

RESEARCH IMPACT



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Session structure

1

Impact and
sector context

2

Impact literacy

3

Principles for
impact literate
practice

Impact =

**Provable effects (benefits) of research in
the 'real world'**



X

Not dissemination, academic interest or reputation, citations, attention

A very small list of illustrative examples!

- ❖ New/changed policy
- ❖ New/changed guidelines
- ❖ New/changed strategy
- ❖ New/change practices
- ❖ New/more jobs
- ❖ New/diversified markets
- ❖ Improved health & wellbeing
- ❖ More/better service delivery
- ❖ £: Profits, cost savings
- ❖ Businesses able to survive
- ❖ Sustainable industrial practices
- ❖ Charities/voluntary organisations able to offer more services, leverage more funds
- ❖ Access to and benefits of education
- ❖ Improved equality
- ❖ Reduced stigma
- ❖ Animal welfare
- ❖ Community welfare
- ❖ Preservation of land/scape
- ❖ Attitudes and understanding
- ❖ Widened access / improved inclusion
- ❖ Use of cultural venues
- ❖ Change in media representation
- ❖ Preserving, memorialising, commemorating or conserving heritage

(and MANY MANY more)

Impact can be....

Something new

Something changed

Something prevented

Something preserved

Types of research impact

Instrumental

Change in a thing

Capacity building

Change in the ability to do something

Conceptual

Change in the way something is thought about

See: <https://esrc.ukri.org/research/impact-toolkit/what-is-impact/>

Impact can arise from



Findings: new knowledge somehow leading to change



The research process: where the practice of research (eg. coproduction) can be a catalyst for change itself.

Impact isn't a single endpoint, and doesn't only happen *after* the research (or publication)

If impact were a person, it would be asking you 'how can you make the world better with your research?'

The UK academic research impact context

- Funders' requirements
- Research Excellence Framework
- Knowledge Exchange Framework
- Institutional 'mission'
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Impact as purpose



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

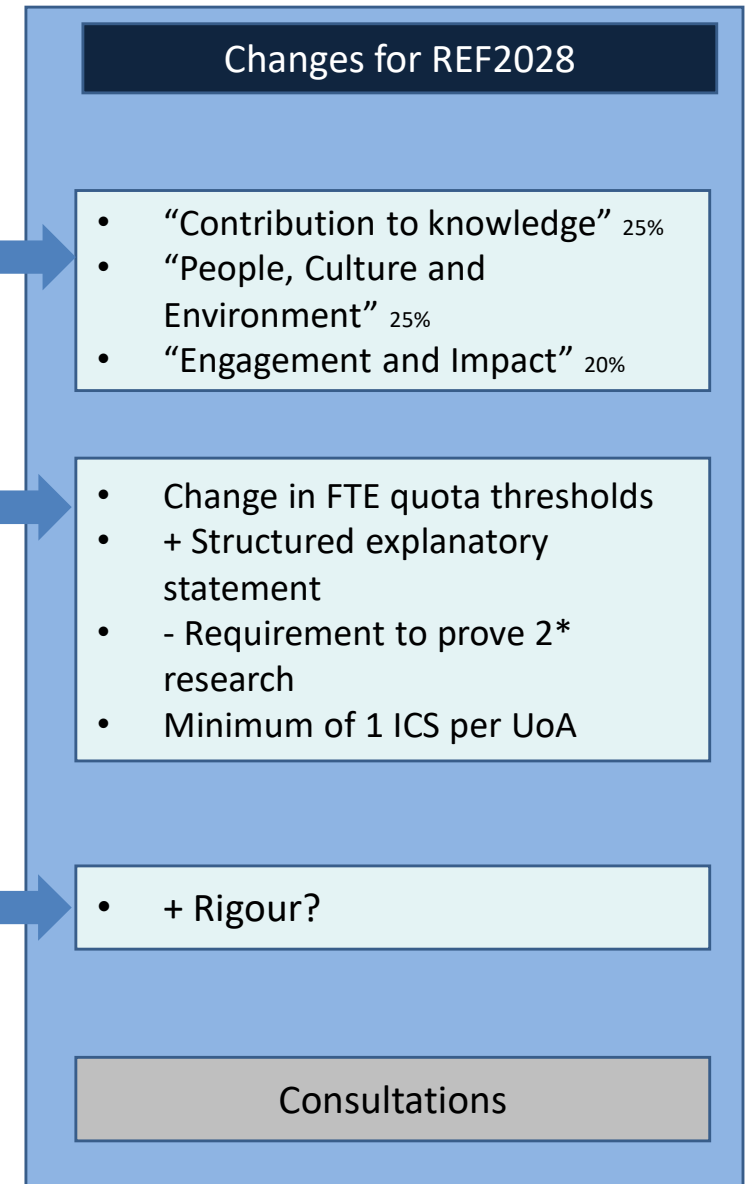


Funders

- Impact as requirement for many funders
- *Terms include:* Return on Investment, Impact, Engagement, Usable, Applicable, Benefit, Improve
- Focus:
 - Addressing an issue [need]
 - Showing how research helps address that need [contribution]
 - Actively engaging, mobilising and/or co-producing research [knowledge mobilisation]
 - Towards articulated real world benefit(s) [impact]
 - Aligned with Funder mission [fit]
- Often academic and non-academic reviewers

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

- UK Dual funding structure:
 - Competitive bids (Research Councils)
 - Quality Related (QR) funding – *via REF*
- 7(ish) yearly assessment of outputs + environment + impact
- Submitted in 'Units of Assessment'
- **Impact Case Studies:** accounts of research at the institution → impact within certain dates & other eligibility requirements
- Assessed by academics / non-academics
- Marked on Reach and Significance (Unclassified to 4*)
- See <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact> for 2021 Case Studies



An impact case study is essentially a detailed version of this:

“We did research on _____. We connected this research to society by _____. Because of this research, _____ changed, as demonstrated by _____”



Qualitative or quantitative information from a legitimate (external) source to corroborate the claim of ‘real world change’.

May consist of a single or multiple pieces, with typical formats being testimonials, organisational reports, citations in policy documents or other such materials which show the influence of the research

'Strongest'* impact

- Significant (addresses an important need)
- Reach (scale or depth of effect)
- Clear/compelling research-to-impact link
- Clear stakeholders and beneficiaries
- Collaborative and co-produced
- Recognises challenges of the context
- Appropriate measures (qualitative or quantitative)
- Clears ways to demonstrate /corroborate
- Longer term/legacy effects

**There are no set or global rules covering all agendas*

Policy and legislation

- Informing and influencing government policy
- Influenced funding decisions and tax rates
- Formation and design of Fiscal Commission
- Informing trade agreements
- Reshaping legislation to protect whistleblowers

Strategy, decision making and business transformation

- Changes in company strategic planning, processes & policies
- Improve decision-making capability of senior leaders
- Change in company focus (eg. from hardware to software)
- Changing employer practice on whistleblowing

Finance and economy

- Increased turnover / sales / profits
- Cost savings
- Change in investing
- Increase and enable sustained financial recoveries
- Establishment of the new funding streams
- Investment decision making (pensions)

Changes to practice, service delivery and efficiency

- Improving services delivery, access and use
- New services
- Reduce/manage pressures on services
- Improving existing efficiency and productivity

Improving benchmarking, monitoring and forecasting tools

Entrepreneurship and social enterprises

- New social enterprises
- Strengthen corporate entrepreneurship
- Increase number of Employee Owned Businesses

Preventing resources use

- Decision to not enter into a trade arrangement, saving financial resources and personnel time
- Withdrawing from Olympic hosting process.

Regulatory reforms

- Regulatory change within Code of Governance
- New industry standard
- Reforms to public sector accounting
- Reform banking regulation to mitigate future risks

EDI (Gender and ethnicity)

- Changes to hiring practices and board composition
- More inclusive leadership development practices
- Meeting diversity targets

Wellbeing (various examples)

- Reduced prisoner incidences of violence, alcohol and drug use
- Establishment of a Community Food Hub
- Patient experience

Awareness raising – public and policy



Data enhancement and analysis of the REF 2021 Impact Case Studies

Cagla Stevenson, Jonathan Grant, Martin Szomszor, Cecilia Ang, Devika Kapoor, Salil Gunashekar and Susan Guthrie

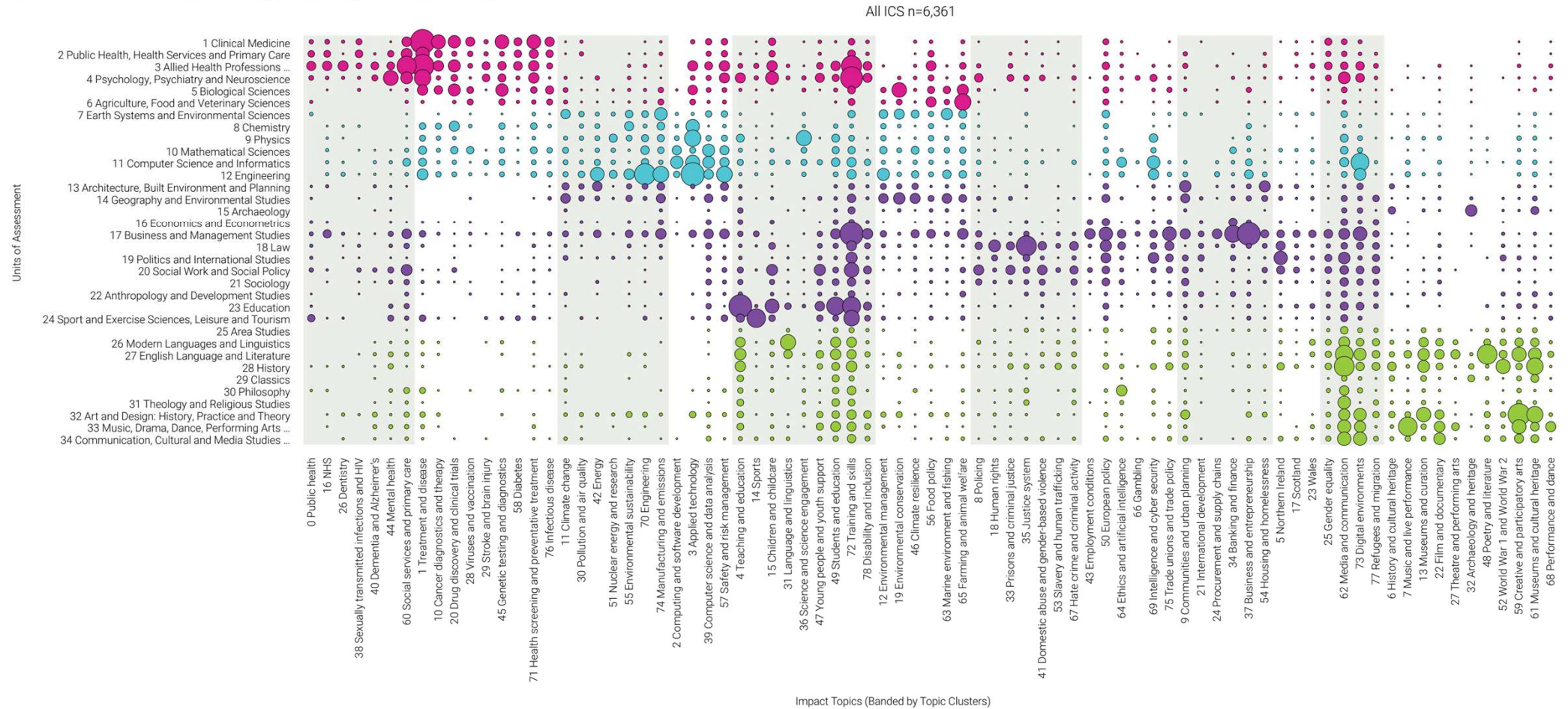


- 6,361 published ICS
- 34 UoAs
- 79 impact topics
- 12 impact clusters
- 48,571 impact pathways, comprising 5,397 unique paths

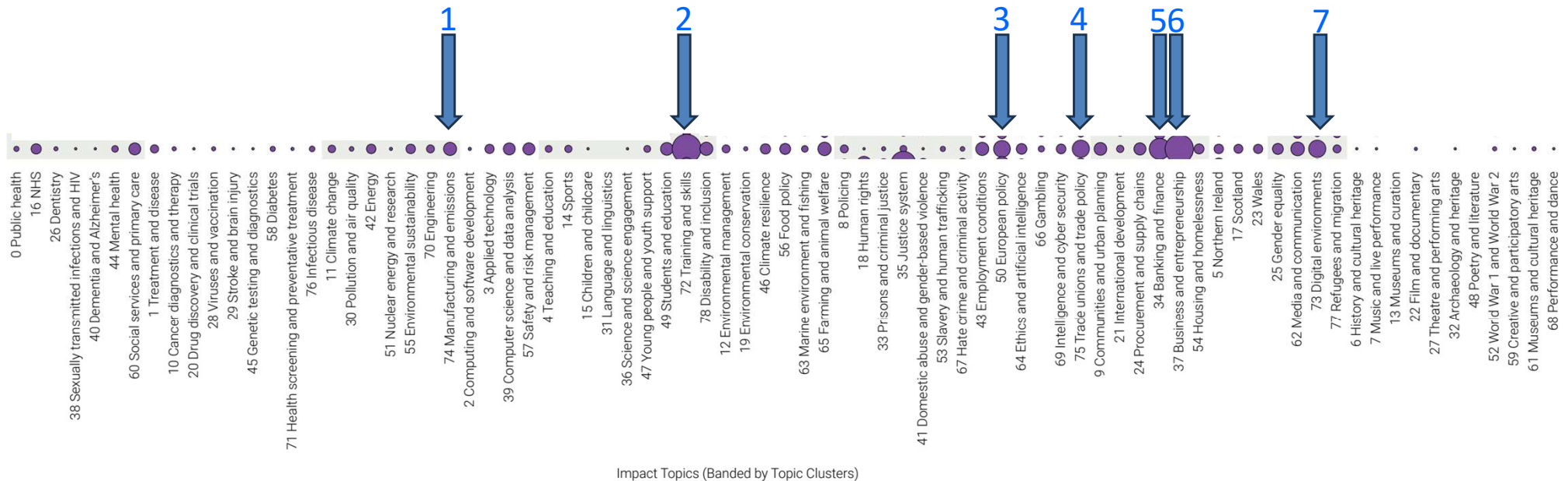
<https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9321/1/data-enhancement-and-analysis-of-the-ref-2021-impact-case-studies.pdf>

Impact topic by UoA

Figure 6. A bubble plot mapping impact topics against UoAs



17 Business and Management Studies



1. Manufacturing and emissions
2. Training and skills
3. European policy
4. Trade unions and trade policy
5. Banking and finance
6. Business and entrepreneurship
7. Digital environments

Some reflections



**We can miss meaning
when we chase impact
Unicorns**



**Impact case studies show the
sausages, not the sausage
factory**

Reach is not just numbers or (international) location

- **Horizontal reach:** how far the research gets in context
 - eg. number of products sold, number of countries affected
- **Vertical reach:** research addressing the problem at multiple levels
 - eg. change within the community, within local authority, at policy level
- **Reach as depth:** research brings something to the surface
 - eg. voices heard, people now integrated
- **Reach over time (setting up a cascade):** unlocks onwards change
 - eg. change in legal definition

Accidental (impact) culture

- Who does impact *vs. who doesn't*?
- What counts *vs. what's counted*?
- Why do we do impact?
- What is 'good'?



THE SECTOR IS INCREASINGLY
EQUIPPED FOR, POSITIVE ABOUT,
AND ACTIVE IN IMPACT

hidden **REF**

<https://hidden-ref.org/>

A need to unhide contributions



Welcome to a
possibility of
Grimpact

Investigating the Cost of an
Evaluative Culture Focused on Impact
Without Consequence

Start Now

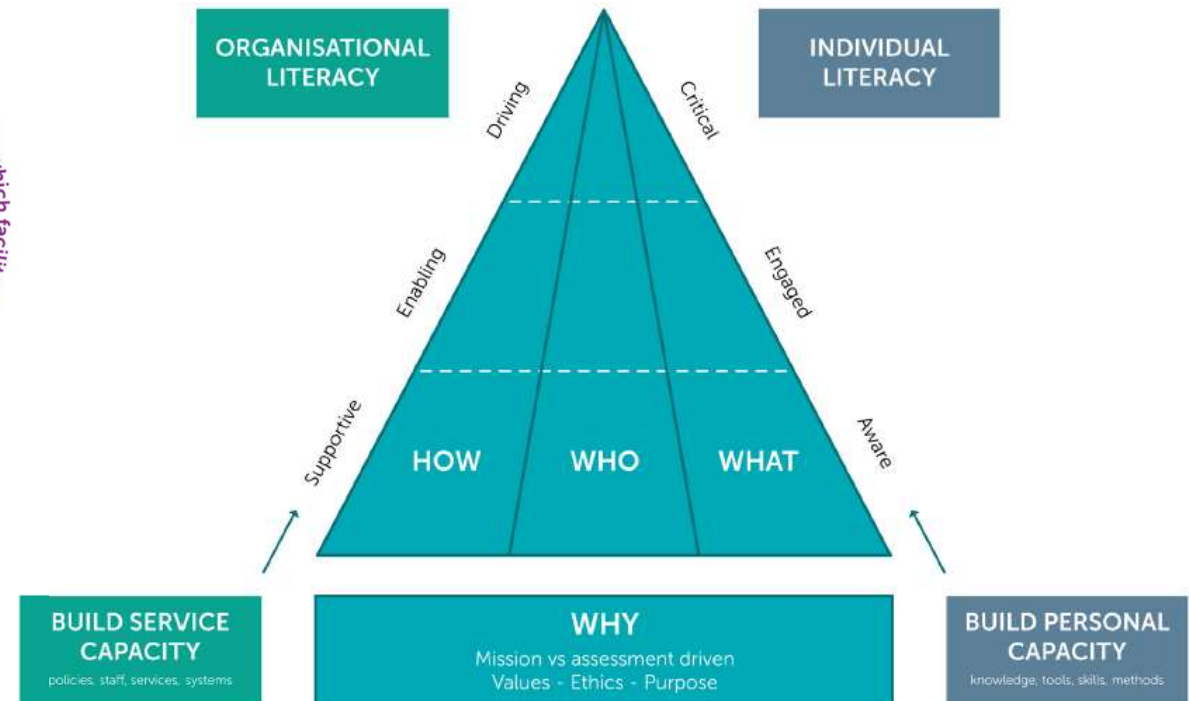
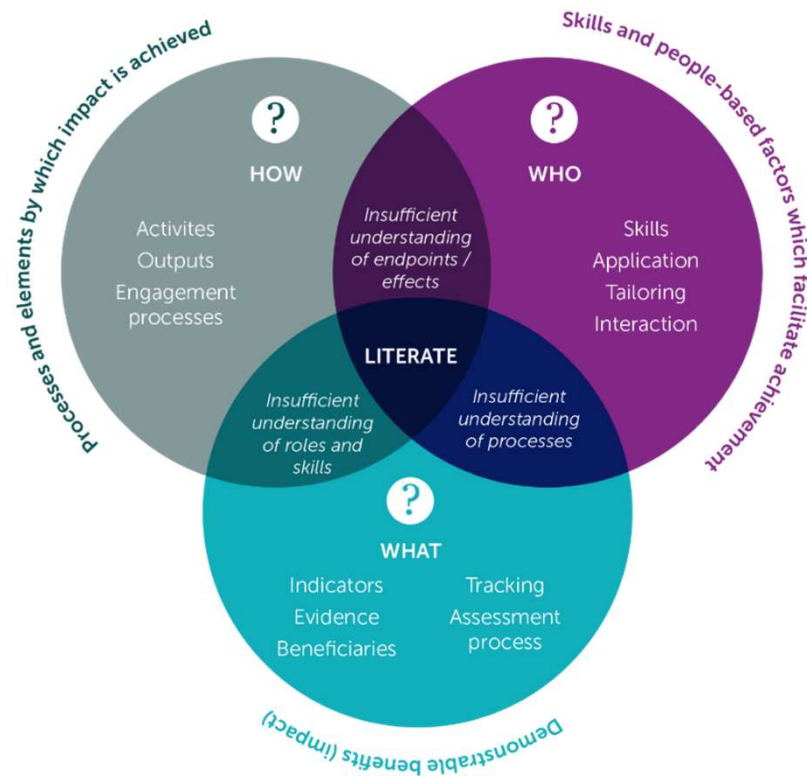


**Grimpact
Research Lab**

Home of the Grimpact repository

GRIMPACT (grimpact.org)

Impact Literacy



- Bayley, J. and Phipps, D. (2017) **Building the Concept of Impact Literacy**, Evidence and Policy (available online) <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426417X15034894876108>
- Bayley J and Phipps D. **Extending the concept of research impact literacy: levels of literacy, institutional role and ethical considerations [version 1; peer review: 2 approved]** Emerald Open Research 2019, 1:14 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/emeraldopenres.13140.1>)
- Bayley, J., 2023. **Creating Meaningful Impact: The Essential Guide to Developing an Impact-Literate Mindset**. Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://books.emeraldinsight.com/book/detail/creating-meaningful-impact/?k=9781804551929>
- **Impact Literacy workbook:** <https://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/about/our-stance/our-impact>

WHY

The purpose /
reason

HOW

The methods

**Impact
Literacy**

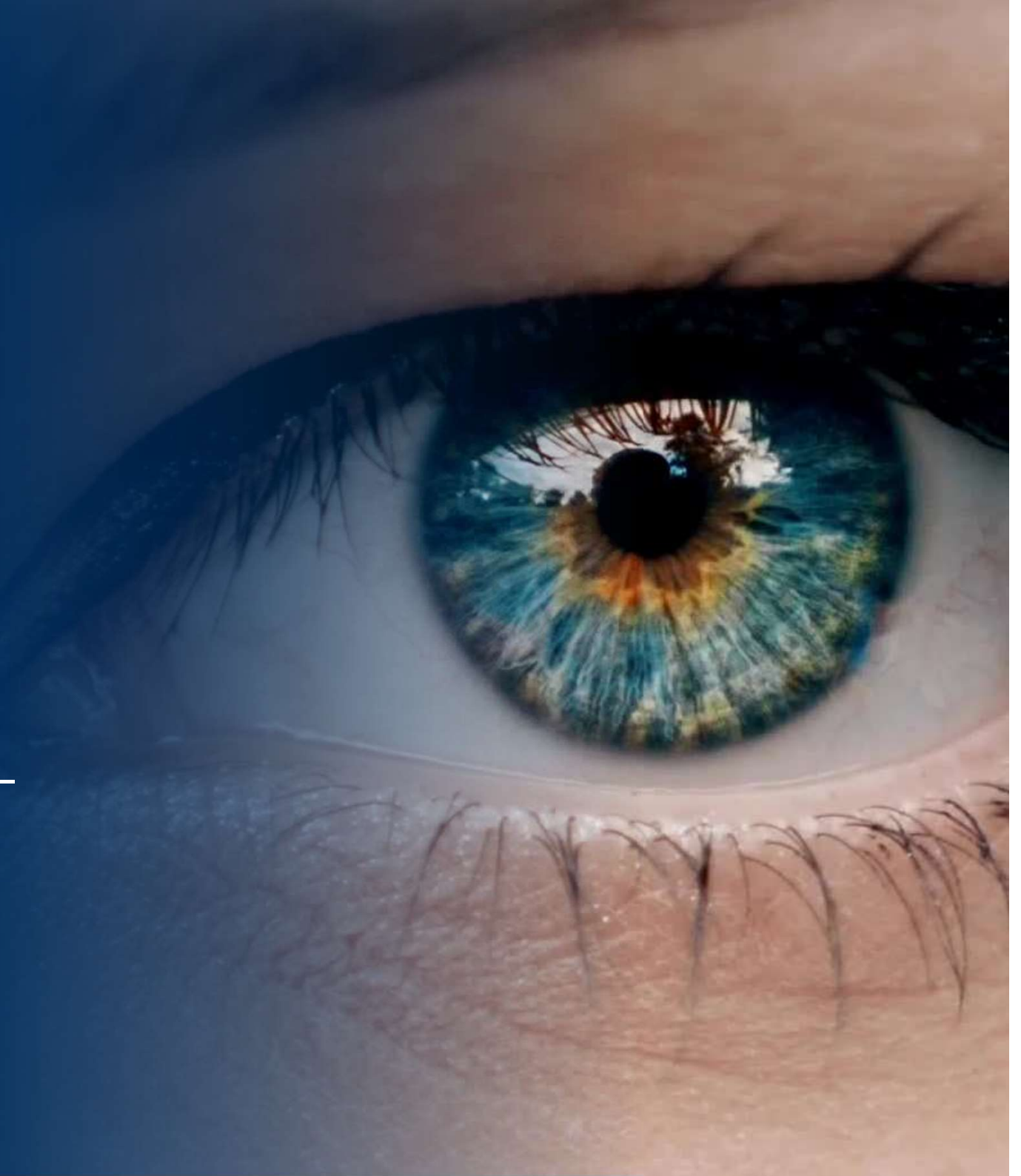
WHO

The stakeholders

WHAT

The benefits
(impacts)

*Impact is in
the eye of
the beholder*



We need to engage

To understand

- what's needed
- the opportunity

To identify

- How research can help
- Readiness for change

To find

- Collaboration, coproduction and translation partners

To explain

To set up and fuel an implementation path

As a duty

- Practical
- Ethical

To build trust

Who? *Impact is a team sport*

- **Within the organisation**
 - Researchers, research managers, leaders etc
- **Outside the organisation**
 - Those who might benefit
 - Those who share the same goals
 - Those who can implement
 - Those who advocate for change
 - Those can see if the change happens
- *Recognise competition and opposition*



What can we mobilise?

It's not just about positive findings....

- 👍 New knowledge, insights or evidence (*'we now know'*)
- 👍 New concepts, ideas or perspectives (*'we have rethought'*)
- 👍 Insights into ways things are understood (*'we know how we know'*)
- 👍 New or modified research methods (*'we know how to'*)
- 👍 Experiences of what doesn't work (*'we know not to'*)
- 👍 A materially usable 'thing' eg. process, tool or intervention (*'we now have a thing for'*)
- 👍 A new practice or way of performing (*'we have a new way to'*)
- 👍 Newly heard voices, especially through coproduction (*'we've now heard from'*)
- 👍 A new definition or set of parameters (*'we can now specify'*)

HOW

Engage with society early

Assess capacity in (eg) organisations

Establish a line of sight to impact

Check (not presume) need

Check if there are barriers (and how to get past them)

Plug into expertise within the institution

Be active; *go beyond dissemination*

Choose engagement methods that match the context

Map realistic pathways

Some mechanisms for how



Mobilising research

Dissemination and communication, websites, blogs, seminars, outreach, engagement (etc)



Mobilising researchers

Eg. outward secondments, knowledge transfer partnerships, 'in residence'



Mobilising non-academics

Eg. inward secondments, 'artist in residence', use of University labs



Embedding impact



The Five C's of Institutional Impact Health

Commitment

The extent to which the organisation is committed to impact through (eg) strategy, systems and staff development

Connectivity

The extent to which organisational units work together to deliver impact

Clarity

How well staff understand impact and their role in delivering it

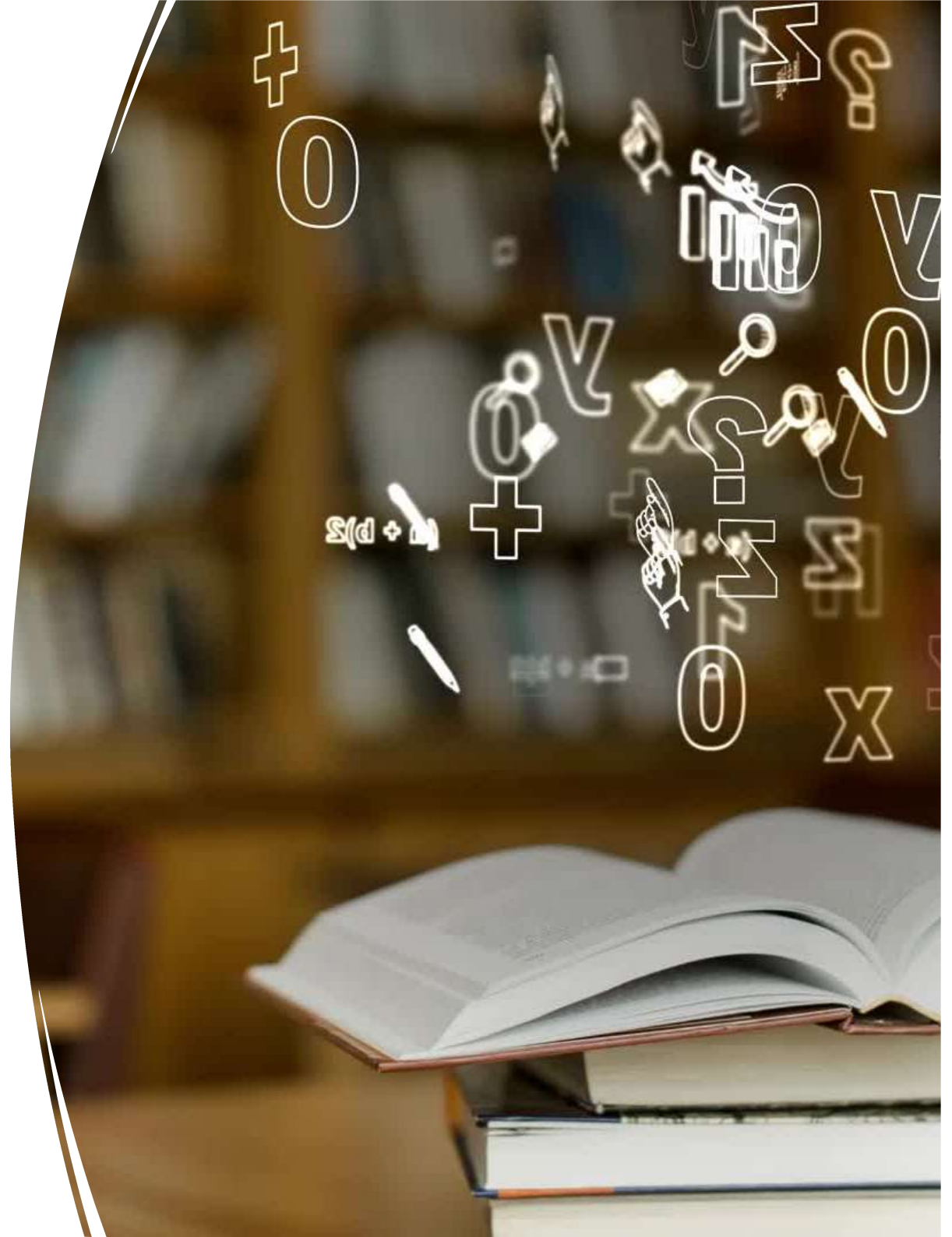
Competencies

Impact-related skills and their development

Coproduction

The extent of, and quality of, engagement with non-academics

Principles for impact literacy in practice



CHASE MEANING
NOT UNICORNS

Focus on what matters, rather
than what looks shiny and
impressive



WORK OUT
WHAT YOUR
RESEARCH
POWERS UP

For who? To be able to do
what?



EVIDENCE? THINK
'WHAT WOULD
JESSICA FLETCHER
DO?'

Be a detective: Ask
questions, collect the clues
and assemble the case.



OWN YOUR
EXPERTISE BUT
DON'T BE A JERK

Recognise the value you bring,
whilst also recognising the
expertise of others. Don't be
arrogant, but don't dismiss what
you know.



Not too hot, not too cold, but just right

BE YOU

Always, and with pride.

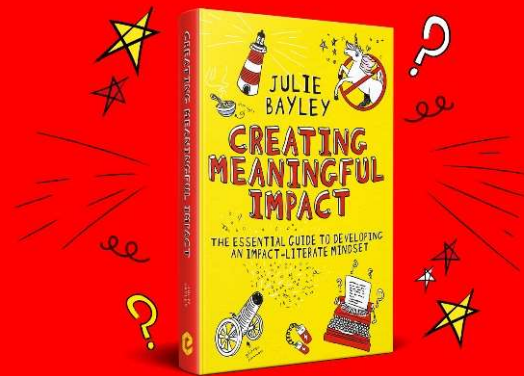


Unless you're a jerk

THANK YOU



CREATING MEANINGFUL IMPACT:



**THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DEVELOPING
AN IMPACT-LITERATE MINDSET**

JULIE BAYLEY, UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN



AVAILABLE NOW IN PAPERBACK & EBOOK

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