**1. About IMPACT 2018**

In the past three years the Cultural, Communications and Computing Research Institute (C3Ri) has delivered an annual research student conference on the theme of METHOD in research. The aim of METHOD was to invite research students to think critically about the design and implementation of their process, improving the articulation of method needed at confirmation (RF2) and submission stages of PhD. While this conference was led by C3Ri, we invited PhD students from across the University to participate, offering a richer learning experience.

From 2018 we are going to alternate the theme METHOD with IMPACT, and focus on ways that we might articulate the wider value of our research. Both conferences are for PhD researchers at any point in their study.

In the past decade there has been an increasing demand to demonstrate how research moves beyond ‘contribution to knowledge’ and makes an impact on social, economic, technological, cultural and environmental life, beyond academia. This movement sits within general currents in public life- to create mutually beneficial interactions between researchers and citizens, to encourage participation, to be more transparent and accountable, and to be better value for money.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) broadly understands impact as something that has *‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond academia’* (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/REFimpact/). Impact is something that happens when people interact with research, take it up, react and respond to it. Research Council UK defines impact as, ‘*the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy’*. This is an exciting and optimistic vision resting on an expectation that all research can and should contribute to society and the economy, beyond academia.

Right from the beginning of doctoral study, researchers are asked to identify the contexts for their research- academic and cultural- and to consider what it is about a certain context they hope to influence or transform. Impact is a way of thinking about this change and how we might recognise it when it happens. Doctoral research does not, by necessity have to generate impact- however understanding how impact might be envisaged, generated and articulated is a vital part of researcher training.

To understand and communicate impact it is important to think through what the ingredients might be. Firstly, we have to consider who the beneficiaries of research are-might they be certain specified elements of the ‘public’ such as service-users, audience or customers? These descriptions all assume that the recipients might ‘receive’ the impact once the research is done. However, for many instances of research, impact might grow or be incorporated as the research is undertaken, so blurring the line between the research process and its findings, or between research subjects and beneficiaries, in forms of ‘co-research’. Given the relationship between research and its beneficiaries, it is likely that the pursuit of impact may also have ethical consequences or dimensions.

It is also important to think about the spatial qualities of impact. Much research happens in situ, or has relevance or influence in industry and communities, so might generate forms of communal knowledge. Thinking about impact always involves thinking about time *and* space- might there be different stages of impact and scales of impact? Some impact might be easy to see and measure, whilst some might be subtle, gradual, multi-dimensional and non-linear: a type of ‘influence’ that is much harder to quantify or specify.

While influencing society seems a wholly positive aspiration for research, the impact ‘agenda’, as cultivated by HEFCE and RCUK is complex and sometimes contentious. By separating academic contribution to knowledge from social and economic impact it implies that academic contribution is not part of society, or that economic gain might be considered separately from societal value. Some research might have more clearly immediate, quantifiable indicators of impact, while others might generate slower influence. Given the varied forms impact can take, its important to have a nuanced and critical understanding of the ways it can be identified and articulated.

The IMPACT conference gives us the opportunity to consider the relationship between academic influence and social, economic, cultural, environmental and technological impact.

We invite doctoral researchers across the University, to reflect on: notions of impact; how their own research may generate impact; what impact means to their study; or to reflect on how their research might challenge assumptions of impact.

**By participating in IMPACT you will:**

* Be able to recognise who will (or might) benefit from your research
* Develop an understanding of how your research will (or might) make a difference
* Be able to identify pathways to impact in your research
* Be able to recognise and communicate the impact of your own research
* To understand the requirements of impact and to be able to see it with a critical lens
* Gain experience in presenting at conferences
* Gain experience in presenting in inter-disciplinary environment
* ‘Top and tail’ your training- METHOD explores research process, IMPACT explores the transformative potential of research.
* Contribute to an interdisciplinary discussion so we all understand impact better.
* Think about impact earlier than you might have done

**2. Submission details**

**Abstract guidance for research students**

**Submission deadline: April 2nd 13.00**

**Send to:** **b.shaw@shu.ac.uk**

The abstract should be a maximum of 300 words, summarizing a 15-minute presentation. It should be in English that is intelligible to others outside of your discipline. If you need to use subject-specific terminology then you need to provide definitions in the body of the text.

The abstract *must* address the theme of the conference: impact. To do this you will probably need to briefly describe the aims of your research and its context, then move on to explore how you consider the likely or actual impact of your research.

To do this you might want to discuss:

* How you are conceiving the ‘beneficiaries’ and how might the work impact upon them?
* What do you want to change?
* What impact might your work already have had and how can you identify this?
* Is there a relationship between academic publishing- conferences, journals etc, and social and economic impact?
* What affect might you want your work to have, and what strategy could you devise to make sure it achieves this impact?
* What strategies have other researchers used to generate impact for their work and how might you draw on these?
* How might technology and social media be used to generate or understand impact?
* What are the different types of evidence of impact and might some be considered ‘better’ than others?
* How might we understand the difference between user engagement and public engagement?
* Have you considered the different forms of audiences for your findings- citizens and professionals?
* Offering new ways to understand or challenge notions of impact

To help you write your abstract and think about your presentation we are offering two scheduled training sessions. One on Impact and abstracts on March 15th and another on confident presenting skills on April 11th. See below for more details.

We intend that ALL abstracts proposed will be accepted, so begin to prepare your presentation as soon as your abstract is submitted. We may also send feedback and ask for the abstract to be rewritten or corrected so it is of professional conference standard. If this is the case for you, please discuss your abstract with a member of your supervision team and use it as the basis of a supervision session.

**3. IMPACT 2018 Training Sessions**

**IMPACT training: Wednesday 15th March, 9-11, Cantor Building 9130**

Training on abstract writing, with an IMPACT focus

Led by Alison Honnor, Impact Researcher C3Ri and Becky Shaw (Postgraduate Research Tutor ADRC and Acting PGR Lead C3RI).

Please bring with you a draft of your abstract, or some ideas, so we can help you shape your individual submission.

Book via eventbrite asap: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/impact-training-session-with-alison-honnor-impact-researcher-tickets-43392167140?aff=es2

**IMPACT 2018 confident presenter training: Tuesday 10th April 11.00-13.00 Cantor Building 9135**

Led by David Slack, professional performer and public speaker.

Book via eventbrite asap: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-confident-presenter-postgraduate-research-training-session-tickets-43346454412?aff=es2

Many Best Wishes

Postgraduate Research Team C3Ri

Any enquiries contact:

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