



## Impact and the REF: The essentials

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# Overview of the session

Defining 'impact' within a REF context

Covering the latest release of REF rules for impact

Outlining the 'new' impact case template

Providing an overview of 4\* impact case studies

Highlighting the range of support for impact authors



# Defining ‘impact’

For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, *beyond academia*’.



# Impact includes, but is not limited to:

- the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
- of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals
- in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

Impact includes the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects.

‘Engagement’ is NOT impact!



# Impact and the REF

- REF2014 was the first exercise to assess the **impact** of research outside of academia.
- The REF assessment process is based on expert review. Sub-panels examine submissions made in the relevant UOAs. For impact the panels included non-academic 'user' members
- UK universities submitted 6,975 impact case studies demonstrating the impact of their research. Exeter submitted 93 impact case studies.
- In REF 2014, one 4\* impact case was worth about 7 4\* outputs. In 2021 it will be worth about 10.



# The REF2021 assessment framework

## Overall quality

### Outputs

Outputs de-linked from individuals

60%

### Impact

Impact template and case studies (driven by no. of outputs)

25%

### Environment

Environment data and template

15%

# To note

- Impact case study volume controlled by staff FTE, at a ratio of 2 case studies for the first 20 FTE, and one for every 15 FTE thereafter.
- We need 4 cases for Econ and 7 for Business & Management.
- Impact cannot travel. We can claim impact of for staff who have left, but it is difficult to evidence and to tell the story effectively.
- Impact must have occurred during the period 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2013-31 July 2020 although they might have been building prior to this.
- Must be underpinned by excellent research producing by the submitting unit in the period 1 Jan 200—31 Dec 2020.
- Impact claims must be substantiated, i.e. supported by evidence.



# Defining ‘excellent research’

‘Excellent research’ means that the quality of the research as a whole is at least equivalent to 2\*: ‘quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour’.

Not every item has to meet the quality threshold.

The research should make a distinct and material difference to the impact taking place – such as the impact would not have occurred or been significantly reduced without the contribution of that research.

The relationship between research and impact can be indirect or non-linear.

Up to 6 key references are required produced by the submitting unit from Jan1 2000- 31 Dec 2020



# Reach and significance/ Panel C

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Reach – the extent &/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, as relevant to the nature of the impact.

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Significance – the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance, policies, practices, products, services, understanding, awareness or well-being of the beneficiaries.

# REF assessment process

4 Main Panels A to D

A – biological and medical

B – engineering and physical sciences

C – social sciences

D – humanities

36 Units of Assessment – Exeter 24 UoAs

UoA16 Economics & Econometrics, and UoA17, Business & Management Studies, are assessed by Panel C



# Impact Case Studies in REF2014

- Case studies combine narrative of impact and indicators
- As stated, impact assessed according to **reach** and **significance**
- Require **evidence** of impact (and the relationship between the research and the impact)
- Given a grading from 1\* to 4\* (or U)
- 4\* Impact was defined as:

‘Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance’



# What does an impact case study look like? (I)

## Section A

The fields in this section are mandatory.

**Institution:**

**Unit of Assessment:**

**Title of case study:**

**Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:**

**Period when staff involved in the underpinning research were employed by the submitting HEI:**

Is this a case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N?



# What does an impact case study look like? (2)

## Section B

**1. Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)

**2. Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of ten references)



# Additional contextual data

The fields in this section are mandatory, where applicable. The information will be used in post-assessment evaluations and will not be routinely provided to panels.

**Names of funders**

**Names of funding programmes**

**Grant numbers**

**Amount of grant (in GBP)**

**ORCID for each named researcher**

**Name(s) of formal partner(s)**

**Country/countries where the impact occurred (e.g. 'Wales' rather than UK.)**



# Keeping track of evidence of impact and engagement

For REF impact case studies the narrative needs to explain:

- how the research underpinned (made a distinct and material contribution to) the impact; and
- the nature and extent of the impact

Evidence is needed to corroborate **both** of these aspects, gathered in combinations that demonstrate: the **reach** (breadth) and the **significance** (importance) of the impact.



# 4\* impact case studies

- Panels knew 4\* impact when they saw it!
- Clear and well explained narrative
- Clear links between research and impact
- Evolution of the story over time
- Engagement of partners in the research
- Maturity/depth of relationship with partners/stakeholders
- Clear statement of benefit to specific groups
- Compelling evidence – different types
- Clear reach and/or significance
- Strong evidence



# Examples of 3 & 4\* impact from REF 2014

- **Economics/econometrics**
- University of Bristol – all their ICS were 4\*
- UCL average of 3.92
- LSE – average of 3.87
- **Business & Management**
- Cambridge 3.84
- Aberdeen 3.80
- Strathclyde 3.75

<http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/>

# INNOVATION IMPACT AND BUSINESS





# Innovation, Impact and Business (IIB)

**IIB enables the University's world-class research and education to make a real difference in society. We have four main objectives:**

- **Drive impact:** By supporting the development of research creativity, innovation and discovery which underpins the creation of impact case studies and builds pathways to impact.
- **Connect partners:** We will bring people and organisations together to grow productive and transformational partnerships locally, nationally and globally.
- **Create opportunities:** We will creatively-conceive and support new opportunities to build sustainable business and government research and education activities – including national and international research contracts and regional funding.
- **Generate value:** By leading income generating initiatives, IP exploitation, spin outs, consultancy, facilities access, and entrepreneurship initiatives across the University.





## Innovation, Impact and Business (IIB) – Theme and Sub Theme Leads

### **Government & Society: Bridget Sealey - [B.Sealey@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:B.Sealey@exeter.ac.uk)**

Education and CSR – Bridget Sealey

Finance, Green Finance, Tax – **Jack Oliver**

Leadership, Management & Organisational Strategy – **Sophie Smith**

Government, crime, justice and the law – **Jess Hurrell**

**Business School Business Partner** - **Michelle Spillar**

Defence, Security, Conflict - **Colette Defoe (Penryn)/Josie Butcher (Exeter)**

### **Environment: Beccy Mitchell – [R.Mitchell2@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:R.Mitchell2@exeter.ac.uk)**

Food Security, Land Use – **Alex Huke**

Water – **Alan Denbigh**

Environment & Development – **Tom James**

Climate & Environmental Futures – **Beccy Mitchell**

### **Manufacturing, Materials, Infrastructure, Energy: Becca Adams - [R.Adams@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:R.Adams@exeter.ac.uk)**

Energy and Marine – **Jim Grant**

Data & Digital – **Isabel Gonzalez**

Aerospace/ Auto/ Manufacturing – **James McNaughton**

Infrastructure & Civil Engineering – **Becca Adams**

Circular Economy & Mining – **Ruth Cherrington**

### **Health: Adrian Hill – [A.J.Hill@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:A.J.Hill@exeter.ac.uk)**

Pharma, biotech and diagnostics – **Adrian Hill**

Wellbeing & Public Health – **Claire Miller**

### **Culture: Brigid Howarth – [B.B.Howarth@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:B.B.Howarth@exeter.ac.uk)**

Digital, Media & Content – **Jay Gascoigne**

Heritage – **Nicola Nuttall**



## Practical Ways IIB Supports Impact

Everyone with a priority Impact Case for REF2021 is allocated a member of the IIB team to support the development of their impact case, which includes:

- Face-to-face meeting and support
- Signposting of resources to access to support impact and to develop linked funding applications.
- Critical friend feedback on your impact case – and suggestions for deeper, broader reach and impact
- Provision/development of links with external partners
- Assistance with evidence capture where required.
- Support with the requirements of the research monitoring process including Impact Case Study Planners, narrative and action planning.

For major research grant applications support is also available to assist with development of Pathways to Impact and Impact summaries.



# **Innovation, Impact and Business (IIB) – Impact Support Assistants**

**Impact Support Assistants (ISA's) are also available to support specific activities on a priority impact case study, working with impact case study leads.**

Activities that could be undertaken by an ISA may include:

- Impact evidence identification, collation, review and archiving
- Desk-based market assessment
- Literature and media reviews
- Support with specific activities related to the impact case study plan

A limited amount of funding also exists for **Specialist Impact Support Assistants**, to be recruited by you to work specifically on activities within your impact case study plan, working alongside IIB. Speak to your Impact & Partnership Development Manager to enquire.



## Funding Sources to Support Impact

**Open Innovation Fund 2018/19** – The IIB Open Innovation fund provides financial support for academics to engage and develop relationships with non-academic external organisations and conduct collaborative activity which accelerates the creation and translation of high impact research into economic and societal benefits.

There are two funding mechanisms available for 18/19:

- **Link Fund:** To support the development of new external relationships and initiate projects with external partners - Up to £2,000
- **Proof of Concept Fund:** To advance the commercialisation of new or existing intellectual property – Up to £15,000

**Impact Fund 18/19** – Small amount of funding for REF2021 impact case studies to be distributed in College/IIB



## Impact Fund Process:

Enquiry

- Speak to your IPDM (or Michelle to refer you on)
- Or Patrick Frake regarding your project idea

Advice

- We will advise you as to the most appropriate approach/fund
- Send a draft of your application to your IPDM for support and feedback

Budget

- Developing the budget is supported by the UEBS Research Office.

- Final draft to Director of Research and Director of Impact (Sarah Gilmore) for UEBS assessment
- Submission to Patrick Frake at [openinnovation@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:openinnovation@exeter.ac.uk) for review by the Open Innovation Team
- Approval, rejection or requests for further information will come direct to the applicant



# Impact Acceleration Accounts EPSRC & ESRC

## ESRC IAA - re-bid underway

- Rapid Response
- Business Boost
- Impact Cultivation
- Social Policy Network
- Project Co-creation
- Knowledge Exchange

## EPSRC IAA

- Partnership Development
- Impact & Knowledge Exchange

## GCRF IAA

- New account here – details to be finalised at present

## BBSRC IAA – bid underway

- Food production focussed





# Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAA) - Purpose

- The purpose of the ESRC IAA is to accelerate the non-academic impact of social science research and the purpose of the EPSRC IAA, is to accelerate the non-academic impact of EPSRC funded research
- RCUK define impact as “**...the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy**”
- Exeter is one of a select few research organisations to receive an ESRC IAA and an EPSRC IAA



# Assessment criteria / what we are looking for

- Must exploit existing social science research (ESRC IAA), physical sciences research (EPSRC IAA)
- Demonstrate high quality KE with at least one external, non-academic partner (this might take into account leverage and the letter of support)
- A clear and feasible delivery and project plan with realistic milestones and outcomes in the required timeframe and budget
- The application details how the impacts will be recorded and monitored
- The resources requested are justifiable and are value for money



# What to consider before applying

- Eligibility requirements
- Is your project genuinely progressing existing research?
- What is the **non-academic impact** you aim to achieve?
- Do you have a collaborator interested in taking this forward?  
Have you spoken with them?
- How far does that commitment go? (letter of support for  
your IAA application)
- Can you spend the grant in the time allocated?

# Current deadlines

Scheme	Funding Available	Deadline
<b>ESRC IAA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Social Policy Network</li> <li>• Impact Cultivation Award</li> <li>• Economic Development and Welfare Scheme (EDWAS)</li> <li>• Project Co-creation Award</li> <li>• Knowledge Exchange Fellowship</li>   <li>• <b>Business Boost</b></li> <li>• <b>Rapid Response</b></li> </ul>	Up to £3k (Social Policy Network & Impact Cultivation) Up to £7k (EDWAS)  Up to £20k (PC & KEF)  Up to £10K Up to £5K	<b>Currently closed – awaiting further funding news</b>  <b>Open for applications, spend by Mar 19</b>
<b>EPSRC IAA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership Development Award</li> <li>• Impact and Knowledge Exchange Award</li> </ul>	Up to £2K – rolling applications Up to £10K – rolling applications Up to £35K	<b>Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018</b>  <b>Friday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019</b>



# IAA Support

- Meet to discuss a potential project idea
- Review draft applications prior to submission
- Share examples of successful projects
- ESRC IAA webpage: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/esrciaa/>
- ESRC IAA Events – Showcase and Training (ESRC evidencing and measurement in Autumn term)
- EPSRC IAA webpage:  
<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/toolkit/opportunities/internalopps/epsrciaa/>

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## Questions?

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- **Patrick Frake** – *Commercial & Business Programmes Officer (OIF)*
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