

**Institution: LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**

**Unit of Assessment: UNIT 19: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT**

**a. Context**

The achievement of impact on public policy and on practice in the public, private and third sectors for public benefit has always been the key driver of research in Leeds Business School (LBS) and we have a strong track record over the past two decades of undertaking high quality applied research with impact in close collaboration with users. Indeed, the strength of user engagement in research in Business and Management was recognised in the 2008 RAE. We have continued to build on this area of strength in the context of a new University Strategic Plan and Research and Enterprise Strategy, developed in 2009 by a new Vice Chancellor and Deputy VC for Research and Enterprise. This emphasises the role of the University in the social, economic and cultural development of the region and beyond, and aims to strengthen research as a catalyst for such development consistent with the recommendations of the recent Witty Report. In this context, the research strategy for LBS has sought to strengthen academic leadership and capacity to produce high-quality research that has a real impact on policy and practice regionally, nationally and internationally.

Well-established research units in LBS have a strong orientation to applied research achieving impact on policy and practice and provide an important basis for the sustained strength of research and external income generation and for the development of the relationships and networks that are crucial to achieving impact. Most of our research projects are undertaken in research units through contracts with research-commissioning organisations in the public, private and third sectors and are, by and large, specifically commissioned to address policy and practice development needs. Impact is therefore integral to the nature of such research, primarily impact on policy and service delivery, on organisational and management approaches, and on professional practice:

- the Policy Research Institute (PRI) in the area of labour markets, employment and skills policy, with government departments and agencies such as the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Jobcentre Plus, and Yorkshire Forward contributing to improvements in policy and service delivery;
- the Human Resource Development and Leadership Unit (HRDL) in the area of leadership and enterprise, with businesses such as Savile Group, Morrisons, BUPA and Unilever to help develop leadership capacity;
- the Faraday Centre for Retail Excellence in the area of retail, consumer experience and innovation, with businesses such as United Biscuits, Mars, BASF and Arla to help improve business performance;
- the Centre for Public Relations Studies (CPRS) in the area of public relations and communications, with public sector agencies such as the Cabinet Office, the former Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Health Authority and Calderdale Council to help improve corporate communications.

These research units have developed strong relationships with business and governmental organisations at regional and national levels and international links for research collaboration. Moreover, relationships with professional bodies and international coordinating bodies, enables us to disseminate research findings to a wider audience of business and academic stakeholders. Our case studies illustrate how the strength of such relationships have contributed to impact in the areas of employment and skills policy (through UKCES), leadership development in the small business community and corporate governance in the Rugby Football League

**b. Approach to impact**

We achieve impact through applied research that is relevant to, and meets the needs of users, driven through expert knowledge and experience, commissioned research and the scholarly activities of staff. This approach is built on the foundations of applied policy and practice-relevant research over many years by the Faculty's research units, the success of which was reflected in the assessment of our submission for Unit 36 in the 2008 RAE: *"User engagement was assessed as reaching a standard of international excellence reflected in partnerships with regional and national bodies across a range of sectors."*

**Impact template (REF3a)**

Our approach to impact is to work with partners within a 'co-production' framework to develop research solutions to business and policy problems. Two key aspects of this are: seeking out appropriate research opportunities; and developing the capacity to achieve impact. The research units have developed a culture that provides encouragement and support for staff to promote impact from their research and a strong expertise in building the relationships and networks that facilitate applied policy-relevant research and promote its impact. Our Research Support Unit supports a well-established process of scanning for research opportunities across UK and EU networks and we have worked to develop good relationships with key potential clients to be on circulation lists for tenders. We have achieved membership of 'preferred supplier' arrangements with the DWP and Yorkshire Forward. HRDL and Faraday illustrate our efforts to develop partnerships with businesses and sponsorship for applied research of direct benefits to partners.

On successful commissions we apply our expertise in research methods in consultation with clients to ensure appropriate research designs that produce robust results, relevant to the policy or practice context. For example, many projects in the area of employment and skills policy employ mixed method designs that are often appropriate to the real-world context (see the Labour Markets, Employment and Skills case study). We have also pioneered the use of action learning approaches in the area of business leadership (see case study on Leadership and Management in SMEs). Impact has also been enhanced through a range of dissemination strategies such as: networked events with business stakeholders (guest lectures); and PRI and Leeds Business School Seminar Series. We also have a positive approach to staff moving to work in 'user organisations'; for example, between 2005-08 Sanderson worked for the Scottish Government (as Director of Analytical Services) and Jassi worked for IMPROVE (the sector skills council for food and drink) between 2010-13, both having returned to Leeds Met.

The following examples illustrate the range of impacts on policy and business practice achieved primarily through relationships with key user groups:

- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES): The PRI provided Policy Briefings (2008-10), accessible on the UKCES website, to keep organisations and businesses up to date with relevant policy developments; research on the relationship between low pay and skills development to inform strategy and policy development; on the Women and Work Initiative to inform interventions to support the progression of women in the workplace; and on careers advice and progression practices of employers (see Case Study)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP): 2008-13 the PRI has been a member of the DWP Research Framework, which instituted a partnership approach to research (with two successful re-tenders). Amongst major research and evaluation projects, a key area of research has been the Jobcentre Plus performance management system, with projects to inform its development (eg. an international review of PM systems), its operation (eg. research on the experience of benefit claimants) and evaluation (eg. evaluation in 2011 of the implementation of a new PM system). Research was also undertaken in 2009-10 for the Pensions, Disability and Carer Services (PDCS) to inform improvement of partnership working.
- The Faraday Centre for Retail Excellence, transferred to LBS in January 2012, works closely with business in the retail sector, undertakes applied research and consultancy to achieve commercial impact and has an extensive associate network and membership scheme, currently engaging 21 businesses with whom the Centre works to help improve business decisions.
- Yorkshire Forward (Regional Development Agency): 2008-11 the PRI was a member of the Professional and Consultancy Service Panel, providing Policy Briefings for staff and agencies and research contributing to improvements in policy and services, including stakeholder perceptions on agency performance and support for the development of a Skills Strategy.
- Local businesses: Since 2009 significant relationships have derived from research on human resources issues. For example, research to contribute to the development of the Morrisons Centre for Coaching Excellence through the evaluation of the Coaching for Performance initiative to feed into improvement of programme; the 'From Shop Floor to Top Floor' research project contributed to Morrisons' work on employee progression; ongoing work in HRDL with sponsor companies (Saviles, Morrisons, Unilever, BUPA, Hallmark Cards) on the development of leadership capacity; an action learning project is progressing with Unilever; and involvement in the work of the Northern Leadership Academy has established learning sets to support third

## Impact template (REF3a)

sector and advanced manufacturing (see Case Study)

- Tench's work on public relations and communications in Europe through the European Communications Monitor in partnership with other European universities has contributed to the development of professional practice (<http://www.zerfass.de/ecm/>)
- In 2012 the PRI contributed research to the Wakefield Poverty and Prosperity Commission which helped to inform their Action Plan (<http://www.wakefieldtogether.org.uk>)
- In November 2013 Sanderson contributed to an InterAmerican Development Bank programme of capacity building for the Brazilian Government on policy making and evaluation.

### c. Strategy and plans

We will continue to strengthen our capacity to produce impact by ensuring that our research is relevant to, and addresses the needs of users and that we have the skills needed to deliver rigorous, high-quality research and to promote its impact. We aim to ensure that by the end of the next REF period we will achieve more substantial impact, supported by more international level research, through stronger user relationships, improved academic leadership by professors supporting junior colleagues, and reflected in growing external research income:

- We will continue to develop our 'co-production' mode of working with clients on research contracts, with close collaboration and engagement to ensure relevance and maximise impact. Key elements include regular contact with clients, collaborative research design, presentations of findings to users and production of 'user-friendly' reports and summaries.
- We will strengthen the support provided for staff to engage in applied research and develop the necessary skills, for example, building relationships, project management, writing and presentation skills. Such staff development will be driven through our performance review process and will involve appropriate training and mentoring. We will continue to have a positive approach to staff moving to work for 'user organisations'.
- We will develop further the engagement of businesses and stakeholders in the research life of the Faculty, building on the membership and strategic partnership schemes already in place in the Faraday Centre and HRDL, through stronger engagement in policy and practitioner networks, and through conferences and external seminar programmes.
- We will develop the research profile in business and management through the coordination of our web presence with associated social media to disseminate the findings from our research and highlight and demonstrate successful impact. We will produce and disseminate research bulletins and 'think pieces' to drive traffic to the website and raise awareness.

### d. Relationship to case studies

Our three case studies represent different areas of research activity in Business and Management and exemplify the Unit's approach to impact. They have been selected using the criteria of significance, reach and depth of impact, and illustrating the length of time over which research and its impact have been developed. The labour market and SME studies indicate how a body of intellectual capital was built up through the inter-dependence of applied contract research and the development of high-quality academic publications, which located such research within the broader discipline and contributed to its development. This intellectual capital enhanced the reputation of staff and research units which, in turn, increased the capacity to bid successfully for important pieces of research, or otherwise attract clients for applied research and consultancy, and thereby achieve impact on policy development and practice in government and business. The ideal we have sought to achieve is a virtuous circle based on a synergy between the application of applied research and the development of intellectual capital.

Our approach to impact is also reflected in the mechanisms through which impact is achieved in our areas of work. Impact is not achieved on a direct and linear path from research outputs but rather through 'intermediary' mechanisms that can create complex indirect and non-linear effects. The labour market study in particular shows how research impact is achieved through the applied research, consultancy and advisory activities of individuals working in teams and through the movement of key individuals (eg. Campbell) from academia into the world of policy and practice, taking with them the intellectual capital built up over many years and applying it to influence government policy, organisational and business practices.