



Research Impact Masterclass Series: No 4

Engaging broad audiences for real-world impact



Introduction and course overview



Course tutor:

Melinda Kenneway,
CEO, KUDOS
www.growkudos.com

Topics:

Why engaging broader audiences matters
Audience targeting – general principles
Adapting your communication style
Engaging industry, policy makers, and the public

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

- ✓ Understand the role of broad engagement in impact assessment
- ✓ Know how to prioritise and adapt your message for audiences outside of academia
- ✓ Appreciate the different writing styles and outputs required for broad outreach
- ✓ Apply best practice in communicating with industry, policy makers and the public

Why does broad
engagement
matter?

Accountability

Increasingly, institutions need to be open and transparent about what they are spending public money on – and why.

Trust

We need a trusted evidence-base from which to make decisions – individually, nationally and internationally. Researchers need to be part of the debate on the social and ethical implications of the research they undertake.

Relevance

There is the opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of research by responding to the transformation in media to share expertise and improve understanding.

Why does broad engagement matter?



I think it is easy to forget the privileged position we are in as researchers. We have the latest research and insights and evidence at our fingertips and (crucially) we have the knowledge to be able to critically interpret and use what we learn. Yet, without realising it, we hide these insights in impenetrable language, on inaccessible bookshelves, out of reach of those that need our knowledge most.

Professor Mark Reed
Fast Track Impact

Why does broad
engagement
matter?

Non-academic impact is becoming more important in research evaluation

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

Reaching outside of academia is becoming a requirement of many **research funders**

Kudos survey results, 9,500 researchers worldwide

Which of these does your funder require?

39%

Dissemination / impact plan required

37%

Required to reach broad audiences

25%

Engage stakeholders throughout project

The importance of broader communications and impacts

In the context of your future funding and career progression, is it important to show that you are communicating your work and achieving broader impacts (beyond measures such as the Journal Impact Factor)?

n = 6,972



<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/08/21/where-is-the-publication-puck-going-making-research-possible-upstream-of-publication/>

Audience targeting



Audience targeting

Defining your impact goals

The following questions provide a useful starting point:

- What are the likely outcomes of this research?
- Who will benefit from this research?
- How will they benefit from this research?
- How can you involve potential beneficiaries in this research?
- How will you know if it has made a difference?

A typical set of objectives might be to:

- Build awareness of the project among a defined audience
- Secure the commitment of a defined group of stakeholders to the project aims
- Influence specific policies or policymakers on key aspects
- Encourage participation among researchers or partner bodies

<https://esrc.ukri.org/research/impact-toolkit/developing-a-communications-and-impact-strategy/step-by-step-guide/setting-objectives/>

Audience targeting

Types of impact / beneficial changes

1. Understanding and awareness
2. Attitudes
3. Economy
4. Environment
5. Health and wellbeing
6. Policy
7. Other forms of decision-making/behavior change
8. Culture
9. Other social
10. Capacity or preparedness

Audience targeting

Reaching outside of academia is becoming important to **researchers**

Kudos survey results, 7,000 researchers worldwide

Which of these audiences is it important for you to reach?

82%

educators

72%

policy makers

67%

industry

65%

public

Audience targeting

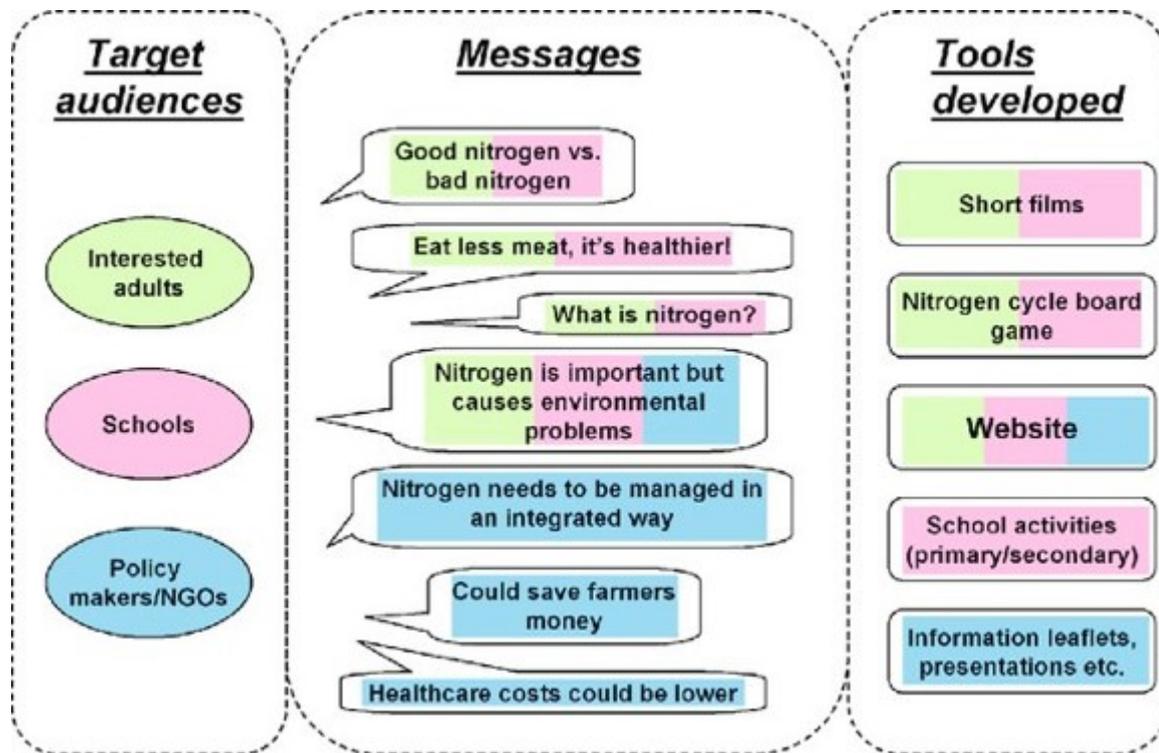
Writing a key message

Key messages are the **core idea** you want your **target audiences** to hear and remember.

Using them can help make your communications with each audience relevant, focused and consistent. Each key message should be written from a position of the *change you wish to bring about in a belief or practice*.

Remember the old adage that people have to hear something three times before they take it in? Microsoft have done research that indicates this could actually be between 6 and 20 times. So keep your top line messages simple, and **repeat, repeat, repeat**.

Audience targeting



The European Nitrogen Assessment; Chapter 26: Societal choice and communicating the European nitrogen challenge. Editors: Mark A Sutton, Clare M Howard, Jan Willem Erisman, Gilles Billen, Albert Bleeker, Peringe Grennfelt, Hans Van Grinsven, Bruna Grizzetti

Adapting your style for non-academic audiences



Adapting your style for non-academic audiences

- **Keep sentences short and direct**

The next step will be to undertake a thorough analysis of the results.
Next we will thoroughly analyse the results.
- **Use simple words and avoid jargon**

Write *use* instead of *utilize*, *near* instead of *close proximity*, *help* instead of *facilitate*, *start* instead of *commence*.
- **Use active sentences**

Active: Passive sentences bore people
Passive: People are bored by passive sentences
- **Keep paragraphs short**

Our brains digest information better when it's broken into chunks
- **Use visual aids**

Consider how you might use infographics, videos, images ...

Adapting your style for non-academic audiences

The image shows a grid of science news article thumbnails from New Scientist magazine. Each thumbnail includes a category label, an image, and a headline. The categories include Technology, Environment, Mind, Physics, and Sponsored. The headlines are: 'IBM is using quantum computers to generate Minecraft-like game levels', 'Human Nature film review: Telling the CRISPR story with wit and verve', 'Companies could be failing to explain decisions made by AI', 'What is the UN's COP25 climate summit, and why does it matter?', 'Two brain networks behave differently in people who are suicidal', 'The dark side of innovation: From dynamite to climate change', and 'We've discovered a strange twist in the story of how crystals form'.

The image shows the cover of New Scientist magazine. The main headline is 'Why the medicine you take could actually be bad for your health'. The cover features a diagram of various pills and capsules with arrows indicating their effects: 'Fast-tracked approval, efficacy unproven', 'No better than placebo', 'Tested on 20 people', 'Potentially deadly side effects', and 'Not approved for your condition'. Other headlines include 'SUPER MAGNETS: The new materials that will transform technology', 'END GAME: Grand unified theory of two-player games revealed', and 'YOUR DOG'S TRUE AGE ...and how to calculate it'.

The image shows the YouTube channel interface for New Scientist. The channel name is 'New Scientist' with 187K subscribers. The interface includes tabs for 'HOME', 'VIDEOS', and 'PLAYLISTS'. A video player is shown with the title 'By trusting science, we will solve the world'... and a play button. The video duration is 0:00 / 2:36.

Adapting your
style for
non-academic
audiences

WHAT GRATIFICATION DO PEOPLE GET FROM SOCIAL MEDIA?

25 Participants



Whiting, A. and Williams, D. (2013) "Why people use social media: a uses and gratifications approach", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Volume 16 issue 4, pp.362 - 369

Engaging **industry**,
policy makers and
the public



Engaging **industry**, policy makers and the public

Potential benefits:

- Industry partners can be a good source of research questions and constructively challenge your approach to help you improve it
- Different perspectives may lead you to develop new research horizons and / or strengthened, robust research arguments.
- A greater understanding of the needs of the particular industry partner / sector that you are engaging with is likely to help you improve the impact potential of your research
- Satisfaction from seeing your research making a difference and from exposure to a different working environment
- A virtuous circle wherein research informs practice and practice informs your research.

Engaging **industry**, policy makers and the public

5 tips for engaging industry

1. **Network, network, network** – be seen in the right places and make sure you are visible
2. **Talk in their language** – have a good elevator pitch that articulates your research and potential benefits to the industry partner
3. **Give it time to build relationships** – it can take a while to find the right partner and project
4. **Clarify Intellectual Property Rights** – the intended use of any IPRs needs to be specified in the research contract
5. **Establish clear boundaries** – be clear at the outset of the project as to what input the industry partner will have into the project as it progresses.

Engaging industry, **policy makers** and the public

What is policy?

A policy is a plan, course of action, or set of regulations adopted by government, businesses, or other institutions designed to influence and determine decisions or procedures.

Who are policy makers?

'Policy maker' is a broad term that covers all the people responsible for formulating or amending policy. This includes Ministers, their advisers, civil servants, chief scientific advisers, staff in government agencies, politicians, and their advisors.

What role does research and evidence play in policy making?

Generally, governments worldwide are trying to encourage better use of evidence in policy making.

Engaging industry, policy makers and the public

WHY is this important for policy? You need to be able to sum this up in a few sentences - for yourself and others.

WHO has the power to make a difference? Identify key individuals and groups who make, implement or influence relevant policy.

WHEN to engage? The most effective engagement results from dialogue throughout the project, beginning at the planning stage.

WHERE to engage? Go to your policy audience (for example, in London or Brussels), and build funding for this into your project budget.

HOW to engage? Two of the most common ways of engaging with policymakers are via meetings (large or small) and written policy briefs.

Engaging industry, policy makers and the public

5 tips for engaging policy makers

1. **Short meetings are best.** 1 or two hours. Longer meetings may be possible but need to be worked out ahead of time.
2. **Take appropriate printed materials.** For a one-on-one meeting, business cards and policy briefs are ideal, as are other short communications materials. If you bring a report or journal article, include a one-page summary.
3. **Use templates for policy briefings.** Many institutions make templates available – check with your communications team.
4. **Aim for 1500 words** maximum for a 2-side brief/ In general, include the following sections in order: **Key points, Introduction, Findings, Policy Recommendations.**
5. **Post your brief on your website and other policy sites.** Policy Library (www.policylibrary.com) reaches an audience of hundreds of thousands, including policy makers and politicians.

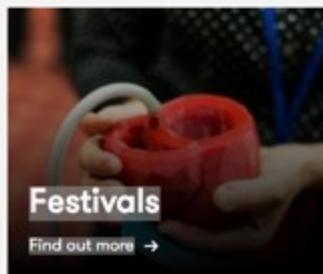
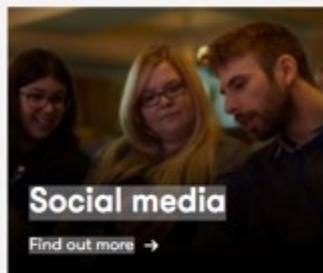
Engaging industry,
policy makers and
the public

Not all research can drive policy change

1. Some research has no policy relevance
2. Much research supports the policy status quo
3. Politics almost always trumps evidence
4. Policymaking is path-dependent and chaotic
5. 'Bounded rationality' applies to researchers
6. Influencing policy is a specialist, time-consuming activity

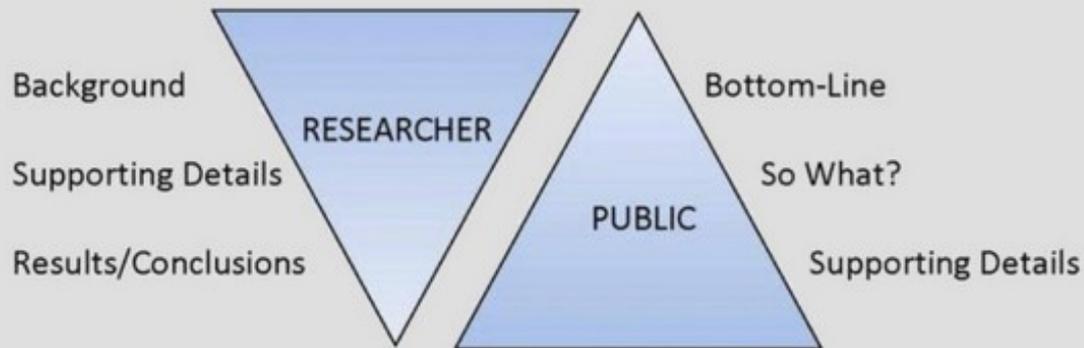
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/05/25/should-academics-be-expected-to-change-policy-six-reasons-why-it-is-unrealistic/>

Engaging industry, policy makers and **the public**



Engaging industry,
policy makers and
the public

Different styles of communication



Engaging industry, policy makers and the public

5 tips for engaging with the public

1. **Get to the point** – researchers are trained to provide lots of detail ahead of their conclusions, but the public want the headlines first and will then decide if they want the detail.
2. **Don't use jargon – researchers** use terms like "bias," "positive trend," and "pdf". While most scientists associate "probability density function" with "pdf," the public will think this is a file format.
3. **Use analogies and metaphors** – "weather is your mood, climate is your personality" or "if you don't like the weather wait a few hours, if you don't like the climate move".
4. **Use 'three key points'** – studies continue to show that this is a powerful and memorable way to communicate information.
5. **Relate to your audience** – adapt to the particular group you are looking to engage; there are many 'publics'.

Kudos for Research Groups

Help with planning, logging and tracking your communications and impact:

Kudos Pro for Research Groups

- Engage broad audiences and increase the impact potential of your research through better communications.
- Showcase your work, create and action a communication plan, and track reach and engagement – all in one place.
- Report quickly and easily to funders and institutions, providing evidence of your activities and impact.

https://www.growkudos.com/about/research_groups

Impact Masterclass Series

This masterclass is one of four. To access further impact masterclasses from the Royal Society of Chemistry and Kudos please visit:

<https://www.rsc.org/journals-books-databases/about-journals/maximise-your-impact/kudos/>

Questions?



Course tutor:

Melinda Kenneway,
CEO, KUDOS
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