



SEVEN TIPS FOR DEVELOPING YOUR IMPACT CASE STUDY



These seven tips will help you tell a compelling story that celebrates the societal impact of your work.



01 STEP BACK FROM THE LAPTOP!

Start by filling out the [UCD Impact Planning Canvas](#).

This will only take about 20 minutes, and will prompt you to consider important questions, like these:

- What real-world challenges does your work address?
- Who in society is affected by your research – how have you worked with them, or how will you in the future?

Watch at our [video tutorial](#) for filling out the Canvas.

02 ARTICULATE YOUR EVIDENCE

Be as clear as possible about who has benefitted, or will benefit, from your research:

- How many beneficiaries are there?
- How much do each of them benefit?
- Can you show how your research contributed to these impacts?
- How will future impact be captured and measured?

Evidence of these things can take many forms, from references in policy documents to testimonials from attendees at events informed by your research.

Learn more about evidencing impact on our [Impact Toolkit](#).



03 LOOK AT OTHER EXAMPLES



UCD Case Studies



REF Case Studies



Australian Research Council
Impact Studies

TIP

Filter REF and ARC cases studies by discipline and use keyword searches.

04 KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE AND USE PLAIN ENGLISH

Use every-day language instead of technical jargon.

Research funders and policymakers may end up reading the case study – have a friend or family member check that non-experts can understand your draft.

If you're entering UCD's case study competition, the judging panel will score your case study against the judging criteria, so make sure it ticks all the boxes.

KEEP IT ACTIVE (MOSTLY)

Use the active voice to keep your writing crisp and clear

So don't say The policy was influenced by my research

Say My research influenced the policy

Don't say 200 people were hired by the company

Instead, say The company hired 200 people



But the passive voice is useful if you don't know (or it doesn't matter) who or what is doing the action. For example:

UCD is known for the impact of its research

DON'T TURN VERBS INTO NOUNS

Don't say We had a discussion about my research

Say We discussed my research

Don't say The committee was in agreement

Do say The committee agreed

Using a verb as a noun is known as **nominalisation**, which definitely isn't a plain-English word...

AVOID CUMBERSOME WORDS AND PHRASES

At the present time can be replaced with Now

Prior to is clunkier than Before

Utilise has a specific meaning – try Use

In light of the fact that can be changed to Because

Ameliorate could be replaced with Improve

The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink.

George Orwell →



LIMIT YOUR USE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Try not to use more than three acronyms or initialisms (like NASA or DNA)

Unless widely known, like those above, define each abbreviation when first used

Remove an abbreviation (or other technical term) if you only use it once

Avoid two-letter abbreviations if possible





05 USE A STRONG TITLE

Come up with a short title that describes the impact of your work, not the research.

Consider using 'ing' words to highlight the change that your research effects.

Good examples include:

- Protecting Ireland's homes from radiation
- Challenging mass surveillance in Ireland and Europe
- Irish Prostate Cancer Risk Calculator:
Reducing unnecessary biopsies

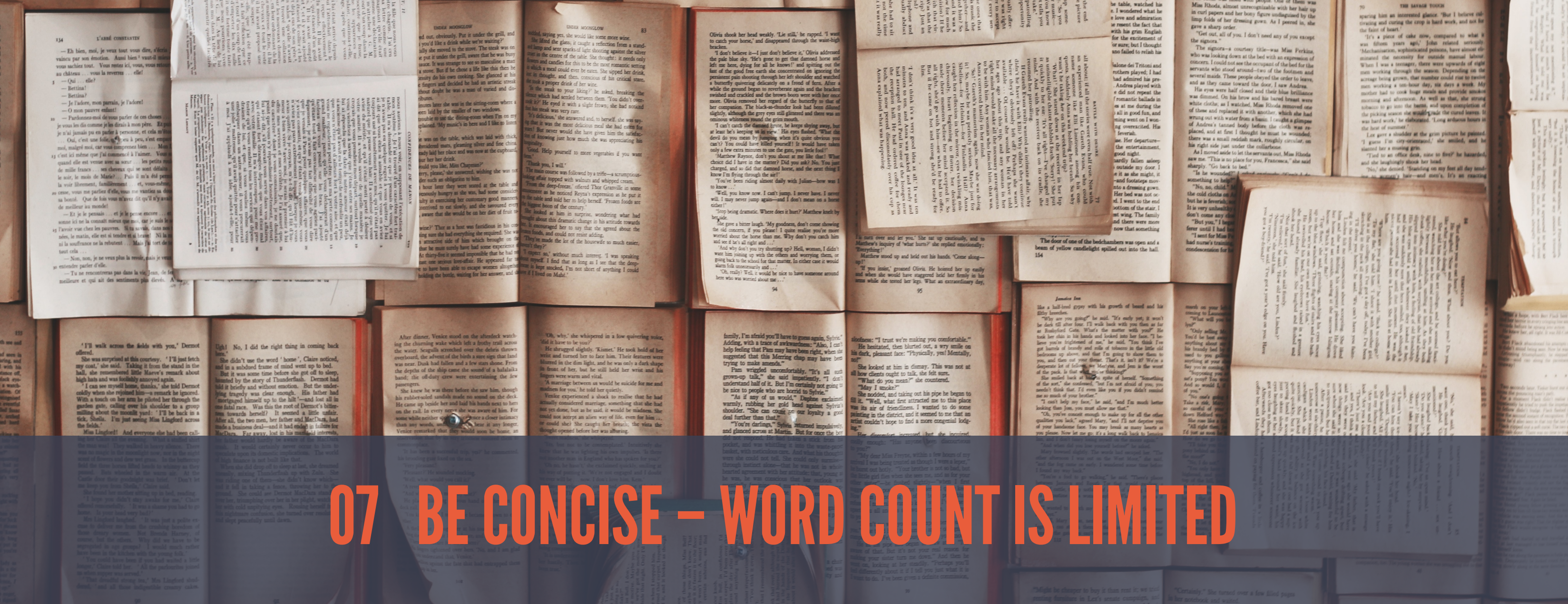
06 ILLUSTRATE YOUR CASE STUDY

Use relevant, hi-res images to make your case study come alive.

Make sure you have the necessary permissions, or try royalty-free websites like pixabay.com and unsplash.com.

Gather testimonials from people who have benefitted from your research.





07 BE CONCISE – WORD COUNT IS LIMITED

Be punchy – avoid long sentences (more than about 20 words) and paragraphs (more than about 100 words).

Keep things interesting by varying the length of your sentences.

Avoid repeating information – every sentence should say something new.