

Tips for writing your REF2021 Impact Case Study

Key themes from 2019 Brookes internal audit

Here are some key observations and guidance for the future work on developing your case studies. Please ensure you adhere to these guidelines as closely as possible and please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Impact Team (impact@brookes.ac.uk) if anything unclear or you wish to discuss any of this in more detail.

1. Each completed case study template will be limited to **five pages** in length. As such, a case study is a very concise report which must demonstrate clearly how research done here at Brookes has made a material and distinct contribution to wider impacts (i.e. think about what has changed or is different as a result of your research). Each claim made must be corroborated by the most relevant and appropriate evidences.
2. **Please ensure you use the correct [REF template for Impact Case Studies](#)**. This is a requirement for submission. Please refer to **Annex G** in the [Guidance on Submission \(2019/01\)](#) for advice about what needs to be included in each section. Please follow the instructions carefully.
3. Please ensure **Section A** is complete and accurate.
4. The indicative maximum for sources to corroborate impact (i.e. your evidence) is ten, and for references to your research is six. Focus your lists and select those most relevant to support your claim.
5. Please ensure your Impact Tracker claim number(s) and evidence ID are stated clearly in your template, at the top of the Sources to Corroborate section. (This is for internal use.)
6. Refer to your evidence in the text when explaining how the research led to/contributed to the impact. Please provide the evidence number in square brackets, e.g. [IC32, E1327]. Please note that both numbers are allocated automatically by the Impact Tracker when a claim and/or a piece of evidence are saved.
7. Refer to **Annex A** of [Panel Criteria and working methods \(2019/02\)](#) for examples of impact and indicators/evidence. If you are unsure, please ask for advice sooner rather than later. You may just need help re-framing existing evidence or you may need to gather new pieces, which can take time.
8. Minimise the use of jargon. Explain what things are (particularly acronyms) and consider whether you can describe things in a simpler way, to be understandable to a non-specialist. It may help to get a friend or colleague to read your case study and identify any areas that are unclear.
9. Case studies do not require a description of research methodology. Instead, the 'Underpinning research' section should focus on what was done, by whom and why, including some contextual information about the research field if required and, most importantly, what the unique research insights/outcomes were.
10. Remember that case studies are factual narratives, not speculative or theoretical. Avoid using the future tense – this indicates that the impact has not happened.
11. Focus on the beneficiaries (primary and secondary) and impact, not dissemination or research outputs.
12. Remember that research that impacts on a practitioner will go on to have impact on their clients. Can you show evidence of those secondary impacts too?
13. Don't be modest! Remember that while the research may no longer seem novel or exciting to you, it will to others. Assertive, persuasive language will make the case study much more compelling.

14. It is important to show that the impact would not have happened (or would have happened to a lesser extent) without Brookes. What is unique and distinct about our contribution?
15. Be really explicit and specific throughout – about your/Brookes' role; what has changed, who has benefitted, etc.
16. Be really clear about your impact's reach (the extent or diversity of beneficiaries) *and* significance (the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed change).
17. Label the impact – what kind is it? Economic, environmental, social, cultural, health, etc
18. Think about creating a coherent narrative that explains: What was the problem or challenge or need that your research was addressing? What was the unique research insight that resulted due to distinctive work at Brookes? What impact occurred as a result? Who benefitted and how?
19. Keep asking yourself 'so what?' to ensure you are clear about why your impact matters.
20. Use REF's own terms where appropriate: 'reach', 'significance', 'beneficiaries', 'contribution', 'insight'/'finding', etc, to signpost key elements of your narrative.
21. Think about the title of your case study very carefully. Keep it simple and remember that it should be a summary of your summary. Include the impact and some indication of the reach and significance in the title, rather than just the general topic. For example, don't just state 'The measurement of Anti-Müllerian hormone levels' but try and summarise the essence of your ICS to something like 'Transforming the measurement of Anti-Müllerian hormone levels into a routine clinical tool in the field of reproductive medicine across the globe'.
22. Contact impact@brookes.ac.uk for advice where needed.