



# Impact and the REF

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Understanding Society Conference workshop

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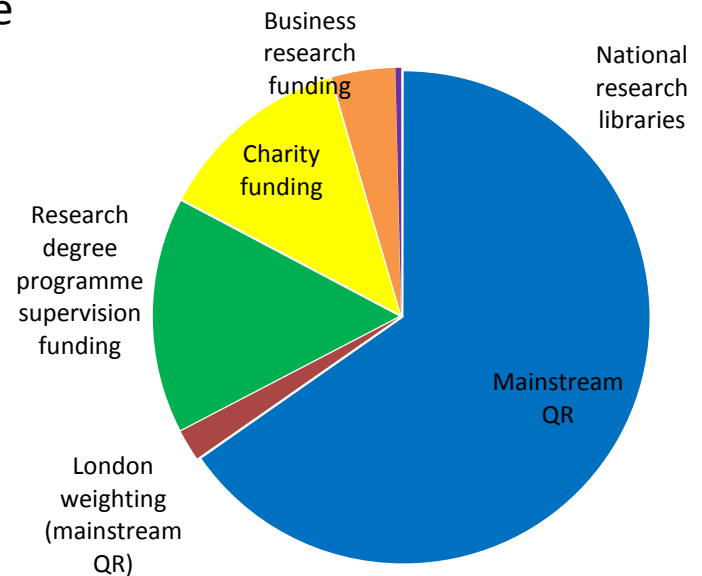
# HEFCE Quality related research funding

**For AY 2015-16 HEFCE will distribute £1.6 billion QR research funding.**

Un-hypothecated funding allocated alongside grants for specific research projects and programmes provided by other funders.

- Drive innovation and respond flexibly to change
- Invest in new and emerging areas
- Grow and support new talent

Stream of funding	£(m)
Mainstream QR (incl London weighting)	1,050
RDP supervision fund	240
Charity support	198
Business research	64
National Research Libraries	7



# Purpose of the REF

- The REF is a process of expert review
- It replaced the RAE as the UK-wide framework for assessing research in all disciplines
- Its purpose is:
  - To inform research funding allocations by the four UK HE funding bodies (approximately £2 billion per year)
  - Provide accountability for public funding of research and demonstrate its benefits
  - To provide benchmarks and reputational yardsticks

# What was assessed

Panels judged the **overall quality** of each submission

**65%**

Quality of research  
**outputs**

**191,150** research  
outputs by **52,061**  
staff were  
reviewed

**20%**

**Impact** of research  
on society

**6,975** impact  
case studies were  
reviewed

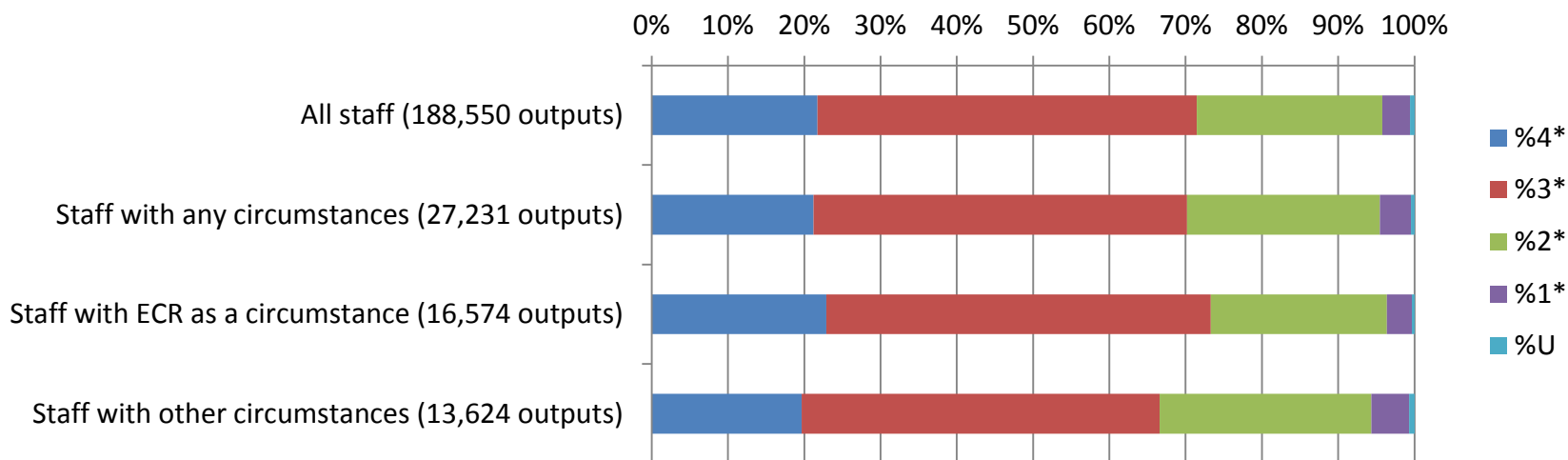
**15%**

The research  
**environment**

The review was  
based on data  
and information  
about the  
environment

# Outputs by early career researchers and staff with other circumstances were found to be of equally high quality to other staff

**Profile for outputs by staff with circumstances**



# The definition of impact is broad

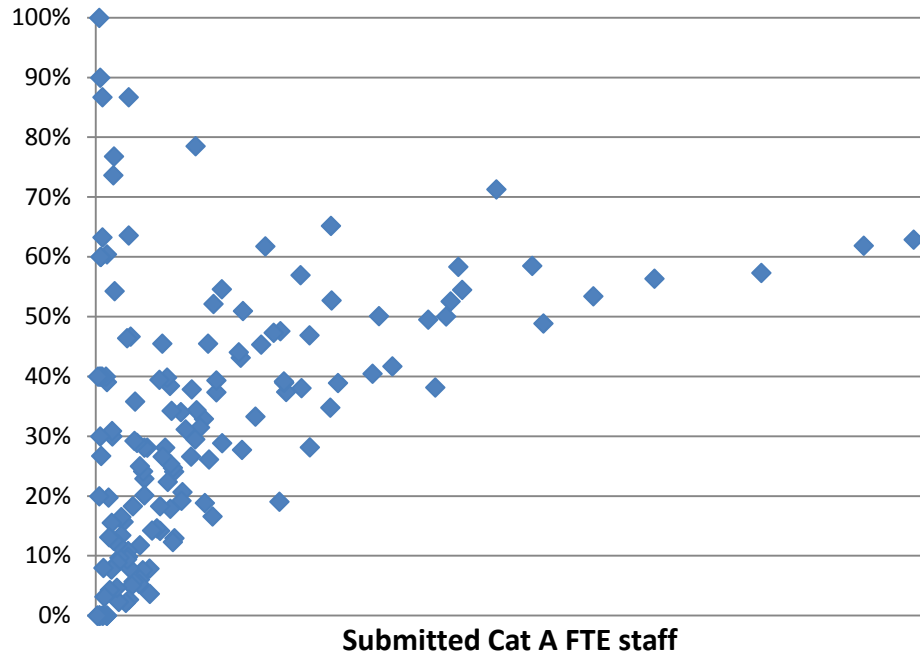
“For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia”

# For the first time, REF has demonstrated the impact of UK research in all subjects

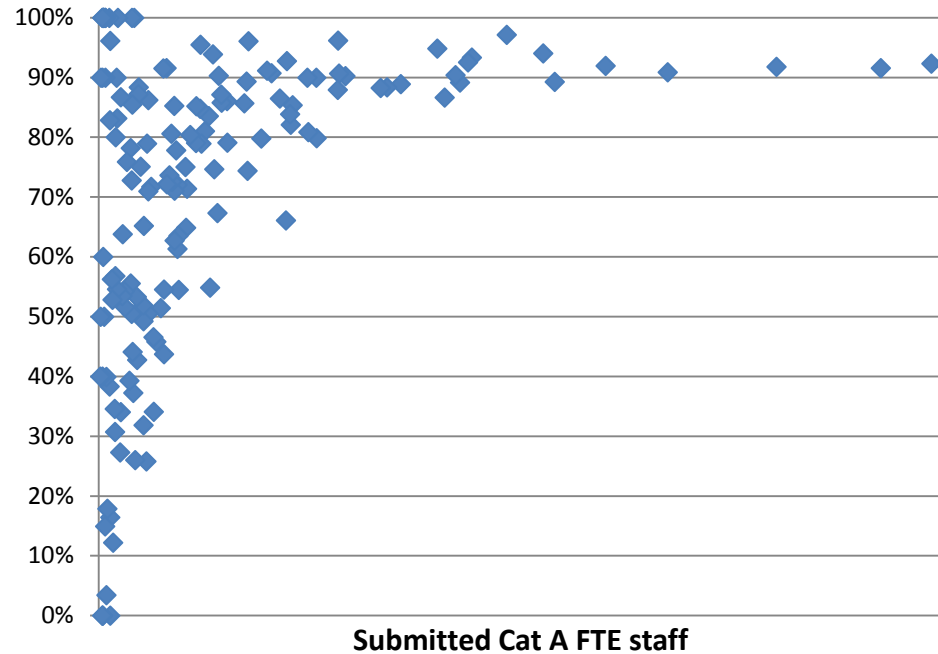
- Over 250 research users judged the impacts, jointly with academic panel members.
- **44%** of impacts were judged outstanding (4\*). A further **40%** were judged very considerable (3\*).
- Impressive impacts were found from research in all subjects.
- REF shows many ways in which research has fuelled economic prosperity, influenced public policy and services, enhanced communities and civic society, enriched cultural life, improved health and wellbeing, and tackled environmental challenges.

# Impressive impact was found across institutions with submissions of all sizes

**Impact: average 4\* by institution**



**Impact: average 3\*+4\* by institution**





# What have we learned?

## **Evaluation of process**

- Preparing for impact has provided benefits and strategic insight to Universities
- The assessment of impact worked well, but there are areas for improvement

## **Analysis of case studies**

- Considerable and diverse impacts were submitted for assessment
- Impact derives from the integration of disciplinary knowledge

There was evidence that assessment of impact as part of REF 2014 along with other policies (such as RCUK's 'Pathways to impact') and the broader 'impact agenda' has led to cultural change within HEIs

*'I noticed my perception of research changing slightly and my passion to make an impact with my research enhanced; this was due to constant in-depth thinking about what we (and I) do in the unit and why we do it. I can say that I became totally immersed in the topic of impact and became fascinated by the area'*

Impact case studies (REF3b)				Impact templates (REF3a)			
Types of benefit	% of total ideas about benefits (n=2338)	% of total respondents to survey (n=962)	Number of institutions (n=21)	Types of benefit	% of total ideas about benefits (n=635)	% of total respondents to survey (n=259)	Number of institutions (n=21)
Identifying and understanding impact	25%	48%	21	Identifying and understanding impact	29%	66%	20
Promotion or recognition	17%	33%	21	Thinking about strategy	27%	66%	20
Review and affirm relationships	9%	22%	21	Promotion and recognition	8%	20%	19

# Feedback from participating HEIs

“It is fair to say that over the period of preparation, the status and visibility of research activity; its relevance to the everyday work of staff and students; and its visibility to the [institution’s] large communities of members of the public and other academic and business collaborators, has been considerably invigorated and enhanced.”

“The most positive aspect of preparing for REF 2014 was to illuminate the vast array of research impact which [the university] may not otherwise have realised it had.”

“In short, we know more about ourselves as a consequence of making a REF submission.”

# As a result of the impact agenda and changing culture, HEIs are changing their practice

*'REF3A is informing the [impact] strategies that are currently being written'*



Setting out an impact strategy



Fixed-term posts becoming permanent



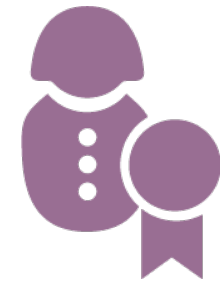
Implementing systems to store evidence of impact



Capturing evidence of impact on an ongoing basis



Building a plan for impact into projects



Inclusion of impact as a criterion for promotion

# What have we learned?

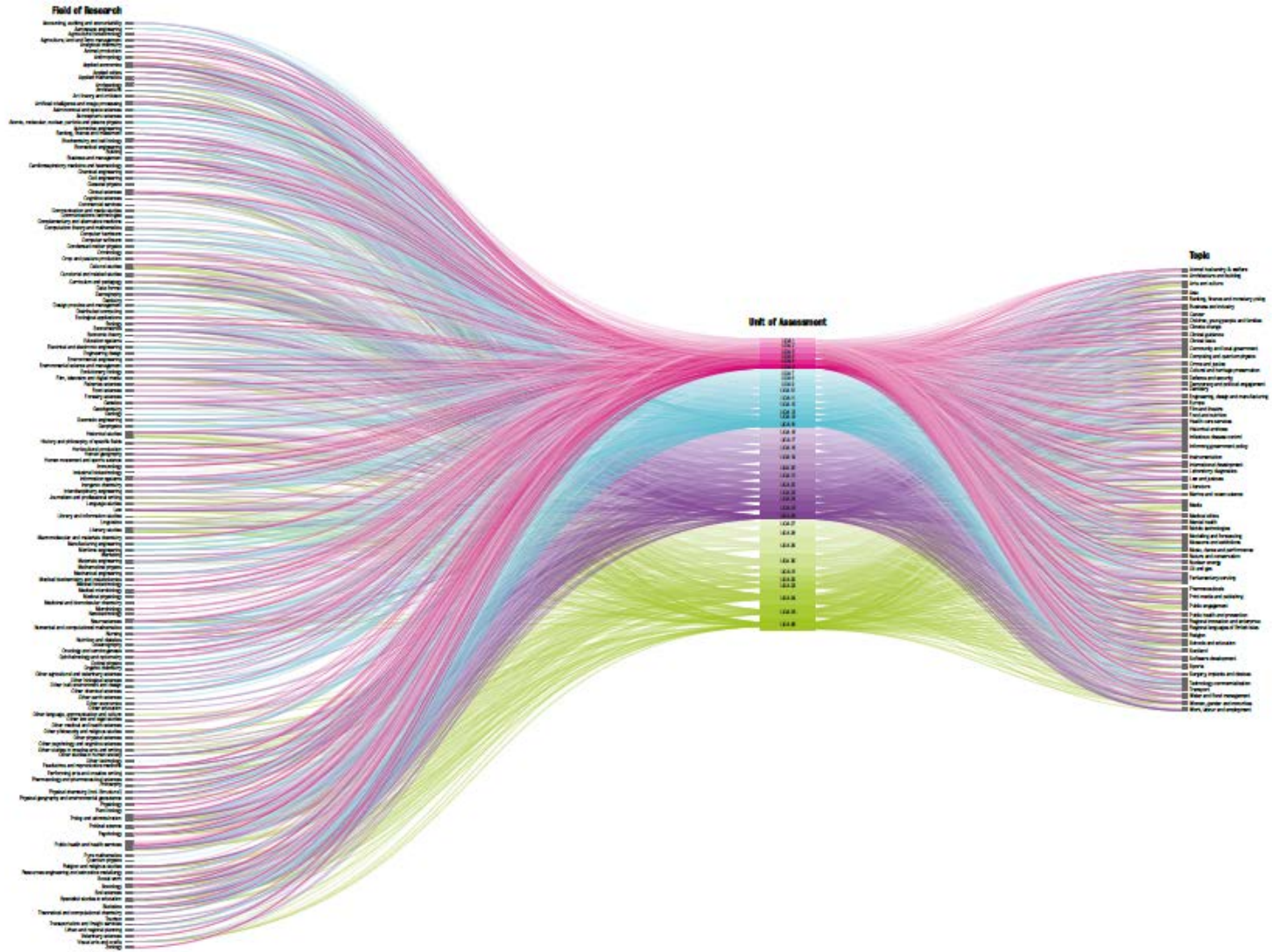
## Evaluation of process

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## Analysis of case studies

- Considerable and diverse impacts were submitted for assessment
- Impact derives from the integration of disciplinary knowledge

# There is a diverse range of impact pathways



# Search REF Impact Case Studies

Browse the index below or search all Case Studies using keywords [e.g. "NHS"].




Learn about advanced search options [here](#).

## Browse the index

[Submitting Institution](#)

**[Unit of Assessment](#)**

[Summary Impact Type](#)

[Research Subject Area](#)

[Impact UK Location](#)

[Impact Global Location](#)

### Unit of Assessment

#### **Main Panel A** (1596)

- [1 - Clinical Medicine](#) (385)
- [2 - Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care](#) (163)
- [3 - Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy](#) (347)
- [4 - Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience](#) (318)
- [5 - Biological Sciences](#) (257)
- [6 - Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science](#) (126)

#### **Main Panel B** (1484)

- [7 - Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences](#) (171)
- [8 - Chemistry](#) (125)
- [9 - Physics](#) (182)
- [10 - Mathematical Sciences](#) (209)
- [11 - Computer Science and Informatics](#) (253)
- [12 - Aeronautical, Mechanical, Chemical and Manufacturing Engineering](#) (124)
- [13 - Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials](#) (127)
- [14 - Civil and Construction Engineering](#) (51)
- [15 - General Engineering](#) (242)

#### **Main Panel C** (1972)

- [16 - Architecture, Built Environment and Planning](#) (141)

#### **Main Panel D** (1627)

- [27 - Area Studies](#) (69)

# Case studies based on longitudinal research

- University of Southampton – impact based on the Hertfordshire Cohort Study and Southampton Women’s Survey – paradigm shift in the medical approach to obesity and non-communicable diseases.
- University of Newcastle – using the Millennium Cohort Study – changing policy and practice for the language delayed child
- Birkbeck college – Effective Provision of Pre-school Education project – Government decision to extend free early years provision for disadvantaged children





Thank you for listening

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