



# Impact evaluation in Norway and in the UK

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**A comparative study, based on REF 2014 and Humeval 2015-2017**

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Marta Natalia Wróblewska\*, Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL) (University of Warwick, UK) / National Centre for Research and Development – NCBR (Warsaw, Poland)

[m.n.wroblewska@gmail.com](mailto:m.n.wroblewska@gmail.com)

**Series Editor Contact:**

Paul Benneworth, Karolina Lendák-Kabók  
c/o Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies  
University of Twente  
P.O. Box 217  
7500 AE Enschede  
The Netherlands  
T +31 53 – 4893263  
F +31 53 – 4340392  
E [p.benneworth@utwente.nl](mailto:p.benneworth@utwente.nl)  
W [www.utwente.nl/cheps](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps)

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the process of implementing research impact evaluation in Norway with a focus on the Evaluation of the Humanities in Norway (Humeval) carried out by the Research Council of Norway (RCN) in 2015 – 2017. The purpose of the study is 1) to analyse the submitted impact case studies with respect to their linguistic features and narrative structures and 2) to assess whether a change has taken place in academic discourse and academic practice as a result of this new evaluation exercise. The findings were compared to the results of a previous study carried out by the same author on the British REF 2014 exercise on which Humeval was modelled. The goal of this comparison was to point to the differences or peculiarities of both evaluative contexts and to suggest possible pathways of development in the Norwegian research impact culture.

The paper starts with a discussion of differences in the science system and in the approach to academic evaluation in the UK and Norway with a focus on the Humeval exercise. The empirical part draws on the analysis of two types of data: 1) impact case studies submitted to the exercise (31 documents from the Norwegian pool and 78 from the British one) and 2) interviews conducted with social actors involved in the exercise (10 in Norway and 25 in the UK). The focus is on the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the studied sample regards the case of the discipline of linguistics in particular.

The study suggests that the two studied countries are developing different approaches to impact evaluation as well as different forms of the genre of impact case study, despite apparently adopting similar policy solutions (including the definition of impact and the case study template).

**Keywords:** research evaluation, research impact, impact evaluation, REF 2014, Humeval

## Executive summary

### **Purpose of the study:**

This study investigates the process of implementing research impact evaluation in Norway with a focus on the Evaluation of the Humanities in Norway (Humeval) carried out by the Research Council of Norway (RCN) in 2015 – 2017. The purpose of the study is to analyse the submitted impact case studies with respect to their linguistic features and narrative structures and to assess whether a change had taken place in academic discourse and academic practice as a result of this new evaluation exercise. The findings were compared to the results of a previous study carried out by the same author on the British REF 2014 exercise on which the Humeval evaluation was modelled. The goal of this comparison was to point to the differences or peculiarities of both evaluative contexts and to suggest possible pathways of development in the Norwegian research impact culture.

### **Comparison of impact case studies in Norway and Britain**

The process of implementing impact evaluation in Norway differed from the process preceding the launch of the REF. In Norway, what took place was not a shift from one model to another, but rather a developmental change in which new solutions were introduced step by step in response to emerging issues.

Compared to the British impact case studies which give a clear impression of belonging to one coherent and well-defined academic genre, the Norwegian case studies are strikingly diverse. This is apparent on the level of document structure and length, narrative patterns, grammatical forms, use of 'meta' content and the overall focus of the texts. These observations suggest that the genre of impact case study is not yet established in Norwegian academic culture. Humeval was the first experience of writing impact case studies for most Norwegian authors, and, unlike in the REF, the exercise was not preceded by a pilot that could produce 'exemplary' documents.

The Norwegian CSs seem to give a more nuanced view of the impactful research conducted, enabling a presentation of the broader context of the described engagement, rather than showcasing an isolated impact 'intervention'. The Norwegian documents are often striking in their honesty in describing challenges in impact generation and in their reflexivity. This speaks to the formative goal of the assessment, which does not seek to create hierarchies, but rather to harvest information as well as to the relative 'openness' of the evaluation system, which allows for dissenting and critical opinions. Features such as honesty and reflexivity are qualities which should be encouraged in a science system which builds on mutual trust between the policy-maker and the academic community.

While presenting excellent research and a range of engagement activities in the form of readable, nuanced narratives, many of the impact case studies fail to achieve the pragmatic aim of the document, i.e. convincing the reader of the impact of the presented research,

defined as ‘change or benefit... beyond academia’. Many CSs focus on dissemination activities, while neglecting to address impact. In particular, the documents often do not highlight what *problem* of a societal, economic, cultural etc. nature was addressed in the described academic work. When presenting impact, many of the authors do not provide reliable evidence to corroborate the claims. When such evidence is present it is often not efficiently ‘signalled’ to the reader. As a consequence, at the present stage of development, the genre of impact case study in its Norwegian iteration does not seem to effectively address all of the requirements put before it by the organizer of the assessment. The report includes a checklist for future authors of impact CSs which may be helpful in drafting documents which achieve their pragmatic goal more efficiently (section 8.1.)

### **The experience of writing and submitting impact case studies**

Compared to the British context, the preparation of the submission in the Norwegian institution was less burdensome and time-consuming for academics, but at the same time less engaging. While the meticulous British approach to the REF submissions – no doubt resulting from the perceived importance of the exercise – has contributed to anxiety among academic staff and some resentment of the exercise, it has also generated high levels of awareness of the notion of impact and its evaluation.

Most Norwegian respondents of this study describe their experience of submitting the CS as positive: they viewed the invitation to write a CS as an acknowledgement of their work, an opportunity to reflect on their practice and to learn about new tendencies in research evaluation. Many saw the exercise as raising the profile of the humanities. Several objections and criticisms were nevertheless put forward, some fundamental (the ethical aspect of measuring impact, the compatibility of the exercise with the nature of research in the humanities) and some related to the practicalities of the implementation of the policy (lack of clear definition of impact, lack of guidance and training, too short notice given by the organizer before the evaluation). The exercise was sometimes seen as something alien to academic culture, a framework that was imposed from the outside.

Generally, respondents agreed that engagement, dissemination, outreach, activism etc. were considered as secondary factors in academic careers in Norway. In this context, a policy aimed at systematically valorising research impact would have an effect on which elements of academic activity are seen as crucial and recognised. Hence, if the trend towards impact valorisation continues, the integration of impact and forms of writing about impact in different disciplinary cultures will become an issue.

Academics recognise the need to valorise and evaluate research impact and many are happy to have had the opportunity to document their impact. However, there seems to be a general dissatisfaction with the *process* of submitting impact case studies, particularly as regards the communication on the goals of the exercise, the definition of impact and provision of guidance on writing the actual document.

The impact evaluation was a learning point for the RCN and for the academics who submitted CSs. Institutions have been quick to use the narratives produced for the evaluation in their promotion and internal decision-making, but there have been few signs

of systematic change in the approach to impact in terms of creating an articulated approach to generating and documenting research impact.

## **Conclusions**

The impact element of Humeval did not just give an account of the existing academic practices, but was in itself an important intervention in academic culture. The impact evaluation challenged existing convictions about what constitutes the core of academic activity, and shed light on areas that had not always been recognised while inviting academics to adopt a new perspective on their own work.

Due to the processual nature of policy-making on evaluation in Norway a change in the perceived position of 'research impact' is unfolding at a slower pace than in the UK. Therefore, academics are still not completely at ease with the genre of impact case study (as shown in chapter 4), and scholars still grapple with the concept of impact (chapter 5). Moreover, the support provided for impact-related activities falls below the expectations of academics (chapter 6). A new academic practice around impact generation and evaluation is nevertheless emerging, which will raise new questions in the areas of organisation, ethics and disciplinary cultures. It remains to be seen what the specific Norwegian response to the challenge of impact evaluation will be.

If impact is to be encouraged and future evaluations are to be carried out, both the RCN and the institutions need to make an effort to clearly communicate the key ideas behind the impact policy. Opportunities need to be provided for reflection and development in the area of impact. In this context, I provide a list of recommendations for future actions around impact – for authors of CSs, for the institutions and for the RCN (see chapter 8).

## Acronyms used

CS / CSs	(Impact) Case Study / (Impact) Case Studies
Humeval	Evaluation of the Humanities in Norway
RCN	Research Council of Norway
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities

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## 1. Introduction

The focus of this report is the Evaluation of the Humanities in Norway (Humeval) carried out by the Research Council of Norway (RCN) in 2015 – 2017 and particularly the changes in academic discourse and academic practice engendered by the introduction of the new element of ‘research impact’. The report provides a linguistic perspective on the evaluation exercise – language is understood as a prism through which one can study developments in academic reality, but it is also seen as actively contributing to the creation of new practices, new professional identities and new values.

### **The main questions this study aims to answer are:**

- How did the case study methodology of evaluating impact become established against the backdrop of Norwegian policies regarding science and evaluation? (chapter 2) How does the approach to impact evaluation adopted in Humeval differ from the British Research Excellence Framework (REF) on which it was originally modelled? (2.2.4)
- How does the use of the impact case study (CS) template differ in the British and Norwegian context? What are the unique positive qualities of Norwegian CSs and what are their shortcomings, as compared to the British ones? (chapter 4)
- What was the experience of the academics who authored the CSs? Was the exercise seen as positive, negative, inspiring, useful, superfluous? (chapter 5)
- What change, if any, was triggered in the institutions in consequence of the evaluation? (chapter 6)
- How can Norwegian authors write case studies which are clearer, more readable and more attuned to the evaluators’ requirements? What can be learned from the British corpus? (section 8.1.)
- What points should the RCN remain mindful of when developing future policies around impact evaluation? (section 8.2)
- What can the institutions do to strengthen the culture around research impact? (chapter 8.3)

While the study focuses on developments in academic discourse, the impact evaluation exercise must of course be seen holistically, in its broader social, political and economic context. Therefore, the report also includes more general observations and concerns regarding the evaluation of impact. Most notably, these regard salient issues related to knowledge transfer (e.g. challenges related to the dissemination of findings), communication within institutions (e.g. the distribution of information about and expertise in the new practice of impact evaluation) and adaptation of global trends in science policy to local needs and conditions. As argued throughout the report, most of the above-mentioned issues are linked to questions of language. A case in point is the term ‘impact’ itself, and its translation into Norwegian, which was chosen carefully, so as to avoid negative connotations (for instance with an instrumental approach to science). See the excerpt from an interview with an interviewed policy-maker from the RCN below:

*If you look at the communication we had with the different institutions, I think we talked about the Norwegian humanities' 'samfunnsbetydning' – which is the societal importance of the humanities rather than the 'impact' of the humanities.*

*Interview 3*

In this context, it is worth noting that several notions can be encountered in the Norwegian debate on the impact of sciences. The Humeval documentation uses the term 'samfunnsbidrag' (societal contribution). In the context of applied sciences, one sometimes comes across the term 'samfunnseffekter' (societal effects). 'Samfunnsbetydning' (societal significance) is also found, while part of the literature opts for the English term 'impact'. A lack of fixed vocabulary around the concept of 'impact', while possibly confusing, especially for outsiders looking at the system, testifies to a certain flexibility in this newly highlighted and valorised area of academic activity.

The structure of the study is as follows. I start by discussing the Norwegian approach to impact evaluation, casting its emergence against an international background (2.1), tracing its establishment in the local Norwegian context (2.2), providing a timeline of the various attempts at impact evaluation in Norway to date (2.2.3) and drawing a comparison of the Humeval approach to the British REF (2.2.4). I then elaborate on the stages of implementation of Humeval 2015-2017 (2.2.5-6) and present directions for its possible future development (2.2.7). Finally, I present the existing publications on research impact evaluation in Norway (2.2.8) and situate the present study in this broader context. Chapter 3 contains a presentation of the empirical data underpinning this study. What follows is the analysis chapters. Chapter 4 focuses on the specific qualities of the Norwegian impact case studies, as compared to the British counterparts. Chapter 5 describes the attitudes and experiences of academics who took part in the Humeval impact evaluation, based on interview data. Chapter 6 poses a question about institutional change following the exercise. In the Conclusions section (chapter 7), I advance a theoretically-informed view of research impact policy as a force which re-shapes academics' 'professional vision', i.e. their perception of what constitutes core academic work. The last part of this document contains lists of suggestions in the area of impact evaluation: for authors of impact CSs (8.1), for the RCN (8.2) and for the academic institutions (8.3).

## **2. Research impact evaluation in Norway**

### **2.1 International context**

Interest in the evaluation of research impact – or the influence of scientific research beyond academia – can be observed worldwide (Grant, Brutscher, Kirk, Butler, & Wooding, 2009). Several broader societal and economic processes can be cast as the context in which this new tendency emerged:

- the increasing importance of scientific knowledge as the basis for the modern 'knowledge-based economy' (Jessop, Fairclough, & Wodak, 2008)
- the growing symbolic importance of applied scientific disciplines and collaborations between scholars with their social and the economic environment (E3M, 2012; European Commission, 2003), a trend which is often referred to – particularly in the regional context – 'the Universities' Third Mission' (Brundenius & Göransson, 2011)
- the increasingly influential role of audits, assessments and rankings comparing higher education institutions in different aspects, dubbed the rising 'metric tide' (Wilsdon, 2015) or academic 'numerocracy' (Angermuller, 2013).

These trends have been received differently within different academic disciplines, and it has been argued that they pose a particular challenge (or threat) to the Humanities and Social Sciences (SSH) (Benneworth, 2015; Benneworth, Gulbrandsen, & Hazelkorn, 2016), aggravating the perceived 'crisis of humanities' (decreasing importance and prestige of the humanities related to a decline in funding, recruitment numbers to university programmes etc.).

The first country to elaborate a systematic approach to research impact evaluation was, in 2006, Australia (Donovan, 2008). The Research Quality Framework (RQF), a qualitative, peer-review-based assessment model based on case studies was abandoned for political reasons. However, a few years later a briefing on impact evaluation commissioned to RAND Europe by Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE) (Grant, Brutscher, Kirk, Butler, & Wooding, 2009) recommended RQF as the basis for the development of impact evaluation in Britain. This was the origin of the Impact Agenda element of the British Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF is the most articulated, most widely-adopted and most studied system of impact evaluation to date, although it is not the only one in use. The Netherlands has also developed a comprehensive approach, the Standard Evaluation Protocol – SEP (VSNU – Association of Universities in the Netherlands, 2016). Other countries that have to date introduced impact evaluation systems include Australia (Australian Research Council, 2017, 2018), Hong Kong (Hong Kong University Grants Committee, 2018), Sweden (Hellström & Hellström, 2018), Italy (Lanzillo, 2018) and Japan (Yonezawa, 2002; NIAD-QE, 2018). Poland will soon follow (Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, 2018, 2019; Wróblewska, 2017b). Finally, impact is also an evaluation element in grants distributed under the Horizon 2020 Work Programme (European Commission, 2014a, 2014b).

Alternative approaches to impact evaluation have been put forward and tested by research groups: see for instance the Productive Interactions approach developed by the Siampi project (Spaapen & Van Drooge, 2011), the Dutch 'Evaluating Research in Context' proposal (ERiC, 2010), and solutions implemented locally by individual research institutions (Gulbrandsen & Sivertsen, 2018, pp. 36-42). Several other countries are currently debating the possibility of adding an impact component to their research evaluation systems.

## **2.2. Establishment of Norway's impact evaluation policy**

### **2.2.1. Research evaluation in Norway**

Several features distinguish the Norwegian approach to research evaluation from other internationally prominent models. Firstly, Norway does not have any single all-encompassing system of research evaluation that would be comparable to the British REF or Dutch SEP. Rather, research evaluation is carried out in a focused and segmented manner – different institutions, areas and disciplines are assessed separately, at different times. Research institutes, which are more practice-oriented, are assessed separately from the subject-specific assessments of disciplines within universities. Evaluations of research institutes are conducted on an aggregate level (i.e. without dividing them into sub-units, such as departments or subjects). Subject-specific assessments in turn are carried out field by field (e.g. humanities, social sciences etc.) rather than all together, as in the case of REF. Finally, the so-called 'long traces' approach is applied in 'pathways to global impact' reports, which analyse the long-term results and impacts of the RCN's targeted programmes in particular areas: in 2015, the area of mental health and drug research was evaluated (Ramberg et al., 2015), while in 2017 – it was the area of development research (Solberg et al., 2017).

Another fundamental attribute of the Norwegian model is that the evaluation is not tied to funding: hence, the aim of the exercise is above all formative. There is an expectation that higher education institutions will take part in the subject-specific assessments, while research institutes are free to opt in. Some research institutes submit, alongside the evaluation of research institutes, also to the evaluation of research disciplines – in some cases even to several of them (for instance in the case of interdisciplinary research). Informants explain this willingness to take part in the evaluation which is predominantly focused on disciplines within universities as a way for the research institutes to secure their academic status.

### **2.2.2. Development of approaches to impact evaluation in Norway**

The question of valorising the importance of SSH disciplines first appeared on the agenda in 2008 when the RCN published a strategy for the Humanities – *Nasjonal strategi for humanistisk forskning* (Research Council of Norway, 2008) – which mentioned increasing humanities' share of the problem-oriented, thematic funding programmes as one of its goals.

This document sparked a debate among the scientific community in which doubts about the legitimacy of expecting both high quality and societal relevance were raised by scientists (Holm & Løvhaug, 2014 give an introduction on the establishment of the Humeval evaluation against the backdrop of the debate on the role of humanities in Norway; for an overview of some of the arguments on the 'value of the humanities' see: Jordheim & Rem,

2014). Later on (2014), a common strategy for humanities faculties emphasised the necessity of providing education that responds to market needs and of attracting more funding, particularly from thematic (problem-oriented) RCN programmes. However, in the words of one of the respondents of this study, an RCN employee, “this strategy did not succeed in influencing the policy of the faculties” (Interview 1).

A significant shift in Norwegian research evaluation began around 2013, when the RCN started considering replacing the model that was put in place in the late 1990s, whereby subjects were assessed subject by subject (i.e. particular areas of humanities would be assessed separately), with a model in which disciplines would be assessed in an aggregated way, allowing for a more strategic approach to entire fields. A much-discussed novel feature of the new evaluation system was the addition of introduction of research groups as assessment units (alongside disciplines within universities). According to the interviewed RCN employees, ‘impact’ appeared on the agenda as one of the assessment criteria quite late – in 2015, when an agreement had been reached on the remaining elements of the evaluation, such as the assessment of research groups. The impact element of evaluation was proposed in response to growing expectations from the Government and from within the Research Council to account for the return on the investment in research in terms of value for society.

The British REF system was a point of reference for the Norwegian approach to impact evaluation. The UK’s Impact Agenda was considered robust and evidence-based: several reports and studies accompanied its introduction and implementation (Farla & Simmonds, 2015; Grant et al., 2009; Manville et al., 2015; Manville et al., 2014; Stern, 2016), including a pilot study (HEFCE, 2009). The results of the British REF and part of the associated reports were already accessible at the time when the Norwegian approach to impact evaluation was being elaborated. This documentation constituted an important point of reference for RCN employees, as mentioned in the interviews. Hence, the core of the new impact evaluation in Humeval – including the adopted definition of ‘impact’ and the template used for impact case studies – was based on the REF model (see also Figure 2 in section 2.2.4). Collaboration with British policymakers and academics took place also on the personal level. For instance, a workshop was held at which a British scholar introduced the impact template model, talked about the British experience of the Impact Agenda and guided the participants, around 60-100 Norwegian university employees, through writing their own impact case studies (Holm & Askedal, 2019 (forthcoming)). Moreover, some of the panellists in the Humeval exercise had served in a similar role in the British REF.

Unlike in the case of REF, no pilot study was carried out before the first round of impact evaluation in Humeval. This is understandable given that the goal of the assessment itself is formative. Hence, the evaluation can be seen as an experiment in its own right – one from which academics, academic managers, administrators and policymakers can learn.

Training and guidance provided by the RCN on the impact evaluation were rather limited – the most significant event was the above-mentioned workshop for representatives of universities, held by a British academic, Professor Helen Small. According to RCN interviewees, this training was enthusiastically welcomed by the attending academics, who found writing about research impact in the case study format an invigorating task (see also:

Holm & Askedal, 2019 (forthcoming)). The expectation was that the attending academics would take the acquired knowledge and skills back to their institutions.

After the Humeval evaluation, results were published online in the form of pdf reports. Alongside the main report (Research Council of Norway, 2017c), separate reports were prepared by the different panels (the relevant one for this study was panel 4: Research Council of Norway, 2017b). All the case studies were collected in a separate 700-page document (Research Council of Norway, 2017a). Such a presentation of results was not practical for a quick consultation of the results or a comparison between different units, as highlighted by the respondents of this study. In this sense, the platform established to present the results of REF2014 (<https://results.ref.ac.uk>) is much more user-friendly, albeit at the expense of more in-depth qualitative feedback, which is present in the Norwegian reports.

According to the RCN interviewees, the introduction of the case study model was controversial. Specifically, exponents of the humanities disciplines were sceptical about the definition of impact which they perceived as overly instrumental and not compatible with the nature of academic work in the humanities. Social scientists in turn, in the context of the evaluation of Social Sciences Institutes and the upcoming Sameval assessment, were more worried about whether the approach would capture their impact in its entirety.

It is noteworthy that impact was introduced as an element of research evaluation not only in Humeval, but also in other evaluations of research institutes and disciplines that overlapped with Humeval or followed it. So far, the impact case study method has been implemented in the evaluation of two types of research institutes – social sciences and environmental institutes (in the case of the latter separately from the main evaluation of the institute – see the timeline in section 2.2.3) and three disciplines: humanities (Humeval), social sciences (Sameval) and educational research (Utdeval).

The entire process of implementing impact evaluation in Norway differed from the one which took place in the case of REF in that it did not represent a shift from one model to another, but rather a developmental change, in which new solutions were introduced step by step in response to emerging issues – see the timeline in section 2.2.3 below. One unexpected development consisted in the Humeval panels deciding not to make public the scores that had been assigned (on a five-point scale) to individual case studies. This decision resulted from a generally shared perception that the case studies were not mature enough to be rigidly assessed based on the pre-established criteria of reach and significance (many focused on dissemination, rather than impact, or did not document the impact adequately – see also section 4.3 which comments on these issues). However, each subsequent subject-specific evaluation went a step further in sharing the results of the evaluation: in Sameval, the 20% ‘top’ case studies were singled out as instances of ‘good practice’ and commended by the report (Research Council of Norway, 2018b), while the report on educational research ranked entire institutions based on their impact, dividing them into three groups: those that perform ‘very well’, those that are on an intermediate level, and those whose impact is ‘relatively low’ (Research Council of Norway, 2018a, p. 70) .

### 2.2.3. Timeline of the development of impact evaluation in Norway

The elements in bold are **directly connected to the evaluation of impact in Humanities**, while the remainder constitute the context for the emergence of the policies.

Date	Development	Detail
2008	<b>Strategy document on the humanities from RCN</b>	<b>The document included ‘Application of humanities research and increasing awareness of the relevance of the humanities to society’ as one of four focal points</b>
2013	Launch of project of designing a new approach to research evaluation in the RCN	Goals: subjects assessed in an ‘aggregated’ way, at the same time (rather than divided into sub-areas), a more ‘strategic’ approach
2014–2015	Evaluation of technology disciplines (subject-specific evaluation)	The criterion of ‘relevance’ (described in a free text box) was used to produce an analysis of the relationship between research quality and industrial relevance, but the method was deemed unsatisfactory.
2015 – 2016	Evaluation of technical-industrial research institutes	As part of the evaluation, an analysis of socio-economic impact* of Norwegian technical-industrial research institutes was carried out by science consultancy Technopolis, focusing on economic value creation; final report published 1 June 2015 (Åström, Rosemberg Montes, Fridholm, Håkansson, & Annika, 2015)
Early 2015	<b>Proposal put forward in the RCN to evaluate research impact systematically in the subject-specific evaluations</b>	<b>British REF 2014 model chosen as the basis for the Norwegian approach</b>
Spring–autumn 2015	Three meetings between the RCN and representatives of the HEIs to be evaluated.	<b>The concept of impact introduced and its implementation in the upcoming evaluation of social science institutes and Humeval discussed</b>
2015-2017	<b>Evaluation of Social Sciences Institutes</b>	<b>The evaluation of SS Institutes included an impact element, using the impact case study methodology</b>
September 2015	<b>Impact announced as one of the requirements for the upcoming Humeval</b>	
December 2015	<b>The impact case study form distributed to the</b>	

	<b>submitting units, deadline set for submission of impact case studies</b>	
<b>12 January 2016</b>	<b>Workshop with prof. Helen Small, academic from Oxford</b>	<b>First hands-on experience of writing impact case studies for most humanities scholars</b>
<b>1 April 2016</b>	<b>Deadline for impact CSs in Humanities</b>	<b>The deadline was first set as 18 March and later extended to 1 April</b>
<b>October 2016</b>	<b>Feedback session on the Humanities evaluation (Humeval) with representatives of institutions</b>	<b>Impact evaluation generally received positively by representatives of institutions, but questions raised about lack of guidance and support for impact activities</b>
<b>November 2016</b>	<b>Evaluation panels meet to assess impact case studies</b>	<b>Decision taken not to publish scores for impact case studies</b>
2017 – 2018	Evaluation of Social Sciences disciplines (Sameval)	The evaluation included impact case study methodology
March 2017	Government white paper ‘Humaniora i Norge’ [‘The Humanities in Norway’] (Kunnskapsdepartament, 2016/2017)	
March 2016 - March 2018	Evaluation of education research (Utdeval) (subject-specific evaluation)	The evaluation included impact case study methodology
November-December 2017	Impact case studies collected for environmental research institutes	The environmental research institutes had been evaluated in 2014-2015, but without the collection of impact case studies, as these were only introduced later

Figure 1 – Timeline of the development of impact evaluation policy in Norway



### 2.2.4. The REF and Humeval models – a comparison

While the impact element in Humeval was based on the REF impact evaluation methodology and it shares many of its characteristics, there are also significant differences between the two systems of evaluation, as indicated in the table below (prepared on the basis of HEFCE, 2014; Research Council of Norway, 2017a, 2017c, supplemented by interviews with employees of the RCN).

Research Excellence Framework (REF)	Humeval
<b>Similarities</b>	
Definition of impact adopted, criteria: ‘reach and significance’	
Impact case study submitted by unit of assessment	
Unit of assessment – discipline within university**	
Use of almost identical ‘impact case study’ template*	
Assessment conducted by disciplinary panels	
Impact on academic teaching excluded	
<b>Differences</b>	
All disciplines (STEM and SSH) assessed at the same time every ~6 years	Disciplines assessed separately every ~10 years (see section 2.2.2.)
Number of CSs required: ~1 per 10 researchers	Institutions invited to submit at least 1 CS per evaluation panel, up to 1 CS per 10 researchers
Assessment tied to core funding	Assessment formative, not tied to funding
Experts (non-academics) included in panels	Panels composed solely of academics
No scores given to individual CSs, only aggregated score (on scale from 1–4) for unit of assessment	Descriptive feedback given on quality of impact case studies (sometimes per submission, sometimes for each CS)***
Impact must be based on high-quality research (at least 2-star, on the REFs 1–4 star scale)	Impact must be based on published research results, but no explicit requirement as to quality
Template up to 4 pages long	Length of each section indicated, but document itself can be longer (containing attachments, images etc.)
Timeframe: for REF 2014 the impact had to occur between 2008 and 2013 (5 years) and be based on research that took place between 1993 and 2013 (20 years).	Both the research and the impact should have been produced in the last 10–15 years, counting from 2015 (2000-2015)

Figure 2 – Table: The REF and the Humeval – a comparison

\*Two differences in the template are: the sections appear in a different order (in the Norwegian case, ‘references to research’ and ‘sources to corroborate’ sections were both at the end, while a separate section was added for ‘external references’ – contacts to users who have witnessed the impact). Note that in the UK the impact case studies were supplemented by an ‘impact template’ which described the general provisions for impact generation in the unit of assessment.

\*\* Both REF and Humeval assess submitting units rather than individuals. In the case of Humeval, research groups are also assessed. In Humeval, research groups did not submit separate impact case studies, unlike the later Sameval, where this was encouraged.

\*\*\*Note that in the ensuing Sameval evaluation, 20% of the 'top' CSs were singled out, while in Utdeval institutions were grouped as 'high', 'average' and 'low-performing' in terms of impact – see section 2.2.2 of this paper.

### **2.2.5. Drafting and collection of impact cases**

The process of writing impact case studies for Humeval took place over the first months of 2016 (until April 1<sup>st</sup> – the deadline for submission) and, according to my interviewees, involved several actors on faculty and department level, including research managers (such as deans of faculty), administrators and academics. Some respondents mentioned committees established on department or faculty level for the purpose of coordinating the submission to Humeval.

The selection of authors of CSs proceeded differently in different units. In some cases, a generic invitation was extended to all academics who were asked to step forward if they believed they could contribute to the exercise, in others pre-selected candidates for CSs authors were contacted directly. Having carried out externally-funded work or being generally recognised as someone who conducts research with potential impact was usually the basis of pre-selection. Some respondents recall their surprise at receiving an invitation, as they themselves had not thought of their work as eligible for the exercise. In one case, a respondent of this study, who was pre-selected by management to write a CS about a piece of their work, eventually wrote one on the basis of a different research project.

According to information obtained from the interviewed academic manager who supported the faculty submission, management initially feared that very few impact case studies will be collected and was pleasantly surprised when the turn-out of proposed cases was significantly higher than expected. Indeed, in some units more CSs were put forward than were eventually submitted to the exercise. Hence, at some point before submission certain CSs must have been retracted. The maximum number of CSs to be submitted by research unit was indicated by the RCN as 1 per 10 researchers, while the number eventually sent in was equivalent to 1 per 14 researchers (7% of all submitting academics). Not all UoAs submitted CSs and the percentage of staff submitting CSs varied substantially between units. However, it is worth noting that some units with less than 10 researchers submitted a CS despite not being technically obliged to do so.

### **2.2.6. RCN's follow-up and evaluation of the Humeval exercise**

After the evaluation, a follow-up meeting was organised by RCN with the institutions to learn about the academic community's impressions, opinions and plans. Impact was one of the important areas highlighted by the representatives of institutions. Despite the initial reluctance to the impact evaluation and the challenging process of writing the impact CSs, many representatives mentioned that ultimately, the impact evaluation was a useful, "eye

opening” experience (Interview 2). However, it was raised that the exercise was slightly ‘premature’ – information about what was required, and what was to be delivered was seen as incomplete. Representatives also expressed a need for the RCN to explain better the very concept of impact. It seems that many authors of CSs were disappointed with the amount of feedback on impact provided by the panel reports, particularly in given the amount of work they had invested into drafting the CSs. In terms of the effects of the evaluation, it was mentioned that some academics put the fact that they had authored CSs (or that their research had led to a CS) on their CVs while the institutions themselves were starting to use the documents in their external marketing strategy.

The general impression which seems to be shared by the RCN respondents is that “the evaluation of impact has been very successful” and that the Council now has “a firmer grip on the impact of research in the area of humanities” (Interview 3). The influence of the policy of impact evaluation can be seen on policy level and on a formative level. In terms of the influence of exercise on policy, according to an RCN respondent, “for all of the disciplines and institutes evaluated it can be confidently said that they make an important social input” (Interview 3). The fact that this statement can be substantiated with data has already had implications on a policy-making level, as the results of Humeval have fed into the Government’s white paper on the humanities (Det Kongelige Kunnskapsdepartement, 2016/2017).

The influence of the exercise on the academic community is difficult to assess, as it has not been studied systematically. The interviewed policy-makers, based on the follow-up sessions and their long-standing interaction with the academic community, remarked that they have been observing a shift in attitudes towards the assessment. Compared to other disciplines and areas which have undergone an impact evaluation, the change taking place in the area of humanities is seen as the most significant. An initial resistance has, allegedly, developed into a relatively positive attitude. For instance, RCN employees recalled statements of academics who were glad to have been given the opportunity to document their impact and referred to the impact case study method as a tool which enables one to demonstrate their impact. There is some evidence that the results of the evaluation are being used to shape the strategy of institutions (see for instance: Universitetet i Bergen, 2018) as well as for recruitment purposes, e.g. advertising the departments to potential students. While it may be too early to herald “a 180-degree turn” in attitudes towards impact – an expression used by one of the interviewees (Interview 3) – both the feedback sessions held by RCN and this paper suggest that a shift in attitudes has been initiated.

### 2.2.7. Future of the exercise

It is not sure when the next evaluation of impact within disciplines will take place. The Humeval was a ‘testing ground’ for the impact CS method, and, according to interviews with policy-makers from the RCN (Interviews 1–3) the exercise has been a source of new knowledge for the Council. However, it is not sure if the same methodology will be used in the future – other approaches are still being considered and debated. In one of my respondent’s words: “There is no doubt that impact will be part of the assessment – it is high on the agenda; but it is also clear that not all people need to have impact” (Interview 2).

There is a recognition that some stability around the method of assessment would be beneficial for the assessed institutions and for the academics. At the moment, it seems that the biggest change in the organization of the evaluation will consist in a shift from subject specific to institutional evaluation, which may also have implications for the evaluation of impact. Significantly, according to my respondents from the Council, the RCN does not want to encourage the emergence of an ‘impact industry’, i.e. a set of often pricy services around impact documentation, as has been the case in the UK.

An important change will take place in the evaluation of funding proposals within all programmes. As of February 2019, funding applications in all calls will build on a structure modelled on the Horizon 2020, which means that they will be composed of three main parts: project idea, implementation, *impact*. While the approach will consider impact both within and beyond academia, it may still be seen as valorising the idea of societal impact.

### **2.2.8. This paper’s contribution to literature on impact evaluation in Norway**

A number of studies exist of the emergent Norwegian approach to impact evaluation. An obvious starting point for the literature review is the documentation of the evaluation exercises including impact which took place to date. In the case of Humeval, these are: ‘Evaluation of the Humanities in Norway. Report from the Principal Evaluation Committee’ (Research Council of Norway, 2017c), reports prepared by the individual panels – for this study the most relevant is the ‘Report from Panel 4’ (Research Council of Norway, 2017b) and the separate report on Impact case studies (Research Council of Norway, 2017a), which includes a ‘preliminary analysis’ of quantitative factors such as type of research (individual/group), channel (pathway to impact), beneficiary, reach and effect.

The documentation of the emerging Norwegian approach to impact evaluation also includes reports on the other evaluations that encompassed (elements of) impact evaluation, i.e. the impact analysis of the technical-industrial research institutes in Norway in 2015 (Åström et al., 2015), the impact element of the Evaluation of Social Sciences in Norway (Sameval) 2017–2018 (Research Council of Norway, 2018c), and the impact component of the evaluation of Norwegian education research (Research Council of Norway, 2018a).

In terms of scholarly publications, Sörlin (2018) provides a useful overview of a shift that has arguably taken place in the Nordic countries in approaches to research evaluation over the last 25 years, moving from an overly quantitative view to a more integrative approach. The turn towards the recognition and evaluation of the specific ‘value’ of humanities is seen as part of this broader development. Gulbrandsen and Sivertsen (2018) provide an overview of the role of impact in applied research (particularly work conducted at research institutes), outlining five principles of good impact evaluation (broad societal perspective, acknowledgment of the complex nature of impact, recognition of the processual nature of impact, accounting for the relationship of the impact produced to the goals of the institution, following good practice in developing and using indicators). Finally, a reflexive

account of the introduction of the policy and possible ways forward is provided by Holm and Askedal (2019 (forthcoming)).

The contribution of this report lies, firstly, in its focus on the reception of the new impact evaluation in the humanities specifically, secondly, in the use of qualitative interviews to explore the attitudes of academics and, finally, in its focus on language as a means of institutional change. Additionally, the researcher's status as a foreigner and 'outsider' might, paradoxically, have allowed privileged access to the institutional processes that often remain 'invisible', and to knowledge that is often considered 'tacit'.

### 3. Data

This report builds on two types of data: impact case studies submitted to the Humeval exercise and interviews with social actors who were engaged in the evaluation in different roles: as policy-makers, as authors of impact case studies and as academic administrators/managers. The impact case studies shed light on the shaping of a new academic genre, while the interviews provide insights on the respondents' lived experience in interacting with the new academic policy.

As a starting point for the data collection, among the eight disciplinary panels of the Humeval evaluation, Panel 4 covering 'Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Area Studies', was selected as a case study that would provide insight into a discipline representative of the humanities, namely philology (broadly understood) which is both long-standing and currently varied and interdisciplinary (Trask & Stockwell, 2007, pp. 156-158). This choice allows contrasting the research findings with those based on a previously studied corpus of data related to impact evaluation in Panel 28 (Modern Languages and Linguistics) of the British Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF 2014) (Wróblewska, 2018).

The first studied dataset includes impact case studies submitted to the Humeval evaluation to Panel 4. The corpus consists of 31 documents, amounting to around 35 thousand words (all of these were published online as part of: Research Council of Norway, 2017a). The documents were coded, in MAX Qda software, using categories previously applied to the study of the British corpus, as well as a few additional ones created in a bottom-up analytical process. The purpose of this procedure was to compare the data set to its British counterpart – 78 case studies submitted to REF 2014 in the area of linguistics (for the most part to Panel 28 – Modern Languages and Linguistics, supplemented with a number of CSs from the same area submitted to other panels, in total amounting to around 105 thousand words). The two sets were compared with respect to the use made by the authors of the template, narrative and argumentative patterns and vocabulary used. A list of the studied British and Norwegian impact case studies is provided in Annex 1. Note that when citing a Norwegian CS, I use reference numbers assigned in the table (e.g. CS1, CS2 etc.).

The second dataset includes semi-structured interviews (no=10) with three groups of social actors involved in the establishment of a new procedure for impact evaluation: employees of the RCN who oversaw the Humeval evaluation at different stages and in different roles (no=4), authors of impact case studies submitted to the Humeval evaluation to Panel 4

(no=6) and one academic administrator/manager. Apart from one case, where two persons were interviewed together, in consideration of their limited time and the closeness of the topics which were to be discussed with each of them, all interviews were carried out on a one-on-one basis. The interviews amount to about 10 hours of recordings, which were partially transcribed word for word and partly summarised by the researcher. This data set was put in context by comparing it with a corpus of interviews conducted earlier with social actors who had taken part in REF 2014 – 20 academics, 3 administrators/managers, 2 policy-makers.

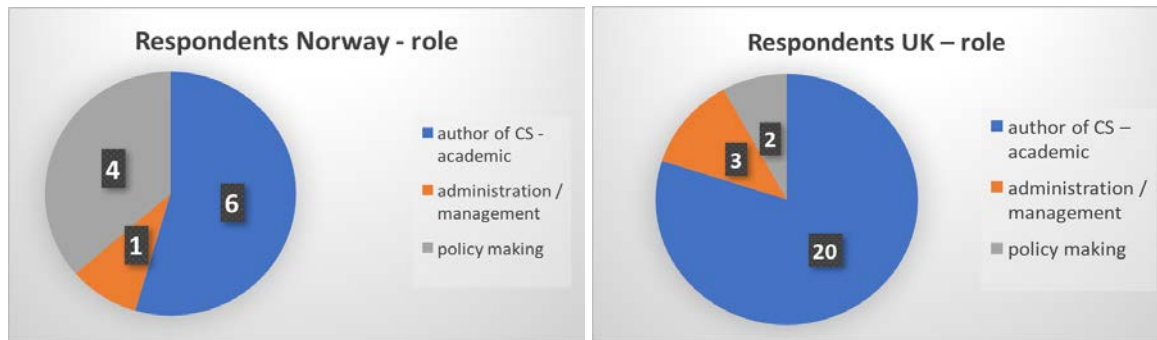


Figure 3 & 4 – Charts: groups of respondents in Norway and in the UK

In order to gain an understanding of changes taking place in a workplace culture in the context of the newly-introduced impact evaluation – such as the emergence of a new academic literacy, or the shaping of procedures around the drafting of impact case studies – one university was selected as a case-study. All academics who had submitted impact case studies to the selected Humeval panel were contacted via email and invited for an interview. Considering that the interviews were to take place during just one week, and the invitation was sent at relatively short notice (two weeks in advance), the positive response rate (43%) among case study authors can be considered quite high. This high response rate confirms the vitality of the discussion about the impact of social sciences and humanities research, and approaches to its evaluation: respondents seemed to be keen to take part in the study and saw it as an opportunity to reflect on the Humeval exercise in which they took part and possibly also to pass on their feedback to the RCN. Overall, 19% of authors of impact case studies from the studied set were interviewed.

While the impact case studies can be considered as the *product* of evaluation, the interview data were useful in shedding light on the *process* that led to their generation. The latter includes, firstly, the establishment and introduction of the new criterion of evaluation (interviews at the RCN), secondly, the response to the new policy within the institutions (interview with managers/administrators), and thirdly, the longer-term consequences for academic realities (interviews with academics, authors of impact case studies).

## 4. Norwegian and British impact case studies – a comparison

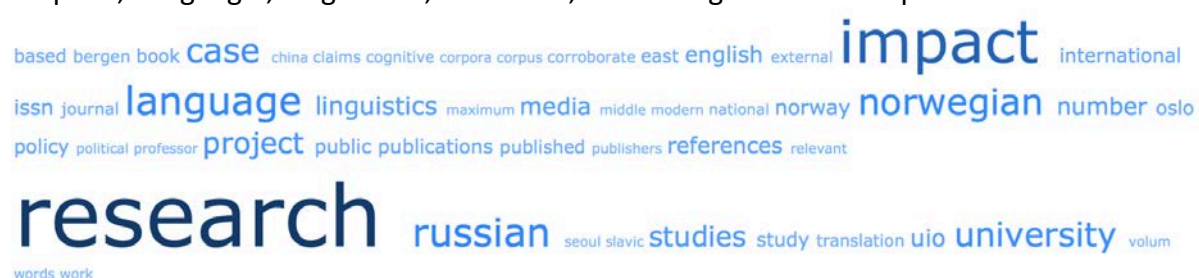
This section presents the similarities and differences between British and Norwegian impact case studies. The author draws attention to *internal* differences within the Norwegian corpus, and compares the two datasets in terms of structure, pragmatic aim, narrative patterns and vocabulary. The analysis starts with a broad corpus linguistic review of the two data sets and proceeds on to a closer reading of the documents. The observations are of a qualitative nature, but, where possible, they are supported by quantitative data.

The differences between the two sets of documents can be linked to several factors. These include, firstly, the distinctive shape of each evaluation assessment – whether it was linked to funding, the notice given to the evaluated units before the launch of the exercise, the way in which the CSs would be assessed. Secondly, the different levels of awareness of ‘impact’ and the new practices around it among the authors of the documents – British academics benefited from much more administrative support and information. Finally, we should mention the differences in academic and broader national culture, which surface, sometimes unexpectedly, in these seemingly most mundane of texts.

### 4.1 A corpus-linguistic approach: similarities and differences

#### Similarities

On first inspection, the two datasets examined are quite similar to each other. This was to be expected since they follow the same basic template (see Annex 6). Corpus linguistic tools enable a quick comparison of the most frequent words used in both corpora (see Images 1 and 2 below and Annexes 3 and 4), which shows that the same words, such as ‘research’, ‘impact’, ‘language’, ‘linguistics’, ‘case’ etc., are among the most frequent in both data sets.



**Figure 4 – Word cloud representing frequency of words used in the corpus of Norwegian impact case studies. The size of a word indicates the number of times it was used in the corpus.**



Figure 5 – Word cloud representing frequency of words used in the corpus of British impact case studies

### Differences

A corpus-based approach only shows minimal differences between the corpora. Besides the expected differences (the Norwegian CSs mention ‘Norway’, ‘Norwegian’, ‘Oslo’ etc.) the words that figure in the Norwegian CSs more frequently include: ‘Russian’, ‘book’, ‘policy’, ‘publish/publication’ and ‘public’, while the words that are more frequent in the British corpus are ‘language’, ‘linguistics’, ‘project’, ‘corpus’, ‘international’ and ‘translation’ (see Annexes 3 and 4 to compare frequency tables). These observations confirm the slightly different profile of the work presented in the two datasets (the British dataset included more linguistic studies, such as ones focusing on translation and corpus linguistics, while the Norwegian dataset also featured cultural and area studies, including policy-oriented projects). The difference in the frequency of the use of ‘international’ (a word featured in 67% of Norwegian and 81% of the British case studies), may point to the scope of the claimed impact, suggesting that the Norwegian CSs highlighted local and national impacts more frequently. Similarly, the word ‘book’ appears to be more prominent in the Norwegian case studies (73% for Norway vs 48% in the UK) which may suggest a higher reliance on book publications as a means of research dissemination.

## 4.2. Document structure

British CSs are relatively uniform, while Norwegian ones remain diverse due to the ‘freshness’ of the genre

Compared to the British impact case studies, which give a clear impression of belonging to one coherent and well-defined academic genre, the Norwegian case studies are strikingly diverse. This is apparent at the level of document structure and length, use of the template structure and inclusion of meta-content (images, charts, links).

Length of documents. The British guidelines specified that the document could be up to four pages long, and most of the British authors (84% in the studied corpus) used the maximum space offered. In contrast, the Norwegian CSs vary significantly in length. In the studied corpus, 42% of the CSs were three pages long, with some as short as two pages and others as long as 15 pages (see the pie charts below). This variety is probably an effect of the lack of precise guidance on the structure of the document (the indicative length of particular sections was indicated, but not the maximum length of the document – the references sections in particular could be expanded to run over several pages). In contrast, almost 50%



of the authors did not reach the length of four pages – this may be indicative of the effort put into the drafting of the narrative, the collection of documentation etc. The relative shortness of the documents could point to the lower importance attached to the document among Norwegian scholars. The variation in the length of the documents is the first piece of proof underpinning the hypothesis that the impact case genre is not yet grounded in Norwegian academia, and that precise models for writing such documents efficiently have not been developed yet.

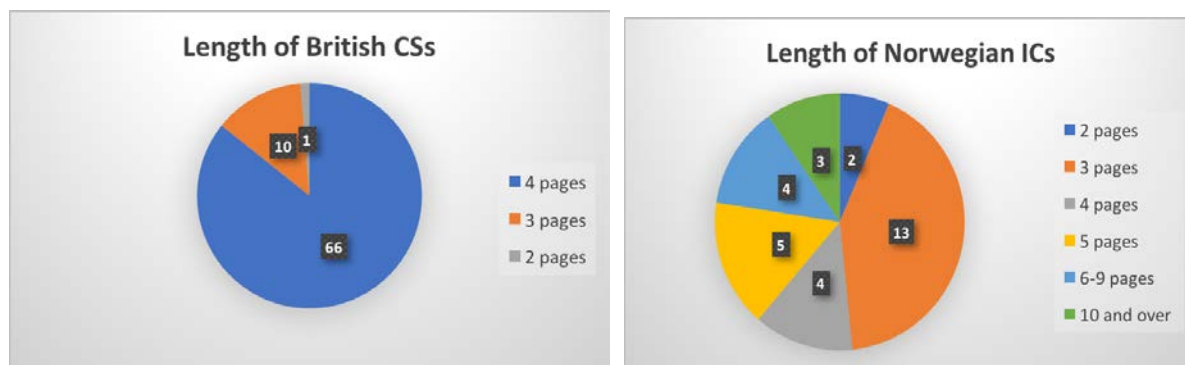


Figure 6. Pie charts showing length of British CSs and Norwegian CSs from the studied corpora

#### Use of document template

Particular sections of the CS document differed in length in the Norwegian case. In some of the documents, sections contained only one sentence (e.g. ‘Summary of the impact’ section in CS1, ‘Sources to corroborate’ section in CS31), and in many CSs one of the sections was left empty altogether. This was the case for the ‘sources to corroborate impact’ section in four CSs from the corpus and for the ‘external references’ section in five CSs. In addition, in many cases the information provided in a particular box (especially the two above-mentioned ones) was very scarce (for instance including just a list of points, names or links, e.g. ‘summary of the impact’ in CS20, ‘sources to corroborate’ in CS10, or ‘external references’ in CS13). Finally, there was no evident pattern as regards where a particular piece of information could be found in the template: information on the research could spill over into the ‘impact’ section, information on the quality of research was sometimes found in the ‘sources to corroborate section’, names of colleagues and collaborators were sometimes listed in the ‘external sources’ box etc. Some authors seem to have misunderstood the purpose of particular sections entirely. For instance, the author of CS26 mistakenly understood the references for the research section to be asking for references (citations) of their research.

Additionally, in the ‘references to research section’, data related to the quality of the listed publications (citations, standing of publishers, prizes, reviews etc.) were not frequently found, unlike the case of their British counterparts. This is surely due to the fact that requirements for research quality were less strict in the impact element of Humeval than in the impact element of REF2014.

Interestingly, where British authors of impact CSs provided links or attachments as evidence (e.g. newspaper articles, letters of support), many authors of Norwegian CSs (no = 8) opted

to paste the relevant images into the document instead. Given that in many cases these attachments were not adequately described (e.g. CS5), this choice may be problematic in terms of the readability of the document.

Another striking difference between the British CSs and Norwegian CSs is the use of references. British authors made use of complex systems of references to link the two narrative sections (details of research and details of impact) to the documents that underpin them. The lack of such references in all of the studied Norwegian CSs may make it more difficult for the reader to locate the necessary elements.

Overall, the authors of Norwegian CSs approached the new template in a variety of ways, many of which were creative. In light of the practical purpose of the documents (providing information and evidence of impact to panellists), the diversity in the use made of the different sections of the template may make it difficult to find the necessary information. The most serious issue in this context is the lack of required information in the sections focusing on impact, i.e. not addressing the question of impact, defined as ‘change or benefit...’, rather than dissemination, and not providing details that would clearly underpin the claimed impact in the following two sections.

In section 8.1, I provide information about how CSs can be written more effectively in order to realise the pragmatic aim of the document. This includes better use of the template structure.

### 4.3. Pragmatic aim and narrative patterns in the document

#### Norwegian CSs are 'structured' compared to British ones

Considering that impact case study is a new academic genre, it might be surprising that British CSs already build on established patterns or moves (Swales, 1990) which provide a sort of 'scaffolding' for the narrated story. The recurrent patterns of British CSs have been documented in previous research (Wróblewska, 2018). The most frequent pattern for the narrative of the research impact is Situation-Problem-Reaction-Evaluation (Hoey, 1994) – interestingly, it is one widely used in stories, novels, tales. Other frequent patterns in the documents are patterns of 'further corroboration' and 'further impact' which allow presenting instances of corroboration and impact not as isolated cases but as elements of a longer and consistent story.

Overall, the genre of impact CS in Britain draws on different types of text and attends to different pragmatic aims. The first part of the document casts the researchers as excellent scholars producing high quality academic work. The second part of the document in turn focuses on explaining the impact of the presented research and providing adequate evidence of its occurrence and relevance. Therefore, the first part of the document shows the authors as *respectable* members of the community, while the second casts them as *respecting* (or paying tribute to) the rules of this new academic form of self-presentation. Given that the goals of the document are twofold, the document can also be seen as a *hybrid* one – incorporating features of traditional academic writing, and of more managerial or journalistic genres.

Strikingly, no stable narrative structure comparable to the Situation-Problem-Reaction-Evaluation model was identified across the corpus of Norwegian case studies. While elements of the above-mentioned pattern *do* appear in the documents, they are often scattered in a way that makes it difficult to follow the narrative. The problem element is often absent or underplayed, particularly in the impact section. Many case studies do not explain what problem of a social, economic, political or cultural nature was tackled, so that the readers are left to assess how important it was on their own. Many authors seem not to have interpreted the concept of impact as linked to *change* (as defined in the documentation), focusing instead solely on dissemination activities. For instance, CS23 provides a list of external engagements of the scholars, interpreting them as impact:

*Insights gained through research have been widely shared with a wider public through active dissemination work: print and electronic media, popular books and articles, and extensive public lecture activities. (...) The impact of the milieu is evidenced by the high number of media appearances, popular publications and its role vis-à-vis government. (CS23)*

While the narrative provided in the above-cited fragment and the references cited portray an active and consistent engagement by the academic group, they provide no details about exchanges with government, they do not point to any specific, traceable change that

occurred as a result of the groups engagement. The same is the case for CS22 and CS12 which argue:

*The book has led to numerous talks, discussions and media appearances, including a presentation (...) on the main Norwegian news programme (...). Broadly, reception of the book has been very positive, both in Norway and internationally, and 1,000 copies of the book have been purchased by Norsk Kulturråd (Norwegian Council of Culture). The book has been translated into Danish, Dutch, and Chinese, and the publisher is expecting more translations to follow. (CS22)*

*'Impacts include a public conference in 2014, guided tours, an education programme for secondary schools, concerts and public debates around the exhibition theme, an academic catalogue in both English and Norwegian, and at least 32 media reviews' (CS12)*

While the above are no doubt significant achievements in terms of dissemination, they still do not point to a change that could be identified and measured. The fact that many CSs focus on dissemination activities, and that, when they do talk about actual impact, they often fail to provide reliable evidence, means that several documents fail to achieve one of the two pragmatic aims of the document. That is to say, that while the Norwegian CSs do present the researchers as respectable members of the community, they do not show them as *respecting* the requirements of the new genre and the new assessment. Hence, it seems that unlike their British colleagues Norwegian CS authors have been reluctant to draw on other genres which are perhaps more appropriate for the purpose of providing evidence and general institutional compliance, instead producing documents which are close to traditional academic genres. At the same time, it should be noted that a few CSs from the corpus *did* use the SPRE pattern successfully (e.g. CS 9, section 3 – details of the impact).

In conclusion, it seems that a stable structure of the genre of impact case study has not been established yet in Norway. Furthermore, among authors of Norwegian CSs there are differing levels of awareness of definition of impact, the impact case study template and the principals of constructing a convincing impact narrative. In terms of the readability of the document, it is noteworthy that Norwegian CSs were less frequently divided into subsections or lists (e.g. bullet point lists of types of impact, areas of influence etc.) than the British CSs. For instance, the British documents rely heavily on headings to distinguish the different types of impact (described in the 'details of the impact') section or the type of corroborative material provided (in the 'sources to corroborate' section).

#### 4.4. Vocabulary

The language of British CSs is focused on persuasion, the language of Norwegian ones on information

A striking difference in the vocabulary used by Norwegian and British authors in their impact narratives is that the documents from the first group focus on *communicating* information,

while the documents from the second group focus on *persuasion*. This is apparent already on the level of the titles used. The British CS titles showcase impact in a variety of ways: the use of verbs in gerund form (verb-ing), the verbs often being ones related to change and development (changing, transforming, improving, etc; n=40), inclusion of the word ‘impact’ in the title (no=5), or inclusion of other words suggesting change and development (e.g. adjectives such as: innovative, new, improved, enhanced; nouns like: dissemination, knowledge transfer, awareness, modernisation, revitalisation, practice, quality, productivity, policy). I group the titles that make use of the above-mentioned features aimed at showcasing impact as ‘strong titles’ (compare to ‘power words’ in: Van Noorden, 2015). In the studied British corpus 78% of the CSs carry ‘strong titles’.

In the Norwegian corpus, there is a clear predominance of titles that are verbless sentences (e.g. ‘CLEAR Resources for Russian’, ‘Studies on Christians in the Middle East’) – they constitute 87% of the titles. Using the same criteria as above, only 39% of the Norwegian CSs can be classified as ‘strong titles’. See the chart below for a comparison.

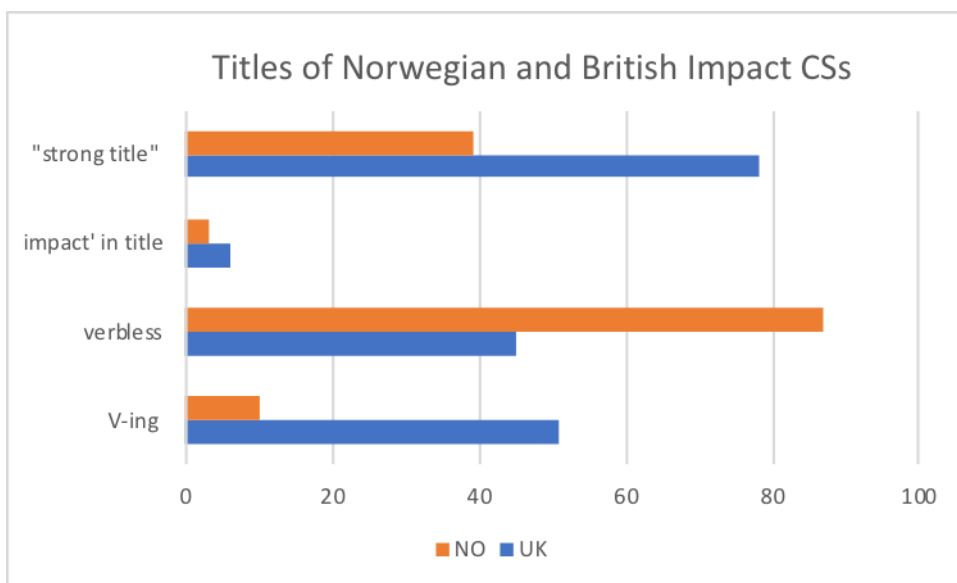


Figure 7 – Chart – titles of Norwegian and British Impact CSs by type

Similarly, a corpus-based (quantitative) search shows that ‘positive’ words are much more frequently used in British case studies than in their Norwegian counterparts. The table below shows the numbers of appearances of ‘positive words’ divided into three categories: quality (words like ‘excellent’, ‘influential’, ‘world-leading’, ‘impactful’), size (‘big’, ‘huge’, ‘wide’) and ‘change’ words (‘developing’, ‘influencing’, ‘change’) – see charts 6 and 7 below and Annex 5 for a full list of words coded as ‘positive’.

	ICs Norway	CSs UK	Total
☐ quality	156	975	1,131
☐ size	59	335	394
☐ change words	213	1,640	1,853
Σ SUM	428	2,950	3,378
# N (Documents)	31 (28%)	78 (71%)	109 (100%)

Figure 8 – Chart: use of words coded as ‘positive’ in the three categories in the two document groups

	ICs Norway	CSs UK	Total
☐ quality	96.8%	100.0%	99.1%
☐ size	77.4%	94.9%	89.9%
☐ change words	83.9%	100.0%	95.4%
Σ SUM	258.1%	294.9%	284.4%
# N (Documents)	31 (28%)	78 (71%)	109 (100%)

Figure 9 – Chart: percentage of documents containing sequences coded under ‘positive words’ in the three categories in the two document groups

Apart from the less obviously ‘persuasive’ titles of the documents and the lower number of positive words that can be found in the narratives, Norwegian impact case studies are striking for their use of *hedging*. Hedging occurs when expressions or forms are used to soften or weaken the meaning of that is being stated, for instance by the use of modal verbs such as ‘could’, ‘would’, ‘might’, adverbs like ‘perhaps’, ‘maybe’ or modifiers like ‘a sort of’, ‘some areas of’ etc. See the following examples from the corpus of Norwegian CSs in which the authors actively problematize or relativize the claimed impact through the use of hedging:

*we assume they [engagement activities] must have had some ‘impact’; the impact of humanistic research here is indirect but not insignificant (CS 2)*

*[the research] had some impact on the way in which the general public understand Norway’s history of [area] (CS 28),*

*There are, furthermore, signs that it will change [in area], but it is early days for a proper judgment on this (CS 27)*

Even more striking are signs of critical reflection on the very idea of ‘research impact’ and the approach to its evaluation adopted by the organizer of the exercise, which can be spotted in some of the CSs. Note for instance the quotation marks around the word impact in the quote from CS2 above (for more examples see next section – 4.5).

Unlike British CSs, the Norwegian CSs are not characterised by an established, technical vocabulary around impact (e.g. ‘pathways to impact’, ‘to generate impact’, ‘to corroborate impact’ etc.), and some refreshingly new expressions have been noted (e.g. ‘basic ‘relay stations’ of impact’ – CS23).

Finally, on the level of vocabulary, some colloquial expressions were noted (“so I have to keep my head low in public” – CS26; “he had no special linguistic skills, only a special love for his tongue” – CS11; “much of the material had to be dug out from a number of Norwegian archives” – CS27) alongside several typographical errors. While the presence of colloquial terms is not an issue and might point to a different level of formality in the emergent genre, compared to the British CSs, the presence of typos points to a lack of proofreading and possibly a more nonchalant approach to the exercise, perhaps resulting from its lower perceived status.

#### 4.5. Differences in impact case studies – differences in academic cultures?

The same genre can have different expressions in different (academic) cultures

There are several differences between the Norwegian and British impact case studies. The Norwegian CSs seem to be less polished and uniform. This is evident in the variation in the length of the documents and in the use they make of the template (for instance, the same type of information is placed in different sections by different authors), the presence of colloquial language and typos, the fact that important information is frequently missing (e.g. even incomplete references), the fact that authors alternate between the third and first person (sometimes within one document), and, perhaps most importantly, the lack of corroborative information on impact (e.g. sections left empty – see previous sections in chapter 4). This raw quality of the Norwegian CSs can be linked to a lack of administrative support in the area of drafting CSs, which was widely provided in the UK. While in Great Britain the input of impact specialists contributed to the production of documents that were polished to perfection (e.g. containing all necessary data, often organized in ‘further corroboration’ and ‘further proof narrative patterns – see section 4.3), it often had the additional effect of ‘orchestrating’ the submissions making them uniform, often dull to read and, it has been argued, exaggerated.

The second point to be made on the comparison of the two corpora is that Norwegian impact case studies rely to a smaller extent on persuasive language. This is apparent in the much lower number of ‘strong titles’ and lower frequency of words classed as ‘positive’ in the Norwegian CSs. Their proliferation in the British CSs is a function of the performative nature of the exercise in the UK, on which much money and prestige hinges (as opposed to the formative nature of the evaluation in Norway). The differences in intensity of use of persuasive language in the two studied datasets may also be linked to broader cultural and linguistic tendencies which condition the perception of boasting in both cultures.

Finally, Norwegian authors tend to problematize the information on impact much more than their British counterparts – they provide contextual information that enables the impact to be placed in a broader context, even when this information might weaken the case for the impact, rather than strengthen it (e.g. “it is important to note that policy decisions in China are rarely transparent and we have no way of knowing exactly what kind of impact our research results have through such dialogues” – CS2; “with Russia’s democratic transition called off, and given the weak civil society structures in Russia, a study of contemporary social movements in the country may seem overly ambitious” – CS16). Additionally, several Norwegian CSs from the corpus actively commented on the concept of impact, drawing attention to difficulties in defining and measuring it (e.g. “this demonstrates how important it is for the impact of specialized research that competence and networks are allowed to be built over long periods of time” – CS9; “while the actual impact of research in humanities is hard to gauge or verify by precision...: – CS20; “it is admittedly difficult to assess the exact societal impact of the research article presented here” – CS26; “the impact of humanistic research here is indirect but not insignificant” – CS2).

The above-described differences are likely to result from the distinctive features of the impact assessment models and the process of their implementation in the two countries (as described in section 2.2.2). In the UK, impact evaluation is a high-stakes assessment at the basis of funding allocation and hierarchies of prestige. The drafting of CSs takes a long time (often many months or, indeed, in the case of the upcoming 2021 assessment – years), and involves several individuals, for instance specialised professionals engaged as ‘impact officers’ and ‘impact managers’ to support academics in editing and proofreading the documents. Furthermore, in the UK, the introduction of the impact evaluation was accompanied by a long debate in the academic community and the first edition of REF was preceded by a pilot of the impact element that produced ‘exemplary’ CSs. These aspects of the British context contributed to the generation of case studies that are highly persuasive in their nature, polished to perfection, uncritical of the exercise (taking up the interpretation brought up in 4.3, the CS authors present themselves as *respecting* the new academic game by eagerly fulfilling all the requirements of the evaluation’s organisers). While certainly appearing meticulously prepared and strongly persuasive in their tone, the British CSs can at times appear dull and exaggerated to readers.

In contrast, the assessment of impact in Norway was launched with just a few months’ notice, and the Norwegian CSs were prepared over a relatively short period of time (around three months, and in some cases just a few weeks). The assessment was not tied to funding. Interviews suggest that little guidance was provided within the institutions on the preparation of the CSs (see section 5.1, 5.2 and chapter 6). Given that Humeval was the first Norwegian disciplinary assessment to include impact, there were not many resources authors could rely on. All these factors contributed to the generation of documents that are less uniform. Additionally, they seem to be less constrained by external pressures, less assertive as regards the impact claimed and in relation to the exercise, and more balanced – while there are cases of boasting (e.g. “[author’s] textbooks are an exemplification of practitioner research, whilst having considerably more impact than is typical of such research – CS1; [research group] has had huge impact on the field” – CS18), these are balanced out or outnumbered by frequent instances hedging (“reaching a relatively high number of individual readers” – CS27; “on the other hand, the role of the [described research] milieu is controversial, with a large number of op-eds and other voices critical of its interpretation” – CS23).

Research on the British impact evaluation suggests that exaggeration of claims to research excellence and impact has become the norm, which panellists take into account when conducting the evaluations (Derrick, 2018). In contrast, Norwegian panellists produced rather nuanced accounts of research and impact that often-mentioned problems (for instance of an ethical or political nature) encountered in carrying out the research or generating impact. Authors frequently draw attention to a deeper, more long-standing engagement rather than emphasising ‘success stories’ about isolated interventions (“by building academic research groups at [institutions] [researcher] has contributed greatly to creating a critical mass of internationally renowned jihadism researchers in Norway” – CS20). They also provide details that enable the account to be placed in a broader context of the research, impact or of the corroborative material provided (e.g. “since the article has so far only been published in Norwegian, it does not yet appear in international databases” –



CS26). The acknowledgment of ones' weaknesses or challenges and a focus on nuanced accounts which don't necessarily lend themselves easily to quantifiable evaluation may, paradoxically, contribute to rendering the documents more credible in the eye of the reader. If the British science system at the moment seems to allow (or even invite) a certain level of exaggeration in claims, the Norwegian can be seen as leaning towards honestly and straightforwardness.

Alongside these differences which may be seen as strengths or weaknesses depending on the broader cultural and institutional context in which they are presented, there is one difference between British CSs and Norwegian CSs that distinguishes the first as more successful. Authors of British CSs attend very carefully to collecting and presenting the data that corroborates the claimed impact. In contrast, the Norwegian CSs, despite presenting convincing and often impressive cases of academic activity beyond academia, are often characterised by an often chaotic presentation of different types of information and a frequent lack of core details enabling the evaluation of impact or such details being buried in an abundance of additional material.

#### **4.6. Comparison of Norwegian and British case studies – conclusions**

##### Norwegian CSs are creative, nuanced and honest but often fail to address the pragmatic aim of the document

Compared to the British impact case studies which give a clear impression of belonging to one coherent and well-defined academic genre, the Norwegian case studies are strikingly diverse. This is apparent on the level of document structure and length, narrative patterns, grammatical forms, use of meta content and the overall focus of the texts. They can be chaotic, and include irrelevant information, while failing to address the key requirements and provide crucial information. These features of the studied dataset lead us to conclusion that the genre of impact case study is not yet established in Norwegian academic culture.

In the first round of impact evaluation within Humeval 2015-2017, this relative ‘immaturity’ of the genre resulted in the documents being less suited for the purpose of being evaluated according to the criteria established by the organizer of the assessment. While both Humeval and REF constituted a new challenge in terms of academic writing, the British academics seem to have developed a coherent genre faster than their Norwegian colleagues. This may be linked back to the existence of a pilot that generated ‘exemplary’ case studies, to more extensive guidance on the use of the template provided by the assessments’ organiser, to the longer time allowed for preparation, to the support of specialised staff from within the university (impact officers) or from the outside (consultants, professional writers, journalists) and to the relatively high prestige of the exercise, which required a big investment on the part of the submitting academics.

Despite often lacking in traceable evidence of impact, the Norwegian CSs seem to give a more nuanced view of the impactful research conducted, allowing for detours on the broader context of the described engagement, rather than just highlighting isolated ‘cases’ of impact. The language of British case studies is focused on persuasion, the language of Norwegian ones on information. Norwegian impact case studies are also striking for their use of hedging, i.e. active problematizing or relativizing of the claimed impact. For instance, Norwegian CSs attend to challenges and obstacles encountered in securing impact, rather than giving a ‘polished’ vision of a ‘success story’, which was the norm in the British case. They also contain reflexive (or even critical) fragments on the nature of impact and impact evaluation. This speaks to the formative goal of the assessment organised by RCN, which does not seek to create hierarchies, but to provide information, and to the relative ‘openness’ of the evaluation system, which allows for dissenting and critical opinions.

According to Norwegian informants, the relatively non-performative nature of the Norwegian CSs could be linked to a more general cultural focus on ‘modesty’, compared to the more ‘performative’ and ‘self-assertive’ Anglo-Saxon culture. Similarly, the differing levels of conscientiousness in collecting and presenting evidence of impact may be put in a broader context of degree of trust between institutions and individuals in the two societies.

A crucial question that is raised by all of the above features of the Norwegian CSs is whether the organizer of the assessment and the academic authors of CSs concur when it comes to the idea of impact, its definition and assessment criteria. Several phrases from the CSs suggest that academics have a tendency to conflate 'impact' with engagement or international dissemination (see section 4.3). At the same time, given the processual development of the Norwegian approach to impact evaluation, it can be hypothesised that the final aim towards which the Norwegian impact CSs are developing is not the standardised, performative and assertive model known from the British context, but rather a different type of document that focuses on providing an honest and reliable account of the facts concerning research impact.

In general, it seems a sensible goal for the Norwegian science system to focus on working out an understanding of impact and a genre which would capture it accurately while respecting the local context and its values, rather than imitating the pioneering British iteration of impact evaluation in all its details.

## 5. Attitudes towards the assessment

The previous chapter presented the *products* of the evaluation of impact in Humeval 2015-2017, i.e. the impact case studies. This chapter focuses on the *process* of producing the documents, i.e. the lived experience of authoring a CS, on the opinions of academics about the Humeval exercise and on their attitudes to impact evaluation more generally.

### 5.1. Authorship and guidance on the exercise

Most respondents of this study contacted as probable authors of impact case studies on the basis of their work being described in a CS document, confirmed that they had written the CSs themselves. Many mentioned obtaining feedback (sometimes in several rounds) from colleagues organising the submission. This feedback was usually minimal: in some cases, additional corroborative material was sought, particularly information of a quantitative nature – sales, audience sizes etc. – and in one case the author was asked to substantiate the claimed impact itself (in terms of making a change), which was considered challenging. One interviewee was asked to remove fragments from the document that were seen as overly critical of the exercise itself. One respondent received slides from the presentation by Professor Helen Small in RCN (see section 2.2.2), which they found helpful and intriguing. Two interviewees claimed that they had not written the CSs themselves, but only provided first drafts (not in the template form). One of these respondents admitted to seeing the final version of their CS in its final shape for the first time during the interview. Most respondents did not have any recollection of broader discussions on impact and impact evaluation taking place in the department, and they were not aware of other colleagues' impact case studies. They also seemed not to attach much importance to 'their' CSs. For instance, one of the respondents told the researcher:

*[the first time you contacted me] I only vaguely remembered having written a report on something called 'impact'.*

*(Interview 6)*

Compared with the British context where the run-up to the REF typically involved a number of meetings, training sessions, much time dedicated to data collection and many rounds of revision of the CS documents, the preparation of the submission in the Norwegian institution was less burdensome and time-consuming for the academics, but at the same time less engaging. In contrast to the Norwegian case study authors, British academics held general discussions about impact within their departments and faculties, but also with other peer groups such as professional associations, societies etc. British scholars were also provided with more support and feedback on the practical aspects of writing case studies and collecting the necessary underpinning data, they were also normally aware of other CSs submitted by their unit. While the meticulous British approach to the REF – no doubt related to the perceived importance of the exercise given its link to funding and league tables – has certainly contributed to anxiety and some resentment towards the exercise, it has also generated high levels of awareness of the notion of impact and its evaluation.

### 5.1. Many positive and some negative reactions to the exercise

Perhaps surprisingly, given the public controversy around impact evaluation, most of the respondents expressed quite positive attitudes to the idea of research impact evaluation as such and commented favourably on their own experience of submitting a CS. Many regarded the invitation to submit an impact CS as an acknowledgement of their work, particularly as regards activities that are often considered less 'prestigious' than specifically scholarly contributions (such as writing books aimed at the general public, textbooks or conducting highly innovative, interdisciplinary, action-research type of work). See extracts from interviews with authors of Norwegian CSs for examples:

*I was happy this was selected as a project that the department felt they could be proud of. Because we expected that it would be high-profile [funded] research projects that would be selected for this kind of thing [and this project was not]. (...) The general feeling in the system about writing [books for the public] is that you do it for a commercial publisher, so it doesn't really count towards anything much [in the academic sense] (...) [Recognition] was what I got out of it mostly. I was also very happy to see it mentioned as a positive thing [in the panel report].*

*Interview 7*

*I was also honoured, it's kind of a recognition of the work you are doing. (...) When the assessment [from Panel 4] was published, people congratulated me on the result, they recognised me in the description.*

*Interview 6*

Some respondents also stressed the role of the exercise in inviting a reflection on their own work and raising awareness of impact evaluation:

*I had a positive experience, honestly. I think it is an important exercise for us to think about what kind of impact we make. And I think writing is one of the best ways of thinking. (...) I liked this exercise, it gave me a small chance to document how what I was doing had an impact.*

*Interview 5*

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*Interviewer: Has participating in the study caused a change?*

*Academic: In a way, yes. I saw that the Research Council is more interested in... [impact]. I learned something from it in the sense that relevance for society is becoming more important.*

*Interview 6*

Many respondents drew attention to the usefulness of the exercise in terms of boosting the profile of the humanities in relation to the government and society at large, sometimes speaking in very strong terms:

*There is an intrinsic resistance [to impact evaluation and similar trends] but we are part of society and it is not necessarily obvious that society should fund the humanities generously...*

*Interview 9*

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*Academic: I think it was a good move [on the part of the RCN] to ask us to justify our existence as a discipline.*

*Interviewer: That is a bold statement!*

*Academic: It's a bold statement and it's an important statement. If we cannot show to society why we are doing what we are doing, then you have a problem, and I think you will have a bigger problem in the future.*

*Interview 6*

In most cases, however, the enthusiasm of participants was curbed by recognition of the shortcomings and dangers of the assessment, particularly the confusion around terms used in the evaluation and the ultimate goal of the exercise, lack of support and the time involved in engaging in an additional activity. See the excerpt below for an example:

*It was fine in the end even if we didn't quite understand the point at first. and when we saw the report we were also very happy that they liked our case studies. It's certainly something that we can use if we ask for funding, as the report said what we do is fine.*

*Interview 7*

Only one of the six interviewed academics expressed strong criticism of the exercise based on fundamental objections to the nature of the exercise, as incompatible (in the words of the respondent – “in direct contradiction”) with the ethos of academic work in their discipline. On the growing importance of impact evaluation for the RCN, the respondent commented:

*I think it is a very problematic move because it makes us focus on short-term issues, so we can't say any longer 'I'm developing a new mode of understanding X' or 'I'm dealing with problem Y (...)'. For whom would it have an impact and how would you measure that? As soon as you start addressing those questions, you see that they are quite far from what I think good research on my topics should be.*

*Interview 4*

This scholar's criticism of the concept of 'research impact' in its current form was of a fundamental and ethical nature – the type of research the respondent conducts requires 'keeping a low profile' and avoiding the sort of publicity that can draw too much attention. The respondent also expressed concern about whether intervening in the studied subject (for instance in a cultural or political environment) is compatible with the objective and neutral position of the researcher. Given these objections, this respondent did not have a good experience of taking part in the exercise, did not want to publicise the results (e.g. on the website of the university) and did not wish to take part in a similar exercise again. Indeed, when the interviewer hypothesised about a mandatory impact element being introduced into RCN funding applications, the scholar commented: “Then I may stop applying for funding”. Regardless of this, the speaker *did* recognise a positive effect of the exercise on the position of the humanities, as shown by the excerpt below:

*[The evaluation exercise] has given the public perceptions of what the humanities can be a face-lift. Absolutely! I don't see the denigration of humanities now that I saw four or five years ago. So, in a sense it has worked. That's the paradox of it. Isn't that interesting? That even I say that.*

*Interview 4*

All respondents, regardless of whether they had a generally positive or negative attitude towards the exercise itself, expressed objections to particular elements of its implementation – I address them in the section on ethical, political and disciplinary issues (5.3).

## 5.2. Lack of understanding of ‘impact’?

The question of defining and understanding impact is a problem that runs through this entire report. I have argued in sections 4.3, 4.5. and 4.6 that many Norwegian impact case studies seem to miss the point of the exercise as conceived by the organizer, i.e. they do not address the concept of ‘impact’ defined as ‘change, effect or benefit’ in an area beyond academia, instead focusing solely, or mostly, on dissemination. Indeed, RCN employees reported that panellists had difficulties assessing the CSs as “many institutions didn’t understand the concept of impact and wrote of dissemination instead” (Interview 2) (compare also panel reports from Humeval and Sameval: Research Council of Norway, 2017c, p. 36; 2018c, p. 33). The challenge of understanding what was intended by ‘impact’, and therefore what was expected of CS authors was mentioned in several interviews, not least with the interviewed academic administrator:

*When we got the first letter from RCN, impact was referred to in a brief sentence, as one of several elements of the upcoming evaluation and, to be honest, we did not understand what it meant.*

*Interview 10*

In the case of the studied institution, this confusion was later obviated by the adoption at management level of an operationalised definition of impact. However, it seems that the management’s initial perplexity about the concept had influenced the reception of the exercise on the side of academics. Indeed, most of the academic respondents recalled grappling with the notion of impact, which sometimes gave rise to frustration. In the fragments below, respondents describe the first stages of impact case study preparation, when the idea had been introduced and invitations to write CSs were issued:

*What very quickly became an issue is “what is impact?”.*

*Interview 7*

At that time [when the evaluation was launched] we hadn’t even heard about the term [impact] so it was quite new to me. (...) It was not only me not knowing what kind of impact we are talking about, it was also from the administration part. It was like ‘we don’t know quite well how to respond to it’ (...)

*[to the researcher] ‘Everything that you tell me [about impact] is new’.*

*Interview 6*

The confusion about the definition of ‘impact’ continued when the first drafts of CSs were collected, and it became evident that different authors addressed the main points of the document differently. Below is an account from one of the authors:

*I did a lot of thinking about the impact case study, because it was not at all clear. (...) [The administrators overseeing the submission] said 'hey, you interpret this question entirely differently [compared to other authors]! We have lots of discrepancies with the answers here, we need to find out how you are supposed to answer this and we will get back to you and you will have to revise it'. And I was getting mad by this point.*

*Interview 4*

The confusion around the definition of impact can be attributed to several factors. As acknowledged by the RCN, the impact element was included in Humeval at quite a late stage, and not all the academics had time to meaningfully engage with the idea of impact evaluation before taking part in the exercise. As already mentioned in the previous sections, the process of submission was relatively swift, with little discussion, debate, training or feedback, as confirmed, for instance, by the following excerpt from an interview with a CS author:

*It [impact evaluation] came about a little bit abruptly, there was not too much time to write it by the time it reached me.*

*Interview 7*

The above factors – the newness of the concept and relative shortage of time for addressing it, whether on the management level or among the academics – resulted in frustration with the process of impact evaluation. Some interviewees suggested that 'impact' was regarded by academics as something imposed from the outside (the RCN, EU policies) and alien to academic culture. Academics complained particularly about not understanding the purpose of the exercise:

*[The exercise] was quite superficial in my opinion. In my opinion, it was not a well-defined project going down to the section and to me as a person. It was like 'well, let's see what we can do'.*

*Interview 6*

*The process was confusing because nobody knew what was expected of them. (...) I thought these questions are formulated by people who do not know anything about research.*

*Interview 4*

Note also that levels of information were different amongst respondents. The one interviewee who obtained the slides from the presentation at the RCN (as mentioned in section 5.1) found them intriguing and helpful. One respondent was aware of the British exercise through personal contacts. In the context of the relative confusion around the notion and definition of impact, it was mentioned that institutions would do well to provide training on such questions, which was not the case in their experience:



*[It would be good] to have a little three-hour workshop on the theme. You invite speakers to talk about impact in different domains, you give an introduction. Then, on the basis of this workshop, you send an invitation to take part in the exercise. This is what I would have preferred, and expected.*

*Interview 6*

I elaborate on the possible provisions that can be made in the area of impact generation by institutions in section 8.3.

### **5.3. Ethical, political and disciplinary issues**

During the interviews, most respondents were keen to reflect on the impact evaluation exercise within the broader context of academic work and humanistic research. This includes general questions about the changing role of humanities, the shift towards research quality evaluation, specific difficulties connected to measuring impact that may, by nature, be unmeasurable. Hence, the first issue to be born in mind is the general concern among academics with how the evaluation of research impact will fit in with traditional scholarly values (objectivity, autonomy, curiosity-driven approach, space for blue skies research) – an important issue which was already introduced in 5.1. Respondents highlighted particular aspects of the exercise as potentially controversial in this aspect. See for instance the following fragment in which an author of a CS comments on the management’s request to substantiate the document with concrete evidence of change:

*I have to say, to me this was an example of fairly reductive thinking (...) [It] was a little bit too instrumental, a crude way of thinking about [area].*

*Interview 8*

Generally, respondents agreed that engagement, dissemination, outreach, activism etc. were not among the activities perceived as the most important in Norwegian academia, and so were considered as secondary for academic careers. See the following excerpts:

*In Norwegian academy, we have a problem that there are incentives for research and teaching. But we haven’t had any incentive for dissemination.*

*Interview 8*

*The main expectation from my employer, the University, and the Research Council and beyond that Norwegian society, is that people like me are expected to produce research – that is monographs, articles in scholarly journals. Which is fine and yet if you do that consistently and devote a lot of time to it, there is not much time left for dissemination and work in that direction. We get much more credit for scientific publication than we do for*

*different kinds of dissemination. In the course of their academic career, academics register that it [impact] is not valued and do not do it. Time is limited, you know.*

*Interview 9*

In this context, a systematic valorisation of impact would have an effect on which elements of academic activity (so far mainly research) will be seen as crucial and recognised. However, as the above-cited respondent says, 'time is limited'. Respondents have raised the possibility of 'buy-outs' from teaching duties, or impact-related funding as possible solutions to this issue.

Another issue to be kept in mind is that impact is a new element that has been added to the existing balance of forces and interests in academia. In this sense, 'impact' may be disruptive. For instance, several respondents, unprompted, brought up the question of disciplinary differences and their influence on developing awareness of impact. Some disciplines within the humanities seem to be perceived as 'closer' to the public and naturally 'better' at achieving impact. Others are perceived as traditionally 'disengaged', while at the same time being stronger in scholarly terms. Hence, if the trend towards impact valorisation continues, the issue of integrating impact and forms of writing about impact in different disciplinary cultures will arise. It remains to be seen which disciplines will lend themselves more to impact evaluation in the terms established by the RCN and which ones will experience this new academic practice as a challenge.

Additionally, in the words of one of my respondents, "the impact evaluation comes on top of existing departmental politics" (Interview 5). The addition of this new element to the 'academic mix' could affect power structures, as researchers, fields or research projects that were considered academically 'weaker', or for some other reason have not been highly recognised, may win recognition in the context of impact evaluation. A new element of academic evaluation and academic culture may offer a 'window of opportunity' for those who want to distinguish themselves (for instance as responsive to new policy, active in their unit, willing to undertake the extra effort of documenting their impact), who appreciate the opportunity to have their activity beyond academia recognised, or who have hitherto found that their work has been overlooked or underappreciated. The impact evaluation may address all of these gaps. For instance, one of the respondents stated:

*Submitting the CS was for me a small act of rebellion, to try to document that what we are doing did have an impact.*

*Interview 5*

Ethical issues are another factor to be kept in mind. Conducting impactful research may be difficult in settings that are sensitive for political or cultural reasons. In such cases, pursuing more impact (more publicity etc.) may be detrimental to the research itself and to possibilities of conducting future studies (compare to extracts from Interview 4 cited in section 5.1). It must be recognised that a new evaluation practice affects the way research is talked about, but also the way in which it is conducted. The consequences this has for academic identity, disciplinary reflexivity and research ethics in general should not be

overlooked. Therefore, the trend towards valorising impact must take into account the specificity of disciplines and their position in relation the studied areas/subjects/objects.

If the shift towards valorisation of impact is to be maintained, these issues will no doubt surface, perhaps to a varying degree and in different constellations across disciplines.

## 6. Institutional change after the assessment

According to an anecdote shared with me unofficially by an RCN employee, one of the deans of a humanities faculty described their first interaction with the idea of ‘impact’ and the newly-established framework for its evaluation as ‘a cultural shock’. The conviction that ‘the discourse on the role of humanities in society has changed’ (Interview 1) in consequence of the implementation of impact evaluation seems to be shared by policymakers and academics. Indeed, several of the interviewees gave quite striking accounts of a development in their thinking that occurred in the context of the evaluation exercise. This shows that the exercise contributed to highlighting new areas of activity in a process that linguistic pragmatics describes as a change in ‘professional vision’, i.e. ‘the shaping process [that] creates the objects of knowledge that become the insignia of a profession’s craft’ (Goodwin, 1994). In other words, in consequence of the evaluation an area or type of activity which was largely seen as negligible gained in visibility and importance. For instance, the interviewed academic manager described the learning process at the management level:

*At the beginning, we simply did not understand what this was, but during the four, five, six months when we worked on this we found out that not only did we know what this was, but actually we were pretty good at it. (...) You start with a word that you do not understand, but the moment you understand it, you see that ‘Oh! We know this, we are this!’ We do this already and in fact we do it pretty well. We just did not have that word for it.*

*Interview 10*

In line with the theory of how objects of knowledge are shaped by the interplay between a domain of scrutiny (an area previously seen as chaotic and undifferentiated) and a set of discursive practices (naming, defining, classifying), the fragment cited above draws attention to how the simple act of giving something a name (in this case ‘impact’) can influence the perception of it as salient, and trigger a process of professional identification (“Oh! We know this, we *are* this”).

The interviewed academics often mentioned that the process of working on a case study constituted a challenge in terms of reframing their research, or the narrative on their research in a new context. The challenge could consist in spotting impact in a thematic area where one has not seen it before or looking at forms of exchange and engagement which are not usually considered the main channels for dissemination beyond academia. See for instance the following excerpt:

*When [my supervisor] suggested I write this impact case study, I thought “OK, let’s see whether it is possible to think in terms of impact in relation to the book.”*

*Interview 8*

In some cases, this effort enabled the respondents to look at their work in a different manner:

*If someone had asked me before ‘do you see your [output] as an impact case?’, I would have never seen it as that.*

*Interview 6*

For some scholars, scrutinizing their work from the perspective of ‘impact’ allowed them to appreciate previously overlooked and sometimes surprising implications.

*Finding that out [about the numbers of visits to their project website] was astonishing.*

*Interview 5*

The above accounts show that evaluation exercises such as Humeval not only *reflect* reality, but that they also trigger processes of change that enable academics to think, speak and write about their work differently. Importantly, this shift in the perception of one’s work does not follow from the simple fact of being acquainted with idea of ‘research impact’ and policies concerning it. What makes a difference is the actual *experience* of looking at one’s own work through the prism a new ‘professional vision’. After all, in the words of my respondents: ‘writing is one of the best ways of thinking’ (Interview 5).

While on the individual level, there are certainly signs of deep reflection and development taking place in the area of impact generation, it seems that institutional change is lagging behind the emergence of new needs and expectations among academics. The accounts of issues and challenges related to impact generation discussed in section 5.3 give an indication that, if impact is to be encouraged and future evaluations of this element are to be carried out, both the RCN and the institutions need to make an effort to clearly communicate the key ideas behind the impact policy. Opportunities also need to be provided for reflection and development in the area of impact.

None of the interviewed academics were aware of current initiatives at their institution aimed at stimulating impact, systematically collecting new impact case studies or training academics, e.g. in the collection of data related to impact. For instance, when asked if there is a person in the department who supports academics in the areas of impact and dissemination, one of the respondents said:

*There should have been. We’ve wanted that for a long time.*

*Interview 4*

Many of the interviewed academics were not even aware of the feedback on their CSs in the panel reports, and only learned about their assessment from the interviewer – this is despite the fact that the report was made available online by the RCN and that an email drawing attention to the document had apparently been circulated in the faculty. Many of the academics seem not to have informed themselves on the results of the assessment of their unit of assessment (department) or even their own CS. One of the interviewees recounts:

*The report came out just before summer [June] so it wasn't taken up. After the summer, there was a bit of discussion, but certainly not enough.*

*Interview 6*

The interviewed administrator admitted that not all heads of department have been equally eager to follow up the evaluation, even though a recommendation has been issued to hold a 'local discussion' within the departments on the results of Humeval. The interviewee further hypothesised that the weak interest in the follow-up of the evaluation among scholars stems from a lack of identification with the units of assessment assessed in the exercise as these often cut across existing administrative divisions.

*On faculty level, we think that we emerged from the exercise with pride. But many of the academics do not identify with the faculty nor the department. They tend to identify with the university and discipline, or their research group.*

*Interview 10*

The interviewed administrator commented on the relatively scarce feedback on the impact CSs in the panel's reports:

*The feedback on impact was not the most important element of the evaluation. The reports greeted the impact, deemed it sufficient, mentioned it in favourable ways. (...) It was not the most important part of the report, so we [administrators] decided to take it to the next level, to make it a major point.*

*Interview 10*

In order to celebrate the good outcome of the evaluation and to recognise the positive stories of research impact that emerged from CSs submitted to Humeval, the studied institution provided an online space where the narratives could be more widely shared in order to inspire academics. Similar initiatives have also been put forward by other Norwegian HE institutions. The aim of these publications is to spread awareness of cases of good practice in the area of impact across academic units and to promote the university externally.

Respondents have reported that the results of the evaluation have been used in internal decision-making, e.g. to point to the excellent work done by a particular department, for instance when applying for funding from the university. For example, one interviewee (Interview 7) said that the panel report that included a positive evaluation of impact

activities was used to argue (successfully) for funding of doctoral bursaries from the university. For other effects in institutions reported in the follow-up session with the humanities, see section 2.2.6.

While the above shows that existing CSs are used by the institutions in internal decision-making, funding allocation and promotion, there is little sign of development in terms of looking forward to the *generation* of future impact. It seems that academics would welcome a more systematic institutional policy on research impact and support in the broadly-understood area of outreach, dissemination, engagement and impact. Respondents mentioned a range of challenges related to communication and suggested that support would be helpful for instance on tasks such as writing journalistic pieces, liaising with journalists, and liaising with colleagues from different departments on interdisciplinary projects. In addition, if the evaluation continues, some training would be useful on collecting impact-related data and constructing impact narratives. It will be important to think about the provision of such support not just in the context of the future evaluations, but also in broader terms, as a change in academic culture. A need for a fundamental change in thinking about the role of humanities and evidencing impact was also flagged up by my respondents. See for instance the following excerpt:

*There are things to be done in that direction. It should not be something done based on a report every five years, but something you do in your everyday activity. (...) I want the university, the faculty, the department to be aware of these questions all the time.*

*Interview 6*

This perceived lack of academic services focused on helping scholars to generate and document impact stands in contrast to the tremendous growth in the provision of such support in the UK. No doubt in response to the importance of the Impact Agenda, an intricate ‘infrastructure’ has been put in place to support impact-related activities. This includes administrative staff dedicated to training academics in communication, supporting liaison with external institutions and the media, providing guidance on the documentation of impact etc. Also academics have been involved in supporting the ‘cultural shift’ in attitudes towards impact generation in British institutions, for instance by taking on secondment roles such as ‘departmental impact champions’, ‘department impact leads’ etc. While the British approach is arguably often quite ‘instrumental’ in its focus on the results of the REF exercise, similar forms of support may also be developed in other national contexts in a more ‘organic’ and sustainable way, in an attempt to build an impact culture from the bottom up.

## **7. Conclusions. Impact – a processual change in academic discourse?**

This report has described the creation of policy in the area of impact evaluation in Norway and discussed two datasets related to the first evaluation of research impact in the humanities – Humeval 2015–2017. The analysis of case studies submitted to the exercise (chapter 4) aimed to shed light on an emergent academic genre – impact cases or impact

narratives, while the analysis of interviews with actors involved in the exercise (chapter 5 and 6) focused on the lived experience of writing and submitting these documents, and the change that this development engendered at the level of awareness and attitude. My argument for advancing a linguistic perspective on impact evaluation is that new linguistic practices (such as writing in a new genre) do not simply *reflect* certain social processes, but that they also actively *create* and *shape* them. Therefore, I believe it is helpful to look at the impact element of Humeval as not only providing an account of existing academic practices, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as an important *intervention* into academic culture. As such, the impact evaluation challenged some existing convictions about what constitutes ‘core academic business’, it highlighted areas of academic activity that were not always recognised and invited those who wrote accounts of their research in this new genre to adopt a new perspective when looking at their own work.

The process of policy-creation in the area of impact evaluation – building as it did on existing solutions (the REF, which in turn borrowed from the Australian RQF) – exemplifies the increasingly globalised production of research policy. At the same time however it shows that, in every local context, ‘imported’ models need to be explained and often adapted, as if ‘translated’ to meet the requirements of the target culture (Wróblewska, 2017a). This report has offered a comparison between the British and Norwegian experience of evaluating research impact not for the purpose of pointing to solutions that could be universally considered optimal, but rather to highlight that analogous solutions (such as the case study methodology) can produce quite different results depending on the broader cultural context. The differences in the shape of the CS documents in the two countries and the different pace of institutional development in the area of impact are a case in point.

Due to the processual nature of policymaking on evaluation in Norway, and its light-touch, formative character, the change in the perceived position of ‘research impact’ in academic culture – one which has no doubt occurred in the UK (Manville & Grant, 2015) – is perhaps unfolding at a slower pace in Norway. Therefore, Norwegian academics are still not completely at ease with the genre of impact case studies (as shown in 4.3), scholars still grapple with the concept of impact (section 5.2) and the provision of support for impact-related activities falls below the expectations of academics (chapter 6). And yet, a change has been initiated and its first important effects can be identified.

While recognising that policymakers, academic managers and scholars alike can learn from other countries’ experiences of introducing impact evaluation policies, it is crucial for each national science system to organically develop its own solutions that respect local sensitivities and traditions as regards extra-academic engagement and academic culture in general. The strengths of the British system include the development of a coherent and now well-established case study genre, the rules for which are clear to both academics and panellists, and in the strong provision of support in the framework of an ‘impact infrastructure’. The strengths of the Norwegian approach, in its iteration in Humeval 2015–2017, perhaps paradoxically, lay in its ‘openness’. Because of the relatively short notice given before the exercise and the comparatively scarce guidance and training provided, the exercise resulted in a collection of documents that come across as an authentic, honest and reflexive overview of the impact of Norwegian research. In order to conduct a more rigorous, quantifiable evaluation of research impact in the future and to offer more detailed

feedback to the submitting academics and institutions, it would be recommendable to provide guidance on writing more coherent and empirically substantiated CSs, and to improve communication between the RCN and the academic community. Even more important than attending to the practicalities of future assessments is the continuing dialogue between RCN and academia with a view to developing a system of impact evaluation that would be attuned to Norwegian academic traditions and broader local cultural norms.

A specifically Norwegian approach to impact evaluation may build on the recognition of the two decidedly positive qualities of the Norwegian impact case studies that came to fore in the analysis, namely the documents' honesty and reflexivity. These two qualities form a solid foundation for an evaluation system that builds on mutual trust between the policymakers and the academic community, rather than encouraging top-down 'control' and formalized 'compliance' procedures. A future system of impact evaluation should continue to recognise honest and reflexive impact narratives, while building on a clearer understanding of 'impact' and a stronger skillset for documenting it among academics and academic managers. Such a system could combine the best sides of both of the approaches to impact evaluation described in this report.



## 8. Recommendations

Based on interviews, and a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of Norwegian impact case studies submitted to Humeval 2015-2017, and those submitted to REF 2014, recommendations are put forward below for consideration by three groups: authors of case studies, the RCN and higher education institutions.

### 8.1. Recommendations for authors of case studies

The following recommendations are provided in the form of a checklist which can be useful in drafting an impact case study:

- Does the case study (CS) build on a clear understanding of impact, as ‘change, effect or benefit’ in an area of society that makes it possible to distinguish between cases of engagement, outreach and dissemination and cases of impact?
- Is it possible, on the basis of the CS, to trace and document the change or effect in question?
- Have the authors considered the following questions: *What is the change* that has occurred in the world that would not have taken place if it were not for the research? *What is the causative link* between the research and the impact?
- Does the CS clearly distinguish academic impact (academic prizes, scholarly publications, positive reviews, citations etc.) from extra-academic impact (engagement with policy, cultural institutions, local society, media)?
- Does the first part of the document (‘description of the research’) provide an accurate, succinct and understandable account of the research?
- Does the second part of the document (‘details of the impact’) showcase 1) activities and engagements that lead to impact, 2) the nature of the impact, 3) evidence of the impact?
- Are the two core parts (‘description of the research’ and ‘details of the impact’) and their respective reference sections (‘references to the research’, ‘references to sources to corroborate’, ‘external references’) linked by numbers or symbols that will enable the cited sources to be traced? (For instance, ‘Author, Title, Year’ [1] or ‘corroborative material – media source, testimonial, policy report etc.’ [III.1])
- Are all the attachments provided separately or pasted into the document clearly mentioned in the narrative (‘details of the impact’) and listed in one of the ‘reference’ sections?
- Have the authors considered using headings, subheadings and lists, bullet points etc. to signal the different parts of the impact narrative (e.g. types/areas of impact, sources of corroboration)?
- Is every claim to impact in a particular area (e.g. ‘the research has had impact in the area of education’) followed up with a narrative based on traceable data?
- Are the corroborative data presented in the appropriate section of the document and is all the necessary information provided? In particular:

- When the name of an 'external source' (a person who has witnessed/experienced the impact) is given, are their contact details provided?
- When the name of an 'external source' is given, is information included on what the role of this person is in the context of the impact (stakeholder, collaborator, user, member of public...)? Is it clear what information mentioned in the narrative they can confirm and corroborate?
- When an institution is an 'external source', is the name of an employee of the institution who can be contacted provided (together with the above-mentioned information)?
- Where links are provided, are they contextualised – what information can be found on the websites and how does it support the claim to impact?
- Are links hyperlinked?
- If awards, invitations, presentations, media appearances etc. are mentioned in the description of external engagements, is all necessary information provided (date, institution, audience size, importance of the event etc.)?
- Does the CS avoid generic statements that it would be difficult for the panellists to follow up (e.g. 'please see my website for more information')?
- Rather than using the words 'many', 'several' etc. does the CS, where possible, provide more accurate information about audience sizes, populations affected, book sales, media appearances etc.? A smaller, but well contextualised number (for instance, is this much or little compared to other similar cases?) embedded in a coherent narrative can be more convincing than an exaggerated number or a vague statement.
- Have testimonials been sought from affected members of the public? If so, are they referred to in the narrative? Have the authors considered citing extracts of the testimonials in the narrative?
- Similarly, has other corroborative information (sales figures, audience sizes etc.) been obtained from external organisations? If so, it should be included in the CS since it may not be possible for panellists to follow up with these institutions.
- If blogs, titles of talks in Norwegian (or other languages other than the main language of the CS) are listed, has a translation of the title been provided (where useful)?
- If policy impact is claimed, is it described in specific terms, e.g. listing specific ministries or other public entities involved, clearly stating the issues at hand, listing authored reports, briefings or other interventions, and, ideally, identifying a concrete change in the policy?
- In presenting a piece of corroborative information, have the authors considered looking for 'further corroboration', i.e. can this claim be additionally strengthened, particularly in the eyes of a non-specialist (e.g. 'the researcher has been consulted by [institution], [further corroboration] that is one of the main NGOs working in the area of [topic] in [region/country]')?
- In presenting a case of impact, have the authors considered writing about possible 'further impact', e.g. 'we co-organised an event with a local entity, [further impact] which lead to another invitation for the scholars to

intervene'? It is helpful to see impact in the broader context of collaborations and exchanges.

- Has all corroborative information at hand been mentioned in the document?
- Has the document been proofread?

## 8.2. Recommendations in the area of 'research impact' for the RCN

### MISSION

- If the RCN is to be a 'change agent', affecting academic practice, as advised in the Technopolis report of 2012 (Arnold & Mahieu, 2012), it should play a more active role in establishing an impact culture in Norwegian academia.
- Building a successful culture around impact must include engagement on several levels: developing knowledge, providing support and training, carrying out efficient evaluations, sharing their results in a meaningful and relatable way, and valorising impact in funding instruments (including existing funding programmes, but possibly also establishing dedicated instruments focused on stimulating impact, such as the British ESRC Impact Account).
- A long-term plan indicating the goals of the Research Council's policy on impact and the main pillars of future evaluations in the area would help the institutions to plan for impact and collect necessary data in advance. Highlighting the existing logic models of the programmes may help researchers to plan for impact.

### METHOD

- The definition of 'impact' should remain open and inclusive, valorising different areas of impact, including types of impact that are difficult or impossible to measure, and impact that consists of preventing harm.
- A broader platform of exchange between policymakers and academics would allow scope for more engagement and thus ownership of the policy among academics.
- A disciplinary mapping that better corresponds to organisational units at the HEIs should be sought in order to allow for fuller ownership of the results of the evaluation by the researchers.
- The approach to impact evaluation needs to remain mindful of the ethical implications of pursuing research impact (including possible negative consequences) and of the different place this element of academic activity will occupy in every discipline.
- Tracking the implementation of impact policies within institutions would allow tracing the ongoing change in the academic culture around impact in terms of practice, attitudes and discourse.

### COMMUNICATION

- To ensure the success of the RCN's mission in the area of impact, it is crucial to efficiently communicate the goals of the exercise and the main elements of the evaluation policy (such as the definition of impact and its evaluation criteria) to the

institutions and the academic community. New evaluation exercises should be announced well in advance, allowing sufficient time for preparation and engagement of the academic community in all phases of the process.

- If impact narratives are to be requested, sufficient guidance should be given on using the provided form (including the information and evidence required).

### **8.3. Recommendations in the area of ‘research impact’ for institutions**

#### **Follow-up after evaluations**

- Evaluations should not just be followed up by the institutions at the central level, but also within departments and smaller units (e.g. research groups), to enable academics identification and ‘taking ownership’ of the assessment and its findings.
- Evaluations should lead to conclusions about institutional and departmental policy. If, based on the evaluation, changes are introduced to the policy this should be communicated to the academic community in an effective way.

#### **Looking forward to the future**

- Regardless of the shape of future evaluations and the approach to impact evaluation taken by the RCN, the institutions would benefit from building an ‘impact infrastructure’ from the bottom up. This should include developing a systematic approach to stimulating and documenting impact, which would challenge academics to engage with the notion of impact, without alienating them.
- The function of an ‘impact infrastructure’ would be to generate and share knowledge in the area of impact and to respond to the needs of academics in the area of knowledge exchange (such as training in communication, support for liaising with groups within the institutions and entities beyond it, fostering links with the direct environment of the institution etc.). Ideally, this ‘infrastructure’ would not just include administrative and managerial staff, but also involve academics.
- It is worth considering offering academics incentives in the area of impact, such as small impact-focused grants, teaching relief for scholars involved in knowledge exchange or impact generation, or formal recognition (such as prizes) for academics whose work has contributed to solving a problem that is important to the public.

## Annexes

### Annex 1. List of Norwegian and British CSs included in the corpus

#### British CSs

Ref. No:	CS no	Title of CS	University	UoA
1	43557	Language Testing: Assessing Proficiency and Improving Education	University of Lancaster	29: English Language and Literature
2	43561	Corpus Research: Its Impact on Industry	University of Lancaster	29
3	22177	Ecological Linguistics Research and its impact on Education for Sustainability	University of Gloucestershire	29
4	2579	Developing “Global Skills”	University of Warwick	21: Education
5	41287	‘Small stories’ research: its impact on the Greek classroom and beyond	King’s College London	31: Classics
6	43541	Research on natural language processing leading to improved language tests and dictionaries for millions of language learners	University of Lancaster	11: Computer Science and Informatics
7	20943	Improving the impartiality of the BBC's coverage of the Middle East and North Africa	Loughborough University	36: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
8	1026	Language Policy and Planning in Northern Ireland	University of Ulster	28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
9	1028	From local dialects to global languages: supporting multilingualism in Northern Ireland	University of Ulster	28
10	1029	Embedding computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in Modern Foreign Languages curricula, in industry and in the community	University of Ulster	28
11	1697	Articulate Instruments – visualising speech	Queen Margaret University	28
12	1698	Electropalatography (EPG) to Support Speech Pathology Assessment, Diagnosis and Intervention	Queen Margaret University	28

13	2734	Language learning and teaching in Macedonia: policy and delivery	University of Greenwich	28
14	2810	Working with vulnerable deaf communities to support the vitality of endangered rural sign languages	University of Central Lancashire	28
15	2811	Championing linguistic rights and educational opportunities for sign language users around the world through Sign Language Typology research	University of Central Lancashire	28
16	3471	Devolution and the Creation of a New Language Law Regime in Wales	Cardiff University	28
17	3899	Bringing the benefits of grammar knowledge closer to L2 practitioners	Cardiff University	28
18	4893	Preserving a linguistic heritage: Biak, an endangered Austronesian language	Oxford University	28
19	4896	Public dissemination of the British National Corpus	Oxford University	28
20	6375	Innovative computational linguistic technologies for language service providers	Leeds University	28
21	11822	Shaping European Policy on the Training of Translators	Durham University	28
22	13200	The Norman French Dialects of the Channel Islands	Cambridge University	28
23	13201	Phonetics applied to Forensic Speaker Comparison	Cambridge University	28
24	12839	Children's speech and literacy difficulties: influencing professional practice	Sheffield University	28
25	13840	Widening opportunities for socially disadvantaged children through language and literacy support	Sheffield University	28
26	17641	ROMEYKA	Cambridge University	28
27	17642	The English Profile Programme and EF Research Unit	Cambridge University	28
28	18018	Helping to Preserve the Endangered Language and Culture of the Kiowa Tribe	Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	28
29	18020	Linguistics research for English Language teachers	Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	28
30	18028	Language policy: informing policy debate, public understanding, and education	Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)	28
31	18131	Policy and practice of complementary schools for multilingual, transnational, and minority ethnic children	Birkbeck University	28
32	18132	Developing intercultural communicative competence amongst young people	Birkbeck University	28

33	20470	Media for All: Live Subtitling for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People Around the World	Roehampton University	28
34	20471	Changing the English Language Testing Landscape	Roehampton University	28
35	21107	The languages and culture of southern Arabia	University of Salford	28
36	21132	Relationships of trust: Public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) in the community and in statutory and non-statutory welfare services	University of Salford	28
37	21714	Transforming clinical practice in aphasia: The Comprehensive Aphasia Test (CAT)	Newcastle University	28
38	21715	The importance of communication change over time: Influencing practice in the management of people with Parkinson's disease	Newcastle University	28
39	21716	Trouble talking: changing policy and practice for the language delayed child	Newcastle University	28
40	21719	The Talk of the Toon: Enhancing the Linguistic Cultural Heritage of North East England	Newcastle University	28
41	24009	Gaelic Language Policy in Scotland: Revitalising and Sustaining the Gaelic Language	University of Edinburgh	28
42	24042	Commercial and clinical impact of speech synthesis	University of Edinburgh	28
43	24043	Cultural evolution research inspires art	University of Edinburgh	28
44	24044	Bilingualism Matters	University of Edinburgh	28
45	24043	Literacy and language support in South Sudan	University of Edinburgh	28
46	24571	Place-name research supports local investment and community initiatives	University of Glasgow	28
47	24573	Museums and Galleries and the International Visitor Experience (MGIVE)	University of Westminster	28
48	25828	Promoting Equal Access to Justice in Multilingual Societies.	Heriot-Watt University	28
49	25829	Ensuring Greater Equality for Sign Language Users	Heriot-Watt University	28
50	2621	Language policy, diversity and usage	Bangor University	28
51	26758	Informing and influencing the creation of language policies and strategies at local and national government levels to promote the use of Welsh amongst young people	Swansea University	28
52	28025	Welsh Lexicography and Terminology	Bangor university	28

53	28112	Modernisation of teaching German as a foreign language	Manchester University	28
54	28113	Number and recursion: the popular understanding of language	Manchester University	28
55	28115	Promoting recognition and status of the Romani language	Manchester University	28
56	28116	Supporting multilingualism and community language needs	Manchester University	28
57	36241	Languages in war and conflict	Reading University	28
58	36979	Changing English Language Teaching in the Global Primary Sector	Aston University	28
59	36980	Transforming EU policy and practice in translator training by defining translation competence	Aston University	28
60	36981	Forensic linguistics: improving the delivery of justice	Aston University	28
61	37244	Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru / A Dictionary of the Welsh Language	University of Wales	28
62	38145	Shared Spaces and Names of Places: The Northern Ireland Place-Name Project (NIPNP)	Queen's University Belfast	28
63	38704	Linguistics research in Modern Languages and its impact in the community	University of Exeter	28
64	39940	Improved mediation outcomes through an enhanced understanding of the cultural aspects of translation and interpretation.	University of Nottingham	28
65	40823	Creating effective teamwork in obstetric emergencies	University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol	28
66	40828	Highlighting and preserving the Mosestén language and culture	University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol	28
67	42280	Discourse analysis in medical settings	University of Wolverhampton	28
68	42281	Post-editing effort indicators for estimation of translation quality and productivity	University of Wolverhampton	28
69	42775	Informing Approaches to Endangered Language Protection and Revitalisation in the Channel Islands	SOAS	28
70	42791	Documenting, Preserving and Sharing Global Linguistic Heritage (ELAR)	SOAS	28
71	43364	SOILLSE: Building an Infrastructure for Gaelic	University of Aberdeen	28
72	43408	Linguistic analysis of asylum seekers' claims to origin	University of Essex	28
73	43477	Forensic speaker comparison	University of York	28
74	43490	Developing prototypes for natural-language interfaces in collaboration with BAE Systems	University of Essex	28



75	44021	Anglo-Norman Dictionary	Aberystwyth University	28
76	44186	28-03 Promoting Foreign Languages in Primary Schools	University of Southampton	28
77	28117	Improving the lives of Romani migrants in Western Europe	Manchester University	28
78	28114	Informing Government Policy and Public Debate on European Media	Manchester University	28

### Norwegian CSs

CS (ref) no	Title of CS	University	Panel
1	Improved English teaching in school years 1-7	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
2	Airborne: Pollution, Climate Change and New Visions of Sustainability in China	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
3	WisTrans – knowledge transfer in translation and intercultural communication	Østfold University College	4
4	Neology in specialised communication and its relevance for language standardisation and language policy	NHH	4
5	Enhancing public competence in assessing textual representations of contested issues of great social importance	NHH	4
6	Enlightenment News' exhibition of early modern newspapers	Faculty of Humanities, Norwegian University of Science and Technology	4
7	Translation, language choice and language competence in Scandinavian popular music	Faculty of Humanities, Norwegian University of Science and Technology	4
8	Classical Studies Societal Impact in Norway	Faculty of Humanities, Norwegian University of Science and Technology	4
9	Law Trumps Power at Sea: The South China Sea and Beyond	PRIO	4
10	Tolerance and the City: Human Interaction in Social and Urban Space Research Group: Early Modern and Modern Research Group (EMMRG)	University of Agder	4
11	Reviving Boruca language (Costa Rica)	Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen	4
12	'Art in Battle'	University of Bergen, Faculty of Humanities	4
13	Recordings of experiences from veterans from First World War	Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen	4

14	Young people's awareness of the importance of language in climate change issues	Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen	4
15	Studies on Christians in the Middle East	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
16	New Political Groups and the Russian State (NEPORUS), research grant Norwegian Research Council, number 228205; duration of project 2014 – 2017.	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
17	Textbooks in English Grammar	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
18	"Ny fransk grammatikk" – French grammar in contrast	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
19	Islamist movements	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
20	Research on Militant Islamist Movements	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
21	Symbolic nation-building in post-Soviet states and ex-Yugoslavia	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
22	Kvinnelige tidsvitner. Fortellinger fra Holocaust (Time's Witnesses. Women's Voices from the Holocaust). Oslo: Gyldendal, 2013. Edited with an Introduction by Jakob Lothe.	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
23	Middle East Studies	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
24	Multilingual corpora	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
25	Buddhist Nuns	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
26	Avoiding offense in embassy art	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
27	Knut Hamsun. Reisen til Hitler (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2014)	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
28	Norwegians in Latin America 1820-1940	UiO Faculty of Humanities	4
29	Tikhonov's Research on Modern Ideology in Korea: Social Darwinism, Nationalism, Perceptions of the Ethno-National Others.	University of Oslo (IKOS)	4
30	CLEAR Resources for Russian	Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education; University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway	4
31	Russian punk for the BBC World Service	Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education; University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway	4

## Annex 2 – List of interviews

Number	Role of interviewee
1	Policy-maker RCN
2	Policy-maker RCN
3	Policy-maker RCN
4	Academic, author of CS
5	Academic, author of CS
6	Academic, author of CS
7	Academic, author of CS
8	Academic, author of CS
9	Academic, author of CS
10	Academic manager/ administrator

## Annex 3. Table of 25 most frequent words in both corpora

The of 25 most frequent words in both corpora, Norwegian and British, with numbers of occurrences in each dataset.

	Word	CSs (no)	Norway	CSs uk (no)	Documents
1	research	432		1578	109
2	impact	300		1008	109
3	language	220		2197	98
4	study	212		739	109
5	russian	189		36	15
6	case	189		543	109
7	norwegian	185		1	25
8	university	162		507	109
9	project	158		513	97
10	linguistic	148		481	86
11	book	110		147	60
12	medium	108		221	70
13	make	106		211	96
14	numb	105		101	81
15	reference	102		227	109
16	uio	101		0	17
17	corpus	98		175	27
18	english	97		466	73
19	publish	94		157	82
20	norway	91		4	27
21	publication	91		132	86
22	issn	88		6	14
23	include	88		343	100

24	policy	87	278	73
25	report	85	300	93

#### Annex 4. The 30 most frequent words in both corpora

The 30 most frequent words in both corpora, Norwegian and British corpus, with percentage of documents in each dataset where the words occur. In green are highlighted the cases where the coverage is identical (100%), in red the higher percentage of the two groups

	Word	CSs Norway (%)	CSs UK (%)	Documents
1	research	100.00	100.00	109
2	impact	100.00	100.00	109
3	language	63.33	100.00	98
4	study	100.00	100.00	109
5	russian	23.33	10.13	15
6	case	100.00	100.00	109
7	norwegian	76.67	2.53	25
8	university	100.00	100.00	109
9	linguistic	36.67	94.94	86
10	project	76.67	93.67	97
11	book	73.33	48.10	60
12	numb	100.00	64.56	81
13	reference	100.00	100.00	109
14	corpus	13.33	29.11	27
15	english	46.67	74.68	73
16	medium	90.00	54.43	70
17	publish	90.00	69.62	82
18	publication	100.00	70.89	86
19	issn	26.67	7.59	14
20	norway	73.33	6.33	27
21	international	66.67	81.01	84
22	report	93.33	82.28	93
23	east	26.67	22.78	26
24	journal	70.00	73.42	79
25	translation	30.00	35.44	37
26	policy	86.67	59.49	73
27	public	73.33	65.82	74
28	group	80.00	79.75	87
29	base	76.67	82.28	88
30	work	76.67	97.47	100

## Annex 5 – Lists of words coded as positive

Category	Search item
quality	innovative
quality	ultimate
quality	wide-reaching
quality	robust
quality	unprecedented
quality	significant
quality	novel
quality	global
quality	best
quality	influential
quality	outstanding
quality	excellent
quality	ground-breaking
quality	impactful
quality	tremendous
quality	path-breaking
quality	the first
quality	ambitious
quality	impacting
quality	quality
quality	productive
quality	better
quality	great
quality	direct
quality	long-term
quality	recognized
quality	famous
quality	celebrated
quality	renown
size	immense
size	large
size	big
size	enormous
size	massive
size	huge
size	wide
change words	change
change words	changing
change words	improve
change words	improving

change words	develop
change words	enhancing
change words	improved
change words	revitalise
change words	grow
change words	growing
change words	enhance
change words	widen
change words	protect
change words	create
change words	preserve
change words	transform
change words	support
change words	influence
change words	influencing
change words	help
change words	shape
change words	championing
change words	supporting
change words	impacting

## Annex 6 – Template of Impact Case Study

Norwegian Impact Case Study template:

**Impact case study**

**Institution:**

**Panel number:**

**Case number or short name (max 10 characters):**

**Name of impact case:**

<b>Summary of the impact (maximum 100 words)</b>
<b>Description of the research underpinning the impact: (maximum 400 words.)</b> ->include names of key researchers and, if relevant, research groups. A time frame for when the research was carried out should also be included
<b>Details of the impact (maximum 400 words)</b> -> include a description of how the research has contributed to the impact on society
<b>References to the research (scientific publications)</b>
<b>References to sources to corroborate the claims made about the impact (publications, reports, media items, policy papers, etc.)</b>
<b>If relevant: External references (external users or others who have witnessed the impact and could be contacted to corroborate the claims made in the reported research cases).</b>

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