**Author’s response to reviews**

**Title:** Performing collaborative research: a dramaturgical reflection on an institutional knowledge brokering service in the North East of England

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We would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Reviewer 1, Comment 1: The discussion would benefit from consistent explicit linking of the 5 themes developed in the findings to the dramaturgical lens of Goffman, as is done for findings 1 to 3 (Managing performances in knowledge brokering; Performing for different audiences; When audience segregation fails). After that, beginning with the sub-heading The backstage function of AskFuse, the analysis of the dramaturgy to the final findings is not clearly articulated.

Response: We have added more explicit linking and reflection between findings 4 and 5 and the dramaturgical lens of Goffman under the heading “Dealing with change ‘deviant’ roles”. Lines 401-430

Reviewer 1, Comment 2: I am curious about the reference to the United Nations document on Human Rights (reference #13, line 150). I read the cited document and I could not see the link to the statement regarding the ubiquity of challenges of different governance and health systems. Please clarify.

Response: Apologies, an incorrect reference was included with this number. The correct reference is: Oliver K, Innvar S, Lorenc T, Woodman J, Thomas J. A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers. BMC Health Serv Res. 2014; 14: 2. This reference has been included in the reference list. Lines 555-556

Reviewer 1, Comment 3: There seems to be some information missing in the paragraph beginning on line 340, "A second way outlined by Goffman to handle the problem of failed .." The second sentence alludes to an example about a GP that does not appear elsewhere in the manuscript, and is either out of place or needs some further description.

Response: The second sentence is out of place and was left over from previous iterations of the manuscript. We removed this sentence. Lines 356-358
Reviewer 1, Comment 4: Line 347-348 - Should this say that the back stage functions "are" provided by AskFuse?
Response: We changed “could be” into “are”, as suggested by the reviewer, which makes more sense. Line 362

Reviewer 1, Comment 5: Be careful with abbreviations; for example you use PHPs in line 53 and it is expanded in line 54.
Response: We wrote out abbreviations in full. Lines 34-35

Reviewer 2, Comment 1: The front and back stage metaphor will be useful for other universities in thinking through the kinds of problems and potential solutions likely to arise. However there are important limitations to the use of the metaphor which have not been acknowledged. Not all readers will resonate with some of the underlying assumptions: Different audiences require different messages and methods of communication, and we must be sensitive to the local context, but must audiences be kept distinct? Is hiding the problems and limitations encountered by the broker institution helpful? Is the messiness of sorting out what is wanted from research a limitation or a strength? I was also left wondering whether these early experiences of AskFuse's knowledge brokering service may change over time as Wehren suggests elsewhere (2012)? The authors may wish to reflect on this in the discussion.
Response: We have acknowledged the limitations of applying a dramaturgical lens to institutional knowledge brokers in a new section at the end of the paper (Limitations to a dramaturgical lens) with reflections on underlying assumptions and future changes to the AskFuse service. Lines 467-489

Reviewer 2, Comment 2: The authors refer very little to an existing substantial knowledge about the problems they identify. The paper explores knowledge brokering at an institutional level in a unique way. However, many of the concepts are not new and the authors should acknowledge this. For example, the time-consuming nature of scoping research has been acknowledged often [eg Kangura et al 2012; Ganann et al; Featherstone et al]; the need for better incentives in universities for knowledge translation [Campbell et al; Greenhalgh et al]; the mismatch between policy and research timeframes and funding [Ganann; Khangura et al 2014; Oliver et al 2014] the need to consider multiple types of evidence [Armstrong et al 2014; Kastner et al 20142; Oliver et al 2017]; the necessity of establishing trusting relationships with key players [Haynes et al 2012; Haynes et al 2018]; the need to tailor messages to different audiences [Grimshaw et al 2012; Lavis et al 2003; Ellen et al 2014]. The authors could comment in the discussion on how this article builds on what is known by identifying the ways in which these issues arise and are addressed in an institutional knowledge brokering context.
Response: We acknowledge that the challenges highlighted in this paper are not new and have tried to summarise the most important ones in the background section with references to the literature (2,3,4). The aim of our manuscript is to reframe these well-known challenges by applying a dramaturgical lens. We have tried to be clearer about how the challenges link to the existing evidence base by adding references at the end of each challenge discussion, making good use of the references suggested by the reviewer, for which we would like to express our thanks. We explained clearer at the start of the discussion section that we build on what is known about the five challenges by adding a new perspective (dramaturgical lens) within the context of
an institutional knowledge brokering service. Lines 38-42; 195-197; 216-219; 230-232; 258-261; 294-297; 397-399; 305-307

Reviewer 2, Comment 3: The authors should consider modifying the sentence about Kislov who pointed to the potential problems of a model that relies on a single knowledge broker; he did not dismiss the model out of hand. E.g. "Employing individual knowledge brokers may not be sufficient...". The authors could also reference some of the university-based knowledge brokering studies such as Caswill et al 2013; Knight and Lyall 2013; Lightowler et al 2013 and comment on the limitation of these studies, alongside Kislov.
Response: We have modified the sentence as suggested as added references on studies of university-based knowledge brokering and the challenges faced by individual knowledge brokers within universities. Lines 36-42

Reviewer 2, Comment 4: The quote in line 337 is confusing and reinforces the idea that what goes on behind the scenes is negative.
Response: We have explained the quote in more detail to emphasise the positives of dealing with clashing audiences, when audience members help to refocus the performance or where performers adopt new audience members. Lines 347-352

Reviewer 2, Comment 5: Functions 1-5 need to be developed a little more, particularly number 5.
Response: The five functions listed on page 21 are a summary of the reframed challenged outlined in the paper and therefore more detail on each function can be found in the discussion section. See also our response to comment 1 from reviewer 1. By adding more reflections on findings 4 and 5, we have developed the functions further. In particular, we have added more detail and references to function 5. Lines 298-399; 401-430; 457-459

Reviewer 2, Comment 6: The article needs some language corrections before being published: Line 328 insert 'the' before 'individuals'; Line 355, 'lays' should be 'lies'; Line 416 'response' should be 'responsive'; Line 420 'increasing' should be 'increasingly'.
Response: We have corrected language in the manuscript as suggested by the reviewer. Lines 334; 369; 496; 500