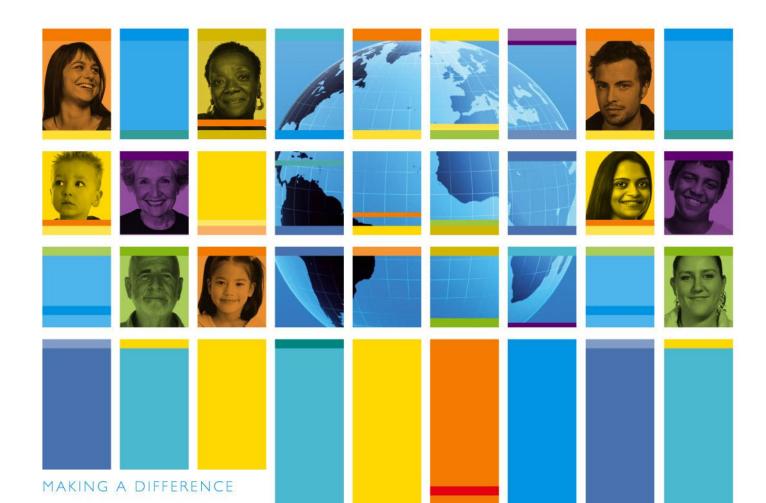
Economic and Social Research Council

EVALUATION OF RESEARCH FUNDING



The use of end of award reports in the evaluation of research projects





The use of end of award reports in the evaluation of research projects

- Introduction
- Why do we evaluate projects?
- What is an end of award report?
- How are reports assessed?
- Current use of indicators
- Proposed changes to final reporting/project evaluation
- Future use of indicators



Introduction: Funding

- Research budget is currently £100m per year
- Funding structures include:
 - Research Centres and Groups
 - Research Programmes and Networks
 - Research Resources
 - Stand-alone projects
- Responsive and strategic funding streams



Introduction: Evaluation

- Research Evaluation Committee responsible for assessing quality and impact of ESRC research
- REC evaluates all of the Council's research investments
- Evaluations conducted predominantly through peer-review



Why do we evaluate projects?

- Project evaluations enable the ESRC to:
 - Provide an assessment of accountability
 - Assess whether the project has been conducted effectively
 - Assess whether the project has met its objectives
 - Assess the quality and impact of the research
 - Create track records to support funding decisions
 - Establish evidence base to support other evaluation activity



What is an end of award report?

- An end of award report contains:
 - Project details
 - Submission of relevant datasets and outputs
 - A 1000+ word non-technical summary of the research
 - A 5000 word full report on research activities and results
 - Two nominated outputs from the research
- Outputs are recorded on an on-going basis onto ESRC database (through web portal)
- Reports are submitted 3 months after the award's end date
- Final reporting process is currently under review



How are reports assessed?

- Rapporteurs are selected from the same or similar field in order to:
 - Comment on scientific contribution and academic impact of the project
 - Assign a grade to the project
- The project is awarded one of the following 4 grades:
 - Outstanding
 - Good
 - Problematic
 - Unacceptable



Current Use of Indicators

Project grades are collated and analysed to:

- Create track records to support funding decisions
- Assess broad trends in the quality of research by discipline/institution
- Develop performance indicators
- Provide input to other evaluation activities
- A sample of reports is analysed to:
 - Document levels and methods of user engagement
 - Assess policy and practice impacts
 - Identify potential for knowledge transfer activities



Current Use of Indicators (contd)

- Output data are analysed to provide performance indicators including:
 - Number of academic publications from ESRC research investments (research papers/books & chapters)
 - Number of papers published in refereed journals
 - Proportion of papers published in refereed journals (as % of all papers)



Proposed changes to final reporting and project evaluation

- Changes will reflect greater emphasis on the importance of research outputs and impacts
- Draft proposals include:
 - Shorter report at 3 months post award
 - On-going reporting of outputs and impacts up to 12 months post award
 - Self-assessment questionnaire
 - Rapporteur evaluation at 12 months post award based on all output and impact data received



Proposed changes: Short report at 3 months post award

- Plans to reduce report to 1000 words (summary reduced to 250 words)
- Main purpose of the initial report will be to provide assurances that:
 - Project was undertaken as proposed
 - Funds spent as agreed



Proposed changes: Outputs and Impact Data

- Outputs will be reported as they are currently
- The framework for recording impacts is still under development
- Framework likely to include:
 - Type of impact
 - Mechanism by which it took place
 - Individuals/organisations impacted upon
- Aim to collect impact data as pre-coded responses, to provide impact indicators



Proposed changes: Project Evaluation

- Rapporteurs will analyse impact and output data
- Evaluation of the scientific contribution and impact (academic and non-academic) of the project
- Rapporteurs will then assign a grade which reflects their assessment



Future use of indicators

- Project grade data will be used (as currently) to:
 - Create track records to support funding decisions
 - Assess and report on broad trends in the quality of research by discipline/institution
 - Provide input to other evaluation activity
- Output data will be used (as currently) to provide performance indicators
- Plans to develop a portfolio of impact indicators on such issues as:
 - impact type
 - impact mechanism
 - impact audience