

# Punching our weight: the humanities and social sciences in public policy making

A British Academy Report

September 2008



BRITISH  
ACADEMY

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## Foreword

It is vitally important that UK policy makers are able to make use of all that humanities and social science research has to offer. By any measure, UK research in the humanities and social sciences is first-class. It generates evidence and findings of high salience for policy makers. This report illustrates many of the central challenges facing policy makers in using that research. It also gives examples of the various ways in which humanities and social science researchers can help policy makers to respond to these challenges.

Our findings reveal serious concerns that policy makers are not realising the full potential of the contributions that humanities and social science research can make to public policy making. Policy makers and academic researchers alike are agreed that more should be done to strengthen that contribution. This report illustrates these problems and contains proposals for consideration by Government and other bodies.

This is one of a number of reports by the British Academy which seek to inform public debate on topics of current interest. Through its various activities, the Academy contributes to policy discussion and development, championing the value of the humanities and social sciences. The Academy believes that national and international policy making can and should be better informed by the findings of high quality research in the humanities and social sciences. This report has helped to develop the Academy's own thinking on how this objective can be achieved.

I am deeply grateful to Sir Alan Wilson, who chaired the Working Group which oversaw the review, to the other members of the group and to the members of Academy staff who have contributed to this report.

**Baroness Onora O'Neill, CBE, PBA, F Med Sci, Hon FRS**  
*President of the British Academy*

## British Academy Reports and Policy Statements

The British Academy is the UK academy for the humanities and social sciences. The Academy publishes reports on issues of particular importance to these disciplines, and to the formation of public policy that bears on them.

Examples of recent Academy reports and statements are shown below. These are all available online from [www.britac.ac.uk/reports/](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports/)

*Joint Guidelines on Copyright and Academic Research - Guidelines for researchers and publishers in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, published jointly by the British Academy and the Publishers Association, April 2008

*Taking Forward the Gowers Review of Intellectual Property: Proposed Changes to Copyright Exceptions*. The British Academy's submission to the UKIPO consultation, April 2008

*Review of the 30-year rule*, March 2008

*Response to the questions posed by the HEFCE consultation on the Research Excellence Framework*, February 2008

*International Development Select Committee Inquiry: DFID's Programme in Nigeria*. Submission by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the British Academy. February 2008

*The work and operation of the Copyright Tribunal*. A response to the inquiry by the House of Commons Innovation, Universities and Skills Committee, January 2008

*Peer Review: the challenges for the humanities and social sciences*, a British Academy Report, September 2007

*Dearing Review of Language Policy - Response to the Interim Consultation Report*, February 2007

*Dearing Review of Language Policy - Response to the Announcement of the Review's Establishment*, November 2006

*Response to the AHRC Review of Postgraduate Funding*, November 2006

*Response to the DfES Consultation on the Reform of Higher Education Research Assessment and Funding*, October 2006

*Copyright and Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, a British Academy Report, September 2006

*Response to a Consultation on the Draft Research Agenda for Theme 8 'Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities' in the 7th Community RTD Framework Programme, 2007-2013*, July 2006

*Response to the British Library's Content Strategy*, June 2006

*Response to the Gowers Review of Intellectual Property*, April 2006

*Response to the AHRC's Consultation - A Strategy for Supporting and Sustaining High Quality Research in the UK's Museums, Galleries, Libraries and Archives*, March 2006

*Response to HEFCE's Review of the Teaching Funding Method*, June 2006

*Comments on HEFCE's Draft Strategic Plan for 2006-11*, January 2006

*Response to the AHRC's Consultation on Doctoral Research in the Arts and Humanities*, November 2005

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## Preface

How can policy makers maximise the untapped potential of research in the humanities and social sciences? This is the question at the heart of this report, which has investigated the contributions made by the humanities and social sciences to public policy making. Our findings show that while these contributions are often extensive, there remains considerable scope to improve the effectiveness of public policy making through increased use of humanities and social science research.

The challenges that confront public policy makers are growing in complexity. They require a sophisticated and far-sighted approach, which can anticipate, and respond to, potential long-term risks and opportunities. Humanities and social science research is well placed to help policy makers respond to these developments. However, short-term political pressures often work against policy makers' efforts to prepare for future uncertainties. There needs to be greater recognition of the importance of increasing the stock of useful knowledge from a wide range of relevant academic sources, in order to enable the UK to respond better to these developments.

How can we bring policy makers and researchers together in a way that facilitates knowledge innovation and knowledge transfer? This is another key question, as our findings show that sustained contacts between researchers and users, based on personal relationships and developed over time, are the most important determinants of policy impact. The importance of developing dialogues and partnerships is a major theme of our report and we make a series of recommendations to address this issue.

Many of these recommendations build on work that the Government, the Research Councils, learned societies and others are already undertaking in the area. Much of what we hope will be achieved will only happen if all these bodies continue to focus their efforts, often in partnership, on addressing the under-utilisation of humanities and social science research in public policy making.

I am grateful to the LSE Public Policy Group and to Philippe Schneider for research support; to the Fellows of the British Academy who commented at various stages; and to Vivienne Hurley for her untiring support and highly-skilled contributions to this endeavour. Many academics and policy makers contributed through their interviews with the Public Policy Group and I am grateful to them. Finally my thanks go to the members of the Working Group who have been both diligent and have contributed enormously.

We hope this report will stimulate further thought, discussion and action.

**Sir Alan Wilson, FBA, FRS**  
*Chairman, Review Working Group*



## Executive Summary and Recommendations

### Summary

It is essential that public policy making is informed by high quality research, in order to support the effectiveness of government decision-making. But the full value of humanities and social science (HSS) research has yet to be realised by policy makers, and as a result we are concerned that the Government's efforts to make its policy making more effective will not yield the results that are required. Researchers and policy makers agree that opportunities are being missed, because policy makers are not exploiting all that HSS research offers. Equally, researchers are often unaware of opportunities and approaches to feed their findings into local, regional, national or international policy debates. Both sides would welcome increased opportunities for dialogue and exchange. Our findings echo those of both past and recent government reports and studies<sup>1</sup>, which have found that the Government is not leveraging the academic research base as effectively as it could and should.

This problem is becoming more pressing as the challenges facing society today increasingly require a range of inputs from experts in many disciplines. The Government has particular concerns about the lack of progress in developing the inter-departmental collaborations that are needed to address the policy areas that straddle the boundaries of a number of government departments.<sup>2</sup> Many challenges require a more sophisticated understanding of human behaviour, in order to inform and develop policies that are at the forefront of so many government concerns. HSS disciplines also help policy makers to anticipate, and respond to, future challenges and uncertainties.

We welcome the Government's commitment to enhance the role of academic research in public policy making. The appointment of departmental Chief Scientific Advisors is an important means of enhancing both cross-departmental engagements and links with academic researchers. We also welcome the Government's recently published consultation, *A Vision for Science and Society*, which raises questions about the mechanisms that are needed to improve and reward interactions between academic researchers and policy makers.<sup>3</sup> However, we believe that these efforts need to be strengthened by a series of targeted strategies aimed at addressing the current under-utilisation of HSS research.<sup>4</sup>

In this report we address the following questions:

- What do policy makers need?
- What do the humanities and social sciences offer policy makers?
- What are the challenges of providing better evidence for public policy making?

Our findings and conclusions lead us to a series of recommendations, which focus on the problems from three perspectives:

*Knowledge use.* What can the Government and policy makers do to exploit all that HSS research has to offer?

1 For example, the inquiry by the Council for Science and Technology (CST), which was set up to consider the ways in which the interaction between academia and policy makers could be improved.

2 See Lord Sainsbury's Review of Science and Innovation, *The Race to the Top: A Review of Government's Science and Innovation Policies* (HM Treasury, October 2007).

3 Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (July 2008) *A Vision for Science and Society: A consultation for developing a new strategy for the UK*.

4 We welcome the recent calls by John Denham (Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills) that government decisions should be underpinned by sound research and advice, along with his request that the CST conduct an inquiry on his behalf into the links between academia and policy makers.

*Knowledge production.* How can we encourage more HSS academic researchers to engage in public policy development?

*'Co-production'.* How can we bring the two sides together in a way that facilitates knowledge innovation and knowledge transfer?

Our conclusions are best summarised in the recommendations that follow.

## Recommendations

### Knowledge use

Government departments need to enhance mechanisms for anticipating, and responding to, future challenges and uncertainties. Our findings show that a high proportion, often as high as 60%, of departmental research budgets is being allocated to short-term projects to meet current political and administrative demands. This is contrary to the Government's own guidelines on the use of scientific research in policy making, which state that government departments should 'think ahead' and 'should broaden their advice'.<sup>5</sup> We believe that there is a need to recognise the importance of increasing the stock of useful knowledge from a wide range of relevant academic sources, in order to enable the UK to respond better to uncertainty. The humanities and social sciences have an important role to play here. Government departments should give greater recognition to the importance of developing the evidence base of possible policy scenarios and solutions, in order to respond to unforeseen developments.

**R1** Government departments should review the size, aims and timescales of the budgets they have earmarked to support departmental research, with the aim of committing sufficient funding to support long-term knowledge development and longitudinal research that can offer a range of different solutions and perspectives to potential problems.

The research underpinning public policies should be of the highest quality. As a recent Academy report said: 'if research is being used by policy makers to take decisions on matters that have a direct effect on the quality of citizens' lives, the standards ought to be as high as possible.'<sup>6</sup>

Peer review by expert assessors is the means by which research quality is guaranteed in academic research. It informs the decisions about the work that should be funded, or the writing that should be published. Peer review is both a mechanism of selection - only the work deemed to be of the highest quality is funded - but also of enhancement. Work is better as a result of peer review.

We are aware that there are widespread concerns that much of the research commissioned by government departments has had to meet only the competition of tendering and not of peer review. The Academy considers that a good commissioning process should involve an element of peer review. We therefore share the views expressed recently by the Government's Chief Social Researcher on this issue:

*'We should, as a matter of principle, open our research to external and independent peer review - not because peer review is the only way of ensuring quality but because in the long run it generates shared standards and is a defence against charlatanry and partiality. We should use peer review to give our*

5 Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office (2000) *Adding It Up - Improving Analysis and Modelling in Central Government*; Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office (2001) *Better Policy Delivery and Design*.

6 The British Academy (2007) *Peer Review: the challenges for the humanities and social sciences*. The report is available from [www.britac.ac.uk/reports](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports)

*Ministers confidence about the research we produce and as an independent basis for our judgement as to what we publish as government research.'* (Professor Paul Wiles, Government Chief Social Scientist)

**R2 Government departments should develop and strengthen their peer review mechanisms to ensure that the research that they commission is of the highest quality.**

It is essential that government departments have robust mechanisms to assess the research that they fund, to evaluate what works and what does not. The appointment of departmental Chief Scientific Advisors (CSAs) is a welcome step forward in the efforts by Government to improve the effectiveness of its policy making. We are concerned that there remains a vacancy at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

We support the efforts of departmental CSAs to strengthen the policy making undertaken within and across government departments. As part of the efforts to ensure that robust mechanisms are in place to assess and better exploit the research that is being funded, all government departments should annually publish the highlights of the research that they have commissioned. Departments should be able to point to the evidence that underpins their policies. There also needs to be a mechanism that enables departments to justify the funds spent on commissioned research.

**R3 Government departments should evaluate the research that they have commissioned and annually publish the highlights of this work.**

All government departments ought to publish their research priorities and needs, in order to facilitate interaction and dialogue with the academic research community. We understand that a number of government departments already do this and recommend that this practice should be universally adopted. For example, the Scottish Executive is active in making public its research priorities and needs. Most teams of in-house researchers and analysts publish work plans for their area, which have been agreed with policy colleagues and Ministers. Research project opportunities are also published on-line.

**R4 Government departments should publish departmental research priorities and need to increase transparency and facilitate interaction and dialogue with the academic community, and to make it known which work would be of particular use.**

Government needs to recognise the importance of investing in the tools and large-scale evidence bases to support policy development. HSS research funders and professional bodies should draw the attention of policy makers to the opportunities afforded by these advances and the need to develop and maintain databases to inform policy innovations.

**R5 Government should invest in the tools and techniques required to support policy development.**

### **Knowledge production**

There is a need to ensure that future government analysts and researchers, together with academic researchers, have the appropriate skills. As one report put it: 'HSS will inform public policy insofar as these analysts, researchers and consultants have appropriate skills - aware of

developments in their field, adept at appropriate methodologies, capable of designing and managing research, confident in communicating research-based evidence to policy audiences.<sup>7</sup>

**R6** Drawing on their links with their 'user' communities, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) should consider whether the training for the PhD students they fund meets the needs of appropriate 'user' communities. Attention should also be paid to the possibility of incorporating further opportunities for multidisciplinary training and networking, which would build on the work that universities already have in hand using 'Roberts Money'.<sup>8</sup>

The links between HSS academic researchers and policy makers vary according to discipline; in some, such as law and economics, there are well-developed channels of communication, while in others, including most of the humanities, the connections are at a much earlier stage of development. There is scope to develop initiatives to share examples of good practice across disciplines. Care will need to be taken to ensure that these activities draw on the expertise of existing inter-disciplinary networks of HSS researchers, such as the History and Policy Group.<sup>9</sup>

**R7** AHRC and ESRC should jointly convene workshops, bringing together researchers from across the HSS disciplines to share their ideas and experiences for contributing to policy development. In this way, humanities researchers can learn from their colleagues in the social sciences who have more experience of communicating their research to policy makers and of undertaking commissioned research in support of specific policy initiatives.

AHRC and ESRC have established funding streams to enable researchers to maximise the impact of their existing research. We consider that there is scope to build on these welcome initiatives, with a particular focus on facilitating the impact of research both within and between HSS disciplines. We found evidence that HSS researchers are not always aware of these opportunities. The British Academy and other HSS funders should identify ways in which they can draw them to the attention of their award-holders.

**R8** AHRC and ESRC should enhance their existing funding streams to increase the impact of existing research both within and between HSS disciplines. For its part, the British Academy should promote these opportunities to its own award-holders.

Some universities already include policy engagement in their criteria for promotion. We believe that this practice should be followed more widely, in order to raise the profile of policy engagement within universities.

**R9** Universities should examine their criteria for academic promotion, with a view to including public policy engagement (and engagement with other research users) as a factor to be taken into account (as appropriate to the discipline). Care will need to be taken to ensure that the focus is on recognising work of the highest quality that has had wider benefits.

HSS departments in universities are usually focused on single disciplines and are not structured to facilitate interactions with policy makers. There are excellent examples of interdisciplinary centres that are so focused, but we believe that the stock of these could be increased.

7 William Solesbury (2003) *The contribution of the arts, humanities and social sciences to public policy*.

8 The 'Roberts Money' provides support for the development of transferable skills training provision for postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers. These funds are provided through the Research Councils and are referred to as 'Roberts Money' as they are a direct result of the recommendations of Sir Gareth Roberts' Review, *Set for Success* (2002).

9 See pages 44-45 for more detail on the History and Policy Group.

**R10** Universities should explore opportunities to increase the number of interdisciplinary centres focused on aspects of public policy.

The current debate on the development of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) provides an opportunity for considering further the most effective means of encouraging, assessing and rewarding high quality research that has public policy benefits.

**R11** The funding councils should include, within their national consultations on the REF with the academic community (and other stakeholders), the solicitation of views on the most effective means of encouraging, assessing and rewarding public policy engagement.

The Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) provides a major funding mechanism to incentivise and support engagement between universities and the user community. More could be done to recognise public policy engagement within HEIs.

**R12** The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) are urged to examine the way in which the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) can be developed, in order to incentivise high quality public policy engagement.

HSS researchers need to recognise what they have to offer public policy, and look to enhance the ways in which their work can be better exploited, including cross-disciplinary work, networking and outreach to policy makers. Policy makers say that they are often unaware of the research expertise that is available, because academic research teams are not effective at promoting what they have to offer. Universities and HSS researchers need to improve the way they promote their research highlights and capacities to this key target audience.

**R13** Universities and researchers should examine ways in which they can promote their research capacities and achievements more effectively.

While the Research Councils are coming under increasing pressure to demonstrate the economic benefits of the research they support<sup>10</sup>, it is inherently difficult at the outset of a project to predict what likely benefits the research might bring. Even when research has been completed and published, it may be many years before its impact can be properly understood and assessed. Research seen initially as 'blue skies' might subsequently be found to have economic and policy applications. No single measure will capture the rich and varied contributions that HSS research makes. There is a risk that pressure to develop simplistic measures will eventually lead to harmful distortions in the quality of the research that is funded by the Research Councils. There needs to be a greater awareness among government and policy makers of the damage that over-simplistic indicators might cause. The focus should be on developing a series of indicators (as both the AHRC and the ESRC have sought to do) that will help to illuminate some of the impacts that have been achieved, while recognising the inherent constraints and limitations of such measures.

**R14** The British Academy, HSS learned societies and professional bodies, together with the Research Councils and other funders, should work to enhance the Government's understanding of the shortcomings of simplistic and inappropriate measures of research performance and impact.

<sup>10</sup> The Warry report, *Increasing the Economic Impact of the Research Councils* (2006), recommended that applicants for Research Council responsive mode grants 'should identify potential economic benefits (if any) and reviewers should have clear guidance on how to score these benefits.' Research Councils UK has made it clear that it will use a broad interpretation of benefits, which will include the contributions to social and cultural well-being.

## **'Co-production'**

It is important that both researchers and policy makers share a mutual understanding of the relevance of each other's interests and activities. This will help to deepen their understandings of the way in which academic research can add value and offer insights to key issues of concern for policy makers.

ESRC could usefully broaden the scope and the composition of its social science forum (which currently includes policy makers, representatives from government, leading social scientists, and senior representatives from the funding agencies for the social sciences) with a view to including representatives from business, industry and the Third Sector. Similarly, AHRC should establish a strategic forum for policy and industry, which should be attended by leading arts and humanities researchers, senior policy makers and representatives from government, business, industry, the Third Sector and museums and galleries. These fora would focus on challenges requiring expertise from both within and between disciplines in the arts, humanities and social sciences, with the aim of

- promoting what HSS have to offer;
- understanding the needs of users;
- horizon scanning;
- developing codes of good practice;
- developing joint initiatives to support better linkages between HSS research and their users.

**R15** ESRC should broaden the scope of its existing strategic forum for the social sciences, with a view to including representatives from business, industry, and the Third Sector. Similarly, AHRC should establish a new strategic forum to connect arts and humanities researchers with policy makers and other research users.

There are concerns that the HSS research community has not been interacting with government departments (and others) as effectively as it could and should do. Action should be taken to address these problems. Raising the awareness of the value (and potential uses) of research should go some way in helping to ensure that the UK is better placed to exploit research in the future. We welcome the efforts that have been made already in this area, but consider that there is scope for further initiatives to be developed in order to bring academics and policy makers together to improve dialogue and exchange. Meetings of researchers and research beneficiaries could work to identify areas and opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, both to demonstrate the full value of HSS research and to strengthen its voice in public policy debates.

**R16** The British Academy, HSS learned societies and professional bodies, together with the Research Councils and other funders, should work to enhance the way in which these wider benefits are articulated and promoted to Government and other key stakeholders.

There is currently a rather limited appreciation of the way in which historic, cultural and philosophic evidence can lead to far-reaching social changes, and as a result key opportunities are being missed. High-level recognition of contributions to better links between researchers and users could be helpful. Awards could raise the profile of the contributions that HSS research can make to public policy development and the quality of life.

**R17** The British Academy should create awards for HSS researchers, policy makers, and others who have enhanced the engagement of research and public policy.

Learned societies represent an important resource of independent expert advice. HSS learned societies and professional bodies themselves have a role to play in enhancing their engagements with government policy makers at all levels. There is scope to enhance the role of HSS learned societies and professional bodies as facilitators of public policy engagement.

**R18** HSS learned societies and professional bodies should enhance their role as facilitators of public policy engagement.

Findings show that involving research 'users' at key stages throughout the research process (from the outset through to the final dissemination of the results) can be an important way of increasing the impact and take-up of research findings.

HSS researchers should explore ways of involving potential research beneficiaries from the outset of the research process, in order to heighten the likely impact of their work. While research funders like AHRC and ESRC are committed to increasing the opportunities for these kinds of engagement in the projects that they fund as a means of increasing the impact of their research, there is scope to establish further cross-cutting initiatives on these lines. AHRC and ESRC have recently jointly established the 'Religion and Society' research programme. We recommend that further cross-cutting initiatives be set up, involving government policy makers, AHRC and ESRC. Identifying topics for strategic initiatives will not be straightforward. The identification of major cross-cutting challenges should be subject to consultation with policy makers, and also with appropriate sections of the HSS research community.

**R19** AHRC and ESRC should develop the 'co-production model', addressing cross-cutting challenges identified in partnership with policy makers and relevant sections of the HSS research community.

Policy makers should implement systems to develop engagement with the humanities and social science academic community, including the expansion of two-way secondments between staff in academia and those in government.

**R20** Government departments should be required to set and publish targets for two-way secondments with universities and research organisations.



## Section 1: Introduction

**1.1** The British Academy is the United Kingdom's principal learned society for the humanities and social sciences (HSS). Through its series of reports, the Academy examines issues of importance to these two sets of disciplines. Reports often include recommendations that have the potential to influence policy, as well as affecting practice within the research community.

**1.2** This report builds on an earlier Academy report, chaired by Professor Paul Langford, FBA.<sup>11</sup> In this report, we focus on the contributions of HSS research to policy making, and explore ways in which this research can be better exploited. It is informed by contributions from the members of the Academy Working Group (see Appendix), which oversaw the review, as well as from Fellows of the Academy. The report also draws on externally commissioned research undertaken by a team at the London School of Economics - the LSE Public Policy Group (LSE PPG)<sup>12</sup> and also by an independent researcher, Philippe Schneider. As part of their work, the LSE researchers undertook:

- a large-scale survey of the HSS academic community (more than 450 individual responses were received);
- a series of surveys and interviews with policy makers, business representatives and other key stakeholders;
- a compilation of quantitative data on the size and funding of the HSS academic community;
- a literature review;
- analyses of government department literature and web sites;
- media analysis.

Philippe Schneider undertook a web-based literature review of government publications (White Papers; annual reports; departmental research reports; research programmes).

**1.3** The contribution to public policy making by HSS disciplines varies. Certain disciplines (such as economics, demography, geography and planning, psychology, law, business and management studies, ethics, religious studies, and sociology) can be direct - leading to changes in policy, practice or behaviour. For other disciplines (literary, cultural, philosophical and historical) the contributions can be less direct, but no less important, increasing understanding and knowledge, along with subtle changes in attitudes and assumptions.

**1.4** In this report we address the following issues:

- what policy makers need (Section 2);
- what research in the humanities and social sciences has to offer (Section 3);
- knowledge use: what can the Government and policy makers do to exploit all that HSS research has to offer (Section 4);
- knowledge production: the challenges of providing evidence for policy making (Section 5);

<sup>11</sup> The British Academy (2004) *'That full complement of riches': the contributions of the arts, humanities and social sciences to the nation's wealth*. The Langford report demonstrated that the humanities and social sciences make key contributions to the intellectual, political, economic, cultural and social well-being of the nation, and provide the high level skills required to sustain and enrich an increasingly knowledge-based society and economy. The report is available from [www.britac.ac.uk/reports](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports)

<sup>12</sup> The report by LSE PPG is available from [www.britac.ac.uk/reports/wilson/lse-report/index.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports/wilson/lse-report/index.cfm)

- 'co-production': how to bring the two sides together to facilitate knowledge innovation and knowledge transfer (Section 6).

**1.5** This report seeks to contribute to the debate on the use of research in policy making, raising questions, drawing connections, and recommending solutions. We hope that it will stimulate further thought, discussion and action. We make recommendations in Sections 4, 5 and 6 under the headings of knowledge use, knowledge production and 'co-production' respectively.

## Section 2: What Policy Makers Need

### Introduction

#### 2.1 In this Section we discuss:

- the Government's desire to draw on the best advice available to develop evidence-based policies;
- the issues of concern to individual government departments (as evidenced by a number of government reports and studies), which require contributions from a wide range of subjects in humanities and social science (HSS) disciplines;
- the Government's increasing emphasis on cross-cutting challenges (as evidenced by a number of government reports and studies), which require an integrated approach drawing on expertise in the humanities and social sciences as well as in the sciences.

### Evidence-based policy

#### 2.2 Government departments spent just under £1.6 billion in 2005/06 on civil research and development to support policy and the delivery of services, seeking advice from researchers, research, and monitoring and surveillance data.<sup>13</sup> Departments typically commission research from:

- the in-house skills of departmental analysts;
- consultancy firms (for example, between 6 April 2005 and 18 April 2006, the Home Office paid PA Consulting £14,248,799.21 for work on the identity cards programme);<sup>14</sup>
- public sector research establishments (e.g. research council institutes and centres, NHS laboratories);
- universities;
- learned societies.

#### 2.3 Studies have shown that policy makers want research findings that:

- are relevant;
- are timely;
- are robust (and the methodology is relatively uncontested);
- are applicable to the issue of concern;
- are accessible to wider audiences;
- bring together relevant expertise from a number of disciplines;
- have champions and advocates;
- involve the users of research in the research project from the outset - the 'co-production model';
- support existing ideologies and are uncontentious.

#### 2.4 In the last ten years or so, the Government has repeatedly stressed the importance it places on using the best possible advice to develop its policies, in order to improve the effectiveness of its policy and decision-making. In this period, there have been a number of government reports which have all emphasised the importance of using an 'evidence-based' approach to

<sup>13</sup> HM Treasury (October 2007) *The Race to the Top: A Review of Government's Science and Innovation Policies*. Civil departmental R and D spend was £1,597 millions in 2005/06.

<sup>14</sup> As reported in the then House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee's report, *Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence Based Policy Making* (2006).

policy making. For example, the 1999 White Paper *Modernising Government* stated: 'This Government expects more of policy makers. More new ideas, more willingness to question inherited ways of doing things, better use of evidence and research in policy making and better focus on policies that will deliver long-term goals.' Another example is the Cabinet Office's report, *Better Policy Making* (2001), which identified an evidence-based approach to public policy development as follows:

- review existing research;
- commission new research;
- consult experts and/or use internal and external consultants;
- consider a wide range of properly costed and appraised options.

**2.5** A series of guidelines has been drawn up in response to support these efforts. However, recent statements show that the Government remains concerned about the progress that has been made. For example, John Denham, Secretary of State (Innovation, Universities and Skills), has drawn attention to the need for government departments to improve the way in which they obtain and use scientific advice to inform government policy. This resulted in the establishment in January 2008 of an inquiry by the Council for Science and Technology (CST), which has been tasked by John Denham with considering the way in which the interaction between academia and policy makers could be improved.

**2.6** These concerns are fuelled by a growing recognition of the complexity of the challenges that are confronting policy makers, which will require an imaginative and far-sighted approach. These challenges include questions relating to globalisation, economic prosperity, social justice, the distribution of the community's wealth and opportunities, climate change, ageing, public sector reform, and crime and security. We now discuss some of these challenges - both for individual government departments and for a number of government departments working together on cross-cutting issues.

### **The challenges for individual government departments**

**2.7** We have chosen five examples to illustrate some of the public policy issues that are being addressed by individual government departments, and the range of HSS disciplines that contribute to their understanding and response to these issues. Much HSS research is of direct relevance to the development of government policy in such areas as health, social well-being, the criminal justice system, education, the environment, transport, economic development, business productivity and performance, international understanding, and security.

#### **Home Office**

**2.8** Its objectives are: reducing crime; leading visible, responsive and accountable policing; supporting effective justice delivery; protecting the public from terrorism; controlling migration for the benefit of the country; safeguarding people's identity and the privileges of citizenship. It is focusing on a range of challenges, including: addressing radicalism that leads to violent extremism; reducing crime and anti-social behaviour; developing economic evaluations of migration and the impact of migrants; drawing on behavioural research to improve the way in which it communicates messages to the public.

- 2.9** A wide range of HSS disciplines contribute to these challenges, including: religious studies, sociology, criminology, economics, psychology, communication studies, and philosophy. For example, the Home Office draws on expertise in a number of these disciplines in order to inform the development of policies to tackle crime and improve public safety.<sup>15</sup> While Home Office statistics suggest that crime has fallen appreciably in the UK since 1995 (by 42%) with the risk of being a victim of crime significantly lower (from 40% to 24%), public concern about crime, especially youth crime and antisocial behaviour<sup>16</sup> remains high nationally. The Home Office draws on expertise from the humanities and social sciences to address a number of other questions, including: understanding and addressing the divide between public perceptions of rising crime and actual crime statistics<sup>17</sup>; identifying the factors that lead to violent extremism and radicalization<sup>18</sup>; addressing drug use; assessing the impact of different sentencing strategies; and reconciling the prevention and detection capabilities of new technology (improved biometric and imaging methods)<sup>19</sup>.

## The Treasury

- 2.10** Its objectives are: maintaining sound public finances; and ensuring high and sustainable levels of economic growth, well-being and prosperity for all. The Treasury's (HMT) challenges include: enhancing economic and employment opportunities; promoting UK economic prospects in a global market; leading the global effort to respond to climate change; addressing world poverty; supporting the effective delivery of public services.
- 2.11** A wide range of HSS disciplines contribute to these challenges, including: economics; management and business studies; politics and international relations; philosophy; social policy; and development studies. For example, research by two economists, Professor S Machin, FBA, and Professor J Van Reenan (London School of Economics), has informed the HMT's thinking on global competition, as their findings have shown that it is not a significant driver of lower wages for the unskilled, rather that labour moves towards higher skills, both within and between industries.<sup>20</sup>

## Department of Culture, Media and Sport

- 2.12** The department's objectives include: improving the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities; supporting the pursuit of excellence; and championing the tourism, creative and leisure industries. Its challenges include: measuring the economic and social impacts of the arts; understanding and preserving our cultural heritage; and developing our understanding of the determinants of quality of life in cities and regions.

15 Home Office Research Study 217 (2000) *The Economic and Social Costs of Crime*; Home Office (2005-8) *Science and Innovation Strategy*; Liberal Democrats (2007) *Together We Can Combat Crime*.

16 See the Home Office's 2007 Consultation: *Strengthening powers to tackle anti-social behaviour*; Home Office (2008) *The impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on levels of crime and disorder: an evaluation*. See also *Youth Alcohol Action Plan* (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)/ Home Office/ Department of Health 2008).

17 Home Office Research Study 284 (2004) *Reassuring the public- a review of international policing interventions*.

18 DCSF (2008) *Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery*; see also Home Office (2005) *Preventing Extremism Together: Places of Worship*.

19 Home Office Research Studies 292 (2005) *Assessing the Impact of CCTV*.

20 S Machin and J Van Reenan (2007) *Changes in wage inequality*.

- 2.13** A wide range of HSS disciplines contribute to these challenges, including: archaeology; theatre studies; media studies; music; language and literature; business studies; psychology; and education. For example, subjects such as archaeology, history, geography and planning help to understand and conserve historic places and sites that play an important part of the make-up of our communities. Another example is the need to improve understandings of the way in which cultural opportunities act as a key determinant for the quality of life in our cities and regions. More research is needed on the relative levels of cultural opportunities between cities.

### **Department for Transport**

- 2.14** Its objectives are: sustaining economic growth and improved productivity through reliable and efficient transport networks; improving the environmental performance of transport and tackling climate change; strengthening the safety and security of transport; enhancing access to jobs, services and social networks. The Department for Transport's challenges include: alleviating congestion, improving accessibility and choice, enhancing safety and security, reducing environmental impacts and supporting the economy.<sup>21</sup>
- 2.15** A wide range of HSS disciplines contribute to these challenges, including: geography; demography; town and country planning; and economics. The challenges are characterized by a number of evidence gaps: such as how will changes in land use, demographics and social habits affect future demand for transport? Can infrastructure benefits be locked in without in turn inducing additional demand? What are the geographic and economic barriers to accessing transport? What is the nature and use of subsidies in the system and how can rational pricing be promoted across transport modes? How do behavioural, environmental and technical factors interact to contribute to accident occurrences, especially in view of the fact that new technologies can reduce rather than increase mindfulness? When do safety education campaigns work best? What is the impact of different forms of transport such as aviation on the environment and how can they be redressed through schemes such as emissions trading?<sup>22</sup> All these important questions require research and understanding that draws on HSS expertise.

### **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

- 2.16** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has four policy goals: countering terrorism and weapons proliferation, and their causes; preventing and resolving conflict; promoting a low carbon, high growth global economy; and developing effective international institutions, in particular the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU). A wide range of HSS disciplines contribute to these objectives, helping the FCO to anticipate, and respond to, new threats and developments. These disciplines include: political science, international relations, history, religious studies, economics, psychology, philosophy, languages and law.
- 2.17** International societies have become more fluid. Global security is confronted by the ongoing threats of international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, instability in the Middle East, world poverty, population growth and dwindling water and energy supplies. A more sophisticated

<sup>21</sup> Department for Transport, Evidence and Research Strategy 2006 Edition.

<sup>22</sup> HMT (2007, 2008) *The King Review of low-carbon cars*; see also Liberal Democrats (2007) *Towards Carbon Free Transport*.

understanding of the cultural, social and religious factors that are shaping today's complex global society is required, together with an equally important understanding of the commercial, political and military factors that are at play. For example, more research is needed to help us to understand the underlying causes of terrorist and criminal activity. More work is also needed to help promote an understanding of other societies and cultures, in order to encourage sensitive and flexible international relations policies.

### **Cross-cutting challenges facing society today**

- 2.18** We now discuss some of the challenges identified by Government that straddle the remits of more than one government department<sup>23</sup>; they, in turn, require contributions from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as well as from the natural sciences. Such inputs can help policy makers to understand and redefine problems as their complexity requires and, where possible, design and evaluate policies to tackle them.

### **Globalisation: the challenges and opportunities of interdependence**

- 2.19** The global economy is undergoing long-lasting, structural change - with shifting trading patterns, the rise of new sources of economic growth, advances in technology, and tightening relations between countries. The parameters of globalization, set by the West after 1945, are being redefined as power flows to China, India and other emerging economies.
- 2.20** The accelerated pace of activity and the complexity of interactions brings with it new risks. For example, by 2020 around 80% of fuels used in the UK are likely to come from overseas. In this regard, new actors such as oil investors, Asian central banks, hedge funds and private equity firms - responsible for \$8.4 trillion in assets at the end of 2006 (predicted to reach \$20.7 trillion by 2012) - bring benefits such as increased liquidity and diversification opportunities. However they also bring untested risks: liquidity may encourage asset price bubbles and lax lending; investments may become politicized through ownership by government-controlled entities without greater transparency; and high leverage of hedge funds and private equity firms has the potential to generate contagion across unrelated asset classes if actors, for whatever reason, unwind a large position abruptly.
- 2.21** Notwithstanding greater levels of interdependence and the emergence of a 'global middle class' (projected to surpass one billion by 2030), no straightforward consensus exists on many of these questions. Dilemmas thrown up by differences in norms and values and the need to distribute burdens equitably increase the need for a more effective and representative set of regional and global institutions and governance mechanisms that render the need for collective action compatible with continuing attachment to the nation state.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For the latest summation of the Government's cross-cutting, strategic thinking, see *Realising Britain's Potential: Future Strategic Challenges for Britain* (The Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, February 2008). See also *Long-term Opportunities and Challenges for the UK Analysis for the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review* (HM Treasury, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> See the New DfID Research Strategy 2008-13 that will focus on six areas: growth, sustainable agriculture, climate change, health, governance in challenging environments and future challenges and opportunities. The aim is to increase funding for global research to £220 million by 2010/11, a figure that will be higher than any member of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. See also MoD (2003) *Delivering Security in a Changing World* and FCO (2006) *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK's International Priorities*; Liberal Democrats (2004) *A World Free from Poverty*.



## Climate change

- 2.22** Nowhere is this case more apparent than in the field of climate change. Global temperatures are expected to increase by at least 3°C by 2100 if decisive action is not taken.<sup>25</sup> Developing countries, which by 2050 will make up eight billion of a world population of nine billion, are indispensable to any credible settlement. Nonetheless, persuading them to commit to the same type of mandatory limits that the rich countries are bound to under the Kyoto Protocol or any successor agreement will be extremely challenging given that the source of today's global warming is two centuries of western industrialization.

## How we compete: the importance of innovation

- 2.23** The growth of world markets means that the UK will not be able to compete on the basis of low costs, but on the basis of knowledge, skills and innovation. The UK must compete by developing new products and services and discovering new ways of doing business, sources of wealth which are more durable and out of reach to firms whose only assets are access to cheap labour. The UK will need to continue its efforts to improve levels of productivity. An adaptable workforce equipped with skills needed by current and future employers<sup>26</sup>; a well-functioning intellectual property and financial system<sup>27</sup> that reward and encourage entrepreneurship and risk-taking; greater domestic savings and investment in tangible and intangible capital<sup>28</sup>, exploitation of publicly funded research<sup>29</sup>; open and proportionately regulated<sup>30</sup> markets that keep firms on their toes and put resources to their most productive use<sup>31</sup>; and more reliable assistance and security for individuals displaced from their jobs - each of these will require strengthening if the UK is to migrate to a more high value added economy.
- 2.24** Policy makers will need to be sensitive to the spatial and sectoral aspects of these questions. Longstanding differences in specialisation, endowment and agglomeration effects have contributed to gaps in performance between regions and localities.<sup>31</sup> The UK's economy is also predominantly service-based: in 2002, knowledge-intensive services created more than five times the economic value of high-technology manufacturing, suggesting the need for more sector-specific forms of intervention.<sup>32</sup>
- 2.25** Indeed, insofar as the generation of new ideas and inventions poses special challenges - uncertainty, requiring high levels of coordination and difficulties in appropriating the benefits of investment in knowledge - Government has an important role to play in these processes, albeit one that is imperfectly articulated.

<sup>25</sup> HMT (2006) *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*.

<sup>26</sup> HM Government (2007) *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England*, and more recently DWP and DIUS' *Work Skills* (2008).

<sup>27</sup> HMT and BERR (2008) *Enterprise: unlocking the UK's talent*; HMT (2006) *Gowers Review of Intellectual Property*.

<sup>28</sup> Treasury Economic Working Paper 1 (2007) *Intangible investment and Britain's Productivity*.

<sup>29</sup> DIUS (2008) *Innovation Nation White Paper*; Sainsbury Review (2007) *The Race to the Top: A Review of Government's Science and Innovation Policies*; HMT and DFES (2003) *The Lambert Review*. See also DFES (2005) *The impact of changes in research funding distribution on UK research performance: A literature review*.

<sup>30</sup> HMT (2005) *Hampton review on regulatory inspections and enforcement*.

<sup>31</sup> HMT (2006) *Devolving decision making: 3 - Meeting the regional economic challenge: The importance of cities to regional growth; Why Place Matters and Implications for the Role of Central, Regional and Local Government* - Economics Paper 2.

<sup>32</sup> See DCMS (2008) *Creative Britain: New Talents for a New Economy - a strategy document for the creative industries* and HMT (2005) *The UK financial services sector: Rising to the challenges and opportunities of globalization*.

- 2.26** Finally, as highlighted by the backlash against genetically modified foodstuffs in the UK and Europe, scientific and technological advances will often throw up political and social problems, which can only be fully understood if all disciplines are able to work together. Policy must anticipate, and be sensitive to, these potential problems when, say, it considers energy and environmental options.<sup>33</sup>

### **Life chances, talent and social mobility: from outcomes to opportunities**

- 2.27** Public policy focuses increasingly on policies that aim to ensure that individuals' fortunes reflect their choices and efforts and not their natural or inherited advantages or other arbitrary circumstances. There is a need for more rigorous work on ways in which lines are currently drawn between choice and circumstances, and on identifying which disadvantages policy should attempt to reduce or eliminate.
- 2.28** Despite significant improvements in income, health and education outcome, background continues to pattern life chances<sup>34</sup>: social mobility declined for children born between 1958 and 1970 though this decline has since slowed. It is increasingly recognized that attributes developed in childhood<sup>35</sup> exert a strong influence on future success, a finding which places special emphasis on engaging parents and families<sup>36</sup>. There is a need for more sophisticated mechanisms to identify and reach the groups most likely to be caught in the circle of low aspiration and low achievement.
- 2.29** There is also a focus on other major transition points as policy has endeavoured to sharpen incentives to work<sup>37</sup> and remove barriers to higher education (reform of tuition fees system, improving quality of secondary schools etc).<sup>38</sup> Within the labour market, there have been signs of increased polarisation between pay in jobs, evidenced by a reduction in jobs with wages close to the median. And despite large increases in the prevalence of flexible working arrangements, many find themselves moving in and out of work with stiff penalties (earnings tend to be reduced by 25% in the short-term with a 10% penalty persisting 20 years later) - one reason why unpacking the business case for equal opportunity and people-centred policies remains a priority.<sup>39</sup>

### **An ageing population**

- 2.30** These questions take place against a backdrop of profound and underestimated demographic change. The interaction of declining birth rates and rising life expectancy has

33 Cabinet Office (2007) *Energy and Environment*.

34 DWP/DfES (2007) *Factors Influencing Social Mobility*.

35 DCSF (2007) *Impact of Early Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills on Later Outcomes*.

36 DCSF/IOE (2007) *Influences on Children's Attainment and Progress in Key Stage 2: Cognitive Outcomes in Year 5*; DCSF (2007) *Parental Involvement in Children's Education*; J. Belsky, K. H. Haich, & K. Crnic 'Mothering, fathering and infant negativity of antecedents of boys' externalizing problems and inhibition at age 3 years: differential susceptibility to rearing influence?' *Development and Psychopathology*, 10, (1998) pp.301-319.

37 DWP (2007) *Ready for Work: Full Employment in Our Generation*. In this respect, a substantial amount of research is undertaken to assess the efficacy of programmes such as Pathways to Work, the New Deal for Lone Parents etc. See also Conservative Party Policy Green Paper No.3 *Work for Welfare: Real welfare reforms to help make British poverty history* (2008).

38 DIUS (2008) *Customer Satisfaction with Higher Education Financial Support Arrangements 2006-7* and *University is Not Just for Young People - Working Adults' Perceptions of and Orientation to Higher Education*.

39 DIUS (2008) *People and the Bottom Line*; DWP (2008) *The Business Case for Equal Opportunities: An Econometric Investigation* and DWP (2006) *Economic and Social Costs and Benefits to Employers of Retraining, Recruiting and Employing Disabled People and/or People with Health Conditions or an Injury: A Review of Evidence*; Liberal Democrats (2005) *Rights and Responsibilities at Work*.

led to society as a whole becoming older. It is estimated that the number of those aged over 65 will grow by a third by 2020 (12.7 million), with a particularly sharp increase in over 85s. Increases of this order mean that people will either be poorer in retirement, need to save more or work longer.<sup>40</sup> The latter is particularly likely given that some 7 million people are at risk of under-saving for their retirement.<sup>41</sup> For those that do stay in the workforce, policy will need to address barriers such as age discrimination, ill health and lack of skills.<sup>42</sup>

- 2.31** Another demographic bottleneck is housing. Population growth and increasing numbers of smaller households, especially one person households, means that even with increases in supply, there will be long term challenges in ensuring the affordability of housing, especially for first time buyers and low income households (the percentage of 30-34 year old couples in England able to afford a terraced house is predicted to fall from just under half to around a third by 2026).<sup>43</sup> At the same time, net migration to the UK is projected to continue, in part to offset the coming decline in the ratio of the working age population to the number of older people, placing pressures on a variety of public goods such as school places and language classes.<sup>44</sup>

### **Personal responsibility and changing behaviour**

- 2.32** It is recognized that long-term improvements in policy outcomes depend heavily on changes in personal behaviour and responsibility. For instance, some 40% of the UK's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions arise directly from citizen attitudes and behaviour.<sup>45</sup> HSS research has led to some important findings on social attitudes to sustainable lifestyles, but further work is needed to look at issues such as business-government relationships, educational experiences and citizen attitudes and behaviour. For instance, interdisciplinary research involving culture, economics and psychology has begun to uncover a complex and subtle picture of individual motivation. In so doing, it has pointed to ways in which the efficacy of government policy can be enhanced, sometimes by stepping in, say, to set default options, but often by stepping back and delegating power to significant figures and institutions capable of influencing individuals' behaviour.<sup>46</sup>

### **Welfare and well-being**

- 2.33** It had been assumed that increasing material comfort would lead to greater happiness. This assumption has been undermined by the evidence that individuals in the West are no happier than they were fifty years ago - this despite the fact that real household disposable income has nearly doubled every 25 years. Four in five Britons believe that the Government's prime objective should be the greatest happiness rather than the greatest wealth. Currently, Britain ranks 17th for the level of life satisfaction and 18th for the equality of life satisfaction out of all OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

40 DWP (2006) *Work, Saving and Retirement among Ethnic Minorities*; Liberal Democrats (2004) *Dignity and Security in Retirement*.

41 DWP (2008) *Understanding Responses to Pension Forecasts: Qualitative Research*; see also DWP (2007) *Live Now, Save Later? Young People, Saving and Pensions*.

42 DWP (2005) *Opportunity Age: Meeting the Challenges of Ageing in the 21st Century*.

43 See HMT (2004/2006) *Barker Review of Housing Supply and Land Use Planning*; DIUS current Foresight Programme on Land Use Futures is exploring this question; amongst other things, it will look at the impact of climate change on patterns of agriculture. There have been efforts to explore the relationship between housing supply and other outcomes including labour mobility and regional development.

44 DCLG (2008) *Managing the Impacts of Migration: A Cross-Government Approach*.

45 Inducing individual behavioral change is a subject that is interesting Government more widely. See Cabinet Office (2008) *Achieving Culture Change: A Policy Framework*. This builds on a 2004 Cabinet Office work *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy*.

46 Conservative Party Policy Green Paper No.5 *A Stronger Society: Voluntary Action in the 21st Century* (2008).

Development) countries. There is a need for more research on trends in people's experience of the quality of life in the UK, and current differences between countries. Emerging insights from the psychology of happiness suggest that happiness is not determined by income but by a wider range of factors.

- 2.34** Recent decades have seen rapid change in the conceptions of family life and in the structure of households and communities. For instance, the married population is projected to fall from just under 22m in 2003 to 20m by 2031, while the number of cohabiting couples, estimated to be 2m in 2003, will rise to 3.8m by 2031. The tendency for rich and poor households to cluster and the weakening of many traditional community institutions such as the church, working men's clubs, local shops and post offices have increased strains on local cohesion. The arrival and integration of new migrant groups has in some cases fuelled ethnic and religious tensions, especially in areas of deprivation.<sup>47</sup>

### Participatory politics for learning and resilience

- 2.35** Democratic modernisation and renewal are pressing tasks. Political participation, as measured by electoral turnout is falling both in the UK and throughout the EU. At the same time, advances in digital technologies offer new opportunities to rethink and develop liberal democracy (4 million people have signed a petition on the Number 10 e-Petitions website)<sup>48</sup>, and new ideas and techniques of 'deliberative' democracy are being developed. There is a need to develop new indicators of democratic engagement and to assess the implications for institutional reform to political systems. In addition, more research is needed on the conditions that strengthen democratic engagement.

### Summary

- 2.36** We appreciate that the examples above are all at a high level, and there are other ways of opening up the agenda. But these high-level examples help to illustrate the ways in which some of the most critical challenges facing society today require a multi-faceted approach, drawing on a range of inputs from experts in all disciplines. As the Council for Science and Technology's report, *Imagination and Understanding: a report on the arts and humanities in relation to science and technology*, said:

*'Science and technology policy, like all other public policy, is about the future of society. The greatest challenges for UK society - globalization, inclusion (or the development of a society in which all individuals are or can be included in the process of reflecting on, participating in, and evaluating change), and the impact of science on society - are all ones in which the arts and humanities and science and technology need each other, and are needed in public discussion.'*<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Here, there is interest in the way in which problems can reinforce each other in a vicious cycle of decline: see the Cabinet Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) *Improving the prospects of people living in areas of multiple deprivation in England*. See also DCLG (2007) *Predictors of community cohesion: multi-level modelling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey*. See also its 'What works' in *Community Cohesion* (2007).

<sup>48</sup> Cabinet Office (2007) *The Power of Information: An Independent Review* by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg.

<sup>49</sup> Council for Science and Technology 2001 *Imagination and Understanding: a report on the arts and humanities in relation to science and technology*.

**2.37** While the contributions that HSS research already makes to public policy development are more extensive and wide-ranging than might at first be apparent, these challenges mean that HSS contributions are likely to become even more important in the future. We note a common theme running through many, if not all, of the Government's challenges - the need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of human behaviour. As a recent report published by the Social Market Foundation said: 'The unintended consequences of the choices we make and the actions we take as individuals lie at the heart of many of the most serious policy challenges facing Government. Whether it be in increasing savings, tackling obesity or confronting climate change, if we as individuals do not change the way we behave, these challenges threaten to become insurmountable, with devastating consequences.'<sup>50</sup> However, the Government's policies designed to tackle these issues have to-date had mixed results, arguably because policy makers have not fully exploited relevant HSS knowledge and expertise.

**2.38** In the following Section we discuss the ways in which HSS disciplines can lead to immediate changes in policy development, and can also lead to deeper changes in the way in which policy makers view current challenges and improve their ability to respond to the unexpected.

50 Social Market Foundation (May 2008) *Creatures of Habit? The Art of Behavioural Change*.

## Section 3: What Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences Offers

### Introduction

**3.1** In this Section we explore some of the ways in which humanities and social science (HSS) research enriches and informs society. We discuss how HSS research informs social, economic and cultural well-being. It contributes knowledge and understanding that inform many of the 'Big Strategic Questions' facing society today, and we give some examples by way of illustration. Research in these disciplines plays an essential role in enabling society to anticipate, and respond to, unexpected challenges and change. This Section provides:

- an overview of the cultural, social and economic benefits from HSS research;
- a discussion of the ways in which humanities researchers are involved in educational and cultural activities of benefit to the individual and critical to quality of life;
- some examples of the skills that flow from the HSS research base;
- illustrations of some of the ways in which HSS researchers inform public policy making;
- examples of the ways in which policy makers obtain contributions from HSS academic researchers;
- material about the way in which HSS research develops the concepts that underpin policy development;
- some examples of its potential to contribute to public debate.

### An overview of the benefits flowing from humanities and social science research

**3.2** It has been recognised, at least since the publication in 1993 of the White Paper, *Realising our Potential*, that research has tremendous potential to benefit the economy, our quality of life, as well as the effectiveness of public policy. The way in which the humanities and social sciences contribute to these objectives is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Source: LSE PPG

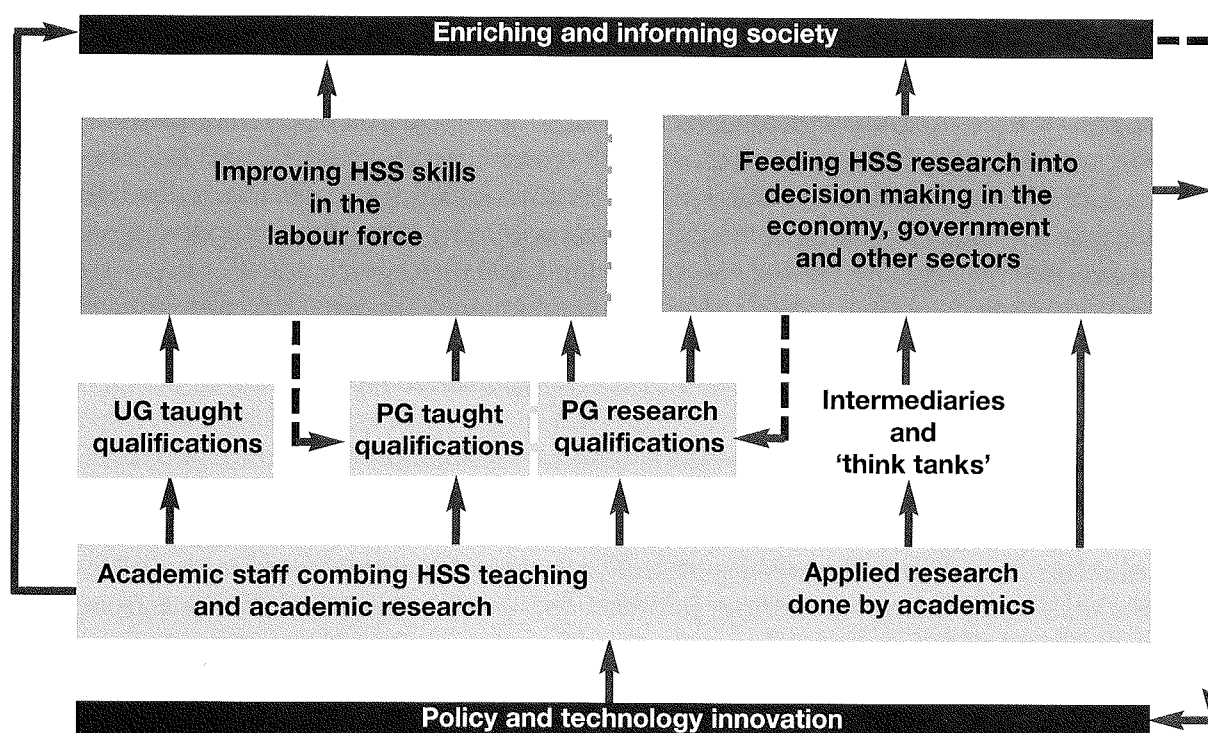


Figure 1 illustrates the benefits of HSS research to society and also shows the complex and interconnected relationships between the producers and beneficiaries of knowledge. These processes and relationships could perhaps be described as a 'knowledge sphere' or a 'knowledge ecosystem' - a means by which the social, cultural and economic benefits of HSS research percolate through various two-way channels to a wide range of beneficiaries, who also inform and influence the shape and direction of HSS research. The process is not linear - research beneficiaries do not passively receive information from research producers. Rather, researchers and beneficiaries interact and will often work together to identify problems and the means of overcoming them.

- 3.3** We now briefly discuss some of the ways in which knowledge and expertise arising from HSS research benefits society.

### **Quality of life and social well-being**

- 3.4** *'Today's society is measured by the quality of its cultural life. Directly or through their students, academics in the arts, humanities and social sciences have made a great contribution to our cultural and intellectual well-being as these subjects help us to understand our heritage and culture, and that of others... Research in these subjects is crucial to exploring the nature of the communities within which we live and the communities with which we might interact. Their findings are seen as central to issues such as the effective delivery of public services and the proper organisation of the welfare state, and the formation of international aid policy and foreign policy.'* (Langford Report, 2004)
- 3.5** As Figure 1 shows, HSS teaching and academic research enriches and informs society and provides the context in which policy and technological innovations can advance. The humanities and social sciences have an important role to play in the development of critical and independent thinking, which is key to a healthy and vibrant democracy. Close to 45% of the population aged between 18 and 30 participate in higher education, and a high proportion of them are studying humanities and social science subjects. Through their teaching, humanities and social science university staff disseminate important social and cultural values to their students, and through them can reach even wider audiences in our society. These disciplines also help to challenge widely held assumptions and beliefs.
- 3.6** While a considerable amount of research undertaken in the humanities may be relatively small scale in comparison with other subjects, the outcomes of this research can be far-reaching. Humanities researchers are often involved in educational and cultural activities of benefit to the individual and critical to quality of life. Researchers in these fields have helped to change the way in which society (and the individuals within it) views itself. For example, research on gender and sexuality has helped to develop society's understanding of these issues, and has contributed to equal opportunities developments.
- 3.7** Subjects in the humanities can make a direct contribution to health and well-being. 'The way we think about risk is governed by expected utility theory, which was developed in its modern version by philosophers and economists in tandem. The direct impact of current philosophers on current policy making is smaller but pervasive. Moral philosophers - particularly Mary Warnock and Jonathan Glover - have been very influential in setting policy on reproductive technology. Moral philosophers are influential in the WHO [World Health Organisation], in setting priorities for public health.' (Comment from a HSS researcher).



- 3.8** Subjects in the humanities are accessible to a wide public, making direct contributions to life-long learning agendas. Television programme schedules attest to the public's appetite for seriously informed history and political comment, literary adaptations and reviews, and musical and theatrical performance. For example, there is considerable demand for films, documentaries and novels about Rome and Greece. Recent films like *Gladiator*, *Troy*, *300*, and novels such as *Pompeii and Imperium* by Robert Harris come to mind immediately, not to mention an explosion of Greek drama performances all over the world, including some distinguished British cultural exports, from Mumbai to Broadway.
- 3.9** There are also deeper synergies. For example, current research in Classics on the use of masks has had a significant impact on high profile theatrical productions of Greek tragedy, in terms of writing, characterization and audience response. Thus scholars like Oliver Taplin, FBA and Edith Hall (Royal Holloway), experts on ancient Greek tragedy and theatre production, have worked closely with directors like Katie Mitchell (National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company) and playwrights like Tony Harrison (*The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, *Fram*). Here there is engagement not only with the perennial human predicament, but the authentically ancient is freshly interpreted. New perspectives are offered from a strong and active tradition of classical research on contemporary phenomena such as conflict in the Balkans and Iraq, which speak to present public concerns in Britain and elsewhere.

*The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is a collection of 56,000 biographies of the men and women who influenced all aspects of national life from earliest times to the present day. In 2007, it was awarded one of the Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education. Queen's Anniversary Prizes are awarded biennially to institutions of higher and further education for work of exceptional quality that brings benefit to the wider community - both nationally and internationally. Since April 2006 the complete Oxford DNB has been available to 48 million residents in England and to all residents of Northern Ireland via their public library. There is further extensive public library access in other parts of the United Kingdom and worldwide.

### Skills flowing from the research base

- 3.10** HSS research and teaching are closely interlinked, each helps to ensure the vibrancy and health of the other. HSS plays an important role in the supply of a qualified workforce with the skills demanded by the knowledge-driven economy. Findings from LSE PPG show that these disciplines produce:
- more than two in every five graduating first degree students;
  - two thirds of successful master's degree students;
  - nearly a third of new doctorates.
- 3.11** Over two thirds of humanities and social science graduates enter the private sector, primarily the financial and business sectors, followed by wholesaling and retailing. These sectors represent some of the fastest growing areas within the economy. Financial services alone account for over 5% of UK gross value added, one million jobs and a trade surplus of 1.6% of GDP<sup>51</sup>. It has been estimated that the economic importance of UK universities

51 HM Treasury (March 2005) *The UK financial services sector: rising to the challenges and opportunities of globalisation*.

amounts to £45 billion. As 54% of all qualifications achieved each year are in the humanities and social sciences<sup>52</sup>, their share of this economic impact cannot but be significant.

**3.12** HSS disciplines also make vital contributions to increasingly important sectors of the economy, such as the creative and cultural industries, and heritage and tourism. HSS research and teaching materials are often covered by copyright, feeding directly into industries such as publishing, broadcasting, film and sound recording.

**3.13** HSS research also has a key role to play in the continuing development, and reskilling, of the workforce - a growing concern of Government as evidenced by the recent Leitch Review of Skills.

‘To achieve world class prosperity and fairness in the new global economy, the UK must achieve world class skills. Without world class skills, UK businesses will find it increasingly difficult to compete and innovate.’ (Leitch Review of Skills, 2006).

With the development of the global knowledge economy, it is essential that citizens can regularly update, and develop, new skills. HSS research informs the development of educational policies that enable UK citizens to meet their full potential.

**3.14** The LSE Public Policy Group (LSE PPG) interviewed on our behalf representatives from the private sector to ask what they thought HSS had to offer. The answers include:

- enabling business to gain a competitive edge, because HSS research can develop understandings of the ways in which political and social reactions are likely to impact on business projects;
- enhancing the ability of business to anticipate emerging trends and better understand potential risks;
- improving the effectiveness of business networks and links to relevant stakeholders and communities;
- analysing the performance and productivity of business;
- providing ideas and inspiration that can lead to new products, processes and methods of working;
- helping businesses to build and maintain good relationships with customers;
- providing key skills for employers and employees.

### **Humanities and social science research contributions to public policy development**

**3.15** In Section 2 we discussed some of the major challenges facing both the UK and the wider world. UK research in the humanities and social sciences contributes new knowledge and understanding to help policy makers respond to these challenges. We now give examples of how HSS research informs some of the cross-cutting challenges discussed in Section 2, and focus on the following:

- happiness and quality of life;
- understanding human behaviour;
- globalisation;
- climate change;
- cultural understanding;
- historical perspectives on contemporary policy problems.

<sup>52</sup> Findings of LSE PPG.

## Happiness and quality of life

- 3.16** It is increasingly being recognised that greater wealth does not necessarily translate into greater happiness. In recent years, HSS researchers have been re-examining concepts of 'happiness' and 'well-being'.<sup>53</sup> A particular focus has been the finding that the more economically prosperous countries become, the more happiness does not tend to increase in parallel, but to stay the same - creating a puzzle of great significance for policy makers who just favour maximising GDP and economic growth. The results of these debates have been dramatic. Findings by LSE PPG analysing the growth in the annual number of references made to 'happiness' in UK press since 1990 showed that coverage in 2006 was 2.5 times higher than the levels common up to the mid-1990s.
- 3.17** As a result, politicians and policy makers alike are starting to focus their energies on ways of improving quality of life. All main political parties have incorporated the findings of happiness research into their manifestos and policy programmes. For example, the then Prime Minister's Strategy Unit held a seminar at Whitehall in 2002 to discuss the implications of a happiness policy<sup>54</sup> which was followed by a paper discussing the ways in which 'happiness' might feature in various government policies.<sup>55</sup> In 2006 David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party, said: 'When politicians are looking at issues they should be saying to themselves 'how are we going to try and make sure that we don't just make people better off but we make people happier, we make communities more stable, we make society more cohesive.' The Treasury has included quality of life in its stated aims, alongside growth and economic prosperity: 'To raise the rate of sustainable growth, and achieve rising prosperity and a better quality of life, with economic and employment opportunities for all.' HSS research findings have also strengthened the call for more resources to be put into mental health provision. More recently, the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, commissioned two leading economists, Professor Joseph Stiglitz, FBA, and Professor Amartya Sen, FBA, to develop alternative measures of progress to GDP that would better reflect people's well-being.
- 3.18** Various disciplines across the humanities and social sciences and the natural sciences contribute to these concepts of 'happiness' and 'well-being', including: economics, psychology, political science, geography, criminology, animal and plant sciences, public and mental health studies.

## Understanding human behaviour

- 3.19** *'Studying human beings as creative individuals and as social creatures is crucial not only in its own right but is also crucial to the study by natural scientists of human beings in terms of their biology and physical environment. The central point is not simply that every branch of knowledge makes an important contribution to the whole, but rather that no branch of knowledge contributes effectively unless the others are granted the same recognition.'*<sup>56</sup>

53 For example, the work by the economist, Professor Richard Layard, FBA *Happiness: lessons from a new science*, (2005).

54 The economist, Professor Andrew Oswald, University of Warwick gave a presentation to the seminar - see [www.andrewoswald.com](http://www.andrewoswald.com)

55 In 2006, DEFRA commissioned Professor Paul Dolan and others to produce a comprehensive review of the research on happiness, *Review of research on the influences of personal well-being and application to policy making*.

56 The British Academy, (2004) *'That full complement of riches': the contributions of the arts, humanities and social sciences to the nation's wealth*.

- 3.20** A common theme running through many of the Government's strategic challenges (such as health, environmental, civil and social well-being) is the importance of understanding the ways in which individuals make choices and decisions. For example, a recent Government Foresight horizon programme on obesity drew attention to the need for a range of initiatives to tackle this problem, which is estimated to cost the UK between £6 billion and £9 billion per annum.
- 3.21** A range of subjects improve our understanding of human behaviour and how best to influence it. In the humanities and social sciences these include: psychology, economics and sociology. In the natural sciences, important contributions are also made by the medical and biological sciences.

### Globalisation

- 3.22** HSS research develops our understanding of the complex social, political and cultural changes created by the growth of the global market, and draws on insights from researchers in anthropology, business, economics, geography, law, politics and international relations, and sociology. HSS researchers are well placed to help policy makers understand the political, economic, cultural and technological impacts of globalisation. An example is shown below.

The Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) was established by the ESRC at the London School of Economics in 1990. Its main objective is to study the determinants of economic performance at the level of the company, the nation and the global economy, by focusing on the major links between globalisation, technology and institutions (particularly the educational system and the labour market) and their impact on productivity, inequality, employment, stability and well-being. In 2003, the Centre was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize in recognition of its 'significant impact on Government policy in the UK and more widely'. At that time, examples of the policies which had been influenced by the Centre's work included: the New Deal Programme, the Working Families Tax Credit scheme, the National Minimum Wage and the European Union's employment policy.

### Climate change

- 3.23** The debate on climate change demonstrates the need for an understanding of both the scientific and socio-economic effects and their interaction. An example of the way in which HSS research can contribute to the debate on climate change is shown below.

UK researchers have played a major role in the international development of knowledge about climate change. In recent years, the involvement of HSS researchers has increased, as it became increasingly apparent that environmental sustainability could not be achieved without addressing deep-rooted socio-economic patterns. The involvement of HSS disciplines has helped to broaden public debate. An analysis undertaken by LSE PPG found that media discussion increased dramatically in response to interventions like the *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, chaired by the economist Lord Nicholas Stern, FBA, which had a worldwide impact in increasing business and public awareness of both the economic and social threats of climate change, and the measures that might be employed to mitigate the problem.

Environmental change is a major international concern. Work by HSS researchers develops understanding of these issues, and enables policy makers to reach informed decisions based on the range of evidence-based policy options and approaches that flows from research in these disciplines.

Researchers at the British Association for South Asian Studies (BASAS) have been examining issues related to water management and sustainable development in West Bengal. The Bengal delta is the world's biggest and most active. The rivers shift their courses frequently, and the area is prone to major flooding. It is one of the most densely settled areas on earth, still mostly rural and extremely poor. It is the greatest area of absolute poverty on earth - there being more poor people here than in the whole of Africa. The construction of roads, railways and urban embankments have exacerbated these flood problems by blocking lines of drainage, and by spasmodic collapse at unpredictable places. HSS researchers at BASAS have been exploring alternative policies that would enable the Bengal people to live with, and respond better to, the fluctuating water levels.

### Cultural understanding

- 3.24** HSS research enables us to understand our culture and society and that of others. For example, research in other languages and cultures provides not only understanding of other societies, but also insights into UK society and culture and can have direct implications for policy makers. Two examples are shown below.

Researchers from Reading University and Southampton University are collaborating with the Imperial War Museum (with funding from the AHRC), to study the relationship between formal language policy and military strategy and outcomes 'on the ground' in territories under military occupation. This research has immediate relevance for a number of government departments, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Britain is a multilingual society. In addition to English and the many other languages that have come to this country through various waves of immigration, there are the indigenous languages of Welsh and Gaelic. Welsh and Gaelic were in decline for many years and recent efforts to revive them via legislation - the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 - have drawn extensively on the research and expertise of institutes such as the Language Policy and Planning Research Unit at the University of Cardiff and the work of scholars including Professor Donald Meek and Dr Wilson McLeod (Edinburgh), Dr Robert Dunbar (Aberdeen) and Professor Colin Williams (Cardiff). Such research continues to inform the development of language policies and teaching materials in both countries and to underpin the revitalization of these languages.

### Historical perspectives on contemporary policy problems

- 3.25** HSS research often gives policy makers the long-term background and context to a policy problem, enabling them to learn from historical precedents.

'Despite the air of novelty in contemporary prostitution policy, much of what the Government proposes has already been experimented with. Street crackdowns, for instance, have been enforced several times over the past century or so, and these increases in repression have always had troubling impacts on the safety of the women involved in prostitution ...While the past century has witnessed massive changes in the status and rights of women, prostitution law has remained static and policies toward prostitution have grown increasingly repressive. A historical perspective thus reveals the ways in which even the newest prostitution-control strategies rely on outdated concepts.' *Paying the price again: prostitution policy in historical perspective*, Julia Laite, October 2006

### **How do humanities and social science researchers inform the development of public policy?**

**3.26** HSS researchers inform the development of public policy making in a variety of ways, ranging from:

- acting as specialist government advisers;
- leading or contributing to major national enquiries, or to the work of various standing commissions;
- raising public awareness of key problems and issues;
- providing the answers to specific questions through, for example, modelling or evaluations;
- providing objective analysis of what works and what does not;
- monitoring and analysing social trends;
- providing independent scrutiny of government initiatives and developments;
- offering solutions to help improve and refine current policy initiatives;
- enhancing the effective delivery of public services;
- challenging current paradigms, helping to identify new approaches, concepts and principles.

The impact of these contributions can be direct - leading to changes in policy, practice or behaviour - or can be less tangible - increasing understanding and knowledge, along with subtle changes in attitudes and assumptions.

### **How policy makers obtain access to contributions from humanities and social science research**

**3.27** Government departments draw on expertise from the humanities and social sciences in a variety of ways, these are often complex and include:

*The in-house skills of departmental analysts.* Their role includes the development of networks with the wider research community.

*Commissioned research.* An analysis by LSE PPG of government department web sites shows that research in the social sciences, and in the humanities to a lesser extent, is regularly commissioned and funded by a wide range of government departments and other bodies. It is widely referenced in the government web domain, especially in legal services, education, health care and crime prevention. For example, the National Audit Office, which provides independent scrutiny of government spending, has all its 'value-for-money' reports externally audited by two academic 'strategic partners' - the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford. In addition (following a competitive tendering

process), these two universities have been commissioned to produce 'value-for-money' studies, drawing on the expertise of their social scientists.

*Established linkages between academia and policy makers.* Most major government agencies have agreements with ESRC Research Centres to support their research, most notably in economic policy making. ESRC itself has formal agreements with most government departments and devolved administrations.

*Contributions and submissions made to government committees and consultations.* Humanities scholars have been prominent here. For example, philosophers have made important contributions in the field of bio-ethics.

*Professional groupings in government.* Their members monitor their academic fields and have extensive networks with colleagues in universities, in order to keep their knowledge at the cutting edge. For example, the Government Economics Service (GES), the Government Social Science Research Service (GSR) and the judiciary. One interviewee told the LSE PPG that: 'The judiciary still look to academia for advice, and there are quite fluid boundaries between the judiciary, barristers and academia. There is a continuing flow of information across these boundaries.'

*Training and professional development.* For example, the Ministry of Defence uses the expertise of staff in the War Studies Department at Kings College London, to develop and train its officers. The training covers topics in political science, public policy studies, international relations, along with philosophical and historical perspectives of relevance to military issues. The National School of Government, which provides policy management training and research for the civil service, has begun to develop its linkages with universities. Its advisory group, the recently established Sunningdale Institute, is comprised mainly of academics from the humanities and social sciences, and advises the National School and other government bodies on public management issues.

*Intermediaries.* Third sector organisations such as charities and issue-specific campaigning bodies play an important role as intermediaries and champions for academic research in HSS disciplines. They are often closely integrated into policy networks involving major Whitehall departments, devolved administrations and local authorities. These organisations also play a role in the enhancement of the impact of HSS research, by picking up the major themes and ideas arising from academic research and 'weaving these into the strategic goals of the organisation'. Barnados, for example, commissioned research from Professor Richard Wilkinson<sup>57</sup> on the relationship between income, perceptions of social status, and health. He recently gave a talk at the organisation (funded by the Treasury) to a group of policy makers and practitioners (including Jack Straw) on the developments over the last decade. This work has had tangible impacts in the areas of sexual exploitation of children, particularly with the development of a risk analysis scale for local authorities.

*Two-way secondments.* For example, the ESRC Fellow Placement Scheme allows for mid-career social science researchers to spend 3-12 months in a government department to undertake policy-relevant research and to upgrade the research skills of 'partner organisation' employees. The scheme has recently been extended to include government fellows placed within universities.

<sup>57</sup> Professor Richard Wilkinson, Professor of Medical Epidemiology, University of Nottingham. His two-page article in *New Society* published on 16 December 1976, entitled *Dear David Ennals* (who was at the time Secretary of State for Social Services) played an important part in the setting up of the *Black Report* (1980) on health inequalities. His research has drawn attention to the tendency for the populations to be healthier in societies which have smaller income differences between rich and poor.



## Developing concepts that underpin policy development

- 3.28** These less tangible contributions, such as the development of ideas and underpinning concepts, can be enormously important. For example, the concept of Social Capital, which is often defined as 'the networks, norms, relationships, values and informal sanctions that shape the quantity and co-operative quality of a society's social interactions' is seen as having a range of important implications for the development of policy making.<sup>58</sup> While the concept has been around for several decades, it came to have greater prominence as a result of the work of a number of social scientists, including Jane Jacobs, Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. In his book, *Bowling Alone* (2000), Professor Putnam described the decline of civil engagement in the USA since the 1970s. His work has been the focus of seminars hosted by the then US President, Bill Clinton, at Camp David, as well as by the then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street. The concept has been increasingly incorporated into policy thinking. For example, a Cabinet Office report published in 2002<sup>59</sup> concluded that:

'Social capital should be seen as giving policy makers useful insights into the importance of community, the social fabric and social relations at the individual, community and societal level. As such, it can open up a range of new policy levers but it is not a simple or single magic bullet for solving all policy problems.'

- 3.29** Similarly, the concept of innovation has been the focus of considerable attention by HSS researchers. This research helped to inform a rethink within the then Department for Trade and Industry, which moved away from a traditional linear model towards a broader interactive approach. More recently, the Government's *Innovation Nation* White Paper stated that:

'In the past, innovation was thought of as a simple process of investment in fundamental research leading to commercialisation by far-sighted management in industry. This process has been supported by supply-side policy initiatives. However, innovation draws on a wide variety of sources and is driven as much by demand as by supply. The insights generated by basic science are critical to long-term innovation performance but the path they follow from the laboratory to the marketplace is long, complex and uncertain. [there are other sources of innovation as the process is becoming more open] Government policy needs to recognise these new sources of innovation and, in particular, develop new instruments that drive demand for innovation as well as its supply.'<sup>60</sup>

- 3.30** HSS researchers have helped to inform the development of these policies. For example, HSS researchers at the Advanced Institute for Management (AIM) have been focusing on developing our understanding of the way in which UK firms can improve the use of knowledge to lead to positive economic and social impacts. AIM's mission is to improve understanding of management's contribution to organisational performance and UK well-being.<sup>61</sup> A recent AIM report, *Competing on Knowledge: The UK's Global Innovation Challenge*, argued that 'UK plc must raise its game if it is to avoid being relegated from the global innovation elite.' AIM is currently advising the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), along with others such as the Office for National Statistics

<sup>58</sup> Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office (2002), *Social Capital: a discussion paper*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (March 2008), *Innovation Nation*.

<sup>61</sup> AIM is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). For more information see [www.aimresearch.org](http://www.aimresearch.org)

(ONS), the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the Confederation of Business Industry (CBI) and others, on the development of a new Innovation Index to measure the UK's performance as an Innovation Nation.

## Public debate

- 3.31** Recent Government announcements show that it is anxious to increase the involvement of the public in public policy formulation.

*'Encouraging two-way communication with the public in the development of science policy must be a priority... Talking, but more importantly, listening to what people say, is the only way to ensure policies truly take account of the people they will affect. Our aim must be to have that mature relationship between the media, the public, scientists and Government, so that each understands the others' ways of working and concerns.'* (John Denham, 16 January 2008).

- 3.32** Researchers in the humanities and social sciences are well placed to assist these efforts to engage the public's interest in key issues facing society today, and can influence public debate which in turn can impact on policy development. For example, historians can point to ways in which policy makers can learn from the public reaction to related initiatives in the past. Social scientists offer insights into the way in which the media translates and presents scientific developments for the public, along with the way in which these issues are understood by the public.
- 3.33** Media analyses undertaken by LSE PPG surveying UK quality press coverage of academic research in May 2007 showed that coverage of HSS disciplines outstripped by a factor of 2:1 that given to natural science disciplines.
- 3.34** The recommendations we make below to enhance the connections between HSS academic researchers and policy makers will also generate material that enriches public debate.

## Summary

- 3.35** The contributions made by the humanities and social sciences are substantial. In this Section we have illustrated some of the ways in which knowledge and understanding in these disciplines contribute to social, cultural and economic well-being.
- 3.36** These disciplines make a significant contribution to public policy, informing policy making at all levels, and impact directly on a diverse range of government departments (such as the Home Office, the Treasury, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department of Media, Culture and Sport, and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform). Their contributions to policy making vary. They can address specific questions through, say, the mapping, monitoring and evaluation of trends, as well as the objective scrutiny of government initiatives and developments. They can also improve the way in which issues are seen and discussed.

- 3.37** As mentioned earlier in Section 2, these contributions are likely to become more not less relevant as concerns, such as behavioural issues, inter-cultural understanding, the contribution of the arts and museums to the quality of life, urban renewal and economic development, increasingly come to the fore.
- 3.38** In the next three Sections we explore the challenges of providing evidence for policy makers. We seek to identify the various challenges, both on the supply side (i.e. the academic researcher) and on the demand side (i.e. the policy maker), which may be hindering the effective exploitation of HSS research, looking at these issues from three perspectives:
- *Knowledge use.* What can the Government and policy makers do to exploit all that HSS research has to offer?
  - *Knowledge production.* How can we encourage more HSS academic researchers to engage in public policy development?
  - *'Co-production'.* How can we bring the two sides together in a way that facilitates knowledge innovation and transfer?

## Section 4: Knowledge Use - Exploiting what Humanities and Social Science Research has to Offer

### Introduction

- 4.1** Earlier Sections of this report demonstrated the importance of ensuring that policy makers can fully exploit what the humanities and social sciences (HSS) have to offer in order to improve the quality of the advice available to them. Humanities and social science research is making a significant contribution to public policy at present. These contributions are more extensive and wide-ranging than might at first be apparent. The big strategic questions facing society today mean that these contributions are likely to become even more important in the future. Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges that will have to be met if the UK is to make full use of the humanities and social sciences.
- 4.2** Recent Government statements show that it is concerned that the links between policy makers and academia are not as developed as they should be. Certainly the experience of many HSS researchers, especially those in the humanities, suggests that it is often difficult to convince policy makers of the relevance of their work to topical issues of concern to government departments.
- 4.3** In this Section we seek to identify the various challenges of providing evidence for policy makers, focusing on the perspective of the public policymaker. We discuss:
- the spend on research in the university sector;
  - the Government's efforts to improve the effectiveness of its policy making;
  - what policy makers perceive as the barriers to more effective engagement with academic researchers;
  - the fragmentation of HSS disciplines within government departments;
  - the tools needed to support public policy development;
  - and some examples of the ways in which some departments promote their research priorities and needs to the wider academic community.

Our findings lead us to a number of conclusions and recommendations at the end of this Section.

### The spend on research in the university sector

- 4.4** The Government is concerned that it is not leveraging the academic research base as effectively as it should be, and that this it is missing key opportunities as a result. While government departments spent just under £1.6 billion in 2005/06<sup>62</sup> on research and development to support policy and the delivery of services, relatively little goes to the higher education sector. Figures published by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) on the gross expenditure of government departments (excluding the Ministry of Defence) on research and development in 2004/05 show that: 10% of the departmental expenditure was awarded to higher education institutions; 33% to the private sector; and 28% to intramural funding between departments and other government organisations. The major funding departments for higher education institutions are in environment, food and rural affairs, international development, health and education. While BERR - the former Department for Trade and Industry - allocated most of its R and D budget, at 88%, to private consultancies.

<sup>62</sup> Source: SET Statistics for 2007. Figure excludes R and D expenditure by the Ministry of Defence.

- 4.5** The findings from the interviews with policy makers (which we commissioned specially for this report)<sup>63</sup> showed that policy makers tended to commission research from higher education researchers, in order to develop the evidence base of possible policy situations, in the event that it might prove useful should there be a change in political and administrative demands. The Chief Scientific Advisers that were interviewed on our behalf said that they tended to spend between 40 to 60% of their research capacity on short-term research or statistics, up to a further 20% on medium term research in order to compile policy summaries and briefing notes, with the remainder allocated to ongoing or longer-term projects. Most of them said that they would like to commission more longer-term research.

### More effective policy making

- 4.6** The Government has been concerned for some time about the short-term nature of the research it commissions to support its policy making activities. For example, the report of the Cross-Cutting Review of Science and Research, undertaken by The Treasury in 2002 found that 'little effort is now made to take a systematic view on the areas of policy that need scientific input, or the critical mass of scientists needed at the science/policy interface.' We would argue that this is particularly true for potential HSS contributions.
- 4.7** In the last ten years, the Government has sought to improve the effectiveness of its policy making in response to calls that it should strengthen its use of scientific advice. Concerns were raised about the Government's failure to draw on a broader range of knowledge and expertise in its handling of BSE and the Foot and Mouth epidemics. It was argued that these cases showed that there was a need for departments to be more prepared, taking a longer-term view in their commissioning of research, so that relevant research and advice would be on hand when needed. Concerns were also raised about the lack of sufficiently developed, and robust, cross-departmental connections.
- 4.8** The Government responded to these criticisms by issuing a series of protocols and guidelines on the use of science in policy making.<sup>64</sup> These guidelines, which apply to the social sciences as well as the natural sciences, state that there are three main principles that departments should follow:
- *Think ahead* - this will require departments to embark on some form of horizon-scanning work
  - *Broaden their advice* - acknowledging uncertainties and different perspectives by obtaining advice from a wide range of sources covering natural and social sciences, and (where necessary) non-scientific disciplines such as philosophy, theology and ethics.
  - *Act with a presumption of openness* - e.g. publishing their scientific advice and all relevant papers.
- 4.9** In 2002, the Cross-Cutting Review of Science and Research and the subsequent White Paper, *Investing in Innovation*, made a number of recommendations on the use of science, most notably that government departments should publish science and innovation strategies and appoint Chief Scientific Advisers. The Government also established a mechanism, the Science Reviews, to review the quality and use of research that has been carried out by departments, with the aim of developing models of good practice.

63 LSE PPG interviewed policy makers on the Academy's behalf. Further information is available from [www.britac.ac.uk/reports/wilson/lse-report/index.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports/wilson/lse-report/index.cfm)

64 For example, the 1999 White Paper *Modernising Government* argued that there should be a more professional approach to policy making. In 2000, the Government published guidelines on the use of science in policy making (subsequently updated in 2005), along with a code of practice for scientific advisory committees.

## The challenges identified by policy makers

**4.10** A report commissioned by the Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC)<sup>65</sup>, to assess ways of increasing the impact of research on practice and on policy, identified a number of barriers to policy makers' engagement with research, including:

- lack of time - to read journals, attend presentations or conduct their own research;
- low priority;
- poor communication of research within organisation;
- perceptions of research - for example, internally conducted or commissioned research was more likely to be seen as relevant and hence considered;
- research was not timely or relevant to users' needs;
- research was less likely to be used when the findings were controversial or upset the *status quo*;
- other sources of information might be valued more highly, particularly by policy makers;
- failure to value research at an organisational level.

**4.11** These findings were echoed in the interviews with policy makers that were conducted for this report. Policy makers were asked to identify what they considered to be the main barriers to the effective exploitation of HSS research in policy development. They identified the following:

- policy makers need research inputs provided in ways that are accessible and suitable for immediate use;
- the links between HSS and Government policy makers vary according to discipline, with some, such as law and economics, where there are well-developed channels of communication, and others, such as the humanities in general, where the connections are at a much earlier stage of development;
- the systems to assess how impacts are achieved are in their infancy;
- the research budgets of government departments are often relatively small;
- government departments tend to focus on short-run, specific projects, often using consultants and professional firms on most applied projects;
- the demands of government contracting (extensive paperwork, indemnity insurance and other tender requirements) are recognised by civil servants as being offputting for universities;
- the tendency for HSS research to be limited to narrow disciplinary confines;
- the short-termism that led to an over-use of consultants as skewing research towards the social sciences at the expense of humanities subjects;

*'There is also a lack of investment in humanities research, particularly in relation to cultural sensitivity in developing programmes and institutions in developing countries. The decline in modern languages is also part of this problem.'*

(comment from a government policy maker)

<sup>65</sup> LSRC, (2003) *Models of research impact: a cross sector review of literature and practice* (Building Effective Research: 4), The LSRC was supported by a grant from the Learning and Skills Council and the then DfES. For further information see [www.lsrc.ac.uk](http://www.lsrc.ac.uk)

- the lack of quantitative skills among social scientists;

*'Many questions require quantitative research. There is a problem in the British social science community relating to quantitative skills.'*

- the way in which academic researchers wrote reports;

*'The main problem is that academics tend to write for academics.'*

*'US academics are much better at writing for non-specialist audiences.'*

- the lack of self-promotion by research teams in academic institutions.

### **The fragmentation of humanities and social science research in government departments**

- 4.12** We are aware of concerns that have been raised about the perceived fragmentation of HSS research in government departments. There are currently separate professional groups and structures for science, social research, economics, statistics and operational research.

*'It is not always clear at either a department or government level how these different sources of evidence are brought together so that Ministers are not left with conflicting and potentially confusing advice... Furthermore, the departmental organisation of government also does not reflect coherent evidence needs...many issues need cross-government solutions and the marshalling of cross-government scientific evidence and advice.'* (Professor Paul Wiles, Government Chief Social Scientist)<sup>66</sup>

- 4.13** In addition, certain social science disciplines seem to be well established across government, notably economics, where it has been argued that the status and influence of economists is significantly stronger than that of scientists in other professions.<sup>67</sup> But there appears to be scope to improve the use of other social science disciplines. The policy makers interviewed for this report agreed that social researchers were 'the most vulnerable analytical profession', because the research 'is often too qualitative or enigmatic to provide compelling enough support for policy, which often requires evidence to be quantified and decisive.' As one senior policy maker put it: 'traditionally social research has set itself in long term studies which last more than 18 months or so... and this is often not what politicians and senior department officials want to hear'. We would argue that this also applies to a number of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

- 4.14** Almost all humanities research appears to be under-utilised in public policy development. As data on government expenditure on HSS researchers is not collected either by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) or by central government, we have had to rely on anecdotal evidence from policy makers and academic researchers, but the result is clear. An illustration is shown below.

<sup>66</sup> Extract from a speech given by Professor Wiles at a meeting of the Foundation for Science and Technology on 15 November 2006.

<sup>67</sup> House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee, (October 2006), Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence Based Policy Making.

*Research undertaken by the Department for International Development (DfID). DfID scores more highly than any other government department in terms of research expenditure as a percentage of total department administrative expenditure, and also has the largest number of research partners - over three quarters of which were universities and third sector organisations. However, the majority of its budget (currently around £110 million and set to rise to £220 million by 2010) is earmarked for research in the natural sciences, although there is a separate DfID policy development function, where the research is largely social science (where the subjects covered include development studies, education, health economics, psychiatry, human and social geography, anthropology, conflict regulation and public health). Senior officials confirmed that DfID commissioned no humanities research whatsoever. The Chief Scientific Advisor said that 'there is a lack of investment in humanities research, particularly in relation to cultural sensitivity in developing programmes and institutions in developing countries. The really important link is between the hard sciences and the humanities, and this is currently very weak.' Humanities subjects such as history, languages, cultural studies, archaeology and theology can all make contributions to the objectives of this department.*

Similarly, a number of the humanities researchers surveyed for this report drew attention to their concerns that there was inadequate recognition of what the humanities have to offer.

*'Where people in town planning and urban regeneration have used historical evidence as a way of both judging the worth of projects, and framing questions to ask about cities of other researchers, they have come up with pretty useful solutions that have, for example, helped preserve indigenous economic activity in regeneration zones (conventionally, regeneration extinguishes all indigenous economic activity in an urban district). But they tend to believe that this is an 'interesting gloss', rather than 'central critical framework'. (comment from a humanities and social science researcher).*

*'Politicians generally now are less aware of history, I think though it's not only history, a great deal of policy is not based on evidence from any source... it's this belief that things must be changing, things must be different than in the past and therefore we have to have a new solution, whereas very often, they aren't and we ought to be more aware of that.'* (comment from a historian, *Start the Week*, BBC Radio 4, November 2007)

- 4.15** On the other hand, there is evidence that policy makers are starting to give greater recognition to the importance of social science contributions. For example, in the past five years certain large government agencies (e.g. the Food Standards Agency and the Health and Safety Executive) have set up new social research units, in order to respond to cross-cutting policy challenges. Government units like the Social Exclusion Unit and the Performance and Innovation Unit draw on social science expertise in their projects (such as the impact of skills on the UK economy and so on). There are also signs of a growing recognition that there has hitherto been a serious lack of investment in humanities research.

*Government and academia inhabit very different worlds. Governments have to make decisions under acute time pressure, in conditions of uncertainty, and buffeted by interest groups, the media and politics. Academia can be more detached and sober. It operates at a slower pace, is judged by peers rather than the public, and has the freedom to explore complexities rather than having to make judgements*



*and decisions. Yet there is probably more overlap between the two worlds now than ever before. A less acutely ideological approach to Government - summed up in the phrase that what matters is what works - has created a much greater demand for hard-headed and honest analysis. As a result Government is becoming a more active and demanding consumer, hungry for good research, time series data, cohort studies and for genuinely interdisciplinary work that sees issues in the round.'* (Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Prime Minister's Forward Strategy Unit and the Performance and Innovation Unit in the Cabinet Office)<sup>68</sup>

## The tools needed to support policy development

*Illustrative Case study from a HSS academic researcher.* In the area of city and regional planning, there has been a steady development of tools and techniques for dealing with forecasting population, employment, land uses, densities, and housing requirements at small spatial scales for over 40 years. This kind of work was developed in the US and the UK in the 1950s and 1960s and UK academics have been very active in the area ever since. However very little of this science has entered the practice of planning and much local and strategic planning remains uninformed by this science. This is due to a combination of lack of awareness, lack of skills taught in universities, and lack of funding in government; the application of such science requires investments in data and software and expertise that are not costless, and this has often been the sticking point to continued and routine usage of new techniques. Currently local government barely employs the kind of tools that have become routine in North America for example and even with the development of geographic information systems (GIS), the UK lags in terms of government adopting such technologies, despite some high profile research which is acknowledged world-wide. Certain government departments have promoted some of this science in terms of regional development, land use transportation modelling and new sources of data such as in retailing. But all too often, such projects become bogged down in bureaucracy, are internalised within the department and thus not widely available to those who need the tools and data, and/or are developed in a consulting capacity and thus not available for wider use in government or research. In the last ten years, the UK has lagged in the development of large scale forecasting techniques with most development occurring in mainland Europe and North America, along side the considerable momentum for such developments in Asia-Pacific and Australasia. In general, government departments are not availing themselves of the techniques and expertise that academics have to offer across the board in issues from urban regeneration, housing analysis, urban design to strategic land use transport and regional planning.

- 4.16** This case study illustrates some of the concerns we have heard about the need for government to invest in the tools and large-scale evidence bases to support policy development. Several National Audit reports have also highlighted the lack of internal information within central government.
- 4.17** There are widespread concerns that HSS researchers are not always able to access the data held by government departments and other government bodies that they need. As a consequence, there is a danger that certain lines of research inquiry will be hindered. We endorse the views expressed recently at the conference of the Ministry of Justice/Legal Empirical Research Support Network<sup>69</sup> that there is 'a need for government agencies to see it as part of their public accountability responsibilities that they facilitate the provision of

68 'What Government wants, and why', Geoff Mulgan, *ESRC Society Today*, (May 2008).

69 Conference held on 18 December 2007 - for further information see [http://www.kent.ac.uk/lersnet/?page\\_id=7](http://www.kent.ac.uk/lersnet/?page_id=7)

information to bona fide researchers...[there needs] to be an improvement in the co-ordination and information-sharing about available data sets and the potential to encourage or facilitate access to existing sources and/or building on existing surveys rather than 'reinventing the wheel'.

- 4.18** While large corporations like Tesco are investing time and effort to capture information about the behaviour of their customers, central government does not appear to recognize the opportunities that 'pervasive information' might provide. This issue was flagged by LSE PPG: 'Persuading decision-makers to make the large-scale investments needed to create and grow systematic digital evidence bases in intelligent ways that provide for better policy formulation and more agile trialling and implementation of innovations is a potentially vital role for a range of HSS disciplines - especially policy analysis and public management, economics and social policy.'

### **Promoting research priorities and needs**

- 4.19** Connections with regional and local government bodies are often stronger than those for central government. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, some of the LSE PPG interviewees referred to 'small country' trends, which pooled the administrative, political and academic expertise in ways rarely achieved at the UK level or in English Government. For example, it is understood that the Scottish Executive has started to ask academic researchers about the topics that they are currently pursuing, so that the Executive can feed this information into the development of its research strategy. In this way, the Scottish Executive can place its research commissioning into a broader context, and take account of the new emerging lines of enquiry that have been identified by academic researchers. The Executive has also been active in promoting its research priorities and needs. Most teams of in-house researchers and analysts publish work plans for their area, which have been agreed with policy colleagues and Ministers. Research project opportunities are also published on-line.

### **Conclusions**

- 4.20** There are systemic problems affecting the effective exploitation by policy makers of research in all disciplines. While there have been a number of welcome government initiatives in recent years which have sought to address these problems, there is no single quick fix. Particular concerns remain about the co-ordination of cross-cutting issues that straddle the responsibilities of a number of government departments.
- 4.21** The links between policy makers and HSS academic research community are varied, with some much more developed than others. While social science research appears to be highly valued by policy makers, there is scope to strengthen its use in public policy making. Policy makers have been slow to exploit what the humanities have to offer, and the use of knowledge and expertise arising from research in these disciplines needs to be developed. Our interviews with policy makers confirmed that at present there is a rather limited appreciation of the way in which historic, cultural and philosophic evidence can lead to far-reaching social changes.
- 4.22** The evidence we gathered for this report shows that a high proportion of the research funds for public policy making are earmarked for short-term projects and initiatives. Policy makers should review their mechanisms for evaluating, and acting on, the research and

advice that they have sought. They also should do more to set out their research priorities and needs.

## Recommendations

Government departments need to enhance mechanisms for anticipating, and responding to, future challenges and uncertainties. Our findings show that a high proportion, often as high as 60%, of departmental research budgets is being allocated to short-term projects to meet current political and administrative demands. This is contrary to the Government's own guidelines on the use of scientific research in policy making, which state that government departments should 'think ahead' and 'should broaden their advice'.<sup>70</sup> We believe that there is a need to recognise the importance of increasing the stock of useful knowledge from a wide range of relevant academic sources, in order to enable the UK to respond better to uncertainty. The humanities and social sciences have an important role to play here. Government departments should give greater recognition to the importance of developing the evidence base of possible policy scenarios and solutions, in order to respond to unforeseen developments.

**Government departments should review the size, aims and timescales of the budgets they have earmarked to support departmental research, with the aim of committing sufficient funding to support long-term knowledge development and longitudinal research that can offer a range of different solutions and perspectives to potential problems.**

The research underpinning public policies should be of the highest quality. As a recent Academy report said: 'if research is being used by policy makers to take decisions on matters that have a direct effect on the quality of citizens' lives, the standards ought to be as high as possible.'<sup>71</sup>

Peer review by expert assessors is the means by which research quality is guaranteed in academic research. It informs the decisions about the work that should be funded, or the writing that should be published. Peer review is both a mechanism of selection - only the work deemed to be of the highest quality is funded - but also of enhancement. Work is better as a result of peer review.

We are aware that there are widespread concerns that much of the research commissioned by government departments has had to meet only the competition of tendering and not of peer review. The Academy considers that a good commissioning process should involve an element of peer review. We therefore share the views expressed recently by the Government's Chief Social Researcher on this issue:

*'We should, as a matter of principle, open our research to external and independent peer review - not because peer review is the only way of ensuring quality but because in the long run it generates shared standards and is a defence against charlatanism and partiality. We should use peer review to give our Ministers confidence about the research we produce and as an independent basis for our judgement as to what we publish as government research.'* (Professor Paul Wiles, Government Chief Social Scientist)<sup>72</sup>

70 Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office (2000) *Adding It Up - Improving Analysis and Modelling in Central Government*; Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office (2001) *Better Policy Delivery and Design*.

71 The British Academy (2007) *Peer Review: the challenges for the humanities and social sciences*. The report is available from [www.britac.ac.uk/reports](http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports)

72 Extract from the opening address given by Professor Wiles to the Manchester GSR Conference on 4 May 2008.

**R2 Government departments should develop and strengthen their peer review mechanisms to ensure that the research that they commission is of the highest quality.**

It is essential that government departments have robust mechanisms to assess the research that they fund, to evaluate what works and what does not. The recent appointment of departmental Chief Scientific Advisors (CSAs) is a welcome step forward in the efforts by Government to improve the effectiveness of its policy making. We are concerned that there remains a vacancy at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

We support the efforts of departmental CSAs to strengthen the policy making undertaken within and across government departments. As part of the efforts to ensure that robust mechanisms are in place to assess and better exploit the research that is being funded, all government departments should annually publish the highlights of the research that they have commissioned. Departments should be able to point to the evidence that underpins their policies. There also needs to be a mechanism that enables departments to justify the funds spent on commissioned research.

**R3 Government departments should evaluate the research that they commission and should annually publish the highlights of this work.**

All government departments ought to publish their research priorities and needs, in order to facilitate interaction and dialogue with the academic research community. We understand that a number of government departments already do this and recommend that this practice should be universally adopted. For example, the Scottish Executive makes public its research priorities and needs. Most teams of in-house researchers and analysts publish work plans for their area, which have been agreed with policy colleagues and Ministers. Research project opportunities are also published on-line.

**R4 Government departments should publish departmental research priorities and need to increase transparency and facilitate interaction and dialogue with the academic community, and to make it known which work would be of particular use.**

Government needs to recognise the importance of investing in the tools and large-scale evidence bases to support policy development. HSS research funders and professional bodies should draw the attention of policy makers to the opportunities afforded by these advances and the need to develop and maintain databases to inform policy innovations.

**R5 Government should invest in the tools and techniques required to support policy development.**

## Section 5: Knowledge Production - Encouraging Public Policy Engagement

### Introduction

**5.1** In Section 4 we discussed the importance of ensuring that policy makers can fully exploit what humanities and social science (HSS) research has to offer, in order to improve the quality of the advice available to them.

**5.2** We believe that it is essential that public policy is informed by research of the highest quality - work of scholarly excellence that has wider public policy benefits. This has also been referred to as the 'double hurdle'.<sup>73</sup> In this Section we seek to identify the various challenges of providing evidence for policy makers, focusing on the perspective of the HSS academic researcher. We discuss:

- training and continuing professional development for PhD students and academic researchers;
- support and incentives to encourage academic researchers to engage in policy development;
- mechanisms to assess and reward public policy engagement;
- the promotion of research capacities and highlights.

The HSS academic researchers, who responded to the large-scale survey of HSS academic researchers undertaken for this report, identified all these issues as barriers to policy engagement. Our findings lead us to a series of conclusions and recommendations at the end of this Section.

### Training and continuing professional development

**5.3** The consultations of policy makers and HSS researchers showed that both sides believed that there was a need to review the training available for PhD students, in order to ensure that it reflected the needs of the various 'user' communities. For example, a number of policy makers expressed concerns about the way in which HSS academic researchers write for non-academic audiences. As many of the Government's in-house analysts and researchers have these qualifications as well, a review on these lines would also have to consider the skill set that they will increasingly need to be prepared for future challenges. The case study on page 30 illustrates some of the problems that are occurring because policy makers are not aware of various developments in research tools and techniques.

### Support and incentives for policy engagement

**5.4** It is essential that policy-oriented research should be held to the same standards of research excellence as all other work in the humanities and social sciences. Otherwise policy will depend upon mistaken assumptions or inadequate information.

*'Research without scholarly quality will satisfy no one and will certainly disable our capacity to meet the double hurdle of scholarly quality and relevance.'*<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> A. M. Pettigrew, 'Management Research After Modernism', *British Journal of Management*, 12 (2001) pp. 61-70.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

What kinds of incentives are required to encourage academic researchers to engage in areas that will lead to both high quality scholarly impacts and have wider social, cultural, policy and economic impacts?

**5.5** Two major funders of HSS research, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) now have established funding streams to enable researchers to maximise the impact of their existing research. For example, ESRC impact grants aim to support 'additional and new knowledge transfer and impact generation activities that demonstrate the potential for significant economic, social, policy and/or practice impact(s).' Other ESRC opportunities include: policy review seminars; two-way secondments; joint PhD studentships; and PhD internships. Similarly, schemes like the AHRC's Knowledge Transfer Fellowship Scheme aim to support knowledge transfer activities to enable high quality arts and humanities research to 'make a difference beyond the world of academia'. The results of the consultation of the HSS academic community undertaken for this report suggests that these opportunities are not perhaps as well-known as they should be within the community: survey respondents often said that there was a lack of support available to encourage policy engagement.

**5.6** 'The most important incentive universities wield to motivate academic staff is pay and reward'.<sup>75</sup> Some universities already include policy engagement and other work which benefits practice or quality of life in their criteria for promotion. For example, University College London's (UCL) professorial promotion criteria includes the following under its criteria for research and knowledge transfer (band 1): 'Involvement (as appropriate to the discipline) in knowledge transfer/exchange which impacts on practice or on quality of life through ongoing engagement with communities.' It has been argued that if this practice was adopted more widely, it would raise the profile of policy (and other) engagements within universities. As in the example of UCL, care would have to be taken to ensure that 'a one size fits all' model is not introduced. The criteria would have to be sensitive to the practice and variations within disciplines. The applicability of concepts like 'knowledge transfer' and 'impact' vary according to discipline, and it is important that the focus should not be on a narrow range of engagements and impacts. Rather, the emphasis should be on designing criteria that will capture the full range of benefits that flow from research engagements in all disciplines.

## **Mechanisms to assess and reward policy engagement**

**5.7** It has been argued that the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE - the mechanism undertaken every five years or so to assess the quality of research in university departments, which informs funding decisions) has encouraged academic researchers to focus on the short-term intermediate good of publishing work, rather than on the final good of scholarly and other impacts.<sup>76</sup> Some critics have suggested that the RAE does not adequately recognise and reward applied 'user' focused research. Others argue that the RAE discourages academic researchers from engaging in public policy development, because policy-oriented research is often not published in prestigious journals. In 2006, the Government called for a new model of research assessment to be developed to address these concerns and others. How the new system - the Research Excellence Framework (REF) - will operate has yet to be determined and will be influenced by a further large-scale consultation of the academic community. This presents an opportunity to identify the most effective means of recognising and encouraging policy engagement.

<sup>75</sup> J. Parker, 'Comparing Research and Teaching in University Promotion Criteria', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 62 (3) (2008).

<sup>76</sup> A. M. Pettigrew, "'Scholarly impact' and the co-production hypothesis", *EFMD Global Focus*, 2 (2) (2008) pp. 8-12.

## Identifying potential policy impacts from the outset

**5.8** A number of HSS researchers, who were surveyed for this report, drew attention to the difficulties in predicting at the outset of a research project what the likely benefits the research might bring.

**5.9** EvidenceNetwork offered social scientists the following advice on the ways in which they might be able to enhance the prospect of their research informing public policy:

- plan research impact as thoroughly as research design;
- aim to achieve change in one or more areas - knowledge, understanding, attitudes, behaviour;
- create a dialogue - interactive, recursive - don't just disseminate;
- multiply effort - don't rely on one shot (which may miss the target) or one size (which will not fit all);
- take the long view and stick at it - sometimes research impact just takes time.<sup>77</sup>

**5.10** HSS researchers also raised concerns about the difficulties of measuring many of the benefits of their research, which are often intangible and it may be many years before the full benefits of the research can be understood and assessed. It was argued that the perceived emphasis by Government on the potential of research for income generation might undermine the development of wider, perhaps more significant, benefits.<sup>78</sup> As discussed in Section 3, HSS research can have significant economic impacts, but it could be argued that its social, cultural, and policy benefits are equally, if not more, important. It is essential that the mechanisms that are designed to encourage the development of high quality scholarly work with wider benefits (cultural, social, policy and economic) do not adopt a narrow definition of these benefits. The Research Councils have all stated that they will use a broad interpretation of benefits, which includes social and cultural well-being. But some concerns remain within the HSS research community, especially as it is clear that government policy makers and others do not always appreciate the full potential of what HSS research has to offer. As Estelle Morris, the then Minister of Arts, said:

*'I know that arts and culture make a contribution to health, to education, to crime reduction, to strong communities, to the economy and to the nation's well-being but I don't know how to evaluate it or describe it. We have to find a language and a way of describing its worth. It's the only way we'll secure the greater support we need.'*<sup>79</sup>

**5.11** Care should be taken to ensure that the focus on current policy priorities and measures of direct tangible benefits do not distract attention from the richer and more diverse contributions that HSS research makes to public policy. As the Langford Report said:

*'[HSS research] impact should not be measured solely in terms of immediate changes in policies. These subjects also lead to much deeper changes in the way in which policy makers and others view the world. Such research is important in its own right. It is part of a scholarly function which sustains a strong tradition of analysis and investigation extending beyond the immediate needs of the economy, and underpinning a culture of open and informed debate essential in a democracy. No civilised society can be without it.'*

<sup>77</sup> 'Research and Policy: Building a Good Relationship', K. Young, *ESRC Society Today*: (May 2003).

<sup>78</sup> For example, the Government's *Lambert Review of Business/University Collaboration*, the Government's Worry Report, *Increasing the Economic Impact of the Research Councils* (2006).

<sup>79</sup> As quoted by E. Belfiore and O. Bennett in 'Rethinking the Social Impact of the Arts', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13 (2007) pp. 135-151.

**5.12** While the Research Councils are coming under increasing pressure to demonstrate the economic benefits of the research they support<sup>80</sup>, it is inherently difficult to predict at the outset of a project what likely benefits the research might bring. Even when research has been completed and published, it may be many years before its impact can be properly understood and assessed. Research seen initially as 'blue skies' might subsequently be found to have business applications. No single measure will capture the rich and varied contributions that HSS research makes. There is a risk that pressure to develop simplistic measures will eventually lead to harmful distortions in the quality of the research that is funded. There needs to be a greater awareness among Government and policy makers of the damage that over-simplistic indicators might cause. The focus should be on developing a series of indicators (as both the AHRC and the ESRC have sought to do) that will help to illuminate some of the impacts that have been achieved, while recognising the inherent constraints and limitations of such measures.

### Self promotion

**5.13** Earlier this year, John Denham said that: 'When there is an appetite for academic input, it can be hard to source relevant advice.'<sup>81</sup> The concern that HSS researchers and their universities could do more to promote what they have to offer was echoed in a report commissioned by the Scottish Executive in 2004, *Mapping Social Science Research Provision in the Higher Education Sector in Scotland*.<sup>82</sup> It found that while users were generally complimentary about the range of research expertise and methodologies available in the university sector in Scotland, some believed that they had missed opportunities to draw on this source of expertise, because they were unaware of the research capacity that was available. It was argued that universities and researchers were not always effective at promoting what they had to offer. 'Both users and network groups felt that there was an onus on the social science research community itself to communicate and disseminate more and to produce research in a format that was understandable and usable.'

**5.14** These concerns were echoed by the policy makers interviewed for this report. There are also concerns that the HSS community has not been interacting with government departments (and others) as effectively as it could and should. 'I would like to see them [social science professional bodies and learned societies] lobbying much harder for better funding and support for social science in this country - something the scientific and statistical learned societies do so well.' (Professor Paul Wiles, Government Chief Social Scientist)<sup>83</sup>

### Conclusions

**5.15** There have been a number of promising developments in recent years. These include the efforts of the AHRC and the ESRC to develop funding mechanisms to enable HSS researchers to maximise the impact of their research. However, these initiatives do not appear to be as well-known as one might expect. There is also scope for the AHRC and ESRC to build on these developments. Particular attention should be given to the ways in which they might work together to enhance (where appropriate) certain existing schemes and initiatives.

<sup>80</sup> The Worry report, (2006), recommended that applicants for Research Council responsive mode grants 'should identify potential economic benefits (if any) and reviewers should have clear guidance on how to score these benefits.' RCUK has made it clear that it will use a broad interpretation of benefits, which will include the contributions to social and cultural well-being.

<sup>81</sup> John Denham, 16 January 2008 at the RSA.

<sup>82</sup> The report sought to provide 'a 'snapshot' of the landscape of current social research capacity in Scottish universities in 2004...[and] how Scottish social science research is organised, structured and directed.'

<sup>83</sup> Extract from the opening address given by Professor Wiles to the Manchester GSR Conference on 4 May 2008.



- 5.16** The survey of HSS academic researchers found that researchers were keen to engage more pro-actively with policy makers. More sophisticated mechanisms need to be found to support, assess and reward public policy engagement. It is essential that the research that informs public policy making is of the highest quality. The incentives that are developed will need to ensure that this key objective is met.

## Recommendations

There is a need to ensure that future government analysts and researchers, together with academic researchers, have the appropriate skills. As one report put it: 'HSS will inform public policy insofar as these analysts, researchers and consultants have appropriate skills - aware of developments in their field, adept at appropriate methodologies, capable of designing and managing research, confident in communicating research-based evidence to policy audiences.'<sup>84</sup>

- R6** Drawing on their links with their 'user' communities, AHRC and ESRC should consider whether the training for the PhD students they fund meets the needs of appropriate 'user' communities. Attention should also be paid to possibility of incorporating further opportunities for multidisciplinary training and networking, which would build on the work that universities already have in hand using the 'Roberts Money'.<sup>85</sup>

The links between HSS academic researchers and policy makers vary according to discipline; in some, such as law and economics, there are well-developed channels of communication, while in others, including most of the humanities, the connections are at a much earlier stage of development. There is scope to develop initiatives to share examples of good practice across disciplines. Care will need to be taken to ensure that these activities draw on the expertise of existing inter-disciplinary networks of HSS researchers, such as the History and Policy Group.

- R7** AHRC and ESRC should jointly convene workshops, bringing together researchers from across the HSS disciplines to share their ideas and experiences for contributing to policy development. In this way, humanities researchers can learn from their colleagues in the social sciences who have more experience of communicating their research to policy makers and of undertaking commissioned research in support of specific policy initiatives.

AHRC and ESRC have established funding streams to enable researchers to maximise the impact of their existing research. We consider that there is scope to build on these welcome initiatives, with a particular focus on facilitating the impact of research both within and between HSS disciplines. We found evidence that HSS researchers are not always aware of these opportunities. The British Academy and other HSS funders should identify ways in which they can draw them to the attention of their award-holders.

- R8** AHRC and ESRC should enhance their existing funding streams to increase the impact of existing research both within and between HSS disciplines. For its part, the British Academy should promote these opportunities to its own award-holders.

Some universities already include policy engagement in their criteria for promotion. We believe that this practice should be followed more widely, in order to raise the profile of policy engagement within universities.

<sup>84</sup> William Solesbury (2003) *The contribution of the arts, humanities and social sciences to public policy*.

<sup>85</sup> The 'Roberts Money' provides support for the development of transferable skills training provision for postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers. These funds are provided through the Research Councils and are referred to as 'Roberts Money' as they are a direct result of the recommendations of Sir Gareth Roberts' *Review Set for Success* (2002).

- R9** Universities should examine their criteria for academic promotion, with a view to including public policy engagement (and engagement with other research users) as a factor to be taken into account (as appropriate to the discipline). Care will need to be taken to ensure that the focus is on recognising work of the highest quality that has had wider benefits.

HSS departments in universities are usually focused on single disciplines and are not structured to facilitate interactions with policy makers. There are excellent examples of interdisciplinary centres that are so focused, but we believe that the stock of these could be increased.

- R10** Universities should explore opportunities to increase the number of interdisciplinary centres focused on aspects of public policy.

The current debate on the development of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) provides an opportunity for considering further the most effective means of encouraging, assessing and rewarding high quality research that has public policy benefits.

- R11** The funding councils should include, within their national consultations on the REF with the academic community (and other stakeholders), the solicitation of views on the most effective means of encouraging, assessing and rewarding public policy engagement.

The Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) provides a major funding mechanism to incentivise and support engagement between universities and the user community. More could be done to recognise public policy engagement within HEIs.

- R12** The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) urged to examine the way in which the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) can be developed, in order to incentivise high quality public policy engagement.

HSS researchers need to recognise what they have to offer public policy, and look to enhance the ways in which their work can be better exploited, including cross-disciplinary work, networking and outreach to policy makers. Policy makers say that they are often unaware of the research expertise that is available, because academic research teams are not effective at promoting what they have to offer. Universities and HSS researchers need to improve the way they promote their research highlights and capacities to this key target audience.

- R13** Universities and researchers should examine ways in which they can promote their research capacities and achievements more effectively.

While the Research Councils are coming under increasing pressure to demonstrate the economic benefits of the research they support<sup>86</sup>, it is inherently difficult at the outset of a project to predict what likely benefits the research might bring. Even when research has been completed and published, it may be many years before its impact can be properly understood and assessed. Research seen initially as 'blue skies' might subsequently be found to have economic and policy applications. No single measure will capture the rich and varied contributions that HSS research makes. There is a risk that pressure to develop simplistic measures will eventually lead to harmful

86 The Worry report, *Increasing the Economic Impact of the Research Councils* (2006), recommended that applicants for Research Council responsive mode grants 'should identify potential economic benefits (if any) and reviewers should have clear guidance on how to score these benefits.' Research Councils UK has made it clear that it will use a broad interpretation of benefits, which will include the contributions to social and cultural well-being.

distortions in the quality of the research that is funded by the Research Councils. There needs to be a greater awareness among government and policy makers of the damage that over-simplistic indicators might cause. The focus should be on developing a series of indicators (as both the AHRC and the ESRC have sought to do) that will help to illuminate some of the impacts that have been achieved, while recognising the inherent constraints and limitations of such measures.

**R14** The British Academy, HSS learned societies and professional bodies, together with the Research Councils and other funders, should work to enhance the Government's understanding of the shortcomings of simplistic and inappropriate measures of research performance and impact.

## Section 6: Bringing Both Sides Together - The 'Co-production' Model

### Introduction

- 6.1** As discussed earlier, the links between humanities and social science (HSS) academic researchers and policy makers vary according to discipline, with some, such as law and economics, where there are well-developed channels of communication, and others, such as the humanities in general, where the connections are at a much earlier stage of development. Humanities researchers reported that policy makers were often slow to invite them to join their networks, because policy makers often did not recognise the added value that expertise and insights from the humanities might bring to bear on the policy making process. HSS researchers who responded to the survey undertaken for our report drew attention to the difficulties of developing effective relationships with policy makers.
- 6.2** In this Section we discuss the 'co-production' model - engaging policy makers from the outset of the research process - as a means of enhancing the exploitation and impact of HSS research. We discuss:
- the benefits of co-production for public policy-maker and academic researcher alike;
  - the role of research intermediaries;
  - the development of communication strategies;
  - and the role of two-way secondments.

### The benefits of 'co-production' for the public policy-maker and academic researcher

- 6.3** There have been a number of calls to engage policy makers from the outset of the research process, on the grounds that this will heighten policy impacts, because research conducted in this way can increase policy makers' understanding and appreciation of the research process. The aim of the 'joint production of knowledge model' is 'to dissolve the boundary between producers and users - all forms of expertise (among academics, practitioners, business and the public) are considered valuable and contribute to knowledge production'.<sup>87</sup> There is no set model for 'co-production'. A number of research funders have been experimenting and assessing the impact of different models.<sup>88</sup>
- 6.4** This model benefits both policy-maker and academic researcher. As regards the policy-maker, interacting with academic researchers can help to identify and frame the questions that need to be addressed. Efforts to follow a more linear model (the Rothschild formula), where 'The customer says what he wants; the contractor does it (if he can); and the customer pays' led to a number of unforeseen difficulties.<sup>89</sup> Analyses by Kogan and Henkel concluded that the Rothschild formula 'failed to note how in those areas of policy where data are diffuse, and analyses most likely to be strongly influenced by value preferences, problems must be identified collaboratively between policy-maker and scientist. It failed to acknowledge that

<sup>87</sup> The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU), (June 2007) *Common Knowledge?*

<sup>88</sup> RELU is an example of the way in which this 'co-production model' can work. RELU is an interdisciplinary programme, which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research council (BBSRC), and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). It was set up to tackle the key challenges facing the UK's rural areas. Its report, *Common Knowledge?* (2007), an exploration of knowledge transfer, analysed different approaches to transferring knowledge.

<sup>89</sup> Following the 'Rothschild Report' of 1971, *The Organisation and Management of Government Research and Development*, the Government accepted his principle that applied research and application should be done on a customer-contractor basis.

policy makers have to work hard to identify problems, to specify research that might help solve them, and to receive and use the results of research.<sup>90</sup>

- 6.5** With regard to the academic researcher, a number of studies have shown that engaging with research users at an early stage in the research process is a key factor in helping to ensure that the research findings are subsequently taken up and exploited.<sup>91</sup> For example, the findings of the ESRC's impact case studies have found that sustained contacts with users, based on personal relationships and developed over time, are the most important determinants of policy impact.

### **The role of research intermediaries**

- 6.6** Research intermediaries (such as learned societies and professional associations, research funders, and knowledge brokers) can play an important role in facilitating the impact of research and providing support to individual researchers. The 2006 inquiry by the then House of Commons Science and Technology Committee of the Government's handling of scientific advice, risk and evidence in policy making drew attention to the 'scope for greater involvement of the learned societies and professional bodies in the UK scientific advisory system, not least in order to reduce dependence upon external consultants.'<sup>92</sup> While we wholeheartedly endorse this recommendation, the Academy considers that not enough progress has been met in realisation of this goal, particularly in relation to the humanities and social sciences. As the report rightly states, learned societies represent a tremendous resource of independent expert advice. HSS learned societies and professional bodies themselves have a role to play in enhancing their engagements with government policy makers at all levels. We share the views expressed recently by the Academy for Social Sciences (AcSS) that there is scope to enhance the role of HSS learned societies and professional bodies as facilitators of public policy engagement.

### **The development of effective communication strategies**

- 6.7** Another factor influencing impact is the development of effective communication strategies. It is clear that HSS academic researchers and their host institutions are investing time and resource into the promotion of what they have to offer policy makers and other potential users of research. The Scottish Economic Policy Network for example, is a network of economists based in Scotland's twelve universities, which aims 'to stimulate academic research on the Scottish economy, particularly in those areas of concern to the Scottish Parliament. The network concentrates on increasing the quality and quantity of evidence-based research to inform policy in areas such as education, enterprise, the environment, exclusion, health, rural affairs, training and transport.'<sup>93</sup> In the humanities, the History and Policy network 'works for better public policy through an understanding of history'. It puts

90 M. Kogan and M. Henkel (Heinemann, 1983), *Government and Research: The Rothschild Experiment in a Government Department*.

91 For example, in 1999 the ESRC set up an initiative 'to bring social science research much nearer to the decision-making process'. It set up a national co-ordinating Centre and an Evidence Network of researchers, practitioners and policy makers both from home and from overseas. By October 2005 900 people had joined the Network. Work by researchers involved in this Network and others, including the Research Unit for Research Utilisation at the University of St Andrews and the work of the research councils on its evaluation strategies, has helped to develop our understanding of the various factors that enhance the likelihood of policy impact.

92 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2006) *Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence Based Policy Making*.

93 For more information see [www.scotecon.net](http://www.scotecon.net)

historians in touch 'with those discussing and deciding public policy today', as well as advising historians wanting to engage more effectively with policy makers and the media.<sup>94</sup>

## The role of two-way secondments

- 6.8** Two-way secondments are an important means of facilitating dialogue and exchange between academic researchers and policy makers. These secondments help academic researchers and policy makers to develop understandings and connections that facilitate knowledge transfer and policy impact. For policy makers, they enable them to understand what HSS research has to offer - benefits that they in turn can draw to the attention of their colleagues. For HSS academic researchers, they provide vital insights into the needs of policy makers. And there are other benefits as articulated in the Government's recent report, *A Vision for Science and Society*<sup>95</sup>:

*'Policy makers should have access to good, timely, scientific evidence and advice and be more transparent about the process. Scientists need support to understand policy makers' needs better if more are to become involved in policy work. Engaging with policy makers ought to be a valued part of what it is to be a scientist. Those researchers who have worked with policy makers report that it enriches their research and teaching of models of good practice.'*

There are a number of examples of good practice. For instance, the ESRC has a people transfer scheme which enabled academic researchers to work on projects such as the Stern Review. The AHRC has for many years supported networks of researchers and museum and gallery curators, together with cross-sectoral exchanges and secondments.

## Conclusions

- 6.9** The findings of the interviews and consultations undertaken by LSE PPG showed that, on the whole, there was a remarkable convergence about the barriers to effective policy making that were identified by both 'policy users' (government policy makers) and 'research producers' (HSS researchers). And there is also substantial agreement on the possible solutions to overcome these barriers. The interviews suggest that there is a growing recognition on the part of civil servants and policy makers of the potential contributions from HSS. Policy makers are seeking to develop a more inclusive approach to the ways in which problems are handled. Similarly, the findings of the review's survey of HSS researchers showed that they were very willing to engage more pro-actively with policy makers.
- 6.10** It is important that researchers and policy makers alike have a mutual understanding of the relevance of each other's interests and activities. This will help to deepen their understandings of the way in which academic research can add value and offer insights to key issues of concern for policy makers. Findings show that involving research 'users' at key stages throughout the research process (from the outset through to the final dissemination of the results) can be an important tool in increasing the impact and take-up of research findings.

<sup>94</sup> For more information see [www.historyandpolicy.org](http://www.historyandpolicy.org)

<sup>95</sup> Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (July 2008) *A Vision for Science and Society: A consultation for developing a new strategy for the UK*.

- 6.11** Raising the awareness of the value (and potential uses) of research should go some way in helping to ensure that the UK is better placed to exploit research in the future. We welcome the efforts that have been made already in this area, but consider that there is scope for further initiatives to be developed in order to bring academics and policy makers together to improve dialogue and exchange.
- 6.12** HSS researchers should explore ways of involving potential research beneficiaries from the outset of the research process, in order to heighten the likely impact of their work. Action should be taken to enhance the provision of two-way secondments between staff in academia and those in government.

## Recommendations

It is important that both researchers and policy makers share a mutual understanding of the relevance of each other's interests and activities. This will help to deepen their understandings of the way in which academic research can add value and offer insights to key issues of concern for policy makers.

ESRC could usefully broaden the scope and the composition of its social science forum (which currently includes policy makers, representatives from government, leading social scientists, and senior representatives from the funding agencies for the social sciences) with a view to including representatives from business, industry and the Third Sector. Similarly, the AHRC should establish a strategic forum for policy and industry, which should be attended by leading arts and humanities researchers, senior policy makers and representatives from government, business, industry, the Third Sector and museums and galleries. These fora would focus on challenges requiring expertise from both within and between disciplines in the arts, humanities and social sciences, with the aim of

- promoting what HSS have to offer;
- understanding the needs of users;
- horizon scanning;
- developing codes of good practice;
- developing joint initiatives to support better linkages between HSS research and their users.

**R15** ESRC should broaden the scope of its existing strategic forum for the social sciences, with a view to including representatives from business, industry and the Third Sector. Similarly, AHRC should establish a new strategic forum to connect arts and humanities researchers with policy makers and other research users.

There are concerns that the HSS research community has not been interacting with government departments (and others) as effectively as it could and should do. Action should be taken to address these problems. Raising the awareness of the value (and potential uses) of research should go some way in helping to ensure that the UK is better placed to exploit research in the future. We welcome the efforts that have been made already in this area, but consider that there is scope for further initiatives to be developed in order to bring academics and policy makers together to improve dialogue and exchange. Meetings of researchers and research beneficiaries could work to identify areas and opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, both to demonstrate the full value of HSS research and to strengthen its voice in public policy debates.

**R16** The British Academy, HSS learned societies and professional bodies, together with the Research Councils and other funders, should work to enhance the way in which these wider benefits are articulated and promoted to Government and other key stakeholders.

There is currently a rather limited appreciation of the way in which historic, cultural and philosophic evidence can lead to far-reaching social changes, and as a result key opportunities are being missed. High-level recognition of contributions to better links between researchers and users could be helpful. Awards could raise the profile of the contributions that HSS research can make to public policy development and the quality of life.

**R17** The British Academy should create awards for HSS researchers, policy makers, and others who have enhanced the engagement of research and public policy.

Learned societies represent an important resource of independent expert advice. HSS learned societies and professional bodies themselves have a role to play in enhancing their engagements with government policy makers at all levels. There is scope to enhance the role of HSS learned societies and professional bodies as facilitators of public policy engagement.

**R18** HSS learned societies and professional bodies should enhance their role as facilitators of public policy engagement.

Findings show that involving research 'users' at key stages throughout the research process (from the outset through to the final dissemination of the results) can be an important way of increasing the impact and take-up of research findings.

HSS researchers should explore ways of involving potential research beneficiaries from the outset of the research process, in order to heighten the likely impact of their work. While research funders like AHRC and ESRC are committed to increasing the opportunities for these kinds of engagement in the projects that they fund as a means of increasing the impact of their research, there is scope to establish further cross-cutting initiatives on these lines. AHRC and ESRC have recently jointly established the 'Religion and Society' research programme. We recommend that a further cross-cutting initiative be set up, involving government policy makers, AHRC and ESRC. Identifying the topic for this strategic initiative will not be straightforward. The identification of a major cross-cutting challenge should be subject to consultation with policy makers, and also with appropriate sections of the HSS research community.

**R19** AHRC and ESRC should develop the 'co-production model', addressing a cross-cutting challenge identified in partnership with policy makers and relevant sections of the HSS research community.

Policy makers should implement systems to develop engagement with the humanities and social science academic community, including the expansion of two-way secondments between staff in academia and those in government.

**R20** Government departments should be required to set and publish targets for two-way secondments with universities and research organisations.



## Summary of Recommendations

### Knowledge Use

- R1** Government departments should review the size, aims and timescales of the budgets they have earmarked to support departmental research, with the aim of committing sufficient funding to support long-run knowledge development and longitudinal research that can offer a range of different solutions and perspectives to potential problems.
- R2** Government departments should develop and strengthen their peer review mechanisms to ensure that the research that they commission is of the highest quality.
- R3** Government departments should evaluate the research they commission and should annually publish the highlights of this work.
- R4** Government departments should publish departmental research priorities and needs to increase transparency and facilitate interaction and dialogue with the academic community, and to make it known which work would be of particular use.
- R5** Government should invest in the tools and techniques required to support policy development.

### Knowledge Production

- R6** Drawing on their links with their 'user' communities, AHRC and ESRC should consider whether the training for the PhD students they fund meets the needs of appropriate 'user' communities. Attention should also be paid to the possibility of incorporating further opportunities for multidisciplinary training and networking, which would build on the work that universities already have in hand using 'Roberts Money'.<sup>96</sup>
- R7** AHRC and ESRC should jointly convene workshops, bringing together researchers from across the HSS disciplines to share their ideas and experiences for contributing to policy development. In this way, humanities researchers can learn from their colleagues in the social sciences who have more experience of communicating their research to policy makers and of undertaking commissioned research in support of specific policy initiatives.
- R8** AHRC and ESRC should enhance their existing funding streams to increase the impact of existing research both within and between HSS disciplines. For its part, the British Academy should promote these opportunities to its own award-holders.
- R9** Universities should examine their criteria for academic promotion, with a view to including public policy engagement (and engagement with other research users) as a factor to be taken into account (as appropriate to the discipline). Care will need to be taken to ensure that the focus is on recognising work of the highest quality that has had wider benefits.

<sup>96</sup> The 'Roberts Money' provides support for the development of transferable skills training provision for postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers. These funds are provided through the Research Councils and are referred to as 'Roberts Money' as they are a direct result of the recommendations of Sir Gareth Roberts' Review, *Set for Success* (2002).

- R10** Universities should explore opportunities to increase the number of interdisciplinary centres focused on aspects of public policy.
- R11** The funding councils should include, within their national consultations on the REF with the academic community (and other stakeholders), the solicitation of views on the most effective means of encouraging, assessing and rewarding public policy engagement.
- R12** The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) urged to examine the way in which the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) can be developed, in order to incentivise high quality public policy engagement.
- R13** Universities and researchers should examine ways in which they can promote their research capacities and achievements more effectively.
- R14** The British Academy, HSS learned societies and professional bodies, together with the research councils and other funders, should work to enhance the Government's understanding of the shortcomings of simplistic and inappropriate measures of research performance and impact.

### **'Co-production'**

- R15** ESRC should broaden the scope of its existing strategic forum for the social sciences, with a view to including representatives from business, industry and the third Sector. Similarly, AHRC should establish a new strategic forum to connect arts and humanities researchers with policy makers and other research users.
- R16** The British Academy, HSS learned societies and professional bodies, together with the Research Councils and other funders, should work to enhance the way in which these wider benefits are articulated and promoted to Government and other key stakeholders.
- R17** The British Academy should create awards for HSS researchers, policy makers, and others who have enhanced the engagement of research and public policy.
- R18** HSS learned societies and professional bodies should enhance their role as facilitators of public policy engagement.
- R19** AHRC and ESRC should develop the 'co-production model', addressing a cross-cutting challenge identified in partnership with policy makers and relevant sections of the HSS research community.
- R20** Government departments should be required to set and publish targets for two-way secondments with universities and research organisations.

## Appendix: How the Review was Conducted

The British Academy appointed a Steering Group to oversee the work of the Review. Under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Wilson, FBA, FRS, the Group met on a regular basis between June 2007 and July 2008 to oversee the direction of the Review. Its members were appointed by the British Academy and were drawn from a range of subjects in the humanities and social sciences. The Group commissioned external researchers to support the work of the Review - a team at the London School of Economics, the LSE Public Policy Group (LSE PPG), and an independent researcher, Philippe Schneider.

### Chairman

Sir Alan Wilson, FBA, FRS	Chairman, AHRC, and Professor of Urban and Regional Systems	University College London
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### Other members

Dr Ivon Asquith	formerly Oxford University Press and member of AHRC Council	
Professor Robert Bennett, FBA	Chairman, British Academy Research Committee, and Professor of Geography	University of Cambridge
Professor Ian Diamond, FBA	Chief Executive	ESRC
Ms Yvonne Hawkins	Director of Knowledge and Evaluation	AHRC
Dr Robin Jackson	Chief Executive and Secretary	The British Academy
Professor Paul Langford, FBA	Professor of Modern History and Rector of Lincoln College	University of Oxford
Professor Steve Machin, FBA	Professor of Economics	University College London
Professor Andrew Pettigrew, FBA	Dean, School of Management, and member of ESRC Council	University of Bath
Professor Nigel Vincent, FBA	Professor of Comparative Philology	University of Manchester
Mr David Walker	Editor	The Guardian Public Magazine
Professor Helen Wallace, FBA	Formerly Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies	European University Institute Secretariat

### Secretariat

Ms Vivienne Hurley	Secretary, Steering Group	The British Academy
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