

Director of Impact role description

Overview

The Director of Impact (DoI) is a senior leadership role within a department/school, they are responsible for championing and supporting impact within the department, while also maintaining oversight of the impact pipeline. The role supports the development of a supportive impact culture within departments and the strategic development of engagement and impact activity to ensure that there are sufficient high-quality engagements and impact case studies for the next REF and beyond.

The Director of Impact will work closely with colleagues across their department/school alongside the Director of Research (DoR) and the Faculty Dean for Research (FDR). This role requires close coordination of activities with the Research Impact Team to develop a strategy to monitor, develop, support and encourage staff in all aspects of research engagement and impact. They will also support in the development of impact cases and other requirements for the Engagement and Impact section for the next and future Research Excellent Framework (REF) exercise or its equivalent.

Responsibilities

Working to the Director of Research, the DoI holds the following responsibilities:

1. To champion research impact within the department/school. This will involve promoting, supporting, encouraging and facilitating engagement and impact with an awareness of various routes to impact including knowledge exchange, enterprise, public and policy engagement.
2. Lead the development of a supportive impact culture in department/school to support research active staff to incorporate research engagement and impact generation as an integral part of their research practice to increase the overall awareness of the vital role of impact when developing research projects.
3. Work with the Director of Research and/or Unit of Assessment Lead to ensure engagement and impact contributes to the department's strategic objectives in relation to research.
4. Lead the development of Departmental impact case studies for the next REF and beyond. Collaborating with the REO Research Impact Officer to ensure that the chosen REF impact case studies are supported and developed in a timely manner for the REF submission.
5. Collaborate with the REO Research Impact Officer to proactively encourage staff with an interest in or expectation of research activity to engage in impact, to ensure timely capture of engagement and impact activities and evidence using the RIS-Impact Module, throughout the REF cycle.
6. Encourage relevant staff to engage in appropriate training on engagement and impact including REF engagement and impact requirements and case study development including the promotion of internal resources such as the Impact Academy and Research Impact Toolkit.
7. Attend and give updates to Departmental and Faculty Research and Impact Committees.

8. Liaising with the Research and Enterprise Office and other central teams on impact-related matters relevant to the department/school.
9. Disseminate information and opportunities on research engagement and impact.
10. Making recommendations to the Head of Department and Director of Research on Impact Leave applications. Promotion of internal Impact funding calls, supporting applications from colleagues to calls from the Impact Programmes Fund team.
11. Work with the REO, PVC (Research) and Faculty Dean for Research on external funding generation (eg. UKRI IAAs) and internal funding allocation for impact related work.
12. Work with the Head of Department and other appropriate role holders to consider the allocation of time in the workload of staff members engaged with engagement and impact activities as part of their greater workload allocation, as appropriate.

Holders of the role may delegate specific activities related to these responsibilities to departmental colleagues. Where activities are delegated the role holder remains responsible for them; activities can be delegated, responsibility may not.

Good practice guidelines

Heads of Department should:

- Include an appropriate time allocation with the role holder's workload allocation to allow them to carry out the role. Guidance on suggested allocation can be sought from the Research Impact Manager.
- Consider when appointing someone to the role the level of experience and seniority required to operate strategically and support colleagues effectively.

Heads of Departments are encouraged to:

- Ensure that colleagues are appointed to the role for at least two years, and preferably three, to provide continuity and consolidate expertise.
- Where possible and appropriate, identify a successor a year before a holder of the role is due to end their term of appointment in order to allow the successor to shadow the role before taking up its responsibilities.

Role holders should:

- Attend and engage with relevant faculty and University and external networks related to the role.

August 2025

Approved by Senate 4 November 2025

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

PERSON SPECIFICATION – DIRECTOR OF IMPACT

QUALIFICATIONS / PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relevant doctoral level research degree in related or equivalent professional experience or practice. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy or the ability to gain professional recognition at this or a higher level if appropriate. 	X	
EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An established and internationally recognised research profile, with a well-developed future research agenda. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A strong track record of published academic output at international levels of recognition with evidence of a clear publication plan for submission to future Research Excellence Framework (REF) programmes. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A record of success in generating external research income appropriate in scale to disciplinary norms and career stage. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Successful experience of having co-ordinated, supported, supervised, managed and/or mentored others (whether individuals or teams) in relation to teaching and learning 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence of impactful dissemination of research to academic / other audiences, as appropriate and an ability to contribute to Impact Case Studies for the REF. 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Significant leadership within professional practice (if relevant). 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An established professional reputation in a relevant area of professional practice (if relevant). 		X
SKILLS/ABILITIES	Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A record of, or demonstrable potential for, academic leadership. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ability and willingness to complement and enhance the department/school's research impact strengths and areas of planned development. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong communication skills, both written and verbal. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An experienced subject mentor with experience of supporting those new to research impact. 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence of substantial contribution to the development of professional policy or practice at a regional, national or international level. 		X
PROFESSIONAL VALUES	Essential	Desirable



■ A commitment to helping develop dynamic communities of research and education at the University, through inter-disciplinary collaboration where appropriate.	X	
■ A strong and well-articulated commitment to the University's values and mission to deliver excellence in both education and research (integrated academic practice).	X	
■ A commitment to supporting and/or mentoring others, especially those at early career stage.	X	
■ An acknowledgement of the wider context in which higher education operates, recognising the implication for professional practice.	X	