Institution: University of Hull

Unit of Assessment: C25: Education

a. Context

The main non-academic user groups, beneficiaries and audiences for the Education research undertaken at the University of Hull are members of the teaching profession and their leaders, students in schools, other related professions, policy makers and employer groups. Whilst initial involvement largely came through PGCE or BEd programmes, continuing professional development short courses, taught masters and research degrees, engagement with such groups has now developed in such a fashion that we interact and engage with many of these groups to develop impact from our research, and this will now be our assumed approach. There are currently three major (if at times overlapping) research groupings which are engaged in research which actively involve non-academic input through the inclusion of such individuals within these groupings:

(a) **Technology Enhanced Learning:** Relationships between teacher educators and computer specialists has led to a research group which has focused upon the role of information and communications technology in developing learning strategies internationally, with resultant impacts at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels on the users of such technology.

(b) **Professionals and Practice**: relationships between educators at primary and secondary levels, have resulted in research foci on developing the involvement of children in inclusive strategies in schools, and the experiences of new teachers moving into a teaching career.

(c) **Policy: Theory and Practice:** relationships with practitioners in HE and FE, the experiences of educational leaders, and an engagement with official literatures have resulted in research foci on the experiences and sustainability of practitioners at all levels in a turbulent policy environment.

These activities have resulted in a balanced emphasis between research into issues of national and international concern, and those of a necessarily more local nature. The research within the UoA therefore has a number of different kinds of impacts: upon the thinking and practice of educators and students, the aspirations of the local community, educational leaders, and upon thinking by those within and beyond education concerning the nature and values underpinning educational policies.

b. Approach to impact

Approaches to impact in this UoA have historically been of two kinds, but over the last five years have developed into a third kind. The first kind is research resulting from the interest of individual researchers, which led to planned forms of impact; the research on inclusion led to planned changes in schools, whilst research on healthy diet led to considerable change in school food policy both nationally and internationally. Other projects have been more serendipitous: research on headteachers' views of educational pressures led to considerable impact upon their feelings of support and well being, but was not originally a planned impact. A second kind of approach has been through research activity stimulated by work and discussions with non-academic individuals, but resulting action has been seen primarily as a form of in-service work or evaluation, where research protocols might not have been fully adopted, and systematic and rigorous recording of outcomes might not have been a priority. The third research approach moves beyond these, and facilitates the interaction and engagement of academics with non-academic beneficiaries to proactively develop impact from research. This kind of approach is now seen within all research groups, who incorporate as a matter of policy the presence of users of their kind of research. This final approach then is underpinned by three major impact concerns, namely:

1. *How can the UOA develop an understanding, appreciation and consciousness of the importance of the REF definition of impact within its research culture*?

2. *How can the UoA and its staff identify individuals and organizations who are likely to be recipients of such impact, and how are they involved with the institution's research culture and practice*?

3. *How can the UoA develop a consideration of potential impacts before any body or piece of research is fully developed?*

The strategies and plans for achieving these are addressed in the following section.

c. Strategy and plans

The three concerns listed above all entail a number of strategies, and actions. Currently, these are being addressed by the following three goals:

Goal 1: To develop an understanding, appreciation and consciousness of the importance of impact within its research culture.

This has been developed through the following strategies and actions:

- A bulletin written for all staff on impact, its meaning, and its implications (published November 2011);

- A series of presentations with discussion to staff on the same themes (begun July, 2011 and continuing, particularly with new staff);

- Discussions with research groups about the nature of impact, and the likely impacts of proposed research(begun October 2011 and continuing);

- The creation of an Impact Working Party, comprised of leading members of the research groupings, whose remit was to further develop activities, documents, and policies to enhance impact consciousness, to facilitate its achievement, and to shape and adapt strategy to ensure an impact focus in the future(begun February 2012, report with recommendations June 2012);

- The use of bi- annual research 'conversations' between individual researchers and senior researchers (begun September 2012), and of staff mentoring sessions (begun June 2013), to develop the inclusion of impact within an individual's current and future research plans.

Goal 2: to identify individuals and organizations who are likely to be recipients of such impact, and to include them in the institution's research culture and practice.

This is currently being developed through

- The identification by research groupings of those individuals and organisations which their research is likely to impact upon, followed by invitations to attend relevant research meetings (begun October 2011 and continuing);
- A similar identification of such 'impact' champions to act as members of steering groups for research projects, to be used for initial piloting of interview or questionnaire schedules, or to be active members of such research teams (begun January 2012)

Goal 3: To develop a consideration of potential impacts by researchers before a body or

piece of research is fully developed.

This is currently being developed through the following strategies and actions:

- In annual research conversations, discussion concerning the inclusion of impact within an individual's current and future research (begun autumn 2012 and continuing).

- The establishment and utilization by the research finance committee of impact criteria for awarding internal funds for pump-priming research, to utilize impact criteria for awarding finance to support conference attendance, and to facilitate impact considerations prior to such research.

- The creation of a 'research impact proforma' helping the framing of research proposals with 'impact' integral to them. This consists of approximately forty questions focused around nine different areas of impact which asks for consideration of two key questions: '*could some of these different kinds of impacts be included within the research proposal?'* and '*what extra would need to be done in the writing of a proposal to include such impacts?'*

d. Relationship to case studies

Whilst both case studies began before the strategic approach set out above, and initially did not directly affect their inception, nevertheless the strategy subsequently had clear influence upon them. Thus, in the Burden case study, the researchers ensured that in writing the initial research design the participants in the validation process were likely to be end-users, or involved in networks of end-users. Similarly, in the Bottery portrait case study, the impact described was not the original intention of the work, but the strategic direction did influence the development of further research into this unexpected impact; for example, researchers in Hull and in Hong Kong have subsequently interviewed users of the research on its impact on them in both countries, and a portrait project with Hong Kong principals in 2013/2014 has had impact investigation proactively written into its methodology.

However, influence was not purely one way. The impact case studies have developed and strengthened the strategic direction in a number of ways. First, they have demonstrated how much more effective impact is when it is conceived as an initial core objective of the research, and therefore at the start written into the methodology of any research project. Second, they were among the first projects in the UOA to take on board this strategic direction, and incorporate it into their ongoing research, thus providing useful evidence of issues and challenges of strategic implementation for other projects, leading to a refinement of a number of impact objectives and instruments. Third, it made clear that such incorporation into research objectives added a further element to the research which would lead to valuable outputs – not only in terms of making them more enterable in prestigious journals, but more fundamentally, if obviously, in helping to improve the work of those they were investigating.