

Research Councils UK


Excellence
with impact

Pathways to Impact



Presentation summary

- What is impact? And why does it matter?
- Why are we asking applicants to explore Pathways to Impact?
- What do applicants need to write in their application?
- Key messages and policies.
- Implementation of Pathways to Impact.



RCUK is committed to excellence with impact.

This means continuing to invest in the best research, people and infrastructure; whilst aiming to enhance the impact of that funding on society.

What is impact?

- RCUK recognise that the research we fund has academic, and economic and societal impacts.
- The potential to maximise both of these is assessed within peer review process
 - Academic impact: Academic beneficiaries and case for support.
 - Economic/societal impact: Impact summary and Pathways to Impact.

What is economic and societal impact?

- The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy by:
 - fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the UK,
 - increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy,
 - enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

Why does impact matter?

- **Accountability**
 - spending public money means demonstrating the benefits of that investment to society
- **Quality**
 - research can be improved by engagement with a broad range of potential beneficiaries
- **Maximising benefits**
 - shortening the time to benefits, and increasing the impact we know our investments have
- **Reputation**
 - enhance UK attractiveness for research and innovation investment

Why are we asking applicants to explore Pathways to Impact?

- Asking applicants to consider activities to enhance economic and societal impact is not new.
- We know that the research we fund has a huge impact on the wellbeing and economy of the UK.
- The changes to the application process help emphasise the importance we place on this and ensure that potential impacts are demonstrated and supported.
- Also, it ensures a common format for capturing and assessing this information across different Research Councils.

What do applicants need to write in their application?

Academic beneficiaries

- Should cover potential academic impact and pathways towards realising that.

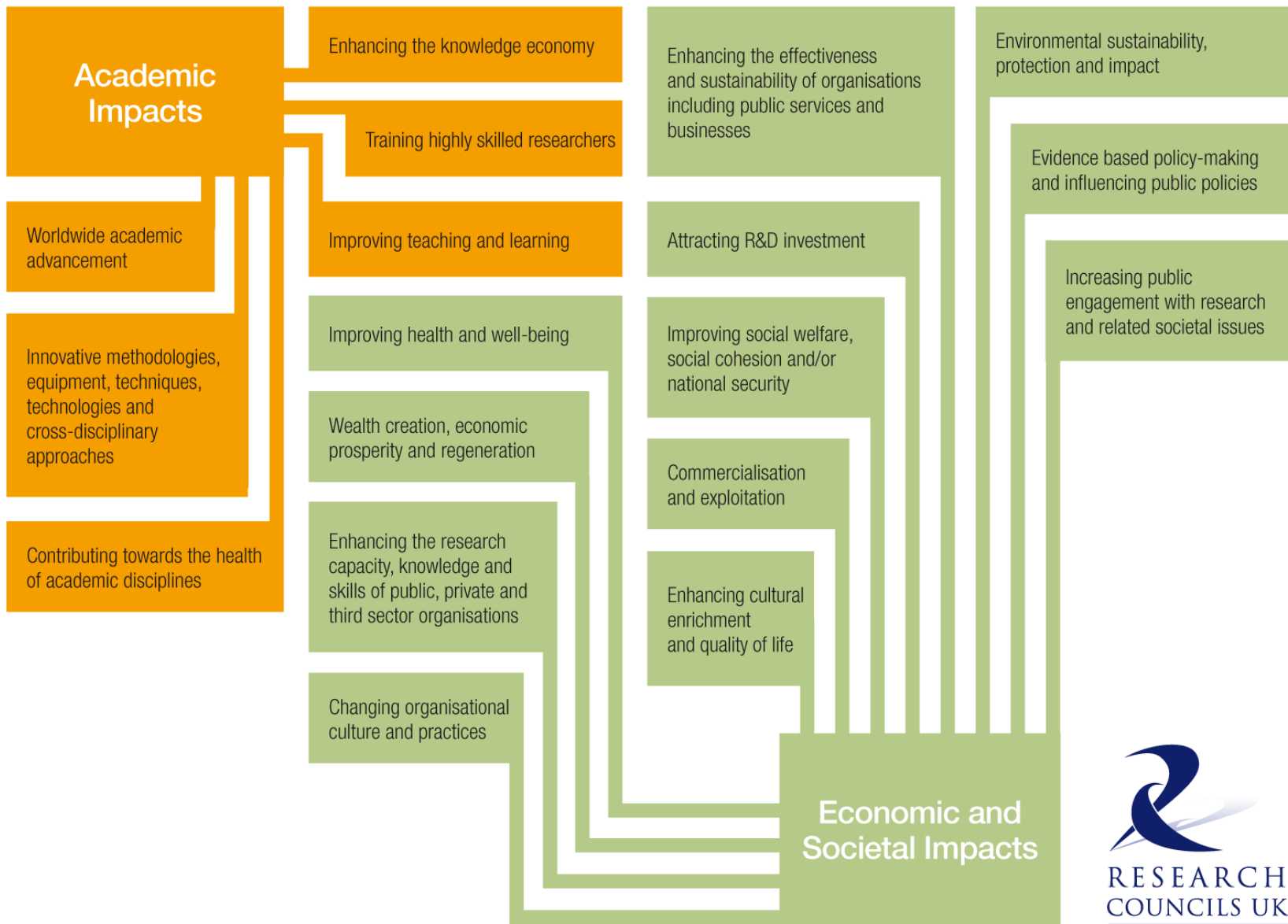
Impact Summary

- Should cover potential economic and societal impact and seek to answer two questions:
 - *Who* might benefit from this research?
 - *How* might they benefit from this research?

Pathways to Impact

- Should detail the activities which will help develop potential economic and societal impact, answering the question:
 - *What* will be done to ensure that potential beneficiaries? have the opportunity to engage with this research?

Pathways to Impact



Pathways to Impact: Key messages and policies

- The primary criterion for RCUK funding remains excellent research.
- Beyond that there are a number of other considerations, of which Pathways to Impact are one.
- Pathways to Impact may affect the funding decision when applications are at the borderline for funding and/or there is a clear need for user engagement.
- RCUK reserve the right to withhold the award of a grant until Pathways to Impact are of a standard appropriate for the project.

Pathways to Impact: Key messages and policies

- Activities outlined in the Pathways to Impact document should be **project specific** and **appropriate**.
- Where appropriate, plans for engagement with other academics may be included in the Pathways to Impact, where this forms part of the critical pathway towards economic and societal impact.
- Applicants may request resources to cover the costs of eligible, project specific and appropriate activity within their Pathways to Impact, unless applying via STFC, where applicants should refer to specific guidance available online.

Pathways to Impact: Key messages and policies

- Any costs or additional time requested in applications for such activities should be reasonable and fully justified, and should avoid duplicating any elements that are covered within indirect costs.
- It is expected that applicants will be able to explore pathways for realising the impact of their research. However, if applicants have explored the guidance and describing activities aimed at enhancing impact is not applicable for the research, then this should be stated and justified with the Pathway to Impact document.

For more guidance: www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/impacts



Implementation of Pathways to Impact

- how is it going so far?

Attitudes and perceptions

Benefits:

- Encourages researchers to give more consideration to the potential impact of their work.
- Scope for better knowledge exchange.
- Helps to identify potential future success stories.

Challenges:

- Resources required to support researchers.
- Confusion and misconceptions regarding purpose.

Content and quality of Pathways to Impact

- Applicants have taken the requirements of Pathways to Impact seriously and attempted to address all three questions.
- Quality of applicants first attempt at completing Pathways to Impact has been varied, but there is an indication that this is improving.
- Common characteristics of highly and poorly rated Pathways to Impact have been identified and used to enhance the RCUK guidance.

Common characteristics of problematic quality Pathways to Impact	Common characteristics of high quality Pathways to Impact
<p>Vagueness, lack of specificity and clear deliverables.</p> <p>Activities are not project specific, but routine activities for University research posts.</p> <p>Too much focus on track record rather than what will be done as part of this research project.</p> <p>Lack of consideration of broader beneficiaries, likely impacts and appropriate mechanisms.</p> <p>Activities narrowly and end of project focused.</p>	<p>Good consideration of the relevant beneficiaries, user needs and tailored activities.</p> <p>Clear description of deliverables and milestones.</p> <p>Co-production and involvement of beneficiaries and users from the outset.</p> <p>Clear commitment for realising both academic and non academic research impacts.</p> <p>Briefly noted track record for knowledge exchange and impact generating activities in the context of the specific research project.</p>

Guidance and support for Pathways to Impact (application process)

- The revised RCUK guidance and institutional visits have been appreciated by the research community.
- Standard text for Pathways to Impact has not emerged and is discouraged.
- Many Research Organisations are supporting applicants with Pathways to Impact.

RCUK peer review process and Pathways to Impact

- Pathways to Impact are appropriately considered within the assessment process and potential economic and societal impacts have not been judged above research excellence.
- Peer review panels feel they have the right mix of assessors to adequately consider the appropriateness of the proposed activities to maximise the potential impact of the research.

Next steps

Continued commitment to:

- embed impact consideration as part of the core process in all activities supported by RCUK,
- encourage and support potential impact generating activities and the sharing of best practice,
- consult with the sector to communicate and enhance our guidance and processes.