Policy Impact Unit

THEORY OF CHANGE

VISION AND AIM

VISION

UCL Engineering is a 'go to' place for policymakers seeking engineering evidence and expertise to tackle societal challenges

AIM

The Policy Impact Unit (PIU) facilitates and delivers high quality policy engagement that increases UCL Engineering's impact* on policy

APPROACH

- Creating the conditions and space for engagement
- Providing dedicated capacity for delivery of engagement

* Our definition of 'impact on policy' is: "research evidence or expert opinion informs the development, implementation or evaluation of policy".

GOALS, ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

GOAL 1

Strong networks with policymakers are built, managed and maintained

GOAL 2

Policy and academic research interests are aligned and opportunities for collaboration maximised

GOAL 3

UCL's Faculty of Engineering Sciences (FES) research and expertise informs the development, implementation or evaluation of policy

Activities and outputs

- Stakeholder mapping
- Database of contacts
- Baseline of policy engagement recorded
- Events and workshops
- 1-1 meetings
- interviews
- Project updates

Activities and outputs

- Ongoing networking
- Horizon scanning
- Policy landscape analysis
- Actively playing a convening role
- 'sandpit' workshops

Activities and outputs

- Identifying 'windows of opportunity'
- Targeted research translation and knowledge exchange activities such as:
- *Events and workshops*
- *1-1 meetings*
- *Policy briefings and dissemination*
- *Consultation responses*
- *Communications and social media*

Short-term outcomes

- PIU staff identify and build relationships with key stakeholders relevant to FES research
- New relationships are cultivated and maintained

Short-term outcomes

- Convening role is strengthened and developed
- PIU is recognised as providing an important convening role by key stakeholders

Short-term outcomes

- Policymakers utilise outputs
- Policymakers find outputs useful

Medium-term outcomes

- Policy engagement opportunities opened up to researchers
- FES researchers have access to a wide policy network via the PIU
- Policy makers proactively contact PIU team

Medium-term outcomes

- More FES researchers and policy makers collaboratively identify research priorities

Medium-term outcomes

- Policy makers can point to examples of where FES research has informed or influenced thinking, policy or practice

GOALS, ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

GOAL 4
Strong team capacity and expertise

GOAL 5
The profile of the PIU is significantly raised within FES and UCL

GOAL 6
FES values the theory and practice of policy engagement

Activities and outputs

- New posts created
- Ongoing training and development for team
- Cross team working and collaboration built into work plans
- Create a process for developing, implementing and evaluating innovative engagement approaches

Short-term outcomes

- PIU can point to examples of innovative methodologies
- Effective methods are identified and refined

Medium-term outcomes

- PIU team consistently delivers high-quality and effective policy engagement

Activities and outputs

- Develop a complementary sub-brand
- Establish an advisory board
- Promotion through existing forums and channels
- Reporting on impact to key individuals
- PIU website
- Networking/meeting research staff
- Co-ordination with other policy teams

Short-term outcomes

- Regular internal communication programme established

Medium-term outcomes

- Awareness of the existence, activity and impact of PIU has measurably increased

Activities and outputs

- Internal communications
- Evaluation plan developed and implemented

Short-term outcomes

- Research teams proactively approach the PIU for support

Medium-term outcomes

- Increased demand for PIU resources from FES researchers
- PIU staff embedded from the outset of projects

OUR VALUES

WE ARE COLLABORATIVE

- We believe that by working with people with different knowledge, skill sets and perspectives, we can achieve better outcomes

- We seek opportunities to work with colleagues from UCL as well as external organisations

WE ARE INCLUSIVE

- We work to remove barriers to participating in our activities

- We aim to work with researchers from a variety of backgrounds at different stages of their career

WE ARE COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

- We take pride in delivering our activities to a consistently high standard

WE ARE CONSTANTLY LEARNING

- We use evidence-based approaches to policy engagement and keep informed about new developments in the field

- We evaluate and reflect on our work and stay open to new ways of doing things

ASSUMPTIONS

UNDERLYING CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS

- Evidence plus effective engagement leads to impact ("*research evidence or expert opinion informs the development, implementation or evaluation of policy*")

- Individual research projects add sufficient value for policymakers

- Strategic rather than opportunistic or formulaic approach to policy engagement is more likely to lead to impact

- Policy engagement outputs create additional value above and beyond research findings

- Multiple activities over a sustained period of time are more likely to lead to impact than one-off interventions

- The PIU is able to continue to build trusted relationships with the policy community and FES academics

- Outputs will continue to be valued by the intended audience/policy community

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- PIU staff skills and knowledge
  - ◊ *Network and relationship building*
  - ◊ *Strategic thinking /goal identification*
  - ◊ *Specialist knowledge of policy areas*
  - ◊ *Research-based, user-focused and policy-oriented analysis*
  - ◊ *Writing for a policy audience*
  - ◊ *Facilitation/event design*
  - ◊ *Political awareness*
  - ◊ *Anticipation of how different ideas and language will be received by different actors*
- PIU staff time is dedicated solely to policy engagement (providing additional capacity for research teams)

WEAKNESSES

- Researchers are not always able to spare sufficient time to collaborate on impact-related activities
- The PIU funding model inhibits flexibility on project selection, hampers collaborative working within the team and increases the chance of staff turnover

OPPORTUNITIES

- Institutional culture: policy engagement and impact is a priority for FES
- World-class research activity in FES provides fertile ground for engagement—significant latent value to be realised

THREATS

- If PIU staffing is not increased, ability to deliver will be limited
- The political and policy landscape may change in ways that affect the PIU's work
- If policy engagement and impact become less of a priority for UCL or FES, there would be less demand for the PIU