

Queen's University Belfast ESRC Impact Acceleration Account Guidelines 2019-23

Background

Queen's University has been awarded an Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). This award builds on and complements the University's vision for research and impact to support the delivery of an ambitious programme of targeted, responsive and flexible financial support that will help embed a culture of social science-based impact and knowledge exchange among our researchers and our external impact partners.

Objectives of the ESRC Impact Accelerator Account

The ESRC IAA seeks to:

- develop a culture of embedded knowledge exchange and impact in research through social sciences
- lower the barriers, both real and perceived, that impede activities that generate impact
- create a fully-engaged research environment that embeds and values the co-production of research, impact and knowledge exchange activities as essential, integral parts in the research cycle
- build on and diversify our portfolio of external impact partners by reaching out to new organisations
- facilitate improved bids to other funding bodies through greater knowledge, confidence, competence and understanding of impact
- support early career researchers to develop by providing relevant opportunities for academic growth and career progression
- involve external partner organisations in the management of the IAA
- leverage further opportunities for support from within Queen's and from partner organisations

Funds dispersed from the IAA must align with one or more of these objectives.

What is impact?

The ESRC defines research impact as 'the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy'. According to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact is an effect on, change or benefit – beyond academia – to:

- the economy
- society
- culture
- public policy or services
- health
- the environment
- quality of life

Impact includes, but is not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit:

to:	of:	in any geographic location, whether:
attitude awareness behaviour capacity opportunity performance policy practice process understanding	audience beneficiary community constituency organisation individuals	locally regionally nationally internationally

Impact also includes the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects.

Queen's has directed institutional investment to areas of research excellence aligned to major societal challenges across the world which, in turn, help us achieve our aim of being distinguished by our academic strengths and recognised globally for the social, economic and cultural impact we deliver through our research.

The research landscape at Queen's has evolved in line with this ambitious vision and our commitment to research, impact, innovation and internationalisation is reflected in an environment that encourages and accelerates the translation of ideas into validated, robust and impactful solutions, with real-world application and benefit.

Eligibility

The Queen's University ESRC IAA invites applications for funding for projects that will enable academics to generate new, or build on existing, impact-related activity.

Applications are welcomed from staff across the University working on projects that clearly align to social science-related [areas eligible for ESRC funding](#). The proposed activity must be based on past or current social science research **but you do not need to have been a previous recipient of ESRC funding in order to be eligible to apply**. Please note that, for the purposes of administering the award, the person named as Principal Investigator should be a permanent member of staff. If you are not a permanent member of staff but wish to apply, please contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk for advice.

Applications based on multi-/inter-disciplinary research but with a substantial social science element are eligible.

All initiatives must be able to demonstrate potential for social, economic, political and/or cultural impact.

Applications should reflect school, faculty and institutional research priorities, such as those contained in the Strategy 2030 in reference to Research and Innovation, for example aligning projects with UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Innovative and creative approaches to impact are encouraged, particularly if your proposal relates to Covid-recovery and a post-lockdown world.

Applications from early career researchers and staff who are new to Queen's or new to impact are welcomed.

Covid-19

Queen's follows current communication from the NI Executive regarding additional measures to control the spread of Covid-19. Please consider the most recent guidelines when considering impact activities within your application and make suitable provision, if necessary, for alternative arrangements. Given the unknown duration of the pandemic, and the timing of this funding call, Covid-19 will generally not be considered as an eligible reason for project delays.

Eligible Costs

The ESRC IAA can support directly incurred and directly allocated costs. All costs must be clearly justified and may include the following:

- salary costs for Research Assistants, Research Technicians etc. ([see policy and rates](#))
- consumables such as professional materials
- promotional materials, such as digital toolkits, video content, infographics, blogs, podcasts and briefing papers
- small pieces of equipment directly related to the project*
- venue bookings and catering**
- travel and subsistence**

*Where funds are transferred to external organisations, a contract and due diligence checks may be required. Contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk for advice.

**In the likelihood that travel and face-to-face meetings are possible in the future, travel, subsistence, venue hire, and catering can be considered. However, if you include these costs you must also include alternatives in the event of continuing lockdown.

The ESRC IAA does not prescribe the types of initiatives that can be supported. It is for applicants to put forward proposals that will best support **the realisation of impact** from their research. Activities that are **not** eligible for funding include:

- primary research
- activities that can be supported through other standard routes
- estates and indirect costs
- infrastructure and capital expenditure (other than small pieces of equipment directly related to the project as mentioned above)
- patent filing or similar costs associated with registering intellectual property rights
- training or activities aimed at undergraduate or Masters students
- large ESRC investments such as Centres, Large Grants and Infrastructure Investments during their ESRC grant

For information on internal funding opportunities which may be able to support these activities see: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/Support-for-researchers/Funding-information/Funding-opportunities/InternalFundingOpportunities/>.

Funding Available

There are three areas of funding available:

1. the ESRC Impact Fund
2. secondments
3. partnerships and alliances

1. The ESRC Impact Fund

The ESRC Impact Fund consists of the following three strands aimed at supporting impact-related activity:

- 1.1 Leading Impact Fund:** This is a responsive-mode, call-based scheme with projects being chosen through a competitive process with a small number of calls issued throughout the year. Activities will enable researchers to carry out longer-term pieces of work to accelerate the impact of research and give a clearer understanding of the impact potential of research outputs. In evaluating proposals additional weighting will be given to projects that support engagement between external organisations and researchers who are either new to Queen's or new to impact.

Awards of up to £15k are available, but projects will typically be in the region of £5k-£10k.

- 1.2 Rapid Impact Fund:** This is a responsive-mode scheme that is open all year round with fixed criteria for spontaneous impact-related activity. It will provide short-term, smaller amounts of funding, usually under £1k, and will allow researchers to respond instantly to opportunities for impact, e.g. giving evidence to an Inquiry.

Awards of up to up to £1k are typically available, from an annual allocation of £10k. To discuss an application to the Rapid Impact Fund, please email esrciaa@qub.ac.uk

- 1.3 Impact Vouchers for Social Science:** Aimed at external organisations that do not yet have connections with Queen's, but would like to work with the University to generate impact. The vouchers can be used by the external organisation to pay for researcher time/services. Primary research cannot be supported under this scheme, but examples of eligible activities include co-creation, knowledge exchange, support with secondary data analysis, and training activities, among others. Please contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk for more information. There will be a number of calls throughout the year.

Three awards of up to £5k will be made each year (VAT inclusive).

2. Secondments

Secondments are available to enable flexible people exchanges between organisations and the University, and are key ways of exchanging skills and knowledge and of developing longer-term working relationships. Given the current pandemic, we expect applications to this strand to look different from previous calls, given the requirement to work from home.

There are three types of secondments available through the ESRC IAA:

- 2.1 Mid-Career/Senior Academic Secondments:** This fund invites University-based researchers to apply to undertake work that will validate their research in relevant non-academic contexts. By allowing academics the time away from their normal commitments to focus on related challenges and opportunities within an external setting, secondments aim to accelerate the delivery of research impact. The secondments will usually last a maximum of 6 months on a flexible, part-time basis. Given the pandemic, this can be extended if required.

£5k is available per secondment with two secondments supported per year.

- 2.2 Early Career Researcher Secondments:** This scheme is based on the Knowledge Transfer Partnership model of the Associate, Mentor and external partner and may include PhD students, where appropriate. The secondments will usually be a maximum of 6 months on a flexible, part-time basis and will be established with the opportunity, but not requirement, for leveraged funding from external partners. Given the pandemic, this period can be extended if required. These secondments will provide an opportunity for research to be tested in an external environment and must be supported by a named senior academic mentor.

£5k is available per secondment with two secondments per year.

- 2.3 Practitioner Appointments:** This scheme will allow staff from external organisations to spend time with researchers or teams of researchers within the University. Such appointments allow Queen's researchers to showcase their work and the research environment, and will allow the appointees to be introduced to other key academics and researchers at Queen's to explore further areas of mutual interest. Applicants should secure agreement from the relevant Head of School or other senior manager at Queen's. For support in identifying the relevant person, please contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

£5k is available per appointment with two appointments per year (VAT inclusive).

3. Partnerships and Alliances

There are three strands of support available under the theme of Partnerships and Alliances:

- 3.1 Developing International Impact:** In all parts of the University, our leading researchers are collaborating across disciplines and with outside agencies and organisations on projects of world significance. By further developing robust and

inspirational partnerships with NGOs, international bodies, governments, policymakers, businesses and other gateway partners across the globe, our researchers are able to extend the impact of their research on the grand challenges facing the world. This funding strand was initially developed to allow academics to travel to share their research with internationally-located impact partners and for partners to come to Belfast to learn how the research can help them create impact. However, given the pandemic we would welcome innovative proposals as to how to do this differently. A call for funding will encourage thematic-based proposals involving representatives from partner organisations, irrespective of geography. This engagement will lead to longer-term relationships being built, with potential impact on international policymaking and activities. In turn, this could lead to future research collaborations, funded projects and a long-term alliance, potentially being underpinned by a partnership agreement.

A maximum of £20k is available per proposal, with two awarded each year.

- 3.2 Developing New Partnerships:** This strand is aimed at activities that will help academics build partnerships with organisations regionally or nationally with which they have not previously worked or with which they only have a tentative relationship. This funding will open the doors for new relationship building, thereby contributing to the University's increasing portfolio of impact partners.

A maximum of £3k is available per proposal, with three awarded each year.

- 3.3 Strategic Alliances:** This will be a managed strand with partners being identified internally by the ESRC IAA Steering Committee. Activities will support increased engagement with external partners at a strategic level through establishing or developing relationships that have the potential to lead to enduring collaborations and impact. Partners will be selected to fit with the strategic priorities of Queen's.

If you would like to nominate an organisation or a network for consideration, please send your suggestion to esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Applications

Applications should be submitted through the appropriate application form. Pre-submission conversations with the Impact Acceleration Officer are strongly encouraged: please contact Lynne Gault at: esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Applications for the **Rapid Impact Fund** operate on a rolling basis until the fund is exhausted. Applications will be assessed by the Chair of the ESRC IAA Steering Committee, normally within five working days of submission.

Applications for other strands will be call-based. These applications will be assessed by members of the ESRC IAA Steering Committee, normally within 15 working days of the closing date of the call. The Steering Committee is composed of academic and support staff from Queen's and representatives from external organisations: the list of current members is included as an appendix to this guidance.

A Research Application System (RAS) entry and/or Research Grant Application Summary (RGAS) form are required for awards made under the Leading Impact Fund, Partnerships (Developing New and International) and Secondments (Mid-Career/Senior Academic and Early Career Researcher).

Application Review Process

All eligible applications will be considered against the following questions:

- Does the proposed initiative build on past or current social science research conducted at Queen's?*
- Does the proposed initiative have clearly expressed and achievable aims?
- Does the proposed initiative have clear and appropriate deliverables and clearly anticipated outcomes?***
- Does the proposed initiative demonstrate potential impact beyond academia?***
- Does the proposed initiative have the potential for sustainable impact and/or lead to long-term relationships?***
- Does the proposed initiative demonstrate good project management?
- Is there a good quality plan for collecting evidence of impact?
- Does the proposed initiative demonstrate good value-for-money and is the budget fully justified?
- Will the proposed initiative enhance the culture of engaged research at Queen's?
- Does the proposed initiative demonstrate user demand?
- Where possible/appropriate, does the proposed initiative include cash or in-kind contributions from external partners?

* Or in part at Queen's

***The ESRC IAA Steering Committee will adopt an open attitude to risk and innovation, balanced with a need to deliver value-for-money. This approach is designed to encourage applications that are novel in design and whose success is consequently more uncertain than conventional impact projects.

Other support available through the ESRC IAA

The ESRC IAA will also support training for impact and policy engagement. For more information, or to discuss possible impact activities, please contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Terms and Conditions of Award

By accepting an ESRC IAA award, successful applicants accept and agree to the following terms and conditions:

- Award holders must engage with the Impact Acceleration Officer to monitor progress both during the life of the initiative and post-initiative, to allow for learning and reporting of potential impact.
- Award holders will be required to collate evidence of impact and adhere to reporting procedures outlined with offers of award.
- Successful applicants are expected to start impact activities as soon as possible. In most cases, it is expected that activities will be completed within 3 to 12 months of the start date.
- Successful offers are required to consider any ethical issues relating to their application and comply with the University procedures for ethical review processes.
- The award holder and her/his School are required to manage the approved funds appropriately and to record expenditure.
- For awards administered through an R account: after completion of the initiative, the account should be reconciled and closed with any unspent funds returned to the ESRC IAA.
- Where there are cash contributions from external organisations, the award holder's School is responsible for managing contributions and liaising over collaboration agreements.
- Awards are non-transferable.
- Any major amendments to budget plans must be agreed with the Impact Acceleration Officer.
- Any amendments to project timescales must be agreed with the Impact Acceleration Officer.
- Details of successful initiatives may be listed on the QUB website and in other publications.
- Details of successful initiatives may be shared with other ESRC award holders and potential applicants.
- Any equipment or materials purchased from the award shall remain the property of the University.
- All activities must adhere to the QUB Safeguarding Policy, available from <https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/legal-services-and-employee-relations/>
- All applicants must adhere to both regulations from Queen's and from the NI Executive regarding additional measures to control the spread of Covid-19
- It is expected that applicants will have anticipated any delays that could result due to Covid-19 and to have made alternative arrangements

Appendix

ESRC IAA Steering Committee Membership

The current members of the ESRC IAA Steering Committee are:

James Dillon	Research and Enterprise, QUB
Laura Dunne	School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work/CESI, QUB
Liz Fawcett	Research and Enterprise, QUB
Kevin Fearon	Research and Enterprise, QUB
Brian Gormally	CAJ
Maria Lohan	School of Nursing and Midwifery/CESI, QUB
Daithí Mac Sithigh	School of Law, QUB
Geoff Nuttall	NICVA
David Paulson	Queen's Management School, QUB
Adrienne Scullion	School of Arts, English and Languages, QUB (Chair)
Ian Shuttleworth	School of Natural and Built Environment, QUB
Peter Stephenson	Research and Enterprise, QUB