KEC IMPLEMENTATION SERIES 2022: ENGAGING ACADEMICS

WEBINAR PRESENTATIONS - SUMMARY

Wednesday 12th October 2022

Overview

The KEC Engaging Academics webinar brought together colleagues across the UK to explore the opportunities for, and the barriers to, engaging academics in knowledge exchange (KE). This summary highlights speakers' recommendations for supporting and incentivising academic engagement in KE.

We hope that this information may help participants to evaluate and improve their approaches to engaging academics, as well as to identify new directions for practice. We will continue to revisit, test and build on these insights throughout the KEC Implementation Series 2022 and beyond.

In addition to this summary, we encourage the reader to consult the accompanying **Breakout Session Summary** for further ideas on how we can support and engage academics. We have also collated **a list of resources and further reading,** as recommended by our speakers and participants. The full webinar recording and speaker slides are also available **here**.

This summary was written by:

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All errors are author's own.
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◉ **The Myth of the Ivory Tower: Key Features of Knowledge Exchange by UK Academics, Michael Kitson** (Judge Business School, University of Cambridge)

Michael Kitson presented the headline findings from two surveys on KE in UK universities

18,117 academics

2015 Survey

+

3,823 businesses

2020/2021 Survey
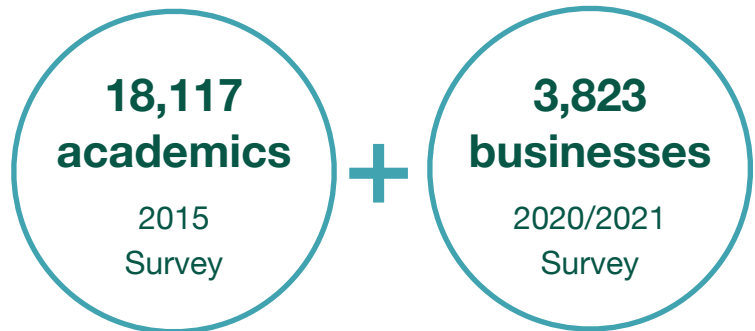
DRIVERS OF KE

- **Research, outreach and teaching** are the most important sources of motivation for academic engagement in KE

- Direct income (whilst important) is the **least** motivating factor for academics

- The development of **new technology, products and services** is a strong driver of business engagement with academia - but other benefits are also valued by businesses

- These include benefits relating to **HR management, marketing and sales, operations, and business organisation/strategy**

BARRIERS TO KE

FOR ACADEMICS:

The biggest barriers to academic engagement in KE relate to:

- **Lack of time**
- **Bureaucracy and inflexibility of university admin**
- **Lack of resources**

Less engaged academics, in particular, reported problems with:

- **Identifying partners**
- **Lack of marketing, technical or negotiation skills**
- **Lack of external interest**

FOR BUSINESSES:

For businesses, the biggest barriers to engagement in KE relate to:

- **Lack of company resources**
- **Difficulties with identifying partners**
- **Insufficient benefits from collaboration**

Reaching legal agreement (on issues such as IP) and cultural differences were perceived as the **lowest barriers to engagement** among both academics and businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve engagement between academics and business, we should focus on three core areas:

INFORMATION   **PEOPLE**   **NETWORKS**

◉ **Engaging Academics: Lessons From Impact,
Dr Julie Bayley** (University of Lincoln)

Dr Julie Bayley's presentation approached the subject from the perspective of academics as individuals, and drew on lessons from her work in research impact.

BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN KE

**WORKLOAD,
CAPACITY and
COMPETING
PRESSURES**

- Little time for KE alongside teaching and research, which can be reduced further by personal circumstances (e.g. disability and caring responsibilities)

RESOURCES

- Limitations in institutional support, funding, facilities, and human and personal resources

**KNOWLEDGE
and
SKILLS GAP**

- It is a myth that impact happens naturally if research is good enough

RESISTANCE

- Stemming from **unease** (not understanding what's expected), **bad experiences**, and **principles** (feeling that KE is not relevant for topic or discipline)

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

- **REF case studies show the sausages and not the sausage factory**
  Case studies do not reveal the hard work and failures that lie behind success. When conveying what impact or KE looks like, keep the things that go wrong as part of the story - to help others avoid similar problems.

- **Acknowledge and make transparent the accidental (impact) culture**
  What messages are academics receiving about the types of researchers who engage in KE (and the types that don't)? Consider what counts vs what is being counted, and whether the bar for 'good' is set too high.

- **Unhide contributions**
  Unveil the invisible labour of an army of researchers, partners, professional staff, and students in your case studies to maintain their engagement in the future.

- **Chase meaning not 'unicorns'**
  In chasing big, headline-grabbing goals, we might be missing important achievements and activities around us.

- **Recognise the pressures**
  People are feeling the pressure of multiple agendas, so we should work *with* them to see how well they are and how they can support the process.

- **Recognise that KE and impact are not automatic consequences of research**
  Help to develop the skills required for KE and impact.

- **Make it feel safe**
  Help to make colleagues feel less vulnerable and the process less uncertain.

◉ **Engaging Academics Through Recognition and Reward: Insights From KEC Action Plans 2021, Dr Ariadna Tsenina** (Universities UK)

Dr Ariadna Tsenina highlighted some insights emerging from the institutional self-evaluations and external feedback submitted during the first round of the KE Concordat Action Plans in 2020/2021.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Most commonly cited examples of engaging academics through recognition and reward (among institutions rating themselves highly on Principle 6 of the KE Concordat) are:

• **Internal awards**
• **KE career pathway**
• **Inclusion of KE in promotion criteria**

PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Most common priorities for improvement (identified by institutions rating themselves highly on Principle 6 of the KE Concordat) are:

• **Clarifying KE definitions, standards and indicators**
• **Improving KE awards and prizes**
• **Communicating examples of KE success and opportunities**
• **Including KE in career progression and promotion criteria**
• **Reviewing workload allocation**

Ariadna's presentation also included a **checklist** for initiatives that seek to engage academics through recognition and reward - including awards, KE links to career progression, and other incentives. This checklist can be found **here**.

SUCCESSFUL INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES

1 Reward, incentivise and recognise academic involvement in KE through **a wide range of policies and initiatives**

2 Link initiatives (such as awards and promotional pathways) explicitly to **KE language**

3 Do not introduce initiatives in a **vacuum** – holistic approaches that connect with other work (for example links to researcher development and research culture)

4 **Think beyond binary terms** - not only checking that an initiative is in place but also asking whether it is satisfactory, effective, and inclusive

5 Strive for **consistency across the institution** – rolling out local (Faculty/School-level) examples more widely; seeking KE inclusion in all career pathways, career levels and disciplines.

◉ Engaging Academics through the Making An Impact Series, Sarah Jackson and Dr Saneeya Qureshi
(University of Liverpool)

Sarah Jackson and **Dr Saneeya Qureshi** shared some lessons from the **Making An Impact** programme at University of Liverpool - a capacity-building programme for KE practitioners and academics. Sarah and Saneeya explained the format of this programme, and shared some tips on what has worked well for the initiative thus far.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE

- An online Resource Hub containing recordings, virtual workshop materials, tours of facilities and other resources
- Hearing from colleagues from all backgrounds and all levels of KE familiarity and expertise
- Developing flexible and online routes for participation, allowing colleagues to engage with the programme at a time and from a place that suits them

A CLEAR, RECOGNISABLE BRAND

- Consistent images, colours and branding in all communication

MUSICAL PLAYLISTS AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY KITS

- Participants contribute ideas for Spotify playlists
- Family kits help to keep children entertained whilst parents are engaged with the programme, and were especially useful during lockdown

INDIVIDUALISED PARTICIPANT PATHWAYS

- Participants can build their own pathway by selecting sessions tagged with specific themes such as IP or Commercialisation
- Within each theme, there is a variety of activities - some are live, some are recorded, some are workshops, and some are one-to-one surgeries

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE

- Resources that inspire reflection and help participants to continue developing beyond the programme

PARTNERSHIPS

- Internal partnership between RD & KE developers; external partnerships

ALIGNMENT OF HEIF FUNDING TO DELIVER ACTIVITY

- Referring to HEIF funding principles and guidelines, as well as to institutional priorities for developing capacity around research impact

INCENTIVISING PARTICIPATION

- e.g. one-to-one surgeries with industry leaders; prizes

DEDICATED ONLINE FORUMS AND SOCIAL SPACE

- Helpful for continuing learning and discussion, and enabling peer-learning

◉ **Reflecting On Academic Engagement in KE at Lancaster University, Dr Mark Rushforth** (Lancaster University)

Dr Mark Rushforth discussed the approach towards engaging academics in KE at Lancaster University, and shared some personal reflections on what has worked well and what the next steps might be for his team.

KEY FEATURES OF THE APPROACH

1. EMBEDDING ENGAGEMENT IN INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE

Engagement is one of three pillars within the institutional plan at Lancaster University. Senior academic leadership positions (such as Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise), as well as dedicated faculty and departmental leadership roles, are built around this pillar and are underpinned by a system of committees (such as the Enterprise and Innovation Committee).

2. POLICIES

The team at Lancaster have revised the IP and Consultancy policies (after studying the sector), created clear guidance materials for academics, and sought external validation for institutional policies to gain confidence about the quality of institutional support for academics when it comes to spinouts and consultancy.

3. STAFF

Developing internal partnerships is considered to be as important for academic engagement as developing external partnerships. Lancaster University has a large team dedicated to engagement (supported by over 100 staff) with members based centrally, as well as within faculties.

4. OTHER MECHANISMS

Impact Acceleration Accounts and European Structural and Investment Funds are used to stimulate external partnerships and build a culture of engagement. Particularly successful initiatives include **Collaboration Cafes** (which stimulate internal collaboration), the **Festival of Social Science**, and **Bright Club** (where researchers learn to articulate their research interests to external audiences through the medium of stand-up comedy).

5. UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS

The team at Lancaster University seeks to understand and measure the wide range of academic benefits from engagement with external partners - and thus show the full breadth of impact for individuals, as well as the wider institution and external partners. Recent research into this revealed the (typically less-noted) importance of external partnerships for generating new teaching material and increasing job satisfaction among academics.

6. OPPORTUNITIES

There are multiple research learning and development opportunities at Lancaster University. As next steps, the team is considering creating more bespoke KE learning opportunities or improving the fit of KE within existing opportunities. In addition, the team is interested in improving their use of case studies, so that these can better demonstrate the value of KE to individual researchers and the key mechanisms behind this.

THANK YOU

We would like to express our sincere thanks to our panel of speakers for taking the time out of their busy schedules to explore this subject and share their findings, lessons, and experience with the KE Concordat community.

Our speakers:

Dr Julie Bayley (Director of Research Impact Development), University of Lincoln

Sarah Jackson (Director of Research, Partnerships and Innovation), University of Liverpool

Michael Kitson (University Associate Professor in International Macroeconomics), Judge Business School, University of Cambridge

Dr Saneeya Qureshi (Head of Researcher Development and Culture), University of Liverpool

Dr Mark Rushforth (Associate Director of Enterprise and Innovation), Lancaster University

Dr Ariadna Tsenina (Policy Researcher - Knowledge Exchange Concordat), Universities UK

Webinar chair:

Greg Wade (Policy Manager), Universities UK

KEC IMPLEMENTATION SERIES 2022

Previous webinars in this series:

• **Measuring Non-Financial Impact** (Wednesday 14th September 2022)

Upcoming webinars in this series:

• **Defining What 'Good' Looks Like** (Wednesday 9th November 2022)

• **Aligning KEC With Institutional Strategy** (Wednesday 7th December 2022)

For more information, please visit:
https://www.keconcordat.ac.uk/events/kec-implementation-series-2022/