

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION STUDIES – WHAT, WHY, WHEN AND HOW?

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Half day	Intermediate to advanced levels
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Many organisations and groups are now being asked to provide an account of the benefits and impact of their research and evaluation activities. This includes public and charitable research funders, research and evaluation sections in government agencies, university research centres and groups, and evaluation organisations. They all face substantial challenges in providing robust and representative accounts of their impact.

This workshop will discuss these challenges and participants will consider what, why, when and how research impact assessment is or can be undertaken. Participants will examine examples of how a variety of organisations and groups have set about this task. They will discuss the role of research impact case studies, the use of logic modelling and contribution analysis, and the potential for cost/benefit analysis and routine impact indicators.

By the end of the workshop participants will know what questions to ask and they will take away some conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches that should allow them to develop their own context-specific answers.

BIO

Sandra is Professor of Public Management at the University of Edinburgh, where she is also Director of the Research Unit for Research Utilisation (www.ruru.ac.uk). In addition to her academic role, she is a non-executive director of the Social Work Inspection Agency Board (Scotland).

Sandra has an international reputation for her work on research use and evidence-informed policy and practice, and she is a frequent keynote speaker at international conferences on these issues. She has written many papers and her research on this topic is captured in her recent book on *Using Evidence* (Nutley et al 2007, Policy Press). In 2010 she edited and contributed to a theme issue of the *Evidence & Policy* journal (Vol 6. Issue 2), which considered evidence and policy in six European countries.

Sandra has sought to practice what she preaches on the importance of dialogue and interaction between academics and those working in policy and practice roles. Much of her own research is applied and is undertaken in partnership with 'user' organisations. She has also been a member of several policy advisory groups.

From 2006-2009, Sandra chaired a group which reviewed the supply incentives for knowledge exchange activities in Scottish universities and how these can be enhanced, what can be done to stimulate public policy and practice demand for the knowledge available from universities, and what is needed to improve the interaction between the supply and demand sides of this equation.

Prior to joining academia, Sandra worked in local government in the UK and since then she has been seconded to work with several public sector organisations, including the Scottish Government. She has also worked on a consultancy basis with a wide range of public and voluntary sector organisations.