



Evaluating Research Impact in the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Research England, Universities UK International, Japan Association of National Universities

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Purposes of the REF

Funding

To inform the selective allocation of funding for research

Accountability

To provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment

Reputation

To provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use within the HE sector and for public information

Overall quality

Outputs

E.g. journal articles,
monographs, software,
performances,
exhibitions

60%

Impact

Impact case studies

25%

Environment

Environment data and
template, incl. impact
strategy

15%



Impact

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



Assessment criteria

Reach

the extent and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, as relevant to the nature of the impact

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

To be eligible, case studies must be:

...underpinned
by...

- Research made a distinct and material contribution
- Can be indirect or non-linear

...excellent
research...

- Research as a whole is at least equivalent to two star
- References and indicators to be included

...produced by the
submitting unit in
the last 20 years

- Staff carried out research within this disciplinary area, while working in the submitting institution

Impact case studies

- Max. 5 pages
- Underpinning research and references
- Details of impact
 - How did the research contribute?
 - Who were the beneficiaries?
 - What was the nature of the impact?
 - When did it occur?
- Corroborating sources
 - Reports, web links
 - Confidential reports
 - Testimonials



Supporting impact

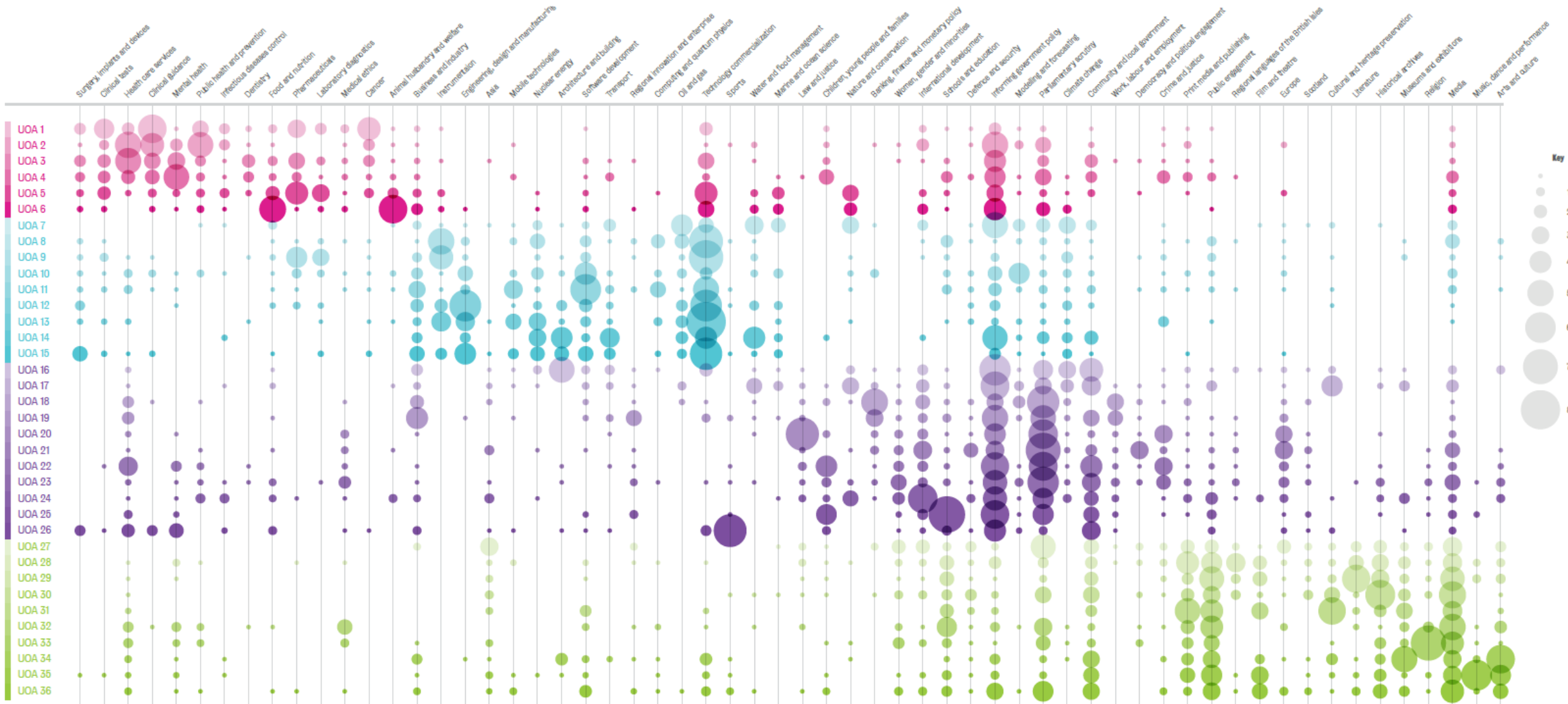
- Strategies and approaches to supporting impact assessed via the environment template
- Assessed against criteria of 'vitality and sustainability'



REF 2014

- 6,975 case studies were submitted
- On average across all submissions, 44% of impacts were judged outstanding (4*) by over 250 external users of research, working jointly with the academic panel members. A further 40% were judged very considerable (3*).





Evolution of impact assessment

- **Broadening** definition of impact and underpinning research
- **Increasing** weighting from 20-25%
- **Embedding** into environment



Challenges

- Non-linearity of impact
- Attribution vs contribution
- Measuring/evidencing impact
- Interpretation of criteria
- Ensuring cost is proportionate





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Thank you



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