

Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science
Unit of Assessment: 17: Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The UoA undertakes multi-disciplinary social science research covering three broad areas of specialisation (economic geography, environmental economics and policy, and cities and development). It places a strong emphasis on the practical application of its research. The main type of impact sought is to influence policy locally, nationally and internationally. Substantially the largest group of users are therefore policy makers and practitioners working at different levels of government. Users also include community and non-governmental organisations and development partnerships, think tanks and business. The case studies selected for REF 2014 reflect this commitment and demonstrate our success in influencing diverse user groups and policy audiences.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Our approach to impact starts with our Departmental research culture which embraces an interdisciplinary approach geared to delivering applicable research findings. In this, we are supported at the institutional level by the LSE, which has a long history of valuing and rewarding impact based on internationally excellent and world leading research on issues of societal and economic importance. A strong track record with respect to knowledge exchange and impact is now part of the evidence base on which we make recruitment, performance and promotion decisions.</p> <p>The research groups and centres associated with the Department also have a strong impact remit. These include: the (long-established) LSE London group, based in the Department, and three major externally funded Research Centres and Institutes established during this REF period: the Spatial Economics Research Centre (SERC), the Grantham Research Institute (GRI) on Climate Change and the Environment and the (closely integrated) Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (CCCEP). Around 80 percent of staff are associates of one or more of these. Additional support comes from the Department and LSE.</p> <p>We seek impact in two dimensions. First, we aim to enhance the quality and change the terms of public and private debates by giving them a more solid grounding in research-based evidence. Second, we aim to achieve direct impacts on public policy, and increasingly to ensure that our research informs private sector activities and decision-making as well.</p> <p><i>Informing public debate</i></p> <p>Turning research into impact that informs public debate requires work to ensure that the research is itself informed by public debate and that results are widely accessible and usable by practitioners, policy makers and the wider public. Translation, dissemination and engagement are central to this process. We undertake a mix of proactive outreach activities and more responsive engagement mechanisms, tailored to different audiences.</p> <p>The process of translation often starts with the production of written outputs in a range of formats appropriate to the audiences to be reached (user-friendly, technical jargon-free reports, papers, book chapters, briefing notes, presentations, fact-sheets for non-specialist audiences, etc). Traditional means for disseminating our findings (particularly publication, public lectures and via the web) are complemented by more innovative mechanisms, including the use of social media (particularly twitter, numerous blogs – the SERC Blog alone receives well over 3,000 average monthly views and is just one of 4 blog sites used by the UoA – and LSE's You Tube channels). We also organise a wide variety of events including academic and policy-focused seminars and conferences, as well as contributing to a large number of events (both national and international) organised by others. For example, between January 2011 and July 2013, the Department ran 24 public lectures attended by a total of over 5000 people on a wide variety of topics involving, in addition to faculty, internationally recognised academics, government ministers and think tank speakers. We use many of these events as an opportunity to seek feedback and recommendations</p>

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on our research. Advisory boards of the research groups and centres provide a more formal mechanism for ensuring that engagement is a two way process.

At the Departmental level, support for staff mainly takes the form of support for public lectures, as well as the Departmental website and Twitter. This support is supplemented at the institutional level by the LSE Public Lecture series as well as the work of the LSE Public Policy Group who provide research-based guidance on the effective use of social media, and run a number of widely-read blogs carrying content from across the school (including from the UoA). The LSE Press and Information Office help increase visibility (including through the on-line LSE Experts guide). Finally, the School also provides financial support (e.g. via the Higher Education Innovation Fund) for LSE London's Development Workshops and SERC's Making the Most of Localism project.

Further direct and indirect support is provided by the research centres. The Grantham Research Institute and CCCEP provide support from a dedicated Policy and Communications team of exceptional size – at the time of writing the team comprises seven full-time communications professionals. Consistent with its size, SERC has more limited resources but it still provides considerable day-to-day and strategic support from a Head of Policy, plus shared administrative support from the Centre for Economic Performance.

Influencing policy and strategy

Our activities aimed at influencing public debate also play a role in our second key impact aim to influence specific public policies and private activities by ensuring our research informs the development of particular policies and strategies. Often, however, the most successful means of influencing strategic decision-making in policy and business is through intensive, informal engagement with key decision-makers. These activities can range from high level personal briefing meetings with ministers and senior officials to the provision of more frequent advice to those developing detailed policies and strategy. A good example of our work here is our long-term engagement with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and its predecessors, HM Treasury, the Department for Business, Innovation and Science (BIS), and most recently the OECD on the role of planning policy in increasing costs and price volatility in housing and real estate markets (with consequent direct and indirect economic impacts on housing affordability, productivity and even fiscal policy).

This is just one example of many which, during the 2008-13 period, would include both formal and informal engagement with user groups, beneficiaries and audiences at various levels, namely:

- International and supra-national: the European Commission, the OECD, the World Bank, Regional Development Banks and various UN agencies including the Economic Commission for Latin America, the UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN-HABITAT, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Youth Unit and the International Labour Organization.
- National: both foreign (Australia, China, Costa Rica, Mexico, the Palestinian Authority, New Zealand, South Korea) and domestic (the Bank of England Residential Property Forum, BIS, DCLG, Department for Culture, Media and Sports, Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Environmental Agency, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department for International Development, Department for Transport and HM Treasury, and Ministry of Justice).
- Regional and local: the English Regional Development Agencies and their successors the Local Enterprise Partnerships, the Greater London Authority, Local Authorities (including in particular Birmingham, Cambridge, City of London, Manchester and Newcastle).
- Non-governmental (e.g. Consortium for Street Children, Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, Friends of the Earth, National Trust, WWF, Green Alliance, UK Upper Tier Tribunal) think tanks (e.g. Centre for Cities, IPPR) and business (e.g. Mercer, Munich Re, CB Richard Ellis, Family Mosaic, Property Market Analysis).

Formal means of engagement also play a role in responding to official inquiries and calls for evidence or providing peer review of ongoing work or activities. Particularly important in this regard

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is representation on key advisory boards and committees. Specific examples would include the two Barker Reviews, the Eddington Friends, the HS2 Analytical Challenge Panel, the Local Enterprise Partnership Economic Advisory Board, the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit, the Planning Sounding Board, the Climate Change Committee and the Natural Capital Committee. Many staff are also engaged in consultancy work which feeds research-based evidence directly into appropriate decision making processes.

At the Departmental level, support for these activities mainly comes indirectly via a recognition of the importance of public service and a flexible approach to 'buy-out' of several members of staff who, freed from teaching and Departmental administrative and managerial roles, have been able to devote a significant amount of their time to engaging with our key audiences for generating impact. Once again, this support is supplemented at the institutional level by similar flexibility as well as specifically through the support that LSE Enterprise provides for external consultancy work. Finally, the research groupings and centres do much to support these activities including through their support of collaborative projects with organisations, through regular meetings with users, active support for researchers with an advisory role and the hosting of seconded staff from user organisations.

c. Strategy and plans

Engagement with the public, and with communities of policy makers and opinion formers, is central to the LSE's mission. While this has always been reflected in our approach to both research and impact, there has been increasing recognition during this REF period that to maximise impact we cannot just rely upon the efforts of individual academics. Our goal for the next planning period is to strengthen our current approach to impact and to provide even more systematic support for generating it.

This was an important consideration for the UoA in seeking externally funded research centres to improve impact on climate and environmental change (Grantham/CCCEP) and urban/regional economic development (SERC). Sustaining and advancing the work of these centres will continue to be a priority for the Department. Indicative of this strategy is the recent success in establishing the BIS/CLG/ESRC funded *Local Economic Growth What Works Centre*. The centre, initially funded for a three year period starting September 2013 is part of the national What Works network and is tasked with significantly improving the use of evidence in the design and delivery of policies for local economic growth and employment – leading to more effective policies and policymaking. Some elements of the Centre's activities will build directly on partnerships with Local Authorities that were developed as part of a HEIF 5 project funded during this REF period. We also recognise that the Department needs to supplement the work of these centres, partly to further increase the impact of their activities but also to support the impact agenda of those members of staff who are not currently covered by them. In the current REF period, this has mostly taken the form of increased support for public debates and improved web and social media content (underpinned by the appointment of a Departmental Communications and Events Officer).

Historically, the extent to which the Department has been able to take an even more active role has been limited by the availability of suitable funds at the Departmental level as well as the relatively small size of the Department. The LSE's new research incentive policy will increase the amount of resources available to the Department and, henceforth, the Department's Research Committee will play a leading role in ensuring impact through the strategic oversight of engagement and impact activities, the provision of seed funding, financial support for engagement activities and the monitoring of existing activities. The Department's considerable growth over the REF period (supported by success of both research initiatives and our innovative teaching programme) is already helping to address issues of scale. Further investment in the Department as part of the LSE's Research Quality Investment Fund recruitment process has recently added a world-leading urban economist. Professor Vernon J. Henderson will further contribute to our impact agenda via his involvement with the World Bank and the DFID-funded International Growth Centre.

We will also continue to make use of resources provided at institutional level including, particularly, the high levels of support around impact (e.g. through the Public Policy Group's work on knowledge exchange), the use of social media (e.g. through the continued development of the

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Departmental web page as well as the use of school wide resources such as blogs and the syndicated channels for podcasts) and the public lecture series.

From a review of potential impact case studies within the REF period it is clear that research outputs and follow-up activity from these have been much more oriented toward securing impacts on public sector decision-making – though often with consequences for private sector behaviour – rather than toward achieving direct impacts on private sector decision-making. In large part this reflects the particular mix of research specialisms, and the salience these seem to have for different audiences. But in the next planning round the Department's Research Committee will address the question of what untapped potential there is for pursuing more impacts within segments of the private sector as part of its review of Departmental impact strategy.

d. Relationship to case studies

The submitted case studies reflect our approach to impact and illustrate the differing ways in which this is achieved. In all cases, the foundation for impact was research intended to produce advances in understanding that could and should lead to significantly better outcomes in the 'real world'. The actual translation of research breakthroughs into substantive impacts came about in varying ways, however, with greater and lesser degrees of institutional support.

The relationship between support for impact and the case studies was more indirect in the two ICS that are not directly linked to one of the UoA's major research centres. In the 'natural capital accounting' case the link between the original research and the substantive impacts grew from both the high profile nature of the academic work and the reputation of the Department in the field of environmental policy and economics. As a result, the impact stems in part from independent research and in part from externally funded research (European Commission) granted in reflection of that profile. Impact also required follow-up advisory work to UK government. This led to central tenets from the research being adopted by key central government actors and international organisations such as the Convention for Biological Diversity. In the 'climate change adaptation' case, the key piece of work was commissioned by a United Nations agency (UNDP) and its lessons promulgated by them in a report which led to its adoption by the Palestinian Authority, as well as triggering a strategic planning change within UNDP itself. The impact was made possible by Departmental support for the ICS author being bought out from his normal responsibilities for a period of time.

Three of the case studies directly link to the UoA's major research centres (1 from Grantham/CCCEP and 2 from SERC) and have strongly benefited from their respective support for impact, though some underlying research and engagement pre-date the establishment of the centres. In these cases, translating research into impact has required continuing innovative research combined with extensive engagement in the relevant policy development and implementation processes, drawing on more significant support from the institution, principally via the centres.

In the 'carbon pricing' case, there was a close inter-relation between development of the underpinning research and engagement with policy-shaping processes in central government, both before and after the CCCEP was established, with a developing set of issues, and use of the full range of channels for interaction: establishment of the centre expanded the research team, allowing broader policy issues to be addressed more comprehensively, and also enabled involvement of a much wider LSE carbon markets group in policy analyses.

In the 'land use planning' case, the underpinning research developed through a sequence of studies over a period of 15 years, part-funded by two UK Government Departments at stages before SERC's creation, and many rounds of active engagement with policy-makers starting before the REF period, though yielding their substantive impacts during this period and SERC's sponsorship by the two relevant UK Government Departments. The 'urban economic policy' case also involved a long period of research development within the UoA, generating a key set of underpinning studies before the establishment of SERC, followed by active and extended dissemination of its key messages to civil servants and ministers by the three researchers most closely associated with this ICS.