

Institution: University of Cumbria

Unit of Assessment: 25 Education

a. Context

There are two areas of educational research at the University of Cumbria based on age phase: 'research in school education' and 'research in Higher Education'. Research in three themes strongly connects these two areas: professional identity and practice of educators; teacher education and development; and assessment. The two main end user groups of University of Cumbria educational research are therefore teachers and head teachers based in schools, and academics and academic developers based in Higher Education Institutions. The main types of impact stemming from University of Cumbria educational research are found both in school education and in Higher Education and they broadly consist of:

- Impacts on teachers, lecturers and educational programmes, services and institutions. This includes changes in classroom practice, school policies and procedures, initial training of teachers, professional development of teachers. The research informs resources and programmes that support teachers and lecturers in driving change and challenging established but less effective practice.
- Impacts on educational policy and services. This includes changes to policy and to the delivery of services.
- Impacts on creativity, culture and society in terms of improved equality and social inclusion, including improved access to educational and employment opportunities for school children and students.

The Faculty of Education is a large provider of initial teacher education programmes and of a Masters in Education programme for experienced teachers, and so impact is created directly through the effects of direct implementation of research findings and evidence-based techniques in professional practice by those taught at the University of Cumbria. This is in addition to impact through external engagement and dissemination through relevant organisations, development of resources and influence on educational guidelines and policy (including on stakeholder organisations, such as the Higher Education Academy and on policies at other Higher Education Institutions).

b. Approach to impact

Educational research, its dissemination and impact is co-ordinated and supported by the unit's research centre, the Research Institute for Professional Learning in Education (RIPLE). The approach to impact includes 7 elements:

1. The primary focus of RIPLE is to strategically support, promote and value 'practitioner research' by educators, which intrinsically supports the creation of research impact. Practitioner research is seen as a fundamental pillar of the pedagogy of teacher education and development, forming a key enquiry-based element within all of our education programmes, including those aimed at 'teachers' in Higher Education. Our commitment to practitioner research, including action research, is supported by our appointment of Honorary Professors David Hopkins, Jack Whitehead and Hilary Constable who are all highly respected in the Education sector for their contribution to practitioner research by teachers.
2. RIPLE works alongside the Faculty of Education's teacher education programmes to maintain a strong knowledge exchange connection with schools within our educational partnership. This provides more than 1000 schools staffed by end-users of our school-focused research, and a complex network of relationships between school leaders, school teachers and the educational

researchers in the Faculty. The majority of these schools are in the North-West region but also include clusters of partnership schools in East London and the West Midlands. Our long term strategic commitment to maintaining this educational partnership means that knowledge mobilisation is a huge element of our day to day activity. This large educational partnership provides access to a large group of end-users of our research so that we are constantly engaging in knowledge exchange activity and supporting application of our research to practice.

3. Extending beyond our educational partnership, RIPLE has worked proactively and invested resources to build strong research and development networks with end-users of our Higher Education and teacher development research. Hosting the Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN) has enhanced the access that our researchers in teacher education have to the national community of teacher educators. TEAN has built a national network providing online resources, regular seminars and workshops and a significant national annual conference, which all provide opportunities to reach end users with research findings.
4. RIPLE proactively seeks to develop collaborative research and development projects with end-users such as schools. These school-funded practitioner projects are facilitated or mentored by post-doctoral researchers, as well as academic staff who are pursuing their doctorate. This knowledge exchange activity provides access to school-based data and professional contact with key stakeholders. This approach means that new and established researchers in the Faculty gain experience of direct collaborative working with practitioners and this helps to develop skills and focus on impact.
5. RIPLE encourages post-doctoral researchers to publish accessible end-user resources. A recent example is the 'Interact' booklet which is aimed at teachers of Modern Languages (Christie 2013). Based on the research of Colin Christie this resource is now available to support student teachers as well as professional development work with experienced teachers based in Modern Language departments in schools.
6. RIPLE has supported research active staff as they build strong links to national agencies. For example, Professor Barry Hymer was invited to provide the keynote address at the re-launch of The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). The NAGC publicly acknowledged Professor Hymer as a key influence on their decision to rebrand and rename their organisation as Potential Plus UK. Work with national agencies has included publication by University of Cumbria researchers of policy-orientated guidelines aimed at improving institutional policies, as well as improving the practice of individuals. For example, Higher Education Academy publications have included research-informed guidance on assessment in Higher Education (Bloxham - HEA, 2012) and on academic induction for teacher educators and lecturers in nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions (Boyd, Harris & Murray – HEA, 2011).
7. RIPLE supports impact from research in Higher Education through the Cumbria Studies in Higher Education Network (C-SHEN). C-SHEN began in collaboration with the institutional academic development unit as an internal network for educational researchers across the range of disciplines within the university. It has developed a wider influence by supporting knowledge exchange and impact and through its open access online journal *Practitioner Research in Higher Education*. C-SHEN helped to disseminate early research work on assessment in Higher Education that eventually led to Impact Case Study 1. C-SHEN also initiated the now well-established *Assessment in Higher Education* international conference in collaboration with the HEA funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University. The continued publication of high quality research on assessment in

Impact template (REF3a)

Higher Education helps RIPLE to generate impact through consultancy work of our researchers for other universities.

c. Strategy and plans

Our strategy includes:

1. Develop and build our profile through high quality research publications in identified educational research themes, to reflect our emphasis on practitioner research and impact oriented projects.
2. Strengthen our research and development-focused work with end-user practitioners across our large educational partnership.
3. Further strengthen our links and engagement with regional, national and international networks and agencies in teacher education and development.
4. Increase the publication of professional development resources by researchers in order to influence practitioners.
5. Support the gathering of evidence and evaluation of impact by researchers.

The unit is taking steps to strengthen development of identified niche areas of research through more focused internal research support and funding to build capacity and raise quality. For example, through prioritisation of applications for internal funding schemes such as sabbatical leave which fit with the identified niche areas of research, as well as through actively recruiting PhD students into these niche areas. The advantage of building these stronger themes in our research will enable us to more effectively build collaboration and impact through related knowledge exchange projects. An example of this is our proactive identification of educational leadership as a new niche area of research in association with our growing activity in collaboration with the National College for Teaching and Leadership in providing programmes for school leaders. Supporting research that is aligned with our knowledge exchange activity is a key strategy for increasing the impact of our research on end-users.

A key feature of the unit's activity is the close engagement with end users in schools and other universities. The unit will continue to pursue this as an important route to developing impact from current and future research. In particular, this will include the continued development of collaborative research projects with schools, which will be used to identify emerging areas of need for research-informed development, which will shape research themes and programmes. Examples of such 'teacher researcher' projects include investigating Mindset and learner resilience at Ulverston Victoria High School and investigating teacher strategies for dialogue with 4 to 7 year olds in a nursery school and Primary school in Everton in Liverpool. Extending and improving this research and development in schools will be significant in the continued research impact development of the unit, both through close engagement with end-users and by feeding user requirements back into research development.

d. Relationship to case studies

Case study 1 - Enhancing University assessment through evaluating student and lecturer understanding of academic standards

This case study is an example of University of Cumbria research in Higher Education which has been supported by the work of RIPLE and C-SHEN.

Case study 2 - Improving academic induction for higher education lecturers in professional fields

This case study is an example of University of Cumbria research in teacher education and Higher Education and has been supported by the work of RIPLE, TEAN and C-SHEN.