate research, consultancy and management development.
- *Embedding impact in research*: There is a clear business case for all of our collaborations, and our partners expect our research to lead to useful results. This has been demonstrated in our work with the police on interviewing, and with BT, and local companies on business transformation.
- *Dissemination*: We have recognised the importance of dissemination of the results of our research to varied audiences. We actively disseminate our work in professional magazines and other media, in addition to publishing in academic journals and delivering conference papers.
- *Built on strength*: Our projects build on a significant strength in business and management studies.
- *Research Active Curriculum*: Our research is expected to feed into the curriculum at all levels, including management development programmes.

Recent examples of our approach include:

- The appointment of Visiting Professors, who further our linkages with national organisations. For example, Visiting Professor Dr Maxine Craig, who holds a Doctorate in Professional Studies, is currently Head of Organisation Development for the South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Visiting Professor Gary Shaw, MBE, NPPIA (National Policing Improvement Programme) has been instrumental in improving police interviewing techniques in the UK.
- We have run 'Informal Friday' networking events, which support innovators across the North East. Run in conjunction with Newcastle Science City, these events have taken place monthly at our City Campus between 8am and 10am. They attract an interesting and diverse group of innovation scouts, entrepreneurs, designers, scientists, researchers and financiers to get together every month to make new contacts over a cup of coffee.
- Our Business Clinic provides a single hub which not only guarantees to source relevant experts to solve employer problems but also arranges work experience for business school students and puts in place longer term projects with local businesses.

- The Business School has developed an Executive MBA, and in 2012 a DBA was launched. The University Professional Doctorate is led by Professor Gail Sanders from the unit, and several of the students on the programme are supervised by staff within the unit. These higher level programmes have provided opportunities for the development of impact.
- The University was invited by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership to produce a report to inform the Lord Andrew Adonis-led Independent Economic Review: "Analysis of Barriers to Growth in Key Manufacturing Sectors in the North East Region". The University was approached because of its research expertise in business and engineering.

### **3. Strategy and Plans for supporting impact**

In 2012/13 the Faculty of Business and Law underwent a major restructuring exercise and formulated a new vision which is underpinned by research, and with a theme of collaboration through people running throughout. The restructuring includes the establishment of a new Executive team, who are committed to a vision for the Faculty which is underpinned by applied research with impact, and the appointment of functional managers to implement this vision, including a Principal Lecturer with responsibility for External Engagement. Research in Business and Management at the University of Sunderland is now categorised in three broad areas: Marketing, Enterprise, and Leadership and Professional Practice, and staff teams have been restructured to reflect these groups. The research groups also underpin the curriculum within our corporate programmes, thus enabling us to apply our research results such that they deliver impact to our corporate clients including Nissan, the Police, the NHS, and BT. In addition the unit has established, and is expanding, a range of mechanisms to facilitate, support and maximise impact, including the introduction of impact plans and the establishment of an Industrial Advisory Board to help shape our research and corporate programmes.

This sits within a University context which recognises the importance of applied research, industrial collaboration and knowledge transfer. The aim is to embed this within our culture, by putting in place the strategic and operational frameworks and support systems to achieve:

- Increase in engagement in applied research activity by academic staff
- Recognition and reward for applied research activity by academic staff
- Embedding of collaborative activity within the unit's activities.

There are several key components to this integrated approach:

- *The Corporate Strategy*, which articulates the vision of a civic University, making an outstanding contribution to our city and region
- *The Academic Strategy*, which takes this vision and clearly identifies research activity as an equal partner to teaching and learning, as part of an integrated and blended continuum of academic activity for all departments, academic areas, and academic staff
- *The Faculty of Business and Law Research Plan* which sets out a vision for applied research and a research-informed university with clear objectives and targets.
- *The Framework for Personal Development and Career Progression for Academic Staff*, which provides a clear career progression pathway for academic staff engaged in applied research activity
- *The University and Faculty Research and Innovation Committees*, which determine strategy and tactics, set and monitor targets, and identify and take advantage of opportunities, as well as helping to implement appropriate academic governance
- *Faculty-level responsibility* through the Associate Dean (Research), as part of Faculty Executive Boards, have responsibility for impact at unit level
- *The central Research, Innovation, and Employer Engagement Service (RIEE)*, which provides integrated support for research and reach-out.
- *Comprehensive Workload Models* which map the workload of individual academics, and balance them to provide the opportunity for the development of research impact

The combination of these key components provides a thread all the way through from the highest level in the University, to the practical development of academic staff, and support impact within the unit. Our approach is based upon the RCUK approach: Pathways to Impact.

At an individual project level we will require principal investigators to produce impact plans, which link their research investigations to our partners, including our corporate clients. We recognise that opportunities for making an impact may arise at any stage during or after a research project. It is thus important to have plans in place to increase the chances of such opportunities occurring, and to take advantage of them when they do. In collecting the evidence for the two case studies the following factors became obvious: the need to (i) collect data and evidence *when they arise*, (ii) maintain collaborative links after the formal end of a project, and (iii) disseminate project results in a range of media. Therefore, our impact plans will contain the following elements:

- Setting objectives for impact;
- Identifying beneficiaries and targeting them;
- Developing a multi-faceted dissemination plan;
- Planning activities; and
- Continuous evaluation and data collection.

#### **4. The relationship between the unit's approach to impact and the submitted case studies.**

The impacts presented in the two case studies provide examples of how a number of strategies and opportunities came together to produce deep and sustained impact.

##### *Transforming Management Thinking Through Alternative Pedagogies*

The work on transformational learning synthesises the research interests and expertise of individuals and applies this across a range of collaborations and beneficiaries. In particular, the research of Prof Sanders in work-based learning, had resonance with the work of Dr Du Toit in coaching and mentoring. Sanders and Du Toit worked together on the development of academic and corporate programmes which were delivered to staff from regional SMEs and larger organisations including BT and the NHS. At the same time the university launched the North East Network for Mentoring and Coaching, a new network to set standards for the profession in the region, with support from the European Mentoring and Coaching Council. The relationships with the organisations and their staff transcend individual projects and training programmes, and the impact comes from the power of a multi-faceted approach, matched to the needs of our corporate clients, including BT, the NHS and a range of clients accessed through doctoral studies within the Professional Doctorate programme, for which Professor Sanders is Programme Leader.

##### *The use of Storytelling within the Police*

There was a long standing strategic imperative to develop relationships with the police at a corporate level. Initial contacts were between Dr Karl Roberts in Psychology, who was researching interviewing techniques, with particular reference to terrorism. This work led to the development of academic programmes in Applied Investigation, and the broadening of the collaboration to include colleagues in Law and Business. The relationship with Visiting Professor Gary Shaw, who has a national role within investigative interviewing, was then developed. 'Contemporary Issues within Investigative Interviewing' was the theme of an event held at the University which attracted delegates from police forces across England. The combination of research relationships, tailored staff development programmes for police officers, and the strategic needs of the police force enabled a range of impacts to emerge. This was reinforced by the introduction of novel storytelling methods developed by our staff, and the police programmes providing a means to test and evaluate these research ideas.

The above two case studies demonstrate how deep, rich and wide reaching impact can arise when collaborations are long standing, are built on well-established research expertise, respect the needs and objectives of the university and the beneficiaries, and operate at a strategic and an operational level.