

Institution: Staffordshire University

Unit of Assessment: Business and Management Studies

a. Context

Among our strategic objectives set out in REF5 are “to secure resources to enable research to develop” and “to prioritise research with policy impact”. These objectives have been met by success in bidding for externally-funded research projects. First, we have secured resources for research. Second, because public- and private-sector institutions commission research for its potential impact, impact has been, perforce, built into our strategy from the outset rather than added as an afterthought. The nexus between our commitment to applied research with demonstrable impact, our ability to secure resources for research and to build research capacity, and our potential for publication ensures the sustainability of our research strategy.

b. Approach to impact

Our approach to implementing this impact-based research strategy includes the following elements.

1. **Interdisciplinary research** – both between business disciplines and between business and other disciplines – is important, because the impact required by policy makers arises from practical concerns that are typically best addressed by a variety of expertise rather than by drawing on one discipline alone. For example, Case Study 2 arises from cooperation of colleagues in Economics and in Accounting and Finance; the research on education policy from economics and education; and research on the sub-regional impact of the M6 Toll Road from economics and geography. (Details on the two latter examples are given below.)
2. **Stakeholder involvement** is sought even when research is initiated independently, without external finance: e.g. in Case Study 1, Professor Hashi’s long-time collaborator, Prof Jens Lowitzsch, was an expert for the Employers group on the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC); in Case Study 2, a pre-publication version of the initial research was sent to potential stakeholders leading to their subsequent involvement and financial support.
3. **A dissemination strategy** is often required by external clients (e.g. for the EU Framework projects detailed in both Case Studies). Even where not required, we ensure that our research is disseminated to informed opinion and, in particular, to policy makers. In turn, dissemination of the results of one project can be the key to attracting support for further projects (our research in education policy provides an example; see below).
4. **Media relations** are an important part of our impact strategy. We work closely with the University Press Office and with public relations colleagues in other organisations to promote the dissemination of our research findings. This involves, for example, the timely production of press releases and maintaining good relations with journalists by responding to requests for interviews and information. Examples are provided in Case Study 2 and for our education policy research (see below).
5. **A public engagement strategy** supports dissemination. This embraces activities including a widely distributed newsletter (*Enterprising Times*), public lectures, writing for practitioner or trade journals, and participating in forums that bring together researchers, practitioners and policy makers. For business and management research, a particularly important part of our public engagement strategy has been our partnering of the West Midlands Economic Forum (by contributing not only a regular stream of sub-regional events such as “Business Breakfasts” but also plenary contributions on promoting innovation at both the 2012 and 2013 Annual Conferences. (The 2012 event is referenced in Case Study 2.)
6. **EU funding for research** is a strategic priority for developing research in business and management. This is consistent with our impact strategy, because EU project proposals are required to include a dissemination plan and to demonstrate how and to whom the impact of the research is to be targeted and maximised.
7. **Publication in peer-reviewed journals** to build reputation, especially through the REF, establishes credibility with policy makers and thus helps attract further externally-funded projects. In turn, this helps to make our research sustainable. In spite of tight resource constraints, our policy is to bid only for projects with complete research independence and freedom to publish. Finally, our strategy is to publish in those journals most likely to reach important stakeholders. For example, we have published our education policy research in the

Impact template (REF3a)

top educational journals – notably, the *British Educational Research Journal (BERJ)* - in order to reach the appropriate stakeholders, who are educational opinion formers and policy makers. This is also consistent with our commitment to interdisciplinary research. (BERJ is Europe's top-rated journal in Education.)

Our approach to impact through Business and Management research is apparent not only in our research outputs – including those underpinning our two impact case studies - but also in our PhD programme. We refer to both, in turn, to document the practical enactment of our strategy.

In addition to the Impact Case Studies detailed in REF3b, we provide a further example to document the practical realisation of a strategic approach that gives rise to impact systematically rather than episodically. Pugh, Mangan and Gray (2011) (see REF2 outputs) grew out of research that introduced dynamic panel modelling into the school performance literature: Pugh, G and Mangan, J. (2003) What's in a trend? A comment on Gray, Goldstein and Thomas (2001), *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol.29, No.1 pp.77-82; and Mangan, J., Pugh, G. and Gray, J. (2005) Changes in Examination Performance in English Secondary Schools over the Course of a Decade, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol.16, No.1 (March) pp.29-50. In turn, these publications attracted a commission from the Value for Money Unit of the then Department for Children Schools and Families (DfCSF), which resulted in a policy report disseminated first by the DfCSF and currently by the Department for Education: Pugh, G., Mangan J. and Gray, J. (2008) *Resources and Attainment at Key Stage 4: Estimates from a Dynamic Methodology*. Publication Code: DCSF-RR056. Published 30-10-2008. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-attainment-at-key-stage-4-estimates-from-a-dynamic-methodology>. This report concluded, contradicting an older literature than found no connection between resources and performance, that the school performance effects of increased per pupil spending were small but statistically significant and educationally important. As such, it contributed to the evidence base that has helped to ring-fence school spending in the subsequent era of austerity.

While we cannot quantify the ultimate influence of this report on policy, we can document considerable media interest. This was the result of a policy to disseminate research, to involve stakeholders and to work with Staffordshire University's Press Office to ensure that we contribute frequently to local, regional and national media. In this case, an interim report presented at the 2007 Conference of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) gave us the opportunity to write a draft press release for BERA that resulted in the following media publicity: in the following days, the research was featured in the professional press - *Public Finance* (07/09/2007) and the *Times Educational Supplement* (07/09/2007 and 14/09/2007); reported widely in the regional press, including the *Evening Standard* (mainly on 07/09/2007); reported in the *Independent*, the *Times* and the *Guardian* (07/09/2007); and reported in combination with interviews in prominent articles in the *Daily Mail* (07/09.2007) the *Daily Telegraph* (07/09/2007) (front page) and the *South China Morning Post* (08/09/2007). In addition, the research was reported on BBC Breakfast TV, BBC Radio 2 News and Sun FM Radio News (07/09/2007). On the same day, Professor Pugh (the lead author) also gave interviews broadcast by BBC TV News 24, Independent Radio News (ITN's regional network), BBC Radio 4 News Briefing, BBC Radio 5 Live News and, most prominently, BBC Radio 4's *Today Programme*. In turn, this publicity resulted in a large number of requests for the research paper; from, amongst others, academics, practitioners and both Houses of Parliament. We thereby ensured that the widest possible public of informed opinion and policy makers were aware of our research and its findings.

Pugh, Mangan and Gray (2011), derived from the 2008 *Report*, was "commended" at the 2012 Conference of the British Educational Research Association as one of the three best research papers published in 2011 in BERJ. In turn, this award helped to attract further policy-related research that promises not only further national impact but also international impact. This strategy of leveraging reputation for policy-relevant research and corresponding credibility with stakeholders and policy makers is evidenced by two current projects in education policy: for the London Borough of Newham to evaluate an innovative reading support scheme (for corroboration: Dr Jane Kennedy, Research Business Manager, London Borough of Newham; Jane.Kennedy@newham.gov.uk); and for the New South Wales Department of Education and

Communities to inform major reforms of school funding (for corroboration: Vincent Blackburn, Manager, Statistical Performance Reporting, NSW Department of Education and Communities vincent.blackburn@det.nsw.edu.au). These outcomes of a long-established research agenda demonstrate that our impact-based strategy is sustainable. Other outputs have similarly arisen from our impact-based strategy. Pugh and Fairburn (2008) (see REF2) was derived from research commissioned by the Southern Staffordshire Partnership (which includes Midland Expressway, the owner and operator of the M6 Toll Motorway); this research – an evaluation of the economic impact of the M6 Toll - was widely reported in the media and cited in hearings at the House of Commons (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmwelaf/506/506vw12.htm>). Finally, Hashi and Stojcic (2012) (see REF2) was derived from the EU Framework VI MICRODYN project (see REF5 for details).

Much of the impact of research at Staffordshire University in Business and Management is accounted for by our current and recent PhD graduates. Most of our PhD graduates are in research-related posts; or, in some cases, have already moved on to senior leadership roles as varied as the Chief Economist of the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Research Business Manager of the London Borough of Newham. The evidence base for this is on-line: www.staffs.ac.uk/research/cabr/phd: for 42 PhD completions we have documented not only the details of authors, their thesis titles, supervisors, examiners and associated publications and awards but also their current employment. Of particular note is that in each year since 2000, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) has supported five joint OSF-Staffordshire University scholarships for young economists from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro to complete doctoral research in economics at Staffordshire University. Since January 1st 2008, 27 OSF students have been awarded PhDs in economics and are now using their knowledge and training to the benefit of their countries. To take one example, Dr Fatmir Besimi was awarded his PhD in May 2008 for the first ever systematic investigation of monetary and exchange rate policy in Macedonia. This research informed his policy role first in the Research Directorate and then as Vice-Governor in the National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia. Evidence of the beneficial impact of our PhD graduates on the region is the continued financial support of the programme by the OSF who, in cooperation with the beneficiaries, regularly evaluates its contribution. In addition, the individual impact of colleagues responsible for the PhD programme has also been publicly recognised: in the 2008 Queen’s Birthday Honours List, Professor Iraj Hashi was awarded the MBE for “services to education and economic reconstruction in Kosovo” (http://web.staffs.ac.uk/about_us/news_and_events/expert-awarded-mbe-for-helping-to-rebuild-kosovo-tcm4216512.jsp); and in December 2011 Professor Geoff Pugh was appointed to the Advisory Committee to the Council of the Central Bank of Montenegro (http://www.cb-cg.org/index.php?mn1=press_centar&mn2=saopstenja_2012&mn3=februar).

c. Strategy and plans

The impact based strategy, outlined and documented in the previous section, was developed and enacted during the period 2008-13 and will continue to inform our research in Business and Management from 2014. This commitment is informed by and consistent with the *Staffordshire University Plan for 2012-17*. Section 1.1 starts with Key Performance Indicators for research: “Improved performance against national measures of research excellence (including the REF, outputs produced, conference papers delivered, impact upon professions, practice and academia) ...”; and Section 4.0 - Research and Advanced scholarship – states: “The University is committed to the further development of its strengths in applied research ... for the delivery of economic, commercial, environmental, cultural or social benefit.”

d. Relationship to case studies

The two Case Studies are both outcomes of our impact-based research strategy, although particular aspects of this strategy are more strongly represented in one rather than the other: interdisciplinary research (Case Study 2, with Geoff Pugh from Economics and John Wyld and David Tyrrall from Accounting and Finance); Stakeholder involvement (both Case Studies); a dissemination strategy (both Case Studies – and, of course, required for EU projects); Media Relations (Case Study 1 and, to a lesser extent, Case Study 2); a public engagement strategy (both Case Studies); EU funding (continuation of the Case Study 1 research agenda); and publication in peer-reviewed journals (both Case Studies).