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# REF 2014 and Impact

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# REF 2014

- **UK research assessment & funding process**
- **Significantly changed from RAE 2008**
- **Impact - new factor in assessment**
- **Will assess the impact of a Unit of Assessment's research – not an individual**
- **20% of quality profile for each Unit**
- **likely to be more important in the future ...**

# Defining impact for the REF

**Impact is an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life *beyond academia*.**

# Submission requirements for impact

- **Case studies** – on impact achieved in 2008-13 underpinned by 2\*+ research; at least two case studies from all units and one additional case study for every 10 researchers submitted above 15; 80% of score for impact
- **Impact statement** - 3-5 page statement on approach to achieving impact; 20% of score

# Criteria for assessing impact

Expert Panels will use Reach and Significance as two criteria when assessing impact.

Panel C definition:

- **Reach** - extent and diversity of the communities, environments, individuals, organisations or any other beneficiaries that have benefited or been affected
- **Significance** –degree to which the impact has enriched, influenced, informed or changed policies, opportunities, perspectives or practices of communities, individuals or organisations

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# No pressure .....

**The Government has made plain its view that .....  
the HE sector can and should do more to ensure  
that its excellent research achieves its full  
potential impact.**

□ REF Second Consultation, 2009

## Some challenges ....

- **Time lag – research often many years before impact**
- **Attribution – link from research to impact rarely linear**
- **Measurement – hard to quantify, especially retrospectively**
- **Valuing different types of impacts – how do you assess significance of policy or social impact?**
- **Increasing public engagement – is that impact?**
- **Is it true? Do you take claims at face value?**

# How REF has addressed challenges

- Takes account of research since 1993, and across unit as a whole
- Accepts that research contributes to impact, not expected to be sole factor
- Impact to be *assessed* by the expert panels, not measured
- All types of impact to be considered equitably
- Will want third-party corroboration of impact and use research users as well as academics to do assessment



## Some unknowns ...

- **What is the exercise going to reveal?**
- **Will it help make the case for public investment in university science and research?**
- **What account will other stakeholders take of the results?**
- **Will it boost our reputation?**
- **Will we become more impactful ... or just better at writing case studies?**