

Institution: University of Bristol

Unit of Assessment: 19 - Business and Management Studies

a. Context:

We believe that research excellence often depends not only on high-quality scholarship, but also on its practical or policy relevance. The research culture in the UOA places emphasis on both these elements, resulting in research which has implications for a range of policy and organisational issues. Over the last 7 years, our approach to impact, described below, has developed with the effect that it is now embedded in the research training of academic staff and PhDs. Impact, knowledge exchange and public engagement are included in annual staff performance reviews, promotions and in the selection of new members of academic staff.

Our research is concentrated into specialisms. The Accounting and Finance group is centred on social and environmental accounting, financial reporting, the public sector, corporate finance and governance. In the Department of Management, research spans two disciplinary areas – organisation studies and operations/management science (with international management planned as a new field from 2014). Across the UOA, researchers share interests in the public and third sectors and on organisational change. Accordingly, the beneficiaries/users of the research targeted by the departments are mostly public sector (e.g. national government, the civil service, local government and hospitals), as well as the professions (e.g. via the Professional Associations Research Network, PARN). Currently, there is significant engagement with the third sector and social enterprises, deriving partly from the ESRC funded Capacity Building Cluster (CBC) on the economic impact of the third sector.

Since 2008, the UOA has grown in size and developed a range of research themes. To promote impact, we aim to continue to build on this growth and change in the research environment. In particular, exploiting common interests helps provide coherence and focus, and is essential in forging an understanding of complex organisational and policy challenges. We also believe in building strong relationships with institutions and organisations where service improvements are required, and policy and practice are made, particularly through processes of knowledge exchange and public engagement. We are aware that the mechanisms to achieve impact sometimes develop over long time scales. Thus, the extent and diversity of our interaction with users is a combination of proactive and reactive activities, where some of the important relationships have developed over the course of many years (e.g. PARN, public services accounting), whilst others are more recent, but are beginning to generate impact (e.g. CBC). These relationships have led to types of impact that are focused around service improvement, organisational change, and policy choice. They relate to the whole range of research activities in which we are engaged and reflect a commitment to impact with reach and significance.

b. Approach to impact:

Over the assessment period we have undertaken specific actions and policies to: (1) build and maintain partnerships with a wide range of organisations and beneficiaries through knowledge exchange and public engagement; (2) support staff to disseminate findings to non-academic users; (3) promote staff/students to take up placements and internships in key organisations; and (4) provide access to university resources to achieve impact. These are described in detail below.

Building and maintaining partnerships with a wide range of organisations and beneficiaries to apply, exploit and further develop the UOA's research

We have a strong record in building relationships. Interaction is encouraged through a number of mechanisms, including: major research projects; organisation of workshops and conferences between academics and end users; active involvement in research networks; and non-research connections between academics and users such as appointments as advisors or committee members. We facilitate such interactions through (1) fair workload management to allow researchers time to develop end-user connections; and (2) a supportive environment in which such efforts are valued in equal worth to externally well funded research. Academics are also encouraged to engage with end users at an early stage in the development of research to identify questions and solutions that lead to impact and benefits. Examples of relationship building include:

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- *Engagement with public organisations and government*
A number of academics have strong relationships with UK government departments (e.g. Cannon advising the Department for Work and Pensions – see case studies). Ellwood and White have NIHR SDO funded research with Salford Royal and South Warwickshire Foundation Trusts, and with the Queens Hospital Nottingham, respectively. These have led to significant service improvement and organisational change (see case studies).
- *Engagement with the Professions*
Friedman’s work with PARN provides opportunities for research and dissemination to over 100 professional associations. PARN has a strong national profile and has made an impact on professional practice and codes of conduct (see case studies). Sturdy also works closely with management consulting professional groups in the UK and internationally (see below).
- *Engagement with charities and the third sector*
During the bid development of the CBC, relations with key end users to co-produce (and co-fund) the research were developed (e.g. New Philanthropy Capital, South West Forum, New Economics Foundation, Barclays Bank). The school supported this through travel and administrative provision. Fieldwork with at least 50 organisations has led to over 30 user reports. Some of the work has also led to wider engagement (including invited talks to government departments and third sector fora) and funding (e.g. White’s work with the South West Forum led to a substantial ‘BIG’ lottery grant and funding for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Barclays Bank).

Supporting staff to disseminate findings to non-academic users:

Researchers are encouraged to disseminate their work to diverse audiences such that annual funding (up to £1000 from the school and £750 from the faculty) is not restricted to presentations to academic meetings. The aim is to foster and strengthen relationships with non-academic users of research. Some examples are provided below.

- Friederich’s commissioned work for HM Treasury led to the government publishing “The Future of Computer-based Trading in Financial Markets” during October 2012 (see case studies). The report provided policy advice to the UK and EU governments on the proposed EU legislation on Computer-based Trading in Financial Markets. He has used school funds to attend high-level meetings and seminars with policy makers in Brussels.
- Jones’s work on accounting scandals has been communicated to a wide variety of professionals and non-professional groups (e.g. Chartered Management Accountants). He has used funds to give public lectures in Bristol and London and to the Australian Institute of Public Accountants.
- White has presented research findings to a “What is good evidence” seminar at NESTA, in November 2012. The audience at this event comprised mainly civil servants and senior managers from the public and third sectors.

Promoting staff/students to take up placements and internships, and to hold key external appointments in organisations in the public, private and voluntary sector

This has proved to be an important mechanism in the UOA, helped by the fact there were externally funded resources available.

- Ellwood was the only academic member of the Treasury Panel examining the financial control and accounting for NHS related charities and this led to policy changes in public finance (see case studies).
- The KTP with Barclays Bank also involved placements and internships. Its value was recognised by Barclays in that the work helped them harmonise their Community Investment programmes and supported the adoption of the recommended good practice on evaluating complex programmes. The KTP was rated ‘very good’ by the ESRC.
- The CBC has involved a number of student/staff placements and internships, and “reverse placements” with a range of third sector organisations, particularly developing impact measures and helping them to develop new evaluation frameworks. Examples of organisations that have benefited from placements and internships include Crisis Housing, Action for Children, The Emmaus Trust, Greater Manchester CVO and The Care Forum.
- Sturdy’s research has an international reach. It was facilitated by links with Chartered

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Management Institute and Institute of Consulting in the UK who hosted user workshops with members. He was also appointed Academic Fellow and advisor to the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (2013).

Providing access to university resources to achieve impact

We access a wide variety of university resources to support impact development. These include:

- University funding to support impact (PARN), £1500 (see case studies).
- Support from the Centre for Public Engagement on user led engagement (eg ARCIO).
- An expert team of support staff to help with case study development and to accelerate intermediate impacts through to full impact (e.g. White's KTP with Barclays).
- An active Press Office helping staff with media activities (e.g. Jones, Sturdy, Cannon).
- Staff involvement in Social Science festivals (SSF) organised by the Faculty of Social Science.

c. Strategy and plans:

Over the last few years, we have increased our research capacity with a significant increase in the number of research-active staff working in the core areas and interests described above (and outlined in the environment statement). The approach to impact that has been put in place will support and shape the growth strategy of the School. However, it is also acknowledged that our plans will need to be adapted in order to exploit impact opportunities more fully. In particular, the key to our future strategy will be to have the impact mechanisms embedded throughout the research cycle, in order to broaden and deepen impact and support it at an early stage. This will require raising the profile and importance of impact to research staff, as being desirable, feasible, supported and valued (e.g. in recruitment, promotion and funding processes). This will be supported and led by a new *Impact Director* for the UOA (and across the university) in 2014. The future strategy to impact will also be facilitated by the following:

- Engage with the new faculty initiative '*PolicyBristol*' (Director: Wilson, Management, 2013) to support, train and encourage more staff to be involved with the wider media (eg blogs, twitter).
- Implement the 2012 Faculty Public Policy Strategy, which supports research to increase social and economic impact.
- Appointment of a Faculty Business Fellow (White, Management, 2013) to develop strategic partnerships with industry and NGOs and to exploit opportunities for placements and internships.
- Ensure that recruitment and the progression/promotion of staff recognise the social and economic impact of research (e.g. job profiles).
- Continue to encourage staff to take up external advisory and committee appointments that raise our profile and provide opportunities for achieving research impact.
- Exploit the University's' contribution to the region and the local community via the Cabot Institute (environment), Elizabeth Blackwell Institute (health) and Bristol City Initiative.
- Support staff to apply for funding from government and international organisations to conduct research that has the potential to have a direct impact on services.

d. Relationship to case studies:

The case studies have all contributed to, and benefited from, our approach to impact, particularly *supporting staff* (Friederich and Cannon) and *building and maintaining partnerships* (Friedman). The cases also reflect the types of the relationships the UOA has nurtured. Two of the cases are based on long-term associations and an accumulation of research activity and findings (Ellwood and Friedman). The others are based on recognised expertise, and short-term interactions that has led to impact. While all our submitted cases are underpinned by excellent research, interestingly, they also draw upon a relatively limited amount of research funding. Therefore, it does not follow that big grants lead to big impacts. Taken as a whole, our cases have contributed and shaped our thinking on the overall impact strategy, showing how direct engagement with non-academic users can work, but that other methods (e.g. knowledge exchange and placements) are also extremely valuable.