Impact in REF 2021

REF2021

Helena Mills (Head of REF Policy)
2 October 2019
Research Impact: Ready for REF 2021, Open Forum Event

Research England

Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
hefcw

Department for the Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter
@REF_2021

Email us: info@ref.ac.uk

Impact

REF2021

an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia

- How many case studies were submitted to REF 2014?

6,975

- What percentage of case studies were judged ‘outstanding’ (4*)?

44%

- How many countries were mentioned in case studies in 2014?

205

Impact – criteria

REF2021

Reach	Significance
• the extent and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, as relevant to the nature of the impact. (It will not be assessed in geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries.)	• 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.

Impact - eligibility

REF2021

- Each submission must include impact case studies that describe a specific impact:
  - that meets the definition
  - occurred during period 1 Aug 2013 to 31 Jul 2020
  - was underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit.
- Number of case studies required relates to submitted FTE of unit
- All the material required to make a judgement should be included in the case study
- Don’t need to be representative of activity across unit

Impact – underpinning research

REF2021

To be eligible for assessment as an impact, the impact described in a case study must have been:

…underpinned by…

- Research made a distinct and material contribution
- Can be indirect or non-linear
- Threshold judgement

…excellent research…

- Research as a whole is at least equivalent to two star
- References and indicators to be included
- Threshold judgement

…produced by the submitting unit, 1 Jan 2000-31 Dec 2020

- Staff carried out research within scope of UOA descriptor, while working in the submitting HEI
- Can include Cat C; doesn’t include research students

Submission requirements

REF2021

- Number of case studies determined by FTE of Category A staff submitted.

Category A submitted staff (FTE)	Required number of case studies
Up to 19.99	2
20-34.99	3
35-49.99	4
50-64.99	5
65-79.99	6
80-94.99	7
95-109.99	8
110-159.99	9
160 or more	10, plus 1 further case study per additional 50 FTE

Consistency with 2014

REF2021

- Impact remains with institution where research was generated (i.e. not portable)
- Impact must be underpinned by excellent research of minimum 2* quality
- Timeframe:
  - 1 January 2000 - 31 December 2020 for underpinning research
  - 1 August 2013 - 31 July 2020 for impacts

Refinements for REF 2021

REF2021

- Weighting increased to 25% (60% for outputs and 15% for environment)
- Impact template to be included as explicit section in environment element
- Required routine provision of audit evidence – will not be routinely provided to sub-panels
- Inclusion of additional contextual data in ICS template (e.g. funder info.)
- Guidelines for standardisation of quantitative data in ICS

Continued case studies

REF2021

a. the body of underpinning research is the same as described in a 2014 case study. This should not be understood solely in relation to the referenced outputs, but means that the continued case study does not describe any new research having taken place since the previous case study that has made a distinct and material contribution to the impact

AND

b. there is significant overlap in the impact described, so that the impact types and beneficiaries are broadly the same as described in the 2014 case study.

- Must flag continued case studies in the template
- Still need to meet REF 2021 eligibility criteria
- Panels set out their expectations in Panel criteria and working methods

Impact on teaching within the HEI

REF2021

- Impact on teaching within own HEI is eligible

> Sub-panels expect that impact on teaching within the submitting unit's own institution may most convincingly form a component of a wider case study that also includes impacts beyond the institution.

- Some examples:
  - Influencing the design and delivery of curriculum and syllabi in schools, HEIs or other educational institutions.
  - Reduced gap in academic attainment for students with protected characteristics.
- Think about reach and significance

Public engagement

REF2021

- Enhanced guidance on public engagement

> Sub-panels will welcome, and assess equitably, case studies describing impacts achieved through public engagement, either as the main impact described or as one facet of a wider range of impacts. Panels expect that case studies based on public engagement will demonstrate both reach (e.g. through audience or participant figures) and significance, and will take both into account when assessing the impacts.

- Examples in Annex A of Panel criteria and working methods

Research activity and bodies of work

REF2021

There are many ways excellent research may have underpinned impact including through bodies of work produced over a number of years, or the output(s) of a particular project conducted by one or more individuals, teams or groups.

- Recognising that the relationship between research and impact can be indirect and non-linear
- Provide up to six key references of underpinning research
- Not all have to meet the 2* threshold, but the work as a whole must

Case studies requiring security clearance

REF2021

- Where research has had impacts of a sensitive nature and the case study can only be assessed by individuals with national security vetting clearance
- Must request advance permission from the REF Director
- **Deadlines: 30 May 2019, 20 September 2019, 6 December 2019**

What makes a strong case study?

REF2021

- Panel overview reports from 2014:

High-scoring	Low-scoring
• Clear and compelling narrative • Clearly identified beneficiaries • Explicit links between research and claimed impact • Self-contained • Verifiable evidence of reach and significance • Evidence of unit's contribution to research • Distinguishes between dissemination and impact	• Lack of objective evidence • Superficial impacts • Vague description of impacts and/or their relationship to the research • Focus on dissemination without explaining outcomes ('so what?')