

Impact template (REF3a)

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education
<p>a. Context. The Oxford University Department of Education (OUDE) has long made research impact a priority, alongside its commitment to sustaining high-quality and innovative educational research. Impacts are facilitated by diverse activities, from dissemination of findings to working with users in co-constructing educational knowledge, research-based collaborative interventions, and wider diffusion of research tools and resources. The success of these activities has depended on the efforts of staff engaged in high quality research within a departmental culture that values and supports the critical and creative pursuit of research reach and significance beyond academia. For example, the research of the three externally-funded Centres (Educational Assessment - OUCEA; Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance - SKOPE; and the Rees Centre for Research on Fostering and Education - REES) is premised on collaboration with users and rapid policy and practice impact. Furthermore, the research groups (see REF5) engage with practice and policy in generating and sharing research knowledge for short, medium and long term use and benefits, while structures and dedicated resources at OUDE enable partnerships between researchers and those working directly in different sectors of education, locally, nationally and internationally.</p> <p>The impacts achieved to date range from rich, transformative action at institutional and local level, to informing large-scale policy decisions, resource allocation and international development, and critically enriching practice and public debates. Beneficiaries of this work include: governmental and other policy bodies, transnational organisations, professional staff in early years settings, schools, colleges and higher education institutions, professional education practitioners, non-governmental agencies, third sector organisations, social workers, parents and students.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact. The department's approach to impact is informed by its research on knowledge construction and mediation, on research policies and practices, and on the practical and conceptual relationships between academic quality and impact. Members of the department (e.g. Edwards, Furlong, Menter, Oancea and Sebba) have contributed to theoretical and methodological understandings of facilitating and monitoring impact and user engagement.</p> <p>The principles underpinning OUDE's approach to defining, facilitating, supporting, monitoring, and recognising research impact emphasise clarity of purpose and proactive attitude in designing research and establishing partnerships to maximise impact, critical analysis of impact capacity and activities, and tailored support and infrastructure to enable and sustain impact. Responsibility for applying these principles lies with research centres, groups and project teams (supported by Theme leaders – see REF5) as they plan, cost, undertake and share research. The impact strategy is developed and monitored by the departmental Research Committee. Departmental support for impact activity is co-ordinated by the Deputy Director of Research (Oancea). University infrastructure (KE and Impact Team, Press Office, the University's technology transfer company, Isis Innovation Ltd.) and the Social Sciences Division's KE team provide further support.</p> <p>To enable impact, during the census period, the department has invested internal resources and attracted further institutional and external funding to:</p> <p>1. Embed impact aims in the research culture of the department and build capacity for further engagement in impact activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The research strategy of the department is explicitly geared towards valuing the full range of research designs that may facilitate different forms of impact in different ways, from pedagogic research aimed at co-construction of knowledge, to evaluation research, or to work on large-scale data sets shared with users at key points during and after a study (see REF5). - The department has invested in strengthening all-round, sustainable internal capacity to achieve impact, engaging: research staff, including ECR (e.g. staff research days on impact and quality in 2011, 2013), support staff (e.g. the OUDE Research Facilitator and Research Secretary), research students (e.g. delivering impact training with the Oxford Social Sciences DTC) and students on professional courses (e.g. by enabling active engagement with OUDE research of all trainee teachers and of practitioners on the Master's in Learning and Teaching); - OUDE is involved in impact coordination and leadership in the university and nationally. The Oxford Social Sciences DTC Director (Mills), overseeing doctoral impact training, is based in OUDE; Oancea is Senior Impact Advisor for the University, convenor of a university-wide impact network, and member of the divisional Knowledge Exchange (KE) Strategy Group; Keep is member of HEFCE's Research and KE Committee.

2. Establish dialogue and partnerships with users and beneficiaries

- The department has expanded the **networks of partners and collaborators** connecting it to the wider world, thus strengthening its conveyance channels for research impact. OUDE's Honorary Research Fellows, UK-based and international, relay departmental research to a wide range of fields and sectors. In addition, since June 2011, **Norham Fellowships** were offered to twelve policy and senior field-based practitioners who engage actively with research in the department and help maintain strong bridges with policy and practice. The rapidly expanding **Oxford Education Society** (OES) is an alumni-led departmental initiative that in July 2013 had 1000 active members from 52 countries (<http://www.oxes.org.uk>). OES aims to "develop the interface between on-going educational research and professional expertise"; an OES/OUCEA Saturday School for practitioners (May 2013) was described by the AQA exam board participant as the kind of initiative that is "crucial to build trust and dialogue in the education system".
- The **creation and continuation of research centres with user and beneficiary collaboration built in** from the start embodies the clear commitment to enable the realisation of wider benefits from high quality research. SKOPE has developed long-term relationships with the public and private sectors; its Employers' Forum and Policy Makers' Forum are unique spaces for co-ownership of research agendas between academic and external partners, and channels for critical impact on, e.g., skills policy and practice. OUCEA works with policy-makers and industry on applications of research to improve assessment processes; e.g. collaboration with the exam board Edexcel on rater effects. It also developed an innovative open-source statistical package for analysis of PISA and TIMMS data. The centres have attracted substantial industry funding.
- The creation of an **Education Deanery** (2013) provides a clear platform for research-based collaboration with schools in the OUDE Initial Teacher Education (ITE) partnership. The Deanery is an innovative response to policy challenges for ITE, of potential national and international interest, and a channel for building local impact and sustaining the strong links between the University, City of Oxford, and Oxfordshire. It enables joint research projects (e.g. in English, MFL, science education, and through annual Action Research Fellowships for teachers) and tailored CPD building on OUDE research (e.g. in mathematics and science; also, the Leadership for Learning in Primary Schools programme, run for the City of Oxford with Oxford Brookes University and a consortium of Oxfordshire schools). Teachers' involvement ranges from membership of Teacher Support Teams to being Practitioner Fellows (HEIF-funded) and joining advisory groups for research projects.
- OUDE has been actively engaged in **evaluation and other forms of applied research commissioned by international, national and local bodies** (e.g. the DfE/DCSF; National Audit Office; QCA; CfBT; NCSL; EC; CEDEFOP; OECD; UNESCO; government agencies from various countries). This work directly informed major policy decisions and investments – for example, the Review of Teacher Education in Wales by Furlong on behalf of the Welsh Government (2006) led to a fundamental re-organisation, most of it post-2008, of teacher education provision in Wales.
- The department has long-term traditions of **dialogue and collaboration** with external partners. For example, the weekly public seminars and the annual themed public seminar series on current educational challenges ("Cities: Educational Improvement and Equity", 2010-11; "Public Understandings of Assessment", 2011-12; "Fostered Children and Young People", 2012-13) attract substantial policy and practitioner participation and media interest and create platforms for connecting research, policy and practice. Collaboration with industry (e.g. via SKOPE and OUCEA), charities, schools and other settings has enabled insights from research to be embedded in work with teachers and other professionals in their workplaces.
- OUDE supports the full range of **user-friendly communication of research**, including: user summaries (e.g. the series of policy-oriented Nuffield 14-19 Review Issues Papers); working papers (e.g. in SKOPE's 38 working papers, 2008-13); research-informed discussion of school-themed films (e.g. the "Ethnographic Eye" series, 2012-13); practical workshops for professionals (e.g. language; mathematics; teacher education; assessment; apprenticeships); coverage in national media (e.g. religious education; higher education; 14-19 education); online resources (e.g. for early years; assessment; deaf children); research-based social media activity, via Twitter feeds, podcasts and blogs (e.g. REES centre's blog features posts by young persons, carers, providers, and policy makers, including the Minister for Children and Families).
- Staff have been supported in their **research-based participation in decision-making in policy and practice**, e.g. through participation in national and international boards, expert evidence to

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inquiries, or secondments and buy-outs to practice, charity and industry settings. Examples include: specialist adviser to the UK Parliament's Select Committee on Education (2000-09) and member of the expert panel for the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage (2010-11) (Sylva); Chair of the RSA/BERA national inquiry into the future of teacher education (2012-13) and of the 2014 Hong Kong RAE Education Panel (Furlong); member of the Scottish Funding Council & Skills Development Scotland's joint Skills Committee (Keep); Chair of the British Council English Language Advisory Group (Walter); member of the expert drafting panel for the primary and secondary mathematics National Curriculum (A. Watson).

- **Resources for practitioners** have been co-produced, co-disseminated and used by public agencies (e.g. National College for School Leadership, Children's Workforce and Development Council, DfE, Ofsted, LGA), not-for-profit organisations (e.g. the National Deaf Children's Society), industrial partners, international organisations, and teachers (e.g. <http://pdcinmfl.com>).

3. Create and update infrastructure to support and monitor impact activity

- Staff have been successful in **securing funding for impact and KE programmes**, including HEIF funding for: cross-disciplinary research on impact (2010-11); teacher fellowships supporting research on school-drop out (starting Sep 2013); KE day seminars on the future of teacher education, bringing departmental teacher education research together with field-based expertise (June-July 2013); and collaboration with the University's Social Sciences Division on sustaining KE in the social sciences (2013-15). Further impact funding came from the ESRC (e.g. in modern languages). There is also access to a University internal KE Seed Fund and to a £400k impact acceleration fund awarded to the Social Sciences Division by the ESRC.
- A **strategic approach to consultancy and development work** is formalised through collaboration with Oxford University's commercialisation and IP company, Isis Innovation Ltd., and its consulting arm, Oxford University Consulting. During the census period, research-based consultancy through Isis attracted over £245k to the department. In addition, University provision enables staff to use up to 30 days/year for individual consultancies. Further external collaboration is set up as industry- and community-funded departmental projects; in May 2013 current departmental projects totalled £490k.
- Strategic initiatives include the creation of an OUDE Research Committee **fund to support impact** activities (e.g. "SchoolScapes", organised with IIEP/UNESCO practitioners in June 2013).
- **Impact data** are regularly collected (survey, interview, metrics), analysed by the OUDE Research Office and Deputy Director of Research, and used to underpin decisions on support for impact activities.

c. Strategy and plans. OUDE's strategy for supporting, monitoring and reporting impact activity and outcomes is developed and reviewed by the departmental Research Committee and its Research Strategy sub-committee (see REF5). Implementation planning in the medium term includes the following goals, priorities, and planned actions, which reflect and build on the successes of the long-term investments described above:

1. Sustaining capacity for impact practice and a research culture that embeds creative reflection on research impacts and on the tools available to facilitate them. Priorities:

- *Further embedding impact training in professional development provision for staff and students.* Specific actions include: stimulating ECR- and student-led innovation in impact activity via funding, showcasing, and prizes; offering on-demand impact surgeries for academic staff, including ECR staff (e.g. media training, writing and costing proposals); further developing existing internal impact peer-review mechanisms and grant application support; continuing to invest in the professional development of support staff involved in impact activity, including the Research Facilitator, Research Secretary, website developers and administrators; and boosting capacity through the appointment (Nov 2013) of a researcher to study impact capture and KE.
- *Recognising and building on impact successes across OUDE.* For example, recipients of OUDE impact grants, HEIF, or ESRC KE funds will be invited to share their experience in Staff Meetings and seminars, and to develop impact capacity through graduate teaching and international work.
- *Continued collaboration with the Social Sciences Division and the University to develop leadership and distributed capacity* for impact activity across the institution. Planned actions include: collaboration with the Social Sciences DTC on enhancing the impact of doctoral research, by leading the planning and delivery of a training programme on research impact for doctoral students (building on the 2012-13 experience); and collaboration with the University's KE and Impact Team on maximising learning from impact successes in all disciplines.

<p>2. Nurturing long-term partnerships with users and beneficiaries of research. Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Building on and strengthening relationships with practitioners and policy makers at international, national and local levels.</i> For example, OUDE will continue to support the annual seminar series aimed at engaging policy and practice; the well-established SKOPE employer and public policy fora; and the appointment of users and beneficiaries to project and centre advisory groups. - <i>Supporting users and beneficiaries in their engagement with and in research, at all stages of research activity.</i> Specific actions, which will harness recently secured impact funding, include: consolidating the Education Deanery and the emphasis on the mutual benefits of research-practice integration; developing and supporting the networks of research-engaged practitioner fellows and clusters of institutions; strengthening the research dimension of partnerships with local educational institutions, to sustain the mutual benefits of integrating professional courses and departmental research; diversifying OUDE's offer of research-supported professional development activities; sharing practical and research knowledge via workshops and online. - <i>Continuing to work with the alumni society (OES) to extend impact,</i> including: setting up OES postgraduate research prizes; enabling alumni access to podcasts and seminar materials on OUDE research; and organising research events in OES branches in the UK and internationally. <p>3. Further development of infrastructure to support impact-related activity. Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Sustaining a level of resourcing that enables the continuation and extension of impact activity.</i> To achieve this, the department will actively seek further resources to support impact, through: building on past successes to support further bids to the ESRC impact acceleration fund and HEIF; partnerships with non-academic organisations, building on the experience of the research centres; and collaboration with Isis Innovation to strengthen the portfolio of consultancy activity. - <i>Investing in strategic infrastructure for impact.</i> Planned investments include maintaining the competitively allocated internal fund for impact activities not in receipt of external funding (up to 2k/year) and continuing to invest in support and academic posts with specific impact responsibilities. - <i>Improving the sharing of research with the wider public.</i> Planned actions include: updating audio-video equipment to make all public seminars available as podcasts; embedding a concern for impact in the departmental social media policy; extending the use of social media for impact purposes; working with the University's Press Office to optimise coverage of OUDE research. - <i>Extension and consolidation of impact data</i> in a database managed by the Research Facilitator, through annual impact surveys of staff, follow-up user/beneficiary surveys, web- and alternative metrics. The data will be analysed to evaluate the approach and inform strategic decisions.
<p>d. Relationship to case studies. The case studies witness OUDE's longstanding commitment to impact and reflect the principles underpinning its impact approach and strategy. Methodologically and substantively they span work right across OUDE, indicating the breadth and depth of impact activity and outcomes of the department as a whole. The case studies illustrate the success of different elements of OUDE's approach to creating impact, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investment in impact culture and capacity. The case studies illustrate the value of investing in ECR and support staff (3b-A, 3b-B), in a research-based approach to impact (3b-C) and in research-led professional development for practitioners (3b-A, 3b-D, 3b-E). 2. Partnerships with users and beneficiaries. The case studies exemplify the rippling benefits of successful collaboration with policy makers and practitioners on large-scale and evaluation research, leading to important policy investments (3b-A); of concerted policy and industry engagement via research centres (3b-B); of direct, focused interaction with core users (3b-C); of close-to-practice research furnishing users with conceptual tools that enable positive change (3b-D); and of working with networks of practitioners in developing and communicating distillations of research and in creating and sustaining professional momentum in their application (3b-E). 3. Impact infrastructure. The case studies show how dedicated funding can catalyse impact (3b-E), how impact leadership can enable positive influence and change (3b-A to E), and how targeting resources at effective communication of research can facilitate the percolation of research into policy, professional and public discourse (3b-A to E). <p>The experience of the case studies fed into strategic decisions to continue investments e.g. in public seminars, workshops and fora (building on 3b-B, 3b-D) and in practitioner fellowships (3b-E), and to make further investments e.g. in staff (3b-A), impact funding (3b-E), or monitoring impact (3b-C).</p>