Irish Universities Association
Researcher-Policymaker Engagement Report

April 2022

mazars

Contents

Key Acronyms

DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth Affairs
DFHERIS	Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science
DOJ	Department of Justice
IUA	Irish Universities Association
PSG	Project Steering Group
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
UCD	University College Dublin

Confidentiality Statement

- <u>Confidentiality Statement</u>

Confidentiality Statement

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Executive Summary

- <u>Executive Summary</u>

Executive Summary

The IUA appointed Mazars to support it in understanding how academic researchers engage with the public policy system in terms of policy agenda setting, formation, implementation and evaluation. Anecdotally, we know that public policymakers engage with university-based researchers in a multitude of formats, through a range of bodies, with a variety of impacts. Policymakers alone rarely have the full range of knowledge and evidence required of sophisticated policy development, especially as public policy becomes more complex.

Over the past decade we have become increasingly adept at characterising the impact of university research on Enterprise (Research-for-Enterprise) with a range of measures like co-authored publications, co-funding, patents, licenses, and human capital transfer. However, we are poor at characterising how researchers and public policymakers engage and interact and how this impacts on public policy development (Research-for-Policy).

When we consider some of the biggest challenges facing our society today, such as climate change, justice, housing and health, by way of example, the requirement for high quality, evidence-informed policy development is abundantly clear. Anecdotally, we know that there are many such instances of researchers working with policymakers but, as mentioned above, we do not have a system for assessing it, quantitatively or qualitatively. Without such a system we cannot further develop it and grow the role of research and evidence in public policy for the benefit of society.

Based on a light touch case study approach, conducted over February-March 2022, this report describes the nodes of engagement, enablers/barriers in developing relationships and a preliminary framework of how researchers and public policymakers engage. It also outlines potential measures to assess researcher and policymaker interactions to enable monitoring and further development of such engagement at system level i.e. enable Research-for-Policy to catch up with Research-for-Enterprise.

The output of this project is likely to inform a follow-on, more detailed exercise to develop a comprehensive framework and suite of metrics to underpin research-for-policy development in Ireland. This report outlines how researchers and policymakers interact in addition to the enablers and barriers they face when building relationships and working collaboratively across the policy system. Our proposed framework in this report sets out what researchers and policymakers alike can do to facilitate growth and their success in working together. Also included in this report are proto-metrics which describe important ways to track researcher/policymaker relationships and networks develop. The framework and metrics proposed here are preliminary and require further refinement to better define and measure engagement.

Project Introduction

- [Project Background](#)
- [Project Context](#)
- [Project Scope and Deliverables](#)

Project Introduction

Project Background

The IUA is the voice of the Irish university sector representing Ireland's universities. The IUA is invested in the interests of member universities as key contributors to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Ireland.

The IUA is currently undertaking a scoping exercise to understand how academic researchers engage with the public policy system in terms of policy formation, implementation and evaluation. It is well known that policymakers engage with university-based researchers in a number of ways, through a range of bodies with numerous impacts. Understanding the relationships between policymakers and academic researchers, measuring it, and expressing its value to the broader system has not been well defined.

Characterising the impact of university research on Enterprise, with a range of measures including patents, licences and co-authored publications, has become increasingly sophisticated over the last decade. However, the impact of university research on public policy formation/implementation has not been developed to a similar level. The requirement for high quality, evidence-informed policy development is abundantly clear, when we consider the biggest societal challenges we face today, such as climate change and access to housing.

There are many cases where researchers and policymakers have actively engaged and communicated. However, we do not currently have a system to measure or assess this engagement, either quantitatively or qualitatively. With the aim of the preliminary development of such a system or framework, we conducted an initial scoping exercise of the research environment through a suite of case studies.

Project Context

On review of the national landscape it was identified that establishing close, trusted and sustained working links between researchers and policymakers is a significant challenge. The need and support for collaborative relationships and development of such culture between academic researchers and policymakers, has been voiced. A goal of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) 2021-2022 Strategy is to develop, *"a highly collaborative research system – closely connected with enterprise, public policy and practice, community and voluntary, innovation districts, national, regional and local interests; driving knowledge-creation, innovation and human capital; and contributing significantly in addressing major societal challenges.".*[1].

This project aims to address this challenge by characterising, at a high-level, the relationships that currently exist between academic researchers and policymakers. In addition, it aims to put in place a preliminary framework for policymaking bodies and academic researchers to align their resources and infrastructure for dialogue, knowledge mobilisation and innovation. It further makes some provisional suggestions or recommendations to foster the provisional framework.

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[1] DFHERIS, Statement of Strategy 2021-2023' (2021). [gov.ie - Statement of Strategy 2021-2023](#) ([www.gov.ie](#)) Goal 2: Connected Research System, p.10.

Project Introduction

Project Scope and Deliverables

Based on a light touch case study approach, conducted over February-March 2022, the project objective was to produce a high-level report identifying and characterising

• Pathways that academic researchers and policymakers use to support policy formation, implementation and evaluation.

• A preliminary framework that supports researcher and policymaker engagements, and

• A proto-set of measures that characterise engagement, relationships and activities between researchers and policymakers that can be assessed qualitatively and quantitatively.

These deliverables will enable monitoring and further development of engagement between researchers and the policymaking process at system level.

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Project Approach

- Methodology
- Project Planning & Initiation
- Desk-Based Review
- Case Studies & Consultations
- Analysis
- Reporting

Project Approach

Methodology

Mazars was appointed to assist the IUA with the development of a preliminary framework characterising relationships between researchers and policymakers to inform and support public policy in Ireland. The project commenced in February 2022 and was completed in April 2022. The methodology in Figure 1 was used throughout this project.
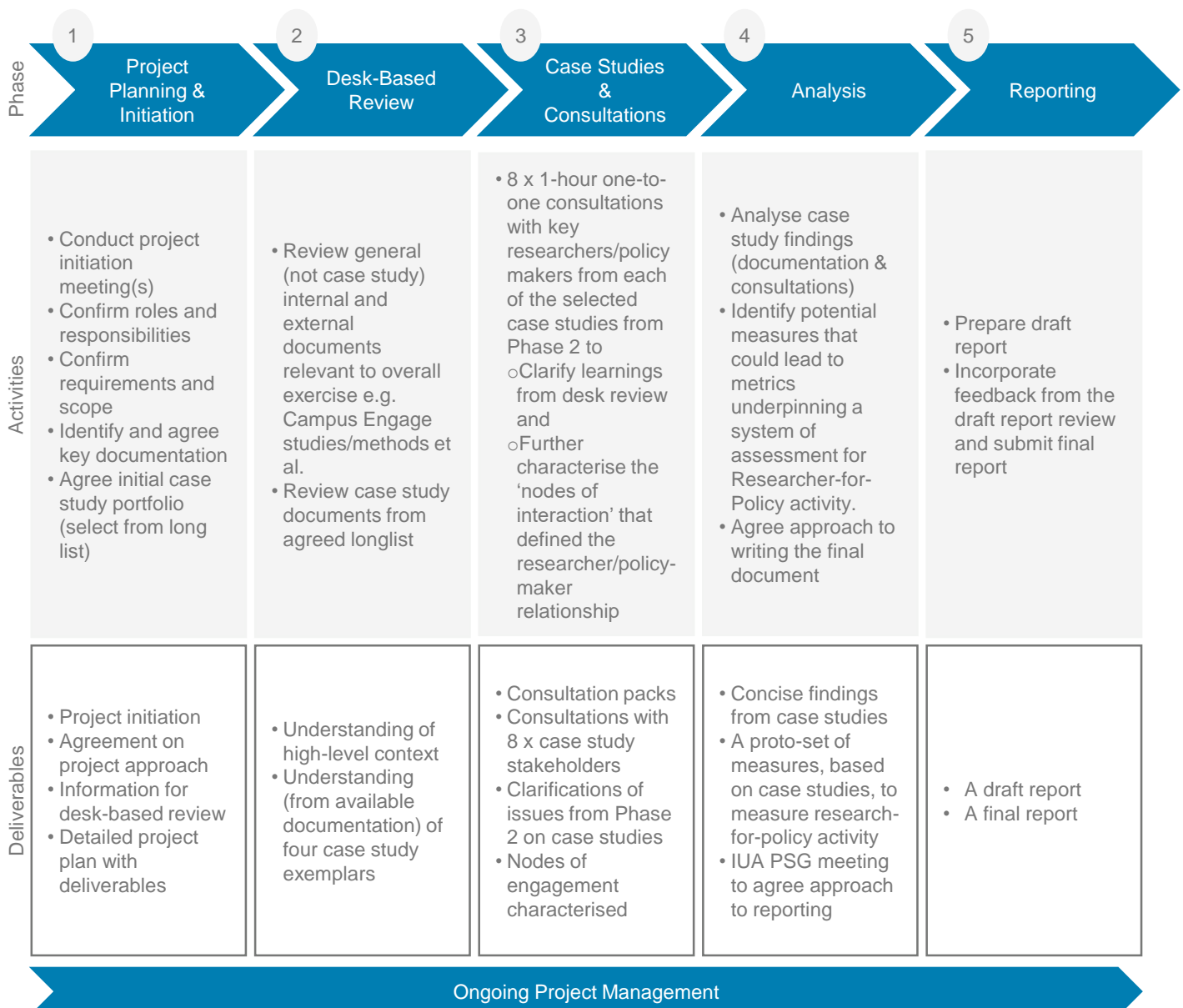
	1 **Project Planning & Initiation**	2 **Desk-Based Review**	3 **Case Studies & Consultations**	4 **Analysis**	5 **Reporting**
Activities	• Conduct project initiation meeting(s) • Confirm roles and responsibilities • Confirm requirements and scope • Identify and agree key documentation • Agree initial case study portfolio (select from long list)	• Review general (not case study) internal and external documents relevant to overall exercise e.g. Campus Engage studies/methods et al. • Review case study documents from agreed longlist	• 8 x 1-hour one-to-one consultations with key researchers/policy makers from each of the selected case studies from Phase 2 to o Clarify learnings from desk review and o Further characterise the 'nodes of interaction' that defined the researcher/policy-maker relationship	• Analyse case study findings (documentation & consultations) • Identify potential measures that could lead to metrics underpinning a system of assessment for Researcher-for-Policy activity. • Agree approach to writing the final document	• Prepare draft report • Incorporate feedback from the draft report review and submit final report
Deliverables	• Project initiation • Agreement on project approach • Information for desk-based review • Detailed project plan with deliverables	• Understanding of high-level context • Understanding (from available documentation) of four case study exemplars	• Consultation packs • Consultations with 8 x case study stakeholders • Clarifications of issues from Phase 2 on case studies • Nodes of engagement characterised	• Concise findings from case studies • A proto-set of measures, based on case studies, to measure research-for-policy activity • IUA PSG meeting to agree approach to reporting	• A draft report • A final report

Ongoing Project Management

Figure 1: Project methodology

02

Project Approach

Project Planning & Initiation

A project initiation meeting was held with the PSG (see A1) to identify and confirm roles, responsibilities, project requirements, consultees key documentation for the desk-based review and project deliverables. An Advisory Group was appointed (see A1) to review the findings of the project, specifically findings from both the researcher and policymakers' perspectives and to critique and provide feedback on the draft report.

Desk-Based Review

A desk-based review of over 40 documents was completed (see A2). This project phase was crucial for the Mazars team to understand at a high-level the context and four case-study exemplars, whilst devising discussion points for the stakeholder consultations.

Case Studies & Consultations

Several consultations with key researchers and policymakers in a range of public policy sectors (children, health, housing, environment and justice) were conducted (see A1 for a detailed list of those consulted). All consultations were undertaken between 4 February 2022 and 29 March 2022. Each consultation was performed in a semi-structured style which was developed in collaboration with the PSG (see A3).

The consultations enabled Mazars to further understand and clarify learnings form the desk-based review and further understand the 'nodes of interaction' and 'barriers and enablers' that contribute to researcher and policymaker relationships. All consultations followed a semi-structured format (see A3) focusing on:

1. Identification of Research for Policy Activity
2. Identification of Relationships
3. Engagement
4. Communication/Initiation
5. Management of Relationships

Analysis

All documentation review and consultation findings were analysed and potential measures to characterise researcher and policymaker engagements were identified.

Reporting

A draft report outlining all findings was prepared for the PSG and the Advisory Group. Based on feedback from the PSG and Advisory Group, the draft report was updated and finalised.

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Analysis & Findings

- [Need for research & evidence and the Role of Research in Policymaking](#)

- [Nodes and Opportunities of Engagement](#)

- [Barriers and Enablers](#)

- [Development of Measures](#)

03

Analysis & Findings

Based on our analysis of the documentation (see A2) and the consultations (see A1)., we made the following observations/findings.

Need for Research and Evidence and the Role of Research in Policymaking

The need for research evidence input to policymaking today has become increasingly prominent due to the complexity of social, economic and environmental challenges. Social problems such as urbanisation or global trade issues are characterised by a mix of complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity. Policymakers engaging with research evidence helps to support effective policymaking by ensuring policies are informed with the best available knowledge. Research knowledge ensures systematic evidence is an important part of the decision-making process. When tackling societies most complex problems, systematic knowledge is integral to understanding circumstance and providing insight to help understand such complex issues.

Research advice helps to foresee future challenges and assist policymakers in designing complex strategies and interventions.

Knowledge provided by research experts provides evidence to the policymaking process and is based on methodological rigour, agreed lines of enquiry, systematic review of evidence, and continuous analysis and scientific debate.

Nodes and Opportunities for Engagement

The ways in which researchers and policymakers engage in public policy work and its impact has not been characterised and measured to the same extent as characterising the impact of university research on Enterprise. Notwithstanding this, there have been notable accounts of university researchers involved in public policy formation and

implementation and producing high-quality, evidence-informed policy. These interactions were explored further through consultation with case study participants and the mechanisms of how they engaged and opportunities for engagement that have previously arisen are documented below.

Right place right time: Attending networks, seminars and committees can enable the establishment of relationships.

Reputation: Researchers known based on reputation, and then approached by policymakers for their involvement in policy design and development due to their expertise.

Memberships: Participation and/or membership on interview Boards, committees, councils, groups and networks. This enables researchers and policymakers to develop relationships and connections based on similar needs.

Open competition: Participating in and winning open competitions for research evidence projects e.g. eTenders.
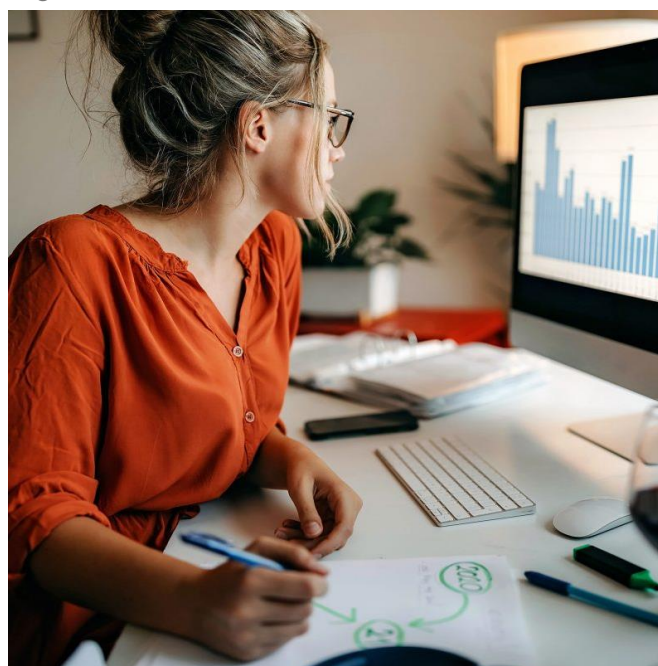
Analysis & Findings

Nodes and Opportunities for Engagement (continued)

Two-way secondment, fellowships, placements: Two-way secondment, fellowships, placements between higher education institutes and Government Departments, provides opportunity to build and develop contacts with those actively working in policy. This can often lead to repeat work or continued engagement in policy development.

Conferences: Attending relevant conferences and interacting with Government officials at these conferences can ensure policymakers are appropriately informed with the latest relevant information and evidence whilst also leading to opportunities for researchers to engage in policy design and development.

Advocacy work: Engagement with non-Governmental organisational addressing a societal challenge, can open up opportunity to engage with relevant civil servants, and to build relationships and trust.

Proactive correspondence to share valuable data: Developing an agreement for the sharing and use of research data between researchers and Government Departments or agencies. This can enhance relationship building and support a responsive policy environment. Readily available access to latest data can make policymakers' lives a lot easier and form an ongoing relationship.

A proactive approach to individual needs: When researchers can show understanding of policymakers' needs, the policy process, timelines, and a reciprocal and trusting relationship can evolve.

Honesty and openness: By promoting honesty and a culture of openness surrounding expectations, researchers can create opportunities to engage in policy development. This is particularly important to increase efforts to drive legitimacy of expertise and reduce undue use of influence.
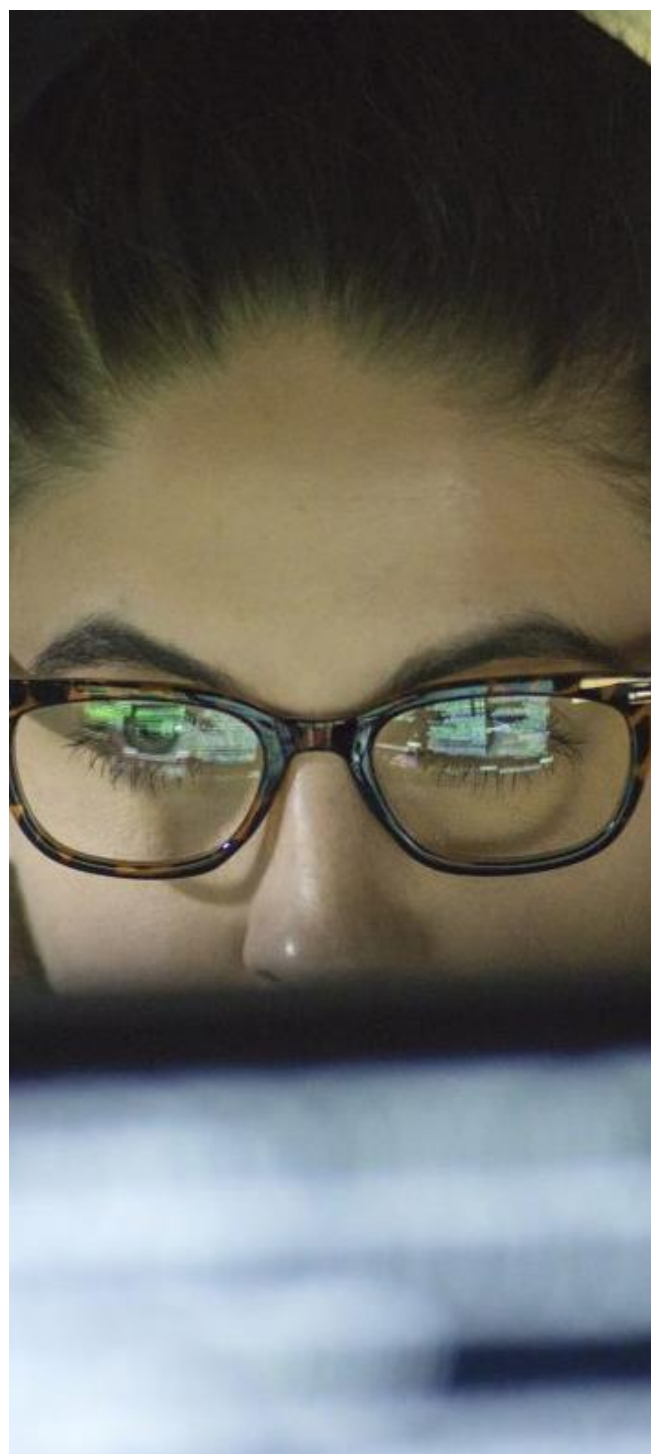
Analysis & Findings

Enablers and Barriers

Analysis of researcher-policymaker engagements was performed to identify the enablers and barriers of forming relationships, so that these areas could be highlighted and addressed to support and promote future engagements. What is most interesting is that both policymakers and researchers identify very similar factors as barriers and enablers to evidence for policy engagement. This indicates a good level of knowledge and empathy for both stakeholders.

Enablers for Researchers

Researchers who have successful engaged in the policy system have identified the below enablers for engaging with policymakers.

Researchers who spot trends: Academics who can readily identify and spot trends in policymaking are valuable for policymakers. These researchers tend to undertake on-the-ground, first-hand field research and can promptly inform policymakers of their findings.

Seriousness to engage: Those researchers that possess a seriousness to engage with policymakers tend to be more successful in building collaborative relationships with policymakers.

Engaging at early stages: Researchers who engage in policy at the early stages of the policy lifecycle are more likely to be recognised and trusted in later stages. Their reputation in the area is built up and collaborative relationships are easier to develop.

Proactive memberships: Researchers who are proactive and are willing to engage in networks, committees, groups, Boards, Councils, panels etc. become accessible to policymakers and are likely to engage with policymakers more regularly.

Encouragement: Researchers regularly require encouragement to get involved with policymaking and need to mentors or senior colleagues for entry routes into the policy system.

Ringfenced funding: Allocated funding for policy work is critical for researchers to fully engage. Some awards and programmes are available from research funding agencies including Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) challenged-based funding calls and the Irish Research Council COALESCE (Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges) call and DOROTHY Co-fund Programme.

Thought leadership: Thought leadership can play a key role for researchers to identify a concept/solution to issues policymakers are challenged with.

Good theoretical basis and desire for change: Researchers with a strong theoretical basis and desire for change will have a strong interest in policymaking. Understanding the influence of their research on public policy and the associated changes needed can enhance the ability of research to influence policy.

Reputation and trust: Researchers who have a strong reputation based on previous work and established trust from relationships developed with public bodies (Government Departments etc.) receive more buy-in and resources/support when working with policymakers.

The reputation of researchers and the trust they have built in the policy system is highly important for further developing their role, skills and involvement in policy. It is also significant when experience and established researchers in the policy system introduce their mentees or younger researcher to such work. This allows for continuity of researchers who are trusted to build networks in the policy work and stay engaged with policy developments. This hugely contributes to bigger impacts beyond policy.

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Analysis & Findings

Barriers and Enablers (continued)

Enablers for Researchers (continued)

Understanding of the job pressures: When researchers understand the pressures and demands associated with policymaking and the quick decisions which are often made by policymakers, relationships can be enhanced, and developed more effectively.

Contacts on the ground: Developing relationships with contacts on the ground can give researchers a point of entry into policymaking. This can also enhance support when providing information to policymakers.

Engaged field research: Undertaking engaged field research for public policy allows researchers to encounter public issues first-hand. This enables researchers to develop the problem-solving mindset needed for policymaking.

Solution-thinking mindset: Pre-empting problems and approaching policy situations with a solution-thinking mindset enables researchers to have a bigger impact on policy changes and approach interactions with policymakers in a more constructive and proactive manner.

Monitoring and evaluation: As policy is monitored and evaluated for impact, researchers who have credible experience in monitoring and evaluating policies can assist and provide support.

Enablers for Policymakers

Policymakers who have successfully engaged with researchers in the policy system have identified the below enablers.

Commissioned work: Policymakers often get the chance to commission pieces of research to academic researchers and research institutes. This

allows for structured engagement and relationship building.

Trusted working relationships: When policymakers work closely with researchers, researchers develop an understanding of the on the ground pressures and demands policymakers face. This enables trusted and more effective researcher policymaker engagements allowing both parties to build an ongoing relationship.

Brokerage events: Seminars to discuss how research can enable policy decision making events where policymakers engage directly with researchers and their latest research.

Synthesising research/service desk: Policymakers can often succumb to information overload. Distilling key points and transferring only the most robust and relevant knowledge enables policymakers to effectively use information provided to influence policy. Sometimes a research desk service is necessary to turn the evidence into useable formats. Some Departments have active partnerships with research institutes and Government agencies that provide such services.

Managing expert communities: Often policy issues are very complex. Cooperation and joint efforts between disciplines enables policymakers to tackle such complex issues with a wide range of expertise.

Researcher participation on expert advisory committees enables policymakers' and researchers' relationships to develop.

Understanding policy and science: Understanding the policy ecosystem as a policy process and not a policy lifecycle with linear stages can be more appropriate. This can produce new ways to understand the link between policy and evidence.

Analysis & Findings

Barriers and Enablers (continued)

Enablers for Policymakers (continued)

Mediating engagements with citizens and stakeholders: Researchers can play an influential role in policy development by bringing stakeholders and the public together when in the policy development stages. Researchers can open doors and build trust with diverse local and national communities and stakeholders, open access to their knowledge and get buy-in through collaboration for policy.

For policymakers this can result in better policy implementation, public support and impact of public policies; and support attitudinal and behavioural change as a result of stakeholder involvement in new policy, products or practices.

Research Desks: some Government Departments use 'research desks/services' to engage with academia and to maximise awareness of current research being undertaken. Examples of Department's that use research desks include the Department of Health, Department of Justice (DoJ), Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

Barriers for Researchers

Several challenges were identified by researchers when attempting to form and develop collaborative relationships. These are discussed below in further detail.

Lack of investment in knowledge mobilisation and culture: A lack of investment in knowledge mobilisation for public policy and in public policy culture across higher education institutions and Government Departments.

Understanding of job requirements: Researchers do not always understand the pressures and demands associated with policymaking and the quick decisions which are often made by policymakers. This can lead to frustration and difficulty in building relationships.

Commissioned work: Commissioned work creates opportunity for researchers and policymakers to engage, however sometimes the indemnity clauses of public procurement contracts prevent university-based researchers from being eligible to apply.

Lack of mutual interest: Academics often believe policymakers undertake policy work with little depth or research involved.

Lack of incentives to engage: Researchers need to produce publications for academic career progression. Grey literature or policy briefing etc. can take time, and do not get accredited. As such, established academics are more willing to undertake evidence for public policy work.

Policymakers do not reference research evidence documents/papers in policy work as they don't understand the research publication process. This prevents researchers from further engagement with policymakers as researchers want credit for their work.

Timing: Academics strive to implement the first best solution which is not always politically or socially acceptable. Policymakers settle for a fifth or sixth best solution due to short-term demands. This can hinder relationship building.

Communication and accountability: Both the researcher and policymaker can be accused of poor communication and lack of accountability. Frequently researchers publish work that is not readily accessible or understood by policymakers.

Analysis & Findings

Barrier and Enablers (continued)

Barriers for Researchers (continued)

Cyclical changing in Government Department personnel: Researchers struggle to build relationships with policymakers when policymakers are shuffled around different Government Departments. Some researchers spend years investing time and building relationships with policymakers in certain Departments, to then find their contact has been relocated and working in a new sector.

Channels to engage: Channels for researchers and policymakers to engage are not easily identifiable. This is problematic for researchers who want to engage in policymaking but are unaware of the route to do so.

Difference in personalities: The lack of understanding, empathy and mutual respect between researchers and policymakers can result in behaviour bias and unwanted behaviours. These must be overcome in order to successful build relationships and engage.

Dissemination of research: Researchers frequently publish their findings in academic journals, conferences etc., however such information is not readily accessible to policymakers.

Lack of funding and time: Many researchers do not have the time beyond their academic duties to engage in policymaking and require dedicated time to do so. Buy-out time is regularly required for academics to fully engage. Some funding agencies also provide leadership awards for academic researchers to engage but competition for such awards is highly competitive.

Misinformation: Most researchers provide information for policy based on rigorous evidence. There are some influential researchers who present their own views or produce non-evidence-based information for policy, which can be damaging to academics' reputations and result in a lack of trust from policymakers.

Barriers for Policymakers

Various barriers were identified by policymakers when engaging with researchers. These are discussed below in further detail.

Lack of mutual interest: Researchers areas of investigation are often too niche, and not relevant to the policymaker. Policymakers believe academics often research personal interests, as opposed to other policy imperatives that arise.

Lack of policymaking knowledge: Policymakers often struggle to identify researchers with knowledge of the policymaking system and those who research broader areas, that both the researcher and policymaker are invested in.

Lack of clarity: Policymakers do not have time to review and regularly do not comprehend researchers work. The areas discussed are usually too technical and not readily understood by a lay audience. Often, during policy design, policymakers are not aware of evidence-informed solutions to policy issues which they are tackling. Researchers tend to produce rigorous evidence; however, policymakers have difficulties assessing the quality of information.

Commonly researchers must produce academic literature that is highly detailed, where policymakers only require high-level summaries / policy briefs of their work undertaken or specific evidence relating to the policy area.

Lack of infrastructures: Sometimes a research desk service is necessary to turn the evidence into useable formats. Often, during policy design, policymakers are not aware of evidence-informed solutions to policy issues which they are tackling.

Analysis & Findings

Barriers and Enablers (continued)

Barriers for Policymakers (continued)

Lack of communication: Policymakers believe that researchers do not effectively engage with policymakers or communicate their research in a way which can be readily understood by policymakers i.e. research areas are too niche to comprehend.

Verifying quality of evidence: Policymakers may sometimes struggle in their ability to recognise quality information. Policymakers do not always verify references and the quality of them when using evidence in policy work. There are also a lot of activists that are not completely objective in the way they use the research evidence. This is a big challenge in the policy system to understand and properly evaluate the research information.

Timing: Academic research can be slow to produce results which does not suit the need for quick policy development e.g. during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sometimes academic researchers produce reports at times when the information is not required but could be useful in later policy development.

Limited knowledge of academic career progression: Policymakers lack understanding of the peer-review and publishing processes. This is a requirement for academics in their professional development and career progression, but often policy work does not lead to online publication.

Limited access to literature: A policymaker requires access to academic journal databases through subscriptions or access to timely information. Repeatedly policymakers are unaware of where to find the required information or lack the necessary subscriptions to access such information.

Long-term projects: Sometimes policymaking implementation takes too long for academic researchers to commit. Academic researchers are not always invested in the long-term and do not have the mindset for long-term thinking that is required in the policy lifecycle.

Lack of needs driven research: There is often a lack of available, clear, relevant research evidence for policymakers to access during the design of a policy. There is a need for the development of a research unit / service in Departments to produce simple, clear and relevant research summaries developed by reputable researchers.

Lack of awareness: Policymakers need to be aware of ongoing research by researchers, and be able to understand it i.e. learn the language, and be willing to get close to the data/evidence. There needs to be a symbiotic culture to understand the data and obtaining the required skills to analyse / use the evidence.

Analysis & Findings

03

Development of Measures

Several factors should be considered when developing and evaluating measures or metrics which have been outlined below:

Define the audience and use for measurement: This is important in order to identify and develop a suitable metric.

Consult with stakeholders and advisory groups: Consultations contribute to the identification of stakeholders' needs while simultaneously contributing to the acceptance of the selected metrics.

Choose the area to measure: This should be based on the importance of the problem, potential for improvement and controllability by service providers

Achieve a balance in measurement: Achieving a balanced set of measures can be assisted by incorporating structure, process and outcome classification into the methodology for assessing the system.

Determine selection criteria: Measures should be chosen based on the judgement and consensus of experts and potential users.

Define the indicator: A clear definition of the indicator should be included to ensure that it is appropriately interpreted by those collecting the data.

Research presentations: Policymakers are extremely busy in their daily duties and therefore require initiatives where researchers have opportunities to present current hot topics succinctly to policymakers. Similar to events like the Executive Edge, Thesis in 3, Engaged Research Seminars are currently being conducted in University College Dublin (UCD) These competitions allow researchers to present concise research findings to a lay audience in under five minutes and they would be highly valuable providing policymakers with insights into current research areas.

Through the suite of case studies, we identified a range of processes and pathways that exist for researchers to inform and support the public policy lifecycle.

04

Framework & Metrics

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Framework & Metrics
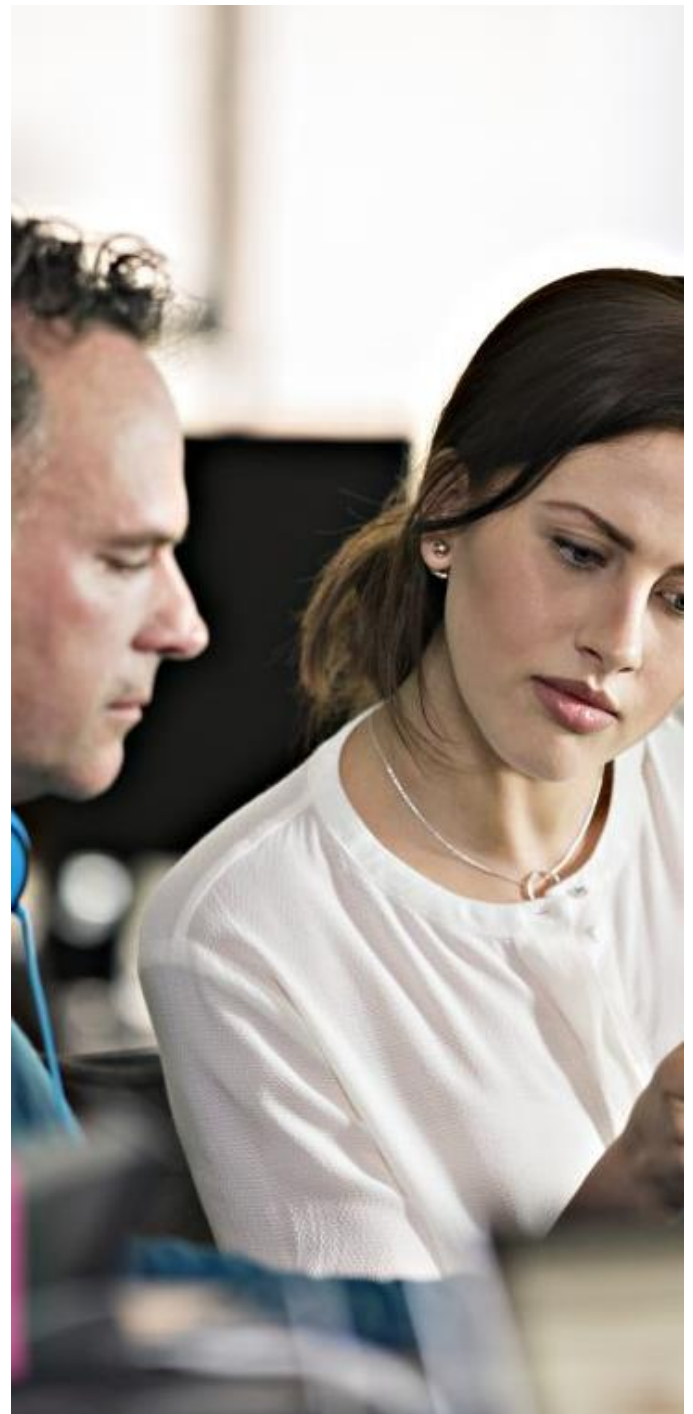## Recommended Framework Approach

Purpose

Research and *Policy* are often seen as two communities which operate independently. While individual public bodies (Government Department or Agency) differ in terms of academic researcher engagement and development of policy, the proposed (preliminary) framework below represents a guide across the stages of the policy lifecycle and where researchers and policymakers can actively engage and collaborate, productively.

The aim of future researcher and policymaker engagements is to use this framework to encourage more contact, cooperation and co-creation to actively solve complex societal challenges. It will also aid creation of a research approach that aligns clearly and comprehensibly to policy design and implementation. Closer relationships between researchers and policymakers build bonds that are necessary for trust, sense-making, understanding of needs, increased dialogue and diversity of input.

Scope

This preliminary framework builds on a number of existing frameworks and is intended to define stages across the policy lifecycle where researchers and policymakers can actively engage in a collaborative working relationships. It applies to all researchers and policymakers nationally. These stages are further described below and depicted in Figure 2.

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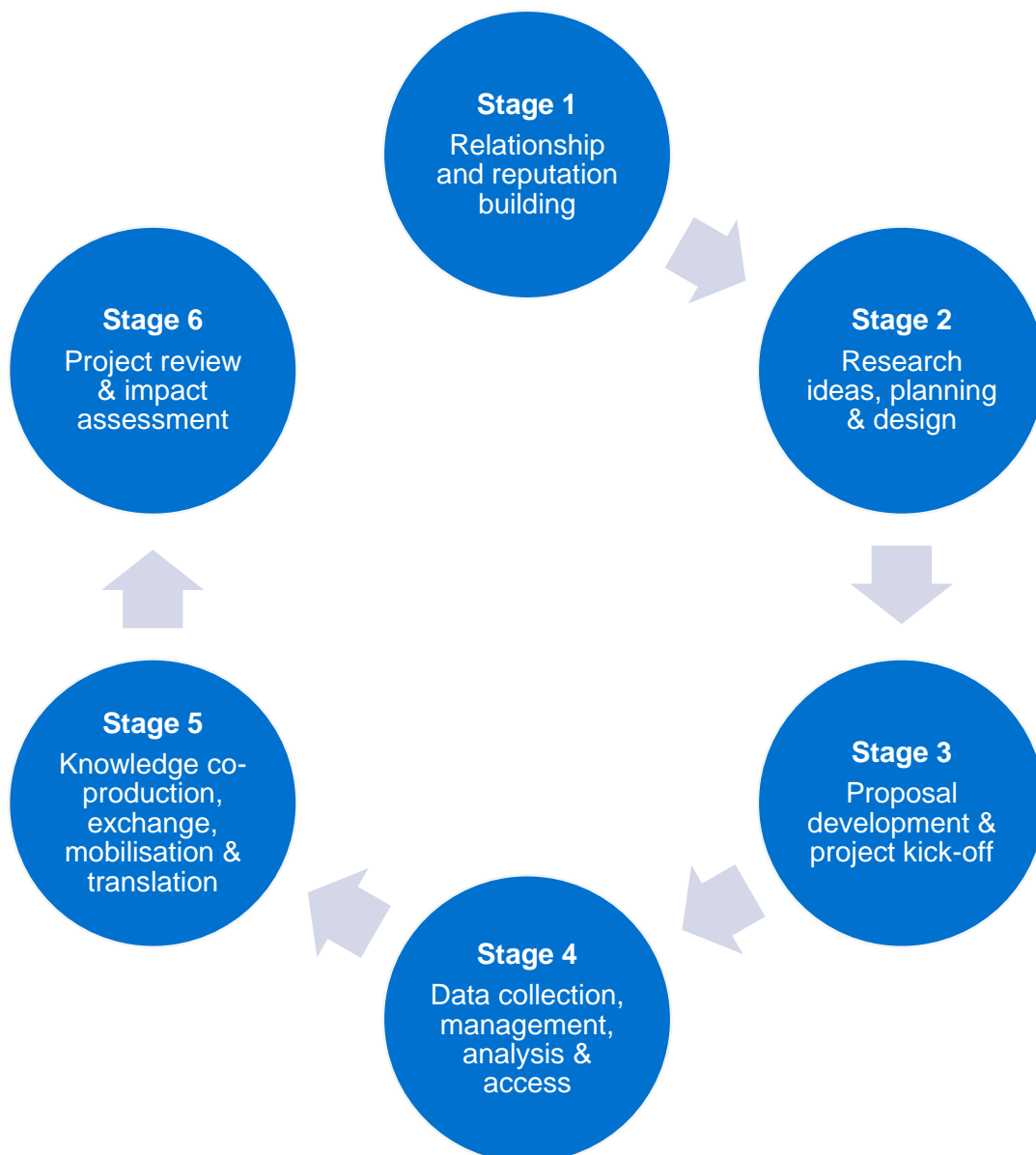# Framework & Metrics
Recommended Framework Approach

Stage 1
Relationship and reputation building

Stage 2
Research ideas, planning & design

Stage 3
Proposal development & project kick-off

Stage 4
Data collection, management, analysis & access

Stage 5
Knowledge co-production, exchange, mobilisation & translation

Stage 6
Project review & impact assessment

Figure 2: Framework for researcher and policymaker engagement

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage

This framework describes the different stages across the policy lifecycle and where researchers and policymakers can engage.

Stage 1: Relationship and reputation building			
Activity	Researcher Role	Policymaker Role	Researcher and Policymaker Roles
Identify channels for engagement	✔		
Build an expert reputation in a specific policy sector	✔		
Join networks, groups, councils, boards etc.			✔
Undertake secondments in Government Departments	✔		
Build relationships and contacts			✔
Undertake training in policymaking/knowledge building e.g. European commission knowledge for policy training material: science for policy	✔		

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 2: Research ideas, planning & design			
Activity	**Researcher Role**	**Policymaker Role**	**Researcher and Policymaker Roles**
Identify key stakeholders and collaborators for whom the research is relevant and engage in discussions in order to refine the research questions / hypothesis		✔	
Confirm the project team, collaborators and social partners, clarifying roles and responsibilities			✔
Identify and help understand the key issue of public concern or the societal challenge that is relevant to the research team and its potential partners and what needs to change			✔
Undertake literature, data, evidence and policy reviews representative of similar international challenges and jurisdictions and modifying what has worked in other jurisdictions for the appropriate Irish context, to map the research and policy landscapes	✔		
Draft and refine the research question / hypothesis and confirm its relevancy with key stakeholders and potential partners through dialogue			✔
Identify relevant funding sources			✔
Develop the budget and confirm resource allocations align with roles and responsibilities for the entire project team, including societal partners		✔	
Utilise the Campus Engage Planning for Impact Framework with research partners to consult and confirm inputs, activities, technology, practice, outputs, desired outcomes and potential impacts, along with the project's timeline and milestones, with clear pathways for impact established with each partner			✔

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 3: Research ideas, planning & design			
Activity	**Researcher Role**	**Policymaker Role**	**Researcher and Policymaker Roles**
Finalise the research question / hypothesis and develop the conceptual and methodological frameworks			✓
State the aims and objectives of the research and clearly explain how the participatory approaches selected align			✓
Refine the Campus Engage Planning for Impact Framework to confirm inputs, activities, outputs desired outcomes and potential impacts, along with the project's timeline and milestones, with clear pathways to impact established with each partner			✓
Document support for this project across key stakeholders. This might include public or professional service providers and product users, policy makers, civil and civic society organisations, other researchers, industry partners, students, and members of the public			✓
Evaluate the methodology, research design, participant settings, recruitment, instruments, methods, measures, assessments, procedures and quality assurances	✓		
Negotiate and finalise the research agreement with the funding agency and host institution or organisation, if applicable			✓
Set up the project's administrative mechanisms and agree on the operational plan, timeline and reporting schedule with the project team, funders and host institution or organisation			✓

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 3: Research ideas, planning & design (continued)			
Activity	Researcher Role	Policymaker Role	Researcher and Policymaker Roles
Secure ethical approvals, as appropriate	✔		
Advance the data collection, management and analysis plans with the project team, funders and host institution or organisations			✔
Advance the public engagement and communications plans with the project team, funders and host institution or organisations			✔
Agree on the ownership of Intellectual Property, access to data, and address other contractual and proprietary issues with partners			✔
Modifying key successes or implementing best practice for the appropriate Irish context and implementation of a new policy, practice or technology		✔	

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 4: Data collection, management, analysis & access			
Activity	**Researcher Role**	**Policymaker Role**	**Researcher and Policymaker Roles**
Implement quality control and data protection procedures in agreement with ethical approvals, as required, including safeguarding data and anonymity			✓
Collect, clean and screen the data in agreement with the project's data collection, management and analysis plans	✓		
Complete transcription, where applicable, and implement data management protocols			✓
Test the reliability and validity of the data	✓		
Store data in agreement with the project's data management plan			✓
Analyse the data	✓		
Manage and impute missing data	✓		
Develop analytical categories and, if appropriate, undertake modelling	✓		
Interpret, critique and share the findings, encouraging research partners to communicate through their networks, maximising the reach			✓
Anonymise the data, as applicable	✓		
Create a clear process for how data can be accessed in alignment with the project's data collection, management and access plans			✓
Publicly archive the data, if so desired		✓	
Promote the use of data, instruments, protocols and other project deliverables to a range of audiences, in user-friendly and accessible formats			✓
Capture data access requests and consider whether these requests may spin out new projects or collaborations			✓

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 5: Knowledge co-production, exchange, mobilisation & translation			
Activity	**Researcher Role**	**Policymaker Role**	**Researcher and Policymaker Roles**
Release project reports, research policy briefs and other deliverables, encouraging dissemination through community partners directly to their networks			✓
Issue publications to both academic and non-academic audiences, as applicable, identifying opportunities to reach communities for whom the research is relevant			✓
Host dissemination and knowledge exchange events			✓
Meet with stakeholders to share findings to promote evidence-informed policies, services and processes		✓	
Map research findings to policy documents at local, regional, national and international levels, as applicable	✓		
Present findings at conferences and other events	✓		
Engage with the media through press releases, interviews and opinion pieces			✓
Issue newsletters or an annual review for multi-year projects		✓	
Provide online resources and website updates, including social media posts and tagged campaigns, as appropriate			✓
Identify technology outputs, intellectual property and the potential for commercialisation activities			✓
Develop proposals for spin out projects, utilising this Engaged Research Framework			✓

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 5: Knowledge co-production, exchange, mobilisation & translation (continued)			
Activity	**Researcher Role**	**Policymaker Role**	**Researcher and Policymaker Roles**
Engagement with intermediary organisations, such as knowledge and technology transfer offices, business incubators, and other supports which assist researchers and social innovators to translate their knowledge for public good			✔
Engagement to advance collaborations, consortia, and teaming opportunities.			✔
Networking, mentoring activities and coaching to exchange knowledge in formats aligned with users' needs.			✔
Meetings with potential knowledge users and co-creators.		✔	
Hosting events to showcase research findings and their implications in local, regional, national and/or international contexts.	✔		
Development of outputs based on users' identified needs, such as audience-specific policy and research briefs.	✔		
Preparation of manuscripts, print and electronic publications aimed at furthering the use of co-produced knowledge.	✔		

Framework & Metrics

Policy Lifecycle and Opportunities to Engage (continued)

Stage 6: Project review & impact assessment			
Activity	**Researcher Role**	**Policymaker Role**	**Researcher and Policymaker Roles**
New Knowledge Creation and Mobilisation			✓
Economic Impacts			✓
Environmental Impacts			✓
Health and Wellbeing Impacts			✓
Public Policy, Practice and Services Impacts			✓
Professional and Public Services Impacts			✓
Industry Innovation			✓
Cultural Impacts			✓
Internationalisation Impacts			✓
Partnerships for Change			✓
Complete final reporting			✓
Update and share the team contact database, as applicable			✓
Identify potential spin out projects and/or new collaborations			✓
Develop proposals for spinout projects utilising this Engaged Research Framework			✓
Interventions need to be evaluated throughout the policy lifecycles to see if interventions have made a difference	✓		
Summative evaluation, policymakers need researchers to monitor evidence informed intervention for initial issues and changes needed.	✓		

Framework & Metrics
Metrics to Measure Engagement

The proto-metrics described below (Table 1.) might be useful in any future framework(s) to inform researchers and policymakers regarding their relationships and interactions, even if they are not actively counted.

Table 1: Proto-Metrics for researcher and policymaker engagement

Metric	Description
Quality / performance	Evaluate current performance / quality of collaboration against an acceptable level of performance / quality or against a standard of expected performance/quality. This is important for researchers and policymakers to assess the impact of their relationship on meaningful policy work.
Active engaged research projects	The number of actively engaged research for public policy projects. This is important as it shows the impact and involvement in research work.
New/revised services	The number of new or revised services which have been developed from engagement between policymaker and research evidence provided by researchers. This is important as it helps to track services which have been enhanced or service issues which have been resolved through collaborative relationships between policymakers and researchers.
Policy communications / briefings	The number of policy communications / briefings, based on relevant up to date information and data, which have been effectively delivered to policy audiences. This is important as it allows you to track researcher involvement in policy briefings or through public meetings, quantifying engagements between researchers and policymakers.
New / revised public policy	The number of new or revised public policies which have been effectively informed or updated through engaged evidence-based research opportunities. This is important as it tracks the involvement of researchers in policy development or change in policies based on informed research evidence.
Citations / references to Department / Agency reports	The number of citations/references to reports produced from Departments / Agencies / Councils where researchers were actively engaged to produce the evidence used during the development of policies. This is important for academic's careers and career progression; it enables tracking and increases Government awareness of publications and their importance in research.

Framework & Metrics

Metrics to Measure Engagement (continued)

Metric	Description
Commissioned research	The number of research projects where researchers were commissioned to perform evidence-based research for Government/Agencies relevant to policy. This is important as it measures how often research services are required by Government.
Relationships	The number of civil servants actively and effectively working with researchers on policy issues and policy development. This quantitively measures the number of policymakers/researchers who have established a continual collaborative relationship. This is important as it tracks sustained successful collaboration between researchers and policymakers.
Researchers with interest in policy	The number of researchers with a fundamental interest in policymaking and continued involvement in policy design and development. This is important as often researchers do not engage long-term in policymaking and there is no succession path/plan for researchers to engage in policy.
Channels for engagement	The number of opportunities for researchers to engage in policymaking e.g. positions on Councils, Committees, Boards, Groups etc. where their voice is influential and heard. This is important as it enables policymakers to access experts and up to date relevant information.
Encouragement	The number of events organised where researchers are encouraged to attend conferences, networks or opportunities to critique policy. This is important as it increases engagement between policymakers and researchers.
Raising issues	The number of times issues were raised by researchers linked to policy change. This tracks policies which are of relative importance to society or may identify significant challenges.
Appearances on media/Government committees/forums	The number of times a researcher has appeared on media channels in relation to policy work or on Government committees/forums as an expert in policy work. This is important as it increases awareness, trust and reputation of a researcher.

05

The Benefits of Working Together

- [The Benefits of Working Together](#)

The Benefits of Working Together

Produces rigorous evidence to inform government policy and practice decision making

Opens doors and builds trust with diverse local and national communities and stakeholders, and opens access to their knowledge, buy-in through collaboration

Guides decision making and provides agreed solutions based on comprehensive understanding of societal challenges, their causes, effects on diverse stakeholders, and collaboratively tested solutions

Facilitates participation of traditionally under-represented, or marginalised groups in policy research, design and implementation

Results in better implementation, support and impact of public policies

Supports attitudinal and behavioural change as a result of stakeholder involvement in new policy, products or practices

06

Suggestions

- Suggestions

06

Suggestions

Based on our general experience of this short project, we make the following tentative suggestions at a 'system level' in terms of fostering the Research-4-Policy environment in Ireland. These suggestions are outside the agreed scope of the project and are thus offered in a tentative, suggestion form rather than as hard recommendations.

Suggestion 1 – Research desks

Policymaking bodies, principally Government departments, should establish or build on existing 'research desks' to provide immediate / short-term evidence queries, brokerage of more complex research questions on behalf of policy units, commissioning routes to academia and support for networks building. [Arguably, Universities should consider establishing mirror functions to enable connection of the two worlds…].

Suggestion 2 – Research classification system

Create a register for a system to identify researchers in a particular research area. This can enable policymakers to actively identify researchers in areas where evidence/expertise is required for certain policy work. This is a current objective of DFHERIS Research Evidence Unit.

Suggestion 3 – Retention of core resources/knowledge handovers

Government Departments should ensure a spine of institutional resource/knowledge is retained in order to preserve academic / policymaker relationships in the context of the civil service personnel rotation policy.

Suggestion 4 – Reward system in higher education

The incentives for academic researchers to engage in public policy are relatively weak in terms of the academic promotions architecture. Providing recognition of such work in the university system would catalyse change in this regard.

Suggestion 5 – Brokerage events

It is clear from our short project that there are many instances of where policy makers are simply not aware of existing expertise/research that could support their work. Fora (events, networks etc.) are required that enable researcher / policymaker interactions such that relationships – and, ultimately, trust – can be built between university researchers and public policymakers.

Appendices

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Project Stakeholders

Participant	Position
Project Steering Group	
Kate Morris	Head of Campus Engage, IUA
Dr Lisa Keating	Director of Research and Innovation, IUA
Advisory Group	
Prof. Peter Clinch	Professor and chair of Public Policy, UCD and SFI Board Chairperson
Dr Deirdre Quinn	Senior Manager, Policy, Higher Education Authority
Paddy Howard	Principal Officer, DFHERIS
Trudy Duffy	Principal Officer, Evidence for Policy, DFHERIS
Consultees	
Prof. Frank Convery	Emeritus Heritage Trust Professor of Environmental Policy, UCD
Dr Teresa Maguire	Head of Population Health & Health Services Research, Health Research Board
Prof. Eamon O'Shea	Professor of Business and Economics, National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Brendan Walsh	Research Officer, Economic Social Research Institute
Prof. Michelle Norris	Professor of Social Policy, UCD
Bob Jordan	Chief Executive Officer, The Housing Agency Ireland
Prof. Seán Redmond	Professor, Head of Young Offender Programmes, Irish Youth Justice Service, University of Limerick
Deaglán O'Briain	Principal Officer, DoJ
Dr Anna Visser	Principal Officer, Research and Evaluation Unit, DCEDIY
Liz Canavan	Assistant Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach

Appendices

Appendix 2 – Documentation Review

No.	Documentation Review
Internal Documents	
1	Evidence Research IUA June 2020
2	Campus Engage Impact Framework v2
3	Research Public Policy Impact Oct 2019
4	Research for Public Policy and Society, Mary Doyle
5	Research for Policy Project Planning 2022
6	Framework for Research for Policy 2020 JBKM
7	Research4Policy KPI Frameworks
8	A Systematic Review of the Barrier Enablers Research for Policy
9	Academic Article Impact Research for Policy Auz
10	BRIDGE Good Practice Guide
11	Department of Justice and Equality Data and Research Strategy 2018-2021
12	EPA Research for Policy KT Doc
13	EU Course Handbook
14	EU FP9 Impact Framework
15	EU Saiepa Science for Policy Report
16	EU Science for Policy EASAC Guidelines
17	EU 10 Tips Impact Policy Infographic
18	EU Science for Policy Handbook
19	KPI Guidance Version 1.1 2013
20	LERU Productive Interactions Societal Impact of Academic Research
21	Link Competence Framework Science for Policy for Researchers
22	SDG The University Impact Rankings
23	Trinity Long Room Hub Policy Position Paper 2021 Final
24	Toolkit Bridging the Gap Science for Policy EPA TCD
25	Training Research for Policy AquaTT Interactive

Appendices

Appendix 2 – Documentation Review

No.	Documentation Review
IUA Online Documents – Campus Engage	
26	Campus Engage Impact Framework
27	Campus Engage Engaged Research Policy Briefing for Funding Agencies
28	Campus Engage Engaged Research Policy Briefing for HEIs
29	Campus Engage Policy Brief Senior Civil Servants and Policy Makers
30	Engaged Research Practice and Principles
31	Framework for Engaged Research
External Documents	
32	Convery, FJ, Reflections on COP26 EAERE Magazine - N.15 Winter 2022 V
33	Convery, FJ, Making a difference - How Environmental Economists can Influence the Policy Process - a case study of David W Pearce.
34	Demand for the Statutory Home Care Scheme
35	Economic Analysis of Dementia Community Care
36	HRB Evidence Review Housing with Support for Older People
37	IGS & ISPA Healthcare Symposium Programme A4
38	Projections of Expenditure for Primary, Community and Long-Term Care in Ireland 2019-2025, Based on the Hippocrates Model
39	Erismann S, et al., How to Bring Research Evidence into Policy? Synthesizing Strategies of Five Research Projects in Low-and Middle-Income Countries
40	Approaches to the Regulation and Financing of Home Care Services in Four European Countries
41	Evidence Based Policy RIA Research for Public Policy
42	Minister for Mental Health and Older People announces selection of 4 sites for new Home Support Pilot
43	Linking Care Bands to Resource Allocation for Home Support and Long-Term Residential Care
44	The National Single Assessment Tool
45	IRC Researcher of the Year 2021 Impact Awards

Appendices

Appendix 3 - Consultation Pack for Case Studies

Researcher-Policymaker Engagement
Briefing Note, Agenda & Discussion Topics

Irish Universities Association

February-March 2022

mazars

Briefing Note & Agenda

Mazars was appointed to assist the Irish Universities Association (IUA) to support researcher-policymaker engagement by facilitating greater evidence-informed public policy and practice across the Irish system.

Briefing Note

The IUA wish to characterise at a high-level the relationships that exist between academic researchers and policymakers in public policy. Mazars were appointed to assist the IUA to gather evidence on how academic researchers engage with the public policy system in terms of policy agenda setting, formation, implementation and evaluation. The ultimate deliverables of the project will feed into the new IUA Campus Engage Guide to support better engagement between researchers and policymakers.

At the heart of this project, are case studies. Through a suite of case studies we will identify a range of processes and pathways that exist for researchers to inform and support implementation of public policy in Ireland and beyond. Careful selection of these case studies will enable us to get a useful picture of the different ways in which researchers and policymakers engage. The choice of case studies should, where possible, represent a reasonable cross section of sectors (housing, health etc.), research disciplines (economics, sociology, health analytics etc.), policy formation, implementation, evaluation, and jurisdictions.

As a key stakeholder in the Irish public policy system, we would like to hear your thoughts on researcher-policymaker engagements (see discussion topics on next page).

Agenda

1. Introduction & Background – Project Overview
2. Discussion Points (see next page for topics)
3. Close Discussion
4. Q&A

mazars

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Appendices

Appendix 3 - Consultation Pack for Case Studies

Discussion Topics

01 Identification of Research for Policy Activity
State how research has influenced a new policy, a strategy, an intervention programme, evaluation or other?

02 Identification of Relationships
How was the researcher identified?
Is it based on personal relationships or something more structured?

03 Engagement
How were they engaged?
Did the research carry out a consultation, an evidence review, draft policy, create an intervention programme from research findings, evaluate a strategy, a service etc. across the policy cycle?

04 Communication/Initiation
Did the researcher reach out or did the policymaker reach out?
What enables effective and ineffective research for policy engagement?

05 Management
How was the relationship managed?

mazars

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