

Institution: University of Bristol
Unit of Assessment: 18 Economics and Econometrics
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Our aim is to be “the place to come to” for knowledge and expertise in our specialist areas.</p> <p><i>The main users of our research</i></p> <p>These are national and international governments including Westminster, the UK Devolved Administrations, European (EU and non-EU) governments; UK and European local government; supra-national organisations (EU, OECD); and global institutions (e.g. the World Bank). Policy officials and elected representatives use our research to inform policy-making. Third sector organisations work with us to co-produce knowledge and to use our research for their policy and business thinking. Think tanks and consultancies act as important intermediaries for our research, combining it with other work to influence public debate and promote their own work/brand. The print, digital and electronic media, locally, nationally and internationally, use our research to inform and attract readers and viewers, facilitating the process through which our impact is realised. Finally, our research attracts considerable interest from the general public, nationally and locally.</p> <p><i>The types of impact we have</i></p> <p>Changes to government policy (e.g. all three Impact Case Studies; Smith on tax treatment of charitable giving); input into government policy-making and thinking (e.g. all three Impact Case Studies, former staff member Gregg’s impact on policy on youth labour markets, Simpson’s work on location of firms, Smith’s research on charitable giving, Temple’s work on foreign aid); influencing public committees (Impact Case Study Grout, also Burgess, Gregg, Propper, Windmeijer); influencing non-governmental organisational practices (e.g. through our joint research and research student placements with the third sector, led by Smith); influencing public debate (e.g. media contributions, and presentations to schools); provision of support for users to access data sets (e.g. PLASC, ALSPAC); training in quantitative research for policy-making (our many PhDs and research assistants who enter government, think tanks and consultancies); and ESRC-funded placements for research students (three have gained placements in the Cabinet Office).</p> <p><i>How these relate to our research activity</i></p> <p>The research of the UoA is built around specialisation in core areas: public organisation; labour economics; macro, growth and development; econometrics; and economic theory. Several UoA members belong to our ESRC research centre, the Centre for Market and Public Organisation (CMPO). Its research areas, building on the expertise of UoA members, include public service markets, individual motivation, institutional design, and communities and participation.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p><i>How we engage with key beneficiaries</i></p> <p>Our view is that the most successful way of generating external impact from research is to build engagement into the structure of the UoA. We see support structures at the research group, department and university levels, coupled with a user-oriented culture, as the most effective way of promoting visibility and impact. UoA-level resources provide economies of scale and help individual staff to manage multiple demands on their time and handle contacts that are often episodic at the individual level. In short, well-resourced UoA level structures allow us to engage externally efficiently. For example, we synthesise research in our bulletin <i>Research in Public Policy</i>, published twice a year; we organise seminars that bring together leading international academics and policy-makers; we employ media specialists and the resources of the University Press Office, and monitor contacts with users on a monthly basis; we have established structures to train and mentor young researchers who will go into policy-making. We periodically review our user engagement strategy and take advantage of new opportunities. The vehicles we use include:</p> <p><i>The CMPO</i></p> <p>Impact outside academia has always been a core CMPO activity, and the centre is viewed as a</p>

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key resource by national and international users involved in public service delivery. CMPO provides a range of resources to academics to help them engage effectively. CMPO employs two full-time dedicated administrators who maintain and develop our website, coordinate *Research in Public Policy*, maintain contacts with the press, run conferences, record podcasts and web-based TV, and collect statistics to enable us to monitor and review our engagement. CMPO provides funding for conferences and other forms of engagement with our user communities, for training individuals in policy-relevant research, and for employing outside expertise in impact generation.

The Capacity Building Cluster (CBC) on the economic impact of the third sector

Funded by the ESRC, the Office for the Third Sector and Barrow Cadbury Trust, the £800K CBC award has provided funding for collaborative projects with not-for-profit organisations, including PhD studentships, placements and smaller research “vouchers”. It has been used to fund projects with a range of partners: umbrella bodies (Charities Aid Foundation - CAF, National Council for Voluntary Organisations - NCVO, Big Lottery), government (Behavioural Insights Team); national charities (Shelter), private sector (Deutsche Bank) and smaller, local organisations (Tree Aid, Bristol Green Doors, Frank Water).

Institutional support from the University of Bristol

Examples of institutional support include the strong tradition of partnership funding and research in the sciences, now applied actively in social sciences, which we used to secure CBC funding (led by Sarah Smith); outreach activities aimed at the general public, for example, the Bristol Festival of Social Sciences and Law; the Centre for Public Engagement; and the University Press Office.

Specific pathways to impact

- Briefings for UK and overseas governments, and third sector organisations
- Events and seminars, including co-organisation of seminars with government
- Keynote addresses at policy-oriented conferences (seven by UoA members in 2012 alone)
- Publications specifically targeted at policy audiences
- Department and CMPO websites: the latter had over 242,000 hits Aug 2009-March 2013
- Press releases and writing articles for national and international media
- Increasing use of social media (podcasts, CMPO blog, VOX and twitter)

In detail, briefings were given to senior officials, Ministers, central government policy advisors and elected representatives. Since 2008 we have given around 60 briefings at the *senior* level alone to the UK and overseas governments, many of which have led to changes in policy, for example, on youth training (Gregg); the use of regulated prices in the NHS (Propper); and the form of school accountability measures (Burgess). Briefings were also given to chief executives/heads of research in large third sector organisations: the Charities Aid Foundation, JustGiving, and Big Lottery.

The CMPO events programme brings together international speakers, our own researchers and policy-makers working on a particular topic (37 events held since 2008). Activities included co-organisation of seminars with government (for example, with the Behavioural Insights Team, and with HMT on Gift Aid reform); presentations of research findings at seminars organised by think tanks and policy-making bodies aimed at senior UK policy-makers (for example, the Institute for Government, Policy Exchange, the Resolution Foundation); seminars with third sector organisations (e.g. JustGiving); taking part in events aimed directly at the public (e.g., Festival of Social Sciences and Law; and the inaugural Festival of Economics in Bristol, Nov 2012, with an attendance of over 1000); and participation in events targeted at people working in the third sector.

Policy publications include the CMPO bulletin *Research in Public Policy* (sent twice a year to over 3,500 people, primarily in central and local government, and the media) which highlights our own and related research; articles for other publications aimed at users, such as the ESRC's *Britain Today* (21 articles by UoA members) and *Society Now* (20 references to our work). We write press releases and articles for national and international media and, since 2008, there have been over 600 references to our work in newspapers and other print media. We are developing the use of social media, which includes podcasts by a range of speakers (35 since 2008; on average 292 downloads a week in 2012); a collective CMPO blog; contributions to VOX; and use of twitter.

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Evidence of impact

Evidence of impact can be seen in the data above on government briefings; UoA members on public statutory and advisory boards (Gregg - Commission on Youth Unemployment; Grout - OFGEM; Windmeijer - Technical Advisory Group on Resource Allocation in the Department of Health; Propper – expert advisor, Cooperation and Competition Panel, Department of Health; Burgess – multiple advisory boards); by a range of third sector users: JustGiving, Big Lottery, Frank Water, NCVO, Tree Aid, New Economics Foundation - NEF, Citizens Advice Bureau, Bristol Green Doors, Cancer Research; by direct research collaborations (co-production) with third sector and private organisations (CAF, JustGiving, PriceMinister). Our role in debate can be seen in the data above for web hits, media appearances, and participation in events for the general public.

c. Strategy and plans

Our aim for 2014-2020 is to enhance our impact. To achieve this, we will continue to encourage a culture of user focus as an integral part of high-quality, innovative research, underpinned by responsive and well-funded administrative support. The strategy has three key components (1) to develop new models for research that involve users, (2) to give greater support to staff in achieving impact, (3) to secure further resources to deploy at the UoA level to support this.

(1) New models for research

We aim to build more partnerships that will benefit user organisations as well as academic research. We have currently focused on research students. For example, three students have gained placements in the Behavioural Insights Team in the Cabinet Office. Some have been co-funded by charities including Tree Aid, NEF and Frank Water. These partnerships have resulted in academic and user benefits. We aim to increase the number and span of such partnerships.

(2) Greater support and recognition for user engagement

Support includes an active training and mentoring programme for staff to help increase engagement: our existing programme for CMPO research assistants has seen a cadre of researchers join government, think tanks, and academia where they continue to engage with users. We will extend this to early-career academic staff. We will also include user engagement in the formal staff annual review process, review the research of each staff member to identify possible impacts for their research, and provide a tailored plan for their development. We will select particular areas with the highest potential where we will focus considerable development effort. For these we will plan and resource specific actions to develop impact. We will also offer explicit rewards for engagement outside academia: from 2014 user engagement will become an explicit part of our workload management system, and taken into account in promotion decisions.

(3) Further resources

We will continue to devote UoA resources and senior management time, including an impact director, to impact generation. We will seek further funds from research councils, government, non-profit organisations and the private sector, and promote the co-production of research. We will also draw on university-level mechanisms and resources, such as the Vice-Chancellor's Impact Award and additional pay increments to reward staff for developing impact, and resources such as the newly-created *PolicyBristol*, a dedicated portal which seeks to maximise the impact of the policy-relevant research undertaken at Bristol.

d. Relationship to case studies

The impacts demonstrated in our case studies show the benefits of an open-minded and well-resourced approach to developing impact that also informs our future strategy (section c above). The three submitted case studies indicate how long-term commitment to specialised, innovative research can achieve unique and highly-valued policy expertise. The studies also illustrate the various pathways we have used, developed and funded to achieve this impact. The research underlying the studies has been disseminated through a wide range of events and conferences, the CMPO bulletin *Research in Public Policy*, articles in national and international media, podcasts and blog posts, and VOX. It has been presented to UK and international policy officials, MPs and Ministers, and overseas governments. It is 'kite-marked' by the strength of the academic publications and the collective CMPO 'brand name'. Taken as a whole, our impact case studies demonstrate the high value the UoA has assigned to research impact, well ahead of the current REF; the support the UoA offers to help staff achieve excellent research with high impact; and its commitment to the strategic development of research impact into the future.