



How can world-class research have greater policy impact?

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EPC Congress 2019

"I can call up 50 academics who will tell me how to design the perfect pension system, but can't find any who can tell me how to improve the one we have now."

New Labour Minister, c. 1997-2010

Why does policy impact matter?



Because



**Because
engineering
research can
transform the
world**

Pull Barriers

- Officials don't have access to – or culture of reading – peer reviewed journals.
- Few civil servants with STEM background.
- Pressure for policy solutions now.
- Don't know landscape.
- Technology moving very fast
- Policy cycle complex – rarely going looking for one simple answer.
- Too much to do / too little time.

Push Barriers

- Academics don't speak officials' language
- Naïve or unrealistic expectations
- Think telling us once is enough
- Failure to understand wider political / societal / economic pressures
- Publish or perish – especially for early career researchers
- Policy engagement is a skill that's not always developed
- Research talent orthogonal to policy influencing talent
- Too much to do / too little time.

I – E – E – I Model



Identify

Who needs to know about it?

- Civil servants – Grade 7s to DGs
- Relevant ministers
- Select Committees / APPGs
- Think tanks and journalists

What are the ways in?

- Relevant mega-policies, e.g. Industrial Strategy, Northern Powerhouse?
- Public concern?
- Existing burning platforms?

Engage

Establishing the initial connections and awareness

- Get a meeting with officials / minister / MPs
- Run a parliamentary briefing event
- Invite an official to come and speak at a conference
- Effective media:
 - Press releases
 - Interviews
 - Social media
- Respond to government consultations
- Have a blog and comment on both research and relevant topical news

Embed

Make yourself an integral part of the landscape

- Build strong personal relationships with officials at all levels
- Comment on government announcements in your area (and ensure the press is aware).
- Regular series of engagement to which officials, ministers, parliamentarians and think tanks are invited (e.g. HEPI parliamentary breakfast briefings).
- Provide the secretariat for a relevant APPG.
- Offer to lend a PhD student / post-doc to the department at a high resource time (e.g. consultation).
- Bid to carry out government-commissioned policy research.

Impact

Understand what you're looking to achieve

- Greater awareness?
- A change in public attitudes?
- Better targeted policies?
- New laws / regulations?
- A change to existing regulations?
- Targeted investment or research programmes?

'Centre' Approach

Advantages of a Centre Approach

- Clear and identifiable brand
- Can maintain long-term relationships
- Allows division of labour – research, influence and impact
- Skilled non-academic staff can support researchers to have impact
- Provides management framework in which impact work can be valued

Examples of existing effective centres

- Centre for Competition Policy (UEA)
- UK Trade Policy Observatory (Sussex)
- National Graphene Institute (Manchester)

I – E – E – I Model





Thank you for listening

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