

# Impact in the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

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Brief presentation giving an overview of REF and then talking more specifically about REF impact case studies.



- Coffin undergoing analysis as part of Museum's wider research on its collection of ancient Egyptian coffins. Research was displayed in 2016 *Death on the Nile: Uncovering the Afterlife of Ancient Egypt* exhibition.
- Presentation will give an overview of REF, impact case studies and talk about the Museum's work on ancient Egyptian coffins and how it relates to the impact case study.

## REF definition of impact

- “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.” ([https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1092/ref-2019\\_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf](https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1092/ref-2019_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf))



### Additional info:

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

- the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
- of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals
- in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

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

7. For the purposes of the impact element of the REF:

- a. Impacts on research or the advancement of academic knowledge within the HE sector (whether in the UK or internationally) are excluded. (The submitted unit's contribution to academic research and knowledge is assessed within the 'outputs' and 'environment' elements of REF.)
- b. Impacts on students, teaching or other activities both within and beyond the submitting HEI are included (see the 'Panel criteria', paragraphs 301 to 302)

## What is REF?

- National assessment of quality of research in UK Higher Education Institutions
- Run periodically (roughly every 7 years); next assessment in 2021
- Determines QR (quality-related) funding to university sector, typically £1.6bn per annum
- Each discipline assessed by sub-panels & units of assessment made up of expert members
- The assessment has 3 parts: outputs; environment; impact



Begin with a high-level overview.

Units of assessment are roughly discipline-based (e.g. art & design, history, English) but may not link to existing departmental structures with university.

## Elements of assessment

3 assessed elements:

- Research outputs (publications, exhibitions etc) 60%
- Environment (Unit context, structure & strategy; people; Income, infrastructure and facilities; collaboration; and Contribution to research base) 15%
- Impact (benefit or change beyond academia) 25%

Measured on a five point scale 1\*-4\* and unclassified  
Funding only for 3\* and above.



### **REFable outputs are:**

Authored book, edited book, chapter in book, scholarly edition, journal article, conference contribution (published), working paper, artefact, devices and products, exhibition, performance, patent/published patent application, composition, design, research report for external body, software, website content, digital or visual media, research datasets and databases, translation, other

### **Environment statement headings:**

**Section 1: Unit context and structure, research & impact strategy;** support for impact; support for interdisciplinary research; support for open access/open research; support for ethics and integrity;

**Section 2: People:** staffing strategy and staff development; staffing and recruitment strategy; early career researcher support; staff development and policy for leave; procedures stimulating exchange between academy and business, industry, public or third sector; supporting E&D; supporting research students; income; research infrastructure.

**Section 3: Income, infrastructure, facilities:** research funding, infrastructure supporting research activity, operational and scholarly infrastructure

**Section 4: Collaboration and contribution to research base,** economy and society: effectiveness of research collaborations with local, national and international organisations; how staff developed relationships with key research users and how these have enriched the research environment; wider contributions to economy and society; contribution to sustainability of discipline; indicators of wider influence.

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## How is an impact case study assessed?

- Definition of REF impact:
- The criteria for assessing impacts are 'reach' and 'significance'.
- Rated on a 4\* scale. 4\* case studies are: outstanding in terms of their reach and significance. 1\* case studies have recognised but modest impacts.



### Notes:

- Three star: Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- Two star: Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- One star: Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
- Unclassified: The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit.

## What is an impact case study?

5 page narrative that contains:

- Summary of impact (100 words)
- Underpinning research (500 words)
- References to the research (max. 6)
- Details of the impact (750 words)
- Sources to corroborate the impact (max. 10)



### Summary of the impact

Briefly state what specific impact is being described.

### Underpinning research

Outline key research insights or findings underpinning impact.

### References to the research

Publications and other outputs that link to research described in previous section.

### Details of the impact

How the research underpinned the impact; the nature and extent of the impact.

- How the research led to, underpinned or made a contribution to the impact
- Details of the beneficiaries
- Details of the nature of the impact
- Evidence or indicators of the extent of the impact described
- Dates of when impacts occurred

### Sources to corroborate the impact

Sources external to submitting HEI that could provide corroboration of specific claims made in the case study e.g. reports, reviews, web links or other documented sources of information in the public domain; factual statements already provided to the HEI by key users/beneficiaries that corroborate specific claims made in the case study.





### Underpinning research

- Since 2012, the study of ancient Egyptian coffins has been the 'hot topic' in Egyptology around the world. While other institutions have usually approached this by studying aspects of each coffin, Egyptological investigations (textual and iconographic evidence) are kept separate from technological studies (construction/decoration). At the Fitzwilliam, integrated study involving Egyptologists and conservators (and other specialists) has been fundamental to our approach and has yielded richer results than would be obtained by maintaining a separation between specialists.

### Details of the impact

- Museum created a pop up museum after realising that the 2016 exhibition didn't reach many audiences in Wisbech, a town that's about 40 miles from Cambridge, in Fenland, an area that's severely culturally-underserved. Areas of Wisbech are in the 20% most relatively deprived nationally.
- Pop up exhibition contained real museum objects, as well as replicas, painting with Egyptian style paintbrushes and making your own paintbrushes.
- We then took the pop up to Egypt & worked with conservators and curators there to share our knowledge of exhibition development, research, interpretation & conservation.
- We worked with conservators & curators there to deliver their own pop up museums, for some it was the first time they'd worked with members of the public.
- The project won a Vice Chancellor's award for impact in 2019.

## Sources

- Exhibition reports, reviews, survey data from pop up, transcription of interviews, testimonials.



- Ending slide – pop up in market square in Wisbech, Spring 2019.