

CMVM Research Impact Strategy 2023 – 2028

Developed by the CMVM Research Office (CMVMImpact@ed.ac.uk)

What is research impact?

At CMVM, we define research impact as the difference that research makes to society, for example:

- Enhancing health and quality of life of people and animals;
- Protecting or improving the environment;
- Informing local, national or international policy or guidelines to improve processes and outcomes;
- Improving the effectiveness of public policy and services; and
- Creating prosperity, reducing costs, saving resources or preventing harm.

Such societal impact is rarely achieved in isolation where one piece of research informs change in policy or practice, but is more likely the product of long-term, collaborative efforts. We believe that recognising contributions to research impact by individuals will support the building of a positive research culture within CMVM and the University.

How is research impact achieved?

Our researchers build partnerships and make connections with industry partners, clinicians, patients, policymakers, charities or the general population to inform and apply their research. Such engagement is essential when it comes to making a difference to society through research. Thus, activities such as translation and commercialisation, public engagement with research, Public and Patient involvement (PPI), community and policy engagement, knowledge exchange and media communications work are all routes that can amplify the impact of research; impact, in turn, is the actual change these activities create.

Why is research impact important?

Research impact is integral to:

- The University's civic responsibility and accountability for public funds invested in research;
- Maximising and sustaining long-term research funding investments through leveraging new funding and collaboration opportunities;
- The reputation of our research internally within UoE, nationally and internationally, within and beyond academia;
- Contributing to the change in research culture through recognising impact-generating activities and impact as valuable research outputs; and
- Attracting and retaining talented staff and students who are motivated by making a difference.

Impact underpins the University's Strategy 2030, which aims to "*make the world a better place*" and CMVM's objective to improve lives through excellent, interdisciplinary and relevant research to understand human and animal health and disease.

Vision for CMVM

Our vision is to expand the research impact culture within CMVM so that all our researchers and their work have the opportunity to make a positive difference in the world. CMVM already has a strong track record of generating impact from its research and is home to numerous research groups whose research is designed for societal impact and who engage with key partners throughout the research life-cycle. The aim of this strategy is to provide leadership and encourage the whole research community to share good practice, consider potential impact as they plan and conduct their work, and give everyone access to the skills and knowledge to generate and capture impact when appropriate.

The diversity of research approaches taken by CMVM researchers – from fundamental discovery science to more applied and challenge-led biomedical and clinical research – underpins the College's success and reputation. All types of research can lead to societal impact with the right support; some in a predictable and linear way and others via longer-term, less direct routes. The impact culture we look to enable will ensure all researchers have equitable opportunities for their research to achieve impact when the time is right.

Our approach

We strive to create a research environment and impact culture that fosters engagement and reflection and provides a professional support structure that facilitates amplification of the impact of CMVM researchers. To this end, we will be investing in an adequate support infrastructure for our research community to maximise the potential impact of their research. Impact must be captured systematically; this means it can then be celebrated and rewarded at College level. We want the outcome to be a sustainable pipeline of impact stories and successes. This approach was informed by the Strategy for Culture Change¹ and is complemented by an implementation plan.

- **Invest:** We will build business cases for the investment in core personnel with engagement and impact expertise that underpin the support structure for CMVM researchers. We recognise the value that professional leadership in (strategic) partnership engagement and management will bring to CMVM's long term impact delivery.
- **Support:** We bring together resources, training and activities to help researchers plan, deliver and evidence impact from their work².
- **Maximise:** We will provide an overview of expertise, infrastructure and funding opportunities to build mutually meaningful partnerships with research users. This will maximise the generation of research impact through e.g. commercialisation, PPI and public, community and policy engagement activities.
- **Capture:** We will optimise user-friendly central reporting mechanisms to prospectively capture, store and evaluate research impact and evidence in line with University systems.
- **Celebrate:** We will promote our impact to internal and external stakeholders, such as national and international policymakers, research funders, businesses, patient organisations, community groups, NHS, charities and the general public.

¹ <https://www.cos.io/blog/strategy-for-culture-change>

² <https://www.ed.ac.uk/medicine-vet-medicine/our-research/cmvm-research-support/impact>

- **Embed and reward:** We will engage with senior management to ensure that research impact has leadership support, is part of CMVM's strategic conversations and aligns with its governance, reporting and promotion processes.

Implementation Plan: How impact culture will be supported at CMVM

In the short-term with current resourcing, the CMVM Research Office will act as a central "one-stop" research impact information hub for CMVM researchers that a) guides the CMVM research community to relevant resources and initiatives that are already in place at College or University level, b) centrally captures and stores impact stories and evidence, and c) works with senior management, Finance and Human Resources to invest in core KEI professional support and include impact activities in reward processes.

We will be responsible for maintaining oversight of the strategy implementation. Key components of the strategy rely on the work of colleagues across CMVM and the University who already lead activities such as public engagement with research, PPI, translation and commercialisation, community engagement and knowledge exchange and have strategies in place (e.g. CMVM Translation & Commercialisation and Public Engagement with Research strategies). Our role will be to collate and streamline information and communication of ongoing activities, but also highlight gaps in service provision and obtain resources to provide equitable impact support services for all researchers across CMVM.

What this means for CMVM researchers

This strategy and associated activities have been developed to provide CMVM researchers with access to information, training, support and advice when considering the potential future societal benefits of their research. We acknowledge that building partnerships and generating impact is a labour-intensive activity, so we aim for this aspect to be resourced, recognised and rewarded where appropriate. In return, we anticipate increasing CMVM engagement with the concept of 'research impact' with researchers maintaining active involvement in research outcomes after publication. Overall, we want to create an enabling and supportive environment with a culture where research impact does not feel like a burdensome 'add-on' but a key component of the research life-cycle that is professionally supported by the University and College.