

The logo for The University of Manchester, featuring the word "MANCHESTER" in a purple serif font above the year "1824" in a smaller purple serif font, all contained within a purple rectangular box.

MANCHESTER  
1824

The University of Manchester

# Impact Reviews

8<sup>th</sup> March 2024

A wide-angle photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, a paved path curves through a green lawn. In the middle ground, a modern building with large glass windows and a red roof is visible. To the right, a traditional stone building with arched windows is partially obscured by trees. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds, and the sun is shining brightly from the top right corner, creating a lens flare effect.

Professor Nigel Hooper  
Associate Vice-President for Research,  
University of Manchester

# Outline of session

- **Overall strategy to create a culture of impact**
  - Impact in REF2021
  - University of Manchester's REF 2021 submission and results
- **Understanding how impact is created, strengthened and evidence collected**
  - How we prepared institutionally
  - Research Impact Group (RIG)

## **Balancing local and global impact**

- Looking forward to REF2029

## Impact in REF2021 - assessment

Assessed via narrative-based impact case studies.

As in REF2014, research impact was defined as:

‘the effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’

and measured according to its:

**reach** - *the extent and/or diversity of the impact* **and**  
**significance** - *the degree of change*

The panel formed an overall view of the reach and significance of an impact case study as a whole, rather than assessing the two aspects separately.

## **UoM's REF 2021 submission and results (Impact)**

- 160 impact case studies across 31 subject areas
- Overall, 96% of the University's research impact was assessed as 'outstanding' (4\*) or 'very considerable' (3\*) in terms of its reach and significance.
- Nearly half of the subjects submitted (14/31 subjects) scored 75% or more 4\*
- Moved up to 8<sup>th</sup> place for Research Impact (excluding specialist HE Institutions) in the UK (from 25<sup>th</sup> in REF 2014)
- 7 subject areas ranked in the top 3 for impact nationally
- Impact across all types – particularly Policy (54% of ICS) and Health (44% of ICS).

# How UoM prepared for REF 2021 – Research Impact Group (RIG)

- Established in June 2016.
- Focused on research impact beyond the REF process but with operational responsibility for managing the pipeline of future REF impact case studies.
- Quarterly meetings timed to feed into Research Strategy Group and Business Engagement Strategy Group.
- Initial core membership included:
  - Vice-President and Associate Vice-President for Research
  - Academic leads for impact/Faculty Assistant Directors for Research
  - Professional Services Impact leads.
  - Directors of Research and Business Engagement and Social Responsibility
  - Academic Lead for Public Engagement with Research

# How UoM prepared for REF 2021 – Research Impact Group (RIG)

- Impact case studies were managed by Schools with oversight from Faculties. The case study portfolio was peer reviewed and updated annually from 2017.
- Faculties reported back to RIG on:
  - Number of potential impact case studies in each UoA.
  - Estimated star ratings and readiness (using REF criteria of reach and significance).
  - Requirements/concerns and associated resource/costs to address them.
- Ratings were calibrated by a ‘Central Assessment Group’ who assessed the same sample case studies from a range of UoAs and also checked eligibility.
- Feedback was shared with case study authors.

# REF 2021 reflections

## **Essentials for success**

- Local academic leadership for impact.
- Regular institutional-level review of potential impact case studies and evidence.
- Dedicated impact officers in each faculty (permanent posts).
- The establishment of an operational, cross-functional group to coordinate activity and calibrate assessment.
- Funding to support case study development and evidence collection.

# REF 2021 reflections

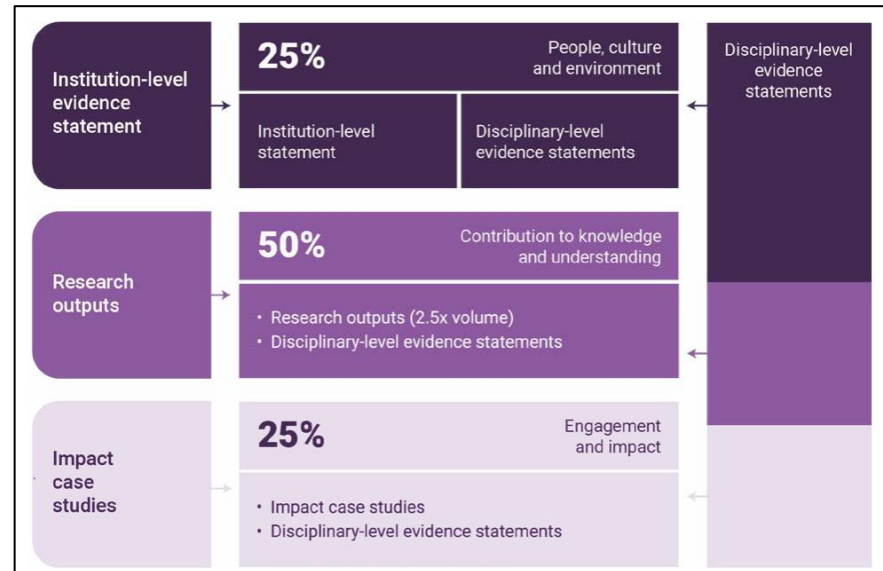
## Areas to develop

- Starting earlier - maintaining momentum by generating impact and developing early versions of case studies.
- Support – recognition of the value of research impact in relation to publications and ringfenced time for case study authors.
- Routine and more robust evidence gathering.
- Improved support and guidance for impact case study authors.



# Expectations for REF 2029

- Weighting will remain at 25%
- Definition remains the same.
- Renamed 'Engagement and impact.'
- Reintroduction of accompanying statement.
- The removal of the 2\* requirement for underpinning research.
- Introduction of rigour as a criterion.
- Reduction in the minimum number of impact case studies.
- Changes to the FTE thresholds for impact case studies.



# Balancing local and global impact

Data enhancement and analysis of published REF2021 impact case studies  
(commissioned by Research England and UKRI)



- **Deep dives:**
  - Covid 19
  - Net Zero
  - Place
- UoM's research impact is featured throughout the analysis and in all three deep dives.
- The report illustrates the breadth of the impact our research has had at local, national and international level and the broad range of stakeholders it has benefitted.

## Balancing local and global impact

- The report showed that UoM research “significantly impacted the local area.’
- 37% of our impact case studies included hyperlocal impacts (within a 25km radius of the university)
- UoM’s hyperlocal impacts on **climate, health, industry and commerce** have a prominent place in the report.
- An internal analysis of countries where impact was achieved revealed that 90 of our 160 impact case studies included international/global impact.
- Many local impacts weren’t included in the case study narratives – the reintroduction of an impact statement provides an opportunity to showcase these.

## Looking forward to REF2029

- Since 2021, we have embedded research impact in our processes (beyond REF) by setting shared annual operational priorities for impact through RIG.
- RIG membership now includes partners who support impact.

# Internal and external partners who support impact

