National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
Public Engagement

REF Consultation Event
September 2018

Event summary

29/09/18

NCCPE REF consultation event: September 2018

Introduction

This is a report of a consultation event run by the NCCPE on September 14th 2018. Over 80 delegates joined us to consider the current consultation on the draft REF guidance. The event closed with a panel discussion between:

- Steven Hill (Head of Research at Research England chair of the REF Steering Group)
- Imran Khan (Head of Public Engagement at Wellcome and member of REF Main Panel A)
- Sophie Duncan, NCCPE (chair)

The NCCPE circulated a briefing paper in advance **which can be accessed here**.

A series of table discussions addressed the following topics:

- **Equality and diversity**: the briefing paper identified the absence of references to Equality and Diversity in the draft documents. Tables were invited to discuss how best to address this
- **Rigour and robustness of evidence:** the briefing paper outlined our proposal to highlight the importance of rigour in assessing impact. Tables considered this and fed back on the suggested framing and wording of the response
- **Consistency and coherence:** four tables reviewed the NCCPE's suggestions for how more consistency and clarity could be achieved particularly in relation to Annex A of the Draft criteria, which lays out a set of exemplar indicators of impact
- **Capacity building:** tables stood back from the details of the consultation to consider the capacity building challenges linked to the REF, and to feedback on the NCCPE's suggestions of how they might offer tools and training in this area

Executive Summary

Delegates provided invaluable feedback on the NCCPE's proposed response.

- There was broad agreement that the guidance about **Equality and Diversity** needed to be extended beyond internal staff policies to include the approach to impact. There should be a clear expectation set by the panels that equality and diversity will be addressed in impact planning (in the 'environment'), and within impact case studies. Some risks with this were pointed out, for instance that it might encourage superficial or tokenistic behaviours.
- There was strong support for asking for stronger guidance on what would count as '**robust evidence'** and on the important role of **evaluation**. But there was a very mixed response to the suggestion that assessment of the 'rigour' of the process of engagement might be foregrounded in the guidance, given that the REF is focused on assessing the outcomes and impacts arising from research (not the engagement process itself). However, many delegates wanted to see more clarity being offered about how '**pathways' to impact** will be judged by panels as part of the assessment process.
- The NCCPE's suggestions about how the guidance about indicators of impact might be made more **consistent and coherent** were welcomed by many, with a number of very useful and practical suggestions about how to develop the draft table of indicators

proposed in the NCCPE's discussion paper. There was broad agreement that categorising indicators as 'structure', 'process' or 'outcome' indicators is helpful.

- Discussion of **capacity building** highlighted how much support will be needed, both by the panels, and by the sector, to ensure a more rigorous approach is embedded for REF 2021. The key 'pressure points' for addressing capacity building effectively are summarised in the table below:

Building capacity for public engagement (PE) in REF 2021	
The particular barriers / blocks to the integration of high quality public engagement in REF submissions	- Issues of resources (time, funding, skills etc.) - Structural issues (e.g. lack of strategic investment in areas like reward and recognition or long term investment in capacity building) - Issues of language/definitions - The challenge of evidencing impacts from PE (Perception) PE not valued/seen as risky - The need for additional guidance/examples
The 'triggers' or methods you have deployed which have been successful	- Reward, recognition, career progression - Training/researcher development - Champions/leadership - Communication/framing - Funding - Support - Case studies and examples
Ideas for how the NCCPE and other agencies might provide well targeted support	- Support to panels - Support to sector/institutions - Support to PEPs - Training/CPD - Advocacy - Setting the standards/providing examples

Next steps

The NCCPE has revised its consultation response in the light of the feedback received at the event and has **published a version of the response which we will submit on 15th October**.

We will be using the feedback on capacity building to inform our plans for our ongoing support activity.

We would like to thank all the delegates for their input, and the various people who contributed feedback on the discussion paper which underpinned this event.

Introduction and Overview

The NCCPE provided a short overview of their approach to the current consultation. The presentation covered the following points:
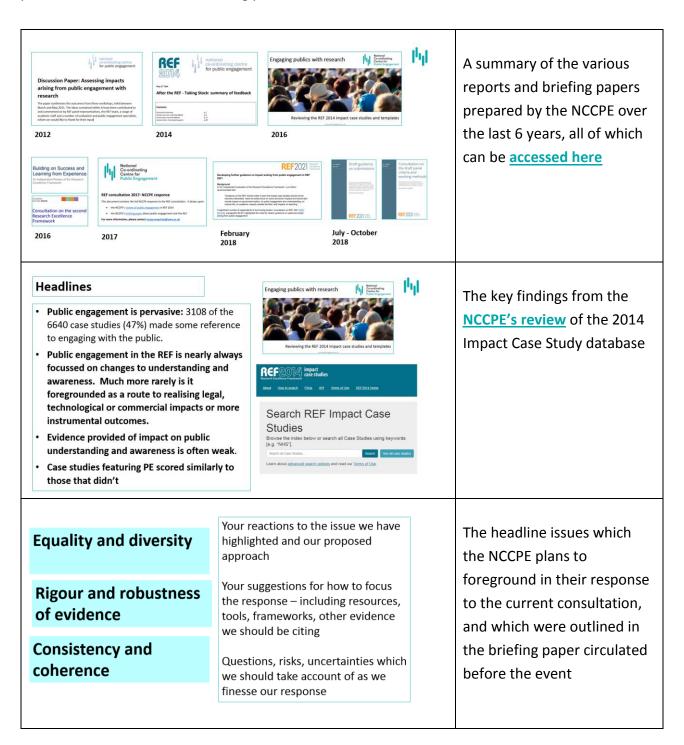
	A summary of the various reports and briefing papers prepared by the NCCPE over the last 6 years, all of which can be **accessed here**
	The key findings from the **NCCPE's review** of the 2014 Impact Case Study database
	The headline issues which the NCCPE plans to foreground in their response to the current consultation, and which were outlined in the briefing paper circulated before the event

Table discussion responses

Following this presentation, tables were invited to record their responses to a set of prompt questions relating to the three discussion topics for discussion. The notes recorded by each table have been transcribed and clustered in the following tables.

Equality and diversity

The briefing paper identified the absence of references to Equality and Diversity in the draft documents. Tables were invited to discuss how best to address this

Whilst there was broad agreement that this issue should be foregrounded in the NCCPE's response, there was some caution about setting unrealistically high expectations of how the sector might respond.

Do you agree that this is a significant issue which we should prioritise in our response?
Strong support for addressing the issue • Increasing the reference to equality and diversity, particularly audiences and communities, can only help with the quality of public engagement work, REF-related or otherwise • Yes • This hard to do, so reward robust methods in doing this even if the level of impact is a little less than others • 100% of our table agree yes • This is an opportunity, if prioritised, to re-orient research to those who would benefit most because they are underserved **But risks of encouraging inappropriate and unprofessional behaviours** • The danger is that the community group should be appropriate, you can't force it • Concerns about parachuting into communities who we've not seen before and then leave again • Including 'community voice' is difficult and sensitive; can involve vulnerable people • Ethics and equality: make sure that focus on rigour doesn't lead to badgering vulnerable impact beneficiaries (e.g. mental health research) for evidence. This would make their situation worse • Diversity and equality as part of the training of researchers on the moral choices and consequences of research and its impact on society **And of other unintended consequences** • We are concerned that this could lead to people thinking that if they don't engage with disadvantaged communities it's no good: impact is not as good • The research community may shout 'what you're telling me this now?! I've only just got my head around public engagement' • There isn't consistency across all impacts: what does this mean for policy and business et cetera

What key points should we emphasise (in terms of case study submissions and environment statements)?

Encouraging panels to be explicit that they will value activity that contributes to E&D
- Equality and diversity should be a factor throughout (i.e. Partnerships and collaborations) as well as processes and outputs
- An acknowledgement that engagement with more diverse communities and audiences can be more complex and demanding and should be recognised as such

Lots of useful suggestions for additional practical guidance
- Can we define and unpack 'reach and significance' and give examples?
- How do we capture the diversity of stakeholders?
- Consider how it relates to reach.
- Breakup the general public into a mosaic of suggested groups to encourage thinking of diversity, and feed this into 'reach'
- How it relates to process: the where, the who, how and non-native English speakers
- Start with stakeholder and audience mapping to identify appropriate publics. Ensure there is diversity and equality within
- Most HEI's have equality and diversity at the vision level, it's the same for the REF
- Importance of recognising the process as much as the outcomes of research
- Reach an equal and diverse audience by producing a range of targeted outputs, for instance to reach those who don't read journals

Are there any frameworks / guidelines policies / examples, which you think we should reference?

- **Involve's patient guides**
- Educational organisations' guidance and policies
- BBC audience categories
- Museum audience classifications
- Emily Dawson at UCL would be a good person to consult
- National standards for community engagement see **voicescotland.org.uk**
- Scottish government **national outcomes frameworks**
- One table suggested the following amendment to section 4 of the Environment template: '*This section should provide information about the submitted unit's research collaborations, networks and partnerships, their equality and diversity, including relationships with key research users, beneficiaries or audiences*'

Rigour and robustness of evidence

The briefing paper highlighted the importance of addressing rigour in assessing impact. Tables considered this and fed back on the suggested framing and wording of the response.

There was considerable 'push back' on the suggestion that 'rigour' might be added to 'reach and significance' as a key criterion for assessing impact. However, there was support for providing clearer expectations about the provision of robust evidence arising from evaluation, with a range of helpful suggestions for how this could be framed.

Do you support the case for adding 'rigour' to 'reach and significance'? Why / why not? Could the wording be improved?

A very mixed response
- Half of the table said yes and half of the table said no
- Disagreement: this approach doesn't account for accidental engagement, we should assess the change made not the process to make that change, this is the wrong platform for assessing rigour: REF is measuring change rather than the process to get that change
- Concerned with introducing the element of rigour at this stage in the REF process
- Introducing rigour would also cause concern for those case studies with strong impact but that struggle to evidence rigour as this may have been approached by other actors in the research process
- Rigour of pathways to impact can't be assessed with the same weighting as reach and significance of impacts themselves
- How can the rigour of accidental impact be measured?
- This would be a significant burden and it's too late to add another element the 2021. Perhaps the 2028
- Only rigorously carried out engagement activities are likely to have the biggest impact. However there can be very rigorously carried out public engagement programs that do not achieve impact, and these should not score as highly
- Rigour: more robustness of evidence rather than more rigour might generate a whole industry behind evaluation

Beware of unintended consequences
- It is vital to bear in mind that these guidelines will ultimately influence the types of public engagement activities carried out, so think what activities do we want to encourage and what guidance will lead there
- There are concerns about providing obstacles and deterrents to staff who might consider submitting a case study
- Emphasising rigorous evaluation requirements within REF guidance could create a hierarchy of evidence which may counter against the key REF goal to identify impact from excellent research however it may arise
- It is important to show that all levels of impact are important and valid, to dissuade researchers from making heroic and grand assumptions about impact because that's what they think is wanted or awarded
- Concerns about how this will be interpreted by researchers, and what type of engagement activities it will end up encouraging

Other considerations
- You don't need to see the detail of the evaluation process
- Panels should ensure that this is considered and it should be fundamental to what's going on anyway and what should be expected
- A radio four interview with high reach but poor quality evaluation should not score highly

Alternative approaches to the challenge
- Suggestion: instead of rigour and evaluation put the emphasis on producing and demonstrating high-quality robust evidence. Make this consistent across panels and

provide a level playing field while allowing for different subjects producing different kinds of evidence
- Include prompts and guidance to include an embedded evaluation e.g. As an example of robust evidence: this could help with better understanding how research leads to impact
- Rigour is something that should come across in the environment element of the REF and is not necessarily something that should be assessed individual case study level
- Rigour is a loaded term which may mean different things to different research areas. But REF leads the agenda on quality improvement so it's important that rigour is recognised. The sentiment of rigour without using that term would maybe be a good first step
- I support it but can see it might be difficult certain units of assessment. Perhaps rigour in some of the range of areas i.e. in the process of setting up evaluating or responding
- I think the paragraph 293 of the consultation of draft panel criteria goes far enough in introducing rigour and robustness to case studies. It mentions integrity and the expert judging of this. It also follows that strong methods and rigorous evaluation lead to highly rated indicators and evidence
- Can we have assurances from the panels that they will judge evidence in a robust manner (which perhaps didn't happen in all cases in 2014)
- Some people who said no, did feel that it should be emphasised more but not foregrounded alongside reach and significance
- Concerns about how rigour would be interpreted. It needs to be flexible

Do you think we should foreground the role of evaluation? Are there any risks with doing this? What points should we emphasise in making the case?

A variety of concerns were expressed
- Tension between internal and external evaluation and overplaying the importance of this
- Evaluation needs to be appropriate and credible, so is that basically 'robust'?
- There are risks in foregrounding evaluation: it might discourage initiatives that are difficult to evaluate rigorously in the short term
- How do the panels know what good and meaningful impact looks like? How can the rigour be articulated to them?
- Does including rigour for public engagement alter the benchmark for other types of impact?
- There isn't a big enough discussion being had about what robust evidence is in order to produce such guidance

Other helpful clarifications
- Steven Hill's point about unplanned impact: the guidance should suggest and encourage exploring it after the event, rather than not at all
- Assessment of process can be discussed and looked at under the environment rather than impact
- Serendipitous impact won't necessarily be able to claim this, but planned public engagement should have aims that can be tested
- Evidence of reach and significance needs to improve and REF leads the agenda, so yes, more and evaluation with caution
- Yes, evaluation is key to knowing what impacts have been achieved, and good evaluation should also capture serendipitous outcomes, events and impacts

- Building rigour and good evaluation is perhaps more timely at the start and throughout a REF cycle and many projects for REF 2021 will be complete too late to change strategy or methodology
- Yes, this is important to emphasise rigour. Need also to highlight that impact may be intangible but should nonetheless be robustly evaluated
- Is it always important to highlight the evaluation process in evidencing impact? Is the strength of the impact demonstrated in the case study not linked to the evaluation process anyway? It's important to recognise the role of evaluation in the process but not necessarily highlight it as an explicit output
- The rigour of the research is ensured by the two star threshold of criteria. However the rigour of the method behind constructing the impact claim cannot be articulated within the case study format. By adding a method section, i.e. What methods were used to create the impact claim in a hundred words would allow for rigour of the claim
- Some of the group feel that this is been addressed already in the guidance through the routine submission of strong evidence. They should be checks in place with this in terms of the organisational scrutiny and overview and the assessment by the panels
- Others felt that it should be more foregrounded, possibly even to the point of including a methodology section to the case study how the impact was evidenced

Are there any frameworks / tools / resources which you think we should reference?

- Provide robust examples of evidence that could be used consistently across panels
- We would like to see more and clearer guidance on what makes a four-star case study
- Guidance on what robust evidence looks like: concrete and specific examples, for instance case studies
- Potential source of tools would be the work of academics in the field of robust evidence, for instance Emily Dawson
- Mixed methods research methods, going beyond the instrumentalised social health frameworks
- Scottish government has some good guidance on **standards of community engagement** which covers 10 areas including planning, evaluation, processes, people, inclusion. I was really impressed and it can be applied elsewhere
- NCCPE **Evaluation resources** and **Guides**
- R Brauer (2018) **What research impact? Tourism studies and the changing UK research ecosystem**
- **Fast track impact** has a range of publications resources and tools
- **The Emerald impact literacy workbook**

Consistency and coherence

Four tables reviewed the NCCPE's suggestions for how more consistency and clarity could be achieved, particularly in relation to Annex A of the Draft Criteria, which lays out a set of exemplar indicators of impact

There was strong support from many people for the suggested use of '**structure, process and outcome indicators**' as a way of providing a more coherent definition of indicators of impact. There was also considerable support for the NCCPE's suggested re-framing of the draft Annex A's

areas and indictors of impact. A number of people suggested that the NCCPE's proposed area 'Education, Lifelong Learning and Community Development' be split into two.

While there was significant support for 'distributing' public engagement across the guidance (rather than containing it in one discrete area) risks with this approach were identified.

Areas of Impact
- **Do you agree with our suggested re-framing? Would you add anything?**
- **Are there risks / unintended consequences with doing this?**

Reflections on the proposed new area. 'Impacts on education, lifelong learning and community engagement'
- Impacts on education, lifelong learning and community engagement: does this reflect a sector?
- Add a 10th area of impact: **impacts on citizenship.** The motivation being to improve participation in civic society, informal engagement in decision-making and considered involvement in public/online discussion
- Consider separating education and lifelong learning (skills related) from community engagement and citizenship (agency -related). See above.
- Feedback the citizenship role into the environment template
- Under skills – make a link to the industrial strategy
- Alternative: impacts on understanding, skills and participation (worried we lose category or a catchall)
- Community engagement or community development?
- The new wording would help introduce more case studies from the humanities
- Skills or lifelong learning?
- Impacts on understanding, learning and participation: is this underlying all the other areas of impact?

Other reflections
- The new wording is more in line with previous. More specific about outcome (noun) over process (verb)
- It is good to have discussions but not to get too caught up in putting things in boxes, so this is valuable as a toolkit
- The table has different responses: an example of how important consistency is, as all the table has different interpretations of the meaning of the word
- Does this query have its roots in the history of development of public engagement? What is the difference between public engagement and community engagement?
- Is there an issue of NCC politics to ensure public engagement is included in everything?
- The definition of impact should be consistent

Indicators
- **Do you find this approach helpful? Are there better alternatives we could use?**
- **Are there risks / unintended consequences with doing this?**

Positive endorsement of the approach
- The indicators are really good! Especially outcomes
- It is helpful to have examples split into indicators

- It is useful to have a document about the range of what impact can be
- It helps to think about the process of research and how that might have an impact that you've not thought through
- It helps think about the impact journey

Enhancing and developing the table
- With the draft table, you could helpfully add 'mechanism' or 'approaches' column between 'public roles' and 'contribution', to explore **how** the impacts might be achieved
- How do these map onto the areas of impact?
- How do these indicators align with the funders' expectations and ideas around impact (for instance Wellcome versus pathways to impact etc.)?
- It is a helpful grid to identify indicators, though the outcome indicators felt vague
- There needs to be some rewording of the terminology. It needs more basic explanation as academics won't understand some of the terminology
- It doesn't seem to capture the measurement of academics changing practice
- We're not sure how the table works: is it a flowchart or not? A few people found it difficult to follow
- The table broadly felt that public engagement should be embedded throughout, that's the aim
- There wasn't much about two-way and civic
- Add in a clear definition of what structure, process and outcome categories mean
- Add an executive summary and diagram of types of indicators
- Provide narrative explanations
- In the areas of impact, should animal welfare be with environment?
- Separate community engagement into a separate area of impact or add into creativity and culture

How might panels utilise this kind of content?
- Who populates the panels that value these indicators? Perhaps more guidance and training to ensure all members have the same process
- This table thought this approach was too complex and more suited for public engagement professionals over panellists

Concerns about Panel A's guidance on testimonials
- Panel A says that they do not welcome testimonials offering individual opinions on evidence of impact. There are risks here – for instance with PPI and the role of patients on panels. If a patient wants to give personal testimony, where does this fit in? We need to ensure you don't take the public voice out of the impact on the public.

'Dispersal' of PE
- **Do you agree with our argument for dispersing PE?**
- **Are there risks / unintended consequences with doing this?**
- **What more should we do to flesh this approach out?**

Broadly speaking there was support for embedding public engagement across the framework, however a strong note of caution was raised that there may be unintended consequences, including a reduction in the number of case studies which focussed specifically on public engagement as a route to impact.

- 'Dispersed' is not the best term, it's too like evaporation. Perhaps 'propagation' or 'universalising'
- Add in mechanisms or approaches - the **how** you do an activity or method - for each area of impact
- Potential risk: if public engagement is dispersed throughout then the risk may be that there are no stand-alone public engagement impact case studies therefore meaning public engagement could only be included as a bolt on
- Collectively we thought the idea of having public engagement throughout was a good thing. It would be helpful for individual researchers, the panels to assess and impact managers but we would caution that another word should be used instead of dispersal for instance: distribution, embedding, propagation, spread, universalising, integration, permeating
- Public engagement is the methodology and route to impact
- Could you lose the value of public engagement in itself as a result?
- You still need to evidence change

Plenary feedback

A short plenary session saw the following points highlighted by delegates:

Equality and Diversity

- Concerns about highlighting E&D included the lack of best practice in the sector, and the risk of tokenism
- The need to start with identifying _appropriate_ audiences
- The important role of the Environment statement in addressing this, for instance describing any investment in training to consider social and ethical consequences of research (and more broadly)
- It is important to take <u>every</u> opportunity to contribute to E&D, especially where taxpayers' money is involved.

Rigour

- It was noted that the guidance will affect types of PE that is done, and that this should be borne in mind.
- A concern about highlighting rigour and evaluation, and a strong preference for foregrounding the need to provide **_robust evidence_** instead.
- We're in the business of education, so HEI's should be rigorous in their internal processes. Can we say we'll mark case studies down if the evidence is not robust?
- Strong concern about the suggestion of rewarding 'method' rather than 'change'.
- Concern about the risk of failing to value unintended impacts.
- It was noted that panel members are not (usually) public engagement experts – so it will be important to consider how to make their jobs easier (for instance by offering training).
- Equally, we should not assume academics know what robust evidence of impact (and PE) looks like.
- Attribution is a critical issue: we need consistency in guidance about how to approach this.
- Consideration of **process and approach** is best captured in the Environment section.

Consistency and coherence

- The distinction between structure/process/outcome indicators was positively received
- Comments on the table provided on page 9 of the briefing paper included that suggestion of adding an area of impact focused on citizenship
- It was suggested that a new column could be added to list examples of mechanisms/approaches of PE, to help to identify PE and express it.
- The term 'dispersal of PE' was challenged – it sounds akin to evaporation. 'Integration' or 'embedding' were preferred
- The detail in the briefing paper was felt to be quite inaccessible. Can it be simpler?

Capacity building to support REF 2021

A short presentation by the NCCPE outlined the current support offered by the Centre linked to preparations for the REF. This includes:

Institutional support	A variety of **training courses and CPD provision**, including
	- Introductory training courses (**A Beginner's Guide to PE** and **High Quality PE**)
	- **Lessons from the REF**: based on our review of the 2014 case studies and including guidance on what is robust evidence
	- **Training on creating a fertile environment for engagement and impact**
	- **Courses and masterclasses on evaluation**
	- **Building Sustainable Partnerships** training
	- **Consultancy and advice**
Individual support	- A **Public Engagement Professionals Network** to support PE professionals with access to CPD, peer support and the latest thinking on engagement
	- **The Engage Academy**: a year-long professional development programme for PE professionals
	- **The Engage Researcher's Academy**: a year-long professional development programme for researchers with a passion for public engagement
Longer term sectoral support	- Various briefing papers, reviews and analyses of how public engagement featured in REF 2014, **listed here**
	- Support for institutional change, including our **Engage Watermark** benchmarking service

	• **The Engage Competition**, to celebrate excellence in public engagement • **Research for All journal**: a collaboration with UCL-IoE Press, a peer reviewed journal sharing cutting edge thinking about engagement and evaluation

Delegates were invited to discuss three questions on their tables:

- The particular barriers / blocks to the integration of high quality public engagement in REF submissions
- The 'triggers' or methods you have deployed which have been successful
- Ideas for how the NCCPE and other agencies might provide well targeted support

Their responses are transcribed and clustered below. The key points arising in each area included:

The particular barriers / blocks to the integration of high quality public engagement in REF submissions	• Issues of resources (time, funding, skills etc.) • Structural issues (e.g. lack of strategic investment in areas like reward and recognition or long term investment in capacity building) • Issues of language/definitions • The challenge of evidencing impacts from PE • (Perception) PE not valued/seen as risky • The need for additional guidance/examples
The 'triggers' or methods you have deployed which have been successful	• Reward, recognition, career progression • Training/researcher development • Champions/leadership • Communication/framing • Funding • Support • Case studies and examples
Ideas for how the NCCPE and other agencies might provide well targeted support	• Support to panels • Support to sector/institutions • Support to PEPs • Training/CPD • Advocacy • Setting the standards/providing examples

Full notes of the table discussions are included as an appendix.

Capacity building: plenary feedback

A short plenary session saw the following points highlighted by delegates:

Barriers

- Ethics – getting ethical approval to do PE
- Evidence – how to capture evidence of impact
- We don't know the rules until it's too late! Guidance for 2028 is needed now – not 2021
- Capacity within HEIs to support the work we do (there are lots of temporary roles in this area, few full time contracts etc.).

Enablers

- It is helpful to have PE Professionals and REF/ Impact officers working closely together
- There is a disconnect between Academics and Professional Service Staff, so having people in PE Professional or hybrid roles helps.
- Citing economic value of impact case studies focuses people's minds

NCCPE

- Work with Leadership Foundation and HEA (Advance HE) and with Vitae to ensure PE is on training programme for Senior Leaders in HEIs
- Is the word 'Public' a barrier? You could use 'External' instead
- Provide really good examples of robust evidence of impact of PE

Closing Plenary

A closing plenary session saw delegates posing questions to our panel:
- Steven Hill: Director of Research at Research England, and chair of the REF steering group
- Imran Khan: Head of Public Engagement at Wellcome, and member of REF Main Panel A
- Sophie Duncan: NCCPE (Chair)

Public vs. external/policy engagement etc. – should we draw a distinction?

The panel were asked to reflect on how helpful it is to focus on and identify 'public engagement' as a discrete area:
- Wellcome ring fences PE funding to encourage engagement with a non-professional audience. The REF is not trying to be prescriptive, but to provide an easy way to describe (and value) all pathways to impact.
- REF is about the impact not the pathway: but in practice different professional skill sets are required to do different types of engagement well, so it is helpful to differentiate. Too broad a definition can dilute professionalism.

Definition of "Bodies of work"?

The panel was asked whether a more precise definition of 'bodies of work' could be expected
- It is very difficult to define – and we have learned that in cases like this you need to be either very specific or very open – a halfway house really doesn't work.

Panel A are a bit "sniffy" about testimonials and continued case studies – why is that?

- There is concern that the panel might get lots of resubmitted ICS, which would be bad for the discipline area.
- We expect that consultation responses will pick up on these differences between the Panels and feed them back.

How much PE expertise is there in panels?

- This is listed online in the details of panel members. Most panel members are not PE experts – so we need to make the guidance and advice accessible to non-experts.

What about training for panel members?

- This will be guided by what the panels think they need. All will get unconscious bias training, and all with get specific guidance on certain things – e.g. citation data (where appropriate).
- If a well-placed organization, for example the NCCPE, should produce guidance on quality public engagement, that is likely to be something the panels would consider.

Research impact – PE – KE – Discuss.

The panel were invited to reflect on the overlaps between knowledge exchange, impact and public engagement:

- There is lots of discussion about knowledge exchange/knowledge mobilization at the moment. PE could potentially be considered a process of KE, but also can extend the legitimacy and link of research to society.
- There are risks in subsuming PE activity within KE as HEI KE infrastructure tends to focus on business.
- It is important to emphasise that REF should not dominate conversations about public engagement. It is vital that HEIs engage with society for all kinds of reasons – not just to realise research impact.

REF/KEF – are they collaborating? If so how?

The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is currently in development. What is the relationship between the KEF and the REF?

- There is a lot of cross-fertilisation. The response to the KEF consultation suggested that PE should be included in the metrics for KEF, but it's hard to come up with metrics that don't skew it and people argued strongly for a narrative element to KEF. This is being explored at the moment
- **The NCCPE responded** to the KEF metrics consultation. The response argued that the KEF is a place where all forms of PE might be reflected, not just those linked related to research impact.

Can we discuss and decide the guidance for REF 2028 earlier?

- We need to evaluate REF 2021 before we press ahead with REF 2028. We talk about how important it is to evaluate PE. Evaluation of the REF process is as important.

Research impact and PE environment

- Imran challenged delegates to think about how the Environment section could be used to emphasise and foreground the contribution of PE to research quality

Is there a danger that we create a 'publish or perish' equivalent with impact?

- The REF celebrates diverse approaches to impact – PE, business, KTPs, policy, etc. It isn't prescriptive – and the last REF did a good job of demonstrating this diversity.
- The REF tries for a balanced approach – it has reduced the emphasis on individuals, and on individual outputs. Impact case studies have always been about the unit not the individual.

Anything else?

The panel were invited for final reflections.

Imran highlighted that:

- Public Engagement is a pathway to impact, <u>not</u> impact. This is a good thing from Wellcome's perspective.
- The Environment section is really important – it's only 15% of the overall score but it's a really good opportunity to foreground the contribution of public engagement.
- We're still in consultation and we <u>really</u> want to hear what you like and don't like, backed up with examples. Make sure you also respond to the guidance on the Environment section.

Steven highlighted:

- The importance of focusing on impact and on **evidence and evaluation**. These will help to deliver better impact.

Appendix: Notes from table discussions of capacity building challenges

Barriers / blocks to the integration of high quality public engagement in REF submissions

Issue of resources (time, funding, skills etc.)
- Lack of resources, people, money, time
- Time taken for academics
- Where is the funding for public engagement? Researchers keep the costs down and public engagement suffers
- Early career researchers need time and support
- Many institutions don't have the resources
- Lack of training and tools
- Lack of resource e.g. temp & part-time roles
- Academics feel they haven't got the funds or budget to do it
- Lack of public engagement resources
- Time: you often hear academics don't have time particularly if they are working on REF research
- Not having the capacity within the University to offer support for instance people on short-term contracts
- Need to provide additional institutional support for academics
- Public engagement is not a quick win

Structural issues
- Institutional structure, if you don't have leads or offices
- There is a requirement for culture change across institutions to improve their approach to public engagement
- Processes institutions don't really fit
- Lack of institutional recognition
- Lack of recognition of professional service staff (experts) at senior level
- Lack of awareness of available support, lack of recognition of skills value of input professional service support for public engagement from senior management and those planning the REF process
- Short-term academic contracts which don't help build relationships
- Public engagement funding rarely pays the salary or time

Issues of language/definitions
- People are not used to the language of public engagement, both internally and externally
- Where are the boundaries between public engagement and knowledge exchange et cetera? A lot of public engagement activity is focused on the individual, not the research
- People are not used to the language of public engagement
- Definitions of public engagement
- Ongoing perception that public engagement needs to be highly visible, like Brian Cox: if it's not highly visible then it's not going in

- Lack of clarity about what is public engagement, what is dissemination, what is engaged research: boundaries
- For many institutions engagement is about increasing student numbers
- Lack of institutional understanding as to what impact public engagement is

Challenge of evidencing impacts from PE
- What evidence can you provide to prove good public engagement impact
- How do you show it makes a difference
- Sometimes people don't incorporate public engagement in case studies because it is so hard to evidence
- Too difficult to evidence or articulate
- Fixation on reach (e.g. Audience numbers, but significance?)
- How to measure the link between research, engagement and impact
- Need for more resource around evaluation: is this the role and responsibility of the University?
- Challenge being able to evaluate with rigour for public engagement if you do not have the expertise in this
- Ethics of asking people for evidence (e.g. Do you feel better) did you get ethics to evaluate appropriately before you started the project for instance providing usable evidence of how information is collected
- Evidence: understanding what good evidence looks like, particularly that which shows significance
- Lack of evidence with regard to significance and impact
- Need examples of what robust evidence looks like
- Support for good evaluation

(Perception) PE not valued/seen as risky
- The will to back it
- Public engagement is not seen as important enough to allow researchers to invest the time required for high quality public engagement
- A perceived hierarchy of impacts with economic greater than public engagement
- Culture of research values commercial and economic impact
- Many feel public engagement could never lead to real impact
- Fear of losing marks if public engagement is included, especially if the institution has so many great impact case studies already
- Perception of what panels will think still an issue at an institutional level
- There is a perception that public engagement is special compared with the more familiar policy business engagement which are more tangible
- Faculty led belief that public engagement is not well received by REF panels
- Less confidence by faculty who make decisions on REF case studies
- High-level support is absent for public engagement is not seen as a significant impact relative to other types e.g. Engineering and health
- Academics are making a huge emotional investment and risk to reputation
- Subject specific consideration of the worth of public engagement: concern the impact case studies based on evidence of public engagement will not be assessed strongly in the units of assessment not traditionally based around this type of activity
- Public engagement is not impact - this is a common institutional review
- There is still an enduring narrative that public engagement is weak

Need for additional guidance/examples
- No sector agreement on what high-quality public engagement looks like
- Lack of guidance
- Lack of clarity over how and what the panels will value in public engagement and therefore not including the narrative
- We need examples of impact case studies that have public engagement embedded and integrated throughout
- Need for guidance in the environment statement about forward plans for instance innovation, diverse city of public engagement, recognition mechanisms for engagement

Other issues
- A cultural voluntary commitment to public engagement
- People doing the best public engagement and not necessarily the ones with good underpinning research
- Public engagement is seen as an add-on people's day job
- Academics sometimes don't value non-academic staff
- Neglects areas of research were public engagement is typically one way, by necessity: for example, arts and humanities
- Research discipline bias
- Direction is always informed by academics
- The link to research outputs
- Other audiences are a more obvious fit research. Academics with limited time prioritise the easiest and most accessible audience
- Dominance of communications and public relations (high reach)
- Lack of good public engagement anyway, with no consequence from funders
- Overreliance on easier methods
- Knowledge of public engagement activities at the institution by those who are compiling the case studies
- Competition perceived between institutions which makes collaboration challenging
- Needs to be implemented at the start, earlier in the funding cycles
- Sometimes seems like a bolt on as you parachute in. Almost can seem like a knee-jerk reaction
- Reluctance to engage is don't understand the benefits
- Research outputs progress individuals careers but impact case studies don't
- How to get visibility of public engagement in amongst all other forms of engagement

'Triggers' or methods you have deployed which have been successful

Reward, recognition, career progression
- Awards and recognition
- Career progression needs to recognise the value of public engagement
- reward and recognition
- Public engagement is written into workload model
- Inclusion in hiring and promotion process
- Having public engagement written, as an option, into researchers contracts e.g. They are allowed to do up to X days of public engagement a year
- Reputation and awards

- Accreditation

Training/researcher development
- Masterclasses on theory et cetera
- Should we focused training and development of public engagement on early career researchers
- Research development support needs to expand support this activity so that academics aren't doing the logistical background work
- Commitment to early career researcher training, catch them at the start
- Training
- An induction pack the new starters
-

Champions/leadership
- Get academics involved in public engagement to talk to other academics
- Influence early career researchers
- An impact champions network
- Lots of internal supporters of research are involved
- Teams which do public engagement well coaching other teams or researchers

Communication/framing
- Getting the narrative out about public engagement and that it matters to them across all panels
- Ensuring we have systems to share projects and learn
- Value public engagement in impact as a matter of course do not encourage a narrow focus on REF
- Building capacity within universities can translate to senior leaders, impact managers et cetera about what public engagement is
- Framing audiences as external, not public
- Having a clear idea as to why people are doing engagement: they need to articulate this
- Nice analysis and report showing public engagement is embedded
- Talking to individual researchers to try to explain how public engagement adds value

Funding
- Public engagement is written into collaborative doctoral training proposals
- Funding mechanisms
- Internal seed funds: make them define their audience, practice, process et cetera
- Being clear about the economic value of impact case studies
- Recognition of the potential natural gain of a four-star case study in relation to justifying resource

Support
- We have a group of impact ninjas
- Help with link to research and engagement activities processes
- Public engagement officers role is to do project management and coordination
- Matchmaking, disseminating work, introducing new partners
- Get impact and public engagement people working together and aligned
- Add value - enhance what they're doing
- Getting people to think about impact building to their proposal from the beginning

- Sharing of wider evaluation team
- Public engagement team involved in the REF readiness exercise
- Having externals, Publics read the impact case studies
- Evaluation

Case studies and examples
- We need a variety of case studies to show the range
- Giving information about the many different types of impact that public engagement can have beyond informing, which is as far as some people think it goes
- Use case studies to highlight the benefit and added value and to give them ideas

Ideas for how the NCCPE and other agencies might provide well targeted support

Support to panels
- Provide support to REF panels in assessing public engagement, or help public engagement staff get involved in that conversation
- Clear and accessible guidance
- Training for REF panel members to ensure baseline understanding

Support to sector/institutions
- Watermark, EDGE tool
- Simplify the language
- Feedback on developing case studies
- Database of public engagement funders, e.g. Small pots et cetera
- Promote small pots of funding which are often underused
- Provide a hub for good practice
- Having information and resources that academics can access through other external agencies such as research councils and NCC, all available on the website
- Sharing between universities via critical friends
- More fora to discuss
- Guidance for external partners, e.g. Museums

Support to PEPs
- A barrier is the lack of a baseline: help us to find this
- More studies like public attitudes to science, which we can use as baselines REF impact case studies Support to senior leaders
- Something we can take back and share

Training/CPD
- Focus on early career researchers
- Early career researcher focus
- Training the gathering of impact evidence
- more training for early career researchers on impact and engagement
- Training on establishing and evaluating dissemination impact, e.g. Online and media
- CPD the public engagement professionals and others (i.e. Impact people and senior managers)

- NCCPE should work with groups like the leadership foundation and higher education Academy to incorporate public engagement in leadership training the prospective vice chancellors and pro-vice chancellors

Advocacy
- Clarify the value of public engagement at leadership level where decisions are made about which case studies are submitted
- Lobby to ensure that people who review evidence to understand what robust evidence looks like and/or encourage those specialists have a weighted voice in the assessment process

Setting the standards/providing examples
- Explain what 'high quality' means to academics
- Examples with good quality evidence and bad, the different types of evidence
- More research into public engagement, distinct from evaluation of activities or programs and/or tying this evaluation into research about public engagement: we need to show evidence that the activities are doing can bring impact (e.g. Cite a peer reviewed paper) and compare your work to this, not necessarily do a full research paper on your own project
- Examples of best practice in evidence and engagement
- Examples of robust evidence, perhaps from the last REF but not actually in an impact case study
- A mature case study will speak to process, structure and outcomes
- Evidence of what good public engagement looks like
- Could we do a pilot exercise which would signal changes