ESRC Impact Acceleration Account Guidelines

Context

Queen's has been awarded an Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The aims of the IAA are:

People

1. To foster an inclusive, collaborative, entrepreneurial and supportive research impact community.
2. To facilitate improved understanding of research impact through greater knowledge, confidence and competence among our researchers.
3. To support early career researchers, including postdoctoral fellows, to develop their impact and engagement portfolio by providing relevant opportunities for capacity building and impact activities.

Research Impact

4. To create a fully engaged impact environment that embeds and values the co-production of research, impact and KE activities as essential, integral parts in the research cycle.
5. To remove the challenges that impede activities that generate impact.
6. To develop an agile, flexible range of funding mechanisms that reflect researchers' and individual partners' needs on the impact journey, from knowledge exchange to commercial translation.

Partnership and Place

7. To build on and diversify our portfolio of external partners by reaching out to new organisations, with particular emphasis on hard-to-reach communities.
8. To reflect UK government aims for place-based research innovation by maximising our place in NI, on the island of Ireland and as part of the UK.
9. To involve external partner organisations in the management of the ESRC IAA.
10. To leverage further opportunities for support from partner organisations.

Eligibility

Applications are welcome from staff across the University working on projects aligned to social science 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.** Applications based on multi-/inter-disciplinary research but with a substantial social science element are eligible.

Innovative and creative approaches to impact are encouraged. Applications from early career researchers and staff who are new to Queen's or new to impact are welcomed. 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 wish to apply and are not a permanent member of staff, please contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk for advice.

Eligible costs

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

- Salary costs for Research Assistants, Research Technicians etc.
- Consumables
- Promotional materials, such as digital toolkits, video content and briefing papers
- Small pieces of equipment directly related to the project (maximum of 10% of the budget)
- Venue bookings and catering
- Travel and subsistence

Where funds are transferred to external organisations, a collaboration agreement and due diligence checks may be required. Please note that no more than 30% of the budget can go to international co-investigators. Contact esrciaa@qub.ac.uk for advice.

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 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

Funding available

Rapid Impact: *Up to £1k available* – This is a responsive-mode scheme that is open all year round for spontaneous impact-related activity. It will provide short-term funding to allow researchers to quickly respond to opportunities for impact, e.g. giving evidence to an Inquiry.

Leading Impact: *Up to £15k available* – Activities will enable researchers to carry out longer-term pieces of work to accelerate the impact of their research and support knowledge exchange between Queen's and external impact partners.

CROSS+: *Up to £10k available* – Commercialising Research out of Social Science will allow researchers to carry out early-stage commercialisation activities needed to realise the commercial potential of social science research.

Partnerships: *Up to £5k available* – This strand will help academics build partnerships or networks with organisations with whom they have not previously worked or with whom they only have a tentative relationship.

Placing People: *Up to £5k available* – **Fellowships** will allow researchers time away from their commitments to focus on challenges within an external setting in order to accelerate delivery of

research impact. The secondments will last a maximum of six months on a flexible, part-time basis. **Practitioner Appointments** will allow staff from external organisations to spend time with researchers or teams of researchers within the University.

Impact Content and Events: *Up to £1k available* – Support is available for policy clinics and impact events aimed at a non-academic audience, and content (videos, toolkits, infographics etc.) aimed at achieving impact beyond academia.

Application process

Applications should be submitted through the appropriate online form. Pre-submission conversations with the Impact Acceleration Officer are encouraged: please contact Alice Neeson at esrciaa@qub.ac.uk. A Research Application System (RAS) entry and/or Research Grant Application Summary (RGAS) is required for awards made under Leading Impact, CROSS+, Partnerships and Placing People.

Applications for the Rapid Impact Fund operate on a rolling basis until the fund is exhausted. Applications will normally be assessed within five working days of submission.

Applications for other strands will be call-based. These applications will normally be assessed within 15 working days of the closing date of the call.

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 (or in part at Queen's)?
- 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?

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.

Terms and Conditions of the 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.
- Successful applicants are required to consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles when planning and carrying out their project.
- 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 here.

FAQs

Can PhD students apply to the ESRC IAA?
The IAA scheme is primarily aimed at staff. However, PhD students may be considered for a Fellowship if supported by a senior academic mentor.

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. See here for information on internal funding opportunities which may be able to support conference attendance.

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.

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?
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.

What is the maximum duration of the award?
The maximum duration of funding awards will usually be 12 months.