

<p>Institution: University of Worcester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 19 – Business and Management Studies</p>
<p>Context</p> <p>The impact case studies presented for this unit are the outcome of research and consultancy activities undertaken by the Centre for People at Work (CPW), a research centre which sits within WBS. Since 2003, in pursuit of its commitment to the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship aspect of its Research Strategy, WBS has developed its external engagement, in particular with local businesses and service providers within the Worcestershire and Herefordshire region and beyond. This objective has been supported, for example, through the formation of a WBS Advisory Board comprised of leaders from business enterprises and public services who advise on research, knowledge transfer and curriculum development. A Business Development Team, under the direction of Tim Maxfield, has undertaken a wide range of activities. Based on underpinning research from the unit, these have included the provision of executive education and the development of knowledge transfer initiatives, particularly in support of public service agencies (notably the Fire Service, the NHS and the West Mercia Constabulary (WMC)), together with business enterprises, including national organizations (such as G4S and Hitachi) as well as local employers (including Malvern Instruments, SouthCo, Allpay, and Malvern Hills District Council). Thus the context of research impact has been a concerted effort on behalf of WBS to engage with, and provide appropriate support to, organizations in the broader region through the outputs of its research and research-related consultancy.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Business Development Team, WBS has supported the work of CPW whose mission has been to “provide a responsive and needs-led consultancy service to external requests for advice on issues related to people at work”. As part of its work the Centre produces academic research which is disseminated through conference papers, reports and journal articles, including practitioner publications, and research-related consultancy with business clients. CPW became part of WBS in 2005, having been originally set up in 1997. Under the leadership of Dr Jan Francis-Smythe, CPW has provided a focal point for research active staff within the unit, as well as serving as the main (but not exclusive) location for the supervision of research students. A close working relationship has also been developed with the Leadership Trust, and Dr Sharon Turnbull, formerly of the Trust, has been appointed as a Visiting Professor.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The University’s Strategic Plan for the period 2007-12, under the broad heading <i>Generating Knowledge and Promoting Enterprise</i>, identified the following key objective: “to support the development and expand the reach of our areas of research excellence, in particular interdisciplinary and multi-professional research and consultancy, with social and/or community identified impacts”. This objective is reflected strongly in the approach to impact adopted by the submitting unit over the REF period. The submitting unit, including the work from CPW, has adopted a number of approaches to ensure that its research has impact:</p> <p>1. Focusing on applied research</p> <p>This is a central part of the work of the submitting unit and much of the research output involves researchers working on applied projects, often in close partnership with business and public sector organisations. This approach is well exemplified by the relationship that has been developed with West Mercia Constabulary (WMC) under the title of SPHERE. The Shared Police and Higher Education Research and Enterprise initiative has been ongoing throughout the period of the current REF, providing financial support for PhD students producing research related to the work of the police force and opportunities for research staff to develop relationships with professional staff at WMC. Three successful PhD students have undertaken their research in projects that have supported the work of West Mercia Police in the areas of learning technologies and career development and the outcomes have become part of embedded practice.</p> <p>The use of matched-funding of PhD students, which has been a key research-support strategy of the University, enabled development of a number of projects that have sought to ally research at WBS to the needs of local firms. CPW was successful in obtaining matched-funding from locally-based organisations for a number of PhD scholarships, for example a small local fitness centre</p>

(Well Within) on the issue of membership retention. In addition, its research activities were supported by the CONTACT Knowledge Exchange (a HEFCE-funded Regional Knowledge Exchange) whilst its consultancy work was centred particularly on WMC and Business Link. CPW also undertook the UW's first KTP in collaboration with Cargyll Ltd. in the area of membership retention. This research is now being developed into a generic instrument that can be utilised by a variety of membership-based organisations.

2. Developing expertise in knowledge transfer

Another feature of the approach to impact of the submitting unit has been explicit knowledge transfer as a feature of research undertaken within CPW. For example, the CONTACT Knowledge Exchange project explored ways in which KT brokers might build on the enthusiasm and motivation of knowledge transfer academics to encourage more engagement amongst academics in general. The Business Development Team have taken a proactive approach in seeking out collaborative partnerships which benefit from the research output of the submitting unit. This proximity of research output and business development aspiration has allowed impactful research to flourish.

3. Developing interdisciplinary research

Work with business and other organisations often requires the input from other disciplines and so the submitting unit has been instrumental in fostering interdisciplinary work across the University. For example, interdisciplinary research features as part of CPW's approach and its strong focus in the field of Occupational Psychology has enabled links to develop with the University's Psychological Sciences division of the Institute of Health and Society, providing an on-going, research-based partnership between the two academic groups. Other examples include the link with researchers in the Institute of Sport and Exercise Science, as well as a range of external collaborators at the Universities of Aston, Leeds, Loughborough, Strathclyde, London Metropolitan, and the Leadership Trust at Ross-on-Wye.

4. Engaging directly with beneficiaries of research

Within the unit more generally activities have been developed that have led to external relationships with beneficiaries of research such as business organisations and public services. For example, an important long-term study of Britain's magazine publishing industry has been undertaken by Professor Howard Cox of the submitting unit and Dr Simon Mowat of AUT University, New Zealand. This research has been supported by the Professional Publishers Association, the main trade body for the industry in the UK, and by the Chief Executive Barry McIlheney who endorsed the book, *Revolutions from Grubb Street*, due to be published by Oxford University Press, in March 2014. The PPA has promoted the work across the magazine industry in the UK as part of their Centenary activities which culminated in November 2013.

c. Strategy and plans

The University's new Strategic Plan (2013-18) identifies as part of its mission statement its continued commitment to foster research with the potential to achieve major social impact. The University has a strong regional focus and particularly seeks to have a transformative effect on Worcestershire and more broadly the West Midlands, although this does not limit its drive to have impact nationally or internationally. The University's mission and the success of the approaches outlined above have informed the development of a strategy for achieving impact within the submitting unit. Thus, a key part of the strategy is to develop partnerships and collaborations that will nurture research with impact (with a particular regional focus) and this plays to the strengths of the submitting unit. An example of this approach is the project that was undertaken in conjunction with health and fitness clubs which demonstrates how applied research can assist local businesses to offer improved services to clients and customers. The findings of this study have wide application to membership-based organisations and it has provided the unit with a valuable resource to develop its business links.

In order that the outputs of impactful research increase in terms of reach and significance, future research plans involve the closer alignment of the main CPW research cluster, and the other areas of research strength, with the work of the Business Development Team. The objective of this is to utilise the many linkages developed by the Team on the School's behalf to facilitate further collaborations and contracts. A Professorial-level appointment in the area of Marketing is planned

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for 2013/14 to lead this research cluster, and the unit will seek to engage an academic with experience in SME-related research to further extend the impact of research activities with the community of local employers.

Further measures have been implemented by the senior team in WBS designed to develop the reach and significance of its research, including:

- Further refinement of the resource model, roles and responsibilities to support research-active staff to engage with key stakeholders to produce research with impact;
- A carefully managed workload for Early Career Researchers to protect research time;
- A staffing strategy which emphasises employing people with a significant record of undertaking impactful research;
- Development of further research collaborations/clusters (both external and internal).

The submitting unit is also committed to ensuring that it engages the public with its research in line with the University's commitment to the *Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research*. A significant strand to this strategy is to make maximum use of The Hive, Britain's first joint university and public library, which provides a unique physical space for this engagement. This provides particular advantage as it contains a Business Hub for local and regional businesses to meet and collaborate. This facility is co-located with the WBS on the City Centre campus which has good accessibility to the wider region through rail and bus links. This enables researchers to meet easily with business leaders to develop new projects.

d. Relationship to case studies

The Impact Case Studies illustrate the way in which support for applied research, specifically through CPW, has facilitated the unit's research strategy. Each of the case studies offers an example of how researchers have been enabled to undertake evidence-based research which generates meaningful impacts on behaviour in businesses and public service organisations.

The support of the SPHERE scheme has been an important factor in underpinning research undertaken in the area of developing career competence, detailed in the first case study **Enhancing Policy and Practice in Career Management and Development**. The relationship with WMC enabled research to be undertaken using a career competences intervention tool. This tool is now being further refined for more general application. SPHERE is a good example of how the unit has directed its research support in ways that make a significant impact through the process of knowledge transfer.

The second case study, **Understanding and Enhancing Time Management Behaviour in Organisations**, benefitted from links developed by WBS with both private and public sector organisations. A number of practical workshops were mounted by CPW to disseminate its time management innovations for members of staff at, for example, Worcester City Council, Worcestershire's Jobcentre Plus and a Worcester-based global manufacturing concern, SouthCo, which has a representative on the School's Advisory Board.