

Preparing for impact in REF2029

Outline and agenda

Full-day (6-hour) session:

Virtual delivery - split over two days

training@fasttrackimpact.com

Fast Track Impact

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Delivered from 2025 by the Institute for Methods Innovation,
a registered non-profit organisation.

Course description

This course will give you everything you need to generate significant and far-reaching impacts from your research and evidence these impacts convincingly. You will gain time-saving methods and tools that will help you plan for impact. You will also learn techniques for monitoring, evaluating and evidencing your impact. Finally, you will receive expert guidance on writing a 4* impact case study, with strategic insights through a practical example. You will have an opportunity to discuss your own case study plans and challenges with colleagues and get expert help from Prof Jensen. As part of the session, you can choose to receive your own hard copy of one of Prof Reed's books, [Impact Culture](#) or [The Research Impact Handbook](#).

Key benefits:

- Think critically about impact in REF to avoid negative unintended consequences and missed opportunities, and build a healthy impact culture in your group.
- Learn how to avoid the number one predictor of low scores in REF impact case studies by distinguishing clearly between engagement and impact.
- Get the latest intelligence on requirements for impact case studies and engagement and impact statements in REF2029.
- Gain clarity on impact priorities and define your impacts in concrete, measurable terms.
- Develop a comprehensive evaluation plan tailored to your objectives.
- Understand the strengths and limitations of key evaluation methods for assessing policy impact.
- Effectively integrate EDIA-related metrics and technology into your evaluations.
- Discover easy and quick-to-use tools to fix problems with significance or reach in case studies.
- Capture compelling evidence to demonstrate impact for multiple purposes effectively.
- Learn how to construct a 4* impact case study, based on research into high versus low-scoring cases in REF2014 and a worked example showing the anatomy of a 4* claim from REF2021.
- Discuss your own impact plans and evidence challenges with colleagues and get advice from Prof Jensen to develop your own REF2029 case study.

At the end of the workshop:

- You receive slides and links to free resources to help you embed impact in your research



- You have the option to make a commitment to an action based on the course and receive a follow-up email from Prof Jensen to check in and help as necessary after a month.
- Prof Jensen and Prof Reed continue to answer all questions from participants via email after the course, guaranteeing a response to all questions within one week.

Indicative agenda

Day 1: Impact evaluation design

Start: 09:30 am (20-minute break included)

Part 1: Thinking critically about impact

- Problems with impact in REF: how can we avoid a REF-shaped impact culture?
- Impact in REF2029: What do we know?
- Presentation followed by quiz and chat: What is impact? What works?
- Tools to fix problems with reach and significance in impact case studies

Part 2: Impact evaluation design

- Preparing your evaluation
 - Defining impact objectives
 - Developing a Theory of Change
 - Developing an evaluation focus
- Designing your evaluation
 - Reviewing the evaluation toolkit
 - Selecting data collection methods

Close: 12:30 pm

Day 2: Evaluating and evidencing impact

Start: 09:30 am (20-minute break included)

Part 1: Evaluating impact

- Making your evaluation ethical
- How to handle personal and sensitive data
- Managing your evaluation data
- Integrating EDIA into your evaluation
- Using technology to evaluate and evidence policy impact

Part 2: Evidencing impact

- How to evidence impact
- Reporting impact evidence
- What makes a 4* case study? Evidence from a quantitative linguistic analysis of high versus low-scoring case studies from REF2014
- Anatomy of a claim: Worked example from a 4* REF2021 case study
- Questions: Bring your case study and specific questions, or just discuss and debate with colleagues

Close: 12:30 pm

About Fast Track Impact

[Fast Track Impact](#) is an international training platform delivered by the [Institute for Methods Innovation](#), a non-profit organisation. Its mission is to change the way busy researchers generate and share knowledge so that their ideas can change the world and they can get their thinking time back.

Fast Track Impact runs training for researchers from every discipline, from PhD students to Professors, from departmental away days to cross-institution training days. It has trained 15,000+ researchers from more than 200 institutions in 55 countries.

About the trainer



Professor Eric A. Jensen

Prof Jensen is a social scientist with a PhD from the University of Cambridge in sociology. He is part-time professor at the University of Warwick, where he has led courses on public engagement with science, science policy, audience research and social research methods (including surveys and statistics). He is also a doctoral research supervisor for the University of Oxford. As a visiting research scientist at the National Center for Supercomputing

Applications at the University of Illinois, Jensen works on a Sloan Foundation-funded project on research software policy.

Prof Jensen has 20+ years of research and practice experience in social research, evaluation, public and policy engagement and science communication. He has delivered hundreds of training workshops on evaluation methods and evidence-based science communication, as well as leading and consulting on projects large and small on public engagement with research, impact evaluation, socially responsible research, and environmental communication. Prof Jensen also serves as an Independent Ethics Mentor for European Commission-funded projects, reviewing data management and ethics planning. He has extensive experience in ethical approval processes in higher education.

What people are saying about this course

"This has been exceptionally useful - thank you!"

"I loved the practical tips and tools, stimulating me to think about how impact can be achieved and evaluated, and what impact actually means."

"Incredibly useful and detailed."

"As an ECR researcher, I know I have to demonstrate impact to progress in my career. However, impact has always felt like something I 'should' be doing. This course reframed the concept and made it into something that I want to do; something that can be exciting and rewarding and meaningful. I was half expecting this session to be dry and boring, but it was quite the opposite! There was plenty of space for discussion and I came away feeling much more confident about the prospect of making an impact. The resources and ideas for how to track and manage impact were particularly helpful and made the concept less abstract."

"I liked the emphasis on persistence and the ways in which someone can chase up impact statements and persevere with the ongoing relationship; also, the distinction between engagement and impact. It was very well explained."

"Talking through actual examples was immensely useful."

"I will definitely take a more methodical approach to designing and developing impact. I will also start to better record evidence as I go along."

"I liked the pace of presenting and asking the audience to comment on questions in the chat, giving us some time to reflect. Great use of the online delivery method."

"There were a lot of personal-focused discussions, which were interesting"

"As a practitioner first and foremost, impact has always been my driving force. The idea of systematically recording that impact is new to me and something I will now address."