



Research Councils UK  
our vision  
for excellence  
with impact



“Our vision is for **excellence with impact**; the UK to be as renowned for the impact of its research as it is for its excellence”

PROFESSOR DAVID DELPY,  
RCUK IMPACT CHAMPION

Public investment in research makes certain that the UK is able to compete in the global economy as well as reaping the rewards both culturally and for the wellbeing of society. Research funded by Research Councils UK (RCUK) is already contributing to creating a productive economy, healthy society and a sustainable world.

Building on our successes, our continued vision is for excellence with impact. We encourage researchers to explore pathways to impact and support them to focus on both short and long-term benefits of research. At the heart of the impact strategy is an emphasis on achieving, rewarding and celebrating societal and economic impact.

Impact is the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. Impact embraces all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

- fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom,
  - increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy, and
  - enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.
- Impact has always been at the core of RCUK. By working with a wide range of partners in the private, public and third sectors, we have the ability to leverage both the resources and expertise to enable us to fund excellent research which benefits both society and the economy. This strategy will ensure that we build on our past successes and maximise the impact from the research, people and facilities that we fund.

The impact strategy emphasises, in particular:

- focus – concentrating RCUK knowledge exchange efforts in priority areas to maximise the benefits of research
- coordination – ensuring well-aligned activities and funding opportunities across RCUK and our partners to maximise the impact of past, current and future funded research
- speed – the opportunity to accelerate transfer of knowledge from the research base into new businesses, services and policies.

# Engaging key stakeholders

Advance the rate of innovation from our investments by developing forward-looking relationships that identify and address the needs of users of research.

Working in partnership generates new ideas, policies, and insights into users' needs; and helps both academic researchers and users to see new opportunities for societal and economic impact. Good partnerships also break down barriers, and allow ideas and expertise to move into practice sooner: Coordination with other organisations who invest in research ensures that public research funding is focused and efficient. RCUK partnerships leverage funding from the private, public and third sectors. All of this is essential in realising the full potential of UK research.

## We will:

---

influence universities to recognise and reward activities that generate impact from our funded research and researchers

---

develop and sustain focussed relationships with key partners including users, other funders and academia to enable increased knowledge exchange and use of research

---

work with partners in the private, public and third sectors to focus on maximising the opportunities, and minimising barriers, for new collaborative ways of working or training, especially in key target sectors and in cross-Council research challenges.

# Maximising research impact

Increase impact from our investments by improving support mechanisms, as well as through evaluation, sharing best practice and communicating the benefits of our continued support of research, training and the provision of facilities.

Working with users as well as engaging with academics and knowledge transfer professionals, is essential to ensure that there is support for impact, innovation and enterprise. This applies from RCUK research programmes, such as the Energy programme, Global Uncertainties and Living with Environmental Change, to individual projects; throughout the research funding lifecycle. Support for knowledge exchange must be embedded appropriately in research funding schemes. RCUK also needs to ensure appropriate dedicated knowledge exchange schemes are in place, which are coherent across the research base.

## We will:

---

embed impact considerations as part of the core process in all activities supported by RCUK, from application to post-project evaluation

---

optimise our dedicated schemes for knowledge exchange, user partnerships and collaborations to achieve increased benefits from past, present and future investments

---

identify and address the barriers and drivers for maximising impact and disseminate best practice

---

develop methodologies to identify and assess impact from our investments to ensure that we are at the cutting edge

---

use our successes to present the strongest possible case for continued investment in the research base.

# Delivering highly skilled people

Drive innovation in knowledge exchange through enhancement of knowledge exchange skills in the research base and encourage movement of highly skilled people between the research base and user communities at all career stages.

The UK requires a sufficient supply of excellent, highly skilled researchers to support innovation and global competitiveness. Of the 4500 RCUK Doctoral graduates each year, over 60% will move from higher education, taking their skills into the wider economy. RCUK seeks to ensure that this supply of highly trained people meets the need for specialist postgraduate research skills in a wide range of employment sectors. We also recognise that highly skilled researchers are vital to successful knowledge exchange between the research base and user communities and will ensure that these skills are specifically included in researcher development.

## We will:

---

develop mechanisms to encourage people exchange between research base and user partners at all career stages

---

support the development of skills that foster and enable enterprise, knowledge exchange and innovation and thereby equip researchers to maximise the impact of their research and research-related activities

---

improve our understanding of the career pathways of researchers and ensure their research training equips them to impact on the economy, society and our quality of life.

Research Councils UK is the strategic partnership of the UK's Research Councils. We invest annually around £3 billion in research.

## Our focus is on **excellence** with **impact**:

- We nurture the highest **quality research**, as judged by international peer review providing the UK with a competitive advantage. Global research requires we sustain a diversity of funding approaches, fostering international collaborations, and providing access to the best facilities and infrastructure, and locating skilled researchers in stimulating environments.
- Our research achieves **impact** – the demonstrable contribution to society and the economy made by knowledge and skilled people. To deliver impact, researchers and funders need to engage and collaborate with the public, business, government and the third sector.

[www.rcuk.ac.uk](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk)