

AHRC Impact Strategy

Summary

The purpose of this Impact Strategy is to provide a framework for articulating the range of impacts derived from arts and humanities research; to provide broad principles and mechanisms for identifying and capturing those impacts; and to assist us with the task of embedding a 'culture of impact' across our research, postgraduate and knowledge transfer activities.

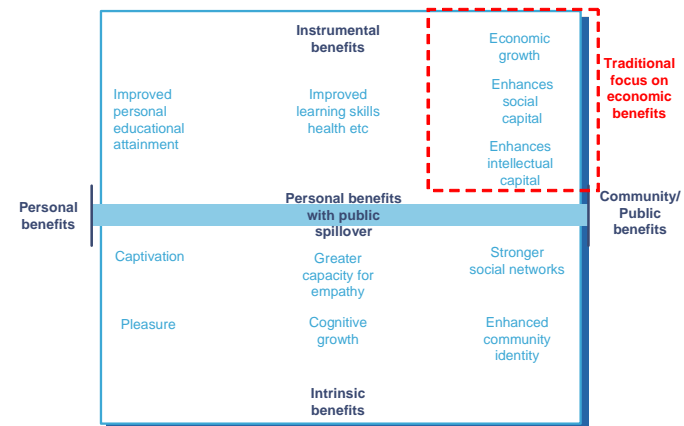
Articulating the Impacts of Arts and Humanities Research

As an advocate for the arts and humanities, the AHRC has an important role to play in articulating the full range of economic, social and cultural impacts and benefits derived from arts and humanities research. Arts and humanities research can make an enormous contribution to the economic prosperity and social fabric of the UK. Indeed, many of the fastest growing parts of the UK economy sit within the AHRC's subject domains including new media, computer games, music, textiles and fashion, design, film and television.

There are a wide variety of pathways through which arts and humanities research can create value. The arts and humanities create social and economic benefits directly *and* indirectly through improvements in social and intellectual capital, social networking, community identity, learning and skills and quality of life.

The AHRC has sought to develop a framework to understand the benefits of arts and humanities research, which considers 'instrumental' values as well as the 'intrinsic' elements (see Figure 1). This framework categorises benefits to the individual and to the wider community.

Figure 1: Framework for understanding the benefits of the Arts and Humanities



Principles of AHRC 'impact' activities

The AHRC exists to promote and support excellent research in the arts and humanities

A clear set of principles underpin our approach to impact:

- **To justify receipt of public money AHRC needs to provide evidence that the market would not otherwise fund its activities and that the overall benefits exceed the costs**
- **Any assessment of impact must extend beyond the direct instrumental impacts to include the intrinsic effects**
- **This inevitably creates pressure to cover impacts that are hard to measure and value**
- **It is vital to identify and describe impact first and then only measure and value where this is possible**
- **It is important to avoid being driven only by what can be measured and valued**

The AHRC's core approach is to develop a narrative, supported by metrics where they are appropriate. Case studies provide essential information to inform our understanding of the mechanisms by which impact

materialises and the diversity of tangible and intangible impacts.

Embedding a 'Culture of Impact': Statement of Intent

Our aim is to ensure that there is a common understanding of the impacts of arts and humanities research, how they can be identified, described and evidenced.

Culture

- The AHRC will take the lead in cultivating a shared understanding of the impacts of arts and humanities research and the importance of being able to demonstrate such impacts.
- We will develop our advocacy role by communicating the impacts of arts and humanities research to our stakeholders in an effective and accessible manner.
- We will encourage the arts and humanities academic community to realise the cultural, social and economic impact potential of their activities.

Policy and Process

- We will develop policies and decision-making structures to support and encourage research, postgraduate training and knowledge transfer activities that have the potential to deliver positive cultural, social and economic impacts.

- Our processes of peer review will take into account the range of likely benefits and beneficiaries identified by applicants to our schemes.
- We will provide mechanisms to support and encourage the arts and humanities academic community to achieve optimum impact and value.

Systems

- We will ensure that our systems collect adequate information to enable us to demonstrate the impact of our investment in arts and humanities research.
- We will further develop our mechanisms for identifying possible case studies of impact.
- We will work to develop the right methodologies and resources to provide a confident and effective assessment of the impact and value of arts and humanities research, postgraduate training and knowledge transfer activities.

Introduction

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) was established on 1st April 2005. Its predecessor body was the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), which was founded in 1998.

The AHRC is a non-departmental public body established by Royal Charter. It is accountable to parliament through the Office of Science and Innovation within the Department of Trade and Industry.

Strategic context

The AHRC's vision is "to be a recognised world leader in advancing arts and humanities research"¹. Our Strategic Aims are:

- To promote and support the production of world-class research in the arts and humanities
- To promote and support world-class postgraduate training designed to equip graduates for research or other professional careers
- To strengthen the impact of arts and humanities research by encouraging researchers to

disseminate and transfer knowledge to other contexts where it makes a difference

- To raise the profile of arts and humanities research in the UK and abroad and to be an effective advocate for its social, cultural and economic significance

Under the third aim of strengthening the impact of the arts and humanities research, the AHRC's has established the following objectives:

- Make a positive and demonstrable impact on the social, cultural and economic well-being of the UK, by promoting the dissemination and transfer of knowledge produced by arts and humanities researchers
- Develop tailored support mechanisms that enable arts and humanities researchers to engage in knowledge dissemination and transfer, to that their research can make a difference beyond the world of higher education
- Develop strong and sustainable links between arts and humanities research and stakeholders, including the creative and cultural industries

¹ http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4_98233.pdf

Drivers for developing an impact strategy

The AHRC is strongly committed to understanding and delivering value through the research that it funds. Fundamental to our ability to deliver positive impacts in either an academic or non-academic context is the quality of the research that we fund. AHRC awards are only made after a rigorous process of peer review. This ensures that applications of the highest academic quality are funded.

There are a number of reasons why it is important to assess the impact of public investment in arts and humanities research. Of particular concern is the need to demonstrate accountability and value for money².

- **Accountability** - the need to provide an account of the activities and achievements of the research unit of assessment; and
- **Value for money** - the need to demonstrate that the benefits arising from the research are commensurate with its cost.

A further important objective is learning³:

- **Learning** - gaining a better understanding of how research generates impacts in order to enhance future impacts.

² Davies et al, 2005

³ Ibid

At a national level, the Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-14 sets out the Government's strategic investment agenda in relation to harnessing innovation and building the UK knowledge base and the role of the Research Councils in that vision. Its ambitions include:

- world class research at the UK's strongest centres of excellence;
- greater responsiveness of the publicly-funded research base to the needs of the economy and public services;
- increased business investment in R&D and increased business engagement in drawing on the UK science base for ideas and talent;
- a strong supply of scientists, engineers and technologists;
- sustainable and financially robust universities and public laboratories across the UK; and
- confidence and increased awareness across the UK society in scientific research and its innovative applications.

Within the original framework strong reference is made to the responsiveness of the research base to economic growth and public services.

'Securing the growth and continued excellence of the UK's public science and research base will provide a platform for successful innovation in the UK by

*business and public services, Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-14*⁴

This framework was followed in March 2006 by the 'Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014: next steps' which, while reaffirming the Government's long term commitment to the research base, makes more explicit reference to the Government's desire to maximise the impact of its research investments.

*'The Government is... consulting on how the Research Councils' effectiveness and economic impact can be further improved.... The Government is keen to create a more effective science and innovation system, which maximises the impact of public investment in science on business innovation, and provides greater incentives for businesses to collaborate with the science base to meet the challenges of globalisation', Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-14, next steps*⁵

In response the Director General of Science and Innovation established the Research Councils

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http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/associated_documents/spending_sr04_science.cfm

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http://www.dti.gov.uk/science/sciencefunding/framework/next_steps/page28988.html

6

Economic Impact Group (EIG) in February 2006. The EIG's report (also known as the Warry Report) was published in July 2006. It followed reports from both the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology and an independent External Challenge Group on Research Council knowledge transfer.

In conjunction with this earlier literature, the Warry report outlined three key issues for the Research Councils to address:

- their **leadership** of the knowledge transfer agenda and in ensuring that economic impact is given a high profile in Council strategy;
- their role in **influencing** the knowledge transfer behaviour of universities and Research Council institutes in ways that increase the economic impact of Research Council funding;
- increasing their **engagement** with user organisations in government, business and the public services to develop overarching, economically relevant 'research missions'.

The impact of arts and humanities research

The traditional argument for public sector investment in research is to drive innovation by funding research that is 'far from market' but which has the capacity to deliver **direct economic benefits** e.g. those that result from the arts as an economic activity and thus are a source of employment, tax income, and expenditure.

The OSI has been using the following measures to assess the value of the research base in the UK that reflect these benefits:

- the creation of new businesses;
- the development of new products and processes;
- the attraction and retention of investment in the UK; and
- the training of people.

OSI recognises that capturing these impacts is necessary but not sufficient. There are many routes and pathways through which research leads to 'impacts'. These include:

- The positive learning and skills impacts on the research team;

- The impacts research can have on government policies, standards, objectives and guidelines;
- The commercialisation benefits which can arise from research leading to spin out companies or being the source of content for the cultural industries, and the development of new curricula and courses leading to educational and commercial benefits;
- The impact and benefits to further research activities which can then build upon the results; and
- The benefits to society at large which in economic terms can be categorised as direct, indirect and public good values.

This broader understanding of economic impact, which includes economic welfare terms, as opposed to simple contribution to GDP, is more comprehensive. But it does not lend itself as easily to the development of metrics. The AHRC's core approach is to develop a narrative, supported by metrics where they are appropriate.

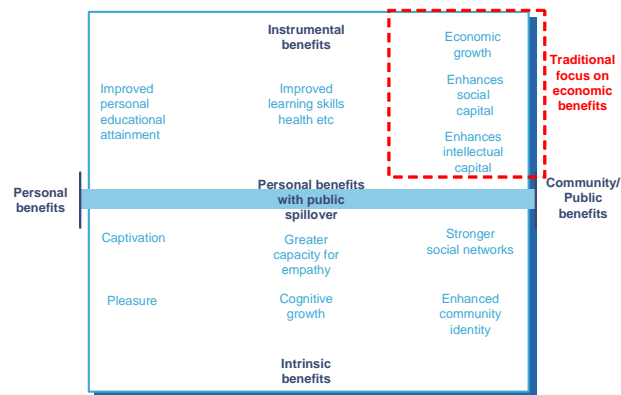
Arts and humanities research can make an enormous contribution to the economic prosperity and social fabric of the UK. Many of the fastest growing parts of the UK economy sit within the AHRC's subject domains including new media, computer games, music, textiles and fashion, design, film and television.

There are a wide variety of pathways through which arts and humanities research can create value. In some cases it is possible to assign a market value and in others not. The arts and humanities create social and economic benefits directly *and* indirectly through improvements in social and intellectual capital, social networking, community identity, learning and skills and quality of life. Such benefits can be assigned 'public' values based on assessments of willingness to pay through contingent valuation.

*Intrinsic values are better thought of as the capacity and potential of culture to affect us...Instrumental values relate to the ancillary effects of culture, where culture is used to achieve a social or economic purpose...culture does have significant value, but that instrumental value on its own does not give an adequate account of the value of culture, and that, moreover, better methodologies need to be found to demonstrate instrumental value in a convincing way.*⁶

The AHRC has sought to develop a framework to understand the benefits of arts and humanities research which considers 'instrumental' values as well as the 'intrinsic' elements (see Figure 1). This framework categorises benefits to the individual and to the wider community.

Figure 1: Framework for understanding the benefits of the Arts and Humanities



⁶ Holden, J, Capturing Cultural Value, Demos, 2004

Measuring 'Outputs' and 'Outcomes'

In measuring the impact of research it is essential to draw a clear distinction between 'activities' or 'outputs' and 'outcomes' or 'impacts'.

*'Outcomes are the eventual benefits to society that proposals are intended to achieve...Outputs are the results of activities that can be clearly stated or measured and which relate in some way to the outcomes desired'*⁷

This model demonstrates, in a necessarily simplified way, that impacts will accrue over a long period of time and that any assessment of impact needs to take a long term view. The measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes becomes more difficult as they move from being tangible and objective to become less tangible and subjective.

*'The impact of a project is the sum of the outputs and outcomes, an overall analysis of its results: unlike the outcomes, the impact of a project may change over time as subsequent events unfold'*⁸

In undertaking any impact assessment it is important to use the most appropriate focal unit. Specific research projects are often interrelated, making the

⁷ HM Treasury Green Book, 2003

⁸ Matarasso, F, and Pilling, A, *The Belgrade Theatre, A first social audit 1998-99*, a study supported by the Arts Council of England, 1999

research team or group the most appropriate unit of measurement in many cases⁹. In addition, any assessment of research impact should take account of the different types of research and consider the impacts of the research process itself, for example in shaping the researchers of the future.

*"In any assessment of research impact it is important to take account of the different types of... research. This is not just a matter of making the familiar distinction between basic and applied research but also entails acknowledging that different forms of research lead to different types of knowledge, for example: 'knowing what works'; 'knowing how things work'; and 'knowing why things happen'. Assessment approaches need to be able to capture the impact of all these forms of research knowledge; they should not be designed with only 'what works' research findings in mind."*¹⁰

⁹ Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), 2005

¹⁰ Davies, H, Nutley, S and Walter, I, 2005, Approaches to assessing the non-academic impact of social science research, Report of the ESRC symposium on assessing the non-academic impact of research, ESRC

Existing evidence of AHRC 'impact'

The AHRC is responsible for ensuring that the potential benefits of its investments are realised for researchers, business and wider society.

The AHRC has commissioned a series of studies on the social and economic impact of a number of different arts and humanities research outcomes. Case studies provide essential information to inform our understanding of the mechanisms by which impact materialises and the diversity of tangible and intangible impacts. Case studies have shown that the impact of AHRC activities can be demonstrated through a range of outcomes. For example:

- Investment in people by supporting skills, lifelong learning & workforce development
- Enhancing the knowledge economy
- Providing innovative content and support for creative industries
- Contributing to regeneration, community cohesion and social inclusion

Case Study: Polynesian Visual Arts: meaning and histories in Pacific and European cultural contexts

The Polynesian Visual Arts project, based at the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the University of East Anglia, received an AHRC Research Grant of £220,897 for a three year period from 2003 to 2006.

The project focussed on Polynesian materials dating from the 1760s to the mid-nineteenth century, covering the period from the expeditions by Wallis and Cook through to the time when Euro-American administrations were being established. This is a period of interaction in which many objects, pictorial representations and written accounts survive. The project included research into existing collections, culminating in a register of over 1,300 artefacts with images and narrative. Another element focussed on archival and pictorial research and in particular the archives and publications of the London Missionary Society. Documents were analysed for insights into indigenous religious protocol, on objects, their collection and their subsequent use in display. There was also extensive fieldwork throughout Polynesia. This work was disseminated through a series of workshops, symposia and conferences, journal articles and a book, as well as two major exhibitions:

Pacific Encounters: Art & Divinity in Polynesia 1760 – 1860 at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, 21 May – 13 August 2006

This exhibition represented the largest collection of Polynesian artefacts ever brought together. It was complemented by an education programme of school visits and workshops for children and young people, plus a series of lectures, talks and other associated events. This exhibition received 21,000 visitors.

Power & Taboo: Sacred Objects from the Pacific at the British Museum, London, 28 September, 2006 – 7 January 2007

This exhibition received 120,000 visitors.

Economic Impact

These exhibitions led to an economic impact of:

- £8.1m on the UK economy;
- £3.9m on the London economy; and
- £270,000 on the Norwich regional economy (PwC Report to AHRC, 2006)¹¹

¹¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers calculated gross visitor expenditure by examining how far visitors travelled to visit the exhibitions and their motivations for travelling (i.e. whether the exhibition was the main reason for their travel). The UK Tourism Survey was used to estimate average daily and overnight visitor spending. Taking into account deadweight and displacement factors, a net economic impact was calculated. A multiplier was added to ensure that secondary impacts on the local economy were included in the overall

Wider Impacts

The broader networking and cultural interchanges that were created through the project and exhibitions, both personal and professional, will also be considerable. These are not assigned market values but are likely to be significant, leading to educational and social capital benefits.

Educational and human capital benefits are created not only for the individual research team who gain knowledge, experience, esteem and professional contacts through their work but also to the variety of schools and other educational groups able to engage with the research results, either by attending the exhibition itself or through more focused interactions.

Over thirty events with an educational focus were held at either the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts or the British Museum. At the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts alone, over fifty separate groups of children attended the exhibition, representing over 1,500 visits. Such 'gateway experiences' are considered increasingly important for encouraging arts and cultural participation, effectively enabling more people to maximise the intrinsic values and cultural benefits that they could gain from arts and cultural participation in the future.

calculation. Multipliers were 1.32 for the Norwich region, 1.44 for London, and 1.56 for the UK.

While the economic benefits derived from new tourist and visitor expenditures in the UK and its regions are substantial, a wide variety of other benefits have been achieved. A focus on the economic impact of visitor effects runs the risk of missing the central rationale of the research. The research project was designed “to enhance knowledge, understandings and appreciation of Polynesian artworks, notably sculptures, textiles, feather-works and ornaments from central and western Polynesia and bring a largely unknown major art tradition greater public attention”. This has surely been achieved and no part of this aim relates to enhancing economic values or generating commercial benefits directly.

The focus of the research is on maximising our understanding of the cultural groups in question. It has provided compelling experiences for the public that present cultural artefacts in a way that broadens horizons and generates intrinsic ‘public value’. This value might be more adequately expressed by the public’s ‘willingness to pay’ for their experiences, which PwC have estimated would be between £470-£771k, or through the fact that discussions are well underway to bring the full exhibition to the Musee du Quai Branly in Paris, the largest museum of its kind in the world.

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