Communicating Impact

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Workshop format

1. What is research impact?
2. Communicating your research – why and how?
ARC Definition of Research Impact

Research impact is the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.

The ARC defines research impact as “Research impact is the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Plan (Impact Measurement Principles)</th>
<th>Evidence (Illustrations of impact)</th>
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**Time**

When writing impact statements, the ARC recommends you consider examples (or illustrations) from your research plan representing all columns of the Research Impact Pathway Table.
Impact Measurement Principles

The working group developed the following principles to underpin the measurement of research impact.

• Acknowledge that excellent research underpins impact.

• **Promote understanding** through use of common language and terms associated with research impact.

• Respect the diversity in research disciplines/sectors in demonstrating research impact.

• Cooperate in developing a set of common, cost effective and efficient parameters for data collection and reporting.

• Adopt a **consultative approach with stakeholders** in regards to implementing impact reporting in support of future research investments.

• Encourage, recognise and reward positive behaviour in planning, monitoring and evaluating research impact.


We will start with the impact measurement principles which I understand should be incorporated into your research plan.

What this says to me, is that your measurements should be underpinned by:

• Excellent research

• Promotion of understanding

• Recognition of all disciplines/sectors involved

• Common data collection and reporting

• Consultative of stakeholders – produce impact reports that supports future investment

• Recognition of positive behaviour in research planning, monitoring and evaluating research.

• NB. You need to develop a good way of monitoring and recording your progress – as impact happens over time and you don’t want to wait until the end to start.
Keep a portfolio of your engagement and impact evidence.

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Cumulative impact (over time)

Work the impact pathway like a CRA (criteria) sheet.

Make sure you have the low marks on your way to the high grades.
The table is split into activity that is expected to happen over time. NB. The activity starts with proving research quality before moving towards impact. Examples increase in their impact from bottom to top. These are high level examples – not an exhaustive list.

“In developing your ‘Impact Statement’ in an ARC grant application form you should consider examples (or illustrations) from your research plan representing all columns of the Research Impact Pathway Table. Please ensure your chosen examples that demonstrate both the expected Outcomes and Benefits over time are included in the Statement.”

**ARC Policy Research Impact Pathway Table**
- High level examples from the research pipeline.
- Indicates where the examples would normally sit on the pathway to impact.
- When applying for grants (proving why the research question is worthy of investigation) – consider an example/illustration from your research plan representing all columns of the table.
- Ensure examples that demonstrate expected outcomes and benefits over time are included.

Impact statements

Ultimately - Benefits is what you really should prove.
- You will prove the scientific endeavor along the way – but you really need to consider and evidence the non-scientific benefits as well; how the research is applied and useful.
- That is why ‘outcomes’ like products, companies are a pathway to impacts. What have those initiatives led to? What is the answer to ‘why’ this research was conducted and why it matters. (E.g. Keep asking until you know that answer and line up the evidence on how you’ve met the ‘criteria’ for conducting the research in the first place.
- Are there any unexpected benefits? Think about those too.

NB. Citations are listed as an outcome but we also know this is an academic measure. I would think about this inclusion as other people making use of your research too – it has contributed to the greater body of knowledge and may provide a foundation for other research.

-- Reiteration

Research Impact Pathway
- ARC’s Impact Principles.
- High level examples only.
- Level of impact examples have.

In developing your ‘Impact Statement’ in an ARC grant application form you should consider examples (or illustrations) from your research plan representing all columns of the Research Impact Pathway Table.

Please ensure your chosen examples that demonstrate both the expected Outcomes and Benefits over time are included in the Statement.
Here is another way to look at this table. Your impact should be cumulative and build in size and quality of impact evidence (scientific and non-scientific) over time.
Other examples

- **Advancement of Knowledge**
  
  - How were research output and activities **USE**D? How was **AWA**RNESS of research output **DEMO**NSTRATED?

- **Clinical Implementation**
  
  - How was **TRANSLATION** of research output and activities into **CL**INICAL applications demonstrated?

- **Legislation and Policy**
  
  - How did research output and activities **INFLUENCE** or **RESULT** in enactment of public law, guidelines, standards or policy?

- **Economic Benefit**
  
  - What economic outcomes were **PRODUCED** from research output and activities?

- **Community Benefit**
  
  - How was community health **ENHANCED** as a result of research output and activities?

https://becker.wustl.edu/impact-assessment/

Belker Model – UK and medical. Existed before ARC model. Used as a guide.
“Research isn’t research until you’ve told someone about it. Don’t keep it to yourself.”

Professor Andrew Bradley

**Stakeholders**
Those impacted, or who can impact, your research goals.

**Impact**
Why/how was your research useful?
Activity

I need to understand
**Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your plan?</th>
<th>Does it align with ARC impact principles?</th>
<th>What is the research contribution to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economy</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
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- How what you found/discovered.
- Communicate about what you found.
- How you (EXPECT TO APPLY) applied the research.
- How (YOU EXPECT) others applied your research.

Activity: Jot down ideas on how you could prove research impact of a planned project.
- What is your research plan?
- Does your plan align with the ARC impact principles?
- How do you expect to communicate your research impact along the journey?
- What is the research contribution to economy, society, environment or culture?
- How does it compare to your first summary?
- Swap with a peer and ask them for feedback on your research impact.
When to start?
You don’t have to wait for ages before you realise research impact.

Brett Lewis started his PhD research this year (2019) after completing Masters studies in 2017/2018.

He started making and posting clips of coral to YouTube, which is how Kate (QUT Media) discovered him.

- Youtube Channel
- Coral videos - Coral Bleaching via pulsed inflation
- Leonard Di Capriore re-posted the coral bleaching video.
- 10 to 15 million views online over 250 different news/media platforms; - National Geographic, New Scientist, Discovery Science, Scientific American, Washington Post
- Featured in museums - Germany, Florida USA, Exmouth Australia,; Aquariums; France, Spain, USA, Australia, Caribbean; Ministry of Education Porthole - Singapore
- Most downloaded article for that journal with 11,000 downloads
- Featured for documentaries in the UK (BBC), Australia (ABC), PBS (USA) among countless others
- I have helped film a documentary series for the BBC and am working on a new series that will feature Sir DA
- I have been on ABC Catalyst, all major news stations, Totally Wild, Scope, and PBS news hour.
- The students and myself recently presented the Citizen Science High School project at the International STEM in Education Conference - I just got back from presenting it at the ACRS conference (It won the best poster presentation award)
- Awards:
  - Vice-Chancellor Engagement and Leadership 2018
  - 2018 ACRS Oral presentation award
• 2019 ACRS Poster presentation Award
• Nikon Challenge Photo Comp - Best Video Award
• I was nominated and selected as an Australian Coral Reef Society council member 2019
• TEDxQUT
• Competitions, e.g. VISER poster competition
• Conferences, e.g. World Congress of Science and Factual Producers (also World Science Festival?)
This may overlap with what Kate is going to tell you, but communicating your research means someone other than you needs to understand what you are doing and why it’s important.

If they don’t get your message, communication has failed.

The process of communication may require some negotiation – especially when you are communicating complex science to non-scientific audiences.

Kate will talk about why that is important.
“Research isn’t research until you’ve told someone about it. Don’t keep it to yourself.”
Professor Andrew Bradley

Is this confusing?
Is this scary?

- Media releases can be embargoed (drafted and kept unpublished until an agreed release date).
- Take the pressure off yourselves and let your communication team know of your pending publications as early as you can – when these are accepted (or you are confident these will be).

Public exposure to your research and its impacts is also cumulative
- Keep your milestones in mind. Your projects will have stages. Let’s work together on a communication plan that’s realistic.
- Newsworthiness – this can be niche (specific interest areas) or broad (wider community interest)
- Social – don’t forget your own networks, publishers etc
- Practice non-scientific writing. Content development can take time and is often iterative, so practice plain language to ensure people understand your messages.
We understand Melody has already worked with you on how to write clearly. These concepts will be important when you start your assessment task of writing and delivering your elevator pitches.

I can’t emphasise enough the importance of using:
• Plain English
• Active voice.

The number one job of a writer is to reduce the cognitive loading of the reader. If your audience is struggling to unpack verbose, convoluted sentences they’re not going absorb the content itself.

Concise, direct wording that uses words familiar to the target audience maximises your impact.
Welcome to the new age

Idea of boffin locked in lab - long gone.

Nearly – still a few dinosaurs out there. Never taught the how or why of communicating their work, let alone the importance of it.

You are the face of a new generation of researchers. Trained even before you consider HDR training.
Pro tips

Keep your audience in mind.

Avoid nominalisations, jargon, formalisms and unnecessary or filler words.

Cover only one idea per sentence.

Keep most sentences to 15-20 words.

Use strong verbs.

Read it out loud.

Here’s a quick refresher:

• Keep your audience in mind.
• Avoid nominalisations, jargon, formalisms and unnecessary or filler words.
• Cover one idea per sentence.
• Keep most sentences to 15-20 words.
• Use strong verbs.
• Read it out loud. If you have to pause for breath a few times, that sentence is too long.
Why communicate at all?

- Informs the community about your/QUT research – and importantly, the impact of your research
- Positions you as an ‘expert’ in the media/public’s mind – media QUT for experts
- Alerts potential industry/research partners to your work
- As an academic, it adds to your service record for promotion within QUT

As a STEM practitioner, you also have an unspoken obligation to fly the flag for a scientifically literate society. We know the importance of evidence-based decision-making and policy-making but the wider population may not. Being able to speak confidently and clearly about topical issues in everyday conversations with non STEM people helps those around you understand the value of the scientific method, critical thinking and evidence-based decision making.

Most importantly – because the research community is operating in a climate of ever-shrinking government funding. To secure funding elsewhere – in an increasingly competitive arena, it’s essential that researchers communicate clearly why their research is worth funding at all.
One of the most powerful ways to communicate your research and its importance.

After all, politicians pay attention to headlines.

Media coverage is also one way you can quantify your research impact. And media coverage can lead to other opportunities that amplify your research impact or embark on new research.

*** Give Brett Willis example.
Under QUT’s Manual of policies and practice, all media opportunities at QUT must go through the central media team.

Trained journos with decades of direct media experience. They know their stuff.

Different unis may have different rules around media but QUT’s is pretty common.

Having a university’s media machine at your fingertips is great because it will generate the media assets for you:

- Professional media release
- Comprehensive media plan – targeting the best outlets for you and QUT to maximise the story.
- Source stunning imagery to go with it.
- Potential for a short video, designed for social media but used by media outlets.
- Pushed through QUT’s corporate social media engine.
- Media report you can use as evidence of your research impact.
Universities typically also have specific communication teams you can tap into.

Novella, the other SEF Comms staff here today and I represent SEF’s communication engine.

We work closely with QUT Media to amplify the research media message.

We also have our own channels:
- SEF website – homepage carousel and news, schools and discipline pages
- Publish to QUT’s intranet carousels – both staff and student
- We create quality publications – great for industry audiences.
- Medium – The LABS
- FB, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn – each targets a specific audience
The power of social media

While we’re on the subject of social media – let’s talk about it’s potential.

Who’s on social media – for professional reasons, not private?

Twitter is most commonly used by academics – but Instagram is very powerful for those whose research has a visual element eg

• You study plants
• You’re out in the field regularly
• You often create microscopic images.

Social media is a great tool for:

• Networking
• Collaborating
• Tracking the impact and reach of your research
• Recruiting participants
• Building your profile as an expert in your field.

In the world of social reach is often synonymous with impact. News travels far and fast. And it comes with metrics you can use as evidence of your impact.

Ask Andrew Baker for the social media stats on his suicidally-sexed antechinus research.
If you don’t yet have a professional social media presence, this piece of research may help sway you.

If you’re going to use social media for professional reasons, remember not to mix your private and professional personas. Keep your professional channel purely professional.

WE have some handout to share on the main platform and the differences on how they’re used effectively.
Communicating with impact is much more than just talking to the media.

As a researcher, you’ll need to communicate to a wide range of stake holders from school kids and their parents to politicians and VCs.

The dinosaur researchers might call this dumbing down your research. It’s not.

It’s about making your research accessible to any audience – and tailoring your messages for specific audiences.

You’ve no doubt heard of the concept of the elevator pitch – being able to clearly communicate your work – with impact – to someone in the time it takes to share an elevator ride.
Day-to-day communication

There are some other variations on this theme, and they all make for great practice.
• Talk about your work as if you were at a social BBQ.
• Describe your research so your doddering old grandma can understand it.
• Explain your research in the time it takes for a sparkler to flare and fizzle out.

In each of these instances, the trick is to not just state what your research is – but also WHY it’s important. What impact could it create.
The ‘wow’ factor

I’d like to share 3 concepts with you to grab attention and keep attention.

The first is - the wow factor.

The most compelling stories are the stories that make you go ‘wow, I’d didn’t know that.’ If you can elicit that kind of a response from your audience, you’ve created impact.

In a media story, that ‘wow’ factor will inevitably become the lead sentence because it’s what grabs attention.

Think about what the ‘wow’ factor is in your research – incorporate that into your elevator pitch.

I’m going to use a sledgehammer example here – party because Andrew Baker sits within EEBS but also because, for a journo, his research is golden content.

Andrew does important research - discovering, describing and protecting Australia’s antechinus species. He’s climbing misty mountains to trap these fluffy critters with peanut butter as bait. He’s linking their declining numbers to climate change. All great stuff.

But when you look at all the facts surrounding the antechinus and Andrew’s research, what’s the element that makes people say ‘wow, I didn’t know that!’?
The ‘wow’ factor

Sensationalism? No, impact.

These headlines have helped Andrew achieve global impact with his research.

Now, we’re not all lucky enough to work with mammals that die from too much sex. But you can find the interesting angle any story.

I could say:
• Hi, I’m Kate, I manage the communication team for QUT’s Science and Engineering Faculty.
  or
• Hi I’m Kate. I’m manage communications for the largest STEM faculty in Australia.

Which has the greater impact?
Let’s talk about an easy formula for communicating with impact.

Research is always conducted for a reason – the problem-solution formula helps people understand both what you are doing & why.

• Explain the problem.
• Explain how your research is helping solve that problem.
• State any research outcomes you’ve achieved or that are in the pipeline.
The last concept I’d like to discuss is key messages.

Your audience will only remember about 3 things you say – particularly in a verbal presentation.

So what three things do you want them to remember?

Spending time writing them down and refining them is a very valuable exercise for all sorts of occasions. It forces you to think about:

• Your audience demographic.
• The purpose of your communication.
• Which pieces of the your story are the most important.
Resources

THE BECKER LIST: IMPACT INDICATORS

10 elements of news and newsworthiness
https://www.axispr.com/blog/elements-of-news

Science communication
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_communication

Growing your profile (SEF Comms presentation)
https://create.piktochart.com/output/4379686-profiling