

Measuring and Managing Impact: a view from UCL

Professor David Price

Vice-Provost (Research)

HEPI Conference: Assessing impact, rewarding excellence

22 November 2011

What is impact?

- At UCL, we consider impact to be innate in everything that we do
- Taking inspiration from our ‘founding father’:
Bentham – “international”, “maximize”, and
.....“chrestomathia”
..... Useful Knowledge
- Impact goes far beyond REF



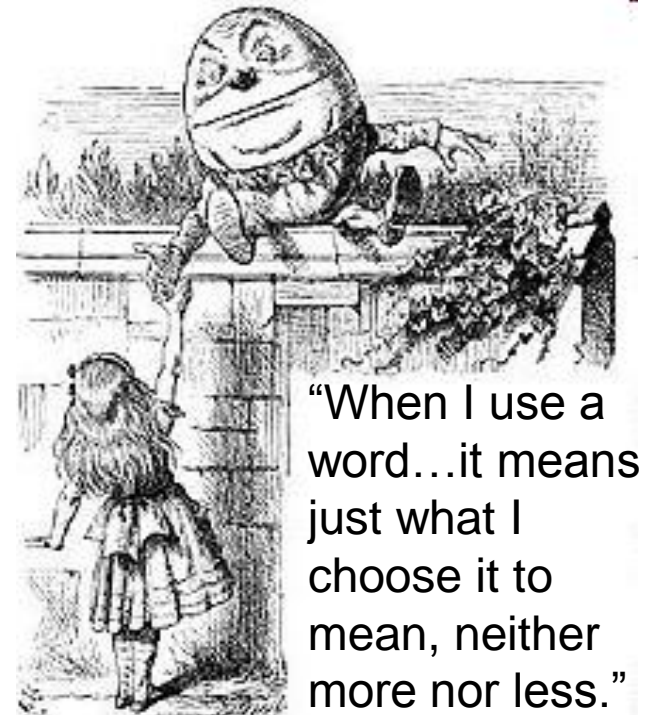
“Impact is not simply an add-on...Achieving impact is the primary function of the entire entity of a university, and expresses its social value.”

UCL Council White Paper, 2011-2021

Impact beyond REF

- Reclaiming “impact” is essential: it mustn’t be a “dirty word”

- The REF defines certain kinds of impact for the purposes of its assessment, but.....
- Universities also need to think about what impact is and what it means for them
- Every university in the UK makes significant impact in a wide range of ways.....



“When I use a word...it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.”

Humpty Dumpty and Alice. From *Through the Looking-Glass*.
Illustration by John Tenniel.

How impact is achieved: UCL's view

THE LANCET Scholarly outputs



Education



Translational research



Public engagement



Commercial and social enterprise activity

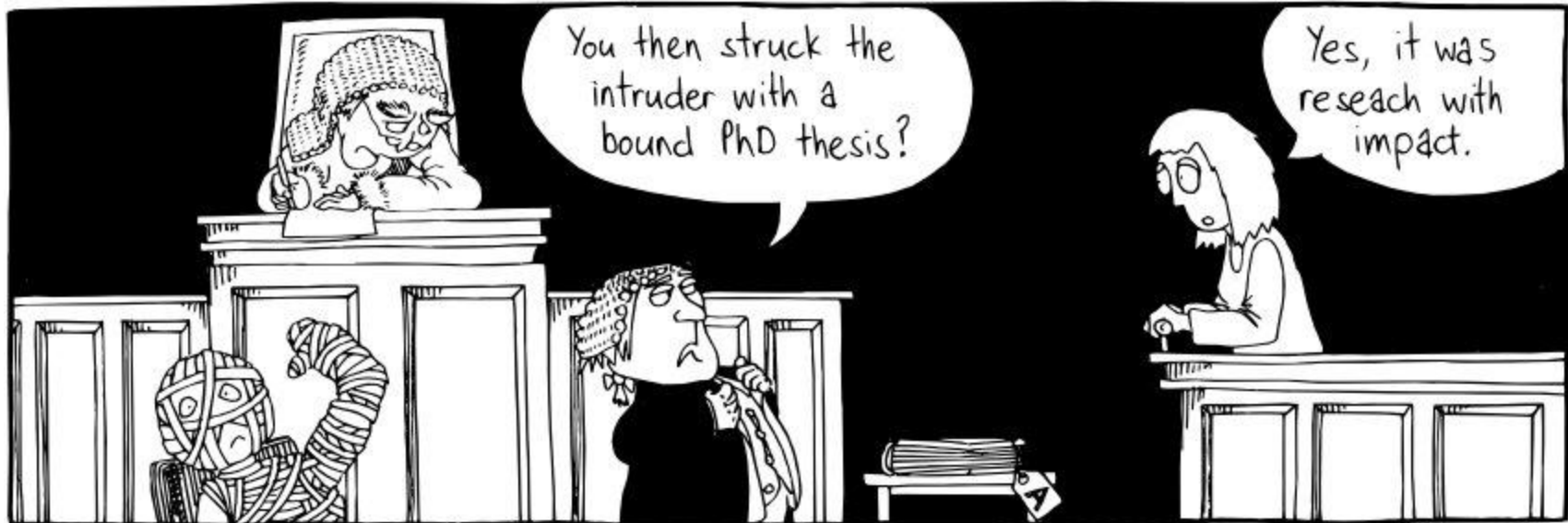


Influence on public policy and professional practice



Impact in new ways

- Impact is an opportunity, not a threat: allows institutions to showcase and assess a different kind of research output....**UCL Discovery**... E.g. PhD Thesis on Line.... 100's of downloads.... >500,000 downloads pa.



Source: <http://researchcounselling.wordpress.com>

- Important that institutions make every effort to make REF work for them, but...

Down the rabbit hole?

- The challenge of REF for universities is a loss of memory: describing and evidencing impact requires regaining that memory And quickly!
- Measuring and quantifying impact is part of demonstrating and assessing impact, but only part..... And challenging!



“Oh dear! Oh dear!
I shall be late!”

Illustration by John Tenniel. Source: <http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net>



- Reclaiming impact for institutions does mean a renewed focus on capturing impacts of research – in all forms – on an ongoing basis.... A major change.

Managing impact (1)

- Managing for impact is actually about managing people – fostering excellence, leadership, creativity, curiosity....An ethos of sharing and celebrating..... And creating systems and records
- Vital to have institutional processes that provide a supportive environment for researchers to pursue their work and to support researchers **and students** to engage beyond the university
- UCL Research Strategy: supporting creativity and curiosity as the best way to achieve outstanding research, discovery and consequently impact,.... and rewarding the impact makers in every context:

“Our university cherishes curiosity and holds that the expansion of knowledge is valuable in its own right...we will continue to see research excellence founded in the successful development of such curiosity as the foundation of the university's contribution to knowledge and society.”

Managing impact (2)

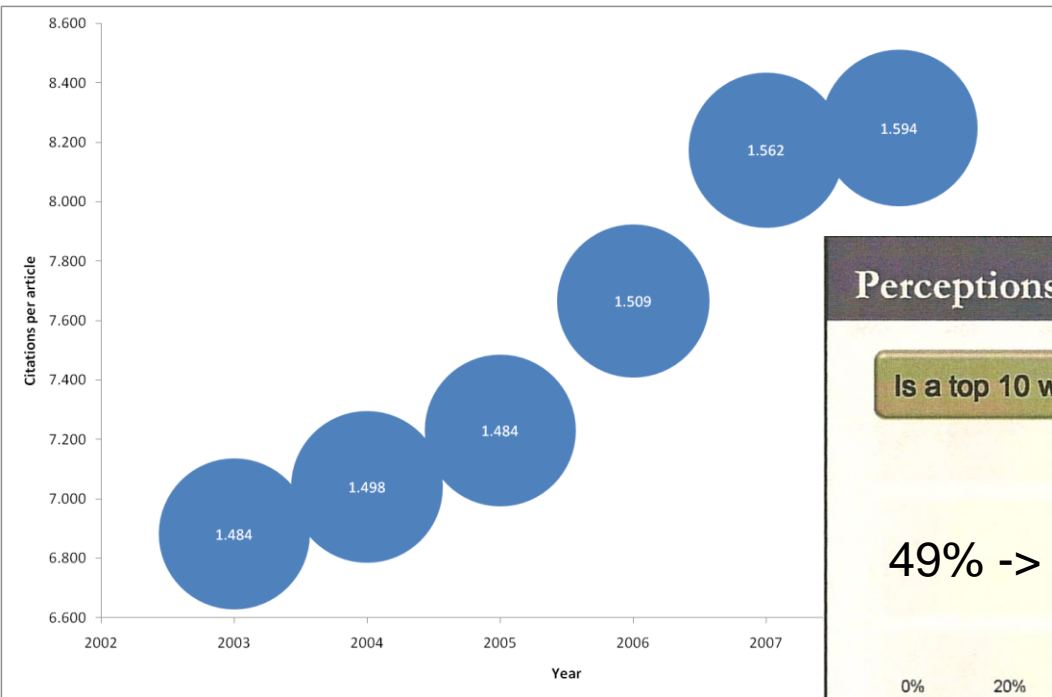
• UCL Grand Challenges: core part of our research strategy and dedicated to achieving impact through cross-disciplinarity:

- Harnessing UCL's collective expertise to address global problems
- Promoting novel cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Demonstrating the added-value of a multi-faculty, research-intensive university
- The Grand Challenges seek to make UCL research more than the sum of its parts



Measuring impact

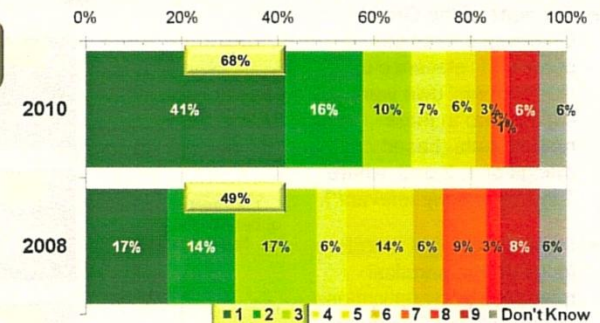
Bibliometrics



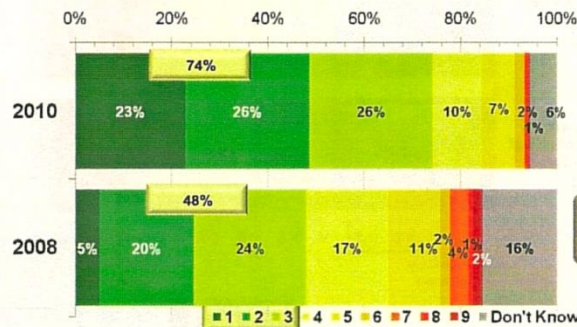
Perceptions of UCL: 2007/08 – 2010 benchmarks

Is a top 10 world university

49% -> 68%



Market Research

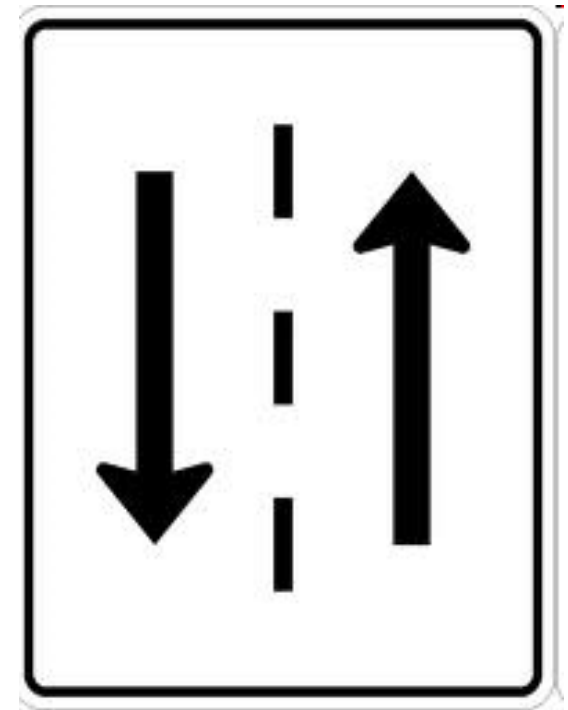


48% -> 74%

Is helping to develop solutions to world problems

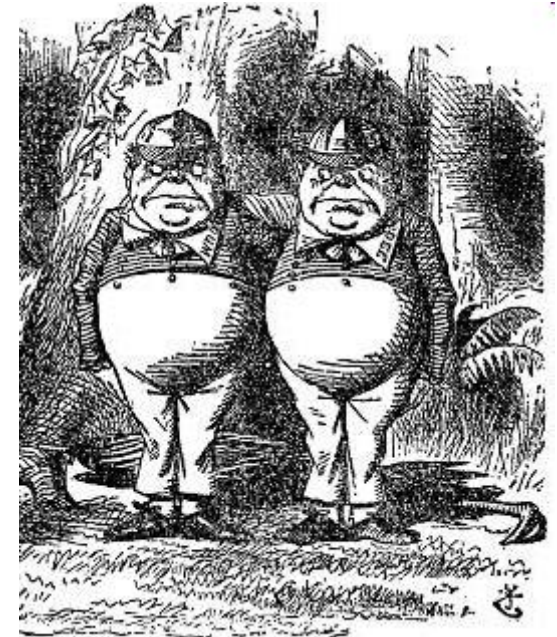
Maintaining impact

- Institutions can't manage and support research impact in a vacuum
- The national context to support research excellence and impact is essential
- The challenge to HEFCE / BIS is:
 - sustainable funding
 - investment in infrastructure
 - ensuring the UK is open to talent
 - supporting curiosity
 - **supporting collaboration**
- And **supporting student initiatives**.... The next generation of growth



Conclusion

- Twin imperatives for universities:
 - maximising impact, for processes such as REF, but...
 - fundamentally, assess the purpose of the university and the role of impact in its mission (impact, therefore as defined by the university and not by the funders).



Impact is about more, and lasts longer, than REF....





d.price@ucl.ac.uk