

Impact through knowledge exchange: RCUK position and expectations

Introduction

This policy sets out the Research Councils' position and expectations in relation to the delivery of benefits and economic and societal impact from our investments in excellent research, training, knowledge exchange and translation.

Position

The Research Councils:

- encourage researchers at the idea stage to consider actively potential benefits and beneficiaries and how they will achieve excellence with impact. This includes consideration of potential pathways for realising impacts¹. The Councils recognise that potential impacts can manifest at any stage in the research, through the full project life cycle and beyond, and can often stem from unexpected or unintended activities. The Councils also accept that **not all research will have direct or immediate practical application** and the primary criterion for RCUK funding will be excellence.
- recognise that **knowledge exchange between academia and public services and third sector** is central to delivering key societal and cultural benefits and does not always lead to immediate or direct commercial benefits.
- support knowledge exchange not necessarily to generate a financial return to an individual, research group, institution or the Councils, but **to deliver the widest range of benefits** to the UK economy and society from the excellent research, people and facilities in which they invest.
- recognise the emergent and long term nature of research and of research outcomes, and therefore, provide funding recipients with **flexibility** and **autonomy** in the delivery of their research, postgraduate training and knowledge exchange activities. This flexibility and autonomy encompasses project definition, management, collaboration, participation, promotion and the communication of research outputs.
- acknowledge that **knowledge exchange encompasses complex and diverse activities** which can deliver economic and societal benefits over varying timescales. Therefore a **range of knowledge exchange pathways and flexible support models** are necessary to

¹ See guidance on Pathways to Impact: www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/impacts

facilitate the multi-way exchange of knowledge between academia and research users in business, public and the third sectors. This may also include knowledge exchange between academic disciplines where such multi/cross-discipline activities form part of the critical pathway towards achieving economic and societal impact. The Research Councils will continue to work together to **provide accessible and appropriate mechanisms to support knowledge exchange and translation** to generate economic and societal benefits.

- **liaise with key stakeholders**, and commission relevant studies, to ensure knowledge exchange strategies and approaches are fit for purpose, and meet the complex needs of research users.
- recognise that in most cases the host **Research Organisation is responsible for the identification and management of the intellectual assets²** (including intellectual property rights) arising from research funded by the Research Councils. Unless otherwise agreed the **ownership of intellectual property (IP), and responsibility for its application, rests with the organisation generating that IP.**
- recognise that it is important to **capture the outputs, outcomes and impact** of the research they fund so as to demonstrate the wider value and benefit of these outcomes to the UK society and economy.

Expectations

The Research Councils expect the Research Organisations (ROs), in which they invest, to:

- develop and deliver a **strategy for knowledge exchange** and commercialisation within the context of the RO's mission, areas of research and user communities
- demonstrate an **awareness of the wider environment and context** in which research takes place and the **social and ethical implications** of potential innovations arising from this research. This includes taking account of public attitudes towards those issues
- develop and maintain the necessary **professional networks** to enable awareness of the wider environment and facilitate effective knowledge exchange
- ensure that **user needs** are taken into account in seeking to take forward research ideas and project outcomes
- **identify and manage appropriately all the intellectual assets associated with research activity that are of potential benefit in any form.** This includes identifying and managing intellectual property, which can be central to delivering commercial benefit from research outcomes in certain sectors

² www.ipo.gov.uk/ipasset-management.pdf

- take effective decisions about **intellectual asset management** that deliver the most benefit to society and the economy. This will include recognising circumstances where the publication of research outcomes or free dissemination and communication to users might be the most effective approach. This also includes managing and maximising the benefits of relevant intangible intellectual assets such as people, data, technology, knowledge, processes and procedures. As well as seeking opportunities for sharing or combining intellectual assets to maximise the potential of delivering benefits. This should be supported by appropriate policies, including those relating to intellectual property management
- **manage collaborations** professionally, in order to secure maximum impact without restricting the future progression of research. The Research Councils consider it best practice for collaboration agreements, including the ownership and management of any intellectual property, to have been agreed early in the process, ideally before the project starts
- **recognise, enable and reward** those who undertake knowledge exchange activities, and support the development of **skills in knowledge exchange and enterprise**
- work in **partnership with the Research Councils** for the benefit of the UK, and **acknowledge the support of the Research Councils** when communicating and disseminating research outputs and outcomes
- **report on the progress and success of their knowledge exchange** and on the impact that have been achieved in accordance with Research Councils requirements.

Further information is available at www.rcuk.ac.uk

Related links

RCUK Mission and Statement of Expectation on Economic and Societal Impact:
www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/innovation/missionsei.pdf

Joint Statement on Impact by HEFCE, RCUK and UUK:
www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/policies/

Terms and Conditions of Research Council FEC Grants (particularly section GC 21 Exploitation and Impact):
www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/grantstcs/

Other relevant RCUK policies

Engaging the Public with
 Research: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/perConcordat/>

RCUK Policy on Open Access:
www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/openaccess/policy/

Concordat to support the career development of researchers (with Vitae):
www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers

RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research
Conduct: www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/researchers/grc/

28/10/2014