The use of end of award reports in the evaluation of research projects
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- Why do we evaluate projects?
- What is an end of award report?
- How are reports assessed?
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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