Institution: UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Unit of Assessment: 19: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

a. Context

Delivering effective impact of the unit's research is central to our research strategy. Our goal is to provide a better understanding of the way business practices can change, supporting improved economic welfare and growth across society. Working locally and globally with governmental bodies, policy makers, private companies, charities, non-governmental organisations, other universities (national and international), schools & colleges, and the general public, our approach is to be innovative by continually creating new transmission mechanisms that empower the unit to deliver impact from excellent academic research.

We develop insights by consolidating skills and expertise within two unifying themes; (a) accounting practice & financial markets and (b) people, organisations & change. Customarily, our work in (a) is taken on board by investigators from select committees of parliamentary members, the U.K. Treasury, the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG), the Financial Conduct Authority, the Bank of England, and fund managers' practices; while our strengths in (b) are historically evidenced as valuable to the National Health Service, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and to private companies across the globe.

Collaborations with other universities are pivotal in achieving effective dissemination of our research work outwith academia. For example, working with the universities of Edinburgh and Strathclyde we are enabling achievement of a long-term government goal to embed a culture of enterprise, innovation and entrepreneurship across generations (through the Scottish Programme in Entrepreneurship, granted £1.2 million from the Scottish Government). In collaboration with the University of Reading, we created the Henley-Aberdeen partnership, which seeks to inform companies, private and public, with discoveries from research made here in Aberdeen and across the world, incorporating national and international research findings into business practice.

b. Approach to impact

1. Dissemination to key stakeholders is a key pillar of the Unit's approach to impact, including through (1) joint academic–user events, involving stakeholders from public, private and third sector agencies that we collaborate with and/or seek to influence: **Buckland** regularly transmits research findings on utilities regulation to regulator training sessions in the USA; **Parker** has contributed to a report for the Swedish Government on entrepreneurial culture, business cycles and economic policies. (2) in targeted dissemination to influential stakeholders: **Williams'** original research on credit default swaps and price discovery in markets for corporate and sovereign debt has been delivered in advice and policy discussion at central banks and non-governmental organisations such as the OECD. In 2008 **Cai** presented her work to China's Academy of Telecommunication Research (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology) and to Chinese government policy makers. (3) by dissemination to bodies directly concerned with translating new knowledge into practice. For example, the unit regularly hosts visits from the Bank of England's Scottish Agency for meetings discussing latest findings from our research. Resulting from this, the unit hosted a public lecture about his research from Monetary Policy Committee member, Dr Adam Posen, 27th June, 2011. Local businesses and schools were invited with a question and answer session.

2. Collaborating with key stakeholders through long-term working partnerships, such as: **Heald's** critical alliance with HM Treasury, impacting on public sector accounting practices; **McKee**'s collaboration with NHS Grampian supporting service improvement in NHS Scotland; **Williams'** collaboration with the research arm of Hewlett-Packard, improving computer security and financial applications of cloud computing. We also seek out new research-user partnerships, as evidenced in **Williams'** current work with the National Grid, or **Cai's** work with China's Academy of Telecommunication Research and with mobile service operators and equipment manufacturers in China. These relationships identify user-priorities, fine-tune research protocols and ensure that our research benefits relevant stakeholders. Thus, work by **McKee** on outsourcing glaucoma care from a hospital clinic to community optometrists was initiated by a consultant in NHS Grampian; her work on Scotland's quality improvement agenda was initiated with the public bodies concerned. In large projects, relationships are formalised through project steering groups with stakeholder representation. Collaborations are also formalised through Knowledge Transfer Partnership grants

(see below) and through the adoption of action research methodologies, as in **Mauthner's** research on the impact of digital work technologies on work-life balance.

The Scottish Programme in Entrepreneurship is an example of the success of this approach to impact. This £1.2 million project, shared equally between the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Strathclyde, was endorsed by the First Minister on 4th September 2007. The programme was restructured in 2008 in response to uncertain economic conditions. The main aim of the programme is to intensify Scotland's entrepreneurship capability in alignment with the Scottish Government's economic recovery plan. The University of Aberdeen appointed **Parker** in 2010 as the academic lead for this programme. He utilises senior interdisciplinary expertise to exchange knowledge about research in entrepreneurship, helping others to disseminate this from university to external stakeholders. He updates the Scottish Government on strategy and method in person at meetings and delivers on the programme in Aberdeen. **Parker** is also Director of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Cross-Enterprise Leadership Center at Richard Ivey School of Business, Western Ontario, Canada. This global link is a key element of our strategy to learn from discoveries overseas and enhance our impact in the local environment and at Aberdeen. Our strategy to enable effective impact of this programme also includes the appointment of three non-research active staff in 2010, whose key skills enable the output from excellent research to be disseminated to stakeholder groups. These members of staff raise funds in their own right: for example, (i) knowledge transfer partnership grants (see 4 below); (ii) £4k to host European Union events on intergenerational fairness as a major entrepreneurial context; (iii) £6.5k to host an enterprise event by Professor John Mullins, London Business School; (iv) £7.5k to host Professor Dhrubes Biswas, India (on rural health start ups) and (v) £22.5k to deliver a TEDx event and to run "Enterprise Wise" for female researchers in medicine, engineering and science (a 5 day event). This latter event is informed by the research by **Parker** on female entrepreneurship, which has also been presented to the World Bank in Washington DC.

3. Advisory work for key stakeholders, policy committees and professional boards ensures that our work reaches relevant user groups and has the potential to change business, commercial or governmental practice. **Heald's** impact has been facilitated by his role as parliamentary specialist adviser, Financial Reporting Advisory Board member and contributor to Treasury, IMF and OECD meetings. **McGeachin** works with the EFRAG on the implementation and understanding of international accounting standards. **McKee** is extensively involved with international healthcare research commissioning bodies (e.g. NIHR-SDO). **Parker** has served as a subject expert for the OECD and contributed to their forthcoming report on SME and entrepreneurship policy in Italy.

4. Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) grants: The University hosts the North of Scotland KTP Centre, a resource used to forge industrial and user relationships. The impact value of KTP grants derives from embedding the researcher within the organisation. **McKee** and **Hughes** led a KTP grant with NHS Grampian focussed on a Health Board defined problem: the redesign of endoscopy services. Commercial and organisational impacts led to reshaping of services in the Grampian health region and savings of £237K for the health board. **Heywood** participates in a KTP project with Aberdeen City Council (£133K, 2013-15). **Heywood**, **Williams** and **Cai** participate in a KTP with Solutions Ltd to develop disruptive business development strategies for managing human resource assets in the energy industry (£127K, 2013-15). **Hetherington** and **Heywood** participate in the CONEeCT Project (Entrepreneurship Education) funded by the European Commission (€678K, 2013-15). **Heywood** and **Williams** also participate in two Scottish Enterprise Kick Starter grants with SMEs, looking at oil and gas training (STC Global Ltd) and web analytics training (Jump Digital Ltd) (£10K, 2013-14).

5. Communication and public engagement: Aberdeen is one of eight centres of excellence for public engagement under the RCUK's Catalysts Scheme. This has led to the establishment of the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) and the Principal's Prize for Public Engagement. Aberdeen is a signatory to the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research. We work with PERU, along with the University's Communication Team and Press Office, to engage non-academic audiences in our research and disseminate our work through the media. As part of the 2012 ESRC Social Sciences Festival, **Clark** was awarded an ESRC grant to put on a photographic exhibition (3rd Nov – 8th Dec) and a linked public lecture showcasing research on market traders. **Mauthner** collaborated with an artist-in-residence at Deveron Arts, Huntly on a community event, public discussion and public booklet exploring the changing nature of fatherhood in the context of

shifting employment patterns, particularly in rural areas and the oil and gas industry.

The University Public Research Profile web site provides a mechanism for recording, documenting and disseminating our outreach and knowledge exchange activities. Entries can be made visible to the public, fully integrated with the Aberdeen University Research Archive, which allows public/open access to publications and reports.

c. Strategy and plans

The unit has embedded a culture which recognises the value of non-academic impact; taking this strategy forward will include:

1. Fostering research excellence as detailed in the research environment document.
2. Reinforcing researchers' awareness/understanding of impact mechanisms. The School Research Surgeries programme runs sessions on KTP grants, working with non-academic partners, public engagement with research, engaging with industry, and technology transfer, supported by the University's Business Development Team, Technology Transfer Team, Consultancy Officer, Continued Professional Development Services and the North of Scotland KTP Centre. School Research Days, Research Review Meetings, staff appraisals, probation meetings, mentoring sessions, and the peer review process further foster impact awareness and activity.
3. Building stakeholder/public engagement with research into research design, conduct and dissemination. Using the support services available through the institution we will continue to advise and support staff on mechanisms such as building and costing public engagement in research grant applications and involving stakeholders (business, public, policy-makers) in the co-construction of research (design, conduct, dissemination).
4. Mentoring. Staff with particular expertise in knowledge transfer mentor junior staff (e.g. through support in writing KTP grants).
5. Research impact training. Colleagues attend University workshops and training events on impact, dissemination, and working with the media. Research impact is a key part of postgraduate research training, discussed as part of supervision sessions. PGR students are involved in Research Surgeries and attend University impact training workshops.
6. Extending relationships with key stakeholders. The executive education programme, run in partnership with the Henley Business School at the U. of Reading, provides a network between academia and senior management across the business, commercial and not-for-profit sectors in the north-east of Scotland, offering development events to improve the business acumen and personal leadership skills of senior executives. These events showcase our research, provide opportunities to engage with local businesses, and enable us to engage in knowledge exchange.
7. Building teams and raising funds to enable effective methods for incorporating research results into practice.
8. Innovation Centres. We are using our ongoing involvement in a consortium bidding for a Scottish Funding Council's innovation centre to further increase our industrial engagement, focussing on financial services firms in collaboration with university and commercial partners.
9. Support is available from the school for the development of knowledge transfer, by specific pump priming funding and/or sabbatical time. We use the School Research Committee budget to support visits to key research users in the UK and abroad. For example, enabling **Cai** to develop strategic links with mobile communications companies and government policy makers in China.

d. Relationship to case studies

Case study 1, **Influencing Public Sector Accounting Change** reports on research contributing directly to changes in the way UK government budgets, manages and reports its performance. Impact has been achieved via the participation of the team's lead researcher in government, parliamentary and professional processes, as parliamentary specialist adviser, Financial Reporting Advisory Board member and as a contributor to Treasury, IMF and OECD events.

Case study 2, **Management of Change within Health Care Organisations** outlines the impact of organisational change research, through: (1) Dissemination of findings through joint academic–practitioner events; (2) targeted dissemination to influential stakeholders; (3) dissemination to bodies directly concerned with translation of new knowledge into practice; and (4) collaboration with key stakeholders, in project design and through knowledge transfer partnerships.