Research Impact Masterclass Series: No 1

What is research impact and why does it matter?

WORKBOOK

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Topics:

- What is research impact?
- Why is research impact important?
- How is research impact achieved ?
- How is research impact measured?

By the end of this short course you will be able to:

✔ Demonstrate a good understanding of definitions and types of research impact

✔ Understand how the research impact agenda is likely to affect you, your team and institution

✔ Explain the different types of research impact and how this is measured

What is research impact?

The likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved.

National Institutes of Health

The potential [for your research] to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of desired society outcomes.

National Science Foundation

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

UK Research Excellence Framework

The contribution that **research** makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic **research**.

Australian Research Council

Proveable change [benefit] of research in the 'real world'.

Julie Bayley, Director of Research Impact Development, University of Lincoln
www.juliebayley.blog

What is research impact?

Types of impact

- Understanding and awareness
- Attitudinal
- Economic
- Environmental
- Health and well-being
- Policy
- Other forms of decision-making and behaviour change impacts
- Cultural
- Other social
- Capacity of preparedness

Professor Mark Reed,
The Research Impact Handbook
https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/what-is-impact

Exercise 1: for a current or recent research project – consider the different types of impact that might be possible and list them here:

Good ideas are not adopted automatically. They must be driven into practice with courageous patience.

Hyman Rickover

Why does research impact matter?

National assessment systems

- UK REF: impact case studies assessment inform 25% of university funding
- Australia has recently introduced Engagement and Impact assessment
- Other countries that examine research impact include Italy, France and Belgium

Competitive grants

- Growing competition is driving requirement for dissemination / impact capabilities for funding success
- The US National Science Foundation requires a statement of the potential broader impacts that a project will lead to as part of the grant submission
- UK Research Councils require a 'pathway to impact' plan
- Horizon 2020 funding requires a detailed exploitation and dissemination plan

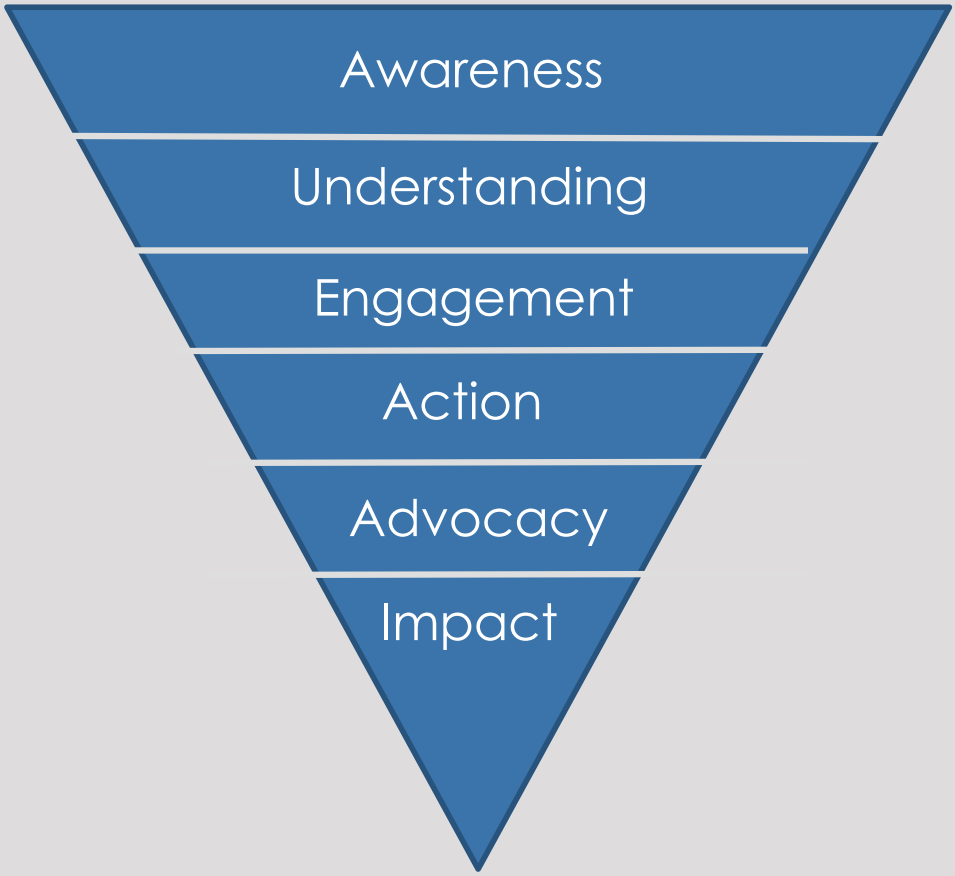
Why does research impact matter?

Political	Environmental
• Growing pressures for evaluation of public spending on higher education and research	• Demands by policymakers for strategic intelligence on research quality and impact
Social	**Technological**
• Competition within and between institutions for prestige, students, staff and resources	• Increases in the availability of real-time 'big data' on research uptake, and capacity of tools for analysing this

Stern Report, published July 2016 – a review of the REF
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-excellence-framework-review

Exercise 2: make some notes on why research impact matters. Consider your personal view and that of your funder and institution.

How is research impact achieved?



Access	Available, discoverable and shareable
Understanding	Explained and contextualised
Engagement	Conversations, exchanges, participation, co-creation
Action	Uptake: products, services, projects
Advocacy	Policy change, training and education
Impact	Proveable change [benefit] in the real world

How is research impact measured?

Mark Taylor, Head of Impact the National Institute for Health has identified four reasons for measuring impact:

1. Advocacy
2. Accountability
3. Analysis
4. Allocation

Traditional measures of 'impact':

- Impact factors
- Eigen factor
- Citations, H-index, M-index and G-index

Emerging measures of 'impact':

- Article influence score (Eigenfactor)
- 'Altmetrics' – online attention
- Impact case studies
- Impact evidence

Exercise 3: what measures of impact do you currently do you currently apply?

Research some of the other methods further and decide which are most relevant to you and your work:

Summary

- Research impact is **real change in the real world**
- There are many **different kinds of impact** including attitudinal, awareness, economic, social, policy, cultural and health
- It takes **hard work** and persistence to create impact from research
- Impact is achieved through **several steps** that include access, awareness, understanding, engagement, action and advocacy
- Impact is best achieved through **stakeholder engagement** throughout the lifecycle of a project
- National assessment programmes and funding agencies are placing **increased emphasis** on dissemination and impact evaluation, particularly outside of academia
- **Evidencing and measuring impact** are controversial and fast developing areas – likely to comprise a mix of quantitative indicators and qualitative reviews
- Researchers will need to develop **new skills and capabilities** to demonstrate ability to create impact, which could become central to career progression and institutional reputation.

Links and further reading

Books:

- Reed, M. S. (2018) The Research Impact Handbook
- Denicolo, P. (Ed.) (2013) Achieving impact in research. Sage.
- Derrick, G. (2018) The evaluators' eye: Impact assessment and academic peer review. Springer

Links:

- https://www.fasttrackimpact.com
- https://juliebayley.blog/
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-excellence-framework-review
- https://responsiblemetrics.org/the-metric-tide/
- https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/special/broaderimpacts
- https://www.ukri.org/innovation/excellence-with-impact/pathways-to-impact/
- www.rsc.org
- **https://www.growkudos.com/about/research_groups**