UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: IMPEDING OR FACILITATING CREATIVITY?

Hannover, September 29th 2016

The Impact Agenda in Research Governance

Mike Power, LSE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank 2014</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Institute of Cancer Research</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Imperial College London</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>St George’s, University of London</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cardiff University</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>University College London</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>King’s College London</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>University of Oxford</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=10</td>
<td>University of Bristol</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=10</td>
<td>London School of Economics</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Original data from Hefce; GPA calculation by *Times Higher Education*
The research of 154 UK universities was assessed. They made 1,911 submissions including:

- 52,061 academic staff
- 191,150 research outputs
- 6,975 impact case studies

The overall quality of submissions was judged, on average to be:

- 30% world-leading (4*)
- 46% internationally excellent (3*)
- 20% recognised internationally (2*)
- 3% recognised nationally (1*)
“Impact” as a performance value

- Longstanding policy interest in outcomes; How to link university research to economy
- Rise of ‘impact’, ‘impactfulness’ as performance value/logic in different fields
- UK “Warry Report” 2006: pressure to measure impact of research outside academy
- UK Research Evaluation Exercise (2014); 20% funding for impact; “beneficial impact” but can be wide, not just economic
- Initial resistance/scepticism: impact as new kind of norm for organizations (LSE 1 study per 10 staff)
- 4* ICS worth £120K per annum!
## Research Excellence Framework 2014: Institutions Ranked by Subject

### Philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2014 mark order</th>
<th>Total number of FTE staff submitted</th>
<th>% of 4* research activity</th>
<th>Research power</th>
<th>% of 4* research activity</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>% of 4* research activity</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>Keele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>King’s College London</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>Cambridge B: History and Philosophy of science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>UCL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>St Andrews</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>LSE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Birkbeck</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Queen’s Belfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>UCL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>King’s College London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>UEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>Cambridge B: History and Philosophy of science</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>King’s College London</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>St Andrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>St Andrews</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accounting for impact

• Underlying causal model: “pathways to impact”:
  • research → “engagement” → impact on ‘users
• Metrics ambition but ICS as narrative accounting form
• ICS template production – Regulator/Universities pilot studies
• Making up more specific rules (Not all staff; time-window, boundary issues, research quality thresholds etc)
• Pluralism of kinds of impact and related evidence forms e.g.
Include evidence of the reach of the impact. This should extend beyond simply providing the numbers of people engaged and may also, for example, include:

- information about the types of audience
- whether there was secondary reach, for example from follow-up activity or media coverage
- other quantitative indicators such as evidence of sales, downloads of linked resources, and/or access to web content.

c. Include evidence of the significance of the impact. This should include a description of the social, cultural or other significance of the research insights with which the public have engaged. Examples of the evidence that might be provided for this include:

- evaluation data
- critical external reviews of the engagement activity
- evidence of third party involvement, for example how collaborators have modified their practices
- user feedback or testimony
- evidence of sustainability through, for example, a sustained or ongoing engagement with a group, a significant increase in participation in events or programmes or use of resources
Evidence of impact: “solicited testimony”

• UNI: operational challenges in creating and writing ICS; populating template
• “what impact is NOT”; “what has changed as a result of my research?”
• Problem of causal attribution vs complexity
• traces of impact lie outside organization; costly to collect.
• emergence of ‘solicited testimony’; low cost evidence form
• Some concerns at UNI about overuse of this evidence form
• = traces of impact actively constructed by researcher
Discussion: creativity?

• What is creativity, innovation; we should avoid over-romanticising?

• UK REF Recalibrating balance of two logics: autonomous curiosity; and use-value; exposed different distributions of this logic across HE field; for some it is an opportunity

• Key question: what organizational and behavioural changes does the Impact Agenda bring about?

• 4 themes: ‘impact creep’; ‘impact auditability’; quantifying qualities; academic misconduct
Discussion: “impact creep”?

- Infrastructure; embedding value of impact; Support for evidence collection; traces of impact.
- ‘solicitation’ of impact as new academic habit! Distraction?
- 2014: impact was *ex post* outcome; becoming *ex ante* target: e.g. Grant applications: prospective impact: impact even precedes research?
- Rankings and reactivity: impact financial consequences; acquires attention;
- In conversation: “Hey that’s impact”. New discourse; ironic?
- ‘users’ as impactees also being constructed; made into good users of research?
Discussion: impact auditability?

- Attraction of solicited testimony = creating traces of impact - interiorise external sources
- But hard to evaluate?
- ‘it was hard to assess the significance of an impact where the evidence was ‘nuanced’ and in the form of corroborating testimonials’
- The ICS field shows the face of real audit society: not an auditable society; or one full of confident auditors/evaluators but organized by a ‘logic’ of auditability:
  - Production of precise traces of impact (cf Wise ‘values of precision
  - Effortful production of evaluations as metrics (GPAs) which can be compared
Discussion: quantifying qualities?

- Impact agenda in UK non-quantitative in spirit; not the usual story of ‘tyranny of numbers’
- At what point in evaluation systems are qualities transformed into quantities?
- The ICS not itself metrics-based but is a ‘mediating instrument’ which ‘feeds’ GPAs and rankings
- ICS as qualitative pre-reduction; we tend to focus on metrics themselves and not their qualitative pre-conditions of the possibility of grading.
- Pre-reduction and simplification: journalists replace academics as authors; marketing?
Discussion: academic misconduct

• Impact agenda as natural extension and next episode of the rationalization and managerial control of academic work? OR
• Legitimate policy demand of states and taxpayers: willing to take a bet on most research funding but some accountability
• But have new kinds of academic ‘misconduct’, ‘deviance’ been created by the emphasis on impact?
  – being an intellectual? Doing research ‘for its own sake’? Writing long books? editing collections? Being too much of an academic citizen? Not publishing in the ‘best’ journals
  – Trusting in ones teaching and research impact, rather than proving it
THANK YOU