Activities & Impact: Capturing Knowledge Exchange, Engagement and Impact in PURE

PURE is the University of York’s Research Information System. As well as recording research funding and projects and grants, York asks all its researchers to use Pure to capture details of other activities, including knowledge exchange, engagement and impact.

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1. Overview – PLEASE READ THIS FIRST!

There are two areas in PURE (called ‘modules’) in which this information can be recorded – “Activities” and “Impacts”.

Please be clear about the difference between “Activities” and “Impacts”:
- “Activities” should be used to record events you’ve run or attended and interactions you have had: e.g. giving a public lecture or media interview, visiting a school or hosting a non-academic visitor.
- “Impacts” are the effects and outcomes of your research – perhaps aided by one or more of your “Activities” – on a non-academic audience; i.e. what changed and who/what benefitted from your activities.

Sometimes, one Activity will lead clearly to an Impact, e.g. if you gave evidence to a government committee, and that evidence later became reflected in a policy document. In that case, giving evidence to the committee is an “Activity” and the use of your research in the policy document is an “Impact”. You should create both, and link them together (see instructions below).

However, many researchers find that they have a gradually emerging ‘Impact story’ or narrative, which evolves over time, possibly linked to one or more underpinning pieces of research, or funded projects, and probably involving several activities. Researchers may also be collecting together several pieces of ‘evidence’ – documents of various types – which will help to tell their ‘impact story’.

If that applies to you, please use the following methodology to capture your Activities and Impacts in Pure:

1. Record each activity, interaction or event as an “Activity”. Multiple activities can be linked
to one project or output if appropriate, which should enable you to build up relationships between your key entries.

2. If you have documents or other evidence relating to your activity (e.g. an email with praise for your activity by an attendee, or feedback questionnaires), attach them to your activity (see instructions below).

3. If you are starting to collect documentary ‘evidence’ that relates to the overall Impact, but is not linked to an individual activity, store that carefully outside the system initially e.g. on a google drive or departmental shared drive.

4. Once you feel that you would like to start recording the story of your impact, even if it is only embryonic, create an “Impact” in Pure. [By this stage, your Department should be aware that you are working on an Impact, and you may wish to consult your CDRC or other senior colleagues about your Impact and how you are recording it]:
   a) Select the Impact status “In preparation”;
   b) Fill in as many of the boxes as you can at this stage;
   c) Attach the evidence and documents you have collected as “Evidence”;
   d) Link your Impact to all relevant Activities that you have already put in Pure;
   e) If appropriate, link your Impact to any relevant research projects or outputs already in Pure.

5. Continue working on your Impact as it emerges and becomes more complete; once it’s beyond the embryonic stage, update the status to “In progress”, and remember you can add more documents and links to activities/outputs (or remove those you no longer feel are relevant) whenever you wish.

6. When you feel you have finished narrating your Impact, and it is as full as you could reasonably expect it to be at this time, change the status to “Completed” [this doesn’t mean you can no longer work on it].

7. If a point comes when, sadly, you feel you don’t in fact have an impact story to tell at this time, change the status to “Inactive” [this won’t delete your record, and you could change the status later, and continue work, if the situation changed].

Key Points:
- One activity is NOT in itself an “Impact”, even if it does have an impact.
- If you can’t fill in most of the boxes in the “Impact” section, then it is possible that what you are recording is not really an Impact – or not yet ready to be recorded as one.
- Most Impacts will have links to one or more Activities, links to one or more projects or outputs, and will be evidenced by one or more attachments.
2. Why do we capture information on activities and impact?

There are several reasons why we capture this information, which also apply to the identification and the evaluation of what we do:

1. **To improve practice, at an individual and institutional level.** Without monitoring and capturing some information, we cannot identify if the activities we do have a positive or negative effect.

2. **To tell stories.** We are often asked to tell stories about our research, and our engagement activity. These stories demonstrate the liveliness of our university.

3. **To justify funding.** Within the current climate, we have to recognise that we compete with education, emergency services and defence, to name a few, for a share of the budget nationally. To enable us to do more research, and to remain sustainable, we must also justify our funding.

4. **To gain funding.** REF is not our only driver, but as impact makes up 20% of the overall assessment, it is reasonable to need to spend some time on doing and reporting on engagement activities.

5. **Part of the research process.** Engagement with audiences outside of academia doesn’t have to come at the end of your research – it can be a part of the research process, and it can improve and bring new insights to the research you are conducting. Considering how this engagement affects people and organisations, both positively and negatively is important.

3. Confidentiality

Information entered in the Impacts module is **not** currently displayed through the YRD, and so is not visible publicly. In addition, when entering an Impact, you have the option to mark its visibility as “Confidential”. This means that other standard PURE users, including in your own Department, will not be able to see the entry.

Information entered in the Activities module can be displayed through the YRD if you wish; you can mark it for internal visibility only if you do not want it visible on the YRD.

If you wish to add a further layer of confidentiality, you could redact the material that you enter, which may be especially important if you are working with a commercial partner and do not wish to name them.

Even where information will not be publicly visible, you should **not** name individuals who are not members of the University in your Impacts or Activities, unless you have their specific permission.
to use their names in our system. This is because it would infringe their Data Protection. This doesn’t mean you can’t enter the Impact or Activity, just that you should avoid including an individual’s name. If an individual from outside the University has given you written permission to name them within Pure, attach a copy of this to the record.

If you feel that your Impact is so confidential that you don’t even want the University’s senior managers and RSPO team to be able to view it in a redacted form, please contact RSPO in the first instance to discuss options.

The screenshot above shows the list of confidentiality options available when you add an Impact or Activity to Pure.

Public – Visible in York Research Database and Pure

- For Impacts, this in effect means only visible in Pure because at present, no impacts are being pushed through to the YRD. Selecting this option would allow the Impact to be visible in the YRD if this changed in the future. If you select this option for your Activities, they will be visible now on the YRD.

Campus – DO NOT USE

- Do not select this option, it has no meaning at York.

Pure Users – Visible within Pure only

- This means your Impact or Activity will be visible to other York Pure users.

Confidential – Visible to authorised users only [only available for Impacts]

- This means that only “full-access” Pure editors in the central team, and senior users who have been given the PURE role “Editor of Impact” will be able to see the Impact (some Departments have given this key role to a senior administrator or academic). Other academics will not see it, including other senior colleagues in your Department.

For more information about what is visible in PURE, a user guide is available on the University’s Pure webpages in the ‘Managing content’ section under ‘Managing content (2): Using the York Research Database (YRD)’, at https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/pure/pure-user-guides/
4. Activities

‘Activities’ covers a range of interactions, from awards and conferences, to engaging with schools and membership of advisory committees. The ‘Activities’ module of PURE can be used to record all types of interactions, whether they are in the academic or non-academic arena. The screen shots below indicate the categories of non-academic activity that can be recorded in PURE, with some of the sub-categories.

We recognise that the categories in ‘Activities’ aren’t perfect. Please choose the category that’s the closest fit for you activity, and then ensure that you describe the activity clearly when adding the data to PURE.

Please note that the University routinely monitors and reports on data held in the Activities module, and may also use these as part of the Annual Departmental Research Reports.
How to add an Activity

To add a new activity, click ‘Add new’ on the right hand side of the ‘Personal overview’ page. This will open up a list of options for adding new content.

Click on ‘Activity’ of the left side bar and then click to choose a template type from the middle of the page. Hover over your chosen template on the right side of the page and click ‘Choose’.
Fill in the template, which provides the ‘Metadata’ for your entry. Items marked with a **red asterisk** must be completed. If at all possible, please complete all boxes, as fully as you can, as the usefulness of the system relies on the fullest possible data being entered.

![Metadata template](image)

**Click ‘Save’ to save all changes. Pressing close without saving first will delete your work!**

**Adding Relations [i.e. linking to other Pure content]**

One project or research output can have multiple activities associated with it, so you should create as many activities as necessary and then link them to the Project or Research Output (if relevant). You can also link your Activities to one or more Impacts (if the latter have already been created).

To add a relation to the activity you are creating, use the options under “Relations”, as in this screenshot.

![Relations options](image)
Remember that before you can make ‘relations’ between your Activities and other content, you will need to have added that other content to PURE. For information on how to add publications and other research outputs, a user guide is available on the University’s Pure webpages in the ‘Adding content’ section under ‘Adding content (1): How do I add publications to PURE?’:

https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/pure/pure-user-guides/

Finally, choose the “visibility” option you want for your Activity: do you want it visible in the YRD, or only to other PURE users in the University?

5. Impacts

Please read the “Overview” section (above) before adding an Impact, and be certain about the difference between an “Impact” and an “Activity”. The ‘Impacts’ area should be used to record when something has changed, and something or someone has benefitted, and ideally will include evidence, such as documents and web links. An impact is a change, effect or influence on a non-academic beneficiary [for further information and definitions, see https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/research-impact/impact-definition/].

Please note that the University routinely monitors and reports on data held in the Activities module, and may also use these as part of the Annual Departmental Research Reports.

Key Points:

- One activity is NOT in itself an “Impact”, even if it does have an impact.
- If you can’t fill in most of the boxes in the “Impact” section, then it is possible that what you are recording is not really an Impact – or not yet ready to be recorded as one.
- Most Impacts will have links to one or more Activities, links to one or more projects or outputs, and will be evidenced by one or more attachments.

How to Add an Impact

Remember that before you can make ‘relations’ between your Impact and other content, such as Activities, Projects or Outputs, you will need to have added that other content to PURE. For information on how to add publications and other research outputs, guidance is available in PDF format on the main PURE support pages.

Currently, ‘Impacts’ are not shown in the York Research Database, but this may change in future; however, you can mark your Impact as “internal only” or “confidential” – see section above on Confidentiality for more details.

Click the green ‘Add New’ button in PURE and select ‘Impact’ from the menu. The Impact template looks as follows:
Whilst only the boxes marked with a red asterisk are mandatory, you should aim to enter as many of the boxes as you can.

[1] Impact Status. The options are
  • “In preparation” – at the embryonic stage; you are collecting together evidence and activities to contribute to an impact, but the impact narrative is in its earliest stage of formation.
  • “In progress” – you are in the thick of writing up your impact narrative, and linking it to relevant activities.
  • “Completed” – you have done all you can with this (at least for now) and feel the story of
your impact is complete.

- “Inactive” – you don’t wish to pursue the development of this impact narrative at the present time.

 Note that you can change the status as often as you need to.

[2] Impact Title – Try to make this specific and clear. E.g. “Report on Cheese Production influenced Cheese Board Policy”, rather than “Policy impact”. Including at least an outline of the beneficiaries and the impact in the title is a good start.

[3] Impact Summary – This section should give a short overview of what the impact has been. It should be possible to outline what has changed as a result of the take-up of your research, and who benefited. A good way to approach this section is to give succinct answers to the questions “what has changed” and “who has benefited”? If you can’t answer those, it may be that you need to use the activities module. Please also include timescales or dates involved in your impact, as these aren’t specifically requested elsewhere. (e.g. “the activities leading to the impact largely took place during the second half of 2014”).

[4] Who is Affected – Enter more details about the beneficiaries of your research here, and if possible make it clear how each particular group has been affected (especially if there is more than one group or type of beneficiary).

[5] How did the research contribute – A clear explanation of how the research led to the impact and, where part of a larger body of research, how the research generated in the project made a particular contribution to the impact being achieved. Remember, if possible you should also be adding a “relation” to the specific research project(s) and output(s) involved.

[6] Narrative – Please provide a more detailed overview of your impact to expand on what you put in the summary, ideally in terms that would be suitable for a broad audience (e.g. not using lots of unnecessary jargon) Again, try and focus on what exactly your impact was i.e. what changed as a result of your research and its uptake.

[7] Impact Type and Impact Sector – Click on the ‘Add impact type...’ button, and choose an entry from the drop-down that is most relevant to the ways you believe your research has been, or is being, used. Note that you can repeat this step to add as many types of impact as are appropriate; however, if you are in fact describing more than one impact, you might want to consider creating a separate “Impact” record in Pure for each one.

Then select the most relevant impact sector from the drop-down to show which sector benefited from the impact you are narrating. Note that you can only pick one sector, so if more than one have been affected by the impact, you may wish to consider adding further Impact records in Pure.
Evidence – click the button “add impact evidence” and the following dialogue box will appear:

- Select “Quantitative” or “Qualitative” from the indicator drop-down
- Enter the date or period of the evidence as appropriate (if you select “specific date”, a date box will open up).
- Describe the evidence in the “summary box”; if required, explain why this evidence demonstrates that your impact took place.
- Add any contact information, documents or links that are relevant. Normally, we would expect at least one document or link to be included here as the actual evidence.

The final sections of the Impact template allow you to add the York colleagues involved in the Impact, your organisational unit, any suitable keywords and any further files. In reality, most documents are probably best added as “Evidence”, but there may be times when it is suitable to add further documents or links here.

You should always aim to complete the ‘relations’ section, so that you can relate the impact to relevant research projects, outputs and activities. Ideally, you should not be creating an impact until you have some relevant activities to link it to.

You can set the visibility to whatever is most appropriate – ‘Public’, ‘Backend’ (visible to PURE users within the University) or ‘Confidential’. Highly confidential information that can only be seen by yourself should not be added to PURE all (e.g. where you have a non-disclosure agreement with an external organisation).

Click ‘Save’ to save all changes. Pressing close without saving first will delete your work!