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AIM to impact
AIM to Impact
Applying Impact Models in research management: Coventry University reflections on an integrated lifecycle approach

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Session

• About Coventry University
• UK context
• Intervention approaches
• Benefit to research management
• Integrating impact into project lifecycle
• Overall reflections from Coventry experience
University of the Year
Times Higher Education Awards 2015

Modern University of the Year
The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2016

Ranked No.15 UK University
Guardian University Guide 2016

Top University for Student Satisfaction
The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2016

95% of graduates are employed or in further study
DLHE survey 2013/14

The Queen’s Awards for Enterprise:
International Trade 2015
UK context

- Research funding and accountability
- Quality and reach of research
- Research Excellence Framework 2014 & 2021(?)
- Research Councils UK
- Horizon 2020
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’
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.

Ie: A provable change in the real world, as a result of our research.
REF2014 case study analysis

- 6975 impact case studies
- 149 fields of research
- 60 impact topics
- 3709 unique pathways to impact

http://impact.ref.ac.uk
Interventions and impact
Impact planning

- Often poorly mapped:
  - Mismatched outputs / activities / audience / impacts
  - Limited linearity
- ‘Default’ activities (workshops, seminars)
- Assume activities lead to impact
- Assume exposure leads to impact
- Focus on broad not achievable impacts
- Overlook the realities of implementation
Stakeholders

Activities

Impact

Too simple
Benefits of intervention logic

• Intervention = an activity designed to create change
• Vast body of evidence/guidance on intervention design (e.g. Intervention Mapping (Bartholomew et al, 2006))
• Key principles to make a change:
  – Incorporate user views, expert opinion, theory and evidence
  – Determine actual needs
  – Determine what changes are needed, what can be changed and what would be acceptable
  – Select appropriate techniques
  – Create a coordinated strategy
  – Implement and evaluate
Impact in research management

• Can be difficult to support impact:
  – Not impact expert
  – ‘Academic as expert’
  – Time available
Using intervention logic

• Impact plans are mapped (matched)
  – Outputs / activities / audience / impacts
  – Clear, defined paths
• Articulates how activities lead to impact
• Focus on achievable impacts within broader impact goals
• Accommodate and acknowledge realities of implementation
Benefit to research managers

• Drawing on intervention methods arms research managers to:
  – Support realistic impact planning
  – Create and follow feasible project management plans
  – Support, question and challenge academic plans
  – Offer informed, objective review
  – Be a ‘critical friend’
Integrating into the project lifecycle
The reality of impact planning

• Often academics need support to strengthen and deliver their impact plans

• May have only basic ideas

• Research managers can apply logical approach, even with limited information
Impact integration in the Project Lifecycle

Develop an Impact Plan

Summarise potential impact

Impact Awareness

Toolkits, Workshops, Training, Sharing

Collection Systems

Exit Strategy: Continued collection

New Opportunities Realised

Impact Plan Monitoring, Review, Collection
Integrating Impact

• It is not necessary to be an impact expert to support impact

• Crucial element is supporting:
  – Staff training and awareness building
  – Building open dialogue with staff
  – Clarifying responsibilities
  – Team effort
Reflections

• Integrate impact into academic and research management roles
• Have a ‘specialist’, but don’t restrict support to a single role
• Bridge academic- research support divide
• Assessment is driver but quality is the aim
• Build a positive culture towards impact
Any questions?
Exercise

1) How do you build stronger partnerships between academics and research management to deliver impact?

2) Based on what you currently do, how do you strengthen the process of impact planning?

3) How can you better integrate impact to the delivery of your project?

4) How can you strengthen the ongoing support and follow up after a project has ended?