




Evidencing the difference we make
Evaluating and narrating the impact of UK arts and humanities research

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Issues to be addressed

- Impact: the broad context
- The drivers for impact assessment: the UK research councils and the Research Excellence Framework
- Personalising the impact agenda
- A mixed approach to monitoring, evaluating and assessing research impact
- The common problem of impact: Learning from partners and other external organisations
- Using narrative in impact assessment



Impact: the broad UK context

- What are universities and academics for, and what contribution they can and should they make to society and the economy?
- Related debates about priorities for public expenditure, and what the public should get in exchange for that expenditure
- Set in a broad ethical and political context of the need for public accountability
- On a more positive note, the now fairly widespread recognition that the arts, humanities and social sciences can have benefits beyond the academy – whether economic, social or cultural.



The drivers for impact assessment
Joint statement on Impact


“The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Research Councils UK (RCUK) and Universities UK (UUK) agree that the range of benefits that can flow from excellent research, and the variety of means by which those benefits are achieved and felt in different contexts, are broad and diverse. Benefits can result from an individual piece of research, or from a body of activity conducted over a period and perhaps across several departments or universities. They can take a wide variety of forms, and may become fully apparent some time after the underpinning research from which they flow was conducted. They may be apparent in an industrial or business context, in the fields of healthcare and social wellbeing, public policy or as a contribution to cultural life, public debate or improved understanding of the world that we live in.

The responsibility for achieving these outcomes is shared by both the funders of research and the higher education institutions where the research takes place. Therefore, these outcomes should be recognised and rewarded through funding mechanisms, career development and the management of research.” <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/maximising/Pages/impactstatement.aspx>



The drivers for impact assessment

- Applications for research funding submitted to the research councils, including AHRC and ESRC, require an Impact Summary (which asks, Who will benefit from the research, how will they benefit, and what will be done to ensure that they benefit?) and an extended impact plan ('Pathways to Impact')
- The research councils distinguish between 'Impact' and 'Pathways to Impact' because they recognise that it is difficult to predict the benefits of research before it proceeds and its outcomes are known.
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundedResearch/Pages/ImpactAssessment.aspx>
- They also make available 'follow-on funding' to enable existing award holders to make the most of potential impacts arising from recently completed projects, as well as Impact Fellowships.



The drivers for impact assessment


HE Funding Councils Research Excellence Framework 2014

- The decision to include an impact measure in the next UK research evaluation exercise led to academic consultation and a pilot scheme: *Research Excellence Framework impact pilot exercise: Findings of the expert panels* (reported in November 2010)
- "For the purposes of REF 2014, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia... Impact includes, but is not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit to:
 - the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
 - of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals
 - in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally." (From *Guidance on Submissions*)
- The criteria for assessing impacts are 'reach' and 'significance'.



Personalising the impact agenda


- identifying the types of benefits/impacts our own research has the potential to make, and to whom
- identifying and developing 'pathways to impact' based on our own research
- identifying any groups and individuals, as well as potential partner organisations and stakeholders who might benefit from our research; making contact and beginning to work with them
- recording, monitoring and measuring the wider non-academic effects and benefits of our research
- and addressing the issues of evaluation and corroboration.



A mixed approach to evaluating and assessing research impact


REF 2014 Impact case study template

- *Title of case study*
- *Summary of the impact* (100 words)
- *Underpinning research* (max 500 words) This section should outline the key research insights or findings that underpinned the impact, and provide details of what research was undertaken, when, and by whom. References to specific research outputs that embody the research described in this section, and evidence of its quality, should be provided in the next section.
- *References to the research* (max 6)
- *Details of the impact* (max 750 words) This section should provide a narrative, with supporting evidence, to explain how the research underpinned (made a distinct and material contribution to) the impact; the nature and extent of the impact.
- *Sources to corroborate the impact* (max 10)




A mixed approach to monitoring, evaluating and assessing research impact

- Quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Evaluation: Practical Guidelines* (An RCUK guide for evaluating public engagement activities) distinguishes between formative and summative evaluation and suggests the use of a qualitative approach to the former and use of quantitative measures with qualitative interpretation for the latter.
- <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/publications/evaluationguide.pdf>
- Statistical measures* (website hits, statistical analysis of feedback on events, numbers of citations in non-academic documents, audience figures)
- Social scientific research methods* (surveys, feedback questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, use of social media such as twitter, facebook, observation)
- Narrative approaches* (case studies, peer review, collecting written responses and comments, researcher self-narration through impact trees, flow diagrams)
- Plus importance of evidence and corroboration



Learning from partners and other external organisations


- Sharing knowledge and experience about impact evaluation
 - The Evaluation Trust resources, <http://www.evaluationtrust.org/tools/toolkit>
 - Alison James (museum consultant): Resources and chart of evaluation methods, <http://home2.btconnect.com/alisonjames/evaluation.htm>
- Collaboration to maximise impact of all partners, e.g. *DARE*
 - "*DARE* is a unique collaboration between Opera North and the University of Leeds, the first partnership of its kind in the UK.
 - As two of the UK's leading institutions of culture and education we fuse the artistic with the academic, combining the very best of both organisations to inspire and stimulate new ways of thinking and working."
 - <http://www.dareyou.org.uk/>




Learning from partners and other external organisations

Understanding impact of new Hearing Aid exhibit

- Impact **quantifiable** as outputs: number of visitors, website hits, sales of linked merchandise
- Measurement of impact **quality**: generic challenge of gauging effect on visitor understanding and attitudes
- Focus on **feedback**, especially from key groups in deaf community
- Evidence: questionnaires, discussion boards, blogs, and evidence of any **changes** in policy or strategy




Collaboration between Thackray Museum and the Centre for History and Philosophy of Science, University of Leeds



Using narrative in impact assessment

- Telling the story of the research and its effects, influence and the reach and significance of its impact
- Summarising the research, saying something about its intended benefits, its potential audiences, users and partners, then describing the activities, events, presentations, reports and other outputs that arose from the research, explaining and evidencing their impact, and providing some corroboration.
- The narrative should give a sense of what has happened as a result of the research, of what difference it has made to individuals, groups, companies, public bodies, international NGOs etc.
- This can be presented in the form of a case study, an impact evaluation report, or through diagrams such as impact trees, flow diagrams



Preparing an impact case study for REF 2014
Religion, policing and security in multi-faith communities

Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Building on the University of Leeds' long-established expertise in researching local faith communities, and on the research strengths of the Institute for Religion and Public Life, our focus on security and policing in multi-faith communities has had an impact at local, national and international scales. Five staff members and two research students have contributed to the underpinning research and impacts. Key impact activities have included collaborative policy-oriented research and dissemination on religion, policing and security in partnership with major stakeholders including LAPD and UK Home Office; engagement with national debate on radicalisation; and contributions to public understanding of the issues.

(Followed by a narrative account of 'Underpinning research', 'References to the research', 'Details of the impact' and 'Sources to corroborate the impact'.)

