

Institution: The Open University

Unit of Assessment: C19 Business and Management Studies

a. Context

Research at the Open University Business School (OUBS) is distinctive owing to our engagement with very large numbers of managers at the point of practice, our global presence that gives exposure to international perspectives of business and management and, consistent with the founding social mission of The Open University (OU), our enduring emphasis on issues of social importance, responsible management and widening participation. These characteristics of our research result in three key distinct groups that benefit from, and in some cases are involved in, co-producing research: **practising managers**, **policy makers**, and **the public**.

Research involving **practising managers**, which includes significant research with public and third-sector organisations, provides impacts that improve the satisfaction and performance of individuals, teams and organisations. Examples include: **Clarke's** study of the identity of academics; **Holti's** work in collaboration with Taylor Woodrow producing frameworks for generating integrated working across the supply chain; **Daniel's** work with Ecclesiastical Insurance on the realisation of benefits from information systems.

Impacts on **policy makers** include **Ball's** production of evidence that the Information Commissioner presented to Parliamentary Select Committees, **Wilson's** presentation of research evidence on unplanned events and security to the Industry Parliament Trust and **Paton's** guidance to the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills on the role of faith leaders.

Public impact leverages the University's multimedia platforms and strategic partnership with the BBC. Researchers provide interactive resources designed to challenge the public's understandings and attitudes, ensuring we move beyond public engagement to generate social impact; for example, **Fenton-O'Creavy's** work with the BBC's Lab UK *Big Money Test* (in conjunction with the BBC's consumer affairs programme, *Watchdog*) provides personalised feedback on financial decision-making.

b. Approach to impact

The School's approach to impact includes several elements that are described here and expanded below. First, researchers are clustered in 'intellectual homes' to pursue sustained streams of research that can generate ongoing and significant impacts. Secondly, the majority of research is designed from the outset to involve collaboration with our key audiences of practising managers and policy makers. Thirdly, staff are allocated time to undertake impact activities and are provided with relevant impact training. Fourthly, the School leverages the unique multimedia and broadcast expertise of the University to generate social impact. Finally, in addition to leveraging multimedia platforms, the School delivers an ongoing series of face-to-face engagements with key audiences of practising managers, policy makers and the public.

Research clusters encourage practitioners to collaborate and co-produce impactful research. For example, the Institute for Social Marketing at The Open University (ISM-Open), with eight active researchers has generated a wide range of policy and practice impacts in the healthcare and environmental domains and has provided an impact case study on reducing alcohol consumption. The Responsibility and Regulation cluster (over ten researchers) has provided the financial decision-making impact case study and generates a significant amount of research which has direct policy impact (especially in the public sector, notably the NHS and the Police).

Much research involves collaboration with practising managers and policy makers, ranging from involvement as research subjects to full co-production of knowledge. An exemplar is **Storey's** action research exploration of participatory governance with the Board of the John Lewis Partnership.

Impact is explicitly recognised in staff time allocation, appraisals, reward and promotion. Staff are provided with training and events to help them generate and sustain impact; for example, media training using the University's broadcast-quality studios, workshops to share good practice in

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impact generation and training in multimedia impact generation.

Impactful public engagement is central to the missions of the University and the School. The School played an important role in winning the RCUK funded Catalyst project (April 2012 – March 2015) to deliver the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement's (NCCPE) Manifesto for Public Engagement. By leveraging the University's unique multimedia platforms, technology and expertise, the School is able to considerably increase the reach and impact of its research. Staff are supported to make research findings available in the University's iTunes U collection (the School has more than 25 iTunes U albums and 2 million downloads in 2013). Staff also make use of the School's Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts to help develop, undertake and disseminate research. For example, a Facebook game was developed to raise awareness of surveillance and personal data amongst 18–24 year olds. The game was played by over 1500 individuals (to Feb. 2013) and measures of player attitudes before and after the game showed a significant change. Open Access publishing is encouraged via Open Research Online (ORO), one of the UK's largest open access repositories, with some 40,000 visitors per month from more than 200 countries.

The School plays an active role in the University's unique relationship with the BBC and with independent programme makers. During the REF period staff have acted as academic consultants to 18 television series, including *The Foods that Make Billions*, *Recession Britain*, *Bankers and Built in Britain* and 14 series of Radio 4's *The Bottom Line*. Television broadcasts have average viewing figures between 1.3 and 1.9 million, an audience appreciation higher than the average for BBC programming and a greater proportion of minority ethnic and other hard-to-reach groups than similar factual programming. All radio and television programmes are supported by online resources based on relevant research, and the percentage of the audience accessing this material is higher than for similar types of programming, demonstrating a move from public engagement to public impact. Our work also has direct impact on the BBC, enabling it to meet its public service requirement to provide high-quality educational programming. Our work impacts on independent programme makers, too, by supporting novel approaches to programme development. For example, the makers of *The Virtual Revolution* (broadcast Jan/Feb 2010) won both a BAFTA (new media) and an Emmy award (digital programme – non-fiction) owing to the unique way in which the School harnessed public involvement in the making of the programme.

Finally, in addition to mediated interactions, the School delivers a sustained series of face-to-face engagements with key audiences. Demonstrably successful practitioner engagements have included the Business Perspective/ Network workshops (started in 2011) at which researchers present their work to an audience of practising managers from all sectors. Ten workshops have taken place with an average attendance of 65 managers. Following a Business Perspective workshop, the financial services firm True Potential recognised the impact and reach of the School's research on the public understanding of finance, resulting in (i) a collaborative venture to develop future public education offerings, and (ii) a £1.4m endowment (2013) to establish a Centre for the Public Understanding of Finance. Face-to-face engagements with the public include the annual lecture given as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science, with speakers who have included the broadcaster Evan Davis (2011, 2013) and Keith Clarke (2012, 2013).

c. Strategy and plans

Future and current plans to maximise impact build upon the approaches described above.

- Further growth and development of our research clusters (intellectual homes), particularly those generating streams of impact such as social marketing, international management practice, surveillance, regulation and behavioural finance.
- Further support for collaborative and co-productive modes of enquiry with key audiences; for example, training of staff to develop and sustain collaborations.
- Continued innovative use of the University's multimedia platforms for impactful engagement; for example, further exploration of the role of 'serious gaming' as a means of generating social impact.
- Continued development of our face-to-face engagement activities, including tailoring engagements to the requirements of key sectors, audiences and geographies.

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- Inclusion of generation and monitoring of impact in personal and School objectives; this will shape future objectives, support and training and investment of resources.
- Systematic collection and recording of evidence of impact during research; the University is currently developing a new IT-based research award management system that will facilitate ongoing recording of impacts generated.

d. Relationship to case studies

The three case studies submitted demonstrate the School's approach to impact: sustained streams of research, collaborative mode of research and significant use of multimedia to move beyond public engagement to public impact.

The reducing alcohol consumption impact case study profiles the impact of a twelve-year stream of research in social marketing that examines the effects of marketing on the drinking patterns of young people. This has been funded by, and undertaken in collaboration with, bodies such as the Medical Research Council and the British Medical Association. The School has eight staff researching in the area of social marketing and has formed the Institute for Social Marketing at the Open University (ISM-Open).

Both the healthcare governance and financial decision-making case studies demonstrate collaborative working with managers and those developing policy. In the financial decision-making case study, senior staff from Saxo Bank participated in the research, ensuring that they shaped the research agenda and also benefited from the research outputs. Similarly, in the healthcare governance case study, the researchers undertook their research in an action research mode, alongside the Chief Executive and Board of University College London Hospital (UCLH). This research 'at the interface with practice' resulted in findings that were not only beneficial to UCLH, but via the health regulator, Monitor, have been recommended to all Hospital Trusts in the UK.

The financial decision-making case study demonstrates how the School leverages its unique links with broadcasters, such as the BBC and independent programme makers, to generate significant impact. Public impact included dissemination of the research findings in the BBC television series *The Love of Money* (average 1.3 million viewers per episode) with supporting resources provided on the BBC's Lab UK (www.bbc.co.uk/labuk/). Findings were reported by BBC Science. Over 109,000 members of the public completed an online questionnaire on their own financial decision-making and received feedback based on the research findings.