EXCHANGING EXPERIENCE *of* EXPLOITATION

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Social science research and its users: the experience of the Universities of Lancaster and Manchester

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This report was produced by two research teams, one at Manchester, one at Lancaster. Those working on the project at Lancaster included: Oliver Fulton, Angela Gelston, Joan Machell, Gilly McHugh, Elizabeth Shove and Alan Warde. The Manchester team included Peter Halfpenny, Elizabeth Middleton, Ian Miles, Brian Robson and Charanjit Sangha.

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Introduction

Those who fund research are increasingly interested in the ways in which it is used and in the development of closer relationships between research and 'practice'. This report, which describes a pilot study, funded and commissioned by the ESRC, focuses on the role of universities in producing and promoting the exploitation of social science research.

The aim of the study was to review systems and practices in universities for the exploitation of social science research (not only that funded by the ESRC). In designing the project we took a deliberately broad view, arguing that the potential for exploitation depends on positioning projects and researchers within non-academic networks. We have therefore assumed that user engagement and exploitation are inextricably linked.

Our reviews of Manchester and Lancaster allowed us to highlight relevant features of institutional context and structure. While both universities are internationally strong research institutions, and while both have roughly the same number of research awards in the social sciences, they differ markedly in terms of overall size, mix of academic subjects and institutional arrangements. Comparison between the two universities allowed us to examine the interplay between institutional structures and individual networks and the implications of both for the exploitation of social science research.

To explore these issues we undertook:

- a survey of researchers and an audit of recent social science research projects in the two universities (Annexe 1);
- three workshops, one involving researchers working in research groups or centres (Annexe 2), another two with 'lone' researchers (Annexes 3 and 4);
- a focus group of CASE students in the two universities (Annexe 5);
- interviews with individual researchers to provide case studies of user interaction, and experiences of exploitation (Annexe 6);
- discussions with senior staff with responsibility for research support in the two universities (Annexe 7);
- interviews with senior staff in ESRC and in the Rowntree Foundation and with a small sample of funders and users, in particular including government departments (Annexe 8); and
- a workshop to look at our preliminary results.

Drawing on this material, our summary report investigates relationships between social science researchers, the universities in which they work and those who might use their research. It explores some of the constraints, opportunities and contradictions found at these interfaces. As well as reflecting on these features, we consider their implications for ESRC, for the two universities and for their research and user communities.

The project confirms the enormous variety of individual experience. The comments below play down these sometimes significant differences in an attempt to construct a black-and-white story from material which depicts a mixed and shaded world of greys. It is therefore important that this report is read in conjunction with the more complex descriptions provided in the Annexes.

What we argue is essentially contingent. If ESRC and universities wish to develop better links with users and to encourage the exploitation of work by their researchers, then there are implications for the ways in which they might best go about supporting and fostering researchers and there are equally lessons for researchers themselves. This is not to argue that all research within a university context either could or should be user-oriented.

The report begins with a discussion of research production in the academic environment. Starting from this base, it then considers the costs and consequences of also operating in non-academic settings, and the ways in which universities intervene in this process. In considering relationships between researchers, users, and universities, we pay special attention to the currency of reciprocity and the incentives (and disincentives) which structure patterns of interaction. These features in turn influence the making of reputations within the academic world and beyond. This is important since reputations are both outcomes and indicators of the sort of networking and inter-connectedness on which effective exploitation depends. In drawing up our recommendations we have paid special attention to these aspects.

1 Reciprocity and reputation: the academic world

Active researchers need to be plugged into a range of different communities: information and ideas about substantive research issues as well as judgements of quality flow through academic networks; relationships with funders sensitise researchers to possibilities for financial support and, in turn, influence the nature of such funding; contacts with users are essential if researchers are to generate external contracts and disseminate their work to relevant audiences. For any academic researcher these links and relationships are the very stuff of the research endeavour and their development and maintenance is vital. Though reciprocity and reputation represent twin themes around which these networks evolve, the raw ingredients of these relationships varies in important ways (Annexe 4).

Membership of *academic* research networks depends to a large degree on mutual intellectual reciprocity. Individuals bring something to the table: they contribute to debate; share ideas and information; publish and edit books, articles and reviews; act as external referees or examiners; attend and organise seminars, conferences, and so on. And it is through this kind of dialogue that reputations are formed. Reputation is measured in terms of an individual's standing in the eyes of research peers. Although universities can help to make reputations (through internal incentives, promotion systems, rewards for publication and so on), the routine weaving together of academic life is an elusive, trans-institutional and even trans-national enterprise.

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) sends a clear message to researchers and their institutions about the importance of traditional academic networks as mediated through peer reviewed publication. While many of our discussions suggested that the most successful academics see no necessary conflict between simultaneously maintaining these and other relationships - for example writing for both academic and other audiences - all our case studies emphasised the opportunity costs associated with non-academic endeavour (Annexes 2 and 4)

The table below highlights features of the academic environment which influence the development and promotion of social science research. It represents the terms on which researchers relate to each other (i.e. mutual, informal, structured around shared conventions), and suggests that universities have only indirect influence over these relationships.

	Relationships with other researchers		
	terms of reciprocity	reputations	incentives
Researchers	shared, mutual and informal, invisible colleges, peer reviewing, exchange of ideas etc.	attach to individuals, sometimes mediated by research centres	RAE
University support for researchers	reward academic recognition through promotion etc.	limited direct influence - but can affect the context in which individuals work -e.g. by funding travel, etc.	RAE

There are, however, increasingly strong incentives to go beyond the apparently self sustaining world of academic reciprocity. There are official prompts that contradict the RAE: the White Paper, Dearing, the Framework programmes, messages from research councils and so on. The ESRC's view that user engagement could itself be an aspect of research quality reminds us that the two demands might not be quite so mutually exclusive (Annexe 6).

Yet the tensions are real enough, not least because there are four further, equally significant, incentives for researchers to engage with the "outside" world: finance; access; influence; and moral obligation. External funding for contracts and projects has become increasingly important as universities seek to diversify sources of income. For researchers, project funds make life easier, and make it possible to build research teams and acquire research staff. In addition, contact with outside organisations offers the prospect of privileged access to information and ideas: to official data; to key individuals; to discussions about policy formulation and the like. This kind of interaction has other attractions for it also promises to influence the way in which the world works. It is exciting to see that research has a practical significance. More than that, many

academics feel an obligation to contribute to the public domain. If the fruits of their research can benefit public policy, commercial practice, or the lives of others they have a duty to ensure that such benefit is realised.

Exploiting these opportunities depends on developing links beyond the academic domain and developing relationships which involve different forms of reciprocity.

2 Reciprocity and reputation: "outside" worlds

The conventions of mutual, informal, exchange which characterise academic endeavour are not replicated in non-academic environments. In the "outside" world, the terms of reciprocity are much more varied. At one extreme, relationships between sponsors and researchers are defined in a formal contract which specifies the type of work required and the rate of pay. Beyond that, there are many intermediate forms of exchange. For example, researchers may develop projects, CASE studentships or Teaching Company Schemes in discussion with non academics. These in turn provide a basis for extending academic-user relationships. At the other end of the scale, researchers find themselves providing unpaid advice or consultation: talking with civil servants; giving information or views to businesses; becoming involved in the activities of voluntary-sector bodies; reacting to journalists' requests for opinions and data, and so on.

All these forms of interaction rest on the assumption that researchers have something to offer. However, expectations about the worth, value and potential utility of research differ dramatically. Some users - for example government departments - see themselves as links in a chain of exploitation, not as end-users in their own right. By contrast, other sponsors, such as commercial organisations, tend to have well defined and discrete "uses" in mind for the studies they commission. Gaps between actual and potential use, like the nature and extent of sponsors' investment in dissemination, mirror the interests and purposes of different user communities. Our survey showed that government departments were most active in promoting research they had funded, that universities were least active and that charities fell in between (Annexe 1).

In non-academic environments, judgements of relevance and quality differ depending on the contexts of exploitation and the possibilities of use. Researchers who promote their work in these settings have to position themselves in response to multiple expectations. As in the academic system, reputations have an important part to play in this process, though the terms on which they are built are again more varied.

From a researcher's perspective, strategies for becoming known often involve broadcasting and promoting work through non-academic channels: for example, writing for trade journals or the media, talking at specialist conferences, chairing meetings, and infiltrating non-academic networks. Researchers who have experience outside the university system are especially well placed to exploit their multiple identities; similarly non academics who have a penchant for or a sensitivity to research endeavour can play key bridging roles. Of course, the constant flux of priorities and people makes it especially difficult to develop lasting reciprocal networks across diverse and uneven "user" environments. As our respondents noted, critical links often snap when researchers' non-academic contacts move to other posts or other companies. Much depends on the nature of the user community but to the extent that a research group's reputation and collective network is greater than one or two of its individual members, centres may be more resilient in this respect (Annexe 2). Similarly, reputation can partly be a product not only of a research group or institute, but also of the university in which

it is based. There may be important lessons in this for universities. If, as our audit of the two universities suggested (Annexe 1), the vast majority of researchers see their university as offering little tangible support, universities might best concentrate on ensuring that their overall research reputation is held in high esteem.

From a user's perspective, the search for relevant expertise (and so the identification and construction of research reputations) can take a number of routes. However, one important feature is that the search is generally for people, not for projects, research findings, centres or institutions. There are examples - not least in government departments - of deliberate attempts to track down "key" academics. For instance, we found users who have quite detailed mental maps of who is who in the research community (Annexe 8). Such pictures are constructed and maintained through contacts with ex-colleagues, or by attending academic meetings and conferences. These systematic approaches seem less common in the business world. But whatever the strategy, there is an inevitable polarisation between the 'stars' who for one reason or another become visible in (one or more) non-academic settings, and an undifferentiated mass of others with whom and for whom interaction is much more difficult.

The table below summarises features of non-academic environments which influence the development and promotion of social science research. The diversity of users and user expectations generates a correspondingly diverse array of user-researcher relationships. There are many "outside" worlds to relate to, each with their own qualities and characteristics.

	Different user communities		
	terms of reciprocity	reputations	incentives
Researchers	very varied - ranging from the formal contracts to more informal exchange based on access, influence, etc.	based on a range of different qualities, usually attached to individuals but sometimes to centres and institutions	1993 White Paper, Dearing, pressure from the Research Councils; pressure to generate external funding; personal obligation
University support for researchers	providing incentives to engage with users, and balancing these with the demands of the RAE.	actively promoting the social science expertise of research groups, centres and/or the institution as a whole	pressure to generate external funding

3 Tensions and trajectories

University researchers operate within a system in which academic reputations are important and in which their successful development depends on certain forms of mutual interaction. Some researchers also promote their work in non-academic environments and, as suggested above, strategies for effective exploitation differ hugely in these much more diverse settings. The rules of the non-academic game(s) are equally demanding, and in trying to function across two or more "worlds", researchers confront competing, sometimes conflicting demands. Different ways of handling these tensions have practical implications for individual researchers and for the institutions in which they work.

To give just one example, traditional forms of academic publication are less likely to have an impact on non-academic users than face-to-face interaction with real-life researchers. It is now commonly recognised that the exploitation of research is not a simple linear process in which readers are sensitised by and act on published output. Instead, user interaction is generally an iterative process. It might involve publication somewhere along the way, but that is only one aspect of a process in which researchers translate practitioners' concerns into researchable topics and/or in which practitioners alter practice and policy through debate with researchers. More than that, dissemination can take researchers into totally new, non-research, territory. Sensitive dissemination processes - as for example developed by the Rowntree Foundation - involve structuring 'events', crafting briefing papers and targeting relevant decision-makers. But it may be necessary to go beyond the launching of results and become involved in the development and application of these ideas in the real world (Annexe 8). In other words, continuing dialogue might be required if research is to be translated into practice. The trouble is that such interaction involves time-consuming work, but work that is not yet recognised or valued as such within the formal incentive structures of the academic world.

Despite these competing demands, our study suggests that certain individuals and research groups deliberately construct mixed, or balanced, research portfolios. Those who go out of their way to engage with a variety of funding bodies, sponsors and user communities (whether to spread the risks of research funding or to build a rounded career), have to find ways of managing the tensions described above. The case studies suggest that an ability to switch between academic and non-academic identities is an increasingly important asset. Several of our respondents described how (multiple) reputations were assembled and constructed across a sequence of projects - funded in different ways and involving different potential users - over the course of a career. Personal trajectories, like those of research centres and groups, typically involved the sequential or simultaneous management of different forms of reciprocity.

Although we have described them separately, the pressures of academic and user interaction co-exist. The energy and resources invested in exploiting social science research depends on the ways in which individuals and institutions handle these overlapping demands. As we have seen, the mutually defined mono-culture of academic life pulls researchers in one direction. Engagement with multiple possible non-academic interests pulls them in many others. Institutions, too, need to respond to the discipline of the RAE, while also recognising and supporting a diversity of user-researcher relationships.

4 Institutional contexts: Lancaster and Manchester

This far we have focused on the tensions, demands and incentives of academic life without regard to the institutional contexts in which research takes place. In practice, research incentives are also structured *within* universities. Not only that, universities do have some influence over the development of both academic and non-academic networks. Our reviews of Manchester and Lancaster (Annexe 5) suggest that there may be institutional imperatives that encourage or inhibit interaction with users. However, these were not immediately obvious.

Few of the researchers we surveyed (Annexes 1 and 6) saw universities as having a supporting role in promoting social science or in facilitating user involvement. Knowledge of research substance, like familiarity with academic (and even non-academic) networks, required such specialist expertise that university administrators were not generally thought to have the capacity to do much beyond relaying standard information about opportunities for research funding. Respondents were able to identify administrative tasks that could be done more efficiently (providing faster turnaround of research contracts; a floating financial reserve on which teams or individuals could borrow to sustain research staff; offering greater technical assistance with the production of briefings papers or reports etc.) but few thought that universities could act as effective brokers in mediating between researchers and users. However, some did think that their institution could do more to strengthen its overall research standing and promote its expertise in social science.

Yet corporate climate is becoming an increasingly important consideration. This is partly a result of the financial difficulties faced by many universities and partly a function of the clearer specification of strategic goals. While researchers still operate in contexts that are non-place specific, many are now more alert to the corporate interests of their own institution. Universities are therefore concerned to promote the quality of *their* research to the outside world. The parallel internal challenge is to construct systems and incentives which positively support exploitation and user interaction, and which underline the value placed on such activity. All this has implications for the training, induction and career development of new and established researchers. At the moment, most university-based support is geared toward increasing external research income. A focus on the effectiveness and exploitation of existing research and on the career development of researchers presents new challenges.

In addressing these questions, there may be valuable lessons to be learned from the experiences of research centres and groups included in our study. Very few social science researchers claimed to work alone, and most collaborated with colleagues in the same institution or with groups elsewhere. In exploring the contexts of research, we encountered a wide variety of research-group structures, ranging from the "virtual" group based on the informal and fluid combination of two or more researchers through to discipline-specific or interdisciplinary centres or institutes formally recognised by the university. What 'centres' all have in common, to varying degrees, is the benefit (and sometimes the cost) of collective action. This can bring with it greater external visibility and a joint identity from which all can benefit; a capacity to promote "branded" reports, papers, and publicity materials; access to more extensive, durable and active external networks (for example, through the use of external representatives on steering groups and advisory bodies); and the potential for managing training and sharing skills and experience across cohorts of researchers. As we note in Annexe 2, there are also potential drawbacks: for instance, the need to maintain a steady income can distort

research goals and divert individual research trajectories. Nevertheless, we found that researchers working in self-financing centres, were especially good at developing and maintaining non-academic contacts and networks. This is perhaps to be expected, partly because livelihoods often depend on securing a steady stream of external research funding, and partly because some centres revolved around the entrepreneurial activities of key individuals.

Lancaster has deliberately created a number of research institutes and at Manchester too, there are numerous centres and groups. Whatever the nomenclature, there is an inevitable and perhaps healthy messiness in the variety of centre structures to be found in both universities. Although part of the university system, these groups, institutes or units also have to reflect and relate to the needs and interests of their constituencies in the "outside" world. Closer investigation of centres - as micro-institutions at the interface of academic and non-academic worlds - promises to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of alternative arrangements for involving and engaging with different user communities. Universities could profitably think further about the varieties of such groupings, virtual and otherwise, and the about ways in which they assist in the promotion and exploitation of research.

There are other specific differences between the two universities. Lancaster's location appears to make routine contact with external bodies more difficult, meanwhile the weight of science-based research at Manchester tends to emphasise that university's links with business and industry. On the other hand, formal systems of research support - which are much more extensive at Manchester than Lancaster - do not appear to affect the ways in which researchers promote their work. Despite the similarity of actual patterns of research funding and research standing in the social sciences (see Annexe 1) there are nonetheless, interesting differences of self-perception. Lancaster largely sees its own success in terms of research council grants, RAE gradings and its standing in many areas of 'pure' academic research. Manchester ostensibly has a greater concern with the relevance of its research and with its user links. Whether such corporate self-perceptions make tangible differences to the behaviour of researchers in the two institutions remains a moot point. The striking fact is that all of our evidence suggests the similarity of the social science output from the two universities.

To summarise, Lancaster and Manchester universities have an indirect influence on the exploitation of social science research. Though preoccupied with means of generating more research income, they have not yet focused on exploitation. Institutional structures and arrangements, and in particular, systems which foster the development of research centres and groupings of different kinds, do, however, influence opportunities for networking and sharing experience, and for promoting research expertise to the outside world. The question that is raised is what value is or could be added by the university context in which research is done. The challenge to universities must be to address three aspects through which such value-added might derive: mobilising the potential partnerships with external bodies; strengthening the management of research; and boosting the training and career development of researchers through human resource development programmes. Each of these need to considered at departmental, faculty and central university levels.

5 Institutional contexts: the ESRC

The ESRC brief for this study invited us to "identify options for improving exploitation processes, both in university systems and the supporting role of ESRC". In this final section we consider the ESRC's position in relation to researchers, universities and

users. Where does the ESRC fit in terms of the mono-culture of academic research and the multiple sub-cultures of user interaction? The answer is ambivalent. The ESRC plays a role as both sponsor and funder and to the extent that it operates within the remit of supporting blue-sky research it inhabits a niche market. Critically, it is not a user in its own right (or at least not for most of the research it supports). As a result, its funding priorities are not identical to those of government and business, both of which are user-funders, and both of which typically have precise expectations about the role and relevance of their own directly funded research. By implication, systems and mechanisms relating to the promotion and exploitation of ESRC funded research should relate to its position and role as one amongst other types of research funder, and should reflect associated expectations about how "its" research might be used, and by whom.

In practice, ESRC funded research is expected to lead to academic publication *and* to be of use and relevance in one or more non-academic contexts. In terms of the analysis we have developed here, the ESRC - like the academic researchers and institutions it supports - is caught between the realm of academic discipline and peer review, and the multiple demands and expectations of potential users. Though these are not logically incompatible, each is wrapped in a significantly different system of reciprocity and reward.

Given the differing bases of reputation (both of individuals and institutions) in academic and non-academic environments, how can the ESRC intervene if it wishes to encourage universities to promote the exploitation of social science research? One obvious strategy is to change the rules and conditions of funding. For example, CASE studentships provide a context in which students learn something of the diplomacy needed to handle differing expectations of research. Though this might be a painful process - one respondent described its as "battle training" (see Annexe 5) - it gives students potentially useful experience. In addition, CASE studentships bring supervisors and non-academic partners into yet another form of contact. Another strategy is to engineer more opportunities for interaction between researchers and users, or between researchers and intermediary organisations such as professional associations, think tanks and pressure groups who are themselves in a position to relate research to policy and practice.

Our case studies and interviews suggest that the exploitation of research depends in large part on relationships between researchers and non-academics that are built up over time, and that span individual projects. In other words it is the career that counts, not the bits of research out of which it is constructed. Recognising that exploitation revolves around people, not projects, points to new possibilities for the strategic grouping and promotion of expertise. For example, people who have worked on ESRC projects funded in different ways and at different periods might be brought together and retrospectively "packaged" in ways which make that expertise accessible to specific user communities.

This study also underlines the importance of centres, not just ESRC-funded centres, but, rather, the huge diversity of trans-institutional groupings and ad-hoc alliances as well as university based units and institutes. There are further opportunities here for network management - for example encouraging researchers to form actual or virtual centres, and in the process, to enhance individual and collective reputations within the academic world and beyond.

In these ways, the ESRC has the capacity to modify institutional contexts and thereby shape the structures of reciprocity and reputation on which the exploitation of social science depends.

6 Recommendations for universities if they wish to encourage user engagement

Universities should consider ways of developing stronger management of research at all levels of the institution. For the 'centre' this would imply, inter alia, considering the outputs and outcomes of research as well as the generation of research income.

1. Evaluate the benefits of exploitation in generating future research income: is exploitation worthwhile, and if so, how much more attention should it get.

2. Be explicit about tensions between RAE and non-academic user-related demands at all levels, and encourage appropriately mixed or balanced "portfolios".

3. Consider ways of signalling the esteem in which research exploitation will be held and how it might be rewarded.

4. Play a more active role in promoting "their" social science research. This might involve identifying areas of genuine expertise, and concentrating on these.

5. Experiment with different ways of getting to know potential funders, for example invite non academics to seminars or organise and host non-academic events. As well as sending researchers out, such strategies should bring users into the university.

6. Encourage a variety of 'centres' and centre-like formations, and evaluate their effectiveness. The experience of similar and different types of centre should be more widely shared.

7. Encourage the multiple use of projects, and identify various audiences to which they should be aimed. This might involve strategic packaging and re-grouping of existing research and expertise across the social sciences.

8. Develop special support for CASE students.

9. Support user-related research career development. This would include valuing time spent on exploitation and promotion, and recognising the importance of contract research. Greater use of rolling contracts would help research teams capitalise on accumulated skills and experience.

7 Recommendations for the ESRC if it wishes to encourage greater user engagement

1. It is clear that the RAE's emphasis on academic output sends strong messages to researchers. If it wishes to encourage greater user engagement, the ESRC should redouble efforts to expand the RAE definitions of research quality to take note of relevance and influence in the "outside" world.

2. There is, however, an important if fuzzy line to be drawn between the role of research councils and those of funder-users. Hence there is a need for the ESRC to think carefully about its special position with respect to the goals and ambitions of

other research funders, and so to consider the particular sorts of use and types of user-relationships which it is best suited to promote.

3. The ESRC should review the kinds of support and dissemination strategies adopted by user-funders, such as business and government, to see if there are lessons from which it might learn. Equally, it is important to recognise that the ESRC is not in the same position and does not have the same goals as these user-funders. Copying the same strategies is unlikely to be appropriate given important differences of role and purpose.

4. The ESRC should pay more attention to different types of user-relationship (e.g. in terms of reciprocity) and to the different promotional strategies associated with each.

5. It should recognise more explicitly that the use and exploitation of research largely depends on links forged between users and individual researchers. By focusing more on the longer-term trajectories of researchers and research areas, the ESRC could develop initiatives to exploit recently completed projects, for instance, reviewing and re-grouping response mode projects and so promoting generic areas of expertise.

6. Given the importance of networks and of the interactive nature of the processes of dissemination and influence, the ESRC should encourage and offer support to individual researchers to network with each other and with non-academics. This is a time consuming process, but greater use of very small grants to enable researchers to travel to briefing sessions or non-academic meetings would help, as would support for dissemination and exploitation long after projects have formally come to an end. Developing and encouraging secondments between academic and non academic worlds would also help.

7. The ESRC should experiment with, and evaluate the benefits of, a greater variety of types of research centre funding, including the recognition and support of virtual centres; the formation of ad-hoc, or post-project research networks and so on.

8. It should expand its CASE studentships scheme and advertise its benefits to potential external funders/users in order to increase take-up. In addition, it should find ways of linking CASE studentships to research programmes and other initiatives, in order to make best use of hard won user-relationships.

Annexe 1 An audit of research projects

Aim

The central aim of the audit was to gain an overview of the assistance in promoting the exploitation of their social science research by non-academic bodies that investigators obtain from their university, and compare this with the assistance provided by their funders or sponsors and the extent to which researchers draw on for later stages of the project.

Timespan of projects included

Because good quality central university records on research funding had been established in preparing for the 1996 RAE, it was decided to use the same starting date of 1 January 1992 and include all projects which were in progress then or had begun subsequently. On the basis that exploitation is more likely after projects are completed, it was decided to exclude those which had not ended by 30 June 1997.

Researchers and grants included

The aim was to achieve coverage of all internally and externally funded research projects conducted by staff in core social science departments and research centres, together with those undertaken by staff in other departments who, according to central records, had received social science funding. 'Staff' included all current academic staff eligible to apply for RC grants, that is, RAs were excluded. Academics who were no longer employed by the universities on 30 June 1997 were also excluded because the timescale was too short to locate their current address and follow them up. 'Social science funding' included the obvious sources, together with all those from which staff in core social science departments and centres had received funds according to central records. In addition, a small sample (20 in each university) of researchers from core social science departments who, again according to central records, had not received research funding in the period under consideration were added. This strategy of constructing the sample of researchers erred on the side of inclusiveness. Accordingly, a filter question was used to establish the extent to which respondents considered each project to be social science research, broadly conceived; projects for which the response was 'not at all' were excluded from the analysis. In the case of multi-researcher projects, one questionnaire was sent to the principal investigator, inviting a response from the most appropriate grant-holder. In order not to over-burden investigators who had had more than five projects over the time period, such people were asked to report on a minimum of five of their choosing from a list of all their projects, although many of them responded about more than this minimum.

Questionnaire

After exploring the feasibility of telephone interviews and email inquiries, it was decided to use a paper questionnaire distributed through the internal mail system, as this was most likely to be successful in reaching the respondents over the summer, when many would be away for periods at conferences or on holiday. In designing the questionnaire, the primary consideration was to keep it simple so that it was quick and easy to complete, otherwise the response rate would suffer because the research constituency is heavily burdened by data gathering. More probing questions were kept for the other parts of the study, particularly the workshops and case

studies. A single questionnaire for use in both universities was drafted and pilot tested on a few highly research-active staff to ensure that it could be completed within five minutes. Basic details of the projects were mailmerged into the questionnaires from central university records of research grants: the principal investigator's name and department, the project title, start date and end date, the funder and the value of the grant. A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this annexe.

Data collection

Audit questionnaires were sent to investigators in late July 1997, along with a covering letter and an addressed envelope for returns. Two reminders were issued in August and September. By mid-October when the survey was closed, 196 returns had been received at Lancaster, a response rate of 56%, and 173 (88%) of these were in-scope and considered by the principal investigators to be about social science research projects entirely, to a large extent or to a small extent (see Table 1). By the closing date at Manchester, 411 returns had been received, a response rate of 57% of projects, and 271 (66%) of these were in-scope and about social science research projects.

Table 1: Response rates: research projects

Questionnaires	Lancaster		Manchester	
	number	%	number	%
Distributed	371	100%	746 (a)	100%
uncontactable	19	5%	19	3%
Of contacts	352	100%	727	100%
refused	2	1%	10	1%
non-response	154	43%	306	42%
returned	196	56%	411	57%
Of returns	196	100%	411	100%
out of scope (b)	1	1%	44	11%
not at all social science	22	11%	96	23%
in scope	173	88%	271	66%
Of in-scope returns				
social science:	173	100%	271	100%
entirely	91	52%	172	63%
to a large extent	53	31%	61	23%
to a small extent	24	14%	38	14%

(a) to allow for the strategy to reduce response burden by inviting multiple grant holders to make only five returns, this figure includes five questionnaires for each such researcher, except where they returned more than five, in which case the total number of their returns is included.

(b) the main reason projects were out of scope was because they fell outside the reference period.

At Lancaster, 79 individuals (five of whom had not been funded) were responsible for the 173 in-scope projects, an average of 2.2 each. At Manchester, 117 principal investigators were responsible for the 271 in-scope projects, an average of 2.4 each.

The research projects

This section provides a profile of the research projects for which returns were received.

The primary and secondary disciplines of the research projects were widely spread across the categories that the ESRC uses to classify research proposals (see

Table 2). At Lancaster, the most frequent primary disciplines were Education (19%), Sociology (16%), Management and Business Studies (10%) and Social Policy (10%), with few from Economics, Human Geography or Social Anthropology. At Manchester, the most frequent primary disciplines were Sociology (15%), Management and Business Studies (14%), Economics (12%) and Psychology (11%). These four disciplines contributed over half of all projects (52%) at Manchester, where there were few from Social Anthropology (2%) and none from Linguistics or Area Studies. Both Social Policy and Statistics, Computing and Methodology featured more prominently as secondary disciplines than primary ones at Manchester.

Table 2: Primary discipline of the research projects

Discipline	Primary discipline		Secondary discipline	
	Lancaster	Manchester	Lancaster	Manchester
	%	%	%	%
Sociology	16	15	10	5
Management and business studies	10	14	8	7
Economics	2	12	4	8
Psychology	9	11	5	3
Social Policy	10	7	8	13
Environmental planning	-	7	1	3
Human geography	6	5	2	1
Political science/international relations	1	4	1	2
Economic and social history	3	4	0	1
Education	19	3	9	2
Socio-legal studies	0	3	1	*
Statistics, computing, methodology	9	3	8	10
Social Anthropology	1	2	4	2
Linguistics	6	0	1	1
Area studies	0	0	1	4
Multi-disciplinary	-	1	-	-
Other (a)	8	10	7	4
N (= 100%)	173		271	

* = 0 to 0.5%

Over two-fifths of projects were conducted under the auspices of a university-based centre or institute at both Lancaster (43%) and Manchester (44%).

Funders/sponsors were classified into five categories (see Table 3). A third of the projects had been funded by government agencies (37% at Lancaster and 33% at Manchester) and a quarter by research councils (25% at Lancaster and 22% at Manchester). Charities funded more projects than industry or business and, as expected, few projects were internally funded or unfunded.

Table 3: Project funders

Funder	Lancaster	Manchester
	%	%
Government agencies	37	33
Research councils	25	22
Charities	13	15
Industry and business	10	10
Internally funded or unfunded	9	7
Other (a)	5	14
N (= 100%)	173	271

(a) Including those for which there were insufficient details to classify them

The value of the grants supporting the projects varied from £77 to £12,960 per month at Lancaster and £57 to £26,082 per month at Manchester. The mean at Lancaster was £2,485 per month and the median £1,793. At Manchester the mean was £3,112 per month and the median £2,128.

Respondents were asked to classify what their research produced as outputs into as many of seven categories as applied. As Table 4 shows, new information and data was the most frequent output (from 67% of projects at Lancaster and 63% at Manchester), followed closely by critique, analysis, conceptual development and theory (60% at Lancaster and 61% at Manchester). Other important outputs were methods, models and tools (47% at Lancaster and 38% at Manchester), policy recommendations (44% at Lancaster and 51% at Manchester) and the evaluation of practice (42% at both universities). Training courses, events and materials were the least frequent outputs (25% at Lancaster and 15% at Manchester). It should be noted, however, that training activity provided by staff at the University of Manchester will be underestimated by this figure, because external funds specifically for training are not recorded on the research grant database used to identify projects for inclusion in the audit. 'Other' outputs included research proposals, seminars and publications.

Table 4: Project outputs

Output	Lancaster	Manchester
	%	%
new information, data	67	63
critique, analysis, conceptual development, theory	60	61
methods, models, tools, instruments, software	47	38
policy recommendations	44	51
evaluation of practice	42	42
re-working of existing data	26	31
training course, event or materials	25	15
other	13	11
N		

The principal investigators had research experience varying from one to 40 years at Lancaster (median 18 years) and 2 to 38 years at Manchester (median 20 years). Higher proportions of the projects were undertaken by principal investigators with longer periods of academic experience (see Table 5). This is probably due partly to the age profile of academic staff, with there being higher proportions in the older age groups.

Table 5: Years that principal investigators had occupied an academic post

Years in academic post (a)	Lancaster %	Manchester %
0 to 8 years	22	15
9 to 16 years	18	24
17 to 24 years	30	28
25 years or more	30	32
N (= 100%)	79	117

(a) Including research posts

Exploitation of the research projects

This section described the range of users to which the research projects were relevant and disseminated, and on which they had known effects.

Respondents were asked to identify to which types of users they thought the project was relevant, to which types of users they had disseminated the research, and on which types of users the research had had any effects known to them (in each case excluding from users other academics). A list of 12 types of users was provided and respondents were asked to consider each in turn. The results are presented in

Table 6 and Figure 1. (Figures appear at the end of this report.) In interpreting these, it should be remembered that some of the projects had only recently been completed and dissemination might take place in the future and effects might subsequently emerge.

Table 6: Relevance, dissemination and known effects of projects

Type of user	research relevant		relevant research disseminated		disseminated research, known to have had an effect	
	Lancaster	Manchester	Lancaster	Manchester	Lancaster	Manchester
	%	%	%	%	%	%
central UK government departments	49	65	47	65	40	46
other universities and colleges	44	41	62	72	42	40
public sector agencies/quangos (excluding health service)	38	36	58	52	58	43
UK local government	29	30	54	46	56	41
large private sector businesses	29	25	53	46	59	52
professional bodies	26	40	44	71	38	40
voluntary sector agencies, social and political movements	25	32	64	58	54	46
small private sector businesses	22	19	50	35	26	33
European Commission and its agencies	21	25	43	53	50	58
overseas governments and their agencies	21	24	41	55	33	47
mass media	20	16	37	43	23	37
health service trusts and agencies	15	24	69	56	72	39
other	14	12	58	75	50	75
none	3	5	27	64	100	78
N	173	271				

The largest proportion of projects were considered to be relevant to central UK government departments (49% at Lancaster and 65% at Manchester). This was followed by universities and colleges (44% at Lancaster and 41% at Manchester) and public sector agencies (38% at Lancaster and 36% at Manchester). A substantial proportion of projects at Manchester were relevant to professional bodies (40%) though this was less so at Lancaster (26%). The smallest proportion of projects were thought relevant to health service trusts and agencies (15% at Lancaster and 24% at Manchester) and the mass media (20% at Lancaster and 16% at Manchester). Very few of the projects were deemed by their principal investigators to have no relevance to any type of external agency: only 3% at Lancaster and 5% at Manchester.

Not all research considered to be relevant to an external agency was disseminated to that agency. For example, at Lancaster, although 49% of projects were considered relevant to central UK government departments, only 47% of such projects had been disseminated to this type of user. In the case of small private sector businesses, as few as 35% of Manchester projects regarded as relevant had been disseminated, this being the lowest dissemination rate.

Similarly, not all projects considered to be relevant and disseminated to external agencies were known by the principal investigators to have had an effect. The highest at Lancaster occurs with health service trusts and agencies: 72% of projects considered relevant and disseminated to this type of external agency were known to have had an effect.. The lowest figure is for Lancaster projects relevant and disseminated to the mass media, where only 23% were known to have had an effect.

Assistance in promoting the exploitation of the research

This section describes the assistance provided by the university and by the funder, and the use of personal contacts, in exploiting research.

Respondents were asked to what extent their university at any level (centre, faculty, school or department) assisted with the dissemination or exploitation of their research in each of eight different ways. They reported that their universities gave very little assistance in the dissemination or exploitation of their research in any of the ways explored in the questionnaire. In almost all respects, for a large majority of projects it was said that the universities had not helped at all (see Table 7 and Figure 2). Where they had helped, it was more usual that a little help had been given, rather than a moderate amount or very much. At Lancaster, the principal exceptions were that the university at some level had helped at least a little with the publication of the research (32% of the projects) and travel costs for dissemination off-campus (29%). At Manchester, despite the existence of a central Research Support Unit, less assistance was reported, with only 16% of projects receiving at least a little help with publication, 13% with travel costs for dissemination and 12% with protection of intellectual property rights. At Lancaster, 'other' types of assistance mentioned as having been rendered by the university (for 19% of projects) included time, professional indemnity insurance, infrastructure access (computation and library) and permission to be bought out of teaching.

Table 7: University assistance with dissemination or exploitation of research

Type or assistance from the university	Lancaster				Manchester			
	very much	moder -ately	a little	not at all	very much	moder -ately	a little	not at all
					%	%	%	%
publication of the research	7	14	12	68	5	5	6	84
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	10	12	7	71	3	7	4	87
protection of intellectual property rights	1	2	10	86	6	5	2	88
contacts with potential users	-	2	7	91	3	4	4	89
identification of potential users	-	3	3	94	2	3	4	91
media publicity	-	5	6	89	3	4	2	91
support for training materials or events	3	2	1	93	4	1	2	93
promotional events	1	3	6	90	2	2	2	94
other	16	3		81	2	*	*	97

* = between 0 and 0.5%. Figures are row percentages. They exclude non-responses and returns where respondents said that assistance was not applicable.

In a parallel question, respondents were asked to what extent their funder or sponsor had assisted with the dissemination or exploitation of their research in each of the eight different ways. Sponsors were reported to be more helpful than universities (see Table 8 and Figure 3). For four out of the eight specified categories of assistance, it was said that the sponsor had helped with 40% or more of the projects. Where assistance had been provided, it was more usual that very much help had been given, rather than a moderate amount or a little, which is the reverse of the case for university assistance. At both universities, sponsors helped extensively with travel costs for dissemination off-campus, identifying potential users, making contacts with potential users, and publication of the research.

Sponsors were reported to have helped projects at Lancaster rather more than at Manchester in most respects. It may be that Lancaster staff have somewhat lower expectations of what might count as support, a plausible suggestion given that Lancaster respondents also reported more support from their university than did their Manchester counterparts.

Table 8: Funder assistance with dissemination or exploitation of research

Type or assistance from the funder or sponsor	Lancaster				Manchester			
	very much	moder -ately	a little	not at all	very much	moder -ately	a little	not at all
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
identification of potential users	21	20	7	51	22	12	9	57
publication of the research	24	11	14	52	23	11	9	57
contacts with potential users	16	22	11	51	20	11	9	60
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	21	21	11	47	21	10	8	60
promotional events	12	13	11	64	11	6	7	76
media publicity	11	10	10	69	11	6	6	77
support for training materials or events	15	7	10	68	9	4	3	84
protection of intellectual property rights	2	4	4	90	2	6	1	91
other	3	0	2	95	2	0	0	98

Figures are row percentages. They exclude non-responses and returns where respondents said that assistance was not applicable.

When asked if they drew on their personal contacts and networks in the dissemination or exploitation of their work, a large proportion of respondents reported that they did: 89% at Lancaster and 87% at Manchester, with 44% at Lancaster and 42% at Manchester saying that they did so very much (see Table 9).

Table 9: Use of personal contacts in the dissemination or exploitation of research

	Lancaster				Manchester			
	very much	moder -ately	a little	not at all	very much	moder -ately	a little	not at all
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Use of personal contacts and networks	44	33	12	11	42	29	16	13

Figures are row percentages.

Variations in assistance in promoting the exploitatin of research

In order to investigate whether there were any systematic relationships between aspects of the research projects and the exploitation of the work, a series of bivariate correlations was undertaken. The independent variables examined were the extent to which the project was social science, the size of grant, the type of sponsor or funder, the discipline, whether the research was undertaken under the auspices of a research centre or institute, the length of experience of the investigator, and the type of research output. The dependent variables were the types of assistance provided by the universities and by sponsors or funders, and the use of personal contacts, to promote the exploitation of research. Because relatively little assistance was offered by either universities or sponsors, the analyses made a distinction only between some assistance being provided (whether a little, a moderate level or very much) and none at all. No distinction is made between university assistance offered centrally or at the level of faculty, school, department or research centre. Cases where the respondents did not respond or reported that assistance was not applicable are excluded from the analyses. In general, there was little systematic variation between the factors investigated and the types of assistance provided by the universities or sponsors, or the use of personal networks. In only five cases (out of 133 correlations on the Manchester data) were the values of the coefficient lambda greater than 0.2 and in most cases it took the value zero; in other words all the relationships were weak or non-existent. Some illustrative analyses are described below.

Table 10: Assistance by size of grant

Type of assistance	Lancaster					Manchester				
	£ per month					£ per month				
	< 1,000	1,000-2,000	2,001-3,000	3,001-5,000	> 5,000	< 1,000	1,000 - 2,000	2,001 - 3,000	3,001 - 5,000	> 5,000
from the university	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
identification of potential users	2	7	20	0	0	3	13	5	9	6
contacts with potential users	4	13	25	0	6	12	13	5	9	6
publication of the research	25	58	50	24	13	17	13	14	13	9
media publicity	5	23	11	10	13	9	5	2	6	6
promotional events	2	13	20	14	13	3	5	9	6	0
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	25	36	45	24	25	17	10	7	6	3
support for training materials or events	2	3	16	10	0	2	15	7	3	11
protection of intellectual property rights	7	13	21	10	19	7	8	7	13	24
other	4	8	29	25	29	2	0	2	0	3
from the funder or sponsor										
identification of potential users	43	39	57	57	67	31	39	42	58	69
contacts with potential users	41	32	67	65	67	27	40	35	54	63
publication of the research	37	41	62	61	56	**29**	**29**	**42**	**58**	**71**
media publicity	19	24	47	52	41	20	16	23	39	23
promotional events	32	17	50	52	56	15	11	26	39	37
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	49	59	58	59	56	27	34	47	46	54
support for training materials or events	19	25	47	38	40	11	11	12	19	35
protection of intellectual property rights	7	0	6	25	14	4	11	5	12	21
other	4	0	33	0	0	0	3	2	0	3
use of personal contacts										
very much	58	40	27	52	32	44	61	51	19	31
moderately	23	40	46	13	47	26	26	33	44	17
a little	9	10	18	13	5	9	11	9	26	20
not at all	9	10	9	22	16	20	3	7	11	31

Figures in bold represent bivariate relationships having a value for lambda (with assistance as the dependent variable) of greater than 0.2

Table 10 suggests that Manchester University tends to give assistance to holders of small grants rather than to those with large grants, particularly for travel costs. The exception is where intellectual property rights are relevant, when the university tends to give more assistance to large grant-holders. In Lancaster, on the other hand, the university support tends to be concentrated on projects with grants of medium value.

Funders and sponsors appear to give more assistance to projects where their investments are high; expensive projects are given more support than cheaper ones at both Manchester and Lancaster.

Respondents with the largest grants make least use of personal networks.

Table 11: Assistance by type of sponsor

Type of assistance	Lancaster					Manchester				
	Government	Research Councils	Business	Charities	Internal/ non fund	Government	Research Councils	Business	Charities	Internal/ non fund
from the university	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
identification of potential users	5	8	0	5	17	14	5	12	5	6
contacts with potential users	10	12	0	5	17	15	5	15	13	6
publication of the research	35	40	21	20	17	13	17	19	18	25
media publicity	7	17	14	11	17	8	9	8	5	19
promotional events	19	7	7	0	8	7	3	4	10	6
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	32	45	7	5	23	11	12	4	18	44
support for training materials or events	3	18	0	0	8	11	3	8	10	6
protection of intellectual property rights	18	8	29	0	27	18	5	8	11	19
other	12	19	14	14	67	2	3	0	0	25
from the funder or sponsor										
identification of potential users	**72**	**20**	**67**	**48**	**27**	**64**	**30**	**44**	**28**	**9**
contacts with potential users	70	25	73	48	25	58	30	52	26	9
publication of the research	64	29	71	45	33	53	28	48	28	27
media publicity	35	18	64	42	9	20	21	36	23	18
promotional events	49	22	62	30	18	30	15	28	21	9
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	60	54	69	43	25	47	47	24	31	18
support for training materials or events	48	21	50	22	9	23	14	12	10	9
protection of intellectual property rights	14	6	18	0	9	11	8	4	11	9
other	8	0	17	0	0	3	2	0	0	18
use of personal contacts										
very much	33	63	40	43	31	31	47	24	63	44
moderately	33	30	40	24	50	33	35	20	26	31
a little	20	2	0	14	19	24	12	28	3	19
not at all	13	5	20	19	0	12	5	28	8	6

Figures in bold represent bivariate relationships having a value for lambda (with assistance as the dependent variable) of greater than 0.2.

Table 11 shows whether type of sponsorship made a difference to the extent of various types of assistance. The help given by the universities was not systematically differentiated. At Manchester most support for the publication of research, media publicity and travel for dissemination off-campus was given to projects which were either funded internally or not funded at all. At Lancaster there was a tendency for the University to give most support of these kinds to projects funded by the Research Councils. For example, the university helped with funding travel for dissemination off-campus for 45% of Research Council projects, and with publication for 40% of such projects. As noted in elsewhere in this report, Lancaster respondents tended to acknowledge greater help by the university than Manchester respondents.

Support by sponsors was more similar across the two universities, though again Lancaster academics acknowledged rather more support than did those at Manchester. The pattern of support by sponsors suggests that government and business give the most assistance, and that they do so in roughly similar proportions.

Their practices contrast with those of the Research Councils and Charities who give considerably lower levels of assistance. At Lancaster Research Councils offer the least assistance in promoting the exploitation of research, though at Manchester there is little difference in the support offered by Research Councils and Charities. It would seem that some sponsors, probably those with more immediately applied concerns of business and the state, are more directive or interventionist in promoting the applications of findings, possibly within the sponsoring organisations themselves. This difference, which might be described as two different modalities of research support, shows up at least to a limited extent in respondents' reports of their use of personal contacts: research sponsored by government and business was somewhat less reliant on personal contacts for assistance with promotion and exploitation than projects sponsored by the other funders.

Table 12: Assistance by research centre or not

Type of assistance	Lancaster		Manchester	
	part of centre	not part of centre	part of centre	not part of centre
from the university	%	%	%	%
identification of potential users	7	6	12	6
contacts with potential users	13	7	15	6
publication of the research	42	25	15	18
media publicity	13	10	8	10
promotional events	13	9	7	5
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	29	30	10	17
support for training materials or events	12	3	8	7
protection of intellectual property rights	10	16	16	7
other	35	7	2	4
from the funder or sponsor				
identification of potential users	54	44	52	34
contacts with potential users	57	43	47	33
publication of the research	56	42	53	33
media publicity	38	25	26	20
promotional events	44	30	30	17
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	62	46	44	35
support for training materials or events	46	22	17	14
protection of intellectual property rights	17	5	9	9
other	10	3	2	2
use of personal contacts				
very much	51	38	33	53
moderately	28	37	37	22
a little	7	16	17	15
not at all	15	9	14	11

At Lancaster projects in Centres and Institutes attracted more of most types of university support than those which were not so situated, possibly from the Centres themselves. At Manchester the picture is more mixed, with some types of university support being more frequent for projects in Centres and other types for projects not

in Centres. In both universities, external sponsors tend to render more aid to researchers working in Centres than to individual researchers. In general, personal contacts were used as much for projects within Centres as those outwith.

Table 13: Assistance by principal investigators' years in academic posts

Type of assistance	Lancaster				Manchester			
	1-8 years	9-16 years	17-24 years	25+ years	1-8 years	9-16 years	17-24 years	25+ years
from the university	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
identification of potential users	9	4	5	5	17	13	4	8
contacts with potential users	9	8	9	10	17	13	7	11
publication of the research	25	28	45	22	22	23	10	16
media publicity	3	0	14	20	13	9	0	15
promotional events	9	8	13	10	4	5	3	8
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	22	27	45	15	17	21	7	13
support for training materials or events	6	4	7	8	13	7	3	9
protection of intellectual property rights	26	17	15	0	0	9	4	21
other	31	0	4	31	0	2	1	6
from the funder or sponsor								
identification of potential users	42	56	59	34	35	39	31	54
contacts with potential users	32	54	63	41	35	39	29	49
publication of the research	48	52	44	49	40	43	35	49
media publicity	19	26	32	41	10	29	17	27
promotional events	25	36	41	36	15	24	15	31
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	39	54	59	54	25	51	37	39
support for training materials or events	32	41	32	27	20	20	15	14
protection of intellectual property rights	11	10	13	3	5	8	10	10
other	10	14	0	5	0	2	2	3
use of personal contacts								
very much	39	87	24	44	46	26	57	41
moderately	42	7	46	33	18	53	15	29
a little	16	0	16	12	9	11	22	16
not at all	3	7	15	11	27	9	6	15

At Lancaster, the university appeared to offer rather more help to its more experienced researchers than to the more junior: especially in respect of publication, media publicity and travel funds for off-campus dissemination, the university was most generous to the group with between 17 and 24 years experience. In Manchester, more aid was given by the university to the less experienced. Sponsors were perhaps slightly more even handed, though in both places sponsors gave somewhat less aid to the least experienced researchers.

The evidence from Lancaster is that less experienced researchers made somewhat more use of their own personal networks for assistance in exploiting their work than did those who had been longer in academic life. At Manchester, there is no clear-cut pattern.

Table 14: Assistance by type of research outputs

Type of assistance	Lancaster			Manchester		
	applied (a)	academic (b)	mixed (c)	applied (a)	academic (b)	mixed (c)
from the university	%	%	%	%	%	%
identification of potential users	8	3	7	13	6	8
contacts with potential users	11	8	7	14	7	13
publication of the research	23	38	36	12	20	15
media publicity	5	17	10	12	9	7
promotional events	7	11	17	6	5	7
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	20	33	40	10	18	11
support for training materials or events	7	3	14	11	5	7
protection of intellectual property rights	19	5	21	23	4	13
other	17	23	9	0	5	3
from the funder or sponsor						
identification of potential users	63	21	62	**65**	**21**	**50**
contacts with potential users	65	32	59	**66**	**20**	**40**
publication of the research	60	21	65	**64**	**30**	**38**
media publicity	35	23	42	30	15	28
promotional events	48	22	44	39	9	28
travel costs for dissemination off-campus	70	37	55	55	33	32
support for training materials or events	59	9	28	29	6	15
protection of intellectual property rights	**18**	**2**	**13**	11	7	10
other	5	6	0	0	2	5
use of personal contacts						
very much	38	53	36	43	43	41
moderately	39	26	36	24	37	22
a little	13	7	23	17	9	25
not at all	10	14	7	16	10	12

(a) research outputs were some combination of methods, models, tools, instruments, software, evaluation of practice, policy recommendations, training courses, events or materials.
(b) research outputs were some combination of critique, analysis, conceptual development, theory, new information or data, re-working existing data or other output.
(c) research outputs were some combination that included elements from both (a) and (b).
Figures in bold represent bivariate relationships having a value for lambda (with assistance as the dependent variable) of greater than 0.2.

Table 14 indicates the relationship between projects with different types of output and the support given. At Manchester, the university gave somewhat more support to the applied projects (that is, those in group (a) in the table) than to the academic projects (those in group (b)) or those with mixed outputs (group (c)). The picture is less clear cut at Lancaster. The pattern of support from sponsors was much the same in both universities: more of most types of assistance was given to the project with applied outputs, and least support was provided for academic projects. Personal contacts were somewhat more evident as the source of assistance with exploitation for academic projects than with applied projects.

Effectiveness of assistance in promoting the exploitation of research

Potential relationships between the types of assistance provided and the relevance, dissemination and effects of the research for different types of user were examined. In general, the type of assistance provided by universities or sponsors and the use of personal contacts had almost no systematic effect on either the extent of dissemination or the effectiveness of the research for any type of user. Only in 22 cases (out of 486 correlations on the Manchester data) were the values of the coefficient lambda greater than zero and in no case was it greater than 0.2. In other words, what relationships exist are all very weak. Overall, it can be said that no particular type of assistance substantially enhanced any piece of research's dissemination or effectiveness.

The effectiveness of research centres in promoting the dissemination of research

This section considers whether conducting research under the auspices of a research centre increases the dissemination of research and its effect on users of various types.

Table 15: Proportion of relevant research disseminated to users by research centre or not

Type of user the research was relevant to	Percentage of relevant projects disseminated to users			
	Lancaster		Manchester	
	part of centre or institute	not part of centre	part of centre or institute	not part of centre
	%	%	%	%
health service trusts and agencies	100	50	63	50
other universities and colleges	77	60	73	71
voluntary sector agencies, social and political movements	76	45	51	63
overseas governments and their agencies	69	29	54	55
UK local government	68	45	55	36
public sector agencies/quangos (excluding health service)	67	50	64	32
central UK government departments	65	33	77	50
professional bodies	63	36	76	65
large private sector businesses	62	52	53	38
European Commission and its agencies	56	33	68	33
small private sector businesses	50	50	45	20
mass media	50	40	35	52
other	64	88	80	67
none	100	100	75	50

Table 15 shows that in general at both universities more dissemination to users of research relevant to them occurred with the projects conducted in Centres or Institutes than the work conducted outwith Centres. It is possible that this is because more of the research conducted in Centres is sponsored by organisations who are also the users. The benefit of Centres for dissemination was greater at Lancaster than at Manchester.

The audit questionnaire

The exploitation of social science research

Principal investigator:	Department:
Project title:	
Account code:	Total grant:
Start date:	End date:
Funder:	

Please amend the above information if it is incorrect or incomplete, using the table below.

Principal investigator:	Department:
Other investigator:	Department:
Other investigator:	Department:
Other investigator:	Department:
Project title:	
Account code:	Total grant (to nearest £k):
Start date:	End date:
Funder:	

1a. Do you consider this project to be **social science** research, broadly conceived? (Circle one.)

entirely	1
to a large extent	2
to a small extent	3
not at all	4

1b. If not at all, please explain why not.
(There is then no need to complete the remainder of the questionnaire, but do please return it.)

2. What did your research produce as outputs? (Circle as many as apply.)

(1) methods, models, tools, instruments, software	1
(2) critique, analysis, conceptual development, theory	1
(3) new information, data	1
(4) re-working of existing data	1
(5) evaluation of practice	1
(6) policy recommendations	1
(7) training course, event or materials	1
(8) other, please specify:	

3. In the table below, please indicate (by circling as many categories in each column as apply):
   a. To which users (beyond other academics) do you think this research is relevant?
   b. To which users (beyond other academics) did you disseminate this research?
   c. On which users (beyond other academics) did this research have any effects known to you?

	3a. research relevant	3b. disseminated research	3c. research had an effect
(1) central UK government departments	1	2	3
(2) UK local government	1	2	3
(3) health service trusts and agencies	1	2	3
(4) public sector agencies/quangos (excluding health service)	1	2	3
(5) large private sector businesses	1	2	3
(6) small private sector businesses	1	2	3
(7) professional bodies	1	2	3
(8) voluntary sector agencies, social and political movements	1	2	3
(9) mass media	1	2	3
(10) other universities and colleges	1	2	3
(11) European Commission and its agencies	1	2	3
(12) overseas governments and their agencies	1	2	3
(13) other: please specify	1	2	3
(14) none	1	2	3

4a. To what extent did the university (at any level: centre, faculty, school or department) assist with the dissemination or exploitation of your research in any of the ways listed below? (Circle one per row.):

	the university assisted			
	very much	moderately	a little	not at all
(1) identification of potential users	1	2	3	4
(2) contacts with potential users	1	2	3	4
(3) publication of the research	1	2	3	4
(4) media publicity	1	2	3	4
(5) promotional events	1	2	3	4
(6) travel costs for dissemination off-campus	1	2	3	4
(7) support for training materials or events	1	2	3	4
(8) protection of intellectual property rights	1	2	3	4
(9) other, please specify:	1	2	3	4

4b. To what extent did your project funder or sponsor assist with the dissemination or exploitation of your research in any of the ways listed below? (Circle one per row.)

	the project funder or sponsor assisted			
	very much	moderately	a little	not at all
(1) identification of potential users	1	2	3	4
(2) contacts with potential users	1	2	3	4
(3) publication of the research	1	2	3	4
(4) media publicity	1	2	3	4
(5) promotional events	1	2	3	4
(6) travel costs for dissemination off-campus	1	2	3	4
(7) support for training materials or events	1	2	3	4
(8) protection of intellectual property rights	1	2	3	4
(9) other, please specify:	1	2	3	4

4c. Did you draw on your personal contacts and networks in the dissemination or exploitation of your research? (Circle one.)

very much	1
moderately	2
a little	3
not at all	4

5. Of the social sciences involved, what do you consider to be the primary discipline and the secondary discipline (if applicable) contributing to this research project.

	Primary discipline (circle one)	Secondary discipline (circle one, if applicable)
(1) Economics	1	2
(2) Sociology	1	2
(3) Social Policy	1	2
(4) Psychology	1	2
(5) Political science and international relations	1	2
(6) Social Anthropology	1	2
(7) Education	1	2
(8) Human geography	1	2
(9) Environmental planning	1	2
(10) Economic and social history	1	2
(11) Management and business studies	1	2
(12) Socio-legal studies	1	2
(13) Linguistics	1	2
(14) Area studies	1	2
(15) Statistics, computing and methodology	1	2
(16) Other, please specify:	1	2

6. How many years have you occupied an academic post (including research posts)? _____ years

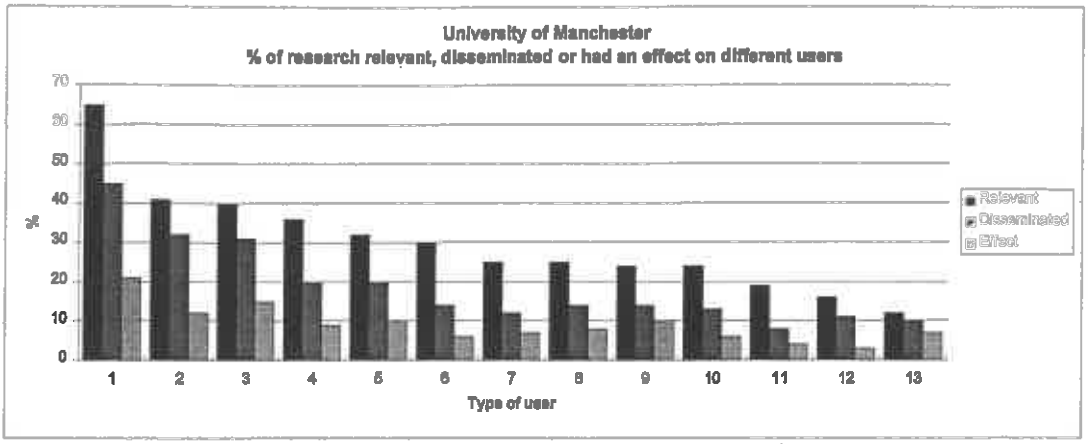
7a. Was this research project conducted under the auspices of a university-based centre/institute? (Circle one)

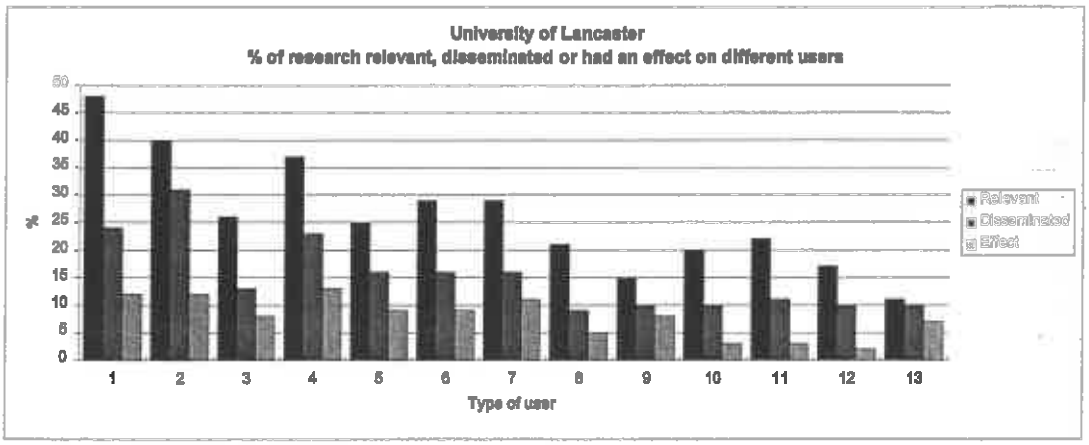
Yes	1
No	2

7b. If yes, which one?

8. We recognise that a survey like this does not provide sufficient opportunity for you to describe all your experiences or express all of your views, and workshops and case studies to be undertaken later in the study should allow us to gather more details. However, please feel free to elaborate on your responses overleaf, continuing on a separate sheet if you wish.

Figure 1

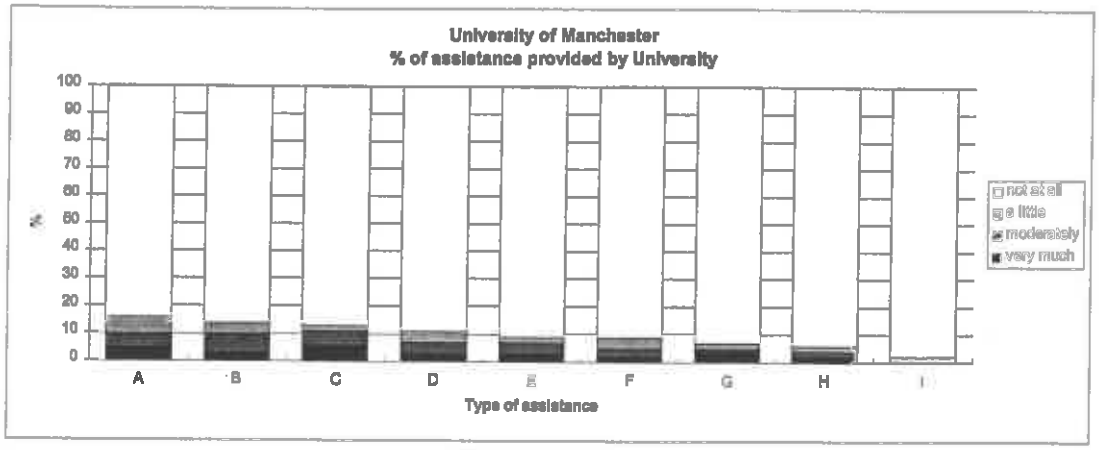


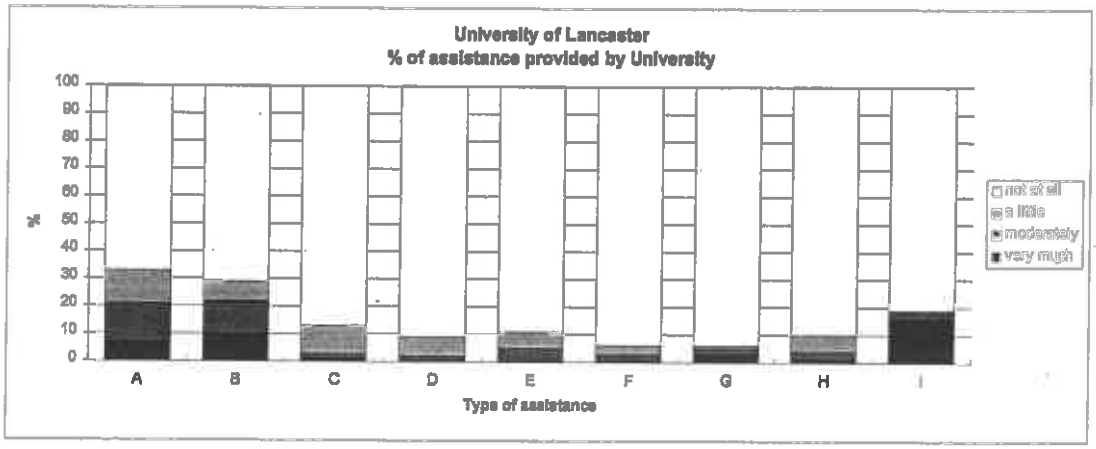


Types of user

1 = central UK government.
2 = other universities
3 = professional bodies
4 = public sector agencies
5 = voluntary sector agencies
6 = UK local government
7 = large private business
8 = European Commission
9 = health service trusts
10 = overseas government
11 = small private businesses
12 = mass media
13 = other

Figure 2

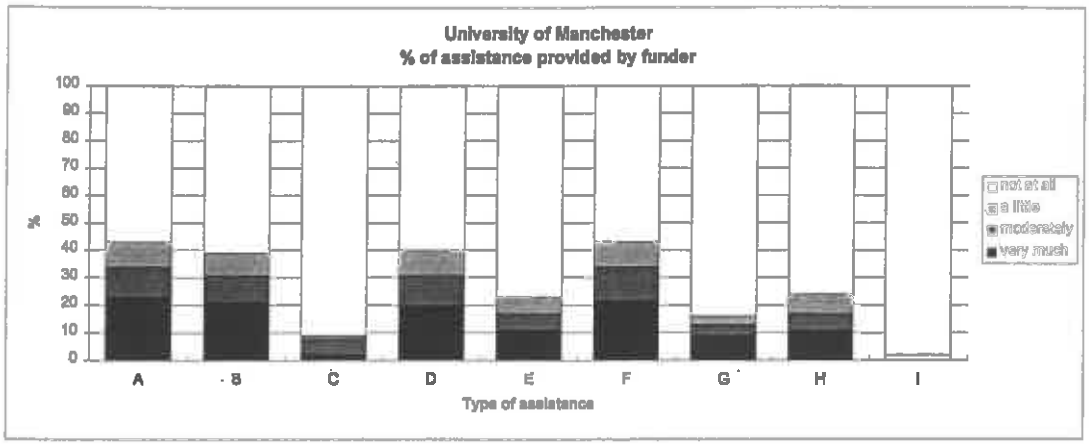


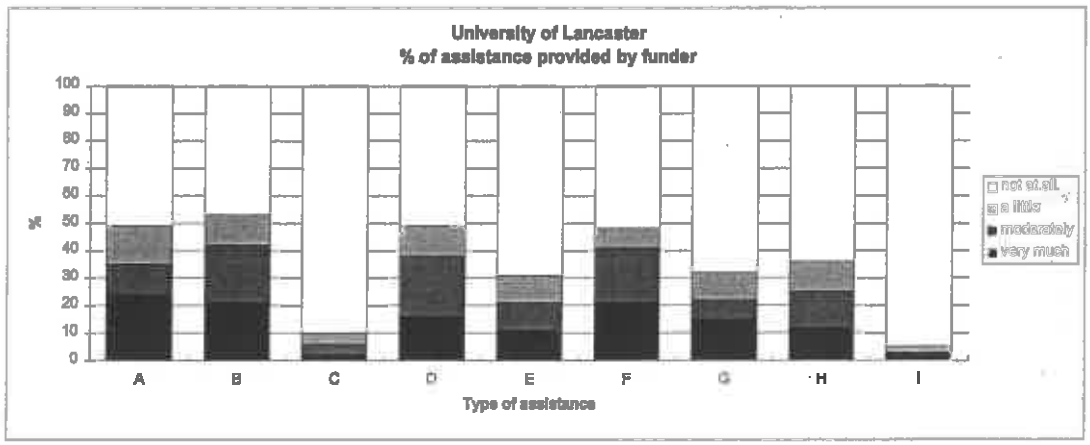


Types of assistance

A = publication of research
B = travel costs
C = intellectual rights
D = contacts with user
E = media publicity
F = identification of potential users
G = training materials
H = promotional events
I = other

Figure 3





Types of assistance

A = publication of research
B = travel costs
C = intellectual rights
D = contacts with user
E = media publicity
F = identification of potential users
G = training materials
H = promotional events
I = other

Annexe 2 Workshop for research groups from Lancaster and Manchester

Introduction

Twenty-one researchers and members of social science research groups (RGs) participated in this meeting.[1] The attendance of senior and hard-pressed staff at this meeting, and their level of active participation, bore testimony to the interest in the issues being discussed. It was remarked at several times that this opportunity to share experiences was a rare occasion, and it was notable that it took a research project to bring groups together who had not previously been in liaison. There were some hopes that opportunities to build on this initiative could be developed.

The notes presented below do not follow the chronological order of the discussion, let alone striving to be a transcript. They seek to capture key themes addressed in the workshop. This means that some nuances of opinion and many details of activities and experience are elided. But there has been little need to abstract from specific concrete cases described by participants. Relatively few such cases were introduced into the discussion, contrary to expectations. Participants in the workshop were able to discuss issues with a high degree of conceptualisation, despite the very different research domains and user groups covered. This ability to discuss the issues in fairly abstract terms presumably reflects the participants' accumulated experience of grappling with the problems of relating research results to users. The themes of the workshop were by no means new ones, then. What was new was the opportunity to learn how others beyond one's disciplinary peers address them, in such a context.[2]

Varieties of User

One recurrent theme concerned the contentious nature of ideas about users and uses of social research. At one level, the issue is simply that there are many possible types of user, and that the task of relating research results to users varies with the nature of the research and the putative audience. In principle one can, and some speakers effectively did, generate a taxonomy of users – e.g. policymakers, policy implementers, "subjects" of research or of the policies and programmes the research concerns[3], media, general publics, affected professional groups, lobby and pressure groups, etc.

Research results are liable to differ in terms of the relevance of different types of result and the utility of different types of mode of presentation to such groups. These factors would also be prone to vary according to the nature of the research itself – commissioned or curiosity, basic or applied, aimed at generating tools, advice, background information, etc. Researchers are likely to have encountered diverse demands over their careers. They typically confront a changing environment, with succession of project officers, policymakers, political ideologies, and pressure groups. One possible issue raised here concerned changes in governmental practices over past decades. It is suggested that these have left civil servants and

politicians less able to know what knowledge they should or reasonably could expect to derive from social research, or what sort of research might be achieved, in what timescale, with what level of funding.[4]

But there may well be different models of the nature of users and uses of social research, which both reflect and more actively inform different practices. The demarcations between production and use of knowledge, researcher and user, may be more fluid than the account above seems to imply. After all, the "linear model" of technological innovation – from ideas in the laboratory to mass exploitation of the technical knowledge in commercialised products - has been declared inappropriate (even in a Government White Paper). An account that starts with research results as a given, from which basis it views how they are subsequently related to users, may fail to capture important dynamic features of the wider set of relationships surrounding the life and afterlife of the research. Individual research projects are often effectively phases in a long trajectory of developing research activities, with results[5] and relations to users reflecting this evolution.[6]

The workshop did not devote much time to belabouring this point – which was widely accepted - nor to spelling out alternative models of the processes. However, the discussions of practice necessarily extended well upstream of the exploitation of specific project research results, and also encompassed more general issues of the articulation of RGs and experts to user communities.

A final point that was stressed repeatedly was the distinction between sponsors and **users**. In commissioned research, normally, sponsors are themselves major users, though they may well wish researchers to relate their results to other user groups (e.g. other parts of their organisation, their client base, etc.). But even in such studies it is common for the range of interested parties to extend beyond this, and there may well be demands upon the research, and interpretations and deployment of its results, which do not correspond to the sponsors' own agenda. The tensions that exist in such circumstances need to be confronted. They may take the form of frosty relations or lack of trust on the part of various parties (which can affect willingness to co-operate with, or sponsor, subsequent research); conflicts over intellectual property and the control of material are also encountered (more frequently in some domains than others?) At least RGs are in a position to accumulate experience and skills at dealing with such issues, and to develop strategies and use collective resources for negotiation. This is probably harder for individual researchers (and new RGs) to manage, but is still not uncommonly experienced as problematic by long-established RGs; and appropriate University support might be more forthcoming here.[7]

Institutional Relationships

RGs vary in the extent to which their research is more in the mode of conventional academic projects (**CAP** mode), or that of commissioned research whose policy sponsors require inputs into decision-making processes (**COM** mode). The two modes often interact in practice. One group cited the use of data resources generated from applied research as a resource underpinning Research Council applications, and the knowledge generated from more basic studies as being instrumental in securing commissioned studies. The two are often in tension too, with short-term demands for applied research or consultancy based on its outputs[8] creating problems ranging from diversion from longer-term research and lack of

sufficient effort to more conventional academic practices (conceptualisation, literature review, etc), through to premature release of partial results.

The differences between CAP and COM modes *may* be shrinking, as research councils and other sponsors push social scientists towards specifying potential users and – especially in research programmes – towards engaging with them. Thus it is now normal for ESRC Centres to have developed user liaison groups, just as has been the case for some of the RGs more preoccupied with COM mode. The RAE still forms a pressure acting in practice in many cases to differentiate the two, however.

Other ways in which RGs varied were also prominent in the discussion. Some groups have extensive core funding from a single source; others have less concentrated resource bases. RGs vary in size, age and the degree of specialisation of their focus. They may be the sole centre of expertise in their domain in the country, or part of a more pluralistic (usually this translates as competitive) environment. Across research domains, the nature of potential users and their level of experience with using research results are also highly variable. All of these differences lead to markedly varying circumstances and experiences: and thus to perceived opportunities and capabilities to respond in various ways. Though there are exceptions, often:

- New RGs have to establish their authority and credentials to speak on their topics of concern. Small groups may be closely identified with their founder(s). This means paying considerable attention to reputations – both building and maintaining them. There may be too close an identification of an RG with a particular figure, and too close an orientation to the user groups that individual knows well.
- Small groups cannot afford administrative staff, glossy promotional literature or even the time to produce alternative versions of their reports for different audiences.
- Newer and smaller groups may however have advantages of flexibility in focusing their research, and in avoiding heavy administrative burdens. In some ways they may be closer to their users and less devoted to the effort of raising large sums of cash to support staff. (They may also receive more in the way of hidden subsidies of academic time.)
- RGs working in politically contentious fields have to confront problems of press (and in one case University press office) misrepresentation of their results, and so on.

The longer-established RGs tend to have adopted a number of procedures for managing user relationships:

- Sponsors are frequently discussed at routine RT meetings, and marketing efforts to sponsors are often well-developed. (Different approaches were cited for maintaining relationships and establishing ones with new potential sponsors.) Notably, efforts to evaluate one's user relationship and dissemination practices are still only nascent. Some groups record requests for publication, feedback from sponsors, etc, suggesting what good practice may be here. It will be increasingly important to demonstrate the effectiveness of PR/marketing efforts.
- Having databases of people to whom to send appropriate reports and press releases, Xmas cards, Annual Reports and other material was important.

- Being aware of the different networks that need to be activated for different types of material to have an impact.
- Having flexible packages of material with which to promote the RG in general and specific lines of work within it (and even specific projects and researchers). A core data source for this – perhaps the Annual Report, perhaps material prepared for a particularly sophisticated research proposal – can be mined for such purposes. But it needs to be accessible to the right people when required, and version management problems can be encountered.
- Being aware that users typically want *messages*, not to hear about research results.
- Establishing the presence of the RG as expert in the field was important for user relations – e.g. journalists will respond better to press releases if they come from recognised sources.
- Presence of staff at key conferences, on relevant professional groups, in advisory roles of various sorts was seen as vital, even if something which few RGs could claim to have accomplished to the fullest extent possible.
- Websites and similar new media are increasingly important (especially to reach potential students and other professionals, but the outreach is expanding).
- Collaboration with other RGs may bring one into their user networks. Again, this requires the building of trust and friendship.
- Secretarial staff are often the first point of contact for visitors and telephone calls: they require knowledge about who is who and who does what.
- Often new users are not only interested in the RG's research, or not primarily interested in it at all. There is thus a function of disseminating information about the field (or University) in general, which is not always rewarding but may still foster relationships.

Third parties may play important roles in relating RGs to users. Sponsors of research can put substantial institutional efforts behind promoting research reports – favourable past experiences with the ESRC and government departments was cited, for example. Typically researchers need to add their own efforts (e.g. ringing up the right journalists, working over the press release); and there may be dangers of the report being identified with the sponsor (or even some other RG – typically a collaborator who happens to have a higher profile or catchier name). Similar problems are, of course often confronted with publishers where the marketing of books is concerned.

Experts and Centres of Expertise

Much depends on individuals: their networks, friendships, and reputation. This is true for small and large groups alike. Much effort is usually required to construct and maintain the identity of the RG, and while individuals are key to this, some RGs are seeking to get user recognition that there is a centre of excellence. This raises a series of issues about bringing junior researchers to the fore as recognised experts in their own right – out of the shadow of the senior staff. This may involve methods ranging from dropping the new researcher into the thick of things (sending them as lone ambassadors, getting them to initiate research contacts) to much more deliberate mentoring. Risks and benefits to the centre and individual are apparent: the RG has to play a role in the relationship between users and junior researchers, without restricting the autonomy and scope to establish and individual identity of the latter. The researchers' need to develop skills at presenting themselves and assessing the optimum ways of relating to specific classes of user.

A large number of concerns were expressed about the ways in which Universities treat contract staff (see below), and the negative impacts these can have on user relations. It can be hard to promote a group when the turnover of staff (other than senior stars) is high; it can be hard to promote research results when the key researchers have left. Among the issues raised were:

- Succession management – ensuring that RGs can survive the departure of founding and long-established staff members whose tacit knowledge of users as well as of procedures and institutional relations may be all-important.
- Ways of supporting staff who possess vital skills – or potential – when short-term contracts are very intermittent. (E.g. rolling contracts, regular rather than fixed-term contracts, use of overheads or reserves to keep staff on.[9] Universities centrally are very poor at resourcing research – an industry of c£1bn turnover annually with next to no strategic investment![10])
- Developing adequate mentoring and staff appraisal systems. Notably DORCISS' report on the theme did not discuss user relations and involvement as a criterion or goal here. The tacit knowledge required for relating to user communities means that it is hard to train staff in many of the skills involved other than through an apprenticeship model of some form.
- There is a real tension between promoting academic stars versus the corporate identity – RGs are not seeking to become just another consultancy outfit, they are selling a scholarly knowledge base and related strengths.
- Among these strengths can be the research infrastructure – access to databases, abilities to deploy specialised modes of analysis, etc.

Research Groups In Universities

RGs themselves are typically active in identifying their own users. In general have greater understanding of these groups and their internal dynamics (internal tensions, response to different styles of approach) than do their University administrations. Such knowledge is typically acquired through lengthy periods of interaction. There may be cases where Invitations to Tender come to or are picked up centrally – a useful role of scanning the Official Journal of the EC can be played centrally, for example. And University administrations may have links to, for example, groups in the local community, whereas the RG may be more integrated nationally. In practice RGs are often alerted to ITTs through research networks well before the central administrations have picked them up; and the links to the local community are as likely to be mediated through other RGs or departments of the University as centrally.

RGs themselves have the prime responsibilities in liasing with users, and through their experience with the domain and social networks are best-placed to do so. They are often rather sceptical as to the ability of central administration or even Faculties to supplement (let alone substitute for) their efforts. This does not mean that University support is irrelevant, nor that RGs feel complacent about their own efforts and capabilities.

Additional points were raised in this context. A common theme was that Universities are largely organised around their teaching functions, and are insufficiently flexible where it comes to dealing with the needs of RGs. This was experienced in numerous ways, such as:

- Problems in handling sponsors when negotiating contracts.
- Status of contract research staff. (Much of the discussion returned to the destructive effects of short-term contracts.)

- Contractual arrangements for such staff (liable to demotivate staff, lead to departures in later stages of research or when staff could disseminate, etc.); and difficulty in recruiting and appointing such staff.
- Lack of transparency and timeliness in financial accounts (with knock-on effects on budgeting for dissemination, etc.)
- Limited scope for appointing people to undertake administrative and dissemination roles, limited support for these activities as opposed to more conventional teaching-related duties.
- Difficulties appointing outsiders in honorary or visiting roles (important for user liaison)
- Similar difficulties in seconding staff to work in user organisations[11]

There may also be issues to explore concerning the ease or otherwise in establishing new RGs, and the sorts of support which could facilitate more productive start-ups.

Given that so much knowledge is held by RGs, and by a few other highly research-active staff members in Universities, it may be that the most effective ways for Universities to support research, and the relating of research to users, is to facilitate networking within their institutions.

Examples of useful practices cited were:
- Research newsletters giving details on projects awarded and ongoing, as well as of ITTs.
- An email list for those in the know to place intelligence about a specific sponsor or group of users.
- Putting people in contact with others more experienced with specific sponsors, users, or problems.
- Databases of people with particular types of contract, institutional experience, and positions in professional groups and on committees.

Interestingly, the examples cited seem to represent Faculty rather than central initiatives: more good examples coming from either level would be of interest. The key issue would seem to be the improvement of internal communications. This may be supported, perhaps, by the freeing-up of some resources to allow people with the relevant experience (be it RG members or lone researchers) to make substantial inputs (briefings on sponsors, lessons in writing plain English, etc.) available to others on a timely basis.

CRIC Workshop - 3 September 1997

Attendance List

Alex Carmichael	-	ACPRC, Psychology, Manchester University
Maria Cairney	-	NPCRDC, Manchester University
Angela Dale	-	CCSR, Manchester University
Sarah Franklin	-	ICR, Sociology, Lancaster University
Oliver Fulton	-	CSET, Lancaster University
Luke Georghiou	-	PREST, Manchester University
Caroline Glendinning	-	NPCRDC, Manchester University
Barbara Hickson	-	CSEC, Lancaster University
Merle Jacob	-	CSEC, Lancaster University (visiting from Gotenburg)
Chris Kiernan	-	HARC, Manchester University
Joan Machell	-	CSET, Lancaster University
Ian Miles	-	PREST, CRIC, Manchester University
Elizabeth Roberts	-	CNWRS, Lancaster University
Brian Robson	-	CUPS, Dept of Geography, Manchester University
Elizabeth Shove	-	Sociology, Lancaster University
Jeremy Valentine	-	ICR, Lancaster University
Alan Warde	-	Lancaster University
Stephen Watson	-	Management School, Lancaster University
Robin Grove White	-	CSEC, Lancaster University
Phil Woodhouse	-	IDPM, Manchester University

Notes

1 A list of attendees is attached to the end of this note.

2 A few of those present had been involved in ARCISS and similar groups, which facilitate networking across research centres.

3 Interviewees are not uncommonly interested in the results of research projects: sometimes they become sponsors of further research addressed to their own interests. In other cases, where the "subjects" are a large social group, it may be that the RG needs to interface with the social or professional movements associated with this group, e.g. doctors' or consumer associations.

4 There may be contradictory trends across branches of government and types of research. For example, the loss of in-house expertise in some government departments has arguably led to a reduced capacity to absorb research results - and to specify research projects that can produce relevant knowledge. In contrast, there are also instances of institutionalisation of certain types of research (e.g. good practice in commissioning and using some types of monitoring and evaluation research have been widely promoted by civil servants within the UK system). One comment was that it is best to deal with more senior staff, since junior staff often cannot distinguish wood from trees. Another was that the push to competitive tendering has meant that it is not unknown for RGs' ideas to be appropriated by consultants preparing such tenders.

5 E.g. the instruments that have been used to generate the results, the problematisation of the domain, the presentation and interpretation of empirical material, the elaboration of academic and policy conclusions...

6 One problem that was cited is the difficulty of keeping press conferences and other interactive modes of dissemination to the results of the project at hand. The researchers themselves may get confused as to exactly what is being presented!

7 Participants were at pains to make it clear that University support structures that do exist are very uneven in terms of utility. For a range of reasons, central administration is not always able to respond effectively to RGs' requirements. Inappropriate support can be worse than none at all. Thus, declaring the University *should* provide support is definitely to be avoided here: support needs to be introduced (if it is) with consent and managed sensitively.

8 In many cases, what is sought by decision-makers is not access to achieved results, but the more general expertise that comes from engagement with a domain. Thus advice is frequently sought well before projects are completed (sometimes before the work has even commenced), or independently of specific projects.

9 A concrete example mentioned was the expenditure of £5k to retain someone with 510 years experience in the RG, who might otherwise be lost to the research field altogether, since this is a unique centre.

10 The plea was not for open-ended funding of RGs. Faculties/central administration should be prepared to make investments – often as loans, or in the expectation of research funds being raised. As well as start-ups, they should be prepared to smooth out peaks and troughs, etc. (Note that the "should" rule has been broached here!)

11 As with most of the problems discussed in this note, experiences varied widely – some RGs had little problem with these interinstitutional arrangements, for example.

Annexe 3 Workshop for "lone" researchers at Lancaster

Introduction

All Lancaster questionnaire respondents who were not part of a research group were invited to this workshop on the 15th September 1997 - a total of 59 invitations. The second batch of 26 invitations went out at relatively short notice and a number of potential participants were still on holiday. In addition to the five who did attend (Alan Warde, Sociology; Rosemary Deem, Educational Research; Elizabeth Shove, CSEC; John Burgoyne, Management Learning; Steven Ackroyd, Behaviour in Organisations; Geraint Johnes, Economics) another nine said they would have really liked to take part. Half of those who came were from the management school.

The workshop was designed to compare the experiences of those working in departments with those in research groups. The discussion therefore began with a review of individual research careers, and accounts of the exploitation of one or more projects. In the course of this discussion we considered: the evolution of academic and non academic research networks; strategies for promoting research; processes of user interaction and exploitation; perceptions of the role and relevance of social science research; and the actual and potential role of the university with respect to these issues.

Being in a department

The fact of being in a department rather than in a research group was important in terms of individual careers and for the significance of RAE related pressures to publish in selected journals. Although important to everyone, RAE related incentives had different practical consequences. For example, those who were no longer seeking promotion were in a better position to engage in "applied" research, and to spend time interacting with non academic communities than were those who had yet to establish their academic careers. Departmental or discipline related differences also counted. Those in the management school described tensions between the demands of the academic world and the needs and interests of practitioners with whom they interacted. This was not the case in Sociology. Against this uneven background, the RAE-rational strategy of focusing on research which followed a "purely" academic logic was seen as either a luxury or a necessity depending on individuals' positions and the mixture of competing expectations within departments.

Careers, networks and projects

Research careers were often marked by chance meetings and a subsequent snowballing of events in which one thing led to another. Academic networks sometimes developed in a slightly more structured way, for example, through organising or participating in seminar groups, editing a journal, or through continuing contact with students (especially in the management school context). Links with non-academics tended to be formed through specific projects or as a result of becoming familiar with a particular "world" - for instance by attending "their" conferences and taking part in "their" debates whether they be energy researchers, school governors or some other group.

An important point here was that researchers were rarely "lone" in the sense of working alone. Sometimes they linked up with colleagues in the same department. More often, they worked with people in other universities, and sometimes in other countries as well. In reflecting on the development of research projects and on and potential exploitation strategies we should also take note of the ways in which university structures help or hinder cross-institutional collaboration in these areas.

These personal histories tended to have a cumulative effect. In thinking over research careers it was hard to say where the "exploitation" of one project began and ended, especially since projects had such a habit of growing into, and growing out of each other. Ideas formed in one context were often developed, extended, elaborated and even exploited in successive pieces of work. In one case, consultancy (for British Rail managers) led to the development of a research council funded project, and then into a popular book. Similarly, EU funded research - which on the face of it had no "use", no "users", and little formal dissemination - was selectively raided for ideas to present to entirely new audiences (eg. as part of a consultancy project for Barclays Bank). Effort to promote a specific project sometimes ended at the point of publication, when the researcher involved got bored with talking about the same study all the time and/or when moving on to the next study. These were the points at which the line was drawn, project by project. Yet issues, ideas, models and research material lived on, not treated as a whole but rather as a resource on which to draw in future work.

Promotional "strategies"

Strategies to promote research seemed to be easier to define and develop in relatively organised areas (for example educational research, educational economics) where there were recognisable funders and sponsors (like the OECD and the World Bank). Even so, it was clear that such organisations were more and less able to benefit from research depending on their own situations at different points in time. In one case the collapse of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation meant that otherwise relevant research findings suddenly had no home to go to.

It took another kind of effort to turn broader constituencies - for instance women, women's groups, or the public at large into manageable "users". This was partly a practical question of how to identify these audiences - strategies here included giving talks in village halls, in peoples living rooms, and in other informal contexts. But it was also a question of the nature of such users' interest in research.

The same research could clearly generate different types of interest. The exercise of re-presenting research, and of searching for new angles for each audience in turn raised questions about the integrity of the project as an intellectual enterprise in its own right. There was at least a risk of undermining what the researcher thought was important about the work by taking this re-casting "too" far, or by doing it "too" extensively for multiple audiences. Where did the "real work" lie amid these multiple representations? It was sometimes hard to say.

All the strategies referred to so far presume that it is the researcher who is making the running when it comes to identifying and interacting with potential users and promoting research. But this was not the only option. In one case, the relationship was the other way around with potential users (especially the media) approaching the researcher directly, and/or with the researcher being obliged to promote their

work through a series of already organised outlets (eg. ESRC programme meetings). The pattern here is one in which the researcher responds to an unstructured, and uncontrollable, stream of requests from the "outside" world.

The role of research

We talked about research users and their expectations of social science research. In different ways, the following examples illustrate various mismatches of expectation, the first to do with methodology. In the case described, "users" did not give any special weight to insights or observations which were based on research (as compared to anecdote or their own experience etc). Potential users were therefore likely to dismiss research findings or at least call them into question if they did not confirm their own first hand experience. In another case, it was possible to compare the responses of UK audiences (local government officials) with their Scandinavian counterparts. There was much more interest in engaging with theoretical debate and in looking to academics for new approaches in the Scandinavian context where research appeared to have a different role.

Expectations of social science research (and of public interest) were also revealed in discussion of media coverage of research on the sociology of food. Reports of that work were pitched as "general interest" stories, with little or no attention given to other angles, for instance those which might have focused on issues of more practical relevance or even of real use to the restaurant trade. Paradoxically, the issues featured were not those which might make a difference to the industry or to the way in which people think about consumption. From the researcher's perspective, the wrong bits of the research were being exploited or at least taken to be relevant.

Academic research is not the only kind of research undertaken. In talking about management research we were drawn into a discussion of different forms of producing and disseminating knowledge: ranging from the stocks of management books on sale at Heathrow, the making and sustaining of guru status, the role of management consultancies and so on. Academics and academic research were thought to have a distinctive role within the crowded scene of management consultancy. For some users at least, academics were expected to fulfil particular functions: to generate new ideas, to introduce a critical perspective, or to spice things up a bit. In these situations, users had a pretty clear view of the role of academic research. For their part, researchers saw such advisory roles more as opportunities to translate and broker ideas than as ways of promoting individual projects. Of course no one knows what happens once the researcher-consultant has left the scene, nor how those carefully mediated ideas are or are not put into practice. There is no after sales service. This is partly because roles are typically well defined by both sponsor and researcher-consultant. Both appear to know when the job has been done. Research in this bounded environment is quite unlike that undertaken in the more open, more risky setting of research council funding. While exploitation might seem more secure in the bounded world, that is not necessarily the case.

Getting "taken up"

It is not easy to predict which ideas and insights non-academic (and even academic) audiences will latch on to. A project might, for instance, be founded on a theoretical base which is quite familiar within a discipline but which comes as news when presented to a different audience. So what knowledge, and more specifically, whose

knowledge is being exploited when it is the accepted wisdom of a subject area that is, of interest, not the particular twist it is given in an individual project? Somehow the language of exploitation seems to imply that the researcher owns the ideas in question and even in a general sense (ie. without getting tangled in issues of intellectual property rights), there are obviously many instances in which this is evidently not the case. The way the advertising business is now borrowing ideas from cultural studies seems to illustrate the creep of accepted widsoms from one domain to another, mediated, in this case, by students transplanting ideas from their unviersity courses into the industries in which they are then employed.

But for individual researchers, the processes which lead to ideas being "taken up" were largely mysterious. No one was quite sure how it happens: how is it that some individuals (especially in the management world) rocket to stardom while others do not, and why is it that that one page can touch a nerve when so many others do not?

For the most part, we assumed that academics were involved in producing knowledge, and that research was the main tool of production. Both assumptions are questionable. For instance, there are all kinds of practical knowledge which evolve and develop without reference to research. In addition, it is at least worth exploring the idea that the business of knowledge production has shifted outside academia (eg. just think of all those management consultancies). In which case it might be that the relevance of academic research activity lies in offering a critical voice, developing alternative perspectives, or reflecting on the knowledge produced elsewhere. Different strategies are likely to be required for the "exploitation" of this kind of work, not least because those who might stand to benefit in the long run are likely to resist the sorts of critical insights on offer. Again such discussion raises broader questions about the place of academic research within a wider system of knowledge production.

The role of the University

We finished with a few thoughts on the university's role in exploiting social science research. As in the workshop for research groups it was easier to think of ways in which the university hindered the process than it was to suggest ways in which it might be facilitated. This was partly because researchers were so used to doing everything themselves that they had never considered any other arrangement. Even so, there were a couple of positive suggestions. One was that lists of contacts, for instance, those which had been maintained by the industrial liaison unit, could be helpful as a first point of entry to unfamiliar organisations or sectors. The second more general point related to the orientation of the university as a whole toward social science. The ESRC might, for example, seek to persuade universities to promote their social science (as compared with natural science) expertise rather more actively. Yet the most resounding conclusion was that the incentive system, as mediated by the RAE, did not encourage anyone to spend time exploiting existing research to non academic audiences. In the present context it made sense to gear individual and institutional resources toward publication and the generation of new research funding.

Annexe 4 Workshop for "lone" researchers at Manchester

Introduction

Five researchers participated in the first of these meetings, two in the second. It proved difficult in practice for researchers to attend the meetings, held as they were while student inductions were underway (but earlier dates had been equally difficult due to the lack of contact with many researchers over the summer vacation period). As with the earlier research group workshop, the attendance of senior and hard-pressed staff at this meeting, and their level of active participation, bore testimony to the interest in the issues being discussed. *Many thanks to these participants.*

The notes presented below seek to capture key themes addressed in the workshops. It has not been possible – and is probably not even desirable – to detach the comments from the people involved, but a degree of anonymity is provided.

There is reason to think that we have a bias toward more senior and experienced researchers, and to tenured rather than contract research staff. Not only are such staff more likely to self–select for the workshops. They are likely to be more prevalent simply because the former are more likely to be represented as grant-holders picked up in our survey. The opinions and experiences reported are thus more likely to give insight into the circumstances of established members of staff of these types. Case study research might well seek to locate some of the more traditional lone researchers (who may themselves be linked into networks of journalists etc.) though some of these are early retirees.

Not so Alone

Few of the participants fitted the classical model of the lone researcher. The norm was to be involved in a variety of studies, with colleagues from one's own department, from other University groups, and in some cases from a very wide range of disciplines and institutions indeed.

The discipline where the classical model was most apparent was social anthropology. This is characterised by individuals undertaking long periods of fieldwork and aiming to generate books and monographs with long shelf lives, that might be used as reference sources by subsequent researchers for years to come, and in some cases that inform a broader reading public. But even from this discipline, the researcher experiences that were conveyed included interdisciplinary collaboration (in the ESRC's global environmental change programme) with more immediate policy users intended.

"Lone researchers" are part of wider networks of various kinds. One participant was associate fellow of two leading campaigning/information groups in fields related to the research topics pursued. One reported an initiative at Faculty level to foster research group clusters, while in another case a new school had been started with one aim being to promote cross-disciplinary initiatives. The experiences of the latter were mixed. On the one hand, two cross-disciplinary proposals were resulting from initiatives it had undertaken. On the other, an "open day" had failed to attract many participants, and natural and social scientists had polarised as to what they considered to be useful. In the case of the Faculty, its representing a single

department was felt to be advantageous: the centres it was establishing were like mini-departments, but more flexible, and research oriented: they established mechanisms to co-ordinate activities, provide support with proposals, even provide financial support. Other University Faculties were mentioned whose scale was felt to be too big, with departments remote from their Deans.

A case of another University was cited, where a large number of research centres existed with no power at Faculty level; in this case heads of departments acted as robber barons with respect to own budgets. It proved easy to establish initiatives involves two or three of them, but larger scale developments would be very hard going. (There was a management model with appropriate procedures written down.) The departments would have to fix contracts among themselves- that at least left a recorded trace of collaborations. Completely free co-operation was rare. In contrast Manchester has fewer formal barriers to coworking, the problems are more cultural, with tribalism at departmental level- but this is not where the research action is, and the current University philosophy is for the Faculty/Graduate School to be the support level for research. Though HoDs experience was that while being told on the one hand that departments were really fossils in such terms, when the buck stopped it stopped with them: this is where sanctions and loyalties lie. And in some disciplines the loyalty is to a scholarly community that extends beyond the University – maybe especially true for smaller disciplines – and here the HoD is representing the discipline into the faculty, not just the department.

Varieties of Use

Probably the simplest way to depict the range of situations confronted is simply to list in summary form some of the features of the different research activities represented at the workshop. These included:

- EXAMPLE 1

Research field and issues: Educational research, with key research issue being organisational change.
User groups: Teachers and parents, community at large – though sponsor would often be a government department or agency. Usually the researchers themselves know the users or their associations.
Dissemination: via evening seminars (with LAs, community groups, teachers, etc.), training programmes (often international). Typically (and unusually?) these do draw extensively on the results of one research project only, not so heavily on the general knowledge base. Additional funds often obtained for converting research outputs into such formats; Faculty also prepared to make investments here (and to retain research staff on soft money).

- EXAMPLE 2

Research field and issues: Economic geography, regional development, labour markets and welfare reform.
User groups: Political activists and lobby groups in welfare, unemployment and similar organisations, government departments.
Dissemination: Articles in newsletters (wide circulation), pieces in press – often leading to phone calls, etc. Workshop drawing in researchers, policymakers, campaigners.

- EXAMPLE 3

Research field and issues: Social anthropology, usually studying communities in specific areas (often overseas – but even studies in the UK may have a global audience); one specific study of perceptions of environmental issues.
User groups: Discipline tends to view its informants as collaborators in knowledge production, and as having the first claim to feedback from the studies. Other users include scholars from many disciplines, and literate public.
Dissemination: In addition to classic books and monographs, some studies (e.g. the environment one) will yield workshops with the local people. Depends very much upon local culture and politics how this is done, but researcher usually maintains contact with informants and discusses writing up with them. Political sensitivities in the localities may intervene.

- EXAMPLE 4

Research field and issues: Agricultural economics, studies including issues like national dietary patterns.
User groups: Originally seen as sponsors (government departments, Countryside Commission, Meat and Livestock Commission, NFU, etc.) but scope has increased more recently.
Dissemination: Products of research range from computer models to reports. ESRC publicity for work on diet led to much (time-consuming) media interest during BSE crisis, though no further research has been commissioned in consequence.

- EXAMPLE 5

Research field and issues: Risk and disaster management, including emergencies like Chernobyl.
User groups: Diverse, but include policymakers, advisors, implementers, etc. concerned with emergency planning (more diversified in UK than in many other countries); other disciplinary audiences.
Dissemination: Standard academic channels may nevertheless spread knowledge from or to disciplines other than one's own; political conferences reach policymakers and press; press releases; training and simulation gaming workshops bringing together researchers and key policy staff (conducted in various countries). These latter may not draw upon any specific research project, or any one group's research.

- EXAMPLE 6

Research field and issues: Lone parents, influences of initiatives on child support on family relations and on children themselves. Qualitative research (which meant that policy defenders could attempt to dismiss it as based on small sample - but actually able to draw support from wider pool of researchers and studies with additional sorts of knowledge and data).
User groups: government agencies, pressure groups, and voluntary sector.
Dissemination: Foundation funding studies plays important role in dissemination, providing additional funding, publicising results (including own Website and research reports), supporting meetings of relevant research, policy and action groups. Some of the lobbying groups also sponsor meetings, publish results. The particular study we discussed was perhaps atypically smooth in these respects.

- EXAMPLE 7

Research field and issues: Studies of gender aspects of development processes and policies, again part of a network of researchers and a local group, which add various components into the mix. The workshop participant's own studies tend to yield theories and conceptual frameworks rather than field results or models.

User groups: Much funding from policy sponsors, including UK and overseas governments, IGOs and INGOs. Here there is ease of absorption of research because of presence of people who have been trained at University, some in Manchester. (This was reported by some other workshop participants too.)
Dissemination: Normal academic outputs like papers often using secondary as well as primary results and data. Reports to sponsors, working papers, some training courses on integrating gender analyses into policy work (now considering making one team member the trainer to run workshops spun off from this). Seminars at Oxfam, Commonwealth Secretariat; Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; wall posters and resource packs (for schools) via British Council. Using established networks, never RGSU.

Facilitating and Limiting Factors

Several participants mentioned the RAE as something that discouraged too much attention to disseminating research to users. The lack of attention to such criteria in that system acts as a substantial deterrent. Researchers will not prepare media-friendly synopses when under pressure to write star journal articles. Researchers with prior experience in policy and pressure groups find the pressure to convert "useful" outputs to academic pieces difficult: they would be happy to say everything they want in a form that is liable to reach a much wider audience than the average journal.

However, the ESRC's demand to specify users, and the efforts of some programmes to promote user links, act in the opposite direction. And since some departments interpret quality research for the RAE as being ESRC research, there has been a move by some researchers – both "pure" and "applied to establish user links beyond the standard academic or sponsoring audiences. (Though in the case of applied research, often "users" for ESRC purposes are sponsors of previous studies.)

The ESRC emphasis on users was not without its critics. Criticisms took several forms:

- The model of users is naïve, assuming a clear distinction between producers and users of knowledge that is often inappropriate. Researchers may be more facilitators of dialogue than hewers of knowledge. Users may be informants and collaborators; interactions with them may extend well beyond the span of a particular project. "Users are there at the outset" for many of the researchers. Presentation of work may be more dialogic – like a University seminar – than dissemination of digested results. In sponsored results users may be involved in production of documents for further distribution – summaries, syntheses, translations of the results for policy audience.
- The implication that users are UK-based has led to at least one case of a worthwhile project being withdrawn because the team involved could not readily specify such users.
- There is also some interpretation of ESRC policy as favouring work with immediate practical implications rather than long-term significance, at least in some fields.
- "Overdissemination" associated with some research programmes may be leading to information overload: too much is promoted as being of equal (invariably great) significance.
- One case was reported of ESRC reluctance to support training workshop for policymakers. ESRC itself doesn't do enough to support dissemination contrast with several of the charitable foundations, which make big efforts). ESRC

programmes are more active here, but responsive projects not supported much. And programmes' support often feels tacked on and narrow.

- Several cases were reported of difficulties with Steering and User groups - not only with ESRC projects. These problems include: unrealistic expectations as to ability to derive immediate answers to emergent policy problems, with little sense of the difficulties in mobilising research effort and drawing conclusions; divide between town and gown members with latter concerned with methodological detail, former with local nuances. Opinions were divided, however, several participants argued that it was much better to have such Boards than not. (Resources to support them need to be built into applications.)

Other sponsors were also seen as sometimes *inhibiting* dissemination. Government departments may limit the public availability of research results. (There are several cases of the University being very unwilling to sign routine IPR contracts with such departments.) In contrast, US foundations seem enthusiastic to see work exploited, and don't seem too concerned about promoting results stemming from projects carried out under others' auspices.

Finally there was some awareness that some sorts of research might create ripples for the university if widely disseminated – e.g. studies of local elites who may be well linked to senior members of the University hierarchy. In such cases, awareness of possible problems can lead to research output being restricted to scholarly journals, which never get picked up by the local press or lobbyists.

University Issues

Among the points raised here were:

- Younger researchers in particular have their dissemination efforts limited by paltry provision for overseas travel. Tough this is a cheap way of making a presence felt, funds are minimal (one department reported £1700 per annum total). Such funds might be built into contracts more, but central support would be welcome. Bad experiences of requesting travel and conference funds from ESRC were reported, with referees being picky about attendance at specific conferences (and in any case it being hard to specify appropriate venues maybe 3 years in advance). EPSDRC was reported as being less restrictive than ESRC and natural sciences as typically having more access to travel funds. Where people have raised funds from sources like British Academy, NATO or British Council, this was typically on their own initiative with little University involvement.
- Some lone researchers had very favourable attitudes to the RGSU. They were reported as being good at dealing with directed questions and at getting proposals off at the last minute. There was approval for such support, but fear it could be overwhelmed if too widely taken up: it is effectively reactive at present. This stored data could be used more proactively, e.g. on successful strategies and funding sources. Others felt that already procedures were too inefficient, e.g. data on calls for tender emerges too late and is too indiscriminate. The staff cannot be subject experts nor develop links with all potential funders.
- The press office is not used much, and it was also felt that it could not bear a high level of demand for services. One case was cited of a massive mail out of press releases to no avail – whereas personal contacts yielded coverage. More generally the office is reactive to media coverage - it must be frustrating to deal with queries about work that you haven't heard of before. Need cultural understanding of appropriate terminology; skills ere are developed laboriously, and related to specific audiences.

- Staff Support Unit: could help in media and presentation training, training to write press releases, etc. Also promote courses offered by e.g. ESRC, Rowntree Trust, when these are applicable. PhDs are given support with transferable skills- but not all new RA appointments (this should be encouraged by senior researchers – fits the CRS concordat). Scheduling can be difficult though, since the timing of courses and the patterning of most activity within two semesters is not always ideal.
- Contact with users via their phoning in was reported as very important for some of the participants (while for others it was unheard of). In some cases this is so much the norm, and the relevant networks are so well established, that it is rare to need to go out and find or cultivate users. But it is important to have high calibre staff to answer the phone - demotivated and ill-informed secretaries will not do! And while users may need to be educated as to what is possible within constraints of time and funding, having a larger pool of researchers to draw upon makes it easier to respond to sudden requests. Again, more problematic for the truly lone researcher; raising funds to pay for research staff is crucial in such cases.
- University International Office does put researchers in touch with visiting academics, but rarely are policymakers brought into play (there were suggestions that this was not the case at all Universities in the Manchester area?) British Council organises missions however, for both groups.
- The model of new centres and schools is one where they scout for relevant funders and users, and do their own mixing and matching. This means their dedicating effort to this end.
- Teaching is an excellent training ground for researchers' presentations. A critical part of dissemination too: many significant users (and key officials in sponsoring bodies) are ex-graduates, and they both carry the messages from their own courses, and are better able to absorb and commission new research. (Senior politicians may find it hard to deal with nuanced research findings, as some journalists, but other policy staff may be more open.) In this context, elective and service courses should be upgraded, not treated as so often now as a punishment. Maybe promote part-time under and postgraduate courses with potential users (British Council staff already seem well linked in), and scope for CASE links and development of tailored MAs and short courses here? Manchester also needs to do the Oxbridge trick of keeping in touch with alumni, e.g. dining its MPs.
- Some bodies do fund for teaching-related dissemination: the Canadian studies Association was mentioned as wanting to see increases in the Canada content of teaching (as well as nonscholarly outputs).
- The University could support initiatives to host seminars bringing together researchers and users. E.g. Centre for Labour Studies "Welfare to Work" seminar recently. There are some funds for dissemination seminars: advice as how to access and deploy needed.
- Links with Manchester and regional local government and bodies like NHS trusts might be fostered more. Relations are very underdeveloped, while some social research has clear potential links to such users. (Can also be collaborators in EU-funded research.)? Workshops or events facilitating contacts; ways of finding out who has what links. But RGSU can't substitute for informal contacts: needs to facilitate people's use of existing networks. RGSU database of sponsors is liable to miss users like NGOs.
- Faculty research and graduate subcommittees also have a contribution to make in thinking about and bringing in users.

- Many research projects will be missed by this study. The reason is that they do not get an 8-account code (which was the basis for our sample). Some projects are assigned 7 codes, for reasons of flexibility and convenience. This may be true not just for lone researchers but also for centres like IDPMM, ARC, Henry Fielding. Other groups may be missing from the phone directory. Consultancy work is a key mode of influence, which is artificially demarcated from research while often in practice very close. Here again the RAE acts against routine efforts at applying knowledge.

Going with the Grain

This slogan captures much of the message of the workshops. If user links are to be improved, this should be done with sensitivity to the characteristics of the research itself. A standard model and set of indicators could be very damaging.

Participants

Mike Burton (economics)
Karen Clark (social policy)
Diane Elson (economics)
Simon French (informatics)
Tim Ingold (social anthropology)
Jamie Peck (geography)
Gajenda Verma (education)

Annexe 5 Meeting of CASE research students

Introduction

These notes summarise a discussion of the experiences of four CASE research students, three from Lancaster and one from Manchester. The aim of the meeting was to review relationships between CASE research students, their sponsors and their supervisors, and to reflect on the relevance of this for the present study of the role of Universities in the exploitation of social science research.

As none of the students had yet completed we were unable to talk about the "exploitation" of their research or the relevance of the final product (the PhD thesis) to the sponsoring organisations. The discussion focused instead on the process of doing research as a CASE research student, and on associated dilemmas, tensions and benefits. Reference was made to participants' own experiences and to those of other CASE students not present at the meeting.

Common themes

The range of sponsoring organisations and the character of the research itself varied widely but there were a number of important similarities. First, the students had come to a project or at least a project area which was already (if loosely) defined and which had been the subject of negotiation and discussion between the academic supervisor and the sponsoring organisation. In other words, the project had a history which predated that of the research student. The selection process is such that students were likely to find themselves engaging with new issues or unfamiliar sectors rather than developing a topic precisely related to their own interests or previous experience.

The second common feature relates to the involvement of three rather than two players in the PhD process. The role of sponsoring supervisors had to be negotiated and managed as well as the more familiar relationship between students and academic supervisors. Those involved in the meeting had different stories to tell about how this three-part drama was unfolding, but all suggested that the existence of the third party made a real difference to the way they saw their work. Not only that, all drew attention to a significant measure of uncertainty about how these roles would work out and about the division of responsibility and the allocation of rights and obligations between those involved.

Constructing a thesis in the midst of "real time" and "real life" organisations presented other, generic, challenges. Sponsoring supervisors left. New people came in. Things happened which had the effect of opening and sometimes closing proposed areas of enquiry. Figuring out how to turn these unpredictable events into opportunities, and how to live with attendant limitations was part of the process. Each case required more or less constant negotiation, manouvering and re-positioning as the project evolved, and as the surrounding circumstances changed. But exactly whose job is it to do the necessary easing of the way and where does the balance of power lie between the three participants? The problems of "failure" seemed to weigh much more heavily on the academic than on the sponsoring side of the equation. With more to lose (in terms of reputation, credibility, personal careers, etc.) university, supervisor and student were (potentially) vulnerable to events and

choices within the sponsors' world over which they had no control. As described, it, was largely up to the academic participants to find a way out of trouble. At such moments, uncertainties about the responsibilities of student and supervisor re-appeared. What was the student's role in such negotiation? Were there some issues which the sponsoring and academic supervisors had to resolve together, and if so, where did that leave the student?

The character of sponsor-student-supervisor interaction took very different forms. However, the third common feature was that all CASE research students were able to - and were in fact obliged to - negotiate a dual identity. They had two hats to wear: one the hat of their sponsoring organisation, the other the hat of a research student at a university. Discussion of the finer points about which hat to wear when, of whether and how the sponsoring organisation trusted the student in this respect, and of circumstances in which it was useful to hide either the sponsor's identity or the research student status was especially revealing. One of the many skills acquired was that of exploiting this dual identity.

To summarise, the discussion revolved around three common themes:

- the implications of entering into a research relationship in which some of the parameters and players were already defined
- the significance of having three rather than two participants (ie. the academic supervisor, the sponsoring supervisor and the student) especially given uncertainties surrounding the role and relative influence of each
- the implications of having and being able to exploit a dual identity

As might be expected, the way these themes played out depended, in large part, on the characteristics of the sponsoring organisation and on the nature of the project involved.

Dimensions of difference

The sponsoring organisations described ranged from the "one man band" to private sector companies, non governmental organisations, government agencies and government departments. Within the context of these vastly different settings, several features were especially relevant.

One was the role and position of the main point of contact or initiator within the sponsoring organisation. As noted above, several of those who had been involved in setting up a CASE studentship moved jobs during the course of the three years. New supervisors then had to be found and, if possible, drawn into the project. The significance of this loss (and/or gain) differed depending on the relationship between the initial sponsor-supervisor and the rest of the organisation. For instance, the project might have been set up because of personal interest on the part of the sponsor-supervisor. More broadly and perhaps more likely, the project might have played a part in the micro politics of the organisation, helping to promote one agenda against another. On the other hand, the sponsoring organisation might have signed up to the idea of supporting a studentship and then allocated the supervisory role on a fairly arbitrary basis.

The nature of the organisation's interest and the supervisor's capacity to engage with the research set the scene within which the project took place and within which it changed and evolved. Sponsoring organisations clearly had different expectations of what research was, and what its role might be. In the normal course of events,

research tends to have a different part to play in a campaigning organisation as compared with its role in a commerical company or government agency. CASE students were caught up in these contrasting worlds, their experiences of revising and re-defining the initial project reflecteing their sponsors' expectations of research and the "hands on" or "hands off" nature of their involvement. In a couple of cases projects had changed direction sometimes without the sponsoring organisation noticing or caring, or only noticing after the event and even then not caring. At the other end of the spectrum, one sponsoring organisation, wary that the research might actually influence events in the "real world", actively restricted the scope of the enquiry (at least for a time).

The nature of the research design and the research questions clearly made a difference to the sort of interaction which took place between sponsor and student. Things could get difficult if the researcher depended entirely on the sponsor for access, or if the sponsor-supervisor was too senior and so too busy to pay much attention. While positive support in this respect had the potential to open doors and, at a stroke, provide useful and relevant contacts, there was also the risk that over directed "gate keeping" might have narrowing and limiting consequences.

In all the cases discussed there was some sense of a gap between the sponsors' agenda (however loosely or tightly defined) and that of the student. Recognising that expectations didn't quite tally, students found themselves adopting a variety of strategies to manage this problem - for instance by trying to "train" their sponsor-supervisor; by operating, sometimes quite explicitly, on two tracks: for instance by doing work "for" the sponsor whilst also developing a critique of that "for" their academic audience; or by retreating and keeping portions of their work quiet so as not to rock the boat. Those who were in some way studying the sponsoring organisation itself were of course able to draw on both good and bad experiences as relevant research material in its own right. When navigating between competing expectations, students were sometimes frustrated that sponsors were unable or unwilling to say exactly what they wanted, or that they "never put their cards on the table". Such sponsors seemed to be elusive and difficult to deal with. At the same time the students recognised that this was in part because of real uncertainty about the role of research and the value of the research process in worlds which were also changing all the time.

Implications for universities, supervisors and students

The CASE research students clearly felt that they were different from regular PhD students. In particular, they felt they had benefited from the experience of negotiating and working with their sponsoring organisation. Equally that process generated a set of distinctive pressures, some of which had implications for their academic supervisors and the wider university context.

We talked, for instance, about the idea of an induction course on "how to survive as a CASE research student". New students might then get a chance to learn about developing and making use of their dual identity; "training" sponsor-supervisors; spreading the base of connections within the sponsoring organisation, and so on.

The groups of CASE students in Independent Studies at Lancaster and in PREST at Manchester are large enough to provide a pool of shared experience and an informal network of advice and support. This seemed to be extremely important, so much so that it was difficult to imagine how a lone CASE student might get on if isolated in an

academic department or without other CASE students to refer to. The departmental setting did seem to make a difference - with Lancaster students apparently making more cross departmental and inter disicplinary links than those at Manchester.

While this was not a meeting of CASE studentship supervisors, it seems that they too might have experiences to share. Certainly the negotiation of a three part supervision process including an outside organisation requires a particular sort of expertise. Of course much depends on the supervisors' prior links with the sponsoring organisation. Here we found there was enormous overlap between supervisors' research networks and past research histories and the current crop of studentships. Rather than being separate from user relationships associated with externally funded research, supervisors were exploiting these connections in developing CASE student projects. As such the studentships largely depended on the webs of existing links between university researchers and users.

Four points are especially relevant for the study of universities and the exploitation of social science research

1. CASE research studentships generate first hand experience of user interaction. This seems to be valued by the research students partly as a kind of "battle training" but also because (some) sponsors were having to learn about social research in the course of negotiating supervising these projects. The "exploitation" lay as much in the process of doing the work as from use of the (anticipated) final product.

2. The CASE studentship arrangement generates a particular set of three-way relationships between student, sponsor and academic supervisor, with the ESRC as a fourth player in the background. The balance of power between those involved is quite distinctive: this is not a conventional consultancy relationship, nor is it quite like an entirely voluntary research collaboration.

3. Descriptions of the more or less tricky negotiation of rights, obligations and expectations remind us of the diversity of sponsoring organisations and the range of beliefs which "users" hold about the process of doing social research and its potential benefits.

4. Finally, studentships were negotiated with potential sponsors who were in almost all cases already known to the academic supervisor. This suggests that networks of user contacts developed under one set of circumstances can be and are consolidated, developed, and put to other uses.

Annexe 6 Case Studies

Introduction

In the second stage of the study we interviewed a broad range of individual researchers at Lancaster and Manchester about their experiences of research and its exploitation. The sample was selected from our first-stage questionnaire audit and was designed to cover various categories of researchers: different generations; the full range of social science disciplines; a variety of connections with non-academic users; and people working in varied organisational contexts, both lone researchers and those in a range of different types of research institutes and centres. We also used the initial audit to select respondents with differing views on, and experience of, their university's support for dissemination and exploitation.

At each university, between 12 and 15 interviews were held, each lasting for between one and two hours. The discussions were semi-structured and guided by a schedule of issues (appended as an Annexe to this report). The aim was to explore the implications of the various contexts in which individuals worked, and to discuss their approaches to the dissemination of their work and their links with user communities. While each interview initially focused on a specific project undertaken by the respondent, discussion was broadened to cover the full range of research experience of each researcher. Since the interviews were conducted on the basis of confidentiality, the report below has anonymised individual responses; however, some research centres have been named with the permission of the respondents.

In this annexe we highlight the main issues which emerged from these interviews, and discuss some of the similarities and differences between researchers occupying the range of organisational locations referred to above. The report is structured as follows: we begin by describing the crucial importance of networks to academic research, and the ways in which networks of academic researchers differ from combined networks of academics and research users. We then discuss the variety of users that can be identified from our case studies, and follow this with an analysis of the variety of organisational contexts, from major research centres to small 'virtual' centres and lone research, in which social science research takes place in the two study universities. In the next section we discuss both concepts and practices of dissemination and exploitation, followed by an analysis of the perceived tension between 'academic' and 'applied' research. We then examine the process of setting research agendas and the kind of influence or control that is exerted by different types of user, briefly analyse how the changing research career affects the processes of research and user involvement, and conclude by discussing the role of the university in the exploitation process.

The centrality of networks

There was an almost universal view that a key - perhaps the key - to the successful conduct, let alone exploitation, of research is the development and maintenance of good networks. Indeed, our respondents clearly endorsed the view of sociologists of higher education and of science that networking is a prime skill of the successful research academic. The characteristic of most academic research, certainly in well-established disciplinary fields, is that it is directed to a geographically scattered universe of peers, between whom contact is maintained via a wide variety of formal

and informal channels - not only through publications and presentations to conferences and workshops, but also through membership of editorial boards, conference committees and referee pools, informal newsletters, group or individual e-mail, exchange of pre-prints, telephone calls and letters, chats in corridors and over coffee and so on. Thus the traditional research model is one in which the work of individual researchers is far better known amongst their peers in their national and international research community than in their own academic institution. In a later section we describe some of the ways in which Lancaster and Manchester have attempted to promote a more corporate research culture which might complement or even cut across traditional forms of networking, such as encouraging trans-disciplinary connections within the institution, and developing local and regional research links.

But whether researchers' first points of contact are international, national or local, the case studies reinforce the view that networks are a vital element in the genesis and dissemination of research. Many of the research projects undertaken by individuals in the case-study samples had emerged from, or been influenced by, interaction within such networks. Indeed, in general, the more apparently successful and influential the researcher or research group, the more consciously were such networks cultivated.

However, the mechanisms by which researchers cultivate and maintain their networks, and the benefits which network members envisage from their membership, differ between the traditional academic networks and extra-academic links. Whereas links with other academics appear to be readily established and maintained through conventional academic discourse and the range of modes of communication listed above, links with non-academics are somewhat more contingent and more ephemeral. This is largely a matter of the terms of trade of different networks: the essence of the maintenance of links depends on the nature of the exchange involved.

For academic networks, a shared interest in an academic field and the readiness to communicate findings and share ideas is a sufficient basis of reciprocity. One of our interviewees, the director of a large research centre, repeatedly characterised his relationship with other members of his national and international academic networks as one of 'friendship': other universities have now established similar centres and although these are, strictly speaking, competitors, 'I see this as healthy. We are all good friends, we all co-operate and are in touch with each other.' Another interviewee began his response to our questions about networks with a firm denial that he was in any way attentive to his own networks, actual or potential: 'I don't see them as a major professional concern.' But as the interview progressed, it became increasingly clear that he had long been a highly effective contributor to, and beneficiary of, networks of various kinds without necessarily devoting a great deal of energy or - evidently - self-consciousness to promoting or maintaining his contacts: 'I find that people ring me up a lot.' He described the evolution of his networks as 'naturalistic' and spoke about the way in which specific networks could come or go, or could become dormant and then revive.

For non-academic contacts, the variety of types of network is very broad: from formal partnerships and networks held together through such mechanisms as committees, meetings and workshops, to informal groupings and joint activities based on personal acquaintance. Here reciprocity perhaps inevitably takes on different and more

tangible forms. One researcher spoke of the importance of giving free advice and undertaking what could otherwise be regarded as consultancy tasks in order to lubricate and sustain certain non-academic contacts which he saw as important (**Case 1**). Another sharpened the argument by reversing the perspective: 'I'm fairly mercenary in that I tend to take quite a cold view of networks ... I don't see a network as a one-way process - it has to be two-way.'

The skills and attributes that academics can bring to the table of non-university links were a focus of many of our discussions. For links with the business world, a university researcher's access to the literature-based realm of science and social science was the principal key. This is a domain highly valued by large companies - less so by most SMEs - and the opportunity to discuss with and be advised through conversations with academics provided the key to such networks. Frequently, such contacts are used by the academics not necessarily to generate formal contracts but rather to attract joint working, often in the form of CASE studentships and the sponsorship of research students and research fellows. The subsequent work of research students can then provide a context in which discussion of new developments can take place. Contacts with government departments are largely driven by the same forms of academic expertise although the reciprocity is usually in the form of funded research projects and contracts. One of our discussants, who worked extensively with voluntary sector bodies, made the point that amongst the valued skills that he brought to networking were his ability and readiness to talk at conferences and to chair committees and working groups (**Case 2**).

CASE 1

This is an example of research in the field of the management of R&D. Research is undertaken by a team led by a researcher with a background in the physical sciences and a career involving an early period of work in industry, a move to a university, followed by running an independent research unit and a return to university-based work. His accumulated contacts with companies has developed an extensive network with large businesses. These contacts are articulated largely through senior managers of the companies' R&D departments and based on relatively frequent meetings and telephone conversations in which problems faced by the companies are discussed and his views and advice sought. "With issues that I find interesting my line is to say, 'this is an important question, we know x and y about it, but we could throw much more light on it if we did more work on it with a research student." This provides the basis for looking for CASE awards or other forms of support for research students. Work is then undertaken jointly between the company, the research student and the research team.

CASE 2

This example draws on a 'lone' researcher whose work is predominantly with voluntary sector bodies. One highly influential project which fed directly into a change of national policy arose from his extensive involvement with community groups and his chairing of a national committee. 'In the 1970s I sat on committees as a mere participant; but by 1980/81 I was asked to chair a national committee that went around like a mini-Royal Commission taking evidence from statutory and non-statutory bodies.' On this committee also sat a 'policy influential' individual with whom the project was jointly undertaken. The fact that this individual was himself highly committed to the work and influential in policy formulation ensured that the findings of the project were used directly to develop a new national policy framework - 'He was the product champion and one with whom I could develop an umbilical cord.' In terms of what he brought to the process, the researcher noted: 'They could write on headed notepaper and they had an academic name on board to give legitimacy to what they were doing. I could give them communication skills - I speak quite well and chair committees quite well and you can get into a whole host of reciprocities - "Can you speak at our AGM and I'd say yes if....'.

It is clear that the successful academic networker must be prepared to devote considerable (usually unpaid) time to the cultivation of networks and be ready to offer what is in effect a form of consultancy advice drawn from familiarity with current academic debate. It is equally clear that the non-academic map of who are the 'respected' academics within a relevant field is strongly influenced by those academics who speak at high-profile meetings and conferences: more than one of our interviewees told us stories of a key event at which they or a colleague had made a distinctive impression on otherwise sceptical non-academics. But of course the maintenance of networks is also clearly influenced by the quality and reliability of delivering contracts, in addition to their willingness to provide a continual stream of valued expertise.

For many of our interviewees, however, non-academic links were intrinsically fragile and problematic. Some researchers spoke of their non-academic contacts as project- or contract-based, such that at the end of a contract links would naturally cease and would need to be consciously maintained or re-established. In the view of a management researcher, most connections with users are both tenuous and personal: 'most academics who talk about their contacts in a company mean one or two people who write letters on the company letterhead.' Often these are genuine enthusiasts, but whereas members of academic networks can be depended on to sustain a long-term interest even if they move to another university, company employees may not be in a position to do so. The same researcher told us that following what he regarded as a successful and well-received industry-sponsored project, 'almost all my contacts left the company shortly afterwards'. He added, only half-joking, that he sometimes felt that academic involvement had even made his contacts politically suspect or at least dispensable. Another researcher spoke of a similar loss of continuity in a UK government department where a large research programme was managed by one person: when the contact moved, that connection was lost and had to be rebuilt from scratch. Yet another referred to the problems of high turnover among the academic advisory staff in Brussels, which he contrasted with the greater stability both of the Brussels bureaucracy and especially of the international academic network through which he constructed European proposals. One of our interviewees summarised the problem: 'the best links with people outside

academia are those based on personal acquaintance where you know the person, and can work well with him; but of course this does then run the risk that when they move on the link goes disappears. It's difficult to see how to square this circle.' But an interesting counter-weight was provided by one interviewee who, rather like the example in **Case 2**, had evidently made a deep impression on an individual employee of a major UK retail firm at a government-sponsored research seminar. The individual concerned had then occupied similar posts in four different national companies in the past eight years; and each new post had resulted in a major contract for the researcher.

Because effective links and networks depend so heavily on this kind of personal chemistry, it should be no surprise that they exhibit strong generational qualities - including age-related birth and death. One of the researchers who described the loss of his key contacts in the external world added that nearly all of them had been members of his network for much of his professional life, and thus were approaching or just over 50 - and in line for early retirement at a time of contraction. His experience was neatly balanced by another interviewee's description of the formation of new networks: on one of this researcher's projects a young research officer had quickly formed strong personal connections with professional staff of similar ages and academic backgrounds in the voluntary organisations which were the project's clients: as bright recent graduates in the social sciences 'they've all been reading the same books.'

Several of our interviewees commented on the role of funders in promoting and supporting effective networks. An educational researcher who had carried out projects for the Employment Department/DfEE commented on the high profile which the ED in particular had given to networking between researchers, evaluators and innovators/education developers. Despite some reservations about the time and resources demanded of the researchers and the quality of discussion within specific networks, this interviewee clearly felt that the policy of supporting networks was one which could profitably be adopted more widely. The ESRC, on the other hand, was specifically criticised by two other interviewees, with an unfavourable comparison between the effort and resource which it puts into co-ordinating and publicising research programmes and its apparent lack of interest in bringing together responsive-mode researchers with common interests or methodological approaches. 'They have funded a whole bunch of projects [in this area] - it is always a theme that's pretty high up the agenda... [But] they give you the money and that's it... Although I know there were similar projects going on at the same time, we were never invited to anything or asked to contribute a description to their newsletter ... or anything... They waste a lot of opportunities to get that material circulated.' Other funders such as the NHS were commended for their interest in constructing academic-external user networks, but there were reservations about the amount of resource that was provided: 'with some exceptions GPs are extremely unwilling to get involved in anything that they aren't paid for,' and the allowable overhead costs could not fully support the University's long-term fixed costs in liaising with and supporting users of research.

Varieties of users

Interviewees identified three broad types of external bodies with an interest in research. At one extreme were the academic funding agencies such as the research councils and charities, with a mandate to support both blue-sky and applied research. These agencies could not normally be described as users themselves,

and whatever their interest in research exploitation by third parties (which naturally, varied with the project), they were generally seen by interviewees as being more concerned with academic quality. In the middle were user-funders, such as large firms, government departments and voluntary agencies, which - in the social sciences at least - do not normally fund blue-sky or speculative research but have a strong interest in the usability of the work they commission, sometimes on a privileged or restricted basis. Finally, there is a group referred to by many respondents as 'end users', who would not normally fund research themselves, but whose practice may well be directly affected by the outcomes of the research.

Many of our respondents took our project's concern with the 'exploitation' of research as referring primarily to this last group: for some of them, indeed, end-users constituted a reference group of equal importance to their academic peers. We refer below to examples of this approach, such as the 'virtual' centre (**Case 5**, below) for whom end-users constituted a key component of their clientele, albeit partly in the hope of converting some of them to user-funders; or a permanent-contract researcher whose academic identity was defined by a particular and innovative stance towards the relationship of research and practice. More than one interviewee made the point that contact with end-users cannot be left to the end of a project: 'if use is to be considered seriously, it should enter the planning process, and the consideration of [both] the research team and the managers from the sponsors [in this case a government department] at a very early stage - so it can inform the way the research is undertaken, the focus of the questions, the involvement of potential end-users and so on.' Another interviewee defined one of his primary roles (for which he had explicitly received funding) as promoting and encouraging practitioners in carrying out their own research - but wherever possible through joint projects between university staff and practitioners, designed to lead to academic publication. Yet another made a sharp distinction between his responsibilities to governmental 'commissioners' of research and to 'end users': 'the commissioners might just be the gatekeepers for the public interest but quite often they lose sight of that ... and see themselves ... as the user. Whereas we might say, "well, no, the public are the users." It's public money, it's regional resources, it's not just, for example, the TEC as an institution.'

The organisational context of research

It is clear that organisational context is critical. There are significant contextual differences between work done by 'lone' individual researchers and that done under the umbrella of research units and centres, of whatever kind; but also between the many different types of centre. For the term 'centre' is clearly a catchall. It is evident that there is a wide variety of types of 'centre', depending on their size, the formality of their structure, the nature of their research clients and the type of research which they undertake. One extreme is the formal large-scale centre which tackles a defined subject area, often for an identifiable external client. An example is Manchester's National Primary Care Research and Development Centre which has core funding from the Department of Health. Other large formal centres, such as Manchester's Centre for Research in Innovation and Competition, or Policy Research in Engineering Science and Technology or Lancaster's Centre for the Study of Environmental Change, have continuing streams of project funding drawn from a wide range of commercial, research council, government and EU funders and are more readily able to mix 'academic' and 'non-academic' research. The most extreme, but missing, version of this is the research council- or government-funded institute which is found only in the sciences in Britain (although several have recently

been privatised), but is more common in the social sciences in Europe, for example, in CNRS institutes in France. These institutes can offer long-term research careers for full-time 'academic' researchers. In between, there is a wide range of research institutes, centres and groups - some interdepartmental, some located within a single departmental cost centre; some with university or faculty core or pump-priming finding, some dependent on external funds or project overheads - and involving anything from thirty or more staff to a small handful. Budgetary and contractual arrangements are equally varied. At the other extreme are 'virtual' centres which exist largely as letter-heads and comprise either a small group of like-minded staff with little or no core funding, or a fluid set of individual researchers who may be brought together to tackle specific projects or contracts. These latter types may appear to help with one of the funding problems that beset larger or more formal centres, since they may have less obligation to re-employ contract research staff who are taken on to work on specific projects. But this can bring with it the loss of continuity and expertise, and an excessive dependence on the reputation and contacts of one or two individuals (a hazard for all but the largest centres); moreover, large formal centres are undoubtedly in the best position to benefit from greater visibility, and economies of scale in networking, promotional and support activities. The benefits of one or other context are by no means one-sided, and they vary according to the type of centre and the discipline involved. From our case studies we have drawn up the following balance sheet.

On the positive side, formal research institutes, centres and to a lesser extent research groups (hereafter centres) within a university context can provide a critical mass of researchers working in one or more related fields. This offers considerable advantages:

- Active and cohesive centres can provide a supportive context for individuals. This brings with it benefits associated with the exchange of information and ideas - the critical role of networking is augmented by the internal contacts offered within a centre. Internal seminars, informal discussion and advice and the sharing of user contacts can offer invaluable support to individuals, so that the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. In particular, effective centres can provide induction, support and greater contract stability for younger researchers and those on short term contracts (see **Case 3**). Moreover, centres can provide technical support in the form of both people and equipment dedicated to their specific research domain.

CASE 3

A research centre with a specialist focus within a single academic department has three core academic staff, two on academic grades and one on a permanent research contract. Each of these is funded through their parent department's core teaching and research allocation, and contributes in varying proportions to that department's undergraduate teaching as well as to research student training and supervision; their offices are physically located in the centre. The centre employs another six contract research staff on a succession of short-term contracts, as well as one full-time technical assistant and two part-time clerical staff. The longest-serving contract staff have worked continuously at the centre for over ten years. Each of the contract staff tends to work on a portfolio of projects, usually shared between several of them. The centre's main advantages in the eyes of our interviewee are visibility, credibility and marketing; the availability of technical support; and, especially, the experience and commitment of the contract staff. The centre organises internal staff development and support meetings as well as a cohesive environment in which staff provide each other mutual support and assistance on an ongoing, everyday basis. Efforts have been made over the years to convert the short-term contracts to longer-term commitments, but with mixed success.

- Centres can provide a clearer framework for setting a research agenda to which individual members can respond. Some of the centres that were included in our discussions organised regular (weekly or monthly) collective briefing sessions at which strategy was discussed and progress reported.
- Centres can provide a more secure basis from which to disseminate and market research work, as well as to attract new research contracts and project funding. One of the large centres in our survey, for example, employed an in-house publicity officer whose role was both to assemble information about research opportunities and alert staff to them, and to publicise research findings (see **Case 4**). Others had their own publication outlets which could be targeted to appropriate users. For one small 'virtual' centre (see **Case 5**) the maintenance and development of external contacts was its main if not sole raison d'être.

CASE 4

A large research centre with some 70 staff drawn from a range of medical and social science disciplines and with core funding from a government department for a period of 10 years. The advantage of core funding is that it provides a looser and more autonomous relationship with the funder. This helps in part to resolve the tension between what policy-makers want now and what the issues might be in 2002. The advantage of a centre structure is: 'that it has the infrastructure, it provides the support structure and the management structure to help its staff. As a solitary researcher I simply had to go wherever the money was. Departmental structures are simply inappropriate unless you can get a big enough group of like-minded people around you and, since the range and variety of teaching determines staffing in most departments, this rarely happens.' This Centre employs a dedicated press/publicity officer who handles the media, publicity brochures, synopses of research findings, seminars with policy makers and practitioners and the like.

CASE 5

A small 'virtual' centre promotes and exploits the work of two senior researchers, one in a management department, one in environmental science, with a common interest in developing new methods of forecasting of interest to government departments, manufacturing industry and commerce. The centre, described by our interviewee as a 'shell' with research 'diffusion' as its main purpose, maintains a network - 'of individuals, not companies' - to which it circulates news of its activities, and for which it organises occasional seminars and invitational lectures. The centre, which is 'virtual' in the sense that it possesses no dedicated office space or permanent staff, was given a small start-up grant by the University but is now expected to maintain itself by generating a surplus on its more commercial projects. As well as disseminating its findings to members (and generating commercial business from them), it uses its network to find placements for Master's students ('our ambassadors'); involves end-users in bids for research council grants; and, perhaps paradoxically, has sought their help in convincing the academic community of the value of highly applied work of this kind 'in real-world contexts'. (A recent ESRC seminar series involved a mix of academics and external users; the prime agenda, for our interviewee, was not only to bring together different academic disciplines to develop the field and raise its profile within those disciplines, but even more to draw on 'real world problems' identified by external users, in order to convince the academic community of the importance of this area of research. 'It's not the users that need convincing.')

- Centres offer greater visibility to the outside world. This not only attracts further research projects and contracts, but can also add greater perceived authority and salience to the work produced. More than one of our interviewees told us - without cynicism - that 'the letterhead' was one of the most useful features of their centre. In this way both universities and individual researchers can develop and add value to their reputation for work in a research domain.

- Finally, centres can focus on 'real world' problems which are very often inter- or multi-disciplinary in nature, and for which traditional departmental and disciplinary groupings (perpetuated by the Research Assessment Exercise) may be less well suited. As one of our interviewees, who holds a permanent research contract in a medium-sized centre, put it: 'there's no obvious academic [community] that I belong to with the work I do ... I really slide in between a lot of different communities': she defined her research identity precisely in relation to a specific group of external practitioners.

There are wide variations in the ways in which 'problem-oriented' centres define their identity. The 'virtual' centre described in **Case 5**, with its emphasis on methodologies, provides an interesting example in which researchers from two quite remote disciplinary fields have combined their expertise and applied it in areas of economic life which they would not otherwise have encountered, and in which, indeed, they would have had no credibility. In a very different style, Lancaster's Institute for Health Research has been designed to mirror, and respond to, the full range of research agendas which a single external client, the National Health Service in the region, has identified or may adopt: here the centre manages and facilitates access to researchers from every relevant discipline across the university, drawing in whatever expertise is required by particular projects and specific end-users within

the NHS. However, most of the larger centres have shaped their identity in relation to an area of practice which they define for themselves, and for which there may generally be multiple external users. In these cases the centre's identity is primarily defined not just by a specific area of interest which transcends disciplinary boundaries but - for those with a national reputation - by a distinctive theoretical or analytic approach to the problems of that area. It is this identity and reputation which centres seek to cultivate and which they believe attract external users.

On the other hand, centres can bring with them some potential dangers.

- Their need to generate resources to maintain their staffing base can make centres less selective in the projects for which they bid or which they undertake. With the growth of non-university based research consultancies, centres may find themselves bidding against small private enterprises with low overheads, or larger firms with more flexible costing: several interviewees told us that price competition was becoming increasingly fierce and that not all research funders were prepared to pay for quality. One consequence is that there is much less financial slack which would allow for staff development (e.g. work for higher degrees) or provide time for commissioned research reports to be converted into academic publications and subjected to critical academic scrutiny - and qualify their authors for entry in the Research Assessment Exercise, and R funding. (Not all of the contract staff in the centre described in **Case 3** were entered for the 1996 Research Assessment Exercise: much of that centre's research consists of evaluation reports which do not lend themselves to immediate publication.) A number of our interviewees expressed scepticism about the quality of some of the research being undertaken through centres dependent on external financing. But it should be added that lone researchers are not automatically immune from some of the same pressures: at their best, centres can provide mutual support and help to spread these risks.

As we shall see below, there is wide variation in the methods by which, and the extent to which, universities, faculties and departments support their various research centres and groups. Some centres see themselves as needing to 'earn their keep', or to repay a pump-priming investment, over a very short period: failure to meet a single annual budget target could easily lead to closure of the centre or the loss of valued staff. For others there may be a long-term commitment from within the institution, which may be expressed in a direct subsidy, a transfer of staff resource, or a political acceptance that the advantages of gradually-accruing research success outweigh the importance of financial targets.

- We interviewed a number of permanent staff who were appointed on research grades and worked solely in a centre with no substantive departmental affiliation. Several referred to feelings of isolation and even invisibility. One interviewee who defined her identity in terms of a commitment to a particular practitioner group, after noting the absence of a single academic community to which her work related, commented 'you really need both kinds of networks. But it's exhausting trying to keep them all going.' Her feeling of invisibility to academic departments and disciplines (which she was able to verify by describing how her situation had recently changed as she was drawn into one department's teaching and administration) was echoed and even amplified by the director of another centre who complained of a key central-university administrator's 'persist[ence] in not understanding what we are about, despite the fact that we have built an

international reputation.' Of course there have always been problems of recognition for interdisciplinary work. Full-time research staff, for whom even their work rhythms distinguish them from their teaching colleagues, are liable to be overlooked and undervalued. But aside from the personal hurtfulness of lack of recognition, there is the danger that important work may fail to receive appropriate institutional support. Research centres, which by definition lie outside the university's basic structure of departments, can easily be seen, even in research-led universities like Manchester and Lancaster, as peripheral to the 'core business' of the institution.

- Finally, and depending on the tightness of their affiliation and commitment to their centre, there is a danger that the corporate imperative can stifle genuinely innovative work from individual members which may not sit comfortably within the agreed priorities of the centre as a whole. One example comes from a centre working in an applied field where the development and application of research findings amongst user communities is important: 'For some staff who see themselves as "researchers" this can present a real tension, although the size of the centre means that there are often enough people to provide alternative channels so that research output can be translated into practice by others in a project team. But this, of course, does then have consequences for promotion procedures where academic publication is so important.'

One 'lone' researcher compared the work that he had undertaken in a research team based within his department with the benefits that might have accrued had the work been undertaken within the context of a centre (**Case 6**). In his eyes, the disadvantage of non-centre work was the loss of accumulated experience at the end of the project when the research assistants (and some of the principal researchers) left for positions elsewhere. The ideal situation is probably that of centres which have been awarded programme funding and which therefore have a degree of medium-term financial stability that makes it easier to reconcile the imperatives of blue-sky and near-market research, as well as offering the possibility of rolling contracts for research staff. Clearly, limited research resources mean that at any one time only a few centres are likely to attract such funding. However, on the whole even the project-based centres which need to earn their keep through contract and project funding appear to us to offer a balance of advantages that help to ensure a strengthening of the research base and a more assured access to the user community. But this depends on the strength and coherence of the user community to which they relate, or which they are able to establish. Where, as all too frequently, links with users are fragile and may only last for the duration of a single project, centres can easily become destabilised. Where they are successful in establishing longer-term relationships and a consistent academic reputation which can also ensure a flow of Research Assessment Exercise-based funding, their advantages become much more clear.

CASE 6

This was a large project in political science, supported by research council funding and involving three principal researchers and two research assistants. It resulted in the production of an influential academic book, but in less 'non-academic' dissemination than might have happened had two of the principal researchers not moved to posts overseas at the end of the project. Some exposure was achieved on radio, television and the press within the local case-study areas as a result of summaries having been sent to local councils and also to participants in the local surveys. This, however, was felt to have been less than the national significance of the work might have warranted. The loss of the principal researchers meant that there was less proactive 'selling' of the results than might otherwise have occurred. Furthermore, the fact that the research assistants moved on to posts elsewhere at the end of their contracts meant that considerable accumulated expertise was lost. Ironically, the research council is now beginning to develop programme-based work in this field and is having to develop afresh much of this dispersed expertise. One of the principal researchers contrasted this experience with what might have been possible under the umbrella of a research centre in which an acumulation of research knowledge and methodologies could have been capitalised upon somewhat more effectively.

Dissemination and exploitation

Like 'users', the concept of 'dissemination' can take many forms. For some of our interviewees the process is linear, rational and fairly traditional in its assumptions. They conduct a piece of research, largely inspired by a set of academically-derived preoccupations, write it up for academic publication and, at some point generally towards the end of the project, turn their mind to who else outside their peer network might be interested in, or even benefit from, the results. In this case, dissemination involves publications, conferences and seminars, each of which might be oriented more or less towards academic or external users, and perhaps some effort to obtain media publicity. In some academic disciplines there is felt to be no necessary contradiction between academic publication and publication in non-academic outlets: indeed, it is an open question whether the art of academic writing differs from that of producing briefing notes and articles for 'trade' journals. But as we have indicated, the pressures of research assessment on one hand, and of the need to preserve employment contracts on the other, can easily lead to considerable tension over the appropriate effort and resource to be devoted to each kind of publication.

But for most of our interviewees the process of user involvement is both complex and indeterminate. When projects arise out of long engagement in external networks, or involve users and practitioners in the research design and even in the research process itself, the very idea of 'dissemination' sounds quaint. In the words of one interviewee: 'The research process is not sequential, with users wating for a product to come out at the end. This is an increasingly rare way to work...the relationship with users structures the whole nature of research'. Another of our interviewees, who had begun by describing a project in which his dissemination strategy was precisely of the linear form described above - and had been, in his view, 'a total failure' - was sharply critical of the ESRC application form and its tidy emphasis on 'bureaucratically acceptable' dissemination plans. He described a later project as a 'messy' 'real life' process in which project aims changed, 'the spin-offs were more important than the original intentions', and users were integrated in

project design and execution (as objects of study, through advisory groups and through their secondment of young staff to part-time doctoral study). This had been a project funded by a private foundation, for which there had been a generous contingency budget which had been used both for late-emerging fieldwork needs and for 'very professional' dissemination events jointly planned and delivered with the users. 'If the ESRC is serious about dissemination they shouldn't ask me to fill in a form, they should send someone up here to get a feel for the project, spend time with all the team and find out what it is that's really driving us,' then help the team to work out what their messages are and how to get them where they are needed. This may be an extreme view; but we were struck by the number of interviewees who turned out to have reflected extensively on what is after all one of the key intellectual puzzles of the social sciences, namely the ways in which knowledge is created and used within organisations and the wider society. Most of these adopted distinctly un-'rational' approaches in their own work.

Returning to the more mundane level of methods of communication, interviewees in different areas listed a wide range of preferred modes of dissemination amongst users of different kinds: short 'accessible' articles; books (quite often books in an academic imprint, but carefully written to be accessible to practitioners); project reports and/or summaries; invitational or open conferences or seminars; exposure in the media; and of course word of mouth (see **Case 7**). Choosing among these was a function not only of the traditions of the discipline and the external group, but also of the degree of pre-existing interest in the topic and the structure of target groups themselves. For many projects, cold-mailing project summaries to a bought-in mailing list would be a waste of time and money: but for a highly topical piece of research with an identifiable community of potential users it might be worth while. A case study interviewee working in the health field told us that he would never use mailings to large organisations, whether hospitals or commercial groups, since they would be unlikely to reach an interested party, but that for small units such as GPs' practices he had achieved what he regarded as a reasonable 'hit rate'. An interviewee in the social policy field contrasted his experiences of, on the one hand, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and its practice of demanding four-page 'Findings' digests which it then mailed to a wide audience (but with modest results), and, on the other, the ESRC whose Press Office had not, he said, followed up wide media interest in the subject of his research.

CASE 7

One example from a 'traditional' academic researcher came from work on an ESRC programme for which the research council had decided to arrange a media presentation on the results of projects. This, perhaps coincidentally, coincided with a moment of acute national concern about the issue and resulted in: 'a media feeding frenzy for which our work was not wholly appropriate. It all takes time, and what you end up with, given the 30-second sound bites, makes you wonder about the value. The extent to which they can misread your carefully-phrased 2-page press release calls into question whether it's a useful communication exercise... I expect we could have benefited from training in all of this, but it's difficult to know when training would be appropriate. It happens so quickly and blanket training would not be appropriate.'

There was also an increasing interest in the use of electronic media. A statistician whom we interviewed followed standard practice in his discipline in using the World

Wide Web as an adjunct to formal journal publication and recorded very large numbers of 'hits' for new software, one or two of which had led to contracts for further statistical development for commercial users. (But when asked whether he had considered directly marketing his new software, he replied that it was not worth the effort since it would require constant maintenance through help lines, manuals etc. which would distract his team from further academic research. Instead he had passed it to a major software house for incorporation in their next release, in exchange for a number of otherwise expensive site licences.) Others used the Web to broadcast summaries of research findings in an accessible form. One research centre maintained good contact with journalists and used e-mailed summaries of research 'stories' in order to provide readily manipulable copy while ensuring some degree of control over the content of publications. For some of these methods membership of a research centre clearly offered advantages - for example sharing the cost of maintaining and developing address lists, support in writing and distributing press releases or help in organising high-profile lectures or seminars.

Coupling with the process of policy formulation appears to present recurring difficulties. More than one interviewee complained to us of their failure to impress policy elites with what they themselves were convinced was highly significant work, and compared their invisibility in the UK with the respectful interest which their work had been given by civil servants and other potential users in 'more rational' policy-making systems overseas (the Nordic countries were mentioned). While there is no reason to doubt this account of their reception, it would be interesting to compare the views of, say, Swedish social scientists who had offered their research findings to policy seminars both at home and in the UK. Prophets from other countries have the double advantage of unfamiliarity (policy makers are less likely to believe that they already know what the researcher is going to tell them) and, often, simply better timing. There was certainly a view that much research is used by policy makers to justify policy decisions that have already been made. One of our interviewees who specialised in evaluation research described, with fairly heavy irony mixed with genuine pleasure, his surprise that there was 'genuine interest' within government in his most recent work, and claimed that he could see clear outcomes from it in the shape of a recent Green Paper. He added that the more common experience in his field was that 'Either you do an evaluation and ... it's a marketing exercise, whoever's commissioned it can say "well, it's been done" but actually no notice is taken of it and there was never any intention ... Or you come up with significant findings but ... nobody knows what to do with them and it would throw them off their course.'

But there was also a view that to be too closely associated with any particular policy thrust would be to compromise the neutrality, or indeed the critical edge, of academic research and that policy making should rightly be the preserve of the policy makers, if suitably informed by research. 'I don't want to be the kind of academic who advises a particular audience. If the work was geared to particular end users, it would be distorted - I'm anxious to avoid that.' However, the majority view was that 'policy-relevant' research (which was rarely defined) should enable researchers to join in the debate out of which policy might emerge. In this, it was recognised that only rarely does published research have such salience that in itself it alters the policy debate. More commonly it was claimed that face-to-face involvement with senior civil servants or with those within a relevant organisation was critical. This might either take the form of workshops or of joint working. There were good examples of the latter in the voluntary sector world, for example where researchers worked with professionals as members of key committees with policy leverage. The fact that most

national public policy debate is centred on London had prompted one research centre to open a London office staffed by four of its members. However, while this gave easier access to the policy community, our informant felt that the balance of costs and benefits to the centre was rather finely drawn.

Our discussions revealed a number of cases where genuine policy influence was claimed. Some of these were in the management field where work lay on the border zone between the physical sciences and social sciences. For example, one dedicated large research centre has undertaken a range of projects for research councils, business, the European Commission and other funders and has developed an extensive network of 'influentials' including senior government officials, key journalists and members of committees in the policy community. Outputs from projects have been directed at the media through e-mail and press releases, use is made of in-house briefing papers which are circulated to relevant individuals and bodies, and extensive use is made of talks and presentations at key meetings and through workshops. One of its members told us firmly that such people 'listen to what you say, not what you write.' For researchers in smaller centres, however, and still more for lone researchers, the fragility of their networks and the shortage of time which they can invest in them can temper their impact on the external world. Several interviewees described experiences of carrying out research which had been either directly commissioned by, or designed in conjunction with, government departments or firms, only to find that their key contacts had moved on and any interest in the outcomes had evaporated. Other lone researchers clearly looked to their funders to help them by 'brokering' their research. The lone social policy researcher referred to in our discussion of academic/applied tensions also contrasted the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's determination to *use* the research which it funded to promote its own policy agenda with what he saw as the ESRC's 'failure to broker' responsive-mode research in a coherent fashion, even when of obvious policy relevance.

In achieving influence in the policy community, many interviewees explicitly or implicitly referred to the role played by 'intermediary' bodies such as think tanks, pressure groups and the like. Since such bodies have much more direct access to policy-makers than do academics, their involvement can play an important role in taking forward the fruits of academic research into the policy domain. **Case 8** provides one illustration. A second type of intermediary body is the professional association, many examples of which were cited in such fields as accountancy and management. In such cases, the bodies can be funders as well as intermediaries; their especial value for dissemination is the access that they can help to provide to business contacts and in assisting access to data through the credibility that they offer amongst end users. A third type of intermediary organisation is the professional academic society, in cases where a significant proportion of members is drawn from amongst non-academics and where normal academic networking can readily be supplemented by productive contacts with non-academics. Economics, we were told, is a good example. This reflects the more general argument that many of those in certain fields of practice and policy are academics manqué and that it is precisely such individuals who provide the most valuable and the most rewarding members of non-academic networks, not only because they are sympathetic to the critical and more theoretically-informed style of much academic work but also are alive to the difficulties of the research endeavour.

CASE 8

An individual researcher works within a variety of loosely configured teams of academic researchers. He recognises that the policy debate is a rapidly shifting one and that there is a difficult interface between the relatively slow production of academic research and the more immediate needs of policy makers. As well as writing highly respected academic reflective work, he works extensively in conjunction with a locally-based and two national think tanks. This takes the form of offering un-costed advice and inputs that are informed by academic literature and of doing small, often under-funded, work with members of the think tanks. This helps to establish his credibility in a non-academic context and ensures that his academically-informed outputs have fairly direct access to the policy domain. His view is that the most helpful external support for such work is small amounts of travel funds to enable him to maintain direct contact with the usually London-based intermediaries.

A final point to recognise is that, especially in applied areas of the social sciences, dissemination is only the penultimate part of the formal outcome of research. In many cases the final 'stage' is that of the development and implementation of policy and practice. This can take researchers a long way from the conception of research as pure enquiry, but in areas such as medicine and health, education or social welfare some of the staff of applied centres can only see through the fruits of their work by involvement in development. Within a number of disciplines (education is a good example) there is hot debate and, arguably, serious confusion about the boundaries of 'research', and the extent to which developmental work can legitimately be included in individuals' research profiles, whether for internal promotion and rewards or for inclusion in the Research Assessment Exercise. This confusion, which also affects researchers' and indeed universities' decisions about the appropriate price to the commissioning agency, is a reflection of more general debates about the relationship between so-called academic and applied research.

Academic/applied tensions

The perceived tension between 'academic' and 'applied' research was a common theme in our discussions. However, individual researchers' responses ranged from denying that there is any 'real' problem at all, to complaining that their work was seriously distorted by conflicting pressures. Our analysis of these responses suggests that they are conditioned by the discipline or domain of the research, by the age and experience - and distinction - of the researcher, and by the type of funder or user.

The field of enquiry to which researchers assigned themselves was a key element in determining how the academic/applied distinction was perceived. For researchers working entirely within mainstream and well-established academic disciplines in the social sciences - sociology, psychology or economics, for example - there was sometimes a clear distinction to be made between 'theoretical' and 'applied' work, and an implicit attribution (from both sides) of lower status to work which was not seen as contributing, directly or indirectly, to theory. In the nature of our sample, we interviewed a number of researchers in these disciplines who described the research projects about which we were asking as (relatively) applied. In some cases they were keen to assure us that these projects would nevertheless contribute to theoretical advance: a sociologist, for example, told us that his project reports and data analysis, even though published in academic outlets, were all 'fairly boring' and that they had an extremely short shelf-life, but that the thinking they had engendered

had led to reflective books which had had significant impacts on both academic and external readers, and were used for many years. A political scientist, similarly, told us that his work on electoral politics, which was evidently of considerable practical significance, had always started with, and finished by contributing to, major theoretical debates in his field. But other researchers in these fields were happy to declare that this was not their primary interest. As we described in the previous section, they wanted to engage with policy making, and this was justification enough for their work, even if it involved 'merely' the collection and analysis of social data, or the evaluation of policy innovation, rather than contribution to knowledge or understanding in its own right. Others again told us that they did not find the distinction a helpful one. Although we did not pose the question explicitly, there was little support for any concept of 'blue-sky' research which is either logically or temporally prior to more applied research and enquiry. It is widely accepted that the advance of 'theory' (itself an overloaded term) in the social sciences is iterative, circular, halting - and resistant to rational planning.

But many of our interviewees - including quite a few who could plausibly have done so - did not identify themselves directly with any of the main disciplines. We have referred already to the different context of research in applied fields such as social policy, health, medicine or education, in which, in the words of one interviewee, 'you expect to start out from a practical problem,' perhaps drawing where appropriate from an armoury of different disciplinary perspectives: 'you have to become an opportunist researcher.' Such fields exemplify the often-cited and growing importance of *domains* of enquiry, areas of knowledge which are primarily defined not by academic imperatives but by the external areas of social practice to which they relate. There are further examples at both universities in the emergence of interdisciplinary research centres which focus on domains of practice for which multi-disciplinary perspectives are required (such as cultural, environmental or technological change). (But not all interdisciplinary centres are of this kind: there are others which owe their origins to theoretical approaches which intersect a range of disciplines (e.g. feminist research)).

It is clear that within these fields the Research Assessment Exercise is seen as a major influence on whatever construction may be put on the academic/applied research distinction. We referred earlier to the debate within the field of educational research. But the Research Assessment Exercise was cited most frequently by interviewees from business and management: here, we were told, publication in a well-known list of international academic journals (which were prejudiced against applied or even empirical work of any kind) was regarded as essential for achieving a high Research Assessment Exercise grade. One management interviewee made the point that while this was by no means out of the question for a researcher such as himself who was still firmly committed to applied and usable research, his School's expectation that he would shift from 'middle-rank' to 'high-rank' journals had forced him to select and develop theoretical elements of his research which were of considerably less immediate interest to a user audience. There was thus a sharper divide between his funded research and his publications, and the former was coming increasingly to feel like consultancy.

For one researcher, the 'academic' culture reinforced by the Research Assessment Exercise had altered his approach to publication. 'I've changed my approach to publication. I'm now writing more papers for academic journals. I used to consider that properly published reports were a better medium because they were better

prepared, more thorough, more carefully refereed by people who care what is in them - and read by the people who matter, who act on the results. But I've consistently found that the academic community will not cite these results properly and give credit to others who later put the same things in academic papers. So, I now put my results in academic papers to stake out the ground.'

We do not have sufficient cases to categorise the differences between domain fields with reliability. But it is clear that there are significant differences between them, which may well relate to the age and prestige of the field, as well as to the structures of influence within it. We noted that most interviewees referred to the Research Assessment Exercise as an external imposition, conveniently forgetting that at least in the larger and longer-established fields, they and their colleagues belong to the pool from which the subject panel of peer assessors is drawn. This is not at all to suggest that Research Assessment Exercise panels are a pure representation of the whole range of interests and concerns in the field; rather that their assessments, and the values which these assessments embody, can only be judged in the light of the social as well as the intellectual development of the discipline or domain. Ascriptions of value to 'pure' and 'applied' research are internally as well as externally conditioned.

Turning from the discipline to the person, there was a recurring suggestion that a researcher's position in his or her research career was an important consideration. Researchers in mid- or late career were able to draw on their earlier academic work, whether or not they currently undertook consultancy or applied projects, whereas those at earlier stages of their careers are in a more difficult position since they have a more compelling need to establish academic credibility, both with academic peers and with potential sponsors of applied work. This dilemma can therefore become a very real one, especially for less experienced researchers who, unlike their older colleagues, may never have had the luxury of being able to focus predominantly on 'academic' research. However, some of our interviewees argued that it is only the less successful academics who find the alleged dichotomy between 'pure' and 'applied' research a barrier. In this view, good, accessible writing should be - and can be - as readily acceptable by academic journals as by the 'trade' press. Similarly, if academics have something sufficiently useful to say, external users will be perfectly prepared to read well-written academic books. (But one of our interviewees commented that external audiences are highly selective in what they are prepared to read, or find physically accessible. While his books were widely read, articles for academic journals and other refereed outlets were simply much less likely to be noticed, however approachably written.) In any case, competent academics should find it perfectly feasible to write for professional journals or other user-oriented media without compromising their output in refereed publications or reducing its volume. We suspect that here too we detect the voice of success and long experience. As we suggest in our discussion of the University's role, the world looks rather harsher to younger researchers.

Finally, it should not simply be assumed that funders - or indeed end-users - are necessarily looking to universities for applied solutions to their immediate problems. Such help can equally well be provided by non-academic consultants, as increasingly it is. Social science users turn to universities for one or more of three distinctive features: academic knowledge and understanding; theoretically-informed and/or innovative methodology; and perhaps most distinctively, their position as 'objective' (or perhaps more accurately, 'critical') observers of social practice and

interpreters of knowledge. One of the interviewees who had complained most bitterly about the distortions in his work introduced by the Research Assessment Exercise went on to make the point that - for better or worse - a high Research Assessment Exercise grade is possibly the single most important selling point to external funders. In the health field, too, we were told that NHS funders would regard it as not only appropriate but essential for research which they supported to be published in an academic journal which would apply the strictest possible tests of peer review. Thus even in these applied fields, users' definitions of quality, and by implication of value and usability to themselves, may often derive directly from internal assessment by the discipline.

Setting the research agenda

The view was expressed in many of our interviews that the scope for controlling the research agenda differed as between different types of sponsor. At one extreme, much research council funding still by and large reflects an academically-driven agenda; at the other, some externally-funded projects draw on agendas that are largely outside the remit of academia.

At the academic end of the spectrum, we referred in the previous section to the ways in which some researchers see all their projects as deriving from theoretical preoccupations which have emerged within their discipline. For funders such as ESRC in responsive mode, such a claim is normally expected even if the real origin of the proposal is much more applied; if successful 'the good news is, for an academic, that they [ESRC] let you get on with it' - even if they also require user interest and a dissemination strategy for the results. For other funders - ESRC programmes, some foundations - the trick is to shape an existing academic preoccupation to fit the programme requirements: 'this was an area in which we shifted our proposal so it clearly fitted in this sort of area. You know how you can mould the proposal?'

But the most interesting comments concerned the distinctions which some of our interviewees made between public and private user-funders, and between funders and end-users. An interviewee with considerable experience of work for both government agencies (at a range of levels) and private enterprises made some interesting distinctions between them. 'Commercial sponsors have a fairly traditional relationship with the "expert" they've commissioned. They're buying ... expertise and they tend to allow that expertise to unfold during the project. And what they require are high levels of communication so that they know what's happening, so that they can comment on the direction of the project, the key focus. [...] For ... regional agencies with high competition for resources and acute policy dilemmas there's a much more acute relationship, and a degree of – it's not interference – it's intervention and what might be described as illegitimate attempts to control professional expertise. What we would think would be in the realm of our professional decision making, they think is in the realm of their management decision making and there's some interesting tensions between the two. [...] I think it's to do with experience of acute resources, policy dilemmas, vulnerability on the part of the commissioners. [...] I am aware here of a shift in the relationship ... and I would see that as associated with a crisis of authority of expertise [in] the late twentieth century.'

Others echoed his view of commercial sponsors: 'If you are trying to provide a product that is closely tailored to [a major high-technology company's requirements,

they want you to work closely with them as sponsor, but they are relying closely on your expertise and they don't necessarily want lots of day-to-day involvement.' Many of those who had undertaken business-funded projects argued that the projects emerged from discussions with the researchers themselves, rather than from a formal analysis of company needs. But there were of course examples where company priorities took precedence, as with a researcher who had obtained ESRC funding for a comparative study of management practices and organisational cultures in industry. After long negotiations, his first-choice UK case study firm 'took it to Board level and then turned it down' because this was not a country in which it had a commercial interest. Moreover, the UK companies which he eventually signed up for what he regarded as 'the jewel in his crown' 'seemed to me to be doing us a favour' and paid little attention to the project or its outcomes. Other companies may join in research projects with major universities for reasons of prestige - 'basically they didn't really want to know but they saw the project as useful PR' - or to legitimate internal policy decisions which have already been taken.

When funders or users wished to take control, they might try to influence either the substantive topic or the methodology, as in **Case 9**.

CASE 9

This example is drawn from a researcher working in the overseas development field where many of his projects are funded by NGOs. He commented on two types of bias to the research agenda. First was an NGO's preference for case studies to be drawn from projects in which it was directly involved: 'Working on other projects takes on a political dimension - they will say, "We've fallen out with [NGO2] over the question of the conservation of newts in Namibia; how are they going to react if you include one of their projects in Upper Volta?" This can complicate things when we are putting together a research design.' The second tension was over data collection methodologies. 'Most of the agencies working overseas have committed themselves to participative work, work that empowers, and this can create methodological problems. It tends to compromise the independence of your researchers. People in villages see you coming and assume you are from an aid donor and give you the answers they think you want. Sending research assistants into the field to look at the impact of aid in villages would be seen by most British NGOs as exploitative. While the participative approaches have remarkable strengths, they can crowd out the role of independent corroboration. We still do need to have "spies" in the villages to see what's happening.'

The distinction between the interests of funders and end-users, and the concern of some interviewees that end-users should not be disenfranchised, have already been discussed above. A number of interviewees made the further point that end-users should not be regarded as persons to be contacted at the end of a project in order to 'hand out' its findings. Indeed, one researcher objected strongly to the word 'user' itself: 'it's much too passive, these are people you work *with*, not *for*!' But the process of involving non-funders in project design is not straightforward, and it was clear that most researchers who attempted this only found it possible through the user networks which they had built up over a long period.

But these networks can change - not only in composition as we illustrated earlier, but in their stance. There is an interesting political dimension linked to the change of administration in Britain. One researcher who works in the policy field commented

that: 'Under a Conservative administration my personal agenda was clear - to develop a critique of policy. Now so many of those I worked with are adjusting their approach and it's not at all clear what can be done, what kind of constructive policy dialogue you can have with Labour's programme. The critical infrastructure that grew up around [my] field is now being used for a different purpose and it's not clear who will do evaluative work. Some issues are off the agenda - even though the issues are still there - and it's the out-of-bounds issues that are difficult to engage with if you're looking for funded research.'

Research careers

The growing number of fixed-contract researchers nationally, and their increasing political visibility through the negotiations leading up to the research Concordat, have given a new salience to the issue of the development of research careers and the training of future generations of researchers. There appeared to be some disagreement over the impact that short-term contracts have had on the exploitation of research. On one hand there were strong arguments that for new members of the academic profession, a fairly short period as a research assistant can provide an excellent training in the disciplines necessary for the successful prosecution of 'user relevant' research - meeting deadlines, writing for a variety of audiences, working with steering groups, being introduced to key individuals in the client and user communities, and the like. Many such skills are not a component of the traditional postgraduate experience, and established researchers reflecting on their own apprenticeship tended to comment gratefully on their own exposure to them or identify this as a significant gap.

On the other hand, there were equally strong arguments about the difficulties faced by researchers on short-term contracts, especially those who were far beyond the age and status of the traditional research assistant; and innumerable examples of researchers who left projects before their completion as a result of the imperative to find continuation posts, with all of the associated implications of the loss of accumulated expertise and the damage done to the completion of the projects. Rolling contracts are one way of addressing this problem, but even here the nature of funding can present conundrums: 'It's difficult to persuade my colleagues to agree to giving 3-year contracts to my researchers unless they can show assured long-term streams of income - and that really means doing teaching, but that's not want I want them to do if they're steaming away with good research.' The dependence of projects on short-term career research staff leads to considerable difficulties in exploiting projects to the full, even when staff remain in post to the end. As one long-term contract researcher put it, however committed he might feel to dissemination and user involvement 'I'm not paid to write papers.' In his field it was almost impossible to build in adequate resources for dissemination, and the only solution would be to apply for separate later funding which would be hard to come by and to which he would be opposed on the grounds that users should be involved from the start. Another interviewee argued that unless ESRC and other funders offered separate grants for dissemination, many projects would remain under-exploited.

These difficulties appear more readily solvable in the context of team-based or centre-based research. But even here the difficulties should not be under-rated: universities have found it extremely difficult to provide adequate rewards and secure career structures for staff whose expertise and experience have been built up over many years and in some cases constitute the bedrock of a centre's human capital.

Nevertheless, those who work in the context of research centres have a higher probability not only of more formal support structures geared to research training and career development, but also the informal exchange of learning experiences with other researchers. One interviewee, who headed an informal research group comprising a mixture of contract research staff and staff on standard lecturing contracts, saw the development of younger staff as the main justification not only for the existence of the group but for its rather tentative involvement in semi-commercial exploitation: any surplus generated was ploughed back into supporting the development and travel needs of the younger staff members, whom he described as immensely able but lacking most of the skills and experience needed for a successful research career. However, another interviewee pointed to one of the dangers of the sequences of research projects often associated with contract research: 'You can be moved from one topic to another and, while you may build up skills, you don't develop an area of expertise in depth'.

The distinction between short-term projects and the lifetime or longer-term development of expertise was a recurring theme to many of our discussions. 'We see 15-year programmes, our funders see 1- to 3-year projects'. The challenge, both for career development and for the funding of research activities, is to reconcile such perspectives. For research centres there is a perhaps inevitable mixture of 'core' projects that contribute to a long-term research endeavour, alongside other projects whose objective may be the more contingent one of earning money. Balancing the involvement of research centres and of individual staff in this mixture is a critical aspect of the career development of groups and individuals.

One further conclusion to emerge from our discussions was the value of CASE studentships. Amongst their merits is the fact that they can offer a very direct introduction of a new researcher to the contact networks of more experienced researchers. CASE students are frequently introduced to senior-level discussions as well as to work alongside individuals in the research and operational side of organisations and thereby have the opportunity not only to develop useful future contacts, but also to establish credibility in the eyes of potential clients who may fund future projects. To this extent they represent a valuable first step on the escalator of career development.

The University's role

We have already referred to the tendency of academic researchers to identify mainly with their disciplinary peers at national and international level, and to recent attempts, both at Lancaster and perhaps more particularly in Manchester to develop a corporate policy, and greater awareness among researchers of corporate needs. These attempts have been driven by a number of changes in the higher education environment, notably the growing financial and symbolic importance, to universities as a whole, of success in the Research Assessment Exercise, but also - and to a much greater degree in Manchester's urban location than in Lancaster's more remote hinterland - by pressures to develop local and regional links. In so far as institutional policy aims to augment or even partly replace the broader networks with greater local networking and collaboration within the university, this has sensitised researchers to the financial and corporate interests of the University as an institution. To this extent, there is now a pull between the free-ranging intellectual urge that has traditionally driven research and scholarship irrespective of where it happens to be done, and a growing corporate itch to cultivate links that might benefit the corporate interests of the institution in which researchers are based.

In our questionnaire-based audit we asked respondents to comment on their university's effectiveness in supporting the dissemination and exploitation of specific research projects - and received generally negative answers which on the whole were replicated in our interviews. But it needs to be acknowledged that at both institutions research policy has been concerned at least as much with institution-level issues as with support for individuals. In each case there has for example been a growing readiness to develop formal or semi-formal corporate responses to the opportunity to bid in ESRC research centre competitions, rather than leaving bids to the initiative of individual staff. But beyond this it needs to be acknowledged that the development of new research centres in recent years has generally depended on university support: sometimes in paving the way for external funding, but also through pump-priming grants, staff secondments and even long-term financial support. One or two directors of centres who complained of inadequate university funding did not perhaps fully acknowledge the funding that had preceded their establishment. Research funding is certainly an area in which demands can be virtually unlimited. It should be added, of course, that the creation of centres inevitably creates outsiders as well as insiders, a point made to us by a lone researcher who told us that he felt like 'a second-class citizen'. There is also some resentment of the university's managerial 'interference' in academic processes: 'I feel we've gone from a village shop to a rather dated version of a multi-national in the last three years.'

Turning to individual interviewees' experience, it was evident from the initial survey that the general feeling in each institution was that little proactive support came from the universities themselves. There were mixed views about existing levels of support. Most researchers considered that their successes and failures in exploiting their work were largely achieved regardless of what their university offered - and rightly so: in the words of three interviewees, 'I'd be very nervous about putting the University between us and them. I've never found anyone [in the central administration] who understands our agenda.' 'I've neither wanted nor received any advice or help - but I've no sense of frustration about this - I would be very sceptical about the value of any kind of central unit for this purpose.' 'It's my responsibility to know my user community.' But one interviewee suggested that his institution needed to take its own region much more seriously, and integrate its research into the life and work of its surrounding community; and that this was something which would certainly need promotion from the centre of the University.

Much of the growing amount of information about research opportunities that is now disseminated internally by universities was welcomed, but was thought to be of greater potential value to those who were marginally research-active rather than to successful researchers whose networks were likely to have made them aware of such information in any case. There was a sense that few administrators were alive to the imperatives of research and were therefore not well placed to offer helpful advice or support on the handling of accounts, the drawing up of contracts, the identification of useful dissemination outlets or the establishment of valuable contacts for exploitation. (Two of our interviewees complained specifically about the position of social science, suggesting that for too many administrators social science is quite wrongly seen as an intrinsically unexploitable set of disciplines.) The need for speed in the completion of tenders and contracts and for flexibility in the appointment and retention of good research assistants was stressed. There was widespread criticism of the perceived lack of awareness amongst university

accountants of the fact that project funding is end-loaded and that short-term deficit budgeting is an inevitable concomitant of most research projects - although one contract researcher, after commenting with little enthusiasm on his university's lack of support had the grace to add that he had effectively been lent his own salary by this university for most of the past fifteen years.

Asked what universities might usefully do proactively, many interviewees suggested the need for more time for researchers to reflect on and to disseminate their work. Given current funding regimes, this seems an unlikely scenario other than for a minority of cases where specific funded schemes exist. More specifically, suggestions were quite frequently made about more help with press releases and the production of professional-quality 'findings' output. Even here, however, opinions varied between a number of interviewees at one of the universities who felt that their university's press office had been both helpful and highly effective, and others (at the same institution) who told us either that they had been quite specifically let down or that they would not feel able to trust a generalist press officer with their highly specialist material. Several researchers commented that a university press office might play a very useful role in creating positive publicity for the university as a whole, and that they were prepared within reason to be made use of for that purpose; but that a central office could do little to increase their impact on their prime user targets. Finally, in one case, reference was made to helpful advice received on drawing up a contract for a company to market software developed by a research team; but others said that their institution was unhelpful and ill-prepared to handle issues of intellectual property. In general, it is probably fair to say that there was a preponderance of criticism: not only for interviewees' university but also, as we indicated earlier, for ESRC.

- ***Institutional support for research and for exploitation***

Actual/desired role of the institution and/or sub-units (faculties, departments, research grous, dedicated support units, etc.)
Kinds of support offered/received
Was/is support offered proactively or reactively (is onus on researchers institution or both?)
Differences between groups/centres/departments/disciplines (are some groups better at finding help and exploiting facilities)?
Effects of institutional support or lack of it on exploitation
Institutional effects on individual careers
Ask experienced researchers if they have comparative knowledge/data and experience of different approaches to insitutional support

- ***Research careers***

Use interviewee's career to a) help locate them in (or moving between) analytic categories of interest - age, discipline/interdisciplinary, research group/lone etc. etc.; b) illustrate points above.
Good/bad experiences; learning and formative experiences.
Role of group directors/leaders and/or mentors in shaping careers of young researchers - especially in terms of sponsorship/exploitation of work
Differences in cultures/traditions within/between research groups.
Impact of move towards shorter contracts on exploitation and on research careers.
Have things changed over time - how? why?

Annexe 7 Administrative support for research

Introduction

As part of the pilot study we investigated as context the administrative support for research provided by the two universities. In addition to drawing on factual materials about Lancaster and Manchester, the structures and aims of the two universities were explored through a series of partly-structured interviews with a range of relevant senior staff in each univesity. These included senior administrators and academics involved in senior research posts.

The discussion below draws on these two sources in order to outline the formal provision and the objectives of the universities and to consider the implications for fostering research and encouraging its exploitation.

Statistical profiles

Initially, however, we need to emphasise that the two universities are of very different size and have a markedly different mix of academic activities. Manchester is not only bigger, but has a much more significant engagement in science and medicine. This doubtless has an impact on the audiences to which its research support structures are directed. Even though the 'social science' component in each university is comparable in absolute terms, it has greater relative salience in Lancaster. Allowing for the difficulties of definitions, the following tables attempt to compare the two universities.

Research profile: Manchester

	Full-time Postgraduate FTEs	Part-time postgraduate FTEs	Total staff FTEs	Research income (£000)
Social Studies	409	115	176	2174
Law	61	7	32	44
Education	500	119	81	573
Business	na	na	45	na
Sub-total	**970***	**241***	**334**	**2791***
Arts	344	130	263	678
Medicine	280	263	417	16129
Science	677	85	329	16201
BioScience	308	54	118	11604
Sub-total	**1609**	**532**	**1127**	**44612**
Total	**2579***	**773***	**1461**	**47403***

* Figures exclude MBS

Research profile: Lancaster

	Full-time Postgraduate FTEs	Part-time postgraduate FTEs	Total staff FTEs	Research income (£000)
Social Science	356	185	121	1,855
Management	327	191	71	234
Sub-total	**683**	**376**	**192**	**2,089**
Humanities	94	43	88	153
Natural Science	202	17	89	4,659
Applied Science	171	74	74	3,307
Sub-total	**467**	**134**	**251**	**8,119**
Totals*	**1,168**	**511**	**446**	**11,500**

* Totals include non-faculty figures

Research grants and contracts: Manchester and Lancaster (£000)

	Manchester	%	Lancaster	%
Research councils	18,264	35.9	4,851	43.5
UK-based charities	13,754	27.0	1,112	10.0
UK govt, heath authorities	9,122	17.9	2,364	21.2
UK industry and commerce	3,717	7.3	937	8.4
Overseas	4,155	8.2	1,672	15.0
Other	1,861	3.7	216	1.9
Total	50,873	100.0	11,152	100.0

Inevitably, such figures conceal as much as they reveal. For example, the overall levels of applied research and consultancy are hard to estimate (some passes through university books, but some may not, and university and faculty records are, probably inevitably, incomplete). Consultancy work is probably most prevalent in the Management and Business Schools, but it is also found elsewhere (eg in Applied Social Sciences and Linguistics in Lancaster and in Finance and Accountancy and elsewhere in Manchester). Nevertheless, the data provide as accurate as possible a picture of the profiles of the two universities.

Manchester University

This section reviews Manchester's research support arrangements and their implications for the promotion of social science research. As well as describing the formal arrangements, we also comment on some of the tensions and characteristics of the system in action, as perceived by our interviewees.

Social Science at Manchester

The University has seven resource centres, roughly equivalent to faculties:

- Arts
- Economic and Social Studies and Law
- Education (essentially a single department faculty)
- Science and Engineering
- Biological Sciences (essentially a single department faculty)
- Medicine
- Business Administration (i.e. Manchester Business School)

Research and Graduate Schools roughly map on to this faculty structure, with five schools:

- Arts
- Economic and Social Studies and Law
- Education
- Biological Sciences
- Science, Engineering and Medicine

Social science research is largely contained within the three faculties of Economic and Social Studies, Education and MBS. Some individual 'social science' departments operate outside these faculties: for example, Geography is resourced through Arts; so too are Planning, and Economic and Social History; Psychology is resourced through Science; and the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine is in Science. Some social science research is also done in departments within Medicine (e.g. Community Medicine, General Practice, child Health and Paediatrics, Epidemiology).

In addition to departments, the University also includes a number of quasi-independent research centres and institutes, some or all of which include relevant social science research. Examples include:

- Age and Cognitive Performance Centre
- Health Services Management Unit
- Institute for Development Policy and Management
- Henry Fielding Centre for Police Studies
- Hester Adrian Centre
- National Primary Care Research Centre
- Policy Research in Engineering Science and Technology
- Centre for International Competitiveness

Other somewhat less formal research centres are embedded within departmental or cross-departmental structures. Examples include: the Centre for Applied Social Research; the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research; the Centre for Labour Studies; the Farm Business Unit; the Centre for Urban Policy Studies; and a slew of centres within Education. By and large, research in such centres is recorded under the appropriate departments.

Research support and administration

Administrative support for research exists at the three levels of: University (including the Research and Graduate Support Unit), Research and Graduate School, and Department. Although social science research is viewed as an essential element in an 'all round university', it is not given special priority relative to other areas. On a narrow definition of 'social science' (using only those departments and centres within the social science faculty), social science projects represent some 6% of the current total number of University projects, and some 4% by value; in terms of bids for research projects, social science represents 12% of the total (8% by value). Since there is no attempt to provide separate central support for social science research, most of what follows consequently relates to the University's approach to research development in general, and is not specific to social science.

The University

At the University level, the key central resource is the Research and Graduate Support Unit (RGSU). There are separate University administrative departments covering both Finance and Personnel; hence some aspects of research - for example, negotiating financial accounts and hiring research assistants - entail more than one administrative unit. There is also a separate International and Public Relations office which includes a European Office (with information on EU funding opportunities) and a publicity section (which produces brochures, a fortnightly newsletter which includes information about research activities, and has extensive facilities for the production of pamphlets etc. which can include research-related materials).

The central University committee structure includes an overarching Graduate Education Policy Committee and a Graduate Education Standards Committee as well as a University Research Committee. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for research chairs these committees and sits on a range of others across the university structure.

The RGSU and the system of research and graduate schools was set up following a review initiated by the academic registrar and undertaken in 1993. As a result that part of the administration which used to deal with research grants and claims was given a broader role and re-designed to provide a central focus for research support within the university and a central point of contact for the outside world. Commercial exploitation of research is managed by VUMAN, the commercial arm of the university.

The RGSU has some 27 administrative and secretarial staff and is divided into: academic services (including servicing the university research committee, managing the RAE, and administering graduate awards), contracts, funding intelligence, proposals advice, management information, and research accounts. The remit of the RGSU includes the administrative support for grants and contacts and for postgraduate students, the provision of information on research funding opportunities and the monitoring of research activities. It also services the university research committee. The Unit is accountable to the registrar and is positioned within and funded as part of the central administration.

The RGSU appears to be pulled in two directions. Some of those interviewed believed that its primary role is to provide research support for individual researchers. Others thought its main function is to provide a service for the centre.

These dual interpretations are quite understandable. From the university's point of view, it is important to have professional and central management of research. Without such a central system it would be impossible to enter into institutional agreements, develop a coherent response to invitations to bid for research centres or major research programmes, or control financial risks associated with research. Hence the need to "force" researchers through a sequence of standardised procedures when preparing research applications. From the researchers' perspective, these systems may represent additonal hurdles to be overcome.

The perception of the RGSU as an 'obstacle' appears to be unevenly distributed. Central advice and support - for instance in the negotiation of complex contracts - is likely to be welcomed by those preparing proposals for major projects. Disciplines which tend to manage research in this way (eg. the natural sciences) stand to benefit. Departments involved in Bioscience have, for instance, clubbed together to fund a research development officer part of whose role is to mediate between the RGSU, the faculty and the departments. These same research support arrangements appear less well suited to the needs of individual scholars or groups of researchers working on small or medium-sized projects.

There are other inevitable uncertainties about the precise role of the RGSU, as distinct from that of research deans or even of individual researchers. For instance, while the RGSU provides a central information service, much research intelligence also circulates at 'local' level. In the words of one of those interviewed, "it's incredible how much goes on at local level". For example, centrally managed e-mail discussion groups and data-bases (for instance involving some but not all of those with ESRC projects/and or on ESRC committees) are also run by the relevant research deans. While the RGSU is keen to be used, known; and valued across the university it has to relate to a heterogenous population, sections of which have quite different expectations and requirements. Part of the challenge therefore lies in actively creating demand for central advice and support - for instance through being invited on to research and graduate school committees etc.

Research and Graduate Schools

Each Research and Graduate School is headed by a graduate and/or research dean. They incorporate their own research committees and graduate standards committees which feed upwards to central University committees. Administrative support is part of the general administration of the relevant faculties. The Schools are predominantly concerned with graduate education (providing a focus for recruitment and for oversight of the quality and standards of training), but also act as a partial prompt to research activities.

In the Social Science Faculty, the dean and dean's office (3 people in total, 2 funded by the faculty) lie outside the main lines of funding, and outside the main lines of management, partly because the research and graduate school services span departments and resource centres, partly in that deans are seconded to the post (for 3 years) but still paid by their home department. There is a research and graduate school research committee and a small research fund to which individuals or research groups can apply (grants are in the region of £10k each). This office also co-ordinates major bids (for example for research centres), manages the RAE process, and maintains data on applications and their success.

The role of the research and graduate school dean for Economic and Social Studies and Law is largely one of promoting 'best practice' between departments involved in social science research (this might well include researchers in medicine, computing and engineering). As well as exchanging information about funding opportunities, the dean also links individuals and groups who have relevant connections with policy users. For example, it has been possible for researchers in Development Studies to make use of links with local authorities first established by census survey researchers. Rather than simply advocating the 'exploitation' or commercialisation of research, the dean's aim is to encourage socially useful and relevant research, and to take note of the needs and interests of potential beneficiaries as well as users. This means paying attention to the costs of dissemination and budgeting for the time it takes to run workshops, write briefing papers and produce a variety of publications. Despite increasing emphasis on 'user relevance', there are still some areas - such as Economics - which are almost exclusively concerned to develop "pure" research of a kind expected to be highly valued in the RAE.

The dean also has an important part to play in promoting social science within the university, and in promoting research within relevant resource centres/faculties. Although able to lobby for these causes, the research deans are not 'owned' by the centre, equally, they are not embedded in the resource centre structure as firmly as those responsible for, say, personnel or finance. The ability to stimulate activity within or between departments is both limited and made possible by the dean's position 'outside' the system of resources, incentives, and departmental or faculty strategy. Research deans are likely to have more to do with research centres and insitutes than others (eg. sitting on advisory boards, including heads of centres as members of the research and graduate school research committee), but again the relationship is complicated by the fact that centres are typically plugged into the rest of the university system via a host department.

Departments

Most Departments have their own research support structures in the form of research committees which usually cover both graduate education and the fostering of research. Departmental research committees also have some funding to support travel, conferences etc. (bids are usually in the region of £150).

Manchester's characteristics

Five features seem to be of especial interest.

Research and graduate education.

One is the implied link between research and graduate education. Manchester's committee structures; the role of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for research and the titles of the Research and Graduate Schools, as well as the Research and Graduate Support Unit (RGSU) all underline this connection. It is not clear how this affects the actions of individual social science researchers or research centres, but it is an important feature of the central organisation.

Relevance and the RAE.

A second common theme relates to the tension between generating research which is "applied" or user relevant and that which is likely to be highly valued in the research assessment exercise. These tensions have different practical consequences but are as much of a consideration with respect to strategic planning

as to the actions and choices of research and graduate schools, departments and individual researchers.

The relationship between the university, its resource centres and its departments

A third feature concerns the relationship between the centre, and the role of resource centres and departments. While the "centre" has the power to review RAE ratings and suggest routes for future development, the means to implement such strategies largely lies with the resource centres in question. This has implications for the centre's capacity to actively promote different types of research, or to steer research activity. The devolution of budgets and responsibility to resource centres has further consequences for the promotion of research. Who, for instance, is or should be responsible for the production of brochures and publicity material about Manchester's research activity? Some departments and research centres produce their own material, but there is little corporate research promotion, and nothing especially dedicated to the social sciences.

The management of research overheads is relevant in this context. The centre applies a 'tax' of 16% on all income, with further "poll taxes" relating to staff numbers, 'student taxes' to student numbers and 'space taxes' relating to accommodation. Faculties and departments take a further slice and are free to choose what percentage, if any, to return to the researchers involved. The university is therefore unable to directly influence incentives (in terms of easier access to travel money, teaching assistance etc.) on offer to those who generate research income.

Interdisciplinary research

The fourth feature relates to the promotion of inter-disciplinary research and the generation of research activity within research institutes/centres and between departments. University committees relate to research and graduate schools, and to departments, not to interdisiciplinary research institutes and centres (usually lodged within a department). While interdisciplinary intiatives are encouraged (for instance they are favoured when it comes to allocating funds from the central research committee), Manchester's administrative and physical structure does not positively favour such arrangements since departments are often quite literally surrounded by walls. The physical building stock is perhaps more relevant than it might first seem in terms of the identity and promotion of research expertise within and outside the university, hence the (long term) suggestion that it would be good to have a building for social science, and hence the frequent reference to the value of a new building in promoting bioscience. From this "central" perspective, it is as important to promote research by attracting "users" into the university itself as to have researchers out on the road.

The invisibility of research centres

Research groups, centres, and units are typically attached to departments. Only the largest centres have much visibility within the system and even they are ambiguously connected to the overall University. The smaller centres do not constitute distinctive elements in the research system and hence they remain relatively invisible. By and large the drivers of the system are traditional teaching-related entities - faculties and departments. This may have implications for the University's ability to respond to cross-disciplinary research opportunities.

Lancaster University

Lancaster's administrative structures include a University Research Committee and five Faculty Research Committees. There is a small Research Support Office (one person) whose remit is to identify research opportunities and encourage applications to funding bodies. There is a Press Office (two persons), a part-time Contracts Officer, but a Commercial and Industrial Liaison Bureau was closed down in 1996. There is a Centre for Vocational and Educational Training which subsidises courses for the dissemination of research to interested parties, like LEAs, on training issues.

The University Research Committee, chaired by the Dean for Research, is responsible for overall policy, for disbursement of funds to University Research Centres and Institutes, postgraduate studentships, research-related (mostly overseas) travel. It has a planning function. It is serviced by the Academic Registrar, a secretary and an accountant from the Finance Office, for each of whom this represents only part of their duties. Faculties across the University each have an Associate Dean whose remit is research, part of their salary is covered by the Faculty for this purpose.

Social science at Lancaster

The Faculty of Social Science and the Management School each have research committees which are responsible for encouraging research, partly by offering small 'pump-priming' grants, sometimes by offering research studentships. Most of the activity of these administrative bodies is directed towards obtaining research funds rather than exploiting completed research. These committees meet 3 or 4 times per year. There is a very minimal level of administrative support at Faculty level

Departments also often have their own research committees, again with a remit of encouraging research activity rather than targeting sponsors or users. Most such committees meet on an ad hoc basis, probably not very frequently (except in the run-up to a Research Assessment Exercise), though there are exceptions. Departments with social science research activities comprise:

- Applied Social Science;
- Educational Research;
- Geography, Law;
- Linguistics;
- Politics;
- Sociology;
- Psychology;
- the Management School (including Economics); and
- Religious Studies.

In addition, the University has a range of centres and multi-disciplinary institutes. Relevant centres are for:

- the Study of Environmental Change (CSEC);
- the Study of Advanced Learning Technology (CSALT);
- the Study of Education and Training (CSET);
- Defence and International Strategic Studies;
- Applied Statistics;
- and several associated with the Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language.

The three institutes are:

- Health Research;
- Women's Studies;
- and Cultural Research.

Research structures and arrangements

Lancaster undertakes research through three types of unit, Departments, Centres and Research Institutes. It has a largely de-centralised system for handling the exploitation of social science research. Much depends on the disparate networks of the individual researchers or research teams. There is no attempt, by the central administration, to identify particular organisations for collaboration nor even to systematically document these relationships. Departments, Centres and Institutes tend to build links autonomously with potential research sponsors and users. Individual recipients of research grants find a range of users, some of them academic, some found by the funding body (as perhaps with ESRC Programme dissemination), others nominated because they would be interested in the results for commercial or policy formulation purposes. However, these links are almost always personal, and sometimes tenuous. Departments often have some established links on the basis of past projects; thus the Department of Applied Social Science maintains extensive contacts with local authority and social work agencies. The Department of Independent Studies, which has been eligible for ESRC/CASE studentships, developed links with many different organisations to which research students relate. But it is generally the larger Centres and the University Research Institutes which, partly because their financial survival depends upon it, have wider networks of collaborators. Thus, the Centre for the Study of Environmental Change has extensive connections with both voluntary organisations, like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, and does consultancy work for companies like Unilever, Lancashire County Council and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

The emergence of University Research Institutes, which are by definition inter-faculty organisations, is a new initiative partly inspired by a concern to target more directly, and maintain effective communication with, potential sponsors and users of research. Institutes typically have Advisory Boards on which external members are invited to sit. For example, the Institute for Health Research was set up partly at the instigation of the Regional Health Authority which supported a review of health research and the developmement of a collaborative programme of research. That is now in operation with a condition of funding being the provision of a major programme of dissemination for health practitioners, to inform policy and practice. The Institute for Cultural Research has developed intricate links with a major commercial publisher and with multimedia resource centres and various culture industry organizations. The policy to develop Institutes has been in operation for about two years and it is not yet clear how successful it will be. The Institute for Women's Studies is the third major social science venture of this type. Institutes tend to be staffed by academics on secondment with some secretarial support (probably on average one FTE).

In Lancaster, the Management School portfolio includes an Economics Department which undertakes analyses for Careers Services and companies seeking the mapping of business trends; Management Learning constructs development programmes for managment; Management Science is often consulted on the efficiency of the delivery of services by agencies like the Regional Health Authority,

County Councils and supermarkets. The Management Development Unit (MDU) is the most deliberate in its attempts to attract consultancy work, its focus being advice on problem-solving for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, as for instance with a current feasibility study for a possible new local swimming pool in Grange-over-Sands. It is estimated that there will probably be about 25 such projects in existence at any one time, and that about 65 academics within the Management School will have had at least some experience of such consultancy work. However, with the exception of the MDU almost all commercial sponsors are attracted in an ad hoc fashion, with external approaches usually coming either to Heads of Department or, more often, to some individual with whom connections had previously existed. Other sources of use of research come from the many postgraduate and MBA dissertations which often do commercial case studies (estimate at about 70 per annum).

Lancaster's characteristics

To parallel the Manchester case, there are five themes that dominate impressions of Lancaster:

Informality

The minimal provision of formal administrative support is a striking feature of Lancaster. The office of the Academic Secretary which services the Research Committee and provides the channel through which central advice and support are offered is staffed by three people for none of whom research support is a sole activity. There is some further administrative support within the Finance and Personnel offices. Nevertheless, central research intelligence and advice clearly falls on a very few shoulders. As one of our interviewees noted; "We are a taut ship. We may miss some research opportunities, but the benefit is that we have a group of people who are very knowledgeable, who share this knowledge and get to know staff and the University and have a sharp up-to-date sense of their strengths and weaknesses. It is direct and simple and the chain is short." This is considered manageable - at the limit - with a staff of some 400. Much of the information and many of the procedures are therefore essentially informal and personalised. The Academic Registrar's office has a database of the successful and failed bids for research and information submitted for the Research Assesment Exercise, but much appears to be done through what was characterised as a 'parish-pump' approach. It is through this office that the University's *Research Bulletin* is produced. It is sent not to heads of departments but to all individual members of staff and is tailored to the specific context of Lancaster with a foreword written by the Academic Registrar.

Devolution

The University operates a highly devolved system. Its financial system is in a state of transition. In principle it is devolved, but in practice not entirely so. There is a tension, familiar to most universities, between the desirability of devolution and the imperatives of central control. This has been somewhat exacerbated by the University's recent financial difficulties. The central re-charging system keeps changing and in practice the level varies according to type of grant. In principle the intention is to pass money to those who have won it, but again the practice appears somewhat more complicated. Emphasis is placed on the overall contributions made to the University by faculties. Hence, all resources initially go to faculties and there is then a budgeting process in which faculties are expected to return (or make what is called a "contribution") the difference between expenditure and total teaching and research income (this varies between 20-40%). Consequently, the is no set 'tax' or

overhead on research; but rather a calculation of expected contribution. To this extent it would appear that individual researchers cannot rely on "keeping" or storing funding from new contracts within their department or centre.

Something of the same ambiguity is seen in the role of the Dean for Research. He reports to the Vice Chancellor on an essentially personal, informal, basis rather than, for example, through the University's Senior Management Team, of which he is not a member. The benefit of the arrangement may be that the Research Dean is seen by researchers as somewhat divorced from the 'centre' and, to this extent, is more one of them. However, it may seem surprising to an outside observer that one of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors does not have a remit for research.

The tensions between central and devolved structure are also evident in the respective roles of departments, centres and institutes. The conscious policy decision to encourage the establishment of centres and, more recently, institutes has reflected the University's emphasis on interdisciplinary research (as well as providing critical mass and greater visibility to its research efforts). The public face of Lancaster, unlike Manchester, puts considerable emphasis on such research groupings. Some centres are stand-alone units with their own income and their own staff. In other cases there do, however, appear to be some real or potential tensions with departments: for example, resources flow directly to the departments from which institute/centre staff are drawn rather than to the institutes/centres themselves; conversely credit for postgraduate students goes to the institute rather than to departments. Insofar as resourcing is articulated through faculties, such tensions may be more apparent than real, but the impression is that the structure is in a state of evolution rather than having yet fully bedded-down.

Academic versus applied research

The overwhelming impression is of a University that sees its mission as being to foster strong academic research. Some part of this derives from the view that, since the 1980s, the University has moved rather rapidly to now having a strong research reputation, and that this needs to be fostered and built upon. This reputation is seen internally as having been built essentially on 'academic' research. There is a sense that a greater emphasis on applied research would not play to the strengths of the University's academics; that applied work would involve "taking people away from things they do well."

In commenting on the academic focus of research, the relative geographical isolation of the University's location was often cited as a barrier to the establishment of Lancaster's links with businesses and other external contacts (although some of our interviewees recognised that this could too readily be used as an excuse since major companies are indifferent as to where they get research from). However, the over-riding imperative appears to be the focus on academic research. The fact that, for example, the Management School and Finance and Accounting derive little externally-generated income and yet have world-class reputations was quoted with a mix of reproof and admiration. Equally, the self-perception that the University was overly reliant on research council grants was noted with something of the same mix of concern and self-congratulation: "(W)e do, of course, have an uncomfortable proportion of research council grants." It is interesting, however, to note that the figures for research income across Lancaster and Manchester show that there is little difference between their dependence on research council funding. The difference is one of self-perception.

As with general administrative support for research, there is as yet little formal support for non-research council projects. There is no European Officer - rather, the University's intention is to build informally on the individual successes of a small number of people who 'know their way around the Brussels system' by encouraging them to share their knowledge with others. Likewise, there is no formal provision for the commercial exploitation of research (the earlier Commercial and Industrial Development Office ended its operations a few years ago, and, in the view of one interviewee, "no-one noticed that it had closed"). A committee has recently been established to consider the promotion and development of research. Interestingly, in light of the devolved structure of the University, the view is that the failure of the earlier Office reflected its top-down approach and it is expected that the new committee will approach it task by taking wide soundings across faculties.

Research and research training

The administration of postgraduate students is almost entirely separate from research administration at Lancaster. The formal links between the two are largely embodied in the fact that there is cross representation by the Dean for Research and Dean for Postgraduate Studies on the committees that oversee research and graduate training. Nevertheless, there is in Lancaster no ambiguity about the word 'research'; it does not include training. This is very different from Manchester. It means that in Lancaster there is a corporate imperative for staff to be active researchers and this does not imply merely the supervision of postgraduate students. The local culture helps to drive a research imperative and one that is overwhelmingly seen as academic and oriented towards criteria largely consonent with the Research Assessment Exercise.

Corporate sense

There is also within Lancaster a strong sense of the corporate dimension of the research well-being of the University; that the successes of one group reflect well on the standing of all. This helps to underpin the drive towards interdisciplinary work and to reinforce the culture of research within the University. It may equally help to create a sense of the separateness of the institution from the outside world; a sense reinforced by the site of the campus itself. It may be significant that external contacts are largely seen as a matter of encouraging researchers to 'go out' to seek links with business and public-sector bodies rather than organising events or presentations to which the 'outside' world is invited in.

Annexe 8 Government departments and other funders and users

Introduction

This annexe is based on interviews with the Department of Health, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions; the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the ESRC. In all cases, the aim was to explore views about the funding, consumption and promotion of social science research.

Focusing, first, on the responses of government departments, we identify three contrasting models of interaction with social science research and with social science researchers.

1 Co-ordinating research strategies

Government departments frequently fund and commission "their own" research. They are therefore in the dual position of being both sponsors and users of social science research, some of which they have deliberately "asked for", some of which is in the public domain having been funded by another organisation, perhaps the ESRC, but perhaps also the EU, charitable foundations, and so on.

One respondent drew a clear distinction between strategies for using and developing "their own" research and that which was, as it were, "free" (ie. funded by another source). In this context, the primary goal was to make best use of the department's own resources by carefully commissioning research so as not to duplicate others' efforts. The aim was therefore to tap existing expertise (often built up on the basis of projects funded by other means, or concentrated in centres which rely to a greater or lesser extent on other sources of funding) and to support research which is positioned so as to maximise the benefit (tacit as well as explicit) of past research records whatever their ancestry - but which also addresses key questions of immediate concern.

Taking this tack, government departments recognise their own role in the research funding galaxy but seek to put their money in places which generate maximum returns. That also depends on persuading researchers to pay concentrated attention to "their" research questions and in attracting researchers to "their" agenda over the longer as well as the shorter term. Beliefs about the value and relevance of deeper involvement, for instance, in building up research centres or becoming in some way part of the management of university based research vary widely. For some, a hands-off approach is better. University researchers are simply seen as the inter-changeable and competitive suppliers of social science expertise and there is little direct effort invested in shaping the contexts of knowledge production. Alternatively, some government departments (in some circumstances) see benefits in influencing those contexts more directly - building closer relationships in order to get research which is better suited to their needs.

Either way, astute research management involves systematic intelligence gathering about the priorities of other funding agencies (e.g. ESRC) about the pooling and distribution of people and expertise, and about their interests and abilities with respect to new initiatives.

While government departments often have a clear sense of policy priorities, further steps are involved in translating these into research agendas and researchable questions. In making this transition, government departments, like other funding bodies including the ESRC, often look to experts in the field to help define appropriate research programmes. Though this makes sense, shared reliance on what is often a small pool of advisory experts has the unintended consequence of concentrating research initiatives (for instance, those who advise the Joseph Rowntree foundation may also advise the Department of Health and the ESRC), leading to what seems, from the outside, to be a surprising confluence of interest in just the same questions at just the same time and, paradoxically, to the duplication of effort and energy.

It is, however, important to recognise the fact that different funding sources make a real difference to the way in which research is viewed and used. Several of our government department respondents underlined the importance of demonstrating value for money and the relevance of work which they had paid for themselves. This was their priority. Making use of research which others had funded was not subject to the same pressures. More than that, the resources invested in disseminating their "own" research programmes often detracted from their capacity to use research undertaken by others. Departments are more and less systematically aware of other research but there is no compulsion to ensure that it is promoted internally or that it reaches the right people in the system. In other words there is a hierarchy of internal dissemination which - project by project - probably works against research council funded social science. As the audit confirms, researchers find it easier to make an impact if research is directly funded by those who aim to use it or who are under some kind of direct obligation to ensure that potential uses/beneficiaries are exposed to research ideas.

Again this hierarchy of appropriation (i.e. in which own research is more likely to be used than that provided (sometimes for free) by others) is curious for the researchers involved - both in research council funded and in government department supported research - are likely to be drawn from more or less the same population. They may even be developing similar ideas and insights though with funding from different sources. As we have already noted, this pattern of differentiation and overlap is repeated when it comes to setting research agendas and defining research themes. Although aware, through high-level meetings, concordats and such like, of future research programmes and plans for developing substantive areas (eg. on youth, social inequality in health etc.) government departments and research councils are much less clued up about the scope, scale, character and nature of the overlapping research communities which they jointly sustain. Government departments, like the ESRC, were relatively innocent of the demands, pressures and opportunities which characterise the everyday lives of university-based research providers. Tellingly, funders focus on what they refer to as "their" research, forgetting that it is also the researcher's research and that researchers have lives which extend beyond the confines of individual projects.

To summarise, the sort of approach to agenda setting, funding and exploitation outlined above is one in which government departments concentrate on designing and using "their own" research. While this means paying attention to work which others have funded, and while it also means trying to avoid duplication of effort, there is nonetheless, a real hierarchy of influence. Directly funded research has a much better chance of exploitation than that which comes from the "outside". While this

might be because directly commissioned research is more directly relevant, this is not necessarily case.

Paradoxically, this "inside"/"outside" distinction, together with a focus on "their own" projects and priorities, blinds funders to some of the practicalities of knowledge production, and to the overlapping activities and interests of individual researchers.

2 Exploiting individuals and ideas

Though discussion of funding and using *projects* (as outlined above) was important, government respondents described other ways of relating to university-based social science. For example, some paid attention to the evolving reputations and ideas of individual *researchers*. Such people were able to provide an instant catalogue of "visible" academics with what were thought to be relevant areas of expertise. These maps of expertise, often based on somewhat accidental if not arbitrary encounters at seminars, conferences, and so on, were really crucial when it came to navigating between academia and policy worlds and making judgements about who to talk with, involve, or invite to provide advice.

Cumulative experience of this kind interaction with academics led to a sense of well-connectedness and, perhaps more important, an ability to selectively draw on academic perspectives; speakers and figureheads in order to funnel new ideas or particular ways of thinking into specific areas of government activity. Given a really good spread of contacts it was, for instance, possible, to structure seminar programmes to convey the image of a growing agenda, to add to the cumulative weight of argument, or to underline the prevalence of a particular style of thinking and so persuade otherwise reluctant colleagues (within the relevant government department) of the importance of these positions.

The ability to maintain such networks without necessarily investing directly in people or expertise depends on paying relatively careful attention to ESRC and other funded research not so much for its specific content as for the researchers involved and for the sorts of connections and contacts on offer. Of course, evaluations of quality (of who is good, of what work counts, and so on) are not necessarily or exclusively founded on academic reputation. Being a good speaker, or a good chair person are also valued qualities. In this context, being outside the immediacies of government funding, having an independent "academic" status, and being, in some sense, a "name" were critical characteristics. In contrast to the model of influence described above, these more personal relationships between academia and policy are effective precisely because expertise comes from "outside" the government department in question and precisely because it has *not* been directly commissioned or funded.

3 Reconfiguring incentives

We began by reviewing government departments strategies for defining and using "their own" research and that provided and funded by others. We then considered strategies for exploiting ideas which focus more on people than on projects and which involve scanning and selectively appropriating ideas and activity wherever that occurs and whatever the funding or sponsoring agencies involved. Some of our government respondents went on to reflect on the broader structuring of incentives both for academics and for the policy world, and the way in which these order the production and use of social science research.

These more structural analyses pointed (again) to what was seen as the "damaging" split between the imperatives of the research assessment exercise and the need to produce relevant research which engages with policy concerns. In addition, our respondents highlighted the importance of what they presented as a "new" task: that of mediation and translation. The radical suggestion here was that universities should be responsible for three areas of activity: teaching, research and mediation or translation; and that all three should be appropriately rewarded and funded. At present there are no incentives to spend time and energy in generating, devising or promoting research in collaboration with non academics in industry or government.

Though much of this discussion focused on the potential for modifying incentives within the research world, another interview, with a more junior project officer within the DETR, highlighted the pressures and demands confronting lower level government officials in their role as research "consumers". This and other meetings underlined the fragmented and increasingly harried quality of policy advice and the problems this presents for government departments' ability to take any coherent view either of relevant research questions, or of how to relate to a diversity of ideas and research perspectives. The risk here is that a narrow pre-definition of "the problem", or of "policy relevance" prevents the kind of research-policy dialogue on which effective mediation and exploitation depends. In other words, further development of the translation and mediation role presumes a corresponding interest and capacity to relate to research on the part of potential research users including industry as well as government departments.

These observations are important for they reminds us of differences between and within government departments and other users. It would be useful to investigate the ways in which large, complicated bureaucracies actually relate to research; how they see its potential; what they really use it for, in what circumstances, when and why. In the course of our discussions the examples cited included instances in which social science research served to legitimate already established positions or views; in which it was used to set targets and measure or evaluate progress towards those goals; in which it was used to re-invigorate debate and bring in new ideas.

4 Positioning and promoting research

In thinking about *how* research is used, we were again reminded of the different interests and positions of research funders. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation supports research in particular areas and makes deliberate efforts to promote that work through seminars, the "Findings" series, launches and so on. In adopting this sort of role, Joseph Rowntree allies itself quite strongly with the content of the research it supports. This is a deliberate and selective process. Though not exactly involved in campaigning or lobbying (e.g. in the same way as a political party or interest group), the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has a clear view of its purpose and position within the wider arena of research and policy, and it manages and promotes "its" work accordingly. By contrast, the ESRC has a more complicated and ambivalent relationship to "its" research and "its" researchers. Though charged with promoting research which is user relevant, there are countervailing pressures when it comes to identifying "too strongly" with the content of specific projects or the messages that research generates. The ESRC is, for instance, sometimes caught in the position of having to justify funding particular projects despite the fact that the funding and selection process relies on peer-review and is not in that sense controlled by the ESRC.

The role of ESRC programme directors is especially interesting in this context. In effect they represent ESRC funded research on behalf of the ESRC. Being cast in this figure head role, they filter and funnel enquiries and foster patterns of interaction between researchers and policy or industry users, but at one step removed from the identity of the ESRC itself. The perception and profile of these programmes, to some extent, comes to depend on the perception of these key figures and their abilty to manage relationships within beyond what then becomes "their" rather than the ESRC's programme.

These insights are relevant for further discussion about the extent to which the ESRC is known for "its" research. Several goverment representatives suggested that despite its ambition and purpose, the ESRC was not known for its research. As we've suggested in this annexe, this is interpretation reflects the ambiguous position of the ESRC itself with respect to the promotion and exploitation of the research it funds: is that research the researchers' research, and if in a programme is it better seen as the programme director's research, or do ESRC funded projects and people simultaneously have multiple identities? (ie. their own identity as a researcher/academic; as a cog in an ESRC programme, or as a part of the ESRC's research enterprise). This is important for it makes a difference to the ways in which ESRC research is seen and positioned in the broader landscape of funded research, which of course includes work undetaken by consultants, independent research agencies, charities, government departments and others..

Drawing some of these threads together, discussions with government departments and other research funders provide us with a picture of a complicated research landscape in which there are different, but often overlapping, interests in promoting and acquiring (and sometimes paying for) social science expertise. Though funders are understandably concerned to promote or ensure the value and relevance of "their" research, they are also interested in extracting value from what is to them "free" research, ie. that which has been undertaken by others. Our interviews suggest that government departments are typically more preoccupied with commissioning and using "their own" research than with being organised consumers of existing work. Though several respondents were keen on conducting and funding literature reivews, especially given growing emphasis on "evidence based policy, this was seen as a relatively new activity, and one which it was sometimes difficult to organise. Finding academics prepared to drop everything to do a quick literature review on a very short term contract was harder than finding people prepared to do "new" research. Where "outside" research funders see themselves as having a specific purpose or role (for example the Joseph Rowntree Foundation), they can organise and target the promotion of "their" research in a reasonably deliberate fashion - effectively pushing it into the policy world even though it has not been directly "asked for". As a result they can and do become known for, and associated with, the content of the research they support. The ESRC is in a more ambiguous position with respect to the content of "its" research and its relationship to "its" researchers and "its" - or is it "their" - users.