

What is impact?

Stephanie Seavers

Impact Officer, Social Sciences

What is Research Impact?

Academic Impact:

- ▶ the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory, application and academic practice.

Wider Impact:

- ▶ an effect on, change to or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond academia.



What is Research Impact?

Wider Impact:

demonstrable

- ▶ an ~~an~~ **effect** on, **change** to or **benefit** to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, **beyond academia**.



What are the benefits?

- ▶ Raise individual profile and subject profile
- ▶ Benefit research design through stakeholder engagement and feedback
- ▶ Establish long-lasting research contacts
- ▶ Generate new research or funding opportunities



Why is impact important?

- ▶ **Grant applications** (esp. RCUK). Pathways to impact – outline the potential non-academic users of the research, how they could benefit, and what you will do to engage them in the research.
- ▶ **Career progression.** Increasing focus on impact as part of career development. Research impact potential likely to be considered in hiring decisions pre-REF.
- ▶ **REF.** Impact accounts for 20% of overall REF score.



Why is impact important?

- ▶ Research Excellence Framework (REF)
 - The REF assesses the quality of academic research – informs league tables and determines HEFCE 'quality related' funding for 6 years
 - In addition to research outputs, each Unit of Assessment must submit impact case studies.
 - In 2014 each Unit of Assessment needed to submit a minimum of 2 case studies, plus an extra 1 per 10 FTE researchers
 - Case studies ranked between 1* and 4*
 - Impact worth 20% of total REF score
 - Impact seen as having the most potential risk attached, but also the most potential reward for universities.



Making the case for impact

Underpinning research

+

Engagement with non-academic audiences

+

Demonstrable change on audience/partners

= IMPACT!



Examples of impact


Public debate has been stimulated or influenced by research

A charity's campaign has been shaped by research

A new service or product is provided as a result of research findings

Professional standards, guidelines or practices have been changed as a result of research

Policy decisions have been made as a result of research



Pathways to impact

Public discussion about
your research via web,
social media, broadcast
media

Non academic event or
conference

Stakeholder working
groups

Training materials, tools,
frameworks, exhibitions,
artworks

Liaison with policy
makers through select
committees,
commissioned research
or meetings



Engagement vs impact

- ▶ **Engagement** is the method with which you communicate your research to your chosen audience
- ▶ **Impact** is the demonstrable change leading from that communication.

Engagement	Impact
Roundtable event with civil servants	Change to recommendations given to policy makers
Museum exhibition	Rise in ticket sales or visitor numbers
Website/Social Media Chat	Trending, shares, comments indicating a change in opinion or thought
Press interview	Further articles indicating shaping press debate

Demonstrating a change - examples of impact evidence

- ▶ Citation in policy document
- ▶ Citation in charity campaign or think tank recommendation
- ▶ Qualitative feedback from stakeholder explaining how your findings have influenced their work – worth identifying in advance who could provide testimonials
- ▶ Feedback from event participants or online comments showing change in understanding
- ▶ Quantitative data, e.g. improved financial gains/productivity



Developing an impact strategy

- ▶ Identify potential audiences/beneficiaries of your research
- ▶ Why will they benefit from your research?
- ▶ Identify how you can engage with them and at which stages
 - Events
 - Policy engagement
 - Media
 - Web/digital media
 - Collaboration with external organisation
- ▶ Demonstrate flexibility to be both proactive (organising engagement activities) as well as reactive (e.g. responding to select committee calls/contributing to media discussion)
- ▶ What resources will you need?



Activity: what would the impact strategy for your research look like?

- ▶ Describe your research briefly
- ▶ Who are your non-academic beneficiaries?
- ▶ Why would they benefit from your research?
- ▶ How would you communicate with them?
- ▶ What potential challenges might you face?
- ▶ What might your impact look like?

