Achieving Impact from your research
through working with the School Sector

Contents:

Working with the school sector can provide a clear and effective route to delivering impact from your research. You could work directly with schools, or collaborate with external partners – such as charities, creative practitioners, or museums - to support them to engage with this audience.

Why share your research in this way?

There are a broad range of reasons to share specific, current research with teachers and school students:

- Raise the profile of your discipline and its enquiries, benefits and applications, as well as of research activity and university study more generally.
    - Encourage more students to pursue your subject at school and university level
    - Nurture public interest in your discipline and research area - long-term benefits for exposure, resources and engagement

- Contribute to boosting academic attainment – a government priority right now, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic
    - Use your expertise for social good
    - Contribute to improving social mobility and the cultural and economic health of society

- Help to adequately prepare students for the depth and rigour of Higher Education
    - Schools and educationalists place particular emphasis on fostering critical thinking and metacognition, skills which university researchers are well-placed to model and support
    - 'Invest in' the next generation of undergraduate students and future researchers

- Increase and enrich students' cultural and knowledge capital - key factors in progression to, and success at, Higher Education and in adult life generally
    - Support students from disadvantaged backgrounds
    - Provide 'hot knowledge' and role modelling/mentorship for higher education

- Encourage interest in your subject and undergraduate uptake
    - This can positively impact funding priorities later down the line

- Influence the curriculum
    - Ensure that curriculum content and academic skills are informed by the latest research
    - Participate in and contribute to government/societal education goals, such as decolonising curricula
    - Support teachers with subject-specific CPD

- Work with and understand an audience outside of mainstream academia

- o   Get to know a different set of priorities and challenges
- o   Adapt your communication for a different user

- 'Give back' to education and/or support those with less educational privilege or confidence

***How* can researchers have an impact on the school sector?**

The changes or benefits your research can have when working with the school sector will generally fall into the following four areas:
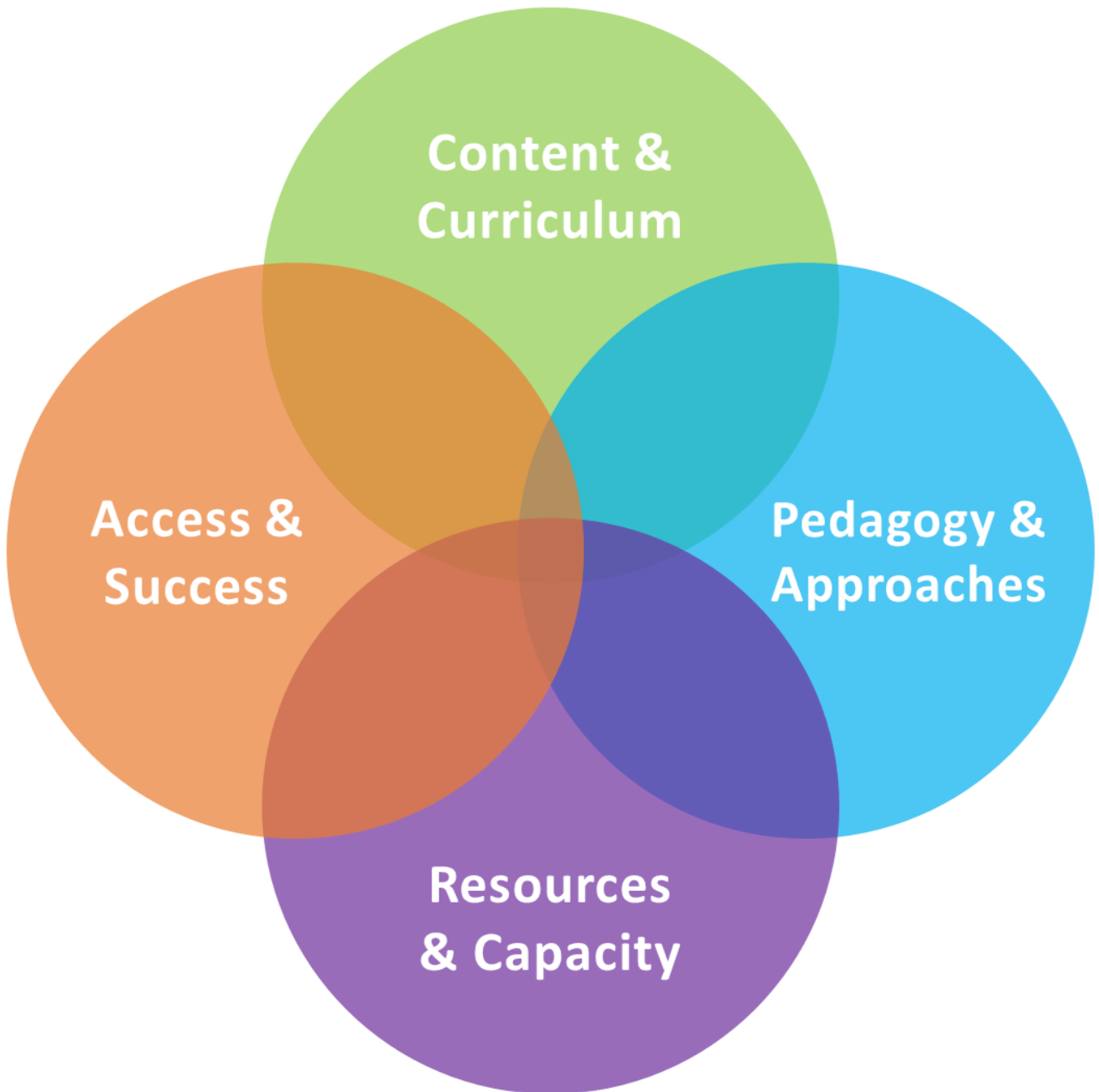
Content and Curriculum:

- Adding to, updating or improving subject content
  - e.g., redressing neglected topics; providing further case studies for exams; incorporating new research findings into existing topics

- Provide subject material for enrichment
  - Neglected areas of study; PSHEC & Citizenship; provide material to help address the arising challenges of modern life (e.g., life on social media)

- Provide material for stretch and challenge (support more able students)

- Provide subject-specialist CPD for teachers

Access and Success:

- Widening participation

- Supporting and boosting attainment

- Supporting students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEN/D)

- Skills development
  - Academic, subject-specific, transferable, or career-oriented

- Stretch and challenge
  - Attainment, progression, and aspirations of more able students

- Career support
  - Skills and information

- Progression
  - To A-Level; to higher education

- Pastoral support, wellbeing, and mental health

Resources and Capacity-building:

- Teaching materials
  - Textbooks, visual media, gamification

- Facilities
  - Specialist equipment available on campus - laboratories, media labs, libraries, performance spaces, etc.

- Technology and innovation
  - Accessibility, participation, and engagement

- Operations and logistics

Pedagogy and Approaches:

- Curriculum delivery and/or new perspectives on existing content

- Teaching methodologies

- Research-informed teaching
  - Cognitive strategies, participation

- Practice as research

- Teacher CPD and teacher training

Challenges and Considerations

Whilst working with schools is a rewarding and effective way of practically applying your research findings, there are some common challenges to consider when engaging or building a relationship with this audience. Indeed, there remain many barriers to schools (teachers) and universities (academics and others) working together, including cultural, logistical, and structural barriers, the speed and nature of the changes in the school sector, and issues to do with knowledge definition and creation. However, some of these challenges can be anticipated and planned for:

Cost and resources	State-funded secondary and primary schools have extremely limited and restricted budgets, and typically cannot pay for extra-curricular activities. Creating fees that may be directed to parents and carers could make your activity needlessly exclusive to some students (which also limits its impact, particularly if there is a widening participation dimension to what you are aiming to achieve). Therefore, think carefully about what your activity, event or resources will cost, and how you will fund them. It is also worthwhile thinking about what existing resources the school might have that you could make use of - from flipchart paper and felt-tip pens, to microscopes or AV equipment. Alternatively, could you bring students on to campus to make use of any equipment or facilities there?
Safeguarding and Data Protection	It is important to give due consideration to both safeguarding and data protection when working with children and young or vulnerable adults. If you do not have prior experience in these areas, we would recommend seeking support from the Widening Participation and Outreach team, who will be able to advise you. You may be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS check - formerly called a Criminal Records Bureau or CRB check) before being allowed to work with school students or access a school site. You may not be *required* to get one; however, in this case you will not be allowed to be with students unsupervised by someone who *has* undergone a DBS check. Even with a DBS check, some schools have their own policy stipulating that external visitors are never to be unsupervised or unchaperoned when on school site or in the presence of students. It is worth noting that most external organisations - such as education charities - will require you to get a separate DBS check specifically to work with them and their pupils, and some schools may require this, too; therefore, if you already have an existing DBS check, you may be required to get another. Similarly, schools and organisations that work with children

	and young people often require DBS checks to be redone regularly if you work with them consistently or over a long period, or to have been undertaken recently (e.g., every two years/within the last two years).
	If you think you will be working with schools or organisations that work with children and/or young or vulnerable adults regularly or over an extended period, it might be worthwhile registering for the DBS Update Service.
	We would recommend that you carry your DBS certificate at all times when visiting a school site or running an activity with a group of students.
	Instead of or in addition to a DBS check, some schools may insist on anyone who comes into contact with their students going through internal safeguarding procedures and/or training. You may also be required to show and carry photo ID when on school site or working with a school group, and even with a DBS check a school may still insist that you are supervised at all times when working with students.
	You should be familiar with all aspects of GDPR when working with external stakeholders, but especially with minors. Think carefully about the sort of data you are accumulating from any children or young people who are working with, and whether it is strictly necessary for you to have. If you are going to conduct any research using data gathered from your activities, then this will be subject to ethical approval.
	We would recommend that you don't have direct contact (via phone, email or social media) with students or their parents/carers wherever possible (for most schools this would be a requirement of working with their students anyway). This is best practice and safeguards everyone involved. If possible, communications should go through teachers themselves and students should not be given your direct contact details (beware of emails being forwarded or people being copied in to replies!).
	If conducting activities online or remotely, give due consideration to additional aspects of safeguarding and data protection presented by the online realm.
	Make sure you ask a school who their Designated Safeguarding Lead is, or who you should contact in the event of a welfare concern or student disclosure.
Teacher time	When planning activities for or in collaboration with schools, be sensitive to teacher workload. Think carefully about any preparation or administrative

	time your activity might take on the teacher's part, and consider how you can limit this where possible. This will help to onboard teachers, for whom working with you will be an additional demand on their time.
Getting 'sign-off' for time off-timetable	Even if a teacher you are connecting or collaborating with is keen for their students to participate in your activity, they will still be required to get sign-off from their Senior Leadership Team before being allowed to take students off timetable (both off and on school site). This is increasingly challenging for many schools, who are already stretched in order to meet the demands of the mandatory curriculum (particularly for Key Stages sitting national exams); these constraints have only become worse for many schools following the COVID-19 pandemic due to the time - and resources - required for curriculum catch-up, particularly in compulsory subjects (English, Maths and Science) and in preparation for national exams. All this means you need to think carefully about why schools might and should want to engage with your research - both to make working with you as useful and appealing as possible, but also to help teachers make a convincing case to their Senior Leadership.
Timing	There are certain times of the academic year in which schools will have other or additional priorities which will take precedent over working with you, and will also mean that their time and resources are already stretched - for example, during national exam season. Certain year groups may be more difficult to access than others at certain times of the year, and teachers may be busy with extra marking or coursework moderation. Equally, there are other points in the school year in which teachers would welcome additional enrichment opportunities, and certain year groups (namely, Years 7-9 at secondary school) who are less constrained by national assessment.
Getting student 'buy in'	Think carefully about how you will get student 'buy in' for your activity - particularly when working with secondary school age - and what you will do if students are reluctant to engage or seem disinterested. Why should they care about your work? How much of your session plan hinges on them participating enthusiastically? The same goes for the local community the school serves, as well as students' families: why should they care that their children are engaging

	with you? What would it be helpful to know about the local community before working with a particular school?
Every school is different	Every school is different – in terms of their ethos, their student and local community, their needs and aims, their safeguarding requirements, whether they would like to co-create or be more 'passive' in their interaction with you, etc. Make sure you ask all necessary questions in advance, and get to know each school and your teacher champions on an individual level so that you can translate your work as seamlessly as possible.

Tips and Recommendations

Consider the following aspects when planning activities aimed at schools:

Make it worthwhile

Sharing research with schools is often considered a low-effort, 'easy win' when it comes to engagement-type activity. But school students shouldn't be considered a 'captive' audience, nor their teachers 'desperate' for any form of enrichment universities are willing to offer. Whilst teachers most often are keen for their students to get a taster of Higher Education or be exposed to the latest research, they are still in a position to be judicious as to what this looks like. As we have already seen, time 'off timetable' is difficult to secure and often has to be justified to senior leadership. Furthermore, a negative or disenchanting encounter with Higher Education - due to inaccessible or poorly-judged content and uninspiring delivery - could have real detrimental effects on students' perceptions and aspirations.

Sharing your research with school students shouldn't be viewed as an exercise in 'dumbing down' or recycling hackneyed content. Rather, thinking about how to convey the findings and implications of your research to this kind of audience should get you thinking about how to make it relevant, accessible, and interactive, and often yields useful insights about your work for you as the researcher, too!

Make it meaningful

Similarly, try to avoid a 'helicopter approach' where possible – rocking up for a one-hour talk, only to disappear and never engage with that school or those students again. In order to achieve meaningful impact, we need to consider how to sustain our interactions with the school sector, how to make such interactions feasible for schools themselves, and how we can tap into what schools actually need/want from us.

Get an advocate in school

Try to connect with an appropriate champion who can advocate for your work school-side and with who you can build a reciprocal, collaborative relationship to ensure that your work continues to

meet the real needs to teachers and students. This person can also act as a gateway to other teachers, and even contacts in other schools.

Try to fit in with the individual school
Each time you work with a particular school or teacher, make sure to accommodate their needs with regards to timings, school ethos, facilities and resources, and aims for the collaboration. Some aspects of your delivery will translate school to school, but do not assume you can take a cookie cutter approach.

Get up to date with the curriculum
Take the time to familiarise yourself with the curriculum in your subject area, especially if you are going to be delivering impact in the form of subject content. Note which topics/periods are taught, and the skills addressed at each stage.

National exams – mainly GCSE and A-Level – mean that subject content is largely similar even across different exam boards, however there will be some variation and schools are also at liberty to select the topics that will comprise their students' exams.

There may be more variation in subject content for year groups not working towards national exams (i.e., Years 7-9) as teachers have more freedom to select the topics they teach; but there is still a great deal of commonality across state schools.

School aims and ambitions
Targets or projects the school is working towards could provide a really effective context for working together. For example, perhaps the school is a Science College, or a design and Technology College, and would like a project to complement this status. Or they might be working towards a certification such as Artsmark, and your work could contribute to them achieving this.

Policy opportunities
Take note of current policy priorities and opportunities – not just in the education sector, but in cultural or regional contexts as well.

Connect with and make use of the [WP and Outreach team](#)
They understand schools, their needs and priorities and can offer advice on the design and delivery of projects.

Finding schools to work with

It is best – and often easier! - to go through established contact channels, such as the Widening Participation and Outreach team. However: if you plan on contacting the school yourself, start with the Head Teacher or Head of Department. It may be necessary to be patient as they tend to be very busy. Contact teachers early to discuss expectations and share ideas; events and days off timetable require SLT signoff sometimes as much as a whole school term in advance.

schoolswebdirectory.co.uk is a database of schools searchable by county.

If you have a collaborative partner – such as a museum or charity - they may have established links with schools or certain teachers already. You could also see whether your colleagues or department have worked with schools previously, and whether they would be willing to put you in touch with their contacts.

The Widening Participation and Outreach team run events for school children aged from 9 upwards, with a particular focus on making Higher Education accessible for students from all backgrounds. Events they organise or support include summer schools, subject specific events on campus and visits to schools by academics. If you would like to get involved in an existing programme, or have an idea for a new activity you would like to run, get in touch with the team: outreach@warwick.ac.uk.

The Widening Participation Staff Network holds regular meetings and training sessions and has online resources for academics.

Potential Activities and Areas of Delivery
- Topic/subject 'toolkits' – either student-facing or teacher-facing
- Running activities with schoolchildren, either in schools or on campus
- Teacher training or CPD
- Topics for PSHE or Citizenship curricula
- Discussion topics for Religious Education/Philosophy and Ethics curricula
- Creative practice
- Co-curation
- Students as researchers
- Students as curators
- Scaffolding the national curriculum
- Local policy strategies – e.g., City of Culture legacy; sustainability
- Developing online resources for teachers and students – remote learning; curriculum catch-up; augmenting the classroom
- Contributing to university events such as summer schools
- Organising school trips - for example, having school groups visit an exhibition that you are consulting on
- Engaging at a policy level in order to influence the curriculum

When you are engaging with schools, remember that to claim impact you need to demonstrate a change has occurred as a result of your research.

Example Projects:
AshLI
Through her AHRC-funded Ashmolean Latin Inscriptions Project (AshLI), Professor Alison Cooley hugely changed the curation of ancient epigraphy in Oxford's world-famous Ashmolean Museum. The Ashmolean's collection of Latin inscriptions had been neglected for more than 250 years: Cooley's research enabled this corpus of material to have educational impact for the first time, creating new resources for teaching Roman topics in primary and secondary schools, and training teachers to integrate Latin epigraphy into their teaching.

School Toolkits
Several researchers have produced educational toolkits to allow teachers to use original research in a classroom setting:
- *Woza Africa!*, designed by Yvette Hutchison (Theatre and Performance Studies), introduces users to African storytelling and historical and cultural frames of reference.
- *Past Time Toolkit*, created by Hilary Marland (Department of History), is aimed particularly at History GCSE teachers and students, and explores themes of crime, punishment, and the justice system in relation to the Victorian Prison system.
- *Understanding Homelessness: A Creative Toolkit*, by Nadine Holdsworth (Theatre and Performance Studies), is designed for teachers and other professionals working with people aged 14 and over to discuss the issue of homelessness.
- David Lambert and Tim Lockley (Department of History) created a *West India Regiments Teachers' Pack* for the British Library to enable teachers to explore the history of the West India Regiment and its wider links to empire, colonialism, the slave trade and military history.

Embodied Islands
Alongside curating an exhibition of Caribbean photography, Fabienne Viala (SMLC) worked with Sidney Stringer to use the exhibition as inspiration for pupils to discuss their own heritage and to produce and display their own artwork.

Acting on Climate Change
Dr Rachel Turner-King and Dr Bobby Smith are delivering Acting on Climate, an ESRC-funded impact project using dance, drama and digital arts to introduce young people in Coventry to the often overwhelming, gloomy issue of climate change. They are working with local artists Flux, Lens Change, and Ashley James Brown. This work is part of an international project led by Professor Kathleen Gallagher (University of Toronto) entitled Global Youth (Digital) Citizen-Artists and their Publics: Performing for Socio-Ecological Justice.

Warwick Classics Network
The Warwick Classics Network supports the teaching of Classics nationally, with a particular focus on widening access to pupils who would not normally have the option of studying it. The WCN has

a bank of online resources and organises study days for students where academics share their research in an accessible way.

Ancient Drama Festival

One of the headline events run by the WCN and to which many of the department's researchers contribute is the Ancient Drama Festival. A hugely popular component of this Festival is the Schools' Day. The Schools' Day harnesses the yearly Classics Society production of a piece of ancient Greek drama – in 2022, it was Euripides' *The Bacchae* - to support secondary schools with the teaching of this material, particularly at GCSE and A-Level, and engage them with the latest research in the field. Indeed, The Bacchae is one of the texts prescribed by the OCR AS/A-Level Classical Civilisation specification, and many of the themes explored in the day's lectures also speak to the topics 'Religion and the City' and 'Festivals' studied at GSCE level.