

## Impact Fact Sheet 2023/24

### What is impact?

Impact is **the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy**. This occurs in many ways – through creating and sharing new knowledge and innovation; inventing ground-breaking new products, companies and jobs; developing new and improving existing public services and policy; enhancing quality of life and health; and many more. (UKRI)

### Types of research impact

**Academic Impact** (not REFable)– the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to scientific advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, method, theory and application.

**Economic and Societal Impact** – the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations.

### Why does impact matter?

**Accountability:** Spending public money means demonstrating the benefits of that investment to society

**Quality:** Research can be improved by engaging with a broad range of potential beneficiaries

**Maximising benefits:** Shortening time to benefits, and increasing the impact we know our investments have

**Reputation:** it enhances UK attractiveness for research and innovation investment

### Why do UKRI collectively invest £7 billion in research and innovation each year?

To meet tomorrow's challenges today, bringing about a positive impact in our society, economy and in our lives

Impact occurs in many ways, such as:

- Through knowledge exchange
- New products and services
- New companies and job creation
- Skills development
- Increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy
- Enhancing quality of life and health
- International development

## How is Impact measured in REF?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the process of expert review that informs the amount of quality related research funding that is provided to Higher Education Institutions in the UK.

It involves an assessment of:

The quality of research carried out at each institution (**outputs 60%**)

The impact that arises from said research (**engagement and impact 25%**)

The environment supporting the research (**environment 15%**)

The process of peer review is carried out by expert panels for 34 subject-based UoAs, under the guidance of 4 main panels. Star ratings (1\* - 4\* or unclassified) are awarded and these are used to determine the level of QR (Quality-related) funding for each HEI, feeds league tables, used for bench-marking and accountability.

Impact is assessed in terms of **reach, significance and rigour** regardless of the geographic location, whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

## Impact Top Tips

### Plan for impact from the beginning

- Know the research goal, ask yourself 'who will benefit from this research?' and include research users and stakeholders in the research design process, if appropriate.
- Include impact costs in grant applications
- Use an impact planner
- Planners and more resources can be found here:  
<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/internal/research/researchimpact>

### Engage stakeholders and beneficiaries

- Who is your audience? How are you going to engage with them and when?
- Consider what you want to achieve from the engagement and how they will benefit, before you approach them.

### Track and evidence your benefit

- Track your impact activities from the beginning
- Collect all evidence of engagement and benefits directly linked to your research

### Understand the distinction between pathways to impact and actual impact

- Impact is the benefit or change that occurs because of your engagement and/or intervention
- Knowledge exchange, public engagement, research dissemination and events are all pathways to impact
- Ask 'what happened next?', 'who is benefitting and how?' to determine if you made an impact

Contact the Impact Team for support: [impact@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:impact@ulster.ac.uk)