



Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award

Guidance Notes
October 2025

www.ulster.ac.uk/awards/research-excellence-awards

OUTSTANDING EXTERNAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH TEAM AWARD

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of its strategy for supporting research excellence, Ulster University wishes to acknowledge and recognise the importance of collaboration in delivering excellence in research. This award for *Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team* celebrates the achievements of research collaboration in delivering research with impact. Collaborations will differ among disciplines and can comprise staff from all careers and career stages as well as external partners and academic collaborators.

The winning team will be honoured at the Research Excellence Awards ceremony in May 2026.

2. ELIGIBILITY

A group of 3 staff or more who are part of a team on the delivery of a collaborative research project with external parties (for example, other HEIs, organisations, public sector bodies, charities or businesses). All staff are eligible to be included in this team award, academic, research, business support, technical, etc.

3. CRITERIA/SCORING

The *Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award* celebrates the achievements of staff at Ulster University and recognises how the development of lasting external collaborations can achieve excellent outputs and impact both inside and outside the University.

The *Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award* is a competitive process and the criteria/scoring that will be used in the selection process for successful submissions are as follows:

a) Impact – Contribution to society and economy (40%)

What impact was achieved as a result of this external collaborative research project? (See Appendix A for the REF definition of impact).

b) Team Aspect (30%)

- 1) *Internal Team*: Please outline how the internal team structure worked in delivering excellent research. For example, what was the rationale for the composition of the internal team and how has this team approach been an advantage? Did the internal team include a range of staff members (i.e., Senior researchers, early career researchers, technical staff, business development etc.) and how did the team benefit from the variety of skills, expertise and support that the members brought?

- 2) *External Team*: How has the collaboration with the external partners enhanced the delivery of this research project and how has this external collaboration demonstrated an advantage?

c) Outputs (30%)

What outputs have been produced as a result of this collaborative research project? Outputs can include the generation of research funding, significant events, new collaborations, the production of research outputs such as publications, patents, performances, devices, reports etc.

Additional Notes:

- Submissions should ensure that they have substantive and appropriate evidence to support the commentary, predominately collected within the last 10 years.
- Applicants can only submit one application to the team award categories in any given year so please choose the team category that best suits your team's research project.
- Team structure
 - Teams should be made up of members of staff who have made a meaningful contribution to the external collaborative research project - academic, research, business support, technical, etc.
 - A Team will represent the core team and normally consist of a minimum of 3 and maximum of 10 members
- Projects that have previously been winner of the Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award cannot re-apply again in the same category.

4. HOW TO APPLY

Teams must complete the *Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award* Application Form and submit to Connie Gerrow at C.Gerrow@ulster.ac.uk by **12 noon on Friday 16 January 2026**.

All forms and guidelines can be downloaded here <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/awards/research-excellence-awards>

5. ASSESSMENT PANEL

- a) An assessment panel comprising of the four Associate Deans for Research & Innovation will assess and score the *Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award* applications based on the scoring criteria outlined in section 3.
- b) A scoring matrix will be used by the panel; and all applicants scored against each of the essential criteria. The criteria will carry the following weightings: Impact (40%), Team Aspect (30%), and Outputs (30%).
- c) The details of the highest-ranking team will be conveyed to the PVC Research, as the recipients of the Team Award.

- d) The decision of the Associate Deans for Research & Innovation pertaining to the highest-ranking team as the recipient of the *Outstanding External Collaborative Research Team Award* will be final.

6. NOTIFICATION

All nominees will be informed of the outcome in Spring 2026. The winning team will be honoured at the Research Excellence Awards ceremony in May 2026.

Definition of impact for the REF

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, an effect on, change or benefit 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.

For the purposes of the impact element of the REF:

- a) Academic impacts on research or the advancement of academic knowledge (whether in the UK or internationally) are excluded. (The submitted unit's contribution to academic research and knowledge is assessed within the 'outputs' and 'environment' elements of REF.)
- b) Impacts on students, teaching or other activities both within and/or beyond the submitting HEI are included. The 'Panel criteria' (paragraphs 301 to 302) sets out the panels' expectations for impact in this area.

Impacts will be assessed in terms of their 'reach and significance' regardless of the geographic location in which they occurred, whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. The UK funding bodies expect that many impacts will contribute to the economy, society and culture within the UK, but equally value the international contribution of UK research.

Source: <https://2021.ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/guidance-on-submissions-201901/index.html> (page 68)



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