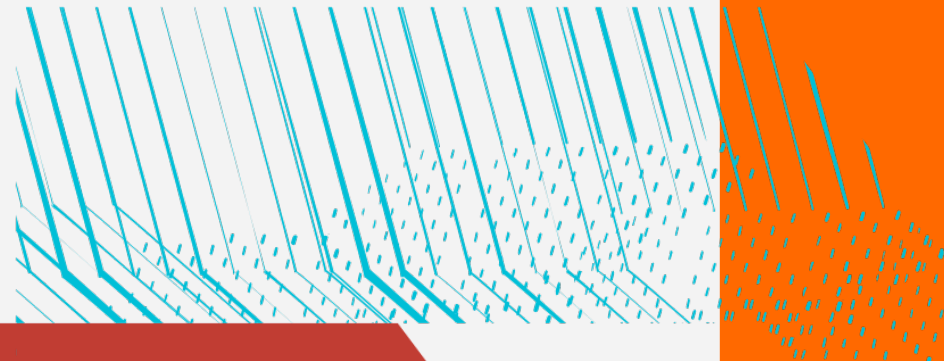




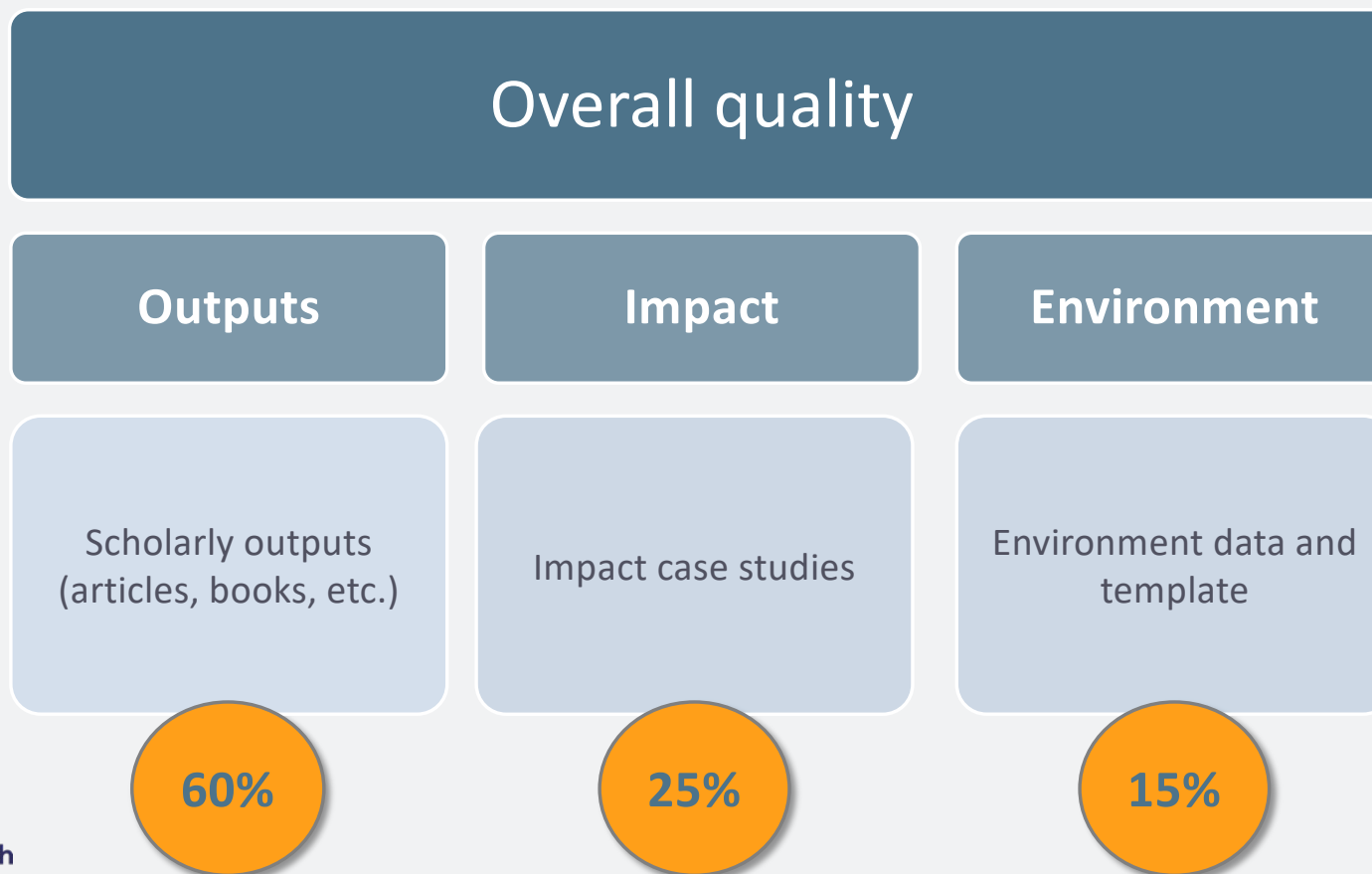
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Assessing research impact and environment

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The 2021 Research Excellence Framework



Definition and assessment criteria

Impact is “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia”

Reach

- the extent and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, as relevant to the nature of the impact. (It will not be assessed in geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries.)

Significance

- the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance, policies, practices, products, services, understanding, awareness or well-being of the beneficiaries.

For impact sub-profiles, the starred levels denote quality as follows:

Quality level	Description
Four star	Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Three star	Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Two star	Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
One star	Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Unclassified	The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit

Challenges for institutions

- Demonstrating quality of underpinning research
- Providing evidence of impact
- Demonstrating impact of activities (i.e. what actually changed)
- Challenges for small units in meeting minimum number of case studies

What we learned as funders

- Institutions worried about what impact would be valued
- Perceived hierarchy of types of impact:
 - economic > policy > cultural
 - international > national > local
- Some (sub-) disciplines struggled to identify opportunities for impact, especially in Arts and Humanities
- Tendency to focus on impact that was easier to measure e.g. economic impact with quantitative metrics

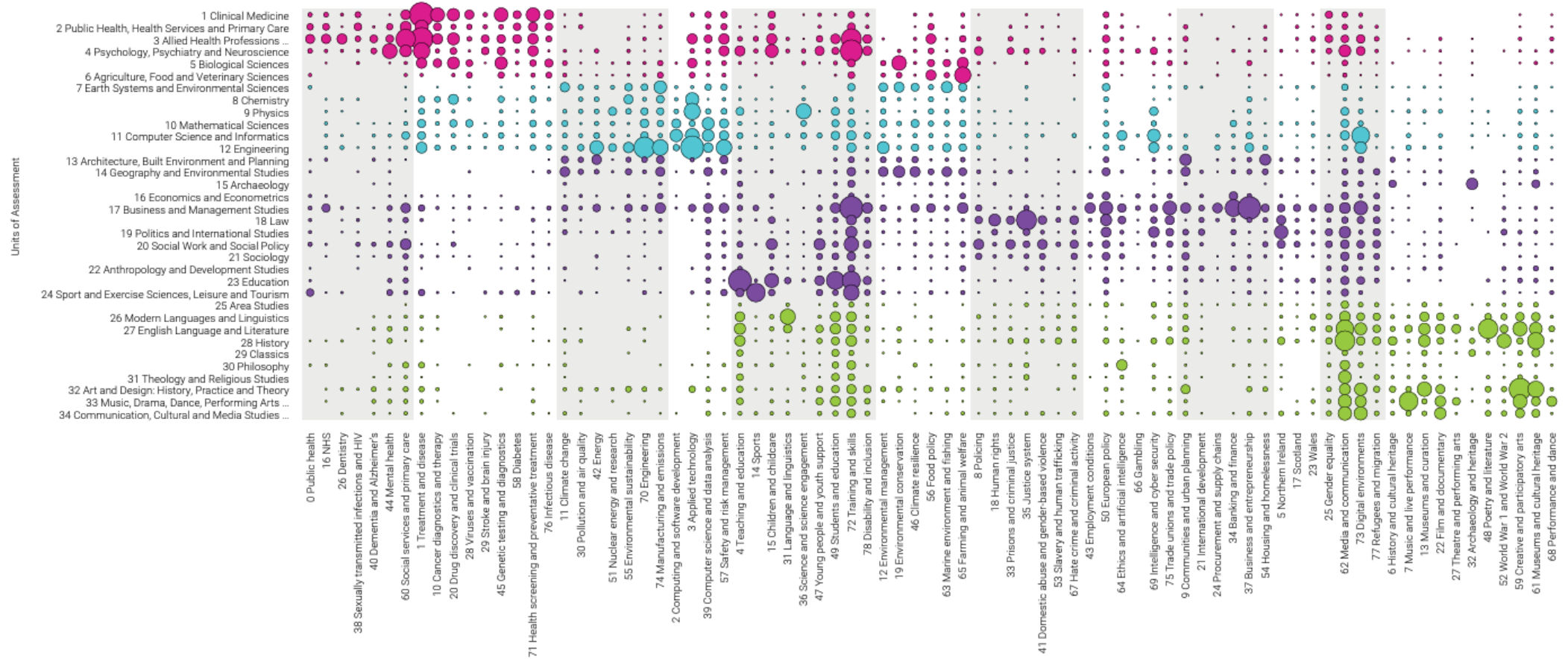
What our analysis showed

IMPACT IS DIVERSE!

- Research can produce a very wide range of impacts
- Inter- and transdisciplinary research deliver impact
- Impact and academic quality are related
- Impact happens on a range of timescales
- Impact happens on a range of spatial scales
- Impact from research can be planned

Research can produce a very wide range of impacts

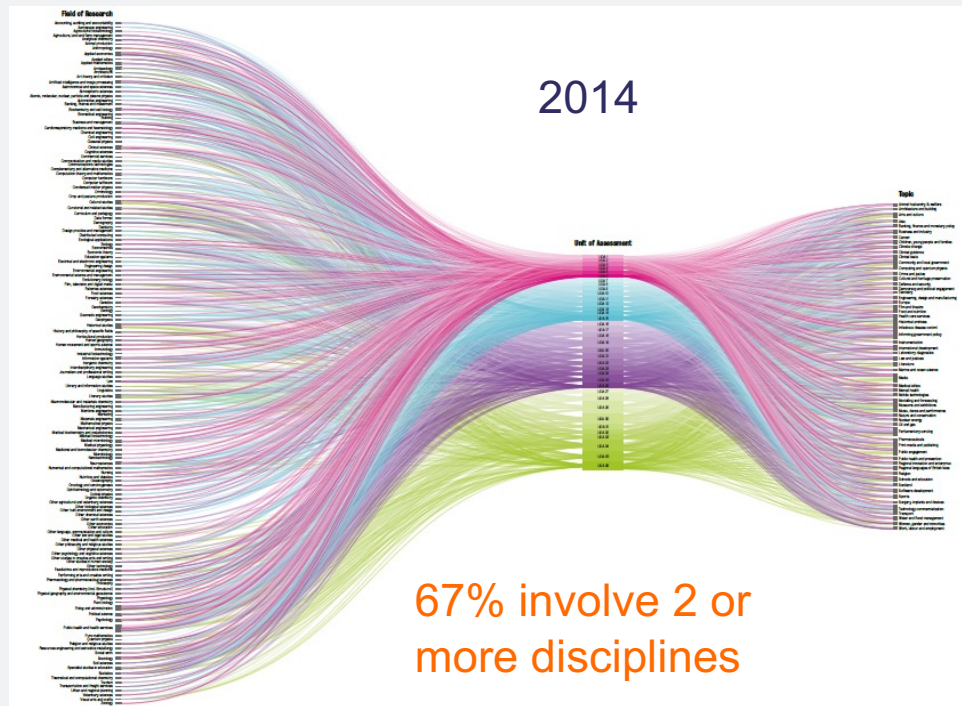
All ICS n=6,361



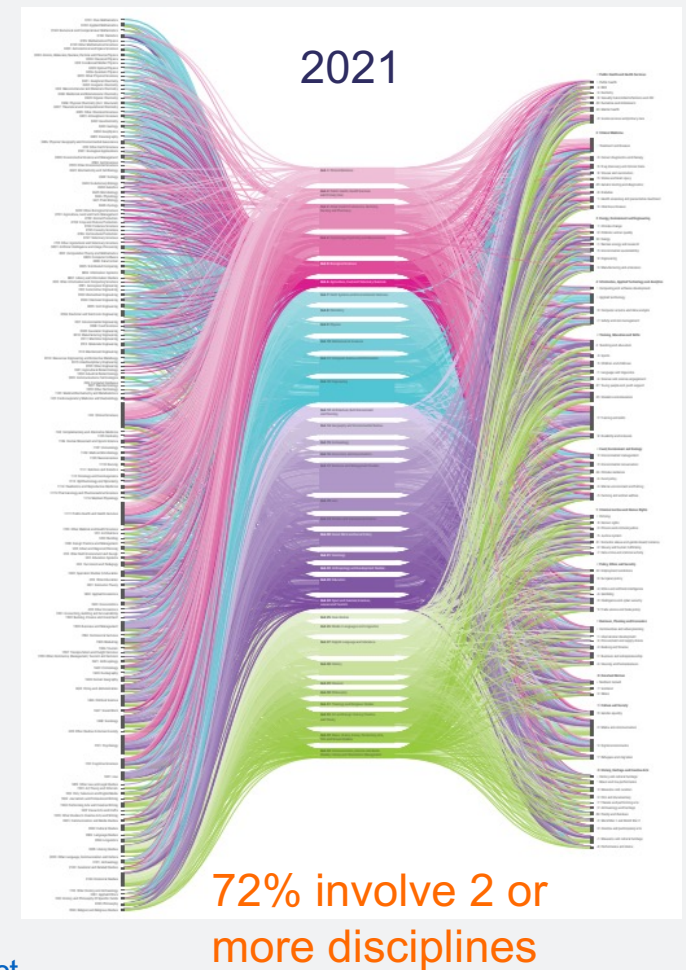
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Source: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2162-1.html

Societal impact comes from interdisciplinary research



<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/research-analysis/nature-scale-beneficiaries-research-impact>
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2162-1.html



Advice for institutions

- There is no perfect path to impact BUT there are ways to strengthen impact case studies
 - Build in evaluation of impact from the outset (where possible)
 - Gather evidence as you go along
 - Draw a clear line between research and impact
 - Keep asking ‘so what?’ to get to the real impact
 - Let academics explain their own impact
 - Engage, engage, engage – many strong case studies came from ‘serendipitous’ impact

REF 2021 Environment

Unit narrative statement covering:

- Context, research and impact strategy
- People – staffing strategy, research students, equality and diversity
- Income, infrastructure, and facilities
- Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

PLUS data on research income, PGR completions

Institutional statements (not scored) on:

- Context and mission
- Strategy
- People
- Income, infrastructure, and facilities



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Questions?



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Thank you



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