Research Impact: Laurels for the Hardy

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UK
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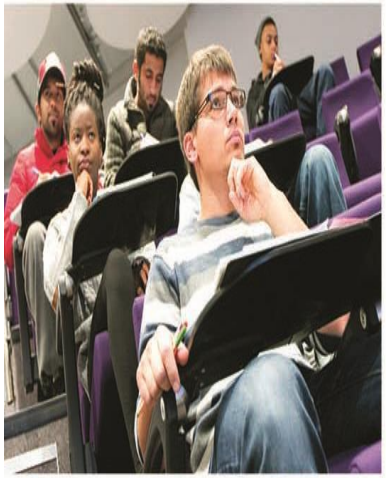
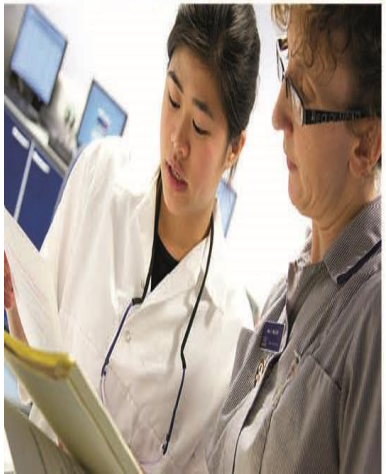
PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- What is research Impact?
- How to differentiate outstanding impact from weak impact?
- How can researchers ensure that their work is impactful?





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WHAT IS RESEARCH IMPACT?

We grow no food on campus, so like every poet, priest or potter since the dawn of civilisation, we must explain why we have faith in the usefulness of what we do provide.

(Norman Gray, 2012)

"*To provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment*".

(HEFCE, 2017, p4)

WHAT IS RESEARCH 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 (!).**

Impact **includes** an effect, change or benefit to:

- **Processes:** the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, policy, opportunity, performance, practice, or understanding;
- **People:** an audience, families, beneficiary, community, constituency, or individuals;
- **Places:** any organisation or geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

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I.M.P.A.C.T. REINFORCE OUR FUTURE

Research Impact: REF Process

Research Impact is judged according to:

- **Reach**: the spread or breadth of influence or effect on organisations, communities and/or individuals who have benefitted from the research;
- **Significance**: The intensity of the influence or degree to which the impact has enriched, influenced, informed or changed the policies, practices, understanding or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals.

(N.B. Additional guidance to follow from work with panels)

WHAT IS RESEARCH IMPACT?

The criteria for assessing impacts are reach and significance	
Four star	Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance
Three star	Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance
Two star	Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance
One star	Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance
Unclassified	The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit

WHAT IS RESEARCH IMPACT?

- **Improved health or welfare outcomes**
- **Enhanced professional standards, ethics, guidelines or training**
- Improved risk management
- **Public debate has been shaped or informed by research**
- **Improved quality, accessibility or efficiency of a public service**
- **More effective management or workplace practices**
- Improved business performance
- Changes to the design or delivery of the school curriculum
- Production costs have reduced
- Research has enabled stakeholders to challenge conventional wisdom
- A social enterprise initiative has been created
- Policy debate or decisions have been influenced or shaped by research
- Enhanced preservation, conservation or presentation of cultural heritage
- Improved access to justice, employment or education
- Improved forensic methods or expert systems
- **Organisations have adapted to changing cultural values**
- Jobs have been created or protected
- **Research has informed public understanding, values, attitudes or behaviours**
- Improved management or conservation of natural resources
- Enhanced corporate social responsibility policies
- Levels of waste have reduced
- The policies or activities of NGOs or charities have been informed by research
- **Changes to legislation or regulations**
- **A new product has been commercialised**
- New forms of artistic expression or changes to creative practice
- **Changes in professional practice**
- **Enhanced technical standards or protocols**

WHAT IS RESEARCH IMPACT?

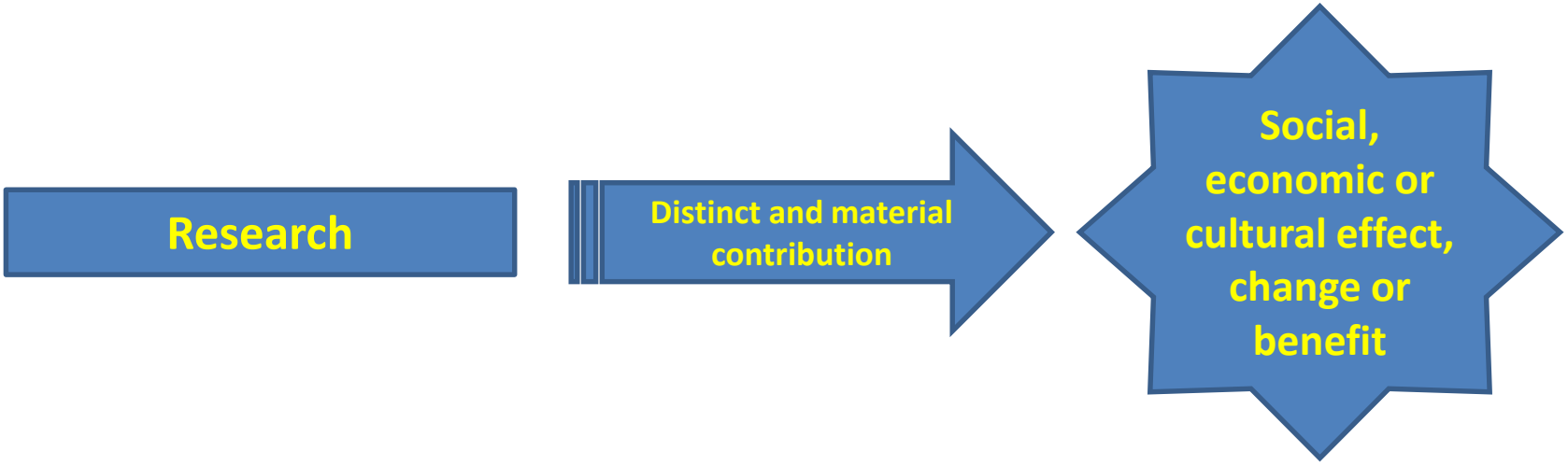
IMPACTS UPON

- Health and welfare
- Society, culture and creativity
- The economy
- Commerce
- Public policy and services
- Practitioners and services
- Environment
- International development

FOR EXAMPLE

- Patient outcomes have improved.
- Public debate has been stimulated.
- Costs of healthcare have lessened.
- New health care products produced.
- Health policy changed by research.
- New professional standards introduced.
- Benefits to environmental health.
- Quality of life improvements in SS Africa.

WHAT IS RESEARCH IMPACT?



WHAT IS RESEARCH IMPACT?

Research at an HEI(s)

Distinct and material contribution

Social, economic or cultural effect, change or benefit

- Conducted by staff while at the submitting HEI(s)
- In the relevant UOA(s)
- Evidenced by output(s) between 1 Jan 2000 – 31 Dec 2020
- Impact must have occurred between 1 Aug 2013 to 31 July 2020
- Whether or not submitted to the RAE2001, RAE2008 or REF2014

One or more individuals, teams or groups

Quality that is equivalent to at least two star. **But possible to base an impact case study on a broad body of work rather than specific publications.**

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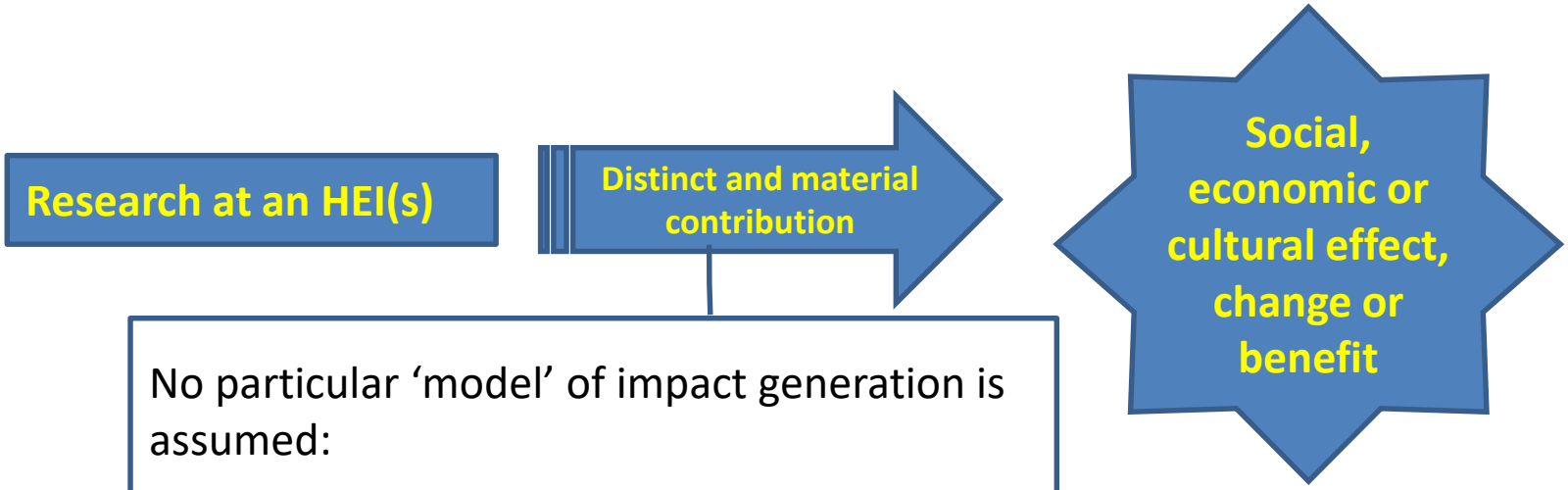

No particular 'model' of impact generation is assumed:

- May be direct, indirect, linear, non-linear, diffuse, planned, unplanned, etc.
- May be the sole research contribution, or one of many.
- HEI need not have been involved in 'exploiting' the research.

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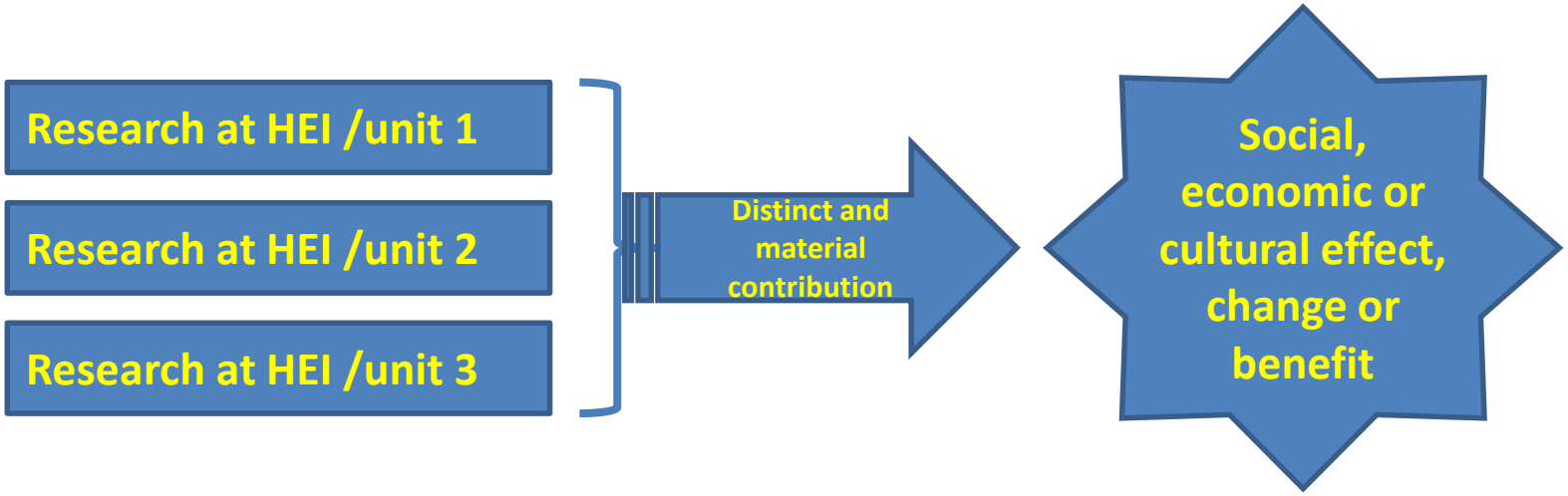

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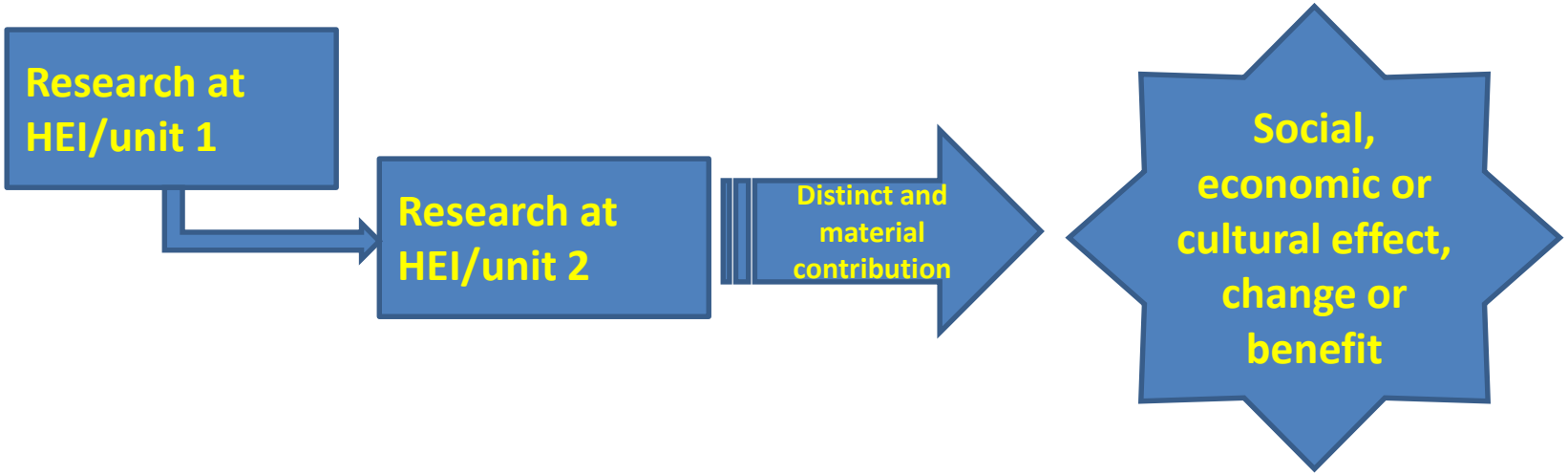

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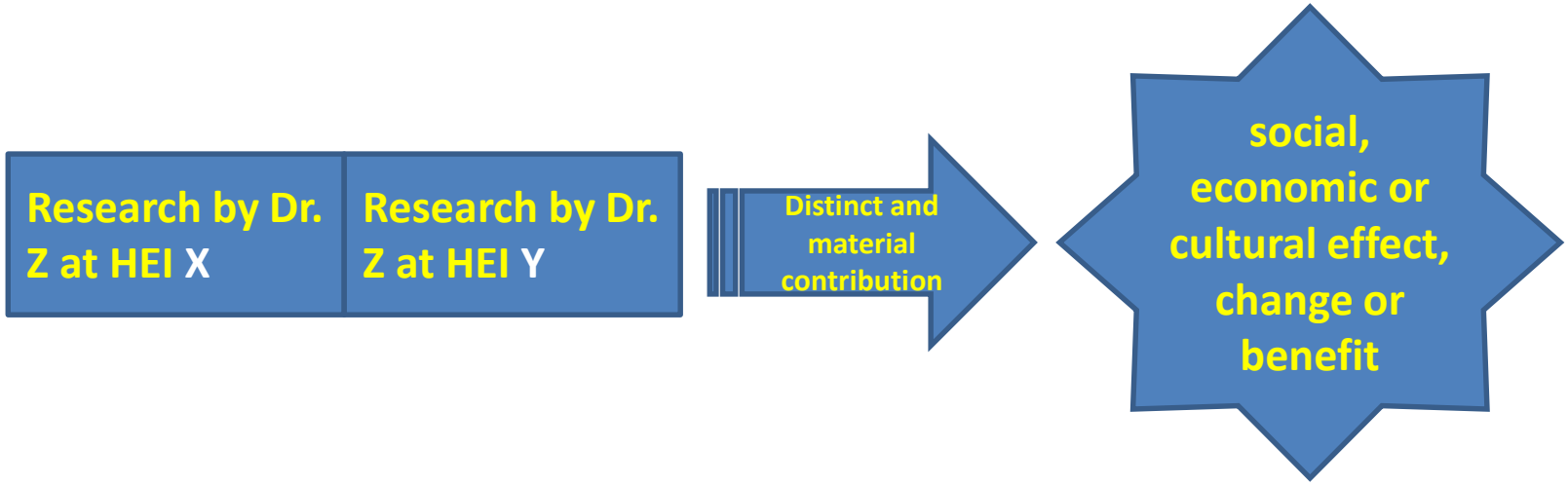

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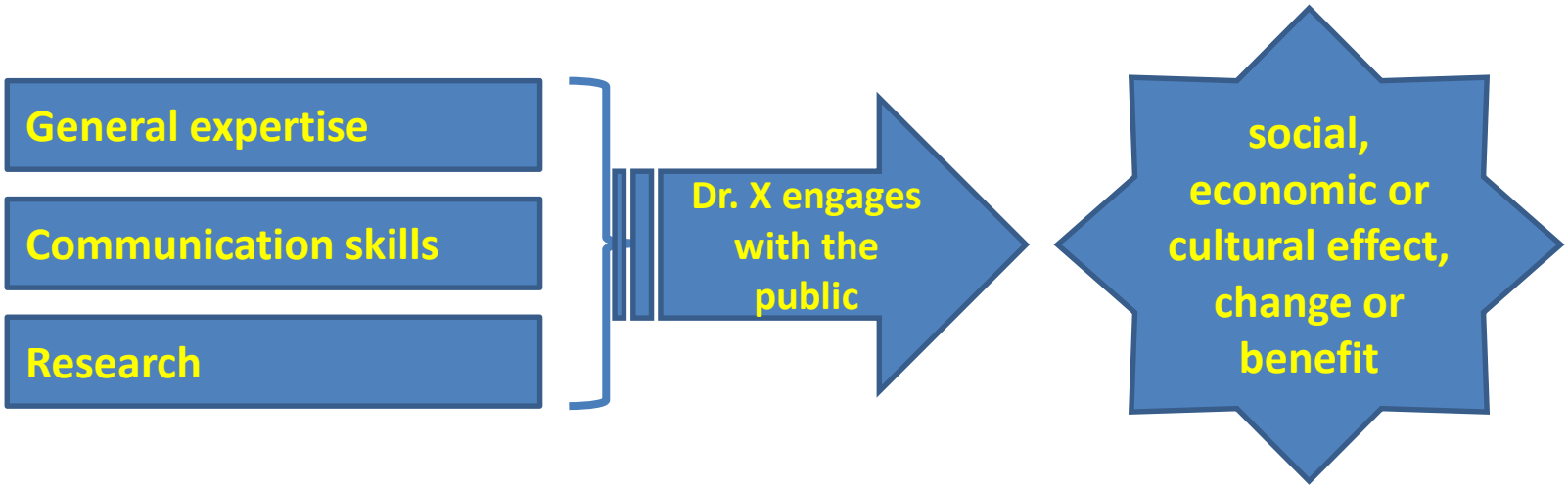

(N.B. Additional guidance to follow)

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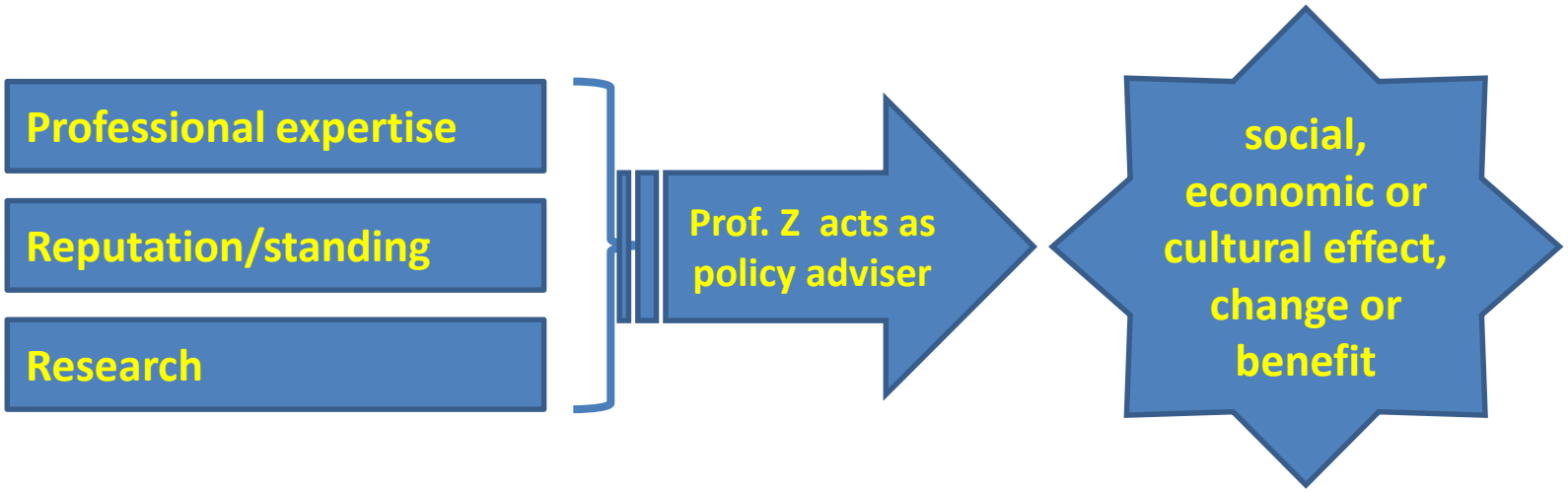

(N.B. Government policy does not always reference sources)

Must be no disjoint between Impact and its underpinning research

Differentiating Outstanding Impact from weak Impact.

Outstanding	Weak
Gave clear indication of the underpinning research and explanation for its 2* (or above) quality.	Failed to set out the thread of evidence linking the research to the impact and to establish the 2* quality of the research.
Gave clear explanation of how the research results had brought about the change, effect or benefit.	**Focused on the reputation/esteem of the researcher and unit rather than the impact.**
Understood the distinction between dissemination and impact.	**Presented dissemination as impact.**
Provided clear (and not overstated) account of the Reach and Significance of the impact.	**Made unconvincing or overstated claims of the Reach and Significance of the impact.**
When corroborating sources were followed up, they justified the claims made. **(REF2021 submitted with return)**	When corroborating sources were followed up, they did not back up the claims made or did not respond.

Differentiating Outstanding Impact from Modest Impact.

Outstanding	Weak
Evidence based statements.	Excessive publication lists or web references, some inaccessible.
Within the word limit and guidelines. (N.B. New mandatory fields to be added)	**Did not adhere to guidelines. (e.g. research was not undertaken at the submitting institution)**
A articulate, well written and interesting story.	Lack of coherence and dense narrative, journalistic.
The underpinning sciences was strong.	**Has unnecessarily 'drummed up' or 'dumbed down' the case study narrative**
Impact of CPD Programmes - Knowledge Transfer.	2* threshold not met so Case study not assessed

Ensuring that your work is impactful

Passive

- Research is done.
- Disseminated.
- It is found and used by others to have impact.

Active

- Research is done.
- Identify some potential impact partners.
- Work with them to develop impact.

Proactive

- Include stakeholders in the research from Design to Dissemination to Development.
- Work with them to map out the journey to impact.

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Ensuring that your work is impactful

- **Who** will benefit?
- **Where** (Regional, National, International)?
- **When** will they benefit?
- **What** will the benefit be (Evidence/Testimonies)?
- **How** will they benefit?

Ensuring that your work is impactful

- Who are the audiences for my outputs, and what are the potential/actual impacts on them?
- When should I engaged with stakeholders?
- How will I communicate and engage with stakeholders (not just disseminate)?
- How do I need to translate materials to meaningfully engage my stakeholders?
- What pathways do I need to follow to achieve impact?
- How can I best describe and evidence the pathway to impact?

Ensuring that your work is impactful

- How will I track impact and demonstrate its achievement?
- What will the reach and significance of the impact be?
- What resources do I need in to realise impacts?
- How will I transfer knowledge into the domains it needs to be in for impact to occur?
- What impact is realistic within the project and what is expected longer term for a later REF?

VV-IMPACT TRACKER

Ensuring that your work is impactful

- If you are submitting a case study that was returned in REF2014 make sure you state this and show additionality
- Can you be impactful if all your ICSs build on 2014?
- Don’t rely on colleagues who have left to source evidence.
- Give busy external organisations time and notice on providing evidence or corroboration.
- Explore the use of metrics (eg Altmetrics as evidence)

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Research Impact: Further Information

- http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/single-post/2015/10/16/How-to-write-a-winning-research-impact-case-study
- http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/
- https://www.atn.edu.au/siteassets/publications/atngo8.pdf
- https://academic.oup.com/rev/article/23/1/21/2889056/Assessment-evaluations-and-definitions-of-research

Research Impact!