

## **Recognising the Diversity of Engagement Activities and Impact Indicators for the Humanities and Social Sciences (within the context of standardizing assessment).**

For the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Creative Arts it is imperative to include engagement activities with non-direct financial contribution and/or benefit. Similarly, Impact measures must recognize that academic research in these disciplines is less quantifiable (in terms of formal numerical/economic indicators) than other disciplines, and thereby requires more detailed narrative evidence.

In the current consultation paper there is a lack of recognition of the value of public engagement and the importance of building an informed public with access to research findings translated for different audiences and community sectors (examples include policy reports; arts festivals; public talks; translation of research for public and commercial media venues; exhibition curation; delivery of research to community groups/websites; informal partnerships with industry/Not-for-Profit organizations and Charities/NGOs/government bodies/cultural institutions). Fostering a well-informed public with access to accurate information about, and specialist analysis of, the social, cultural and political worlds that frame our collective existence is among the central ethical remits of humanities and social sciences scholarship. We should be wary of unwittingly creating systems that make that very significant type of value generation invisible or difficult to recognize.

Given the increasing importance of trusted forms of knowledge in this “fake news” era, we believe that it is vital that universities continue to work hard to engage public audiences across different community settings. As such we strongly advocate that public engagement without a direct economic value or directly quantifiable impact be recognized as vital to building a properly informed democracy and society. We recognize the challenges posed by EI narratives, but strongly support increased flexibility in measuring EI, and recognition of the dynamic and often unpredictable relationship between Engagement and Impact.

Related to this issue is the contraction of news media and the significant changes underway in the audio-visual industries (accelerated by the pandemic), namely the increasing dependence of production industries - notably in music, TV drama and film – on increasingly centralised streaming services. This increased concentration increases the distance between researchers and decision makers and significantly slows impacts on creative practice, commissioning policies and media policy.

There is also limited recognition in the Consultation Paper of the need for longer timeframes for Impact to be measured. While some disciplines can readily measure impact in the short term and within the ERA cycle, for the social sciences and humanities, impact may take much longer to be fully recognized. We are concerned that this may skew new research funding toward short term gains rather than substantial longer-term outcomes with value for the broad public good, which take time to be fully measured.

The Consultation Paper also makes no mention of the tension between the ideal of public access to knowledge and the EI indicators that propose to valorise it.