Web content – REF impact

There is, as yet, no detailed guidance about REF 2020 impact. Here are some working assumptions:

- Impacts should have occurred between 1 August 2013 and 31 July 2020
- Impacts should be based on research that has taken place at the University of Aberdeen between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2020
- Underpinning research must be at least of 2* quality (internationally recognised) – we have interpreted that to mean externally funded through competitive, peer reviewed process or published in peer reviewed journal or equivalent
- Impact can be based on research undertaken by staff who have left, as long as the follow on activity continues
- Impact already submitted to REF2014 can be resubmitted, provided there is continuing or new impact to report in the current assessment period
- Stern review recommendation: case studies can be linked to a research activity and a body of work as well as to a broad range of research outputs. If adopted in the next REF guidance, this will allow the submission of impact by a group or a person based on a body of work or accumulated expertise in a particular research area, making it much easier to submit impact case studies based on, for example, advisory roles and expert witness type activity.
- Stern review recommendation: impact definition for REF2020 to include public engagement activities, cultural impacts as well as major impacts on curricula and/or pedagogy within or across disciplines; include ground breaking academic impacts such as research leading to the creation of new disciplines

REF 2014 Definition:

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 impacts.

Assessed in terms of
Reach – How widely felt it was – not a geographic scale; panels will consider a number of dimensions to the ‘reach’ of impacts as appropriate to the nature of the research and its impacts.

Significance – How much difference it made to beneficiaries

Resubmitting case studies that were submitted to REF 2014

Detailed guidance not yet available, but we understand that
An element of ‘additionality’ will be required – new actions and events that have taken place in the current assessment period

Simple continuation of impact is not enough

Underpinning research needs to have taken place in the qualifying period

Need to watch out for incremental or 2* impact following up on world class impact in REF2014

What happens next?

If you have a potential case study, please get in touch, or complete the template and send to ref@abdn.ac.uk.

We will record it on Pure. The entries will be reviewed regularly to assess whether they will develop into impact case studies, and to enable help and support from Research & Innovation, PERU and others where required.

Some more background information:

A searchable database of all impact case studies submitted to REF 2014 can be accessed here: http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/search1.aspx

A different kind of visualisation of the variety of REF 2014 impact case studies is here: http://www.digital-science.com/visualizations/ref-case-study-similarity-network/ - each dot is an impact case study, arranged in thematic clusters. The different colours represent different panels (green for panel A, red for panel B, blue for panel C and yellow for panel D), giving an idea of how the submitted case studies aggregated into topics and themes across the panels. You can click on each dot to access the case study and see the variations on different themes.

Further information/contact

If you wish to discuss further, please contact

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