



How to move your REF impact case study to a new institution

The REF rules are clear: impacts remain with the institution in which the original research was conducted. If you move institutions, you can't take your case study with you. Or can you? I am regularly asked by researchers about how they might be able to claim impacts at institutions they have moved to, and often there is little hope. However, there are a number of examples in the REF2014 database of case studies that appeared to follow their authors, and were submitted by both the original and the new institution. So, it must be possible. In this article I will explain how.

It is clear that simply changing your affiliation on publications to your new institution is not enough. Paragraphs 311 and 312 of the REF2021 guidelines (that are currently out for consultation) state that case studies must be underpinned by research produced by staff who carried out the research while working in the submitting institution between 2000-2020:

“To be eligible for assessment as an impact, the impact described in a case study must have been underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitting unit, during the period 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2020. [This] means that **staff carried out research** within the scope of the relevant UoA descriptor, **while working in the submitting HEI** (even if those staff have since left). This research must be evidenced by outputs referenced in the case study, published **between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2020**, while working in the submitting HEI.”

Even if swapping affiliations was an option, you should ask the institution you are leaving, who will almost always request a double affiliation that includes them. If you don't do this, then most journals will not allow you to do anything other than adding a second affiliation. Having said that, changing or addition an affiliation may give you an excuse to add the output to the underpinning research section of your case study, and depending on the quality of output and prestige of publication venue, this may help build the case that your case study is based on research that is 2* or above in quality. However, this should never be a pivotal output or research finding for the impacts being claimed, as there is a strong probability that it may be discounted by the panel based on the guidance above.

A safer approach would involve conducting and publishing new research at the institution you have moved to, which builds on the work you did at your previous institution. The new research would need to add a significant new insight that can take the impact to a new level of significance or to new reaches that would otherwise not have been possible. You will then be able to claim the new and additional impact, which builds on the previous work, with an element of integration between the two.

Worked Example

To illustrate, I moved from Leeds to Aberdeen and then Birmingham City University (BCU), arriving at BCU 18 months before the deadline for submitting impact case studies. I finished writing two paper linked to the research at BCU and used my new affiliation, but most of the research had been conducted at Leeds and Aberdeen, so I didn't want to rely on these as my



underpinning research. I therefore applied for four small Government-funded projects to conduct some applied economics work that would lead directly to the development of a new policy mechanism (luck was on my side here, both in terms of the timings of the tenders and the fact that I won them all). I now had funding evidence for substantive new research that was initiated and completed entirely at BCU. The problem was that there wasn't time to get the work published in peer-reviewed journals. I therefore wrote the final reports to the same standard I would have written a journal article, and got them reviewed by colleagues, who thought they were 2 or 3* quality. Although it was a close call, we got them published on the Government website in time for the deadline in 2013. As a result the case study was underpinned by four eligible research outputs, and if reviewers were concerned about the quality of these final reports, there were two peer-reviewed papers in the list to re-assure them and if they read the reports they would find research of a quality that should be eligible. The case study then clearly stated which impacts had occurred since 2012 when I joined BCU. It was a bit repetitive, but was clear to reviewers what impacts I was claiming since 2012, which were attributable to BCU and which elements were pathways to that impact that had taken place at my former institutions. The silver lining was that I was able to share progress with University of Leeds who were able to update their case study to include the additional impacts I had achieved at BCU, which wouldn't have been possible without the original research I had started in Leeds.

So, can you move a case study to your new institution?

The answer is clearly yes – in theory. However, as you can see from my example, doing this without risking your eligibility takes a lot of work. But there is hope for those of us who have moved institutions and are continuing to build on our impacts.

Read Mark's case study at: <https://impact.ref.ac.uk/casestudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=14222>