

Research Impact Framework

The purpose:

The work of members of a Faculty of Education takes many forms, across a range of disciplines. By thinking and planning carefully about the ways in which we report the work we do, we are afforded the opportunity to think about why we do research, and in what ways we make a difference. By developing a Research Impact Framework this better allows us to present the work we do in ways that align with our Western's Strategic Plan, the Faculty Strategic Research Plan, our disciplines, and our individual research programs. In documenting the ways in which we have impact (broadly), we have the opportunity to draw attention to what we do, how we do it, and how often or to what extent we do it. In developing this "Research Impact Framework", we can serve the information needs of the institution and our communities (research, discipline, government, professional, practice and individual).

Why are we talking about Research Impact? Because this is the reality- funders, institutions, regulatory systems are interested in four objectives (Dean et al, 2013):

1. "Advocacy: we are being called upon to 'make the case' for research" (and in particular, make it for non-STEM, and Education research at the level of our own university and beyond. There is great interest in economic components, including ROI, for research.)
2. "Accountability": to funders (including the public)
3. "Analysis: to understand what works in research funding, and inform decisions about which areas to invest in (e.g. the Payback Framework)"
4. "Allocation: examining the quality of research outputs, the wider impact of research and the vitality of research environments are all part of the system of funding allocation in the UK, used as part of the assessment framework for allocating research funds from national science funding." We might assume there is a similar process in place in Canada, with SSHRC.

What will a fully developed Research Impact Framework allow us to do?

We propose to collect and collate the evidence of research impact from each faculty member, once we fully develop the framework. This information will be anonymized, and presented in ways that allow us to showcase the work being done, to both internal and external audiences.

As part of a process, a research impact framework can be helpful in planning, reporting, assessing and promoting the work we do.

What is "Research Impact"?

It has many components: *academic research impact* can include development of methods and techniques, HQP, and *external research impact* is economic, societal, and includes social, public policy, cultural and quality of life elements (Dean et al, 2013).

It's a challenge, because to ask "What is the impact of education research?" also points to the question, "What is the value of education?"

We have our own definition in our Research strategic plan (p. 8):

"Generally, impact is broadly defined as encompassing research that supports teaching, contributes to the body of knowledge, changes practices, influences policymakers, and importantly, benefits society or the environment and contributes to economic development. "

What is the value of a Framework?

In developing a framework, or organizing system, it allows us the opportunity to articulate and identify why we do research, and how we define the basic components of research (e.g. the inputs and outputs). It allows us to use common language to provide a flexible system so that each individual researcher can see their work in the context of how our collective disciplines and bodies of work make a difference to the academy, practice communities, policy makers, systems, society and individuals .

What does this mean for a Framework?

Borrowing from health research (Kuruville, Mays, Pleasant & Walt, 2006)- who point out that science is “a social enterprise with researchers interacting within specific scientific cultures and communities” and recognizing that inherent in a Faculty of Education is multi- and inter-disciplinarity, we are attempting to build a framework that is flexible enough to represent all the types of impacts and all the examples therein, and develop a cohesive set of impacts that can be integrated and presented to our leaders and colleagues at both Western and other institutions. A framework allows for and assists in clarifying, naming and enumerating the range of impacts not always easily captured by other frameworks. This is a challenge!

So, we can look at four broad areas of education research impact:

1. Research-related impacts
2. Policy impacts
3. Service impacts (education and across sectors such as health and economy)
4. Societal impacts

Challenges:

(from Dean et al, 2013)

1. Time lags: When do we assess the impact of any research we do? The time taken for knowledge mobilization, then realizing any impacts from that, can be lengthy
2. Attribution: there is a challenge in attributing any change to the effects of research, because of time lags, history, many kinds of bias, assessment issues. Judgment must be used, but this creates challenges as well
3. Assessing marginal differences: how do we differentiate between high and low research impact, or value these differently?
4. The cost of tracking and assessing research impact: It can take a great deal of time for researchers to track the impact (time they could be using to do research), and funding is needed to track, collate, assess the impact information. It is not possible to design a research impact tracking and assessment system ‘off the side of your desk’.
5. The unit of assessment: the central question here is whether research impact should be evaluated based on inputs (the research) or outputs (the types of impacts). In our case, this may be expressed as looking at our research impact in terms of strategic priorities, as compared to looking at impact from a research perspective and trying to list all the areas of inquiry

What informs us?

SSHRC: *Imagining Canada’s Future. Future Challenge Areas and Sub-questions.*

http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/society-societe/community-communite/Imagining_Canada_s_Future_Technical_Report-Rapport_technique_d_imager_l_avenir_du_Canada-eng.pdf

Six research questions have been identified to address “future challenge areas(FCA) for Canada in an evolving global context that are likely to emerge in five, 10, and 20 years and to which the social sciences and humanities research community could contribute its knowledge, talent and expertise” (p.3):

1. What might the implications of global peak population be for Canada?
2. What effects will the quest for energy and natural resources have on our society and our position on the world stage?

3. How are the experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada essential for building a successful shared future?
4. What new ways of learning, particularly in higher education, will Canadians need to thrive in an emerging society and labour market?
5. What knowledge will Canada need to thrive in an interconnected evolving global landscape?
6. How can emerging technologies be leveraged to benefit Canadians?

“Each FCA is intended to be positioned as a lens through which research might focus on the desired outcomes of sustainable resilient communities: Creativity, innovation and prosperity; values, cultures, inclusion and diversity; and governance and institutions.” (p.2)

Faculty Strategic Research Plan

From the Section “IMPACT” (p. 8)

IMPACT

Explicitly recognizing the impact of research is relatively new to research assessment in higher education. In recent years, "research impact" has become a major topic within the academy, largely due to the processes for evaluating research and the allocation of funds. Generally, impact is broadly defined as encompassing research that supports teaching, contributes to the body of knowledge, changes practices, influences policymakers, and importantly, benefits society or the environment and contributes to economic development.

Less clear is how impact is measured. Particularly within Education, impact remains a diffuse concept. At the **system level**, impact could encompass changes in practice, changes in policy, institutional changes, as well as enhanced public debate and increased public awareness of important issues. At the **individual level**, in practice and policy, research evidence, however strong, rigorous, and effectively communicated, does not simply compel to action, but is filtered through judgments about aims and values, and balanced against other forms of evidence and incentives to action. Dialogue and partnership throughout the research process may enable shifts in the language used in public debates, and in the assumptions shaping the use of research evidence, which may have implications for both the individual and the systemic levels (Strategic Forum for Research in Education III Report, 2012). *As the Faculty of Education moves forward with implementation of its Strategic Research Plan, mechanisms for determining impact will need to be considered and implemented.* (Emphasis added)

To date, the Faculty of Education has not systematically collected or reported impact data. What is available, however, indicates that we have many researchers with high levels of externally funded research, academic and technical publications, and presentations and reports delivered to a broad range of audiences. Researchers hold significant funding from external sources. Since 2008, they have collectively held at least 1.8 million dollars per year and together generated over 1200 research and knowledge mobilization publications. Further, researchers contribute to professional knowledge via partnerships with schools and a wide range of community agencies, governments, and international organizations including professional staff and others who work on the front lines, as well as those who engage at various administrative levels. Noteworthy is the number of Editors of national and international journals who call the Faculty of Education their home.

Western’s Strategic Plan (Draft)

https://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/documents/Going_Global_Draft_July_21_13.pdf

Priority II is “Raising our Expectations: Creating a World-Class Research and Scholarship Culture”.

This has 10 priorities:

1. Invest selectively in interdisciplinary areas of strength
2. Increase focus on research inputs (i.e. Tri-Council funding)
3. Increase focus on research outcomes:
 - a. Citations from the most prestigious sources
 - b. Keynotes and performances
 - c. Scholarship that shapes public policy
 - d. Scientific and technological innovations that can be commercialized
4. Hire and retain established faculty
5. Address societal needs for HQP
6. Partner with other academic, research, and corporate institutions
7. Celebrate our colleagues' successes
8. Bring the world to Western
9. Engage our libraries as partners in research and scholarship
10. Leverage the full potential of administrative staff as partners in research and scholarship

Research on Knowledge Mobilization

Sa, Li, & Faubert (2011):

1. Institutional strategies for knowledge mobilization (systematic connections by having faculty members sit on Boards of Education, engaging in community-based research, offering professional development training programs)
2. Valuing KM as an institutional priority
3. Rewarding and incentivizing for faculty members (i.e. making this part of annual performance reviews, or Promotion and Tenure criteria)

From Jacobsen, Butterill & Goering:

There are 5 areas of organizational practice and policy that may be critical to promoting engagement in knowledge transfer for faculty:

1. Promotion and tenure: KM should be included alongside traditional activities
2. Resources and funding: money for direct costs and indirect expenses
3. Structures: dedicated units- centres or institutes with mandates to engage specific user groups or specific topics
4. Knowledge transfer orientation – it must be an individual priority, so institution can promote it, train people for it
5. Documentation-must be integrated into promotion and tenure decisions, make it routine

Research on the Impact of Research Partnerships

Work that has taken place at the Faculty of Education includes products from a CURA grant held by Dr. Jacqui Specht and colleagues. Through the partnerships involved in the CURA, the research group developed a comprehensive model of the community impacts of research partnerships and with it, a measure (Community Impacts of Research Partnerships; CIROP). The model outlines:

Functions (and outputs) of the Research Partnership: research education and training (training, outreach & financial support), knowledge sharing (website, publications and presentations), and knowledge generation (public dialogue, projects, reports and products)

The model also outlines the utilization (consultation, use of materials, permission to use, use of information, website use, request for materials) and mid-term impacts (Enhanced knowledge, Use of information, and enhanced research skills) and long-term impacts (perceived value of research, sense of inquiry, consumer satisfaction, community wellness, research quality).

The broad categories and ways in which we may observe impact

This list is meant to be flexible, and not exhaustive. Faculty could use the list to prompt an articulation of the ways in which their work has impact. There are spaces left deliberately for more ideas, both at this stage and at the final stage, so that we maintain the dynamic nature of the ways we look at ‘impact’.

Domain	Categories	Products	notes
Research			
	“Inputs”	Funding (tri-Council)	
		Funding (other)	
		In-kind contributions	
	Publications	Journal articles, books	peer reviewed
		Reports	
		Summaries	
	Citations	Google Scholar	
		Scholarship Western	
		Web of Science	Western Libraries
	Events	Conferences	
		Keynotes, invited addresses	
		Performances	
	Methods	innovation	
		Development/extension	
		synthesis	
	Leadership	Setting the agenda	
		Setting the standard	
		Recruiting HQP	
		Disciplinary strength	
		Promotion and prevention strategies and priorities	
	Networks	Knowledge sharing, moving the work forward	Applications for grants with partners, publications from multiple institutions/sectors
	Partnerships	Knowledge generation	
	Knowledge Mobilization	Research dissemination strategies	
	Stewardship	Supporting HQP	Funding
		Training HQP	Resources, access
		Responsible conduct of research	Sitting on ethics boards
	System Management	Expanding linkages	multidisciplinarity
		Setting priorities	
		Resource allocation	Reviewers on funding committees
		Changing Research environment	
		Research implementation strategies	
		guidelines	
Policy	Policy	briefs	To governments, policy-makers; “policy-ready papers”

		Networks	Being part of or informing key groups
		Political capital	Positions on influential committees; consultants to people with influence
		Instrumental use	Research directly drives or influences policy
		Conceptual use	Research leads to new ideas and language that has an influence
	Advocacy		
	Strategic plans		
	Consultations		
Service	Evidence-Based Practice	Curriculum	
		Pedagogy	
		Treatment	For mental health
	Information systems		
	Management	Frameworks	
Society	Capacity building and Support		
		Glossaries	
		Research Based FAQs	
		Toolkits for practitioners	
		Online tutorials	
		Research Support Services	
	engagement	Workshops/training	
Communication	Media	Press releases	
		Newspaper articles	
		Radio/tv	
		Blogs	
		Newsletters	
		Social media	
		websites	
	Outreach	Target audiences	Donors, public, research community, policy makers, practitioners

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