

# Impact & the Humanities Workshop Report & Policy Recommendations



Co-sponsored by InterTradelreland and co-hosted with Queen's University Belfast

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## Background

Impact is an urgent policy issue for academics, higher education institutions and policy makers, and has become a major focus in funding, assessment and the evaluation of research. The direct impact of academic research has expanded with increasing access to research publications and has become a key performance indicator for researchers and institutions alike. This is clear in the EU's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, as well as the recent publication of Research Excellence Framework (REF) Impact case studies in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Understanding, assessing and increasing the impact of research is an urgent concern in all discipline areas. The importance of research for an increasing range of stakeholders has also assumed a new strategic priority, both in national systems and at the level of the EU.

The Irish Humanities Alliance Board decided that due to the participation of Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University in REF 2014, they were uniquely placed to share their experience and begin the all-island debate on Impact. This was to be done in the context of the EU, given the role it plays in framing the debate on Impact and the practicalities of European research funding applications for researchers.

The Irish Humanities Alliance has been working on a cross border basis regarding Horizon 2020 Work Packages, feeding material into the Irish and Northern Irish National Contact Points, Experts and Delegates from HEIs in both jurisdictions. At all times it has emphasised the cross-border opportunities and will continue to do so. Most recently, the Alliance has undertaken a major consultation exercise at the request of the Irish Research Council, so as to advise national representatives on the relevant programme committees on key research themes for inclusion in the 2016 and 2017 calls in the Tackling Societal Challenges pillar. The consultation was undertaken in both jurisdictions and involved workshops with all HEIs. The IHA has continued to engage with national representatives through focus groups and other relevant channels.

Given the strategic role InterTradeIreland plays in promoting and supporting North/South co-operation in Horizon 2020, the Irish Humanities Alliance joined forces with InterTradeIreland to sponsor a workshop, jointly organised and hosted with Queen's University Belfast. It featured the three panel themes:

- Lessons regarding Impact from REF 2014;
- Impact in Horizon 2020 and the EU; and
- How to capture Impact?

The workshop was opened by Professor Tony Gallagher of Queen's University Belfast and Dr Bernadette McGahon from InterTradeIreland.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together key research office staff, funding evaluators, National Contact Points and senior academics, to identify common positions regarding the range of issues connected with Impact and how its policy implications should be articulated. These contributions formed the basis for the following report and policy recommendations.

Developing common positions regarding Impact allows for an agreed version to be used for policy purposes and to assist in funding applications. This is especially useful for cross-border initiatives which currently have different regimes, as well as for building European consortia.

In addition to the workshop and report, the Irish Humanities Alliance now plans to run a year-long series of Impact workshops in Higher Education Institutions. A Toolkit for Impact will also be drafted for humanities researchers. Although the Toolkit is primarily aimed at humanities academic researchers, it will provide concrete examples of Impact which can be utilised by other discipline and subject areas, and support greater interdisciplinary work.

## Executive Summary and Policy Recommendations

**Impact as a strategic challenge for the humanities.** Academic research in the Humanities already has diverse and powerful social, economic and cultural impact. But developing and having formal systems to capture this is a new development, which requires Humanities researchers to respond and engage with external bodies and funders regarding how Impact frameworks and exercises should be designed and refined. Humanities researchers must accordingly make their voices heard at national and EU level.

**Impact and the significance of the Research Excellence Framework.** Where they have engaged with Impact exercises, Humanities academics have found this to be a positive experience in many ways. They performed well in the case studies of Impact in REF 2014 and it gave increased visibility to the research due to it being captured and evidenced more systematically. In Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) exercises, Impact planning was also seen positively. It was not seen as an artificial add-on but as a valuable dimension to the overall research cycle; a source of utility, affirmation, new ideas, inspiration and the building of new relationships.

**Achieving impact requires support.** However, there are very substantial time costs and labour associated with such exercises, and it takes away from other duties such as teaching and research. In order to address this, it is very important that writing Impact case studies and evidencing Impact is adequately supported and resourced by the HEI or the funder.

**The right fit: discipline-specific measures.** There is a need for much better systems and toolsets to capture the matrix of Impact in HEIs and by funders. It is not enough to adopt just one model for all disciplines, to use simplistic measures and/or only measure quantitatively. Discipline specific metrics, sensible indicators and a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches are required. Those at the coalface of the research must be included in the design and development of all of these approaches.

**Impact and the challenges of interdisciplinary research.** If we wish to encourage more interdisciplinary work, it is important to have clear metrics for different disciplines that actually capture the richness of the research. This is not without challenge, but it also offers opportunities especially in new and innovative areas of research. However SSH and STEM are increasingly expected to work together but without adequate systems and toolsets already in place.

**Research evaluation and impact.** When devising research assessment processes and structures such as Impact, funding bodies should ensure consistency in developing reliable comparisons, nationally, within Europe and ideally beyond, to avoid creating perverse incentives/behaviours. Having multiple versions of Impact is not helpful when attempting to build European consortia.

**The impact of teaching.** Teaching should feature in Impact evaluation and design given the fundamental role it plays in educating graduates and preparing them for a lifetime contributing to social, economic and cultural development.

**The strategic priority of research excellence.** Excellent research should remain the primary evaluator of research in both science and policy-making decisions. Without the underpinning

research to begin with there can be no Impact. There is a careful balance to be struck by researchers on this matter as the research progresses and there are increasing time constraints.

***The impact process: design and delivery.*** It is highly advisable that relevant processes and systems relating to Impact are put in place at the very beginning of the research. This is in order to ensure the evidence is captured and documented appropriately by individual researchers. Evidence needs to be collected in a timely manner rather than retrospectively. Again this is a factor which should be integrated into the development of research budgets, whether core or competitively awarded.

***Engaging with stakeholders.*** Stakeholders should be included at the conceptualisation stage of the research, because their involvement can improve and refine the research question. It also allows for more strategic and efficient planning and implementation.

***Recognizing and supporting stakeholder engagement.*** Fair crediting of academic work by stakeholders is crucial. Otherwise it is very difficult to prove the causal link between research and Impact. It is important that stakeholders are educated about this and equipped to play their role.

***Impact and the 'discoverability' of research.*** Researchers must optimise 'discoverability' of their publications and research. They should consider how to increase citation rates, have a unique author name and [ORCID](#) identifier, and they should publish in places where the publication is discoverable, with digital object identifiers, so it can be found through search engines and the usage can be measured. In addition they should include their work in readily accessible databases where available: Social Impact Open Repository (SOIR), Researchfish etc.

## Workshop Introductory Remarks

**Professor Tony Gallagher, Queen's University Belfast Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic Planning, Staffing and External Relations**, opened the workshop by saying that at Queen's University Belfast they are keen to support high quality research that has an impact outside the university and with communities. However, that is not to say that all research must demonstrate immediate impact in advance. Rather that Impact and Public Engagement are becoming more important. Therefore we need to think about how we engage with those concepts and who we engage with, as well as how we might engage with other social institutions to disseminate knowledge and raise public understanding on a host of issues. We also need to think about new and engaged methods of research, something that is currently being neglected.

Impact, and the debate regarding it, should encourage academics to see themselves as part of much wider social networks to which academics bring useful contributions and understanding. The REF 2014 results demonstrated extraordinary social impacts from Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) and it is important to emphasise this. An example from Queen's University Belfast is the Northern Ireland Place Name Project showing the importance and impact of humanities research, especially in a divided place like Northern Ireland.

For **Dr Bernadette McGahon, International Research Development and Innovation Manager for InterTradeIreland**, the international collaborative aspect of Horizon 2020 and the focus on interdisciplinary research makes it ideally suited for North/South co-operation. Since 2010 a concerted effort has been put in place to promote and support North/South co-operation which includes support from InterTradeIreland for the development and expansion of North/South partnerships, the Horizon 2020 app and the AHSS guide. These efforts are paying off and in the last three years of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) there was a threefold increase in applications and a threefold increase in successful applications. InterTradeIreland wants to build on that success for Horizon 2020. However, there are significant challenges ahead; competition from other countries has increased significantly and the requirement to demonstrate and deliver Impact is a big issue.

This is where the interests of InterTradeIreland and the Irish Humanities Alliance overlap. As two bodies working on a cross border basis to promote Horizon2020, there is a shared desire to provide leadership and vision on how research officers and academics can address impact in Horizon 2020 proposals and improve chances of success. The primary intention of this event is to turn workshop proceedings into policy positions and influence policy-making regarding Impact. Having an agreed North/South approach will be beneficial for North/South partnerships in the Horizon 2020 application process.

## Panel One

### Lessons regarding Impact from REF 2014

**Professor Daniel Carey, Chair of the Irish Humanities Alliance and Director of the Moore Institute in NUI Galway**, hosted the first panel: *Lessons regarding Impact from REF 2014*. He began by stating there is little doubt the word Impact causes concern amongst those who may be subject to it. But he challenged the audience and panellists to answer the question 'what do we mean by Impact?' While we may not currently have the answers it is certainly happening and we are being asked demonstrate Impact. But we need to understand it conceptually, on a North/South basis. This is in order to see how we can take advantage because Impact has huge potential for the Humanities and sometimes academics do not realise the impact they have. In addition the programme of panellists shows the material benefits of North/South co-operation and collaboration on an issue like Impact. He introduced the panellists who discussed the experiences of Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University and what that experience tells us about how HEIs should engage with Impact case studies, in exercises such as REF 2014.

#### **Dr Claire Dewhirst, Impact Research Manager in Queen's University Belfast**

REF 2014 was the first formal exercise in the world to include assessment of Research Impact, so it provided an excellent starting point for the workshop. We also need to look ahead to identify what will emerge in the future. REF 2020 is likely to follow a very similar pattern and the rules will not differ significantly from REF 2014. Consultation takes place later in 2015 and we should know by the start of 2016 what the rules are going to be. If it stays the same then the Impact case studies will account for 20 per cent of the overall allocation of the award and remain a very important element.

In REF 2014 in QUB there are 942 academics and they made 868 returns as part of REF 2014, so where QUB did very well was the volume of return: 95 per cent. This was one of the highest of any university. QUB returned 109 Impact case studies over twenty eight units of assessment. (The breakdown was: AHSS 44, EPS 39, and MHLS 26.) 57 per cent of their case studies were considered to be 100 per cent 3\* or 4\*. In terms of research intensity for Impact overall this meant QUB was joint seventh.

REF 2014 was retrospective and HEIs did not know they would have to submit case studies when researchers began the research. But it was done and it was done well. We knew Impact existed in the work we do in QUB, but REF meant being explicit and collecting evidence to demonstrate Impact.

There are tensions regarding REF and Impact more generally with some suggesting that it is about academics being held to account. But we need to discuss this and how we can take some control back over research and its impact. We need to have the belief and self-confidence to know that we already have Impact, with or without REF. The fact we have to submit it to REF does not mean there is no Impact other than REF.



For the purposes of the REF, Impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia. But other bodies define Impact differently and it covers a wide spectrum.

What was heartening to see from REF panel reports post submission was that considerable impact comes from blue sky research. But this is high risk work. It is not always possible to know what the impact will be at the beginning.

There were a number of issues emerging from the REF 2014 panel discussions that are worthy of consideration.

- Local versus global Impact: Which is best and should one be scored higher than the other? Can local compete with global, and can local be 4\*? In QUB they argue yes because Anthropology did very well in the Impact case studies and it was focused on local. If local is deep and strong it works. So it will be interesting to see what the rules say for the next exercise.
- Engagement and collaboration: It must be genuine to the area of research. Interdisciplinary work is valued differently by different units of assessment, but in REF 2020 it will be more important and we need to plan for it.
- Evidence: This is going to be a central part of REF 2020. We need to start evidencing this now. If you choose to begin work early it allows for more time to show Impact and put the processes and systems in place. You need verifiable evidence and this varies by discipline. But there is a need to capture it and tell the story.
- Signpost the links between the excellent research and Impact. Narrative is central to Impact and the stories we tell. You are writing for an intelligent academic audience but do not presume a disciplinary knowledge and vocabulary. You need to spell out the context and relevance to make the story clear. It must be focused and readable, e.g. here is the problem and here is how we solved it. 'The most successful stories told the story themselves' was a quote from the Panel A report.
- Types of Impact: The King's College London Report for HEFCE showed that 'Policy' was the word that emerged from the word cloud in Impact case studies. It can be very discipline specific, so read the guidance for your discipline. You should also talk about one or two key impacts rather than diffuse, multiple, small impacts.
- Follow the rules: Ensure the research is eligible, clarify the character of the research, clarify the contribution of the HEI to the research, explain the research clearly, clearly link the research to the impact, do not overstate the impact and be realistic, use appropriate and compelling evidence, and make sure your statement is strategic and realistic.
- Belief: If you believe in your work it comes across. Do not use external writers because you remove the passion and understanding from the writing.

**Professor Micheál B. Ó Mainnín, School of Modern Languages and Director of the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project, Queen's University Belfast**

The School of Modern Languages in QUB submitted three Impact case studies: Cultural Identity in a Global Brand: Ibarra Real and Microsoft; Theatre Translation and Cultural Encounter; and Shared Spaces & Names of Places (The Northern Ireland Place Name Project).

The Northern Ireland Place Name Project examined the origins and meanings of local place names (c.30,000 items). Although the project had not necessarily set out to achieve the impact it did: it enhanced public understanding of aspects of language and history, it played a role in enrichment of cultural life, especially by providing free online corpus and mapping, and it contributed to civic society by reporting on linguistic diversity and shared space in Northern Ireland. Immediate beneficiaries were government and cultural organisations, local history and community groups. In addition there were collaborations with:

- The Northern Ireland Assembly on the shared future agenda;
- Belfast City Council on cultural diversity;
- The Land and Property Services (OS) on community outreach;
- The Lough Neagh Partnership in development of the amenity, with an additional strand to enrich cultural life; and
- The Historic Monuments Council (DoE) on identification of archaeological sites and provision of contextual information.

The project ran from 1987 and they have learned much from the REF experience. When they started in 1987 they were not thinking about Impact at that point. The key objective was public understanding, but they began to realise they had more to say in other domains which included cultural diversity implications and the complexity of linguistic diversity in Northern Ireland over 800 years. There were also economic benefits for the creative economy and the businesses of culture and tourism. The variety and scale of Impact varied, but there were many kinds of Impact which grew organically as well as being planned. In addition, although the research was conducted within the academy, much of it was developed and exploited outside of the academy. For them, the experience was an overwhelmingly positive one. It took the research beyond the academy, increased visibility for the discipline and placed it on the radar of other stakeholders with consequent political and other benefits.

There are challenges and HEIs need to be prepared for them. Those challenges include devising and mainstreaming strategies for Impact right across the HEI. The time involved in preparing an Impact case study is considerable and there are dangers of losing touch with/sight of underpinning research. Impact must arise from your research. You also need 'buy-in' and to get everybody involved and thinking about Impact and sharing the workload. The way REF 2014 was conducted was retrospective and this did cause complications because you had to retrace your steps and find adequate evidence and proof of Impact. Ideally you would have excellent underpinning research as a starting point, but you should then also include your stakeholders from the beginning to allow you to archive and identify mechanisms for collection of evidence at the time. It is also important to ensure fair crediting of work outside the HEI, and stakeholders also have responsibility to reference the underpinning research and credit the academic work.

**Professor Ailbhe Ó Corráin, Director of the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute, Ulster University**

Whether or not we like it, Impact is here to stay and it is going to become ever more important in future research assessments. There is also an economic benefit to your university and your unit of assessment from such assessments: from 2008-2014, staff in Ulster University's Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute brought in nearly €400,000 per annum through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). This research block grant keeps university departments going and keeps disciplines alive. The formulae developed for translating REF results into income will be crucially important to the Humanities in the future.

In the current REF, Irish and Celtic Studies at Ulster scored 60% 4\* and 40% 3\*. (Note: 4\* is world leading, 3\* is internationally excellent, 2\* is internationally recognised and 1\* is nationally recognised.)

When the Institute started examining its work for the REF it realised it was indeed having impact on society but had not yet developed a coherent strategy to monitor and extend that impact. For example the Irish-English English-Irish Dictionary created at Ulster in the 1990s with Harper Collins sold 100,000 copies in its first year, it had worldwide sales, was transformational in lexicographical terms and was a clear case of major impact.

For REF 2014 the Institute developed strategic resolutions regarding Impact:

1. To give particular support to research projects capable of having a significant economic, social and cultural impact.
2. To prioritise funding applications aimed at establishing and developing research in high impact areas.
3. To seek funding to enhance impact and set aside a proportion of our recurrent budget to support public events at which our research can be disseminated.
4. To foster links with community organisations and in particular with the Irish language sector.
5. To establish and develop collaborations with industry and commerce
6. To develop our links with government with the aim of influencing public policy

The three key areas it decided to focus on initially were language policy and planning, the Irish language in an urban setting, and language learning tools. Thereafter it developed and submitted case studies in the first two areas, dealing in particular with research underpinning the Northern Ireland Languages Strategy and research into Irish language communities in Belfast in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Professor Karen Fleming, Director of the Art and Design Research Institute, Ulster University**

In total there were 84 institutions that submitted under Art and Design in REF 2014 and there were 239 Impact case studies. The fifth largest unit of assessment in Ulster University was Art and Design and the focus on practice and applied research was recognised with over 70 per cent of the Research Institute's Impact deemed by peer reviewing to be 'outstanding'.

In terms of choosing case studies, it was important to recognise that you need underpinning research, and some of the Impact cases studies were solo authored outputs, artworks and exhibitions and curated exhibitions.

Working with cultural institutions was also very important, but there can be challenges if you are not London based. However it is very useful to work with cultural institutions because it is possible to easily 'measure' these types of cases studies, given that exhibitions and artworks can measure visitor numbers. This is very beneficial, if you get good visitor figures.

From observation of the many case studies the advice is to ensure that the descriptor of the research you are doing is in your title and self-explanatory, this is so it tells your story. Public engagement in the form of events and festivals also did very well and were well represented in REF. This was somewhat surprising as you would imagine it would be hard to link it back to underpinning research, but those who did, did it very well. Having these examples means others will now be very keen to do it.

For Art and Design, designating Impact as Policy can be difficult. This is compounded by the fact people do not always reference the underpinning research. It is very important to educate policy makers about this and to ensure the academic work is referenced and credited, so it can in turn be used to demonstrate Impact.

In addition, Art and Design need to be more active in nominating peers for panels, and more Arts and Design user assessors would be very useful.

What was disappointing was that REF 2014 caused a closing down of conversations towards the end of the process. This was due to competition, but people could have included Impact case studies from both sides and it is important to emphasise that in REF 2020. It is also important to emphasise that Impact case studies can come from 2\* research, because sometimes 2\* can have far more impact than 4\* research.

REF was something that concerned and bothered people when it came in but it has changed behaviour by:

- Encouraging more cross disciplinary and transdisciplinary work;
- Developing relationships outside the HEI;
- Documenting engagement with the media and the impact this has; and,
- Encouraging working with cultural institutions.

## Discussion afterwards

**REF 2020 and consultation: are there ways to intervene?** By the end of the year (2015) there will be an opportunity to engage with the REF consultation. This can also be done through panel feedback. Academics should take it upon themselves to provide feedback at discipline level and should not leave it to others. There is passiveness over this, and a presumption others will do it.

There is a sense of goodwill at funder level but perhaps a lack of understanding regarding the Arts and Humanities, so Impact case studies help this. This is partly because discipline specific indicators, understandings, methods and criteria vary by panel and sub panels, but is standardised more generally throughout in relation to Impact.

**Is REF a pressure on the system that is still being negotiated?** Yes it is an add-on cost, but there is a financial benefit from REF and it brings in additional income. The time-cost of engaging with REF is a concern. As well as teaching, academics are now being asked to do more administration and public engagement. Academics would like to see more recognition that there is a time and resource cost and ask that HEIs consider that.

Impact comes at a cost of the underpinning research, as you need to do this additional work on Impact. There is without doubt a tension between the responsibilities academics have: teaching, research etc. However in the Republic of Ireland the assessment processes do not lead to financial income and this causes difficulties. Whereas in Northern Ireland, you can point to the amount of money you brought in on the basis of your excellent research and argue that is why the research needs to be well resourced. Time is a big issue, and research funding and resources also need to be diverted to ensure there is enough time to get the Impact case studies written.

**Will the same case studies be used in REF 2020?** It seems unfair if you have worked on something all your life not to be able to include it, but this will be up to the consultation. The underpinning research which is ongoing should be included but using a different impact/transformation in the case study seems sensible. What should also be borne in mind is that early career researchers are very active and should be brought into the process. It is important that their work can be part of the narrative regarding Impact.

**Would you recommend REF to the Republic of Ireland?** The REF system is not perfect, but we should all want our work to have Impact and Impact gives visibility to the Humanities subject areas. It would be disappointing if REF was just taken off the shelf and applied in Ireland, without learning the lessons and without looking at the other international comparisons. There should be a broad and long term view adopted. However it needs to be linked to funding, regardless of what system is brought in. Most importantly you need to retain independence from government and ensure they are not setting the research agenda in a short term manner.

## Panel Two

### Impact in Horizon 2020 and the EU

**Professor Patrick O' Donovan, Vice Chair of the Irish Humanities Alliance and Head of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences at University College Cork** chaired *Impact in Horizon 2020 and the EU*. He noted that there are very high expectations of Impact within Horizon 2020 and within the design of certain elements of Horizon 2020. Researchers and research officers need to be increasingly aware of this and how it relates to their funding applications, in order to ensure success. Impact as a concept can also be a research question within EU funding programmes. The panellists discussed how Impact conceptualised and captured at the EU level, in programmes such as Horizon 2020, and how this affect academics, research officers and policy-makers at the national level.

#### **Dr Inmaculada Higuera, Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Thematic Lead/ Northern Ireland Horizon 2020 Contact Point (NICP)**

The NICP network is a resource available to all potential applicants from Northern Ireland that are interested in engaging with Horizon 2020. Amongst other activities, this support takes the form of:

1. Organising relevant events/workshops;
2. Assistance with identifying areas of relevance within the competitive EU calls;
3. Help in identifying collaborative partners for applications;
4. Engaging with National Contact Points; and
5. Practical advice and support with the process itself.

Two questions to consider regarding Impact in EU programmes are: how are you 'giving back' and how does the project contribute to the goals of the funder? You need to understand the strategic goals and policy priorities of the EU. Horizon 2020 research has strong policy commitments behind it and is part of a wider complex architecture. What this means in practice is that there are three main priorities (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth), five main targets and seven flagship initiatives. Horizon 2020 is part of one of the initiatives in particular, the Innovation Union initiative.

Across the Horizon 2020 programme Impact is one of three evaluation criteria, the others being Excellence and Implementation. It however differs from scheme to scheme. The evaluation of the Impact depends on what Action you are applying for, not the Thematic Area. Therefore make sure to follow the guidelines and demonstrate how your project contributes.

At proposal stage you are expected to demonstrate, at least:

- Expected impacts and how innovation will be provided and new knowledge integrated, including possible barriers;
- Indicate the socio-economic impacts generated by the project;
- Provide Dissemination and Exploitation plans; and

- Stakeholder involvement.

In terms of stakeholder involvement you should consider the role of stakeholders from the project outset and how you will interact with external actors. This is because effective stakeholder involvement can dramatically improve overall Impact and provide very valuable feedback on the project.

## **Professor Sean Ryder, Chair of Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) and Irish National Expert for Societal Challenge Six**

HERA is a partnership among 23 national humanities-funding Research Councils across Europe, plus the European Science Foundation. The Arts and Humanities Research Council and Irish Research Council are both members. It is funded by agreed contributions from all partners, plus top-up from the Horizon 2020 ERA-NET Co-fund scheme.

The three trans-national humanities Joint Research Programmes (JRP) are:

- 2010-2013 “Cultural Dynamics” and “Humanities as Source of Creativity & Innovation” [19 projects];
- 2013-2016 “Cultural Encounters” [18 projects]; and
- 2016-2019 “Uses of the Past” [20+ projects].

Evaluation criteria in HERA calls have a number of strands, one of which is Impact. However in terms of how Impact is defined it includes Knowledge Exchange, Knowledge Transfer and Public Engagement. The HERA view is that Impact is not an adequate proxy for project value, but rather a complex contributor to its value. Many HERA projects saw Impact planning positively; not as artificial add-on but as a valuable dimension to the overall research cycle; a source of utility, affirmation, new ideas, inspiration and building of new relationships. However measuring and recording Impact requires significant labour. In addition, Impact needs to be defined in open and flexible ways, in partnership with researchers and stakeholders.

Some of the typical ‘impacts’ self-defined by projects were:

- Building transnational communities of researchers, linked with creative or cultural practitioners, NGOs, etc.;
- Public exhibitions and collaborations with cultural institutions;
- Policy influence (copyright law, language policy, etc.);
- Performances, media and broadcasting events;
- Educational innovations (esp. for second-level and public);
- Industrial links: design, music, fashion, ICT; and
- Building and testing collaboration models between academia and industry, academia and public, etc.

HERA has also funded research on the impacts of humanities research. One such example was HERAVALUE. It involved research into debates and practices relating to evaluation of humanities research and paid special attention to public and political perceptions of humanities value. It used case studies from Norway, Ireland, and the Netherlands. The findings drew attention to innovative capacities that are not simply measurable in economic terms.

Impact in Horizon 2020 is different to HERA. The definition of Impact is connected to the ‘Innovation Union’ and Jean-Claude Juncker’s new investment plan. Research is seen as a mode of delivering innovation, competitiveness, employment, growth and co-creation. As currently constituted there is a risk of narrowly instrumental approaches to cultural heritage: the value of culture and creative arts



only as source of economic exploitation. However there are other Societal Challenge Six priorities with humanities potential such as migration, radicalisation, youth employment and governance. The major challenge for the Humanities is to influence prevailing assumptions and discourses about the function of research.

**Dr Katrien Maes, Chief Policy Officer with the League of European Research Universities (LERU)**

The Humanities must make their views heard with the European Commission and other EU actors, with national policymakers and funding agencies, and crucially within their own universities. This relates to every aspect of humanities research and in this instance to Impact, given the role it plays in demonstrating the value of the Humanities.

Due to this, Impact is an issue of concern to LERU and is part of broader analysis of research assessment. LERU recommends that universities take on a pro-active role on impact. Assessment methodology and processes should be transparent and explicit, and should reflect the views of those at the 'coal face'. Assessment and impact data need to be accurate; for example, unique personal and institutional names, and central and linked databases for all research data should be used. External agencies devising research assessment processes and structures should also ensure consistency for reliable comparisons nationally, within Europe and ideally beyond. They should avoid creating perverse incentives/behaviors and recognise the broader role of universities.

Although Impact has taken on new dimensions and connotations, it is not new. It is, and must be, fully embraced by universities. However there are concerns, misperceptions, and anxieties about it and these must be addressed and discussed. Many fear this new interest is borne of a political agenda, with a focus on economic impact only, and that it will have a detrimental effect on academic freedom and the quality of research, due to short-termism. In addition, Impact at the EU level is very political, as we can see from recent developments with Horizon 2020. It is important that universities are prepared for further developments regarding impact in Horizon 2020 and that they have a very clear sense of what they will be advocating for in terms of Impact design.

Impact must be considered in several dimensions:

- Categories/types of impact: Academic, applied, educational, medical, economic, organisational etc.;
- Beneficiaries of impact: Academic, applied, educational, medical, economic, organisational etc.;
- Pathways to impact where actions are undertaken: Knowledge exchange and public engagement etc.; and
- Assessment mechanisms for Impact: use of metrics (i.e. data, quantitative analysis) versus case studies (i.e. narrative, qualitative analysis).

For LERU it is important that Impact is seen as wider than economic benefit. Also, although it is not easy to document or measure Impact, both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be utilised, and good indicators should be used with sensible interpretation. It is also important to bear in mind that there are long term effects of Impact. The impact of frontier research in particular may not be immediately apparent, which is a point that needs to be made and reiterated vigorously with EU and other policy makers. However, more generally universities can/should embrace Impact and set the agenda, and have a practical role to play in the developing debate at the EU level.

**Professor Teresa Sordé, Member of the IMPACT-EV project research team and Professor at the Sociology Department in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona**

There is a questioning of Social Science and Humanities (SSH) right across the world, and there are challenges regarding funding budgets. It is important to not just demonstrate the scientific impact of research but also the social impact and benefits of research, and how SSH research can feed into policy and make a contribution to society. Without demonstrating this there will be further questioning of why SSH is being funded by taxpayers, citizens, policy-makers and politicians.

IMPACT-EV 'Evaluating the impact and outcomes of European SSH research (2014-2017)' is a research project led by Professor Ramon Flecha at the University of Barcelona, with European partners. The main objective of IMPACT-EV is to develop a permanent system of selection, monitoring and evaluation of the various impacts of SSH research. IMPACT-EV will not only develop indicators and standards for evaluating scientific impact of SSH research but particularly, for evaluating their policy and social impact. Some of the research activities IMPACT-EV has been requested to conduct by the European Commission include:

1. The criteria and quantification of the social impact (ex-ante and ex-post) of projects from all scientific areas;
2. To explain to evaluators how to use these criteria
3. The ex-post evaluation of all SSH projects of the FP7 (2007-2013) and last call FP6 (2006); and
4. The creation of an open repository on research social impact.

When IMPACT-EV speak of Impact it examines four different elements: (a) Scientific Publications; (b) Dissemination; (c) Transference; and (d) Social Impact. Scientific publications includes indexed articles etc and dissemination refers to media coverage. However transference occurs when policy-makers, NGOs, schools or citizens use research results to plan and carry out their interventions. Social impact is the evidence-based improvements experienced by individuals and societies, according to societal objectives, resulting from the transference of excellent research.

SIOR (Social Impact Open Repository) was launched by IMPACT-EV. It is an open access repository to display, share and store the social impact of research results. Achieving Impact is a growing demand from society to science and to scientists, but this information had not yet been systematically gathered and registered in a unique open source. SIOR is the first open worldwide registry of social impact, a non-profit initiative to enhance scientific research with social impact.

By including their evidence of social impact in SIOR, researchers and research institutions make clear contributions to science, to the societies and to their own work. There are many social impacts of researchers unknown by the society that will be clarified in this repository. Citizens, institutions and funding agencies will find in SIOR both a general landscape and very concrete evidence of researchers having social impact. SIOR not only outlines what we already have, but also makes early contributions to researchers wanting to improve their social impacts. Within SIOR, researchers or research institutions describe the social impact of their scientific work and provide the evidence of Impact (i.e. institutional report, publication, legislation, website, dataset, press release, etc.). SIOR

also allows researchers to link their social impacts to research institutions, funders, and [ORCID](#) researcher IDs.

An example of a project in SIOR is the discovery in Atapuerca of possibly the first human being in the European continent by the Catalan Institute of Human Paleoecology and Social Evolution (IPHES). They have had scientific impact with high profile scientific publications, dissemination through newspaper and media coverage, and transference through the setting up of a museum in the area. The Museum of Human Evolution (created in 2010) has thus far attracted 500,000 visitors, created more than 1,130 new jobs and there has been an economic impact of €53 million. In addition, an intangible impact has been that Atapuerca has contributed to improving the knowledge about our own history and in turn, contributed to our understanding of humanity.

SIOR is an ongoing process directed by academics and with the support of the technical team. It is already transforming the scientific community: researchers who do not know whether their work has achieved social impact start to consider it and seek evidence (even in finished projects) and researchers whose work has not achieved social impact start to consider it. It also allows researchers and research institutions to make clear contributions to science, to their societies and to their own work. It is also increasing the visibility of this research worldwide and addressing the concern about social impact across the research community.

## **Discussion afterwards**

***Why is teaching not classified as Impact by funders?*** The impact of research on education is something that is not given the attention it requires in current models for capturing or demonstrating Impact. This does not encourage innovation and collaboration with other stakeholders in the design of modules and teaching. Also much of the emerging research and findings in interdisciplinary research does not translate into teaching programmes. The biggest Impact is on students and this needs to be valued and captured. We deliver graduates into society and the economy, and it is part of our primary role.

***Has SSH embedding happened in Horizon 2020?*** Collaborating with STEM disciplines and embedding in Horizon 2020 are major issues of concern for the SSH community. However the perception of SSH researchers is that embedding has not been successful and SSH is just an add-on to this agenda. Embedding has not happened in practice as we can now see and there is a huge effort required at national level to even begin this process. However there is also a role for EU research officers within universities to play in match-making STEM and SSH.

***How do we build Impact into researcher careers?*** There are concerns about career tracks for academics but we also need to have a much richer view of what a research career looks like. Impact plays into this in terms of demonstrating the Impact a researcher can have and how they can develop skills while in the higher education sector.

## Panel Three

### Impact: How should we capture it?

**Professor Margaret Topping, Dean of the Graduate School in QUB and Executive Board Member of the Irish Humanities Alliance** welcomed everyone to QUB and spoke of the challenges and opportunities of capturing Impact. She encouraged researchers to be bolder advocates for the Humanities and at articulating the value of the Humanities. Impact and the debate surrounding Impact offers this opportunity. However we need to decide how to do it. From the perspectives of analytics, science and policy the panellists discussed how should we capture and measure Impact, how the definition of Impact should incorporate academic perspectives and the role the Humanities can play in policy.

#### **Mariachiara Esposito, Senior Scientific Officer for the Humanities Committee (Science Europe)**

The Scientific Committee for Humanities of Science Europe argues that Impact needs to be a wider concept in terms of what we give back to society and the societal value that can be measured also in terms of the relevance of the human factor within the societal challenges. The Creative Industries for example (4.2 per cent of GDP of the EU and nearly seven million jobs) proved to be resilient to the crisis with innovative solutions, in no small part due to the Humanities' involvement in the process of creativity generation and production. In terms of jobs, the Cultural and Creative Industries employ as many people as the Food and Beverage Service Industry does and they provide work for nearly two-and-a-half times more people than Automotive Manufactures and five times more than the Chemical Industry.

Impact is about engaging with the society beyond the academic communities. And the Humanities have a wider remit in focusing specifically on what we give back to society in terms of public good. These sectorial contributions include: Cultural heritage (museums, archives, libraries, etc.); human capital related goods; education etc.

The Humanities are also well placed to answer societal expectations and needs, because the human factor is at the core of their attention and implies a better understanding of change. As a result, the Humanities offer a privileged view on societal challenges. Embedding SSH in the EU research programmes and the human factor in Horizon 2020 would lead to better understandings of change and behaviours based on pervasive values, cultures and modes of communication. Embedding could also create a process for a conceptual fundamental shift: from the concept of metrics, to the one of characterization and towards the development of 'radical innovation' ecosystems and qualitative outputs.

The Humanities want to come up with new answers: moving beyond Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges towards more ambitious societal goals. The human factor in the long term is the idea that there should be a broad understanding of human changes and human expectations in all fields of science. While humanities research has much to learn from other disciplines, other disciplines can

benefit from the perspectives, methodologies and understandings that the Humanities bring to societal challenges.

To start measuring Impact we need to move beyond current metrics in order to capture most of humanities production because the data does not capture the full productivity of humanities research. Interaction with the key stakeholders is imperative. The Humanities Scientific Committee of Science Europe is working towards a recognised list of research outputs within the community that will give more visibility to the full richness of Humanities' production. Understanding the Humanities implies an inclusive approach where non-traditional humanities disciplines, such as Digital Humanities, Medical Humanities, Education and Performing Arts and Design, are also fully embedded.

The long-term perspective would be to move towards an overall taxonomy of research outputs, in parallel with advancing in embedding the impact narrative in having a firm role within evaluation systems. There is also an important humanities' production going beyond articles, in addition to publications and more traditional research outputs. We have two main categories which include:

- Textual form: books, translations, catalogues, commented editions of historical texts; and
- Non-textual form: archaeological excavations, exhibitions, artefacts and performances, digital output (software, digital models etc.).

Therefore it is important to develop a multidisciplinary evaluation on the basis of more transparent and accurate methods and focusing also on non-traditional research outputs. In order to do so, the Scientific Committee for Humanities of Science Europe proposes a number of stages from evolution in evaluation practices to change in Impact perspective.

- The first step is recognising the need for developing new evaluation methods and new concepts of research output.
- The second step is recognising the importance of research results as related to the higher number of people impacted by the results.
- The third step is the engagement in maximising the successful humanities contribution in the delivery of changes which retain the human factor at the centre of the attention.

## **Liam Cleere, University College Dublin's Senior Manager for Research Analytics and Reporting**

The 'Beyond Publications' project was set up by the UCD University Research Strategy Board (URSB). It was established to investigate the definitions, evidence and systems for capturing outputs beyond publications, and the impacts and benefits of that research from the perspective of the university.

The report argued that there must be a broader role for the university, in building a more just, inclusive and wiser society. In addition, it found that there was no standardised approach for addressing the broader picture of research Impact. This provides an opportunity for UCD to clarify its position on Research Impact. It also offers an opportunity to implement an effective system for capturing research outputs and communicating their value and relevance in social, cultural and economic ways.

There were a number of specific findings relating to UCD itself. There was a bias towards publications as indicators of research excellence, whereby bibliometric analysis remains the yardstick. But by not communicating research Impact UCD's research reputation suffers and UCD cannot fully communicate the value and relevance of research to funders and other key stakeholders. As a result UCD falls further behind in telling its research Impact story compared to leading international institutions.

The reasoning behind the growing international move towards assessing research Impact is undoubtedly complex, involving both political and socio-economic factors. In the literature on impact, four critical justifications for assessing research impact are generally cited.

1. Higher Education Institutions overview – To enable research organisations to monitor and manage their performance and understand the contribution that they are making to communities.
2. Accountability – To demonstrate the value of research to government, stakeholders, and the wider public.
3. Inform funding – To understand the socio-economic value of research and subsequently inform funding decisions.
4. Impact Journey – To understand the method and routes by which research leads to impacts, optimising the potential of research findings and developing better ways of delivering impact.

For the purposes of 'Beyond Publications' UCD chose to use the [European Science Foundation's definition of Impact](#): "the consequences of an action that affects people's lives in areas that matter to them" (Source: ESF, 2012, 5). It also made a distinction between academic and socio-economic impacts.

The Humanities argue strongly that traditional bibliometrics disadvantage them because books and monographs are not captured. In addition when there is a focus on books and monographs in a discipline this makes discoverability more difficult because of a lack of digital object identifiers. However, what REF showed was an increasing volume of journal articles in Arts and Humanities per year, leading to the suggestion that 'what gets measured gets done'.



It is vitally important for academic researchers to optimise discoverability of publications e.g. coverage in *Altmetric for Institutions* has a bias toward counting references with Digital Object Identifiers. Therefore, researchers should consider how to increase their citation rates and they should each have a unique author name and ORCID ID. They should also publish in places where the publication is discoverable, with Digital Object Identifiers, so it can be found through search engines and Altmetric, and the usage can be measured.

The 'Beyond Publication' steering group recognised that some research activities will have immediate impact whereas other activities may take much longer to achieve Impact. The process is not always linear; Impacts need to be linked to inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and time. But the time lag from inputs to impacts varies widely. In basic research, the lag may be twenty years or more. In research activities that are almost market ready, a time lag of two to three years is possible.

**Dr Sumi David, Strategy and Development Manager for Research Impact and Sector Analysis, Arts and Humanities Research Council**

In 2009, when more detailed discussions about the Impact agenda began, particularly in relation to submissions to the UK's REF 2014, it was very evident that although there were many instances of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) research having a broader impact on society and the economy, there was an anxiety about what could be included and how it might be corroborated. However, despite the initial uneasiness, AHSS research performed well in this respect. Indeed, REF 2014 has demonstrated the variety of ways in which AHSS research can have an impact.

Looking specifically at the area of impact on public policy, a preliminary analysis of the Impact case studies<sup>1</sup> outlined the important role AHSS had to play in informing government policy and parliamentary scrutiny. Especially noteworthy was the role of AHSS in supporting local government and community-based policy issues. AHSS research contributes to shaping policy in a myriad of ways. This is done directly through formal partnerships, consultations, formulation of new policy, and guidelines for those delivering it. Indirectly it can occur through evaluation of existing policy/legislation, providing historical perspectives on current policy debates, and informing the principles and premises that underpin policy.

Creating and sustaining networks and relationships, both formal and informal, with policymakers and related organisations is vital. However, this often requires a commitment of time and needs to be built on trust and mutual benefit. Also, documenting the nature of the impact on public policy, and collecting evidence of this, can be challenging. The stronger examples from REF 2014 had very clear narratives which succinctly either linked the research to discussions and decisions made by policy makers or related organisations, or demonstrated the use of the research through citations within policy-based publications. Yet one of the challenges of including a policy-based impact case study was the reticence of some government departments to directly corroborate discussions with researchers and the role which that research had had in supporting evidence-based decision making.

Nevertheless, the AHRC's [Guidance on Planning and Demonstrating Effective Policy Engagement](#) encourages researchers to think about ways in which they might 'engage with policy-makers, practitioners or the public in a systematic and active way' (Source: AHRC, 2013, 2) even if it is not always possible to articulate a direct policy impact with an emphasis on mutually beneficial knowledge exchange. The [UK Research Councils Pathways to Impact](#) approach is intended to encourage academics to consider how they might engage with others outside the academic community and to boost the profile of Arts and Humanities research. We recognise that the ways in which excellent research can have impact cannot always be predicted.

In order to be better placed to articulate the impact of research on public policy, it is important to consider what evidence can be collected over the course of the project and after completion. The types of things to consider collecting:

- Published Reports citing the research, reviews, web links etc.;

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<sup>1</sup>King's College London and Digital Science, *The nature, scale and beneficiaries of research impact: an initial analysis of Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 impact case studies* (2015) <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/publications/Analysis-of-REF-impact.pdf>

- Confidential reports or details;
- Details of individuals who will corroborate involvement/impact, and do it at the time because people move; and
- Written statements to provide corroboration.

For the UK Research Councils and some other funders, Researchfish is an online facility that enables researchers to include details of the outcomes of their research, allowing research funders and research organisations to better understand the key findings of the research and the impact of their investments in research. In addition, it allows the UK Research Councils to highlight some of these outcomes on a public portal [Gateway to Research](#) which is envisaged as a research information portal for higher education institutions, charities, business, government and other members of the public.

## Discussion afterwards

**Are we preparing our PhD students to be future academy leaders and for industry?** Specific modules should be offered by HEIs, and structured PhDs were suggested by the panel and audience.

**Are the current metrics able to capture truly profound societal change or Impact?** Impact in a live event, or in theatre and drama, is not captured, but the societal impact may be profound compared to academic publications. For example the Marriage Referendum in Ireland. We need better systems to capture outputs and impacts and we need to develop a toolset to capture the matrix of information. Sectors such as Digital Humanities are pushing the boundaries and we need to be able to measure this also. These sectors will also probably come up with the most innovative ways of capturing Impact.

**Is excellence the most important evaluator?** There must be a commitment to excellent science at all times. We must avoid fetishisation of Impact, because Impact can be bad as well as good. But Impact is not new. It was always there, we just did not articulate it. Impact can be a euphemism for value for money in many national systems, but Impact is only one indicator of research excellence. Impact is the message back to the sponsor. There are other indicators for research excellence and they will remain.

**What do we need to do to be ready for the national and EU debates on Impact and the proposed structures that might be put in place?** It is very important for academics to speak out and feedback when metrics or concepts being used to measure Impact are not right for their disciplines. Universities need to be capturing evidence systematically at all times, to ensure they are prepared for evolving political situations and the demands of funders/policy-makers.





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