



May 21<sup>st</sup> 2014

## After the REF - Taking Stock: summary of feedback

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### Executive summary

#### Context

In this short paper we summarise feedback from a cross-section of individuals who were actively involved in REF 'impact' submissions within their institutions, and who contributed to a recent 'stock taking' event hosted by the NCCPE in Bristol. The feedback focuses primarily on how those institutions interpreted the REF guidance and how they chose to include impacts arising from public engagement (PE) in their submitted case studies, and strategic support for public engagement in their impact templates.

33 individuals contributed to this report, from a cross-section of HEIs and funders. They were first invited to complete a short questionnaire. This feedback was then used to inform more in depth discussion at an all-day event hosted by the NCCPE in Bristol.

The discussions were structured to address the prompt questions provided by HEFCE in their invitation to the sector<sup>1</sup> to feedback informally on the REF:

1. What, in your view, are the most important features of REF 2014 for higher education institutions? Why?
2. In relation to preparing REF submissions, what positive reflections do you have on the process? Why?
3. In relation to preparing REF submissions, which aspects of the process were challenging? Why?
4. Please describe any benefits you identify in participating in the REF for your institution.
5. Please describe any negative implications you identify in participating in the REF for your institution.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/rsrch/howfundr/refeedback/>

6. What positive and negative effects did the key changes since the Research Assessment Exercise have?
7. Are there any further comments you would like to add regarding REF 2014?

This paper summarises the key points raised by the participants in the NCCPE's event. Its two annexes provide details of the pre-event feedback and of the discussions at the event.

## Introduction

The REF 2014 was the first time that the non-academic impact of research featured in the UK Funding Councils' research assessment exercise. The REF framework document (paragraph 161) explicitly encouraged impacts arising from engaging the public with research to be featured in returns:

*'There are many ways in which research may have underpinned impact, including but not limited to:*

*c. Impacts on, for example, public awareness, attitudes, understanding or behaviour that arose from engaging the public with research. In these cases, the submitting unit must show that the engagement activity was, at least in part, based on the submitted unit's research and drew materially and distinctly upon it'.*

During 2011 and 2012 the NCCPE contributed to the development of the panel guidance related to impacts arising from public engagement with research<sup>2</sup>. We also provided detailed summaries and interpretation<sup>3</sup> of the published guidance, and ran a number of independent workshops to help staff prepare impact case studies and templates which featured public engagement with research.

This event provided the opportunity to reflect on what staff involved in these activities had learned, and to identify key lessons and action points to inform future strategy and practice

## Headline issues

The impact assessment process was widely acknowledged to be a very time consuming and challenging activity, but with a number of **positive outcomes**:

- It has formalised the need for good planning, evaluation and evidence gathering within UoAs and HEIs
- It has encouraged a view of PE as core business not just 'good intentions'
- It has given PE a 'harder edge' in terms of its financial and strategic value to the institution
- It has created more demand and interest from academics for help and support to develop good PE - many of whom were previously unaware or uninterested
- It has helped make the case for PE to be effectively resourced and supported
- It has opened up opportunities for greater dialogue with outside partners
- PE is now regarded as an essential part of research, although for some PE is restricted to that which leads to REF-relevant impact – rather than more broadly defined outcomes
- It has encouraged staff actively to seek opportunities to share research findings with the wider public

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<sup>2</sup> ['Discussion Paper: Assessing impacts arising from public engagement with research'](#)

Prepared by the NCCPE in 2011 at the invitation of the REF team, to inform the development of panel guidance

<sup>3</sup> ['Update on Public Engagement and the REF: January 2012'](#)

This document provided a detailed analysis of the panel guidance, highlighting how public engagement was framed by each of the main panels

It has also had some **negative consequences**:

- Some partners / collaborators have been overwhelmed by the sector's demands for evidence of impact and have felt 'used'
- It has encouraged an instrumental attitude from some –doing PE for 'selfish' reasons rather than to achieve genuine mutual benefit
- There is a risk that all PE becomes focused on the REF / impact, meaning that other valuable forms of engagement won't be supported or valued
- The friction and negativity associated with the REF has tarnished engagement in some people's eyes
- Some feel that valuable time which should be spent on innovation is now being spent on auditing.

On balance, the feedback suggested the positives significantly outweighed the negatives. In response to the question '**Has the REF helped to embed strategic support for PE in your HEI?**' 12 people answered 'yes', 13 'partially' and 3 'no'

There is **much still to learn** and develop, in particular:

- How to evaluate and evidence impacts arising from Public Engagement. PE was generally viewed by researchers and their managers as 'softer' and less easy to evidence than other forms of impact
- How to frame and implement strategies to encourage effective 'impact generation'

There are some very specific **challenges** which need deeper thought and possibly revised guidance. Some of these concern the **technicalities** of the current guidance:

- The disproportionate number of case studies needed for small UoAs needs addressing –some felt to make unreasonable demands on them. Suggestions included reducing the minimum number to 1, or allowing people to choose how many to submit, based on the impact they were seeking to evidence
- Why does research follow the researcher, but impact stay with the institution? Who 'owns' impact? Should it be the individual or the institution? Delegates pointed out the inconsistency of 'impact' residing within institutions, but 'research' with the researcher. They pointed out that in many cases the impact depended on the active 'external' engagement of the researcher, before, during and after the research project.
- How can the increasing significance of inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research be better recognised in REF 2020?
- Is the focus only on the impact of the *outcomes* of the research, or also on the impact of the *process*?

Other challenges are more **conceptual** or abstract and merit deeper consideration to inform the next REF:

- Can lessons learned in other sectors about how to measure impacts on learning, attitudes and behaviour be drawn on to develop a more robust assessment framework for the next REF?
- How well do we understand the processes that underpin effective impact-generation? How can we consolidate these understandings and ensure they are more widely shared? How can we use them to improve the assessment process in the next REF?
- Exploring how PE is understood within different institutions. There is considerable divergence, with some HEIs embracing a very broad definition encompassing a range of publics and intermediaries; others framing PE as just work with 'private individuals' and excluding work with (e.g.) policy makers / practitioners. How should these differences be reflected in future guidance and policy?

- Investigating the differences in how PE is understood and enacted within different disciplines – which were very considerable. Are these differences likely to increase in the next REF? What implication does this have? How can we encourage more ‘cross-fertilisation’ between disciplines?
- How can we more effectively account for the benefits engagement brings to the research, and evidence how it has influenced and enhanced it? Indeed, does it make for better research? What is the link between quality impact and quality research?

Looking ahead, a long list of **actions** was suggested. We’ve picked out some of the most commonly cited:

#### **For BIS**

- Provide more certainty and clarity about future impact policy to allow institutions to plan longer term investment strategies
- Recognise that we are still at the beginning of the ‘journey’ to embed impact, and that much work is still to be done to effect a lasting culture change. Significant on-going investment is needed in skills, methods, professional practices (such as partnership development and evaluation) and in strategic leadership of ‘engaged research’
- Clarify the relationship and interdependency between HEIF, Pathways to Impact and the REF – and offer guidance about how HEIs should be using these different sources of funding to invest in engagement and impact-related activity
- Balance policy interventions to enhance universities economic impact with ones to enhance their ‘social’ impact, and address the perception that government is only interested in universities’ commercial impacts.

#### **For HEFCE**

- Ensure the technical and conceptual challenges identified above are properly investigated and addressed
- When the results of REF 2014 are announced, the sector wants detailed feedback explaining the rationale for assessment decisions – particularly given the huge amount of effort expended on this REF:
  - What scored well and why? Provide examples for each UoA of what signified 1 – 4\* case studies
  - If there is a hierarchy in the types of impact valued by the panels, tell us
- Make quick decisions about the next REF and communicate these – already rumours are circulating that impact will be either removed or significantly scaled back.
- Manage the risk that radical changes to the impact component of the REF will jeopardise the progress achieved to date – ‘tweaking’ is preferred to radical re-invention
- Manage the risk of ‘narrowing’ responses through overly prescriptive guidance: continue to encourage creativity and innovation
- Consider the burden placed on institutions and whether this can be reduced next time
- Make sure that the impact templates are reviewed in the next REF: have people acted on them?

#### **For other funders**

- RCUK & other funders should bring impact requirements into line with REF.
- Research Councils need to import the lessons from the REF into their assessments of impact plans in HEIs, so messages and impetus to change are consistent internally and externally

#### **For HEIs**

- Put in place mechanisms to train and develop staff in impact/engagement so they are better prepared for REF 2020, and to appropriately reward and recognise this activity
- Develop methods and systems to ensure staff are capturing evidence of impact ‘as they go along’

## For the NCCPE

- Develop a framework (informed by other sectors) to provide a sector-wide approach to conceiving of and evaluating impacts arising from public engagement
- Consolidate lessons learned about the most effective methods for realising impacts arising from public engagement with research, and share these widely with the sector through resources and training / professional development
- Continue to support learning **between** institutions and discipline communities
- Support the sector to embrace more 'dialogic' forms of engagement: to move beyond the basic dissemination of research outcomes as their default activity
- Support and broker more ethical, productive and strategic partnership working between universities and civil society organisations
- Continue to provide training and development opportunities for the sector to enhance their approach to 'engaged research' and the evaluation of its impact
- Continue to engage with the development of the impact component of the REF, acting as a focal point for discussion and comment with the sector

## For all

- The memorable phrase 'impact literacy' was coined to describe the ongoing challenge of developing shared understandings and intelligent, critical engagement with impact. This requires ongoing conversations within the sector, but as importantly, with people outside the research community. The trigger for these conversations should be very simple questions: has the research made a difference? How did it contribute? What degree of difference did it make?

If you would like to comment on this report, please contact the NCCPE: [nccpe.enquiries@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:nccpe.enquiries@uwe.ac.uk)

We would like to thank all the delegates for their contribution to this document

## Annex one: Pre-event feedback

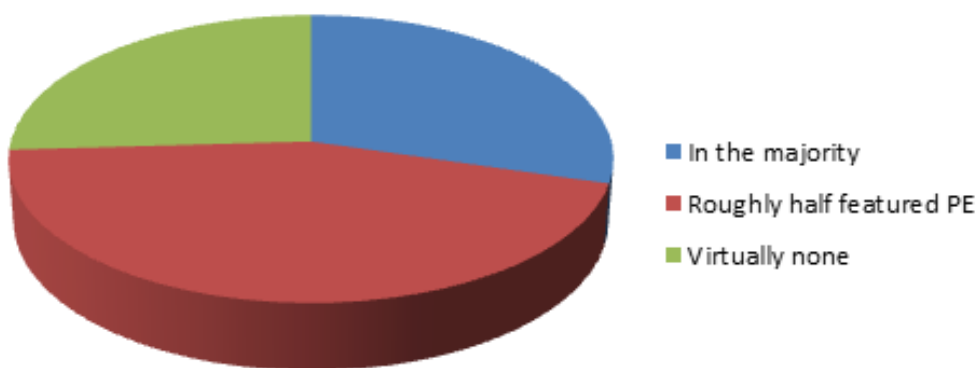
While signing up for the event, delegates were invited to reflect on the following questions:

- How many of your case studies featured public engagement?
- What types of Public Engagement (PE) featured in your submissions (e.g. dissemination)?
- Did particular 'publics' dominate?
- Were there notable disciplinary differences?
- How extensively did strategic support for public engagement feature in your impact templates?
- What have been the key technical challenges you have encountered - and how have you started to address these? How might the next REF be adapted to help?
- What has been the impact of the REF on how PE is valued and supported in your HEI and by your partners?
- Can you suggest any ways in which the current guidance and process for assessing impact should be adapted for the next REF?

Their responses are compiled below. This feedback was tested and developed during the event.

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### How many of your case studies featured public engagement?



### What types of public engagement featured?

- I talk for the Humanities and Social Science, and by PE I mean engagement with direct members of the public (not solely policy makers/practitioners). We did not have much pure dissemination style activities - where this did occur, it led to consultation/dialogue activities and it was there the impact was created.
- There was quite a lot about dissemination-style activity, with a degree of discussion, and the emphasis was on enriching public knowledge as well as stimulating debate.
- Less than half but more than none (about 15%) Most involved active engagement of the public
- Dissemination accounted for the vast majority but some of the most successful case studies were those which included active engagement with the research process. There was a significant variation across disciplines.
- Majority on dissemination and, in Arts, in active engagement, getting public input to projects such as place-name research, Burns memorabilia etc. Loads of public information activities across the Colleges.
- Weighted to more dissemination style talks and communications.
- 'Dissemination-style activities' were often a common feature of those examples featuring public engagement. Some examples then progressed to involve greater dialogue, which was fed back into research to inform future priorities.
- Mostly dissemination activities - schools workshops, public debates
- Consultation and dialogue majority; some dissemination; relatively little active involvement

- Some form of "public" engagement featured in all of them although this is using a very broad definition of publics.
- A mixture of types.
- All types featured - although there was an understanding that dissemination was not impact and we therefore leaned towards co-creation and collaboration.
- Lots from media (informing) to co-creation and co-production.
- Arts and Humanities mostly had PE, and Physics/Astronomy, but no other disciplines did - so not 'roughly half' but more than 'virtually none'
- Majority of case studies featured dissemination-style activities and some research based external consultation, less emphasis on genuine engagement of new publics
- Dissemination style and consultation about 80%

### **Did particular types of 'public' dominate?**

- We had a wide spectrum from members of the public to policy makers, practitioners.
- Our position in London meant that London publics and organizations (eg Museum of London, schools in Camden local authority, etc) dominated
- Strong engagement with schools, and popular science outlets (museums, shows etc)
- Schools
- Arts/literature featured heavily, and those publics tended to be people already interested in research - e.g. people who had chosen to attend a public lecture.
- Mostly schools
- Patient groups and lobbying organizations
- Most of our case studies were concerned with social, cultural, policy impacts rather than economic impacts.
- Not really.
- Lots of policy forming, lots of work with charities, less economic impacts overall...more social.
- No. Fairly balanced....although lots of policy forming stuff.
- Governments, practitioners
- Mostly professional groups: police, teachers, museum practitioners etc mixed with general public audiences
- Largely corporate partners and international organisations
- Arts organizations and education

### **Were there notable disciplinary differences?**

- At the start there were some disciplines who thought this "impossible", whereas others said "we are impact". In the end I think all realised there are challenges as well as great opportunities. In some cases where there was hard to track impact back to research, in other cases we could document lots of engagement but hard to demonstrate the impact.
- Yes - public engagement featured more highly in Panel D
- In some natural science disciplines, public engagement impact was considered of secondary importance. However in all disciplines the difficulty of demonstrating impact through public engagement was a factor in the degree to which this featured in case studies.
- Yes.
- yes, different models and different levels of engagement.
- Public engagement was most valued in main panel D (arts and humanities). Across other disciplines, public engagement was recognised as a possible route to impact, though not given significant value.
- Range of practice across University, but all featured PE to a similar degree
- Yes. I think that the Arts and Humanities leaned more heavily on public engagement as a pathway to impact and the hard Sciences were more dominated by "business" engagement.
- Yes.
- Yes - Sciences tended to focus on hard-edged work with SMEs through KTPs etc. Arts and Humanities much more socially engaged
- In terms of "getting" PE only...Arts and Humanities very strong. Social Sciences strong. Healthcare fairly strong. Science and Engineering not so strong.

- Certainly in terms of PE, yes. Some disciplines do not value it at all in an impact sense.
- I only worked within the Business School

### How extensively did strategic support for public engagement feature in your impact templates?

- We may not have talked about PE, but our definition of Knowledge Exchange incorporates PE, and this was highlighted in all templates.
- Public engagement featured to a varying degree and was far more prominent in Arts and Humanities templates.
- I don't feel it was a major pillar.
- To some degree, although for space considerations was curtailed for industry/policy impact preference
- Very. Our involvement in the Manchester Beacon initiative was highlighted in most.
- Not a significant amount.
- Very. Our impact templates all (except one - grrr!) mentioned our role in the Manchester Beacon and the Manifesto and the RCUK Concordat for Engaging Public with Research.
- Very. In all of them except one (Gen Engineering - we've still not forgiven them!)
- Quite highly
- Tricky... we did demonstrate strategic support, but it was difficult to evidence it
- Difficult to estimate

### What have been the key technical challenges you have encountered - and how have you started to address these? How might the next REF be adapted to help?

Issue	Possible solution?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The burden of the number of case studies for small UOAs</li> </ul>	Reduce the number required and / or give panels more discretion to set appropriate targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The difficulty of evidencing change having occurred, and tracking this back to the research</li> <li>• How can behaviour change be measured? Indicators varied between each case study, and the measures were very much dependent / contextualised to the content of the case study</li> </ul>	Learn from the current assessment process to develop much clearer and more explicit guidance In some cases looking at the impact on intermediaries as well as on the general public itself Clarify the relative significance of testimonials (rather than hard data). We relied on these a lot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering "evidence" proved difficult.</li> </ul>	Impact must be documented from the start. I imagine it is not going to be such a problem next time round.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding evidence and understand the basis on which evidence would be assessed.</li> </ul>	Engaging academics to think about how to prove their involvement and to talk about outcomes in a socially relevant way, as opposed to academic outputs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation, particularly of significance and particularly retrospectively</li> </ul>	Key lesson is to build evaluation robustly into every event and ensure you have a way to capture who is there so you can follow up if need be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor evaluation questions. Lack of two-way communication opportunities built in to dissemination/information channels</li> </ul>	Raising awareness among academics. Reviewing their evaluation questions in advance. We have engaged a public engagement officer as a support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating that an effect or benefit had resulted from an engagement activity that drew on research in a material way, and also that any change or benefit that could be identified came as a result of our institution's activities (attribution).</li> </ul>	Targeted feedback forms may offer one possible solution to this
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vital role of qualitative indicators to evidence the impact of PE</li> </ul>	Develop a checklist of qualitative indicators



	Put pressure on HEFCE to provide detailed feedback on impact case studies - not acceptable to just provide generic feedback as blood, sweat and tears have gone into them!
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**What has been the impact of the REF on how PE is valued and supported in your HEI and by your partners?**

<p><b>What have been the positives?</b>  <b>How could these be enhanced in the next REF?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has formalised need for good planning, evaluation and evidence gathering</li> <li>• It has encouraged a view of PE as core business not just 'good intentions'</li> <li>• It has give PE a 'harder edge' in terms of its financial and strategic value to the institution</li> <li>• It has created more demand and interest from academics for help and support to develop good PE - many of whom were previously unaware or uninterested</li> <li>• It has helped make the case for PE to be effectively resourced and supported</li> <li>• It has opened up opportunities for greater dialogue with outside partners</li> <li>• PE is now regarded as an essential part of research, but only really the impact agenda</li> <li>• It has encouraged staff actively to seek opportunities to disseminate research findings to wider public, follow up how this might change key users' lives especially in fields of dance and health</li> </ul>	<p><b>What have been the negatives?</b>  <b>How could these be mitigated in the next REF?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people simply didn't see the link between PE and the REF</li> <li>• Some partners / collaborators have been overwhelmed by our demands for evidence of impact and have felt 'used'</li> <li>• It has encouraged an instrumental attitude from some – doing PE for 'selfish' reasons rather than to achieve genuine mutual benefit</li> <li>• There is a risk that all PE becomes focused on the REF / impact and other valuable forms of engagement aren't supported or valued</li> <li>• The friction and negativity associated with the REF has tarnished engagement in some people's eyes</li> <li>• Potentially... some bad feeling about the increased expectations on academics.</li> <li>• anxiety that traditional research will not be valued, some staff looking for short impact time in research projects, valuable time which should be spent on innovation now spent on auditing. It would help to have clearer guidelines and models of good practice, and longer assessment periods</li> </ul>
<p><b>What other issues need to be addressed to ensure PE is as effectively embedded as possible in REF 2020?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is some muddled / vague thinking: where do we draw the line between Public Engagement and Knowledge Exchange?</li> <li>• The challenge and opportunity is very different in different discipline areas – we need to understand these differences better</li> <li>• Impacts arising from PE are much harder to evidence than other types of impact – e.g. harder edged commercial outcomes – which have undermined its relative status and resulted in case studies being rejected because too 'soft'</li> </ul>	

## Has the REF helped to embed strategic support for PE in your HEI?



## Can you suggest any ways in which the current guidance and process for assessing impact should be adapted for the next REF?

- I think leaving the potential for a relatively open dialogue is important; I think the concern is that impact becomes overly formulaic or defined, and some of the more creative examples then are not captured. Some of the time scales also feel a bit arbitrary.
- I think we need to see how the panels find judging the case studies, but for us the challenge was to what extent you have to demonstrate actual change having occurred (and how then is change defined), or whether showing contribution to a process is sufficient. I also think we may rethink the role of media engagement for the next round.
- I am concerned that public engagement isn't seen as particularly 'impactful'. I'd like it to be recognised in the next REF as a worthwhile activity in its own right.
- Guidance specifically in relation to public engagement could be clearer. It is to be hoped that the process of reviewing and assessing the case studies will help the panels and HEFCE develop clearer ideas about what a public engagement is and how it can be measured and share this with the sector at large
- Recognition that public engagement impact does not translate well to quantitative indicators and thus development of guidelines on evaluation based on qualitative indicators (e.g. a checklist)
- Maybe there should be a 3 case study limit for a UOA.
- There should not be unrealistic expectations for small units of assessments in the Humanities.
- I think panels should be allowed to set the number of case studies that they need to make an informed judgment about impact themselves - and that there shouldn't necessarily be situations where universities have to submit more than 3 case studies for a UOA.
- Panels to have more autonomy, less case studies necessary in some disciplines, less paranoia!

## Annex two: consultation event feedback

This annex compiles the notes recorded by delegates during the consultation event's 8 activities

### Task one: successes and challenges

As a warm up activity, delegates were invited to share key challenges they wanted to see addressed during the event. These are the key things they shared

### Challenges / issues to address (clustered into different categories)

#### Who Owns Impact?

- What has the institution done to ensure impact, and what has the academic done? i.e. who 'owns' the impact?
- Taking ownership for impact
- How can 'impact' reside within Institutions, but 'research' with the researcher?
- Capturing 'lost' impact i.e. the good researcher/'impacter' who moves Institution and whose work & impact doesn't fall into the next assessment period.
- Staff produce at least 3\* work & impact in a small department

#### Evidencing Impact

- Collecting Evidence (on a regular basis) of public engagement's impact;
- Particularly qualitative evidence!
- Ways of capturing impact (stories) and evidence as we go along (in ways that will useable for impact case studies)
- Getting academics to track and record impact from now on
- Evidencing impact from engagement as we go along.
- How to evidence PE activities in a robust manner.
- Evidence of PE Impact
- Following local engagement through into national/international 'impact' within reasonable timeframe. Include qualitative data as well as quantitative to further strengthen the impact.
- Looking at the 'types' of impact almost all of them can be achieved via PE – perhaps this is the way to include engagement. This would involve creating space for this and guidance that it is ok to include stories (E.g. an academic gave a talk on his research methods at a science festival and was then approached by DEFRA to collaborate on a topic. When that becomes an impact case, the science festival will be excluded. But it is useful context for the research collaboration and evidence of PE's worth
- Provide us with great examples

#### REF literacy re: PE

- REF literacy in relation to PE
- Real understanding of impact.
- To best articulate how PE fits into the Impact agenda
- How are we going to 'incentivise' academics and reward them? For PE & Impact.....

#### Definition of Impact and other technical issues with the guidance

- Impact was narrowly defined – necessarily connected to specific research publications. But external impact is not always tied to publications, but often to more broadly defined knowledge/expertise in the researcher.
- Diversity across panels v mixed messages about impact through PE.
- Does it stifle creativity?

#### PE that doesn't lead to Ref-able impact and other unintended consequences

- Only PE that can be used in impact case studies is valued.
- Having PER recognised as a worthwhile activity in its own right (without "impact" reference to necessarily)

### Help to prepare for REF 2020

- Some people are saying REF 2020 won't happen and Impact won't exist – this needs dealing with
- HEFCE need to provide useful feedback on case studies

### Task 2: The Big Picture

Before focussing down on the ways in which public engagement featured in the REF, delegates were asked (in group discussions) to share their reflections about the four key components of the impact assessment part of the REF: case studies, impact templates, the guidance, and the panels/assessors. They were asked to consider positives, negatives and challenges

### CASE STUDIES

#### Some challenges

- Volume of work to put them all together
- Work done by few key people.
- Academics didn't want to learn how to do this.
- Not clear on who the audience is for the case studies.
- Few scientists can write well
- Half were written poorly
- The number of case studies required for small units
- Number of cases tied to the number of academic submissions – what if you have a department of 2?
- Cross disciplinary research often has impact but doesn't fall into UoA's
- Interdisciplinary research – where does it fit in panels? Can it be submitted for more than one UOA? Where would it fit best
- Linear structure of case study template implies you do the research – it then has impact. What about highly engaged, co-produced research?
- Who owns Impact?
  - REF/H(HEFCE)
  - The institution
  - The researcher?
- Impact follows the person, not the research (especially in relation to media/PE)
- Early Career Researchers are disadvantaged by case studies: impact usually happens later in career
- How is reach and impact measured and compared?
- Providing evidence - especially for policy change and behaviour change
- The challenge of linking research with impact clearly enough – e.g. some highly impactful academics weren't included in final return because of this.
- Evaluation not as rigorous as the research
- A lot on method, but not outcomes
- Might have built in activity at start but not built in work to evidence the effects of the activity
- Evidence not captured, or learning outcomes

#### Some negatives

- Scramble for evidence – having to develop case studies 'post-hoc'
- Distortion of personal relationships as a result of having to secure evidence retrospectively
- Post-hoc evidence collation/collections
- 5 & 20 year time limit on research impacts
- PE seen as a 'risky' submission compared to policy and economic impact. Variation between disciplines on this.
- Impact seen as separate activity, not part of the research

- VC initiated change of strategy (re. what \* research to be submitted) halfway through
- Huge effort
- Tensions / divisions with people not valued if their impact wasn't high enough

#### **Some positives**

- Led to improved understanding across researchers
- Consolidated evidence of the benefit of PE
- Previously marginal research now taken more seriously because valued in REF
- Led to increased visibility of research within department and institution
- Created good collaborations
- Proactive and enabling for individuals
- Intuitive template
- NCCPE training -> Helped clarify form

### **IMPACT TEMPLATES**

#### **Some challenges**

- Debate about the context around/supporting impact at the institution – self-criticism (good).
- Who 'owns' this – should strategy here be done as an Institution or as individual departments?
- Restriction on word limit
- Too abstract
- Lack of objectives/direction
- Academics don't understand concept of a strategy
- Would have been good to have an exemplar template – but know reasons why not!
- Evaluation not as rigorous as the research
- Ownership: was it a 'secret' for senior staff only, or was there faculty buy in?

#### **Some positives**

- Getting departments to think ahead about impact and invest in support staff
- Made us plan for PE
- Brevity of form
- Making implicit (strategy) explicit

#### **Some negatives**

- Overlap with environment template
- Confusing name for this – confusion/overlap with case study templates, environment template etc.
- Length of template
- What is work of fiction to get good mark and what is realistic
- Unclear objectives
- Templates need to cross ref to guidance
- Templates need more side headings (for impact strategy + env). More structured and specific.
- The guidance was wooly

### **GUIDANCE**

#### **Some challenges**

- Case studies from pilot were no longer seen as best practice when submission dates came around.
- Reach and significance hard to define (and assess).
- Generally helpful but open to interpretation

- Potential negative that one model is chosen – reduce innovation
- Hoping impact won't be in next time.
- Guidance thorough but academics didn't read it.
- Excellent research may not correlate with excellent impact. There may be an inverse correlation.
- Research is made excellent by a researcher. But impact is as much if not more, dependant on other people beyond a researcher's control/responsibility.

#### Some positives

- Broadly very good and detailed
- Examples of Impact useful for horizon broadening outside of REF impact
- Thorough and detailed
- Flexible and open
- Came out with time to digest
- Open to questions/feedback
- FAQs on website
- More academics keen to find out about impact – taking it seriously
- Guidance was well laid out – useful tables.
- Raised awareness of importance of building in KE & PE into planning.

#### Some negatives

- Timing of guidance – needed earlier
- As an academic you can't take your impact with you, but you can take your papers.
- Too narrowly defined for A&H/Social Sciences
- Making up guidance or interpretation of guidance as we go along
- Very little evidence on how to measure/capture impact
- Coordination across panels -> if you mean the same – say the same: clarify difference
- Overlong for academics

#### Improvements

- Execsummary of guidance
- HEFCE – be clear about future plans to halt rumours
- Make explicit link to pathways to impact.
- Guidance too complex
  - Has your research made a difference
  - If yes, how?
  - Degree of difference
- Give specific feedback
- Look at how to handle cross disciplinary impact
- Tighten and speed up dissemination of guidance to enable preparation
- Broaden definition of impact (but depends on discipline)
- Provide a standard for measuring behaviour/opinion change.

### PANELS AND ASSESSORS

#### Some challenges

- The unknown – everyone new to this
- In assessing impact will panels be influenced by the standard of research?
- How will assessors be influenced by which university is claiming the impact?
- How do they decide what is beneficial impact? Does it matter if this is beneficial or not?
- Matching panels to internal structures
- Panels & assessors don't follow their own guidance

- Diversity between panels
- What is peer review of impact?
- Academic Peer review is a well-known process. We need to develop the tacit knowledge on how to peer review impact.
- Is it necessarily the case that excellent impact comes from excellent research?

**Some positives**

- Inclusions of users in panels

**Some negatives**

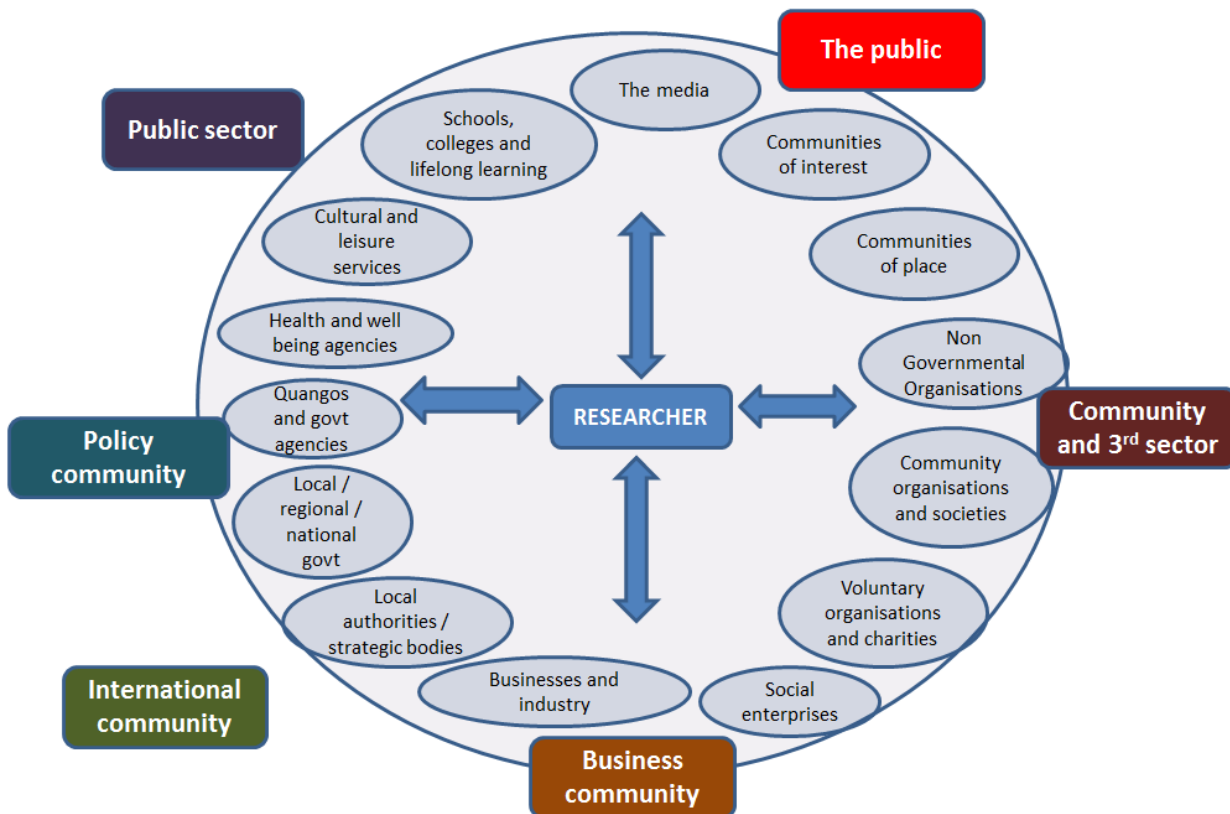
- Panels are all doing the learning re: impact now, so advice is meagre
- Concern about assessing the impact template. Will reputation prevail?
- The user assessors – some high profile in national organisations – will they understand ‘radical’ community work?
- Lack of transparency in the process – how are they going to assess.
- Impact on selection – don’t submit academics so can submit fewer case studies

**Task 3: Making sense of public engagement**

Delegates were then invited to share how they made sense of what public engagement is in relation to the REF, within their institutions: it had been evident from the pre-event feedback that there were significant differences in how institutions had defined the ‘boundaries’ around PE.

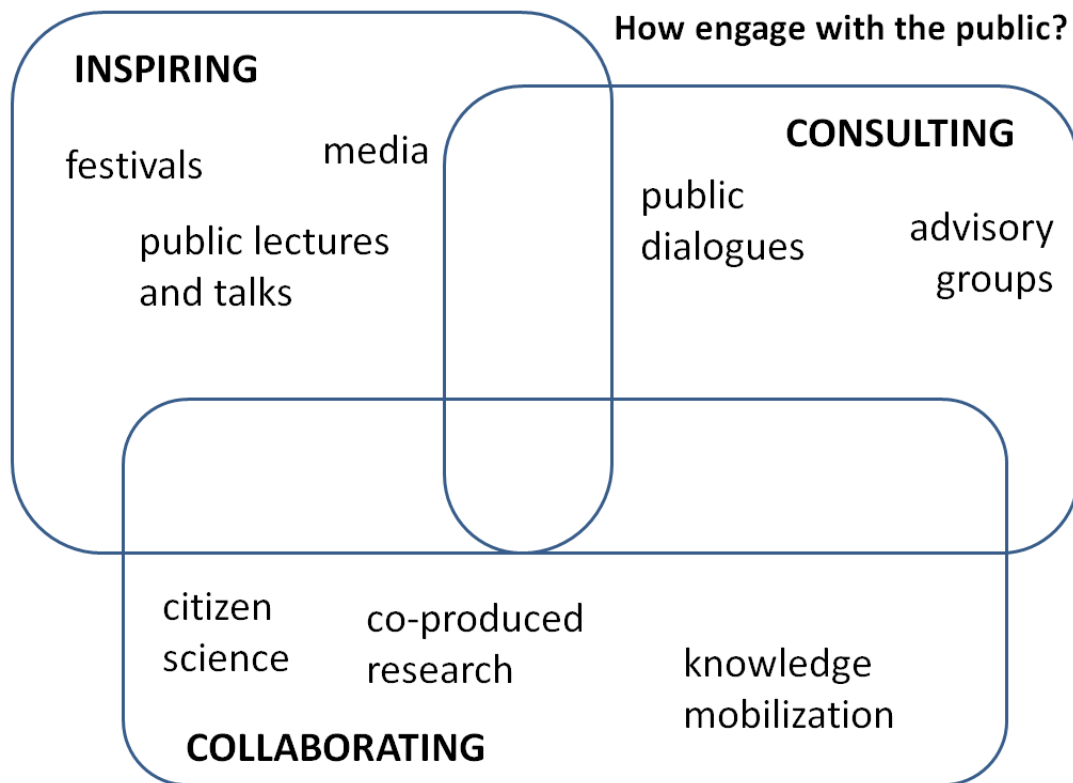
As prompts, delegates were offered two ‘framings’ of public engagement.

The first diagram outlines the various ‘publics’ with whom institutions can engage:



The second describes three overlapping purposes for public engagement:

- Inspiring
- Consulting
- Collaborating



Having discussed their institution’s approach, each delegate prepared a short description, compiled below:

**How did you make sense of public engagement in your institution’s REF submission?**

- PE: refers to external bodies and groups outside of the university. Where the group is a ‘stakeholder’ it is classed as knowledge exchange. PE is a route to KE.
- Cardiff University - Everything from schools to practitioners. Most convincing when engaging with practitioners. PE only in Arts and Humanities and Astronomy. All other work was business / policy. Relationships were the key to all PE case studies with a continuing narrative.
- In Humanities and Social Sciences, almost all case studies had strong elements of PE but it was not made explicit. We looked at the impact achieved and found that it most often resulted from engaging with publics widely defined.
- I believe impact from PE was more contested in the sciences and medicine (University of Edinburgh)
- Oxford Brookes University – PE is happening in all categories (7 categories) mostly via
  - Informing
  - Consulting
  - Collaborating
- The only problem is the clear connection with 3\* research (required by REF) rather than more broadly defined knowledge or expertise
- Business and Community engagement is a better term (perhaps) for describing the kind of engagement that actually worked.
- “Public” engagement is probably not the best term for the type of engagement that usually led to the best impact: it was most often via organisations: (companies, charities, NGO’s, community groups, patients...).



Public engagement makes people the objects of dissemination events only, rather than collaborative relationships which are what works best.

- We made sense of 'public engagement' as "direct" contact with public, schools, museums. But not with policymakers, practitioners etc. Impacts on these intermediaries were valued more, so PE impacts were generally demoted.
- We didn't 'make sense' of PE in any explicit way, i.e. we don't badge activities as public engagement. However – we do a lot at all three levels.
  - Informing policymakers
  - Informing/inspiring communities of place and of interest.
  - Collaboration with community groups
  - Collaboration with patient groups
- We claimed PE impact only where it was structured and planned with identified learning outcomes that were measured and evidenced.
- The institution focused on research and looked at all the impacts. It may not have included PE in the end if evidence of impact not strong enough.
- Should PE be woven into all impact case-studies, or should there be one whole case study based on PE?
- PE with the research process, through advisory groups and other ways for users (e.g. patients, care-givers) to help ensure that research helps meet genuine needs.
- PE with the findings: e.g. CPD for teachers, change in practice, viral news stories
- Need a 'box' on the case study template headed "public engagement" so all research groups state what PE they do.
- Serendipity and retrofit: it can be almost anything, so you need to take broad look at 'impacts' and work out what elements it is comprised of.
- We started with what and who we knew...then pushed people to be creative about defining audiences! No central strategy ☺
- We are still debating the variants of PE for different disciplines. Science is driving a science communication model. Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences need a broader understanding of varieties of public.
- We are trying to help all researchers where appropriate move from public dissemination (media focus) to a more engaged 2-way model!
- We define public engagement impacts narrowly as relating to unstructured groups, and focused on informing rather than consulting. However consulting/collaborating (with publics as defined above) provided the strongest case studies.
- For public engagement we tended to focus on general public/communities of interest, and exclude policymakers and practitioners.
- Under Panel A we found it difficult to work out how to evidence engagement with schools etc. And PE doesn't just mean schools/community. We had case studies which affected policy/practitioners, but we wouldn't have thought of classing it as PE.
- I agree with the NCCPE's broader definition –but our academics/non PE staff tended to be more constrained, thinking PE was 'just' schools stuff'. The breadth of public is not well understood. I don't think 'PE' is a useful term, as it became 'PE bad, business good'. PE encompasses all impact (although not all PE people are experts in all types!).
- Largely left to the case study author, rather than imposing an institutional 'position'.
- The case studies that emphasised "public engagement" were usually the weaker ones. Too much focus on dissemination events, and feedback from them, web site usage etc., But with little evidence of what changed.
- We took a fairly broad definition –excluding business engagement –and most of our case studies therefore include public engagement. In case study discussions we focused on **impact** specifically, rather than engagement. However in impact templates we included lots of PE.
- Researchers need to think about 'engagement' not 'public engagement'. Who do they engage with in order to make an impact? This is very specific to their research topic. Talking about 'public engagement' may be a distraction.
- A clearer definition of *public engagement* is required. So for example is working with a company to apply university research to their manufacturing processes for example, **public** engagement (especially if there is an NDA in place which is utterly normal)? Similarly, is working with policy people in a very sensitive, even

secret, area **public** engagement? If these are not *public* engagement, are they some form of (fully acceptable) *private* engagement, as they clearly sit well inside the RC 'impact' definition? We had some discussions around the ideas of 'targeted', or specific, or 'directed' (public) engagement. Or, perhaps, should we define and recognise both 'public engagement' and 'business engagement' separately? This is an important issue, as there is currently very strong pressure from the EPSRC for joint funding applications with companies, where the outcome is public science but private (business) engagement.

#### Task 4: Disciplinary differences

The pre-event feedback made clear that delegates had encountered very significant differences in how staff in different disciplinary areas responded to the impact element of the REF, and in particular, to the opportunity to feature impacts arising from public engagement. Delegates were invited to discuss how public engagement featured in the four main panels, considering the following prompts:

- How significantly did PE feature in the submitted case studies in the different main panel areas?
  - Did particular types of PE dominate in the different main panels?
  - Did particular challenges / opportunities present themselves in the different areas?
  - Were there differences in the readiness of staff to feature impacts arising from PE?
- What are the implications of these differences for the next REF?

#### Panel A

- Public engagement is often mentioned but usually it comes at the very end of list of approaches to impact;
- The focus is usually on engagement through public education/information events and through media coverage of major research projects and findings;
- Public and media engagement are frequently used interchangeably
- Dominated by Policy & Practice Impacts, Commercial products, Healthcare practicalities, Government departments
- Mostly patient engagement / patient involvement here
- Less appreciation of PE as pathway to impact – was 'trumped' by policy of business impact.
- Assumption that 'PE case study' was less strong on research
- PE not as central as other panels
- More dissemination based.
- Very active but unconscious!

#### Panel B

- Public engagement is usually mentioned but not necessarily explicitly or exclusively in those terms and often at the end of the list of approaches taken;
- A greater focus on PE in Chemistry and Physics than in other Panel B disciplines;
- A focus on public education / information events and a tendency to conflate public and media engagement
- People seemed worried that they 'only' had PE cases
- Physicists focus on inspiring group about physics generally (purpose= recruitment) – difficult to tie to specific research.
- Less recognition that publics could have useful expertise to input into research.
- What came through in REF is what could be evidenced and/or link to underpinning research. Impact trumped Engagement
- The applied subjects focused solely on business. The theoretical subjects focussed on public engagement –

as they had few if any industrial applications to describe.

### Panel C

- Less likely to talk about PE activities in terms of “public engagement” per se - often have separate section on public engagement through the media, but PE activities are also more likely to be woven into descriptions of e.g. co-research with communities, publication of non-academic texts, and contributions to non-academic discussion and debate;
- More likely to reference PE via contributions to public programmes of external (including cultural / heritage) organisations; less focus on schools engagement as key strand of public engagement approach.
- More focus on dialogue / 2-way engagement, and on influencing public debate – rather than on ‘public education’
- “PE” here was often in the broader sense – not schools/general public but targeted at specific publics
- Big Societal challenges seen here – policy, business, practice influences
- Topics have public interest that was recognised by academics.
- Targeted, focused PE more part of culture & well-articulated rationale for PE.
- A lot of impact on policy and practice
- Challenge to evidence and attribute -> helped to talk about contribution to change.
- Felt like PE didn’t count - so it was dismissed.
- Hard to evidence the impact
- Including case studies based on research groups and then individuals -> what is more fruitful / valued?

### Panel D

- More emphasis on public engagement and related activity, which is much more likely to be described as ‘public engagement’ and less likely to be buried at the end of the list of approaches to impact;
- More reference to impacts achieved through contributions to public programmes of external organisations;
- More reference to public (or non-academic) involvement in research processes themselves;
- More likely to already be using online and digital media.
- In short, probably closer to the dialogic ideal of PE – or at least sufficiently well-informed and canny to that ideal to be able to describe their activities as such!
- Engagement as process, or outcome? Big challenge.
- Collaborations through public engagement – where to put/what to preference in which sections? (Research dissemination, etc)
- Are these cases weaker than other panels?
- Weaker – more reliance on public engagement events, website, etc, and trying to get feedback.
- ‘Traditional’ engagement dominated – museums etc. How get beyond this? And who collects/owns evidence (if it is not in the public domain)?
- For some departments here, research/impact is a false dichotomy.
- Closed circuits: Does talking to/engaging with other artists suffice, or should boundaries be pushed?
- Lots of engagement examples but no/little evidence (no metrics, evaluation etc).
- Very difficult when individuals had high public profile but one-way relationship with public. Couldn’t ‘nail down’ specifics of why/for whom.
- Have reached wider public & evidenced impact beyond practitioners, policy groups etc.
- Challenge to provide evidence of qualitative change? Tracing back to actual research outputs/projects.
- Lots of engagement with interest groups – worked best when using intermediaries (who also could provide testimonies).
- Challenge to link a lot engagement back to research – in particularly in some of the creative areas.
- PE viewed as essential in majority of case studies.

### Generic comments

- Need to address difference between engagement and public engagement.

- Is it engagement with the **process** of research or with the **outcomes** of the research?
- If engagement is with the research, then the level of engagement going to vary according to discipline. E.g. theoretical physics versus allied health.
- With reference to Panels A, B & C – People less ready to include PE as viewed as less important -> lower down the 'impact hierarchy'.

#### Task 5: Case study assessment

Delegates were invited to share (in confidence) case studies featuring impacts arising from public engagement. They worked in pairs to compare their reactions. It was noted that two of the participating HEIs – UWE and MMU – have already begun to put many of their impact case studies online. Points arising from this exercise included:

- Who claims the impact from cross-institutional research?
- Could 'yardsticks' be provided to help assess / compare the significance of claimed effects?
- The best case studies make a very clear connection to the research outputs / process
- They also make clear the 'significance' of the research **and** the impact
- Developing meaningful relationships with intermediaries is key to evidencing impact. Testimonials can be very powerful
- Is there value in surveying members of the public when the information is either of poor quality or the process of information gathering itself is onerous for the audience?

#### Task 6: Impact templates

Delegates were then asked to list the 'top ten' interventions that build 'capacity for impact' arising from public engagement. They were also asked to consider whether these differed significantly between the four main panels..

##### Table 1

- Support through training
- Restructure department groups with translational focus not research focus.
- Dedicated admin support for PE & KE.
- Creating internal policies e.g. must build impact into research process.
- Create 'intermediary' internal organisations: these can develop and create new relationships
- Engaged festivals
- Reward/recognition: e.g. awards and promotion criteria
- Enable leads to sit on boards/do consultancy
- Impact is a mandatory part of new product design
- Use of internal peer review (sociology)

##### Table 2

- Funding
- Recognition that it is a good thing to do.
- Relationships (which might take 15-20 years to mature – encourage at ECR level through PHD training and ECR development)
- Formal evaluation of researchers in relation to public engagement
- Having the resource to deploy public engagement when it is the correct resource to deploy.

##### Table 3

- Small funds to pump prime

- Process for tracking and recording impact
- Early identification of opportunities -> and supporting those.
- Reward & recognition -> including time to deliver
- Support staff as brokers, actively seeking opportunities and building external relations
- Support staff (knowledgeable, proactive, imaginative, intelligent)
- Focused strategy – balance breadth & depth.
- Understanding of the relationships
- Sustainable networks of knowledge.
- Strong leadership and communication -> academic impact champions.

#### Table 4

- Relationships between academics and partners
  - Need to remain direct but be tracked (Institutional memory)
  - Take advantage of opportunities to build long-term relationships with group/faculties
  - Reward cultivation of/ leadership with respect to these relationships.
- Forward planning – appropriate planning/timetabling for impact.
- Support: finance, HR, etc all taking an active role in contributing to project design/collecting evidence as relates to public engagement/impact.
- How can engagement be strategically supported? If top down does the message get far enough down? If bottom up do they have the power to make change?

#### Table 5

- Reward & recognition for impact – e.g. within promotions criteria (new structures for engaging others, not just academics).
- ‘Support staff’ at University and/or college/dept level
- Not just focus on the economic impact – focus on social impact as well as broaden ‘enterprise’
- Long term partnership support
- Models of engagement (based on learning from REF): analysis of engagement by audience/location/sector to understand their ‘footprint’
- Where are they now – at dept/school/list level (Can slice at different levels) to inform discussions on how to develop impact ‘strategies’
- Highlight opportunities
- Embedding training – inc. for established academics & mentoring.

#### Table 6

- Horizon scanning? But who is responsible for doing it?
- Peer to peer support “the engaged” to the “non-engaged” for PCRS, ECRS
- Prizes & public recognition: properly embedded, PDRS, ££s, Promotion criteria.
- Develop channels of communications i.e. MOOC’s – public events allow for creative thinking?
- Mutual exchange opportunities. Secondments/personnel exchange, international +cultural learning.
- Providing SMEs access to facilities
- Less ‘go out to find’ PE and more openness to 2-way exploration... break down barriers, responsiveness.
- Give it resource! Develop posts, budgets, co-ordinate across HEI, support/admin.
- Development of relationships so that contact, understanding, and continuation is possible (strategic & relational)
- Determine PE in impact & impact in PE – Find a balance!

## Task 7: the impact of the REF on your institution

Delegates were asked to reflect on the impact of the REF on their institution. They were encouraged to reflect on the numbered points in the table below, compiled from pre-event feedback:

- Did they agree with the points raised?
- What would they add?  
How could the positives be enhanced and the negatives addressed?

If they were commenting on a point, they were asked to refer to its number so that we could link the comment to the issue.

### What has been the impact of the REF on how PE is valued and supported in your HEI and by your partners?

#### What have been the positives? How could these be enhanced in the next REF?

1. It has formalised need for good planning, evaluation and evidence gathering
2. It has encouraged a view of PE as core business not just 'good intentions'
3. It has give PE a 'harder edge' in terms of its financial and strategic value to the institution
4. It has created more demand and interest from academics for help and support to develop good PE - many of whom were previously unaware or uninterested
5. It has helped make the case for PE to be effectively resourced and supported
6. It has opened up opportunities for greater dialogue with outside partners
7. PE is now regarded as an essential part of research, but only really the impact agenda
8. It has encouraged staff actively to seek opportunities to disseminate research findings to wider public, follow up how this might change key users' lives especially in fields of dance and health

#### What have been the negatives? How could these be mitigated in the next REF?

1. Some people simply didn't see the link between PE and the REF
2. Some partners / collaborators have been overwhelmed by our demands for evidence of impact and have felt 'used'
3. It has encouraged an instrumental attitude from some – doing PE for 'selfish' reasons rather than to achieve genuine mutual benefit
4. There is a risk that all PE becomes focused on the REF / impact and other valuable forms of engagement aren't supported or valued
5. The friction and negativity associated with the REF has tarnished engagement in some people's eyes
6. Potentially... some bad feeling about the increased expectations on academics.
7. anxiety that traditional research will not be valued, some staff looking for short impact time in research projects, valuable time which should be spent on innovation now spent on auditing. It would help to have clearer guidelines and models of good practice, and longer assessment periods

#### What other issues need to be addressed to ensure PE is as effectively embedded as possible in REF 2020?

1. There is some muddled / vague thinking: where do we draw the line between Public Engagement and Knowledge Exchange?
2. The challenge and opportunity is very different in different discipline areas – we need to understand these differences better
3. Impacts arising from PE are much harder to evidence than other types of impact – e.g. harder edged commercial outcomes – which have undermined its relative status and resulted in case studies being rejected because too 'soft'

Table 1

<p><b>Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many institutions had positive awareness/sharing of experiences after</li> <li>• We agreed with most of the positives</li> <li>• 5,6,7: probably early to say these have been achieved</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huge focus on impactful research rather than theoretical basis</li> <li>• Did not agree with many of the negatives</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>RE: Public engagement issue:</u> We need a concept of PE being about capturing engagement with people as private individuals, rather than propositional practitioners. If PE captures engagement with policy and</li> </ul>	

practice too – this muddles this.

- Evidencing impact on members of the public is difficult.

**Table 2**

<p><b>Positives</b> <u>New/additions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement as a term appearing in more strategic documents * (See other issues)</li> <li>• Rejuvenated academics by networking + bringing people together</li> </ul> <p><u>How we can enhance the positives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure PE communicated as part of impact in internal comms in Universities.</li> <li>• Talking about what constitutes evidence. ** (See other issues)</li> <li>• Involve academics in assessment of peers' case studies</li> <li>• Don't change REF too much next time – avoid change fatigue (teething problems cause tensions).</li> <li>• Plan: Workload planning for academics and professional services.</li> <li>• Address succession planning for staff with REF 2014 expertise.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For 2 – We need to develop relationships over long period (not just for REF)</li> <li>• The earlier the assessment framework is set the better in terms of gathering evidence.</li> <li>• For 5: this was less of an issue for us (the friction was more about research outputs)</li> <li>• Small institutions had less support available = isolated academics struggled</li> <li>• Address inconsistencies between panels in PE.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• * but this is engagement broadly not PE specifically</li> <li>• ** Quality of evidence for PE needs to match quality of research in terms of rigour.</li> <li>• Academics see impact as superficial 'dumbing down' -&gt; Leads to a new research project to evidence the impact to show value.</li> <li>• Resourcing important -&gt; is an institution decision making based on costs/benefits?</li> <li>• Will an impact case study have same role in recruitment as your publications do?</li> <li>• Understanding the effects of the exercise: it took a lot of work</li> <li>• Many Unis waiting to hear outcomes of REF 2014 before making decisions about ongoing support for REF: they are nervous of too much investment without confirmation of remit of REF 2020.</li> </ul>	

**Table 3**

<p><b>Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are more likely to listen when you talk about PE &amp; Impact</li> <li>• Opened up more conversations about PER – legitimised it. Particularly at senior levels. Not so much at research level</li> <li>• More ECRs asking about impact – thinking ahead.</li> <li>• REF has meant setting up a 'new cohort day' on</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn't helped understand what PE is.</li> <li>• Some think weaker case studies are PE</li> <li>• Confusion that PE is a pathway to impact not an impact itself</li> <li>• Too many different motivations can be confusing as all want something different.</li> <li>• Impact can tarnish PE (5)</li> </ul>
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<p>impact – all PhDs meant to go along.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move forward thinking for next REF: thinking strategically</li> <li>• Thinking about changing culture and the impact of the REF</li> <li>• More institutional level support for PE because of the REF</li> </ul>	<p>NCCPE can fix all these ☺</p>
<p><b>Other issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern that Unis will have to stop spending HEIF on PE because of HEFCE focus on economic impact -&gt; but maybe more 'manifestation' of social impacts. But don't have the methodology to do this (SMEV is interesting – socially modified economic value)</li> <li>• Will there be a section on monetary value of impact? i.e., show your working!</li> </ul>	

**Table 4**

<p><b>Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REF feedback will help to benchmark PE, and to understand how to evaluate it.</li> <li>• REF exercise has supported efforts towards culture change – embedding engagement</li> <li>• Can we evidence PE to help research leaders to understand its value?</li> <li>• Opportunities to bid more for more resource/funding</li> <li>• Widening understanding and acceptance of need for accountability (in return for public funds).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-applied, long-term or 'blue sky' research is discouraged because of impact need.</li> <li>• Policy impact is privileged over other forms of engagement</li> <li>• Impact cart is driving the research horse</li> <li>• Evidence of change or benefit from wider publics.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE case studies deemed "not strong enough" in impact terms.</li> <li>• Reinforcing divide between STEM/arts &amp; humanities</li> <li>• Definitions may need to be clarified in REF context</li> <li>• Specific place for PE in impact template.</li> </ul>	

**Table 5**

<p><b>Other issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better to say e.g. "engaged research" or "engaging with needs beyond academia" rather than "public engagement"</li> <li>• Engagement with the research process or research results? Both are valid, but very different. This may be the basis for differences in disciplines. Engagement with the research process more likely with say, engineering or drama, but with research results in say theoretical physics or maths.</li> <li>• Impact agenda in all about demonstrating ROI (also social or economic return), on public funding of research.</li> <li>• Highly mobile academics: who owns the impact? Is it lost?</li> <li>• Need to build "institutional memory" of engagement and impact (and evidence).</li> </ul>
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**Table 6**

<p><b>Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising profile of impact activities -&gt; cannot be ignored.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instrumentalisation disadvantages some of the really useful PE work that is ongoing.</li> <li>Can we add the question: ‘what has been the benefit to the research -&gt; how has it fed in and improved the research?’ A ‘reverse’ to pathways to impact.</li> <li>Proper learning process and a commitment to evaluation and learning/changing as a result</li> <li>Need a widely shared framework for ‘valuing’ engagement which can be applied to all kinds of PE (not just REF)</li> <li>Question the underlying rationale             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Sociology of knowledge’</li> <li>Does it make it <u>better</u> research</li> <li>What <u>change</u> do you want to make?</li> <li>What <u>need</u> is trying to meet</li> <li>How is it more than an accountability mechanism?</li> <li>Huge shift to ‘low hanging fruit’</li> <li>What is the link between impact and quality research...</li> </ul> </li> <li>Think about it as a ‘<u>unit</u>’ not an individual competing with others.</li> <li>Risk of ‘bifurcation’ -&gt; people get valued for PE, for teaching for research – create a new ‘silo’</li> </ul>
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**Task 8: What next?**

Delegates were invited to list priority actions for the following categories of people

Who?	What?
BIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be open minded about different types of benefit and impact and approaches that lead to impact (appropriate to different disciplines).</li> <li>Be clear on always using a broad definition of impact – i.e. not only commercial impact, as in recent inquiry on knowledge exchange.</li> <li>Consider whether the institutional investment of resources in REF makes sense.</li> <li>Report on reach and significance of the UK HE sector.</li> <li>Do you have priorities or preferred impacts? Is economic more supported than social, and where should we prioritise our efforts? (I feel social is ‘tolerated’ but economic is encouraged – but perhaps BIS genuinely want both? – If so this would be good to know!).</li> <li>BIS/HEFCE – Give an honest summary of why we are doing impact. This may be different for different audiences.</li> <li>Don’t consider panel C&amp;D impact on same grounds as that for A&amp;B?</li> </ul>
HEFCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nuanced guidance based on panel learning</li> <li>Ensure the sector understands what leads to <u>good &amp; bad case studies</u> i.e. constructive feedback for each U of A</li> <li>HEFCE should continue to listen to academic community and adapt REF if needed.</li> <li>When giving feedback on UoA’s be honest about any hierarchy of impacts that emerge: if this is likely to be a pattern that will/might be seen in 2020 this will</li> </ul>

help departments to prioritise their impact agenda.

- Clarity on how to report and assess multidisciplinary/cross disciplinary research impact.
- Minutes of these discussions to be made available.
- If REF (impact) guidelines stay the same – provide detailed examples of what scores well & what doesn't – and **promptly**. For impact to be maximised in the next REF we need to embed structure now – but to do this, we need to know what is considered good.
- Clear definitions of impact and PE – and separate. Shouldn't be measured on the same scale.
- How will HEFCE define impact and PE in REF 2020?
- HEFCE & RCUK – have one definition of impact – and this should include the word *contribution* (i.e. research affects change alongside other influences).
- Perhaps don't change the exercise too much, so that institutions and individuals can absorb feedback and improve. Or issue new guidance quickly as next exercise is (we think) fast approaching.
- Review current decision to not accept 'knowledge/contribution to discipline' as impact, other than academic quality.
- Linear model of PE & impact (research -> findings -> project to maximise impact) is too limiting. The funding councils need to address this in their guidance.
- I wonder if HEFCE (BIS?) needs to consider what it values in terms of research and to frame the next REF to reflect that? The impact portion may have been intended to reflect the value – has it? What next?
- Include PE in 'environment' section of the REF
- Ensure case study data does not lead to narrowing of focus on 'best types of impact in different disciplines'. Showcase great and unusual case studies and breadth of things panels (esp. users) liked. Otherwise we will stifle creativity.
- Would like clear & transparent feedback on the impact elements of the REF, so that we can learn for the next one. Which case studies were strong weak and why.
- Pull out successful pathways to impact evident in the REF case studies – will inform future pathways exercises.
- Revise the template for impact case studies: add a section for the details (names, roles, dates) of the key individuals who contributed to the underpinning research. Academics had to be persuaded to add these as they seemed to think they be taken as read (as it was 'their' case study).
- Change the templates – feedback from panels is they were badly filled in
- Ensure that the exact requirements for the next REF are finalised well, well in advance, so we can all know what we should be working towards.
- Give examples of particularly good case studies, worthy of consideration!
- UoA based feedback on what signified 1-4\* graded case studies with examples.
- I think there needs to be a clear sighted evaluation of the REF in terms of cost effectiveness.
- Offer insight into panel workings: e.g. video content showing panels discussing faux case studies? Or interviews with panel members about the way they came to decisions.
- Clarify feedback arrangements in relation to impact: consider "end-user" engagement/voice in REF. Be flexible and embrace learning - but be consistent too – take a steady approach.
- Guidance on what is good/acceptable impact and what is not.
- Please use the case study resource – don't waste it.
- Provide examples of effective PE showing they meet specific criteria
- Reduce minimum case studies from 2 to 1
- Provide early guidelines for next REF

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For PE – consider the process as valuable as the outcome</li> <li>• Recognise PE separately in 3a</li> <li>• Admit impacts related to discipline rather than research</li> <li>• Pick case studies to give detailed feedback on good pathways, good evidence.</li> <li>• Provide a clear summary of what has been learnt from the REF (in terms of impact) – both positive and negative. For example: metrics are not really possible, or grading cannot be better than good / bad / medium etc. Then apply this knowledge to the next REF!</li> <li>• DON'T MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT! (researchers can bring horse to water, but....)</li> </ul>
Other funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give us top class examples of pathways to impact -&gt; well-structured, properly costed, and with evidence of subsequent delivery.</li> <li>• Encourage reporting on pathways to impact, perhaps in a format that leads to case studies (e.g. asking PIs to collect data as they go along).</li> <li>• Look at REF feedback to understand how impact is going to be measured 'at the end' – so that what they are asking aligns to what people are working towards.</li> <li>• RCUK &amp; other funders –bring impact requirements into line with REF.</li> <li>• Funding councils need to import the lessons from the REF into their assessments of impact plans in HEIs, so messages and impetus to change are consistent internally and externally</li> </ul>
HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan ahead for impact – and develop appropriate mechanisms to support and encourage impact. Balance this with support for quality research and teaching.</li> <li>• Need a system, formal or not, that can hold, update &amp; monitor impact over several years.</li> <li>• View impact as part of research, not an add-on.</li> <li>• Will impact activities be recognised in all promotions criteria? (To help embed it in academic culture).</li> <li>• HEI's &amp; RCUK &amp; VITAE – Build impact &amp; PE into doctoral training &amp; researcher development. Need to move to a position that impact and engagement is as much a part of the researcher work as outputs &amp; academic dissemination.</li> <li>• Invest in supporting impact (e.g. employ more support staff).</li> <li>• Less "secrecy" about REF – more sharing. Recognise the time-commitment involved with respect to the REF and impact; properly resource; plan early, be strategic about partnerships but also give staff room to build new ones.</li> <li>• Need to invest appropriately in impact and engagement. 20% of QR will come from impact...</li> <li>• Funding for collaborators to track evidence to support universities' submissions.</li> <li>• Build support into institutional structure.</li> <li>• Offer support (e.g. impact assistants) to researchers with ambitious PE projects: PE takes a lot of time and resources.</li> <li>• Individual staff need clear planning of priorities to achieve the optimum for their UoA. HEIs need to place strategic funding to help at departmental level, and they need clear and strong leadership</li> </ul>
Individual staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the impact agenda &amp; think forward about how to do this appropriately for your research</li> <li>• Work with partners in an "ethical" way – understand the value of your relationships.</li> <li>• Think and act strategically –develop meaningful relationships, don't just organise 'impact events.</li> <li>• Keep track of as many instances of engagement / impact as you can, as you can't always predict how a project will run, and which piece of evidence might prove</li> </ul>

	key
NCCPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop/info on evaluation and evidencing of PE &amp; how to build into research.</li> <li>• Facilitate more impact case studies. Also best practice and project design.</li> <li>• Continue hosting workshops like this – bringing HEI staff and HEFCE/RCUK together.</li> <li>• Do some work on a standard format for quantifying behaviour change / impact on individuals, such as museums have with the Generic Learning Outcomes (which may be a poor example).</li> <li>• When next REF guidelines are released – provide tools to help academics navigate it to identify impact which could be achieved by PE.</li> <li>• This was very helpful. Keep allowing people to feed into consultations which are accessed (often) only by higher-ups/senior management – giving everyone a voice.</li> <li>• Explore engagement as a pathway not an ‘impact in itself’: the slide on the ‘footprint’ of PE covered all elements of impact... It isn’t always helpful to identify PE as ‘other’ as it makes it easier to classify as weak.</li> <li>• NCCPE could provide training/guidance on how you can effectively evaluate PE activities</li> <li>• Simple, easy, guidelines please.</li> <li>• ‘Metricise’ PE -&gt; give us clear ways to measure and evaluate activity.</li> <li>• NCCPE + FC’s – clearer consistent framework for what good PE looks like within REF</li> <li>• Provide advice on quantitative and qualitative measures.</li> <li>• Develop definitions &amp; guidelines on web, social media, &amp; media engagement.</li> </ul>
Others (please list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Rest of government</u>: be better at acknowledging/referencing research used in policymaking. This would strengthen the attribution (and not contradict the fact that one part of government is asking us to evidence impact – when other parts make that difficult by not referencing!)</li> </ul>
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will a generic definition of PE be agreed by funding bodies/HEFCE/BIS etc?</li> <li>• All stakeholders – define what PE means and what it’s limits are</li> <li>• Offer a clearer and consistent framework for what good PE looks like (including indicators and metrics)</li> <li>• Address the issue of long-term evidence tracking</li> </ul>

## Annex three: contributors

The following people contributed to the consultation. We would like to thank them for their input.

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