

ICS Writing Workshops

2025

ESSENTIALS

- Reach | Significance | Rigour
- Cause and effect via research (not researcher)
- Clear and active impact language
- Confirm why/how the research created change by consulting with users/beneficiaries
- Only essential detail of UP research - narratives should focus on impact
- Evidence should go alongside narrative development



STARTER QUESTIONS

- **Who** has the impact reached
- **What** has it changed
- **How** can the RSR be evidenced
- **Why** is this evidence the most effective way to demonstrate change

CONTEXTUALISING

- Ask direct questions for testimonials and guide questions to the narrative arc
- Get "soundbites" for key points within testimonials
- Quant evidence should be contextualised, 100 people in 120 vs 100 people in 10,000

NEXT STEPS

- Plot out the trajectory of impact as it is now, and map out what is anticipated/ still required within the REF2029 period
- Read other high-scoring ICS from your UoA

RESOURCES

[REF21 results](#)

[Training Pages](#)



EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Reports on changes in Quality Of Life Years (QOLYs).
- Statistics reflecting changes to the number of admissions/ presentations at hospital facilities over time.
- Patient/participant surveys.
- Testimonials from clinical staff.
- External partner testimonials/reports

ECONOMIC

- Commercial and economic partner testimony
- External reports, e.g. external annual reports.
- Company websites.
- License agreements.
- Cost savings reports over time.

POLICY

- National government statistics showing changes over time.
- Public policy
- Policy documentation.
- Regulation and standards documentation.
- Public meeting minutes.
- Social media “shares” over time.
- Legal documentation.
- International non-governmental organisation policy briefings.

SOCIETAL

- Societal and cultural
- Audience surveys.
- Testimonials from influential cultural figures.
- Media coverage statistics such as readership.
- Environmental reports.
- Government reports.
- Charity reports.

Research can drive change by
creating new solutions and/or avoiding adverse outcomes
explore how both trajectories can be evidenced



GROUP EXERCISES

REF Panelist perspective:

(broken down by Panel if numbers allow - if not as a whole cohort)

Each group will be given a 4* ICS from REF21 from a UoA within their Panel, which is not represented at St Andrews. You will be given a short period of time to read it, to simulate the experience of a REF Panelist. We will then work together to unpack it's evidence strategy and resituate it into our Institutional/UoA context...

Drafting in Uncertainty:

Facilitated discussion in the challenges of mapping change which hasn't "happened" yet and how to build an anticipatory draft

RIS 1-1 SUPPORT

1-1 Support on topics including:

Continuation or new ICS?
Navigating co-authorship
Evidence gathering
REF2029 rules (as available!)
Strengthening engagement

Using Theory of Change

2025

ESSENTIALS

Identify the “problem”

Contextualise the issues your work addresses, e.g. societal, economic, or technological

How has your research contributed to a solution? What is the change generated as a result of your research and its related activities?

Desired State: What is the result of/ implications for this change?

UNDERPINNING OUTPUTS

Which outputs underpin the impact?

What story do these outputs tell together?

How can the outputs stand alone (REF ICS are about research, rather than researchers)

WORKING BACKWARDS AND LOOKING AHEAD

Start with the change you are aware of: How can this be traced back to the outputs?

Use theory of change to plot out where change can grow towards: Where do you anticipate the impact to be by 2028? What can be put in place to support/ evidence this?

NEXT STEPS

- Evaluate the use/strength of your evidence
- Work with your Directors of Impact and Innovation to maintain the draft as a live document

RESOURCES

[Theory of Change definition](#)

[Civil Service Walkthrough of ToC](#)