UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH IMPACT

Research Team
Deakin University Library
• Understanding key concepts
  – Research Impact
  – Research Quality
  – Research Output
  – Research Outcome
  – Research Excellence

• Different ways to understand and demonstrate research impact, see examples from:
  – Research Council UK – *Pathways to Impact*
  – Australian Research Council – *Research Impact Pathway Table*
  – UK Economic & Social Research Council – *ESRC Pathways to Impact for Je-S applications*
The Australian Research Council (ARC)\(^1\) defines research impact as "the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia".

Thus, research impact can include both academic impact (e.g., contribution to the body of knowledge) and broader impact (e.g., impact on the economy, society, culture, health, the environment).
• Research impact has different meanings and implications for different people (e.g. researchers, funding bodies, societies) as well as in different contexts (e.g. academic promotion, funding application, policy-making).

• For key stakeholders (e.g. government, funding agencies, industries, universities and the community), research impact showcases the real benefits of investment in research. Therefore, a growing interest has been placed in understanding, measuring and maximising research impact².

The Australian Research Council (ARC)\(^1\) defines research quality as “the standards of reliability, validity, credibility and ethical practice of a piece of research”.

Peer-review is one common mechanism of assessing and ensuring the quality of research.
The Australian Research Council (ARC) describes research output as “the products (including traditional and non-traditional research outputs), services or results (e.g. report) produced as a result of undertaking research”.

Images:
According to the Australian Research Council (ARC), research outcomes refer to “the effects or manifestations of research and research outputs”.

Images:
Michael J. Ermanth, "Miracle Cure!" Health Fraud Scams, retrieved 6 May 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Placebo#/media/File:%22Miracle_Cure%22_Health_Fraud_Scams_%288528312890%29.jpg
Emanuel Raab, Leonardo Glass Cube, Retrieved 6 May 2015, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0
The Australian Research Council (ARC) defines research excellence as “where research is deemed to be of high standard as independently judged by peers”.

In Australia, the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) is a national research assessment exercise which aims to evaluate the quality of research conducted by Australian universities against national and international benchmarks. The ARC is the administering body for ERA on behalf of the Government.
Aligning with the Research Impact Principles and Definition, ARC\(^1\) created the Research Impact Pathway Table to provide high level examples for researchers to understand and demonstrate their research impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Impact Pathway</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inputs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>Background IP</td>
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<td>Infrastructure</td>
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<td>Collections</td>
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\(^1\) ARC: Australian Research Council
PATHWAYS TO IMPACT

Research Council UK (RCUK) provides guidance on understanding and demonstrating research impact by outlining the possible ‘pathways to impact’

RCUK defines:

- **Academic impact** as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application”.

- **Economic and societal impacts** as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. Economic and societal impacts embrace all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefits individuals, organisations and nations”.

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The UK Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC)\(^5\) produced a set of tools – **ESRC Pathways to Impact** – providing examples and guidelines on how to interpret and demonstrate researcher impact for grant application.

The **ESRC Impact Toolkit** covers information and resources on:

- What is impact?
- Why make an impact?
- What the ESRC expects?
- How to maximise impact?
- Developing a strategy
- Impact tools
- Knowledge exchange
- Impact resources
- Impact case studies


