Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Workshop
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Impact in the Humanities

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Convenor, Humanities Panel

- Member of **UK REF 2014** Modern Languages and Linguistics panel
- Member of **UK 2008 RAE** Linguistics Panel
- Member of **UK 2001 RAE** Linguistics Panel
- Member of **New Zealand PBRF** Humanities and Law panel 2012
- Member of **New Zealand PBRF** Humanities and Law panel 2006
- Member of **New Zealand PBRF** Humanities and Law panel 2003

- REF advisor for Humanities at Queen Mary University of London
- An academic researcher with the same concerns about Impact as other colleagues

Researchers' concerns in REF2014

- What research could make an Impact Case Study?

- How extensive must 'reach' be?

- How can we demonstrate the significance of our impact?

Approaches to Impact Case Study, from UK REF 2014 Humanities panels, include:

(1) Researchers may already be working towards obtaining Impact from their research

(2) Researchers can add an impact component to their work
e.g. research on theoretical syntax based on Kiowa

(3) An individual researcher's publications can create impact

REF 2014: Overview report by Main Panel D and Sub-panels 27-36, January 2015
https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/panels/paneloverviewreports/: Impact can be unexpected and accidental, as well as planned: both types are equally valid and can obtain high scores

Examples of types 2 and 3

QMUL Linguistics

Helping to preserve the endangered language and culture of the Kiowa tribe

https://results.ref.ac.uk/Submissions/Impact/1611

University College London Philosophy

The use of research-based teaching materials in political philosophy

https://results.ref.ac.uk/Submissions/Impact/1097

ICS 1. Helping to preserve the endangered language and culture of the Kiowa tribe

Underpinning research was on theoretical syntax (information structure and word order in a polysynthetic language, Kiowa)

Data came from recordings of Kiowa stories from the 1950s to 1980s, interpreted by tribal elders (the last native speakers of Kiowa)

After the research, the team worked with tribal elders to produce booklets of stories in Kiowa with an English translation, and sound files on YouTube

The researchers set up a Facebook page, gave a talk at the local museum and an interview on Kiowa Voices Radio

Significance

must show that the research has produced "**beneficial effects and change to policies, practices, perspectives or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals**…"

Important to show evidence

Helping to preserve the endangered language and culture of the Kiowa tribe: **significance**

Beneficial effects for:

(i) **self-learners of Kiowa**, who now belong to an online community set up via the Kiowa stories Facebook group

EVIDENCE: link to the Facebook group, which includes downloadable resources (number of hits could be given) and acknowledgement of usefulness of the materials; quotes from users e.g. "I have been using the Facebook page to help my family learn the Kiowa language"

(ii) **Kiowa Tribal Museum**, which now adds language texts and sound files to art and other cultural artefacts

EVIDENCE: letter of appreciation from the Museum Director, saying that the story booklets allow them to work towards the Museum's long-term goal of creating a Language Centre

Helping to preserve the endangered language and culture of the Kiowa tribe: **significance**

Beneficial effects for

(iii) **Elders of the tribe** (custodians of cultural memory and linguistic knowledge), who reported personal and community benefits

EVIDENCE: letter from Director of Kiowa Elders' Centre; quote from an elder on the Facebook group page "you gave me the inspiration to learn my Kiowa language and to teach my half-Kiowa children our language"

(iv) **Students and teachers** in life-long-learning, grass roots language classes running weekly in the community and at Oklahoma University

EVIDENCE: Letter from language teacher and from Director of community Teaching Centre to say that the story booklets and sound files help learners to read and pronounce Kiowa

Reach

Para 41 of Humanities Panel-specific guidelines: "The extent and diversity of the communities, individuals, organisations that have benefitted or been positively affected from the impact, **as appropriate for the type of impact**"

Kiowa Impact Case Study: **Reach**

(i) Members of the online Facebook group community

EVIDENCE: number and types of member (200 members: adults, organisations and students from local high schools)

(ii) Visitors to the Kiowa Tribal Museum

EVIDENCE: should have been visitor numbers and comments in evaluation book or from survey

(iii) Elders of the tribe

EVIDENCE: 30 members of the Kiowa Elders' Center

(iv) Students at community classes and university classes

EVIDENCE: 270 booklets distributed; number of enrollments in classes

ICS 2. The use of research-based teaching materials in political philosophy

Underpinning research was by one researcher, published in peer-reviewed international academic journals

This research was integrated and developed further in 2 textbooks designed to engage students and self-directed learners in political and moral philosophy

The use of research-based teaching materials in political philosophy: **significance**

Beneficial effects for:

(i) Students of political philosophy

EVIDENCE: **sales figures from 2006**, with a spike in September indicating a use in teaching; **photocopying royalties**, half from UK schools and FE colleges, one third from UK Higher Education, the rest from overseas

(ii) HE teachers, who use the books to develop the curriculum
EVIDENCE: course descriptions from universities around the world showing that the courses follow the structure of the books, chapter by chapter; longevity of use shown by e.g. Open University courses running for 10 years (number of students given); feedback from course instructors and students (emails); reviews on DangDang.com (China)

(iii) **Beneficial effects also for learners and teachers outside the university**

EVIDENCE:
use by University of the Third Age (letter from Course Leader; numbers of students; longevity of courses);

the only work of political philosophy in the Teacher Resource Bank for GCSE Philosophy (national exam usually taken by 16 year olds; web url given)

REACH

Far- reaching: National and international

EVIDENCE: in addition to evidence already mentioned for significance, royalty statements showing countries using the books; number of languages into which the books have been translated

Other impact areas for Humanities research

- Developing school curricula
- Enriching public understanding through media work and/or public lectures
- Involvement with exhibitions, heritage organisations, museums
- Human rights e.g. acting as an expert witness
- Collaborations with publishers
- (Philosophy) Consultancies on public ethics
- (Theology) Working with faith-based groups to deliver services more effectively

For more examples see:

- UK REF 2014: Overview report by Main Panel D and Sub-panels 27-36, January 2015 https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/panels/paneloverviewreports/
- UK REF2014 Results https://results.ref.ac.uk/Results/SelectUoa

DO's and DON'T's learned from UK REF2014 assessments

DO

Tell a coherent story:

SPECIFIC RESEARCH → PATHWAYS TO IMPACT → claimed IMPACT

DO

Give evidence to support the significance of the impact (the change or benefit) and its reach

Researchers should try to collect systematic evidence from audiences and 'users'

Gathering systematic evidence of impact: a few examples

- Ask audiences to complete a questionnaire (carefully worded, to show whether their understanding has changed);

- If using digital resources, can add an online survey for users to complete;

- At an exhibition or a museum, can have a visitors' book in a prominent position;

- After working on a government committee, can ask the Chair for a letter to confirm the contribution of the researcher;

Many other ways: researchers can be very resourceful once they start thinking about how to evidence impact

DON'T

Confuse public engagement with impact

Comments from the audience after what sounds to have been a very good lecture on English literature: Not all are clear evidence of impact:

"The infectious enthusiasm of the speaker was refreshing"

"I found this talk really interesting.. It made me want to know more"

"I really found that I came away from the course having learnt a lot about Chaucer. This will enable me to deliver this knowledge to my students"

DON'T

Think it's enough to ask a 'user' to write a letter confirming that an event took place or that the researcher contributed to an activity

What's needed is a statement of the change or the benefit that occurred as a result of the researcher's contribution