

Institution: Queen's University Belfast
Unit of Assessment: 19
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Set in a new £12m purpose Business School, known as Riddel Hall, Unit of Assessment 19 comprises Queen's University Management School. Supporting staff to conduct leading-edge research that has a positive impact on economy and society is central to the Unit's mission, and it pursues this mission primarily in the context of two nations, the UK and Ireland. This double engagement is reflected in its case studies—the Unit's research has as much an impact in Ireland as it has in the UK.</p> <p>But the impact of the Unit's research far transcends the national context. As exemplified by its case studies, research conducted in the Unit has international reach, extending to, for example, the United States, Canada and Southern and Eastern Africa. Its research has had an important impact on strategies for sustainable development, on government health policies for women and on the behaviour of firms across countries.</p> <p>The Unit aims to ensure that not only private enterprise, but government, public agencies, professional bodies and civic organisations can benefit from the research of its staff. Research centres created in the Unit seek to advance pioneering scholarship, and also interface actively with potential end users to bring focus, coherence and relevance to the conducted research.</p> <p>For example, the Centre for Irish Business and Economic Performance hosts events that provide a platform for practitioner communities to discuss and debate economic and development policies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Centre for Economic History, meanwhile, has liaised with the Bank of England on the relevance of lessons from financial history to the current 'Great Recession'.</p> <p>The Unit also organises an annual policy-relevant workshop on topics that are aligned with its research priorities. In 2013, for example, the School organised a part ESRC-funded workshop on innovative workplace conflict management, which attracted officials from all the public dispute resolution agencies in the UK and Ireland, and representatives from leading international companies and professional bodies related to people management, as well as trade unions.</p> <p>The Unit broadly organises its research efforts around the theme of “Networks, Institutions and Innovation”. Much of its research seeks to inform and influence the institutional architecture that shapes the actions of business, government and civic organisations. As reflected in its impact case studies, it strives to understand and affect the institutional rules and processes governing a wide canvas of business and economic activity. This work has included improving the efficiency of credit unions, adapting public dispute resolution services to changing employment times, fine-tuning accountancy procedures in the non-profit sector and promoting the role of social and environmental enterprises in sustainable development strategies.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The Unit is keenly aware that its reputation as a place for quality research influences the degree to which its activities will have a broad impact. Above all, our research reputation depends on the talent and commitment of our staff, and the appropriateness of our supporting structures. The Unit emphasizes staff disseminating, nationally and internationally, their research work and ideas to diverse institutions, interest groups and individuals, including; (a) public service departments and agencies; (b) wider policy-making communities; (c) civil society; and (d) relevant Irish and UK-based research and professional communities. This is reflected by the dissemination activities of its staff: McKillop has delivered numerous presentations on credit union reform in Ireland, north and south; Teague has been a plenary speaker at an ILO conference on dispute resolution as well as a plenary speaker at</p>

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conferences both in Ireland and the UK about a social partnership approach to organizing work and employment; Hyndman has been a plenary speaker at a host of conferences on accountancy rules for charities; and, Brownlow has been a plenary at several high profile third sector conferences on the future direction of economic policy in N. Ireland.

The Unit attaches great importance to fostering connections between our staff and practitioner communities, the worlds of theory and practice, to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge. We use staff induction to highlight to new recruits the importance the Unit places on research having an impact beyond academia. This message is reinforced within our appraisal system: a discussion takes place about whether a staff member has considered strategies to increase the impact of their research.

Over the years, staff in the Unit have fostered close relationships with a variety of professional bodies, covering areas such as accountancy (Chartered Accountants Ireland, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, Association of Certified Chartered Accountants, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and Association of Certified Chartered Accountants), actuarial and risk management studies (Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, Professional Risk Managers International Association (PRMIA) and The Institute of Risk Management (IRM)), marketing (Chartered Institute of Marketing) and people management (CIPD).

One benefit arising from these connections is the emergence of professional networks which involve practitioners and Unit staff engaging in detailed discussions about particular developments. The purpose of this dialogue is to ensure that the import of emerging business and economic challenges are fully understood amongst practitioners. At times, the dialogue is used to invent possible solutions to particular problems. Hyndman and colleagues have been working closely with the Charities Commission to develop accountancy procedures and rules for this sector. Teague has been working closely with the CIPD examining the type of people management policies firms have been pursuing in the recession. Holt through her Trickle Out project has developed a partnering relationship with the African Social Entrepreneur Network, a registered charity in South Africa, which is frequently consulted by governments in Africa on best practice policies to promote social enterprises.

Close relationships are maintained with policy makers in government and public agencies on a wide range of management and economic related matters. Within N. Ireland, we maintain close relationships with Invest NI, the region's main economic development agency, as well as Government economic services at Stormont, the home of the region's devolved assembly. Brownlow has been closely involved in the development of the new economic strategy for N. Ireland. Hewitt-Dundas plays a lead role in the all-island innovation programme sponsored by Inter-Trade Ireland, a north-south body established by the Good Friday Agreement, which aims to promote and encourage innovation through the delivery of workshops, masterclasses and lectures to a mix of people from industry and academia. She has been instrumental in establishing under the programme a Community of Researchers working on innovation across the island. The aim of this community is to study innovation in several academic disciplines and to progress the development of an all-island knowledge economy via aligning best practice in innovation research with policy-making and its implementation. McKillop continues to maintain close links with the Dept of Finance in Ireland after acting as the Chairperson of an Irish Government-sponsored Commission on Credit Unions (Ireland) that brought together all relevant stakeholders to map out an agreed pathway for the future these organizations in Ireland. He is a member of the Credit Union Advisory Committee (Ireland) which advises the Minister of Finance in relation to the improvement of the management of credit unions.

Furthermore, staff in the Unit participate in advisory bodies, involving commenting on and influencing policy initiatives on an on-going basis. Teague is the sole academic setting on the advisory committee of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, an EU agency. Hewitt-Dundas has been an Innovation Policy and Research Fellow with the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA), London and has also acted as an advisor to the EU (European SME Experts Panel). Verwaal is a member of the EU committee on international tax and customs, which makes proposals on rules and procedures governing cross-border business transactions. Ambos sits on an advisory panel that advises the German Bundestag on innovation policy.

A by-product of these repeated exchanges between staff in the Unit and public policy bodies has been

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the sponsorship of academic research on defined policy problems. The research on employment dispute resolution by Teague, funded by the Irish Government, is an example of this form of sponsorship. The findings that emerged from these various pieces of research invariably have had a direct, immediate impact on policy deliberations and ultimately on the decision-making process itself. Hewitt-Dundas has received numerous grants for investment agencies in Ireland, north and south for research on innovation.

The Unit maintains close relationships with organizations in both the private and public sectors. As one of the case-studies highlights, our land and environmental economists work closely with various consultancies, particularly CenSoC, that has led to their pioneering work on efficient Bayesian design of choice surveys being used by a wide range of organizations in the education, health, and environment sectors. They also work with high profile companies such as Boeing, Motorola, KFC and PepsiCo. The Unit's relationships with finance companies have developed strongly, leading to First Derivatives PLC and Invest NI to fund an electronic Trading Room. Murphy has worked closely with the PSNI advising on organizational change. Kenny has provided policy advice on whistle blowing to various organizations, including Transparency International (Ireland), Public Concern at Work (UK) and Whistleblowers UK. Successful use has been made of the ESRC's KPT scheme to forge close links between staff in the Unit and local business. For example, McCole has such a scheme with a local company, Chain Reaction Cycles, which is dedicated to embedding a data metrics and advanced analytics capability in the organization to improve online sales and marketing worldwide.

Staff in the Unit work closely with the newly established QUB Leadership Institute to deliver a suite of educational and learning programmes for organizations, which we hope will foster even closer links with the business community. The Unit plays a leading role in the QUB Chief Executives' Club, being a business forum with 200 members from the local business community that meets 6-7 times a year for lectures, seminars and workshops. Moreover, the University's Visiting and Honorary appointments scheme allows the Unit to strengthen its ties with local business leaders. In 2012, for example, the University appointed Kieran Mulvey, a key architect of the current programme for public sector modernization in the Republic of Ireland, to an Honorary Professorship.

Thus, the Unit encourages, whenever appropriate, staff to nurture engagement and linkages with various public policy, business and civic networks. It recognizes that this can be a time consuming and difficult task with returns only emerging in the longer term. During this reporting period, the Unit has supported actively all those staff engaged in potentially high-impact research. All principal staff involved in the documented case-studies received year-long sabbaticals during the REF period, which provided time to conduct the reported impact-driven research.

Thus, the outward-looking posture of the Unit's ongoing commitment to forging links with businesses, professional bodies and public policy agencies has not only encouraged staff to consider the practical contribution of their research, but has led to practical supports being put in place for the delivery of this kind of research.

c. Strategy and plans

The Unit considers that its supportive approach to high impact research during the REF period has been successful as reflected in the evidence presented in the case-studies. Yet we are eager to improve on this approach and have recently been formulating new strategies to strengthen even further the impact of the research done by our staff. Our impact plan for the future has four key elements:

- (1) **Maintaining research excellence.** The Unit's commitment to producing high quality, high impact research will only be fully realised if we maintain (and add) to our existing pool of high calibre staff. We aim to create a working environment in the Unit which is collegiate, supportive and empowering, particularly for early career researchers. We have started, wherever appropriate, a pairing system, which involves connecting early and more experienced researchers together on projects with high potential for impact. Murphy is linking up with Beck on organizational change in the health service, Quinn is working with McKillop on credit unions, Boeri is working with Hutchinson and Scarpa on Bayesian choice analysis.
- (2) **Developing an agenda-setting research environment.** The Unit recognises its responsibility to promote fresh ideas about business and economic development in both parts of Ireland. To this end, the Unit set up the Centre for Business and Economic Performance in Ireland to play an active role in forging links with other Universities on the Ireland to influence the future

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agenda on these matters. The Unit is committed to upgrading its interdisciplinary research capabilities by developing a new Transdisciplinary Research Centre on Institutions and Political Economy.

- (3) **Enhancing research collaborations.** The Unit aims to enhance its collaborations with research communities within Ireland, the UK and elsewhere. It plans to make more systematic use of our visitor programme and other research associate agreements to foster these collaborations. It also intends to forge closer interactions with policy-making and business communities through developing research activities deemed relevant and important by end users. More extensive use will be made of our Honorary Professor and Lectureship schemes to facilitate this objective.
- (4) **Developing more effective dissemination of research.** The Unit's staff continues to devote significant time to presenting research results at conferences, seminars and workshops. The Unit intends to develop more enhanced channels of communications with stakeholders to highlight the policy relevance of our work. The Unit will make its research more accessible to the public by preparing material which is more media-friendly and by encouraging staff to participate in radio and television broadcasts.

d. Relationship to case studies

Engagement is the by-word for the Unit's strategy towards research impact. Developing strong links with end users not only opens up opportunities for research, but also increases the possibilities that any research conducted will affect some kind of change. This strategy is reflected in the impact case studies as many originate in efforts made by staff members to develop their research in the context of building close connections with end users:

- Teague's research on employment dispute resolution emerged from developing close links with the Labour Relations Commission over a period of time.
- Hyndman's work on accountancy rules for charities is rooted in his active involvement in the not-for-profit financial community over many years.
- McKillop's appointment as Chairperson to a reforming Commission on Credit Unions would probably not have happened were it not for his longstanding involvement in the sector.
- Hutchinson and his colleagues' work on developing Bayesian design approaches to non-market valuation surveys emerges from an explicit effort to develop relationships with organizations and policy-makers in the agricultural, food and public health sectors

The strategy of conducting research through nurturing strong links with end users has the added advantage of involving practitioner communities in the design and development of research. It also opens up opportunities for meaningful discussions about the policy implications of emerging research findings.