

Examples of use of adjectives that may have given an impression of over-claiming or may have cast doubts on claims, identified from qualitative analysis of REF2014 impact case studies

Inappropriate use	Examples
Unsubstantiated use of adjectives giving impression of over-claiming	Adjectives such as "promising", "significant", "invested heavily", "excellent", "fundamental", "expanding rapidly" were over-used across a number of cases and were often unsubstantiated
Vague use of adjectives weakening or casting doubt on claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims of impact on "many" without a definition of "many" • "Substantial" is used to describe estimate of millions of dollars of benefit, drawing attention to the fact that there is no specific number and it is only an estimate • "Accumulated impact" implies impact was incremental or is only emerging slowly • "Very well received and some very valuable feedback" without being able provide examples casts doubt on the claim

Examples of stylistic features identified from qualitative analysis

Feature	Stylistic features in high-scoring case studies	Stylistic features in low-scoring case studies
Clarity of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple style and vocabulary • Claims are made directly • Avoids long, complex sentences and breaks text into paragraphs, sub-sections and lists where relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long sentences, unnecessarily complex language • Text not broken up, poor organisation • Hard to follow even if technical vocabulary is not used • Long-winded descriptions, poor explanations
Use of technical jargon and acronyms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids "isms" and "lenses" • Explains necessary technical terms and context • Spells out (sparingly used) acronyms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Especially in crucial places e.g. when describing the impact • Too much background knowledge is assumed • Jargon disguises how vague the claims are • Unexplained technical terms and acronyms • Over-use of acronyms makes text difficult to follow
Narrative progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative clearly shows progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coherent narrative linking research to pathways and impacts or linking different pathways and impacts together • Spelling mistakes and grammatical errors • Swapping between first and third person

Examples of lexical bundles that were common in the high-scoring case studies and largely absent from the low-scoring case studies – Attribution

Search term	Appears in	Example
led by Professor	Start of Section 2	<i>usually followed by name but sometimes by specialism and name; often preceded by "team"/"group" or "studies"/"research"</i>
cited in	Section 4	<i>"cited in the guideline on Organ donation"</i> <i>"cited in the Mental Health Strategy for Scotland"</i> <i>"cited in the Financial Times"</i>
used to	Section 4, 3x in Section 1	<i>"used to inform and target a range of strategies"</i> <i>"our survey methods and evaluation measures are used to assess [...] quality"</i> <i>"has been used to inform Government policy"</i>
improve the	throughout	<i>"to improve the nation's public health"</i> <i>"to improve the availability of data"</i> <i>"to improve the quality of teaching and learning"</i>
resulting in	throughout	<i>"resulting in a funded study"</i> <i>"Based on this research, [company] updated its [...] guidelines [...] resulting in cheaper [...] costs"</i>

Tables 7, 15, 16 in: Reichard, B, Reed, MS, Chubb, J, Hall, G, Jowett, L, Peart, A and Whittle, A: "Writing Impact Case Studies: A comparative study of high-scoring and low-scoring case studies from REF2014", Palgrave Communications, www.nature.com/articles/s41599-020-0394-7