

In the wake of the REF, LSE launches impact website to demonstrate how research can make a difference.

LSE blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/12/18/lse-impact-website-case-studies-ref2014/

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*Love it or loathe it, impact is fast becoming the buzz word in UK academia. To coincide with the release of the REF2014 results on 18 December 2014, which will demonstrate how well (or otherwise) UK academia is creating impact from its research beyond the academy, LSE is joining the growing number of UK higher education institutions to showcase its own research impact via a new section of its website. **Jo Hemmings** in LSE's Research Division explains why the School has created an [impact website](#) and what the School hopes to gain by this.*



As part of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, participating higher education institutions were required to submit impact case studies showcasing how research undertaken by their academic and research staff has had impact in the 'real world' from 2008-2013.

For its part, LSE submitted 66 of these impact case studies on a surprisingly large range of topics. Producing these has been a lengthy, eye-opening and, at times, challenging process. We had to first unpick what was meant by impact, then identify the various ways that LSE's research has influenced or brought about changes that matter with individuals, groups, communities, institutions, countries and globally, and agree how best to prove these links. For some case studies this meant seeking confirmation from beneficiaries that the research had resulted in real changes, for others we had to identify the ways that policymakers had used the findings to support their decisions.

It turns out there are a myriad ways that LSE's research is being used to benefit society, and we found that LSE research has had impact far beyond its traditional social science base. Furthermore, the REF impact case studies are only the tip of the iceberg of what really goes on in places like LSE, and as we move into 2015 and beyond, LSE research will only continue to have impact.

So the idea of an [impact website](#) was born – as a way to showcase the many ways that LSE is benefitting society and to open the School's work up to people who, while they are interested, may not necessarily be experts in the research discipline themselves. Our aim was to create an innovative, creative and contemporary online resource which will enable people to easily find, browse and understand how LSE research has made a difference to people's lives.

Improving weather forecasts to avert disruptions, damage and disaster

Read the case study +

Wider social investment - influencing productivity

View case studies on this theme +

Creating a safer world for children at risk

Read case study +

Human welfare impacts

View case studies on this theme +

Many of the case studies are accompanied by short videos in a range of styles, including animations, 'talking heads' and more light-hearted features, and provide easily digested evidence of how LSE's research is making a difference. Professor Leonard Smith's video on [improving weather forecasts](#) to avert disruptions, damage and disaster demonstrates what LSE has long argued, that all sciences need social science. LSE has a long history of engagement: Professor Nicholas Barr's video on [ensuring access to university education](#) without breaking the bank showcases how his research going back to the 1980s is still relevant and having impact today (and check out the vintage footage of him from the 1980s). 'To know the causes of things' is LSE's moto, which is still as relevant today as when it was penned in 1895: Professor Paul Preston's ground-breaking research into the [Spanish Civil War](#) is beautifully documented in his emotive video on seeking justice for forgotten victims of the Spanish Civil War. Contemporary and emerging issues are also tackled: Professor Sonia Livingstone's video on [protecting and empowering children in digital environments](#) gets to grips with the thorny issue of how to balance risks and opportunities for under 18s in the digital age.

For those who want to delve more deeply, each impact case study also has lists of relevant resources and downloadable content, including links to the underpinning research and policy documents which were influenced by the research. We also hope to encourage potential research funders, donors and collaborators to make contact with individual academics, departments, centres or central School resources to explore ways of supporting research at the School.

The website also aims to encourage exploration of other School activities and research outputs, for example the [LSE Experts Directory](#), [LSE Research Online](#), [LSE blogs](#), [public events](#), [videos and podcasts](#). Individual case studies featured on the website can be shared, and disseminated through social media. LSE will be monitoring its success in disseminating information about LSE's research impact to its target audiences and driving new traffic to the website.

For its launch on 18 December, the website will focus on the 66 impact case studies submitted by LSE to the REF, but we aim to refresh it frequently with new content that continues to showcase the impact of LSE's cutting edge research. We hope that everyone who visits the site will find it informative and welcome feedback and suggestions

for future development.

Note: This article gives the views of the authors, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [Comments Policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

About the Author

Jo Hemmings is Research Policy Manager at the London School of Economics. She manages the School's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) on behalf of the REF Strategy Committee and is secretary to the School's Research Committee. She also oversees the work of the Research Policy team – which looks after the Research Ethics Committee and the research ethics policy – and the School's research impact strategy, with particular emphasis on the impact elements of the REF.

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