



How to build a public policy unit – or not – and get it funded



presenters

Traditional barriers for academics

1. Lack of incentives – money, career
2. Lack of knowledge & skills



Teaching



Research



Enterprise

Of course some individual academics always had extensive links with policy makers, but limited university-level action or support

Traditional barriers for universities

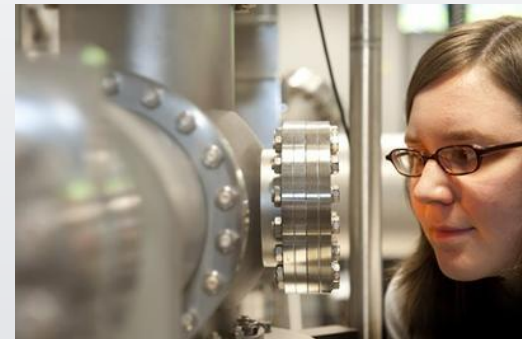
1. Lack of incentives – resource, slow returns
2. Practicalities & systems – fragmentation, space,
3. Geographies –



Teaching



Research



Enterprise



Development of Public Policy units



Policy@Manchester

Public Policy|Southampton



PolicyBristol



Nottingham Institute for Policy & Engagement

Institute for Policy Research

A leading public policy research institute, based at the University of Bath.



What's driving the trend?

1. New Government Money
 - Research Excellence Framework
 - Research funders demanding impact plans in grants
 - Opportunities to bid for specific funding
2. New university incentives (promotion, time allowances)
3. New research opportunities (e.g. access to Government data)
4. Opportunities for students (Placements; MSc projects)
5. Recognition of reputational benefits
6. Increased desire for policy impact

University Policy Team Activities



Academic push –
Take research
to policymakers



UnknownUnknown author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Policy pull –
Identify issues
of policymakers



Research Grants –
Integrate policy
impact from start



Training –
Skills for
academics



Students –
External teaching
and placements



Policy Briefing –
Productions and
distribution



Events –
In Government
& Parliament



[Washington Redskins Cheerleader](#) by
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Cheerleaders –
For policy work
in university

Trends in England & Scotland - Conversation



Exercise 1:
**Why might your university set up a Public
Policy Unit?**

Different models for public policy support

- Team within a professional service:
 - Comms & Marketing / Corporate Affairs
 - Research support
 - Impact, Public Engagement
- Directly reporting to VC/PVC/Dean
- Professional service support within a wider academic-led policy research team

Skills

- Communication is core skill:
 - Have to explain and “sell” to both policymakers and your own institutions (eg academics, deans, heads of...)
 - Translation & writing (eg policy briefs)
- Knowledge of your own university
- Knowledge of government and Parliament
- Budgets

Funding

- Core funding – (via REF)
- HEIF
- Impact Acceleration Accounts
- Specific grants for impact activities
- Impact work funded through regular grants
- Endowments



Exercise 2:
**Where in your university structure might your
university set up a Public Policy Unit?**

Benefits?

Academics

- New research & teaching opportunities
- Greater access to funding streams
- Career satisfaction

Professional Service Staff

- Career satisfaction
- Generating higher levels of creativity and public good
- Developing transferable skills

Students

- Opportunities for placements (both in Government and in policy team)
- Guest lectures/presentations on campus
- Advice on careers in public policy
- Training on policy communication

Benefits?

Wider University

- Potential for new income (REF, Research Council grants, direct funding from policy bodies)
- Profile raising - goods news stories that work well on Twitter
- Student opportunities can improve NSS scores
- Potential for improved corporate relations with local authority
- Provide a source of expertise of how to invite/get hold of politicians and senior officials for university events

What does success look like?

- Some useable evidence to contribute to REF impact case studies
- Reputation of university and policy impact of its research (external and internal)
- Knowledge and support of public policy activities by VC and senior team
- Within budget!
- Perceived benefit to grant holders
- Opportunities generated for students

Measuring this
success is hard!

Things that can go wrong

- Lack of support from top of university
- Limited communication of existence and function of public policy unit
- Have a plan of activity, but no clear idea what constitutes success
- Over-enthusiasm – policy team can turn off academics by overpromising, or by being unaware of other draws on academic time
- Reallocation of small grants – can be time-consuming and with limited value

Universities Policy Engagement Network



UPEN

Universities Policy Engagement Network

- Formalised October 2018
- New grouping of UK universities
- Hoping to have greater impact by working together
- Will develop best practice
- Working with Government & Parliament
- Champion the role of policy brokerage

Setting up a new public policy team - conversation

How to convince your university

- Get a senior backer (VC, PVC, Dean)
- Build a business case
 - Targets (national, devolved, regional, local)
 - Funding – Core, HEIF, IAA, REF Impact case studies
 - Opportunities for staff and students
 - Benefits vs costs
- Link to whatever current university strategy is
- Identify where in university the unit should go
- Pick some easy wins for first year



Exercise 3:
Plan the case to take to your VC

Alternatives to a public policy team

Final Questions

Stay in touch

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