



## The REF impact pilot findings

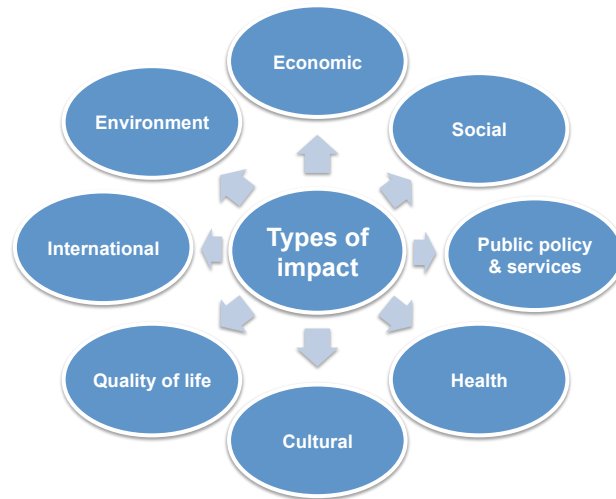
### *Our initial proposals*

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- Assessment through expert review
- Historical impact, not predicting future impact
- Impact of the unit's research, not individual researchers
- Underpinned by high quality research of all types
- Minimum burden necessary to enable robust assessment
- A wide view of 'impact' beyond academia, inclusive of all disciplines

## *A wide view of impact*

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## *The impact pilot exercise*

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- The pilot tested and developed a case study approach to assessing the impact of research
- Five units of assessment (UOAs)
- 29 UK higher education institutions each submitting to 2 UOAs
- Each submission included:
  - An 'impact statement' for the submitted unit as a whole
  - Case studies illustrating examples of impacts achieved (a total of one case study per 10 research staff)
- Impacts that occurred during 2005-09, underpinned by research since 1993

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## *The pilot panels*

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- Membership drawn from academia and research users from the private, public and third sectors
- Tested the methodology by:
  - Assessing the case studies in terms of ‘reach and significance’ of the impacts
  - Considering the wider ‘impact statements’
  - Producing impact profiles
  - Identifying issues and how to improve the process

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## *Pilot reports*

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- Publications on [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk):
  - The findings of the five pilot panels
  - Feedback from the 29 pilot HEIs (by Technopolis)
  - Examples of good practice case studies
  - A summary of workshops to explore impact in the arts, humanities and social science
  - Guidance documents used in the pilot exercise

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## Key findings

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- The process makes explicit the benefits that research in each discipline brings to society

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## Benefits of research

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### Clinical Medicine

- Impacts on patient outcomes, health policy and practice, medical technology and the pharmaceutical industry

### Physics

- Impacts on high-tech products and services, public engagement with science and defence and energy policy

### Earth systems & environmental sciences

- Impacts on environmental policy, conservation, managing the environmental, utilities, risks and hazards, exploration of resources, public health

### Social work & social policy

- Impacts on social policy, public services, third sector, practitioners and public debate

### English language & literature

- Impacts on creative industries, cultural enrichment, civil society, English as a global product, policy development

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## Key findings

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- The process makes explicit the benefits that research in each discipline brings to society
- It is possible to assess the impact of research, through expert review of case studies



## Impact profiles

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Clinical Medicine					
	4*	3*	2*	1*	U
<b>UOA average</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
Institution A	0	40	35	25	0
Institution B	25	10	30	15	20
Institution C	0	40	40	10	10
Institution D	0	55	45	0	0
Institution E	20	45	25	0	10
Institution F	25	25	25	0	25
Institution G	25	30	45	0	0
Institution H	20	25	25	10	20
Institution I	0	0	75	25	0



## *Key findings*

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- The process makes explicit the benefits that research in each discipline brings to society
- It is possible to assess the impact of research, through expert review of case studies
- A number of refinements are needed for full implementation

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- A number of refinements are needed for full implementation
- A generic approach is workable, with scope for REF panels to tailor the criteria as appropriate to their disciplines

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- The process makes explicit the benefits that research in each discipline brings to society
- It is possible to assess the impact of research, through expert review of case studies
- A number of refinements are needed for full implementation
- A generic approach is workable, with scope for REF panels to tailor the criteria as appropriate to their disciplines
- The weighting should be significant to be taken seriously by all stakeholders

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## *Defining impact*

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- There should be a wide definition of (non academic) impact
- Interim or early stage impacts should count, assessed on the same criteria and not by anticipating future potential impact
- Impacts through public engagement should count so long as they are based on the unit's research and the benefits are articulated
- REF panels should develop further guidance about what constitutes impact from research in their disciplines (this should not be restrictive)

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## *Case studies*

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- Panels were able to differentiate between case studies using the 5-point scale to produce impact profiles
- Improvements would help panels to make robust judgements:
  - Revising the template to encourage a more natural narrative
  - Case studies should contain all the information needed by panels to make judgements
  - References should be for verification purposes only
  - Supporting indicators should be contextualised and meaningful to the particular case
  - The focus could be broad or narrow, so long as the narrative is coherent and there is evidence of specific impacts

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## *Submissions*

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- 1 case per 10 staff provided an appropriate range of evidence, though further consideration of very small units is needed
- As well as assessing case studies, panels want to know how the unit/institution supports impact. This should be a distinct section of the environment element, replacing the 'impact statement'

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## Assessment criteria

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- The criteria and level definitions (with some refinements) should be widely applicable, with flexibility for REF panels to interpret them as appropriate
- Panels gave credit wherever the HEI's research made a distinctive contribution to the impact:
  - It should not be essential for the HEI to be involved in exploitation
  - Where the impact depended on a wider body of research the submission should acknowledge this
- The quality threshold for the pilot was appropriate and it will be vital ensure high quality for the REF. Cases should cite only directly relevant research and justify their quality.

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## Other issues

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- A timeframe of 15 years from research to impact is broadly appropriate – some disciplines may need to extend this
- Cases should provide independent sources that could verify specific claims, to be followed up on a sample basis
- Cross referral should remain an option but it is preferable for panels to assess the material submitted to them
- It is essential to include research users on the panels and their time will need to be used effectively
- Scaling up from the pilot will have implications for the panels that will need to be managed

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## Timetable

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Nov 2010	Publish reports
Nov-Dec 2010	Discussions
Mar 2011	Publish decisions on broad framework for assessing impact
Jul 2011	Guidance on submissions
Autumn 2011	Panels consult on criteria
Jan 2012	Publish panel criteria
2012-2013	HEIs make submissions
2013	Recruit additional research users to assess impact
2014	Assessment

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