

# Engaging researchers with impact for the right reasons

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New research published in *British Politics* explores how the political roots of the impact agenda may have shaped early perceptions of the research impact among academics. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of interviews with 51 academics from UK and Australian between 2011-2013, the research explores the challenges of engaging with an impact agenda.

## Key Findings:

- It describes how some researchers perceive impact to negatively affect funding, motivation and the quality of research, skewing funding towards certain disciplines.
- Where impact was seen to 'direct' or 'drive' research, some academics suggested they would re-orientate their work, often at the expense of quality.
- The research suggests that extrinsic motivations for impact may be 'crowding out' intrinsic motivations of academics, demotivating those who were already motivated to achieve impact for their own reasons.



## Actions:

1. As REF2021 continues to externalise and arguably instrumentalise the motives of researchers, professionals whose role it is to support academics need to continue to find new ways of incentivising impact from the bottom up by getting to know the wide range of motives behind researcher's decisions to engage with impact, led by researcher champions.
2. In doing so, researchers can be supported to consider why they are doing what they are doing as researchers, and remain focussed on their own intrinsic motives, whatever they may be. Crucially, if a researcher is not personally motivated by the idea of making a difference, then this must be understood and supported as well.
3. Taking a bespoke approach to impact that recognises and respects diversity is key to maintaining and improving morale. Recognise that each researcher will have a different mix of motivations, and tap into those intrinsic motivations to incentivise engagement with impact.



## Read the full article:

Chubb J, Reed MS (2018).

*The politics of research impact: implications for research funding, motivation and quality. British Politics*