

Impacts arising from public engagement activity

81. Public engagement is an activity that may lead to the impact of research. Sub-panels will welcome case studies that include impact achieved in this way, either as the main impact described or as one facet of a broader range of impacts.

82. Case studies which include impacts that derive from engaging the public with research must:

- a. At least in part, be based on specific research or a body of research carried out in the submitted unit, and explain clearly which particular aspects of the research underpinned the engagement activity and contributed to the impact claimed.
- b. Include evidence of the reach of the impact. This should extend beyond simply providing the numbers of people engaged and may also, for example, include:
 - information about the types of audience
 - whether there was secondary reach, for example from follow-up activity or media coverage
 - other quantitative indicators such as evidence of sales, downloads of linked resources, and/or access to web content.
- c. Include evidence of the significance of the impact. This should include a description of the social, cultural or other significance of the research insights with which the public have engaged. Examples of the evidence that might be provided for this include:
 - evaluation data
 - critical external reviews of the engagement activity
 - evidence of third party involvement, for example how collaborators have modified their practices
 - user feedback or testimony
 - evidence of sustainability through, for example, a sustained or ongoing engagement with a group, a significant increase in participation in events or programmes or use of resources.

Case studies: evidence of impact

83. Case studies will be assessed in terms of the criteria of reach and significance (see paragraphs 102-104). In assessing impact case studies, sub-panels will consider both the chain of evidence linking excellent research within the submitting unit to the impact(s) claimed, and the evidence of the reach and

significance of the impact. Within their narrative account in the case study, institutions should provide the indicators and evidence most appropriate to the impact(s) claimed, and to support that chain. The sub-panels will use their expert judgement regarding the integrity, coherence and clarity of the narrative of each case study, but will expect that the key claims made in the narrative to be supported by evidence and indicators.

84. The main panel anticipates that impact case studies will refer to a wide range of types of evidence, including qualitative, quantitative and tangible or material evidence, as appropriate. Individual case studies may draw on a variety of forms of evidence and indicators. The main panel does not wish to pre-judge forms of evidence. It encourages submitting units to use evidence most appropriate to the impact claimed.

85. However, submitting units should ensure that, so far as possible, any evidence cited is independently verifiable. Where testimony is cited, it should be made clear whether the source is a participant in the process of impact delivery (and the degree to which this is the case), or is a reporter on the process. While it is recognised that the evidence for many significant and far-reaching forms of impact may be hard to define, greater weight may be placed on evidence of fact over evidence of opinion in determining the significance and reach associated with a claimed impact.

86. The main panel recognises that some of the evidence in case studies may be of a confidential or sensitive nature. The arrangements for submitting and assessing case studies that include such material are set out in Part 1, paragraphs 58-59.

87. The sub-panels in Main Panel C wish to understand how underpinning research activity links to impact or benefit, for which simple descriptions of the activity will not suffice. Acting as an adviser to a public body, for example, does not of itself represent impact. However, providing advice based on research findings from the submitted unit, which has influenced a policy, strategy or public debate would constitute impact if there is evidence that the advice has had some effect or influence.

88. In constructing a narrative account in a case study, there are many different types of indicators or evidence which could be used to demonstrate the links in the chain between the underpinning research and impact, and the reach and significance of the impact. No type of evidence is inherently preferred over another; judgements will be based on the extent to which the cited evidence provides a convincing link between the underpinning research and the

impact claimed, and convincing evidence of the reach and significance of the impact. The examples of evidence and indicators provided below are simply indicative, and are not designed to be exhaustive, limiting or prescriptive. Main Panel C recognises that different types of evidence are likely to be applicable across any or all spheres of impact. The examples provided are therefore in the format of a common list.

Table C2 Examples of evidence or indicators for impact

- Citation in a public discussion, consultation document or judgement.
- Citation by journalists, broadcasters or social media.
- Citation by international bodies such as the United Nations, UNESCO, IMF and so on.
- Evidence of citation in policy, regulatory, strategy, practice or other documents.
- Evidence of debate among practitioners, leading to developments in attitudes or behaviours.
- Public debate in the media.
- Parliamentary or other democratic debate.
- Visitor or audience numbers, or number of participants (for example, in the uptake of CPD).
- Media reviews.
- Measures of improved inclusion, welfare or equality.
- Independent documentary evidence of links between research and claimed impact(s).
- Documented evidence of influence on guidelines, legislation, regulation, policy or standards.
- Documented change to professional standards or behaviour.
- Satisfaction measures (for example, with services).
- Use in scrutiny or audit processes, such as Select Committees.
- Incorporation in training or CPD material.
- Outcome measures, including measures of outcomes for beneficiaries.
- Quantitative data relating, for example, to cost-effectiveness or organisational performance.

Further examples of evidence relating to impacts that derive from engaging the public with research are provided at paragraph 82.

Case studies: underpinning research

Underpinning research quality

89. Case studies must include references to research produced by the submitted unit that underpinned the impact, and provide evidence of the quality of the research. A case study will be eligible for assessment only if the sub-panel is satisfied that the underpinning research is predominantly of at least two star quality.

90. The main panel notes in particular that while the REF is a process for assessing the excellence of research in submitting units, there is a key difference in the assessment of impact: the excellence of the underpinning research for an impact case study is a threshold judgement (a level which has to be met in order for a case study to be eligible for assessment), but the quality of the underpinning research will not be taken into consideration as part of the assessment (or indeed the assigned quality profile) of the claimed impact.

91. Submitting units must ensure that each case study fulfils the threshold criterion on research quality (see 'guidance on submissions', paragraph 160). A sample of the research should be cited that is sufficient to identify clearly the body of work, or individual project, that underpins the claimed impact. Sub-panels do not expect to review underpinning research output(s) as a matter of course to establish that the threshold has been met. The onus is on the institution submitting case studies to provide evidence of this quality level. Some of the indicators of such quality might be (but are not restricted to): research outputs which have been through a rigorous peer-review process; research outputs which are the result of external grant funding that has been peer-reviewed (sources should be specified); end of grant reports referencing a high quality grading; favourable reviews of outputs from authoritative sources; prestigious prizes or awards made to individual research outputs of underpinning research; evidence that an output has been highly cited and has formed a reference point for further research beyond the original institution. It is noted that not all indicators of quality will apply to all forms of research output.

92. Such indicators will allow sub-panels to make an initial assessment as to whether the underpinning research meets the threshold quality criterion to make a case study eligible for assessment. Where there is doubt that the evidence provided confirms that underpinning research meets the required quality threshold, sub-panels may, exceptionally, decide to examine the outputs. This will be at the discretion of