



# Rethinking Policy Impact

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Promoting Ethical  
and Effective Policy  
Engagement in the  
Higher Education Sector

## Core Principles

### Collaboration.

Researchers should be incentivised to work collaboratively, rather than encouraged (solely) to get credit for their individual team or institution's research.

### Bodies of knowledge.

Researchers should be encouraged to contribute to help build and effectively communicate wider corpora of insights and evidence.

### Equality and Diversity.

There needs to be focused support for those with protected characteristics and at early career stage, to create a level playing field and diversify the research informing policy.

### Quality of policy engagement.

Policy impact frameworks should reward 'productive engagement' and co-creation as ends in themselves.

### Public and community engagement.

Researchers and HEIs should have incentives to contribute to enriching, informing and broadening the parameters of public debate on policies.

### Disruptive research.

Support for policy impact should not crowd out or devalue innovative, blue-skies or disruptive research.



## Recommendations for REF

### Quality of engagement.

Reward quality of engagement as well as impact, within Impact Case Studies.

### Underpinning research.

Loosen the requirement for 2\* underpinning research to capture the value of applied research and syntheses.

### Collaborative submissions.

Signal strong support for overlapping and joint Impact Case Studies to incentivise cross-institutional collaboration.

### Time limit for underpinning research.

Remove the time limit for research, to recognise longer-term and less linear routes to impact.

### Early career impact.

Introduce an early career researcher (ECR) flag in Impact Case Studies to support ECR impact and engagement.

### Equality & Diversity.

Request a description of how HEIs support EDI in impact and engagement as part of the Environment narrative.



## Recommendations for **UKRI & Funders**

### **Bodies of knowledge.**

Foster stronger linkages across projects by expanding the role of brokers in synthesis and communication of research.

### **Quality of engagement.**

Emphasise the value of high-quality engagement as an end in itself, and develop a reporting system to capture this across projects.

### **Equality & Diversity.**

Ensure EDI considerations are included in guidance for engagement and impact on key schemes such as Impact Accelerator Awards.

### **Co-production.**

Update guidance on coproduction to encourage a more nuanced understanding and consideration of benefits and risks.

### **Discovery research.**

Continue to ensure space for discovery research, for example through re-instating schemes focused on transformation research.



# Recommendations for HEIs

## Implementing guidance.

Ensure clear lines of communication with REF and funders to enable agile adjustment to changes in rules.

## Equality & Diversity.

Promote EDI in support for impact, through producing better data and acting robustly to advance the EDI agenda.

## Researcher time.

Ensure researchers have sufficient time allocated for engagement, while recognising that not all need to engage in impact activities.

## Collaboration.

Support cross-institutional brokering bodies (such as the Universities Policy Engagement Network) and invest in cross-institutional hubs and centres to pool impact.

