

Queen's University Belfast

ESRC Impact Acceleration Account

FAQs 2019-23

What is an Impact Acceleration Account?

An IAA is a block award made to research organisations to accelerate the impact of academic research. They are awarded by research councils, in this case by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

The ESRC IAA provides funding mechanisms **for social science impact activities and knowledge exchange**. IAAs allow research organisations to respond to impact opportunities in more flexible, responsive and creative ways.

How is impact defined?

The ESRC define 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

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.

Making an impact through excellence in research and innovation is central to what we do at Queen's. It is our purpose and responsibility to take on major global challenges, and to find answers that will help to build a better society. 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.

How will projects be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?

Applicants should detail how they intend to achieve impact during current restrictions, including how they will successfully complete their projects in instances of travel limitations, remote working requirements, and potential delays due to illness. Applicants should be sensitive to possible pressures on partners, and should provide adequate provision for the changing situation arising from Covid-19. Before commencing any activities, applicants should make themselves aware of the most up-to-date communications from the NI Executive, and UK Government, regarding additional measures to control the spread of Covid-19. Covid-19 will generally not be considered as an eligible reason for project delays. Applications which contain innovative means to ensure impact will be welcomed.

What support is available through the IAA?

- **Leading Impact Fund:** This fund will support researchers to carry out longer-term pieces of work to accelerate the impact of their research (Awards of up to £15k are available, but projects will typically be in the region of £5k-£10k). The type of work supported via this scheme may include a co-production project, creating an impact-related toolkit or running an impact-related forum with external partners. Creative approaches to impact are welcome. Calls for applications will be made throughout the year.
- **Rapid Impact Fund:** This fund will be open all year and provide short-term, small amounts of money (usually under £1,000) to enable researchers to respond quickly to opportunities for impact, for example, giving evidence before a panel, producing a short guide, or running a workshop.
- **Impact Vouchers for Social Science:** Vouchers are aimed at external organisations that do not have existing connections with Queen's but would like to work with us. Up to £5,000 will be awarded to external organisations to buy in researcher time. **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. Calls for applications will be made throughout the year.
- **Secondments and Practitioner Appointments:** Secondments will enable early career researchers, mid-career and senior academics to apply and validate their research in an external environment. Practitioner Appointments will allow staff from external organisations to spend time with researchers in the University. These opportunities will encourage skills and knowledge exchange and support the development of long-term working relationships. Secondments/appointments will usually be for a maximum of six months on a flexible basis. Given the pandemic, this can be extended if required.
- **Partnerships and strategic alliances:** The IAA will support the development of regional, national and international partnerships and strategic alliances. This will enable researchers to build/strengthen relationships with external organisations in order to share their research and work together to create impact.
- **Training for impact:** Courses and training workshops will be advertised throughout the year. They will be open to all social science researchers.

- **Policy engagement:** The IAA will support public lectures and policy clinics for academics to share research and ideas on major social, cultural and economic challenges. The [Queen's Policy Engagement blog](#) is also a place for research analysis and commentary. If you have a blog post you would like to share, or an idea for a public lecture or policy clinic, please contact qpol@qub.ac.uk.

More information on all these schemes is available via esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

How much support is available?

- **Leading Impact Fund:** A minimum of three projects a year will be funded. Awards of up to £15k are available, but projects will typically be in the region of £5k-£10k. Calls will be issued throughout the year.
- **Rapid Impact Fund:** Approximately ten projects a year will be funded, usually under £1,000 each. A total of £10,000 per year will be allocated and applications will be open until funds are exhausted.
- **Impact Vouchers for Social Science:** Three vouchers per year will be allocated, usually to a maximum of £5,000 each. A total of £15,000 per year will be allocated. Calls will be issued throughout the year.
- **Secondments and Practitioner Appointments:** Each year, there will be opportunities for two Mid-Career/Senior Academic secondments, two Early Career Researcher secondments, and two Practitioner Appointments. A sum of £5,000 is available for each secondment/appointment, with a total of £30,000 per year available. Calls will be issued throughout the year.
- **Partnerships and strategic alliances:**
 - Two international partnerships per year will be funded, usually to a maximum of £20,000 each. A total of £40,000 per year is available for international partnerships. Calls will be issued throughout the year.
 - Three regional or national partnerships per year will be funded, usually under £3,000 each. A total of £10,000 per year is available for regional and national partnerships. Calls for partnerships will be issued throughout the year.
 - There will also be a managed strand for strategic alliances to be identified by the ESRC IAA Steering Committee. Partners will be selected to fit the strategic priorities of Queen's. It is anticipated that one strategic alliance per year will be funded up to £20,000. If you would like to nominate an organisation or a network for consideration, please send your suggestion to esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Applications are welcome from members of staff across the University who are involved in social science-related research, as well as external organisations working on initiatives relevant to social science. Applications based on multi-/inter-disciplinary research with a substantial social science element are also eligible.

The fund is open to researchers at all stages of their career and we would particularly encourage applications from researchers who are new to Queen's or new to impact. 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 for Practitioner Appointments and Impact Vouchers for Social Science are welcome from external organisations.

Can postgraduates access support through the IAA?

Where appropriate, PhD students may be eligible for secondments with external organisations. These secondments will be supported by a senior academic mentor.

Do I need to be a previous recipient of ESRC funding to apply?

No, you do not need to have been a previous recipient of ESRC funding in order to be eligible to apply, but there must be existing research in a social science discipline.

How do Queen's staff apply?

Applications to the ESRC IAA will be made through application forms. These can be submitted for the Rapid Impact Fund at any time. Calls for other strands will be made throughout the year.

For Queen's staff 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).

Pre-application conversations with the Impact Acceleration Officer are strongly encouraged. Please contact Alice Neeson at esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

How can external organisations apply?

External organisations are welcome to apply for:

- Impact Vouchers for Social Science: Up to £5,000 available to buy in time/services from researchers at Queen's
- Practitioner Appointments: Up to £5,000 available to cover the organisation's cost while one of its staff members spends time with Queen's staff

The amount applied for should be **inclusive** of VAT.

If you are interested in applying, please contact Alice Neeson at esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Prior to submitting an application, representatives from external organisations are required to secure agreement with the relevant Head of School or other senior manager at Queen's. For assistance in identifying the right person, please contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

How are decisions on awards made?

Decisions for the Rapid Impact Fund will be made by the Chair of the ESRC IAA Steering Committee. In most cases, decisions will be made within five working days of submitting an application.

Decisions on the other awards will be made by members of the ESRC IAA Steering Committee. This Steering Committee includes representation from across the University as well as external organisations. In most cases, decisions will be made within 15 working days of the closing date of the call. Current members of that Committee are listed as an appendix to this document.

What costs are eligible for funding?

The ESRC IAA can support directly incurred and directly allocated costs. These include:

- 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.

**It would be useful to outline alternative plans in the event of restrictions on travel or events.

What activities are not eligible for funding?

- 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 directly to registering intellectual property rights
- training or activities aimed at undergraduates or Masters students
- large ESRC investments such as Centres, Large Grants and Infrastructure Investments during their ESRC grant
- article processing charges associated with academic publication

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

What counts as primary research?

Primary research involves a researcher collecting data directly – for example, by carrying out interviews, surveys or focus groups. Primary research is not eligible for funding under this scheme.

However, these methods may be used to measure the impact of the initiative. In addition, these methods may be used when the intention is not open-ended research, but outcome-

orientated (such as carrying out interviews in order to produce a policy report, or focus groups to co-produce a new intervention).

Secondary research (research using data that has already been collected) is eligible for funding as long as it is clearly aimed at achieving impact beyond academia.

How can awards for Secondments and Practitioner Appointments be used?

Awards for Secondments and Practitioner Appointments can be used to cover directly incurred and directly allocated costs, as described above. For Secondments, this may include teaching replacement. For Practitioner Appointments, it may include salary costs of external staff.

Do awards count as research income?

Awards made under the Leading Impact Fund, Partnerships (Developing New and International) and Secondments (Mid-Career/Senior Academic and Early Career Researcher) count as research income.

Awards made under the Rapid Impact Fund, Impact Vouchers and Practitioner Appointments do not.

Are award holders required to complete a RAS entry and/or RGAS form?

A RAS entry and/or 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).

Will the ESRC IAA support conference attendance?

The ESRC IAA may support attendance at practitioner conferences *if the impact can be evidenced*. Attendance at standard academic conferences is unlikely to be supported.

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

Can I apply for more than one award?

It is possible to apply for more than one award but, depending on demand, it is unlikely that a researcher/team of researchers will receive more than one award per stream per year.

If I received an ESRC IAA award in the past, am I eligible to reapply?

Yes, provided your second project is different to the first and new impact is anticipated, you can apply to the ESRC IAA again. Second-time applicants will be expected to have fulfilled all requirements of the previous award.

Am I eligible to reapply if I was unsuccessful with a previous application?

Yes, applicants who have been unsuccessful with previous applications are welcome to reapply. Where possible, feedback will be provided by the panel to help strengthen future applications.

What kind of contribution is expected from partner organisations?

Where possible leveraged funding or in-kind contributions from partner organisations will be sought. This may include a cash contribution, access to data or archives, use of space, or contribution of time or services. We recognise that it will not always be possible to obtain leveraged support.

Can I apply for co-funding with other award schemes (e.g. the Engaged Research Seed Fund)?

Yes, if your project is eligible under the ESRC IAA guidelines, you may be eligible for co-funding with other schemes. Please notify us at esrciaa@qub.ac.uk if you are interested in co-funding.

What reporting requirements are required?

Award recipients will be required to collect evidence of their impact. It is up to applicants to consider how impact can best be evidenced, but it may include numbers of participants, survey data, participant interviews etc.

Award recipients will be required to complete reporting forms on their activities, outputs and impact. These will be discussed with recipients when awards are issued. Support for reporting can be arranged by contacting esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Evidence of impact should also be uploaded to Pure.

What is the maximum duration of the award?

The maximum duration of funding awards will usually be 12 months. The maximum duration of Secondments and Practitioner Appointments is six months. However, given the current situation, the ESRC IAA Team can be accommodating.

Please direct any additional questions to esrciaa@qub.ac.uk.

Appendix

ESRC IAA Steering Committee Membership

The current members of the ESRC IAA Steering Committee are:

Committee Membership

Name	Area
Nicola Armstrong	Public Health Agency
Eileen Chan-Hu	Migrant and Ethnic Minorities Council
Chris Colvin	Queen's Management School, QUB
James Dillon	Research and Enterprise, QUB
Laura Dunne	School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work/CESI, QUB
Kevin Fearon	Research and Enterprise, QUB
Brian Gormally	CAJ
Kathryn Kavanagh	Research and Enterprise, QUB
Maria Lohan	School of Nursing and Midwifery/CESI, 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