

# BMS IMPACT INQUIRY

Results of May 1st, 2023

## BACKGROUND

The BMS Impact Inquiry ran over the course of April 2023 and was a policy instrument that helps the BMS faculty board and the BMS Research Support Office to answer two main questions: 1) what does impact mean for us - to provide a reference framework in developing a shared vision and 2) what support do our researchers need - to set up new tools and other types of support, or work on getting existing support to the right people. Additionally, the inquiry served as a launching platform for a series of focus groups, where existing tools can be tested.

## REACHING THE FACULTY

The inquiry was promoted through the research sections, news items on the service portal and mentioned in numerous other meeting formations.

**All in all, these efforts led to 48 valid<sup>1</sup> responses, a number we are very grateful for!**

As seen in this report, these responses come from different sections and researchers in different roles, hopefully giving a nuanced and complete perspective on the topic of impact.

## WHAT'S NEXT

This report presents the results of the inquiry, and the accompanying poster summarises these results. The results are input for the faculty board and research support office, in strategy making and the development of (new) support offer. We also hope that the results inspire you to get in discussion with your colleagues, and hopefully makes "impact" more tangible. This report will also be shared with colleagues at other faculties that are working on the topic of impact, to share best practices and learn from their approaches.

## THANK YOU!

We want to thank all respondents for their time and for sharing their ideas and perspectives. Going through the results was inspiring and activating – the passion of BMS researchers shines through. In this impact discussion we do not start from zero, on the contrary, we have the teams, the networks, and the ideas to make a change happen, which is clearly visible in the responses.

Enjoy reading! For any questions or further comments, contact [Tom Boogerd](#).

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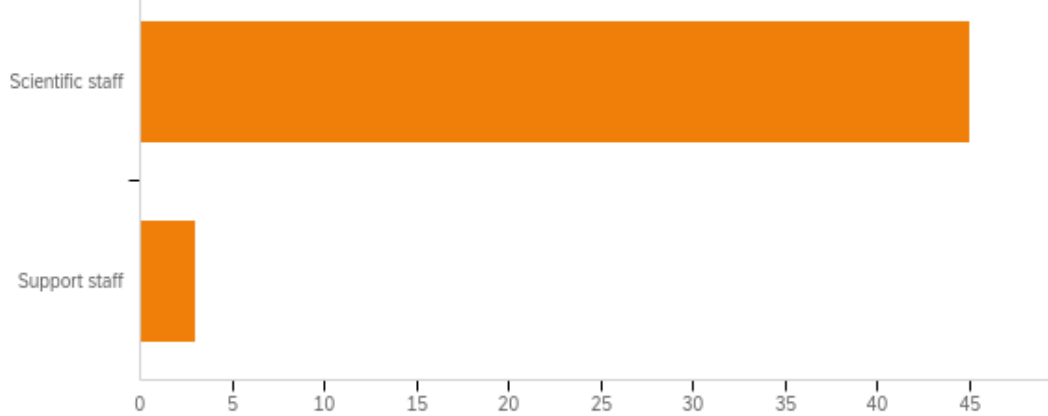
<sup>1</sup> A response is considered "valid" if the respondent consented with the privacy statement. Incomplete responses are valid, as the questions in this inquiry were not mandatory, except for giving consent.

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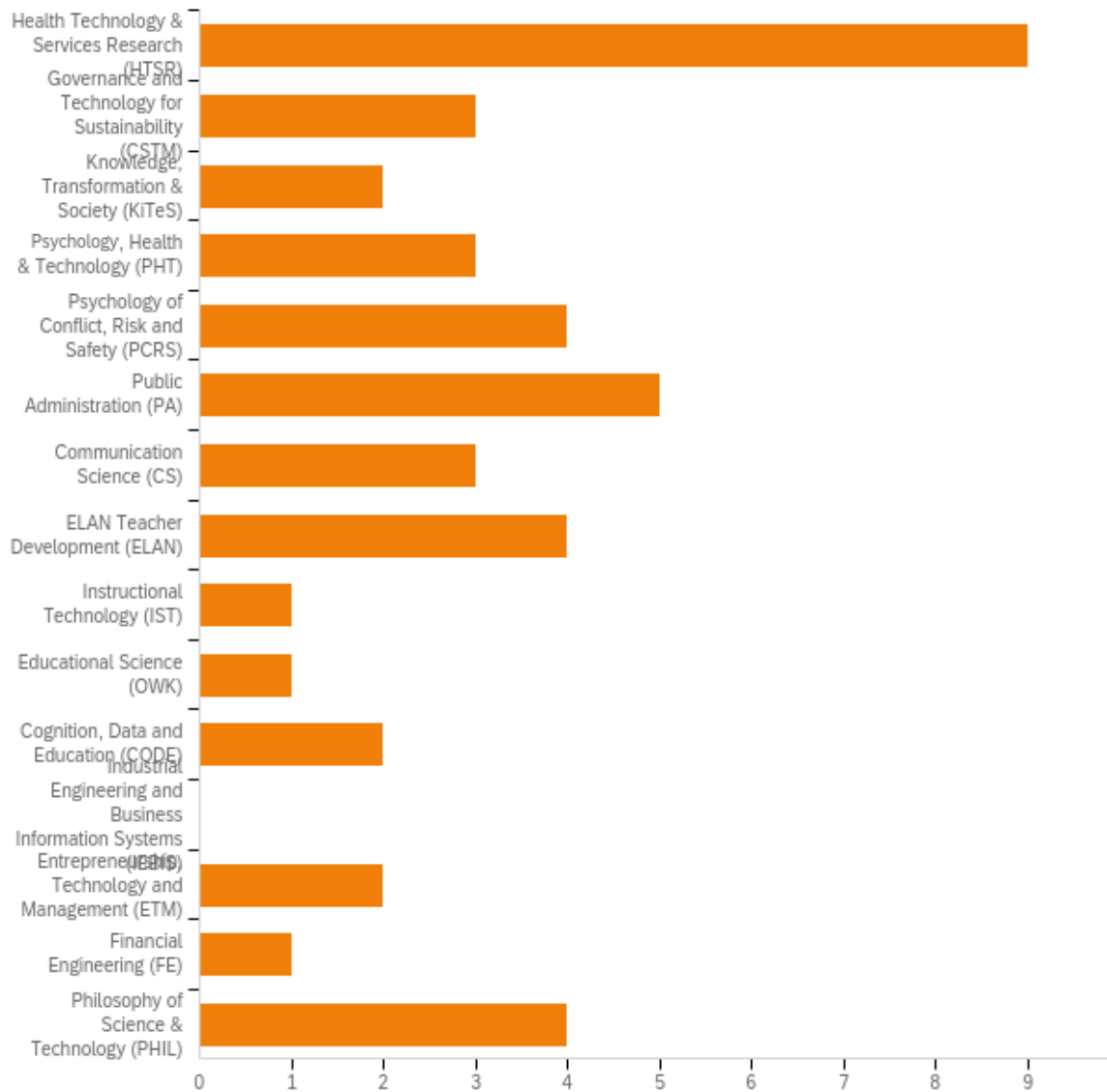
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## ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

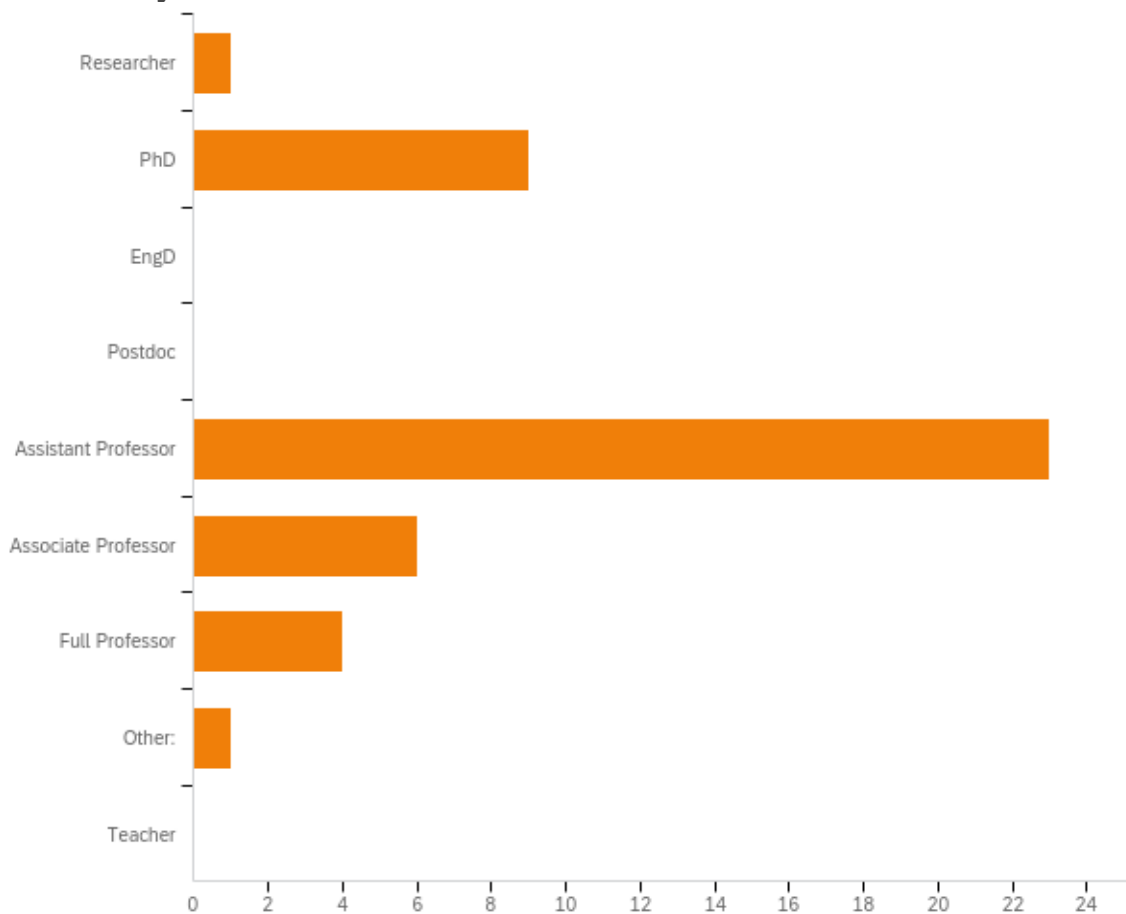
### Q1. Are you scientific staff or support staff?



### Q2. What section are you part of?



### Q3. What is your role?



*Other:* Implementation Specialist

### Q4. Which service are you part of?

Of the respondents that are support staff, one respondent is part of the Education Service Centre, one is part of the Research Support Office.

#### REPRESENTATIVENESS OF RESPONDENTS

As seen in these figures, a vast majority of the respondents is scientific staff. Nearly all sections are represented, with HTSR being very strongly represented. Most responses come from researchers in the assistant professor role.

While we are delighted with 48 responses, this is not representative for a faculty of ~600 staff members. However, the responses can echo a shared sentiment and above all are a great source of inspiration and knowledge to build on.

Keep these two factors in mind while reading the rest of the report.

## RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON IMPACT AND SUPPORT NEED

### Q5. What does impact mean to you?



World cloud generated based on the responses to question 5, omitting the terms “make”, “impact”, “e.g.”, “e.g”, “mean” and “means” to filter content in the common sentence structures “making impact through X”, or “to me, impact means Y”.

The word cloud above already shows some key terms that respondents use in their answers. When looking at the responses, a few things stand out.

#### SOCIETAL VERSUS ACADEMIC IMPACT

The respondents often **differ between academic and societal impact**, not as mutually exclusive, but rather that different goals and activities are related to these two “streams” of impact. Academic impact is often coupled to the “traditional” pipeline of research, paper publication and conference visits to disseminate knowledge. Societal impact is described much broader, but certainly not as replacing academic, but seen as going beyond the initial pipeline. Respondents also mention contributing to societal challenges as a way to make impact, but that good research and thus academic impact remains fully valid.

#### EFFECT AND CHANGE

Another common thread in respondent’s definitions is naming the **effect of their research, or the change brought about by their research**. These statements range from rather neutral terms (difference, change, effect) to also value statements (provide “added value”, have a “positive effect”). For instance: *“The way and amount in which your actions change something (for the better).”* Other respondents make this effect more concrete by mentioning a tangible effect, or a **measurable effect**, like *“Impact means that there is a measurable effect of an action/innovation/intervention on indicators that are relevant to society.”*

Respondents’ quotes are marked *italic*

## THE “REAL WORLD”

In line with the proposed difference between academic and societal impact, respondents indicate that impact is made when research influences “**the real world**”. Other terms used are “practical” and “applied”, all signaling **applications outside of academia**. An example: “*Research's real world influence on individuals, society, politics, etc.*”. Activities to reach the outside world are for instance through policy impact and participating in public discourse, as illustrated by “*It means that the research we are doing is included in decision-making, policy and public discourse beyond the university.*”. The next paragraphs elaborate on this idea.

## DOING IT FOR SOMEONE AND DOING IT TOGETHER

Many participants describe a **user, client, patient, or stakeholder** in their response. These are all different word choices to describe who they are doing their research for, whose lives they want to make better. For instance, “*(...) health outcomes of patients are improved (...)*”, “*That our teacher education program leads to skilled teachers*” and “*It should make and keep our healthcare effective, of high quality, accessible for every individual*”. It is described how the outcomes of one’s research, when finding its way to the “real world”, can better someone’s life.

Respondents don’t just describe making impact *on* someone, they also describe **making impact with others**. This can be within a consortium, with partners from industry, or the user. One respondent illustrates this, writing “*being a motor of interdisciplinary and academic/other stakeholder collaborations (e.g. consortia related to a research topic)*”.

## IMPACT THROUGH TEACHING

Respondents also make clear that they see **teaching and passing their expertise on to their students as a mode of making impact**, e.g., “*that my teaching and supervision provides students with insights they can use in their future work*” and “*contributing to student's personal and professional development*”. Thesis supervision is also mentioned as a way to make impact. Students are included in descriptions of sharing research results within the university.

## SCIENCE COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

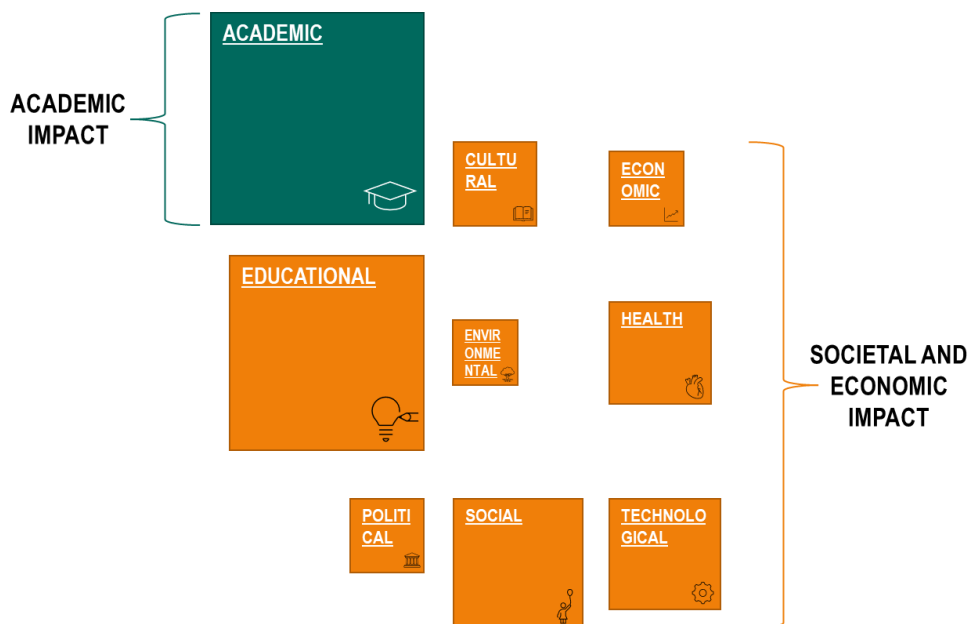
A key means to reach all activities described above is **to be visible and communicating one’s research outcomes with the outside world and reaching stakeholders**. This communication should be done in a way that is understandable and accessible for a broad audience, as mentioned: “*(...) providing useful answers in an understandable form to people who need that knowledge/information (...)*” and “*In bringing research to the public, this may also involve visibility of research.*”. Being visible and reaching an audience is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to make the impact that a researcher wants to make.

## Q6. What efforts do you already take to reach that impact?

The figure displayed here<sup>2</sup> serves as inspiration.



Respondents roughly responded in two ways to question 6, with the vast majority following the nine types presented above. From these responses, the figure below is constructed, where the area of a block is relative to how many of the respondents of this survey, indicated efforts for that type of impact. **As this question was treated more in a checkbox manner, it is difficult to define a set of activities per type of impact.** Still, it can be seen that most respondents connect their activities to academic, educational and social impact.



The other respondents used their own terminology. Here, some key activities are (again) involving stakeholder from the field, like practitioners in the healthcare sector, or networking and setting up network with citizens. Visibility and findability were also named, by posting on LinkedIn, writing blogs, and publishing Open Access.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the [Research Impact Toolkit](#) of University of Dublin.

## Q7. What activities would you like to do, but are you not doing yet?

The responses mainly indicate activities along three lines.

### OUTREACH AND VISIBILITY

In the responses to question 5 (what does impact mean to you?) participants described the importance of being visible and communicating research outcomes with the outside world, or an important stakeholder. Yet, as seen in the responses to this question, this is exactly an activity that respondents want to do more: *“I want to be better able to disseminate my research findings into practice through white papers, blogs, talks, etc.”*

Respondents describe that they wish to be more visible, but also to better **reach their target audience** instead of just a broad audience: *“Write more popular articles for professional journals, news papers or policy journals.”* Writing for **popular media** is often mentioned, also as a way to **participate in public discourse**. The goal of this visibility varies, on the one hand to find practical application of research, but also to **raise awareness** for certain topics: *“Reach out to the general public to enhance awareness of the need for structured and transparent decision making on the reimbursement and implementation of health innovations to keep our healthcare system sustainable”.*

### POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING

Respondents specifically mention the wish to **let their research outcomes influence policy and decision-making processes**, e.g., *“I would like to contribute to assisting political leaders in understanding and working with artificial intelligence and machine learning.”*. In their answers, the point above is applied as a way to reach policy makers, and then letting the research outcomes impact policy. One respondent highlights that this should not be a one-way street, stating *“And the other way around, trying to **include policy questions better in my research.**”*

### COLLABORATION WITH NON-ACADEMIC PARTNERS

Respondents also wish to **collaborate more with non-academic partners**, described by *“Consulting non-profits, NGOs, collectives, etc.”*, *“I would like to make a stronger contribution on environmental issues and I would like to engage more strongly with companies and the public”* and *“I would like to involve teachers and schools during research activities more and more systematically than I do now”*. This also relates to question 5 where making impact is seen as something to do together.



## Q8. Which support do you need if you were to start doing these activities?

Whereas question 5 and 7 led to a number of key observations when looking the results, this question has more split responses. Some respondents request time and appreciation for impact-related activities, other hands-on support, some want training, and some want information. Roughly 6 needs can be identified:

### TIME (AND RECOGNITION THEREOF!)

“Time” was mentioned, but not as an empty and easy response. Rather, respondents are realistic about their **workload**, also taking teaching responsibilities into account, one respondent worded it: *“Finding ways to integrate [the activities] in my workload and not doing them completely on a voluntary basis”*. This **integration of time spent on impact related activities** should not only be seen in the workload, but also in our systems: *“[Facilitation in] time, I spend a lot of time on management and fighting [with] our systems (e.g., AfAS and Unit4)”*.

Even more important than the availability of time, is the **recognition of time spent**. This ties into the recognition and reward movement, if we want impact, we should recognise efforts spent on this: *“Perhaps more recognition for these kind of public outreach activities (blogs, podcasts, opinion pieces, social media) would help to see it as a real/important part of the job”*.

### REACHING POLICY MAKERS

Some respondents ask for **tools and support in reaching policy and drafting policy advice**, for instance *“Helping to identify how to reach policymakers and society; what are tools to use, what kind activities are effective in this regard?”*.

### REACHING THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Another wish is support in reaching the general public, e.g., *“Support and tools/platforms for reaching the general public”*. Tools and support are mentioned, but often not specified. One example mentioned is **videos for external use**. Here, time matters too: *“Time and training to start creating materials suitable to communicate to practice”*

### ORGANISATIONAL AND EVENT SUPPORT

Respondents also wish for **hands-on support in event organisation**, to foster collaboration and involve partners, e.g.: *“facilitation of events/meetings with stakeholders outside the university to work on pressing environmental issues”* and *“Workshops and event support”*.

### LEARNING FROM/WITH PEERS

While some requested support is personal, respondents also value in **learning from others and learning together**. For instance: *“I would need to have more time to spend developing these activities, within a group of likeminded people.”* and *“Expertise of colleagues on education and communication”*. In general, best practices can be shared for the points described above.

### MAKING EXISTING OPTIONS VISIBLE

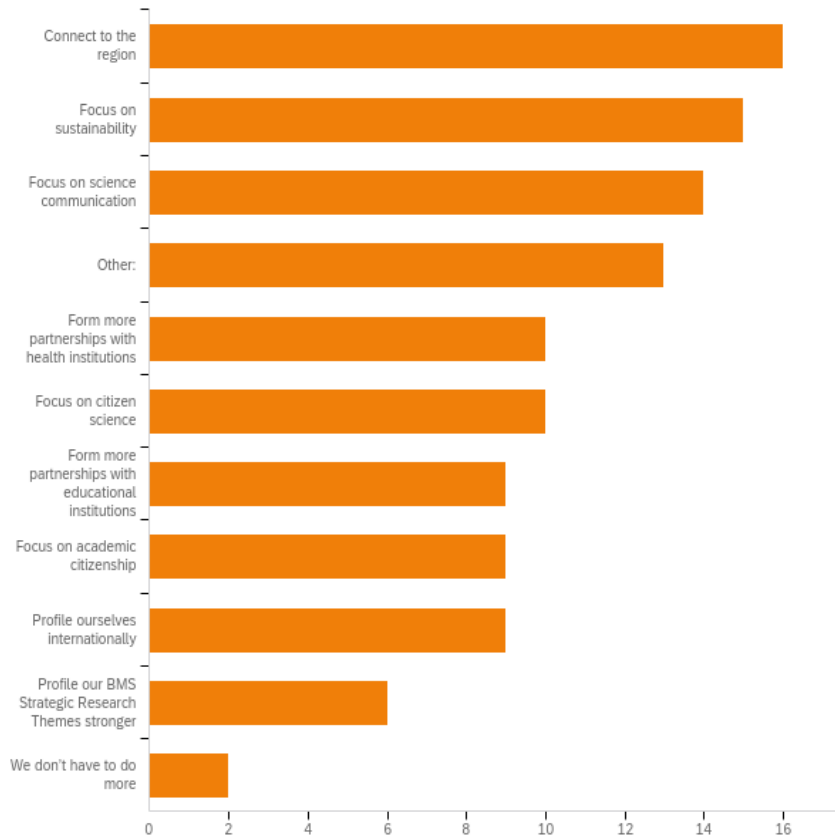
Respondents lastly indicate a need for an **overview of existing partners or making current best practices or support visible**. E.g., *“Events with or lists of people in relevant organisations seeking research collaborators”* and *“Connections to groups that already have platforms where I can publish”*. This can also be interpreted in a general sense: *“maybe a short video to help us understand best practices for achieving impact”*.

## ZOOMING OUT TO BMS LEVEL AND LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

### Q9. What could BMS do more?

This question does give an indication what BMS could do more of, but there is no response that has significantly more votes than the others. It is interesting that “connecting to the region” is not something that was explicitly visible in the responses to the previous questions. Sustainability, on the other hand, is someone expected as a growth area. At question 6, “environmental” impact was not very present, which could mean that it’s an area for improvement. The requested focus on science communication is evident, given the importance of outreach and visibility described in earlier questions.

#### “Select three actions/activities we could do more.”



From the “other” responses, the need for collaboration with the “outside world” in the broad sense becomes visible, including charities and NGOs, and governmental organisations. Focussing on visibility of research(ers) through UT media is also named, as is visibility of individuals but also research teams. Lastly, strengthening connections is given as input too, both between faculties, and with civic society.

**Q10. We are keen to learn from your work.**

**“Could you already share an impact narrative, impact story, or impact case you have worked on earlier?”**

At the time of composing this report, the shared work is still being analysed.

**Q11. Do you have anything else you wish to share?**

**“Success stories, worries, compliments, nuances, all is welcome.”**

From the open comments, two sentiments are shared that we want to acknowledge and take seriously.

**TIME, DOING MORE, AND EMPLOYEE WELLBEING**

The first sentiment are the worries about workload and always having to do more. **We hear you.**

We received feedback on question 9 of this inquiry (“what could BMS do *more* of”), and in general, that impact should not be pushed as something completely new and something extra. This is a valid point, and it is not the aim to treat it as extra work, and especially not as something new. We are inspired by all the efforts that are already being taken and all the lives being bettered as a result of BMS research. We are therefore also glad that the recognition and rewards movement is already pushing for the recognition of various (ongoing) efforts, making societal impact is one of them. And of course, we will ensure that employee wellbeing is key in further decision making.

**MEASUREMENTS AND INDICATORS**

A second sentiment is the push for clarity on measurements and indicators. This is echoed through an open comment, but also in responses to other questions. This topic is on the agenda, both now and later. Right now, we are seeing what impact indicators are used, at other faculties, other institutions, and previous research evaluations. Later, we will work on indicators that fit BMS specific research and related activities. This together should help us build a system that can not only be used to direct impact efforts, but also evaluate those fairly and transparently.

## FOCUS GROUPS AND COFFEE MOMENTS

### Q12. Are you interested in any of these focus groups or to plan a coffee moment?

Each focus group received some interest, enough to start organising them. More details will be shared on the times and dates soon. The coffee moments will be planned.

