

<b>Institution: University of the West of Scotland</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA22</b>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>Staff submitted under UoA22 are based within the School of Social Sciences. This is a multi-disciplinary School including social policy, social work, sociology, psychology and politics. The School research ethos is one that emphasises the importance of applied research, which in turn reflects the University's mission statement, and encourages multi-disciplinary approaches to the research that is carried out.</p> <p>At the time of the last RAE the School research agenda was overseen by the Institute of Applied Social and Health Research. Based on developments and growth within the School the institute structure has been replaced by four research groups: Civil Society and Governance, Applied Psychology, Social Work and Health Behaviours &amp; Policy. The aim of this restructuring was to strengthen group structures based on existing research strengths and to provide a more focused structure for research support. All research active staff and PhD students are aligned to at least one research group and these groups provide support and resources for the development of applied research. Collaboration within and between group members is encouraged through the prioritisation of research bids and other forms of research support.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The submitted impact studies reflect the School's approach to embed potential impact into research work through engagement with external organisations and end users.</p> <p>A number of the research groups and researchers engage with outside organisations to inform their research questions and in some cases directly collaborate with external organisations in developing research agendas.</p> <p>The submitted case studies demonstrate these approaches. For example, the case study aimed at tackling health related problems associated with the injection of drugs builds upon a long established relationship with Health Protection Scotland. Similarly, the child employment case study has developed its research based on issues identified by local authorities and non-governmental organisations. In both of these examples the research has been commissioned by government bodies, local and national, with the specific aim of impacting on policy and practice. In the case study focusing on communities and health in Scotland engagement with a range of external bodies underpins this work including trade unions, NHS Health Scotland and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health.</p> <p>This approach is being developed with the recent partnership agreement involving Oxfam Scotland (see below) and the research groups are developing this model of external engagement.</p>
<p><b>c. Strategy and plans</b></p> <p>Staff research development and recruitment has focused on reinforcing existing areas of expertise as well as developing the main research fields within the School. In the last few years the investment in new staff posts along with the development of existing staff research profiles has allowed for considerable growth in this UoA since the 2008 RAE. This has resulted in a tripling of the number of staff submitted under UoA22 in the present REF compared with the 2008 submission.</p> <p>Drawing on the existing examples of engagement with external bodies the School has sought to expand its contact with external agencies to reinforce and underpin the applied focus of the School's research. In 2012 research links with Oxfam Scotland were formally recognised by the UWS-Oxfam Partnership agreement. This provides a direct link between researchers, Oxfam and a range of external organisations. The establishment of a Policy Forum and a programme of small scale research collaborations between external agencies and research staff within the School demonstrate the potential impact this initiative can produce. The University has supported this initiative with funding of 50k.</p>

**Impact template (REF3a)**

The development of the new research group structures within the School was undertaken in order to build upon key research strengths and target support for research more effectively. The four research groups, led by research active professors, have control over research budgets aimed at extending and developing research outputs. One key driver in terms of supporting research is applied aspect of the project and its ability to demonstrate the potential for impact. The research groups also provide opportunities for dissemination of good practice regarding research impact as well as enhancing opportunities for collaborative work. The latter is fostered through the School's research leads forum where potential joint initiatives are identified.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The approach to impact within the School involves working with partner organisations in the development of research projects and/or drawing on their expertise to identify key areas for research. This approach underpins aspects of all three case studies where collaborations with key stakeholders has informed research questions and allowed the research finding to inform policy and practice in a range of settings. For example case study 1 involves collaboration with Health Protection Scotland; case study 2 work and future development is linked with Oxfam Scotland and case study 3 has involved key stakeholders such as the Department for Education, NGO's and the Isle of Man's Department of Education and Children.

Research support has been targeted to aid the development of research outputs that will have the potential to generate impact. The new research group structures provide a focus for discussion of impact, dissemination of good practice and a means of employing research resources to underpin collaborative work. The use of research resources to underpin impact is evident in each case study. For example in case study 1 the recent allocation of funding from the University to support a new research assistant aids the current work and development of this area; in case study 2 University investment has facilitated the development of the Oxfam Partnership; in case study 3 the allocation of PhD students to this area has allowed it to develop e.g. the recent work undertaken on the Isle of Man was supported by a PhD student allocation to this project. All of the submitted case study research areas have been supported with the allocation of PhD students.