

# Research impact: lessons from REF

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# Outline

- Definition of impact
- Range of impacts
- Examples of impact
- Assessment of impact
- Evidence of Impact

# Definition of impact

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

# Definition of impact

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.

# Definition of impact

Impact excludes:

- Impacts on research or the advancement of academic knowledge within the higher education sector

# Range of impacts

<b>Civil society</b>	Informing and influencing the form and content of associations between people or groups to illuminate and challenge cultural values and social assumptions.
<b>Cultural life</b>	Creating and interpreting cultural capital in all of its forms to enrich and expand the lives, imaginations and sensibilities of individuals and groups.
<b>Economic prosperity</b>	Applying and transferring the insights and knowledge gained from research to create wealth in the manufacturing, service, creative and cultural sectors.
<b>Education</b>	Informing and influencing the form or the content of the education of any age group in any part of the world where they extend significantly beyond the submitting HEI.
<b>Policy making</b>	Informing and influencing policy debate and practice through interventions relating to any aspect of human or animal well-being or the environment.
<b>Public discourse</b>	Extending the range and improving the quality of evidence, argument and expression to enhance public understanding of the major issues and challenges faced by individuals and society.
<b>Public services</b>	Contributing to the development and delivery of public services or legislation to support the welfare, education, understanding or empowerment of diverse individuals and groups in society, including the disadvantaged or marginalised.

# Examples of impact

- Informing or influencing practice or policy as a result of research on the nature and extent of religious, sexual, ethnic or linguistic discrimination.
- Research into the languages and cultures of minority linguistic, ethnic, religious, immigrant, cultures and communities used by government, NGOs, charities or private sector to understand and respond to their needs.
- Contributing to continuing personal and professional development.
- Influencing the design and delivery of curriculum and syllabi in schools, other HEIs or other educational institutions where the impact extends significantly beyond the submitting HEI, for example through the widespread use of text books, primary sources or an IT resource in education.
- Contributing to a wider public understanding of basic standards of wellbeing and human rights conceptions.
- Influencing the methods, ideas or ethics of any profession.
- Providing expert advice to governments, NGOs, charities and the private sector in the UK and internationally, and thereby influencing policy and/or practice.

# Assessment of impact

- Impact is assessed in terms of **reach** and **significance**  
regardless of the geographic location in which they occurred, whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally
- Reach:  
the extent and/or diversity of the organisations, communities and/or individuals who have benefited from the impact
- Significance:  
the degree to which the impact enriched, influenced, informed or changed the policies, practices, understanding or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals



# Evidence of impact

<b>Quantitative indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publication and sales figures both in the UK and overseas, audience or attendance figures (including demographic data where relevant), broadcasting data and other forms of media, download figures, or database and web-site hits over a sustained period.</li><li>• Funding from public or other charitable bodies.</li><li>• Evidence of use of education materials arising from the research (where they extend significantly beyond the submitting HEI).</li><li>• Tourism data, including audience figures and visitor numbers at exhibitions, events, performances.</li><li>• Growth of small businesses in the creative industries. Generation of new products. Sales figures and income generated. Employment data (for example, evidence of jobs created).</li></ul>
<b>Critiques or citations in users' documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Citations in reviews outside academic literature. Independent citations in the media, including in online documents. Reviews, blogs and postings. Programme, exhibition or catalogue notes. Prizes. Translations. Recorded feedback.</li><li>• Inclusion in teaching materials or teaching bibliographies. Replication of work in structure of courses.</li><li>• Evidence of uptake of research in documents produced by public or commercial bodies; citations in policy documents and reviews, or other published reports on policy debates.</li></ul>

# Evidence of impact

<b>Policy engagements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence of influence on a debate in public policy and practice through membership of or distinctive contributions to expert panels and policy committees or advice to government (at local, national or international level).</li><li>• Formal partnership agreements or research collaboration with major institutions, NGOs and public bodies. Consultancies to public or other bodies that utilise research expertise.</li><li>• Evidence of engagement with campaign and pressure groups and other civil organisations (including membership and activities of those organisations and campaigns) as a result of research.</li><li>• Changes to professional standards and behaviour.</li></ul>
<b>Independent testimony</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledgements in annual reports or other publications of NGOs, charities and other civil society organisations. Testimony of experts or users who can attest to the reach and/or significance of impact. Third-party evidence of changed policies, practices, processes, strategies.</li></ul>
<b>Formal evaluations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professional evaluations of exhibitions, performances or other outputs. Formal peer reviews of funded impact-relevant research. Studies on the social return on investment.</li></ul>