

# 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?

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- A decorative vertical bar on the left side of the slide, composed of several horizontal segments in shades of orange, yellow, light blue, and dark blue.
- 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