

Evaluation proforma

Faculty/Directorate	SBS
Department/area	Management
Project title	The business impact of Executive MBA dissertations: an exploratory study
Project lead name	Dr Mel Bull Professor Steve Johnson
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Other project team members	Lyle Odendaal (MRes student)
Abstract including action research (or other project), working hypothesis, info from theory of change, change which is anticipated etc. (Around 250 words)	We undertook a small-scale project to explore how the dissertation research undertaken by our Executive MBA students benefits their own organisations. This enabled us to evidence how research in the context of executive education benefits local and global organisations, thereby contributing to developments in research-informed teaching and learning across the University.
How students are being involved	<p>The project surveyed previous PT MBA students who completed their dissertations within the past four years. This alumni group tends to promote the MBA programme to their staff, so the research will help us to maintain context with a key alumni group with the potential to promote the benefits of our programmes. This is particularly relevant due to the new Senior Leaders higher apprenticeship standard.</p> <p>We engaged the services of one of our MRes students to assist with the survey, data input and analysis.</p>
How project is being evaluated	<p>Data sourced (i.e. emails) for survey use by end of May Survey created by 5th June - Pilot carried out by 12th June Survey sent out by 19th June 2018 - open for 2 weeks Responses received by 3rd July Analysis to be completed by 24 July Initial finds brief completed by 31 July</p> <p>All milestones and targets were achieved</p>
Key things What's worked well? Have you achieved what you set out to do? If not why not? What have been the Highlights?	<p>We achieved what we set out to do - good response, high quality data and interesting findings with potential for learning and impact</p> <p><u>What worked well?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of MRes student assisted greatly with project management and provided resource for data input, analysis etc. • SHU alumni data was useful in facilitating contact with potential respondents • The email survey worked well, partly due to respondents' links with SBS • The development of the questionnaire was a successful team effort • Quantity and quality of response was good, again likely to have been helped by SBS link • The data produced some interesting findings, with potential for more detailed follow up work and potential learning for other SBS/SHU

	colleagues Highlights - Lyle's (MRes student) input, good response, interesting and useful findings
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tight time scale (but we managed to overcome this with good project management) • Finance constraints - having to spend all funds within financial year. Without this constraint we could have extended Lyle's time to help with analysis, writing up etc. • Lack of direct access to alumni contact details (but we recognise the GDPR issues and we were also able to use our own contacts to boost the response)
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from Hallam Guild • Good team working between Mel, Steve and Lyle • Enthusiasm and commitment to project • Respondents' affinity to SBS/SHU undoubtedly boosted response rates and quality of data
Replicability, transferability, scalability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The methodology is replicable for other studies of impact of student research/projects on employers, although the questionnaire would need to be adjusted for different student types, subject areas, levels of study and dissertation types • It could be scaled up significantly - there are large economies of scale for surveys of this type and the alumni database is a good sampling frame • But we should note the distinctive nature of the Executive MBA - mature students, in employment (usually with employer support), projects explicitly designed to be work-related. This does not apply to all programmes.
Any other comments	<p>This project was always intended as a pilot. Our assessment is that it was successful and that there is considerable scope to deepen the study through qualitative work with students and employers. We also see considerable scope for replication across SHU in order to develop our understanding of how to use student projects to benefit employers (as well as students).</p> <p>The employment of a MRes student was very successful. Feedback from Lyle suggests that he enjoyed the experience and learned a lot from it.</p>