

Social Science Impact Accelerator (SSIA)










A quick guide for researchers

Funded by an IAA (Impact Acceleration Account) grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

If you'd like to talk to any of the team, please get in touch by emailing:
SocialScienceImpact@rhul.ac.uk



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What is the Social Science Impact Accelerator?



The Social Science Impact Accelerator (SSIA) programme at Royal Holloway enables collaboration and knowledge exchange to maximise the impact of Royal Holloway's social science research for our region, the UK and internationally.

It is funded by a 5-year ESRC Impact Accelerator Account grant (2023–28) and match funding from the University.

What is an ESRC IAA grant?



WATCH THE ESRC
2023 LAUNCH VIDEO

Royal Holloway is delighted to have been awarded our first Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), to fund our Social Science Impact Accelerator Programme (2023–28).

ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) funding enables research organisations to accelerate the impact of economic and social science research.

Royal Holloway succeeded in a competitive round of applications for this grant and is one of 32 institutions nationally to have been awarded an ESRC IAA.

What is impact?

ESRC defines research impact as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy”. Simply put, it's the tangible changes made outside academia as a result of research. Impact isn't about disseminating research or academic recognition, but making a positive, provable difference. ESRC categorise impact into: societal, economic and knowledge.

There is more information about research impact on the [RHUL website](#)



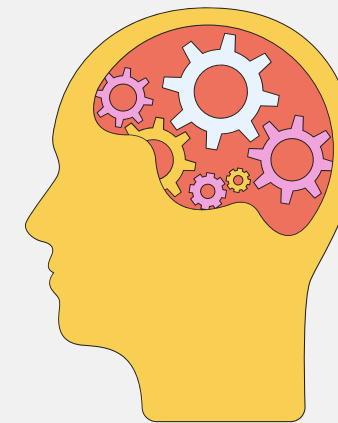
Societal impact

Changes for society



Economic impact

Changes to the economy



Knowledge impact

Shifting understanding

When you are thinking about impact, it's also important to consider the nature of the impact you hope to create. The ESRC offers three categories:

■ Instrumental Impact

Influencing the development of policy, practice or services, shaping legislation and changing behaviour. This is the most tangible type of impact.

■ Capacity Impact

Capacity building through technical and personal skill development. This could also include new networks or partnerships.

■ Conceptual Impact

Contributing to the understanding of policy issues and reframing debates, for example in parliament or in the media. It could be reflected in reports that demonstrate a change in feeling or attitude.

Please note will ask you to describe the impact of your project in your application and end-of-project report.

Other key terms:

- **Knowledge exchange (KE):**
 - defined by the ESRC as “a two-way exchange between researchers and research users, to share ideas, research evidence, experiences and skills”. It is a process through which academic ideas and insights are shared, and external perspectives and experiences are brought into academia. KE is a great route to impact.
- **Public engagement (PE):**
 - “the process for involving the public (non-academics) in research to break down the barriers between research, innovation and society”. In practice, it is a form on knowledge exchange.
- Knowledge exchange and public engagement are two good routes to impact.



What does social science led mean?

Our programmes are funded via the [ESRC Impact Acceleration Account](#) grant. The funder's rules state that "any activity or project supported by the ESRC IAA should be at least 50% within ESRC's remit".

This means that over 50% of the underpinning research for the projects we fund has to be in the social science disciplines as defined by the ESRC on [this link](#).

We encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary collaboration, if it meets the minimum 50% + underpinning social science research requirement.

Please consult our [website guidelines](#) on what "social science led" means in the context of this programme.



Overview of SSIA funding streams for staff

For more information and links to apply, [visit our website](#)

- 1. Flexible funding:** Funding for collaborative projects for academics and business, charity, government and public sector partners
- 2. Residencies:** Short-term residencies for researchers and non-academic professionals
- 3. Bursaries:** Public engagement bursaries for Early Career Researchers and PhD students
- 4. Impact-focused PhD studentships**
- 5. Festival of Social Sciences**

Type of funding	Description	Who is eligible	Duration	Value of grant	Next application date
Flexible funding	Project funding for academic staff looking to develop or amplify the positive impact of social science research, and to respond to new impact and knowledge exchange opportunities.	T&R contracts only	6 months	£3,000– £10,000	March 2025
Residencies	Residencies are opportunities for researchers to spend time embedded in non-academic partner organisations, or for partners to be based at Royal Holloway to carry out social science-led impact and knowledge exchange projects and learn about our research.	All	Between 12 and 30 days on a part or full-time basis	£4,000	24th January 2025
Bursaries	Bursaries can fund a public engagement project of your choice to promote social science research and/or enhance impact activities beyond academia. The project must have a communication and/or public engagement focus with clear objectives and target audience.	All	6 months	£3,000	24th January 2025
PhD Studentships	Royal Holloway will fund 5 PhD studentships (one per year of our ESRC IAA grant 2023–28) to undertake PhD research projects and work in an integrated way with the Social Science Impact Accelerator Programme.	T&R contracts only	3.5 years	Home fees and UKRI-rate stipend	March 2025
Festival of Social Sciences	Funding to run a public engagement event as part of the ESRC’s annual Festival of Social Science. This is an opportunity to engage public audiences and young people with social science research, and to increase awareness of its positive contribution to wellbeing, society, and the economy.	All	N/A	£3,000	TBC

1. Flexible Funding

- Researchers can apply for grants from £3,000–£10,000 to run projects to rapidly develop impact arising from social science research. Projects should be achievable in 6 months.
- Interdisciplinary collaborations are permissible but projects must be social–science led (more than 50% from a social science discipline). Each application must have one named project lead accountable for the award. This opportunity is open to researchers on T&R contracts only.
- Projects can be wide–ranging: we are keen to support innovative and creative ideas, and projects that test new impact and knowledge exchange methodologies and tools.

Flexible Funding cont.

Funding can cover any costs required to enable the project e.g. travel, events, external consultancy, administrative support, equipment, etc. It can also cover PhD support for your workload – please agree the details of this with your Head of Department. Please note funding **does not** cover costs associated with academic conference attendance.

There will be two calls per year for applications, in September and March. Where projects are in collaboration with a partner, we encourage you to establish the connection and co-write the application. Academics who have received Flexible Funding are eligible to reapply for follow-up funding at any time after their project's completion. Applicants will need to submit a new form outlining the additional activities arising from their original project. These may include monitoring and evaluation, ensuring the sustainability of the work, or expanding it to new audiences or contexts. All follow-up funding requests will be subject to approval and must not exceed £10k



2. Residencies

- Residencies are opportunities for academic staff to spend time with partner organisations or for partners to spend time at Royal Holloway, to develop the impact of social science research. Residencies can be between 12–30 days (part or full time).
- Every residency must have a 'host staff member' who will provide support for the 'practitioner/researcher in residence'. All applications should explain how the residency contributes to the strategic knowledge exchange and impact goals of the institution.
- Academic staff on any contract may apply, with prior approval from their line manager.
- Residencies should be scheduled so that they do not interfere with teaching obligations.

Types of residencies

Outwards: researchers in residence

Social scientists embedded in a partner organisation to conduct social science led impact and knowledge exchange projects, build networks, acquire skills, and understand stakeholder needs. We can offer up to £4k per staff residency, to be used within 6 months of award. Funding could cover travel, PhD student workload support, events, etc. It does not cover academic salaries.

Inwards: practitioners in residence

Partner organisations staff spend time at Royal Holloway, hosted by a researcher, to carry out social science led impact and knowledge exchange projects and learn about our research. We can offer up to £4k per partner residency, to be used within 6 months of award. Funding could cover any costs that are required to enable this project including, travel, events and a financial contribution towards the partner spending time at Royal Holloway where they would not be able to do this without support.

Please note there will be four calls per year for applications: September, January, March and June.



3. Bursaries

- **Staff who self-identify as Early Career Researchers (ECR)** have the opportunity to apply for bursaries, up to £3,000, to run a public engagement project of their choice to promote social science research and/or enhance impact activities beyond academia.
- Academic staff on any contract may apply, with prior approval from their line manager. This is not open to PDRAs and PhD students (see PhD opportunities).
- The project must have a communication and/or public engagement focus with clear objectives and target audience.
- Projects that have a clear ambition for long-term or sustained impact will be prioritised.
- The project should be completed within 6 months. Activities could include training sessions, workshops, presentation, media to showcase your research, blogs and podcasts.

Bursaries cont.

Funding can cover any costs required to enable this project e.g. travel, events, external consultancy, administrative support, equipment, etc. It can also cover PhD support for your workload – please agree the details of this with your line manager/Head of Department. Please note funding **does not** cover costs associated with academic conference attendance. Projects should be organised so that they do not interfere with teaching obligations.

Successful applicants will commit to sharing communications content with the Social Science Impact Accelerator team to enhance the presence of the Social Science Impact Accelerator Programme at Royal Holloway, online and in our region, and raise awareness of the University's social science research to new audiences.

There will be two calls per year for applications, in September and March.



4. PhD Studentships

Royal Holloway will fund **5 PhD studentships** (one per year of our ERSC IAA grant 2023–28) to undertake PhD research projects and work in an integrated way with the Social Science Impact Accelerator Programme.

Studentships must have an ambition to build lasting regional partnerships, and develop and deepen our approach to knowledge exchange and impact in the social sciences.

The PhD should address one of the following challenge areas, with Knowledge Exchange (KE), external partnership, and impact considerations at its heart.

- Health and wellbeing
- Education
- Criminal justice
- Communities, participation and inclusion
- Innovation, business and economic growth
- Sustainability and climate change

This is open for academic staff on T&R contracts only.

Potential supervisors should apply with a proposed research title. We also ask that the supervisor(s) propose a student that they would like to work with, and provide basic information about them in the application form, including their qualifications, degree class, and any research or work experience.

PhD Studentships cont.

Students will be funded for 3.5 years (home fees and UKRI-rate stipend), which includes the integral 3-month placement.

A condition of funding is that the supervisor(s) play a role in delivering the agenda of our ESRC IAA in relation to our regional and local partnership agenda, including:

- Develop or strengthen RHUL's relationship with 3+ key organisations working in the focus sector
- Convene two events with external organisations (attended by 4+ relevant external organisations) for RHUL staff members focused on knowledge exchange, innovation and networking
- Convene an internal staff development/training focused meeting to help interested staff members learn about the sector/challenge area and develop ideas for impact/KE work in that area in year 1 of the PhD, and another internal meeting at the end of the PhD project to share outcomes, impact, learning and ideas for future work.
- Support the PhD student in delivering their part of the IAA contribution.

We will be advertising this opportunity annually and you will be able to resubmit unsuccessful proposals, or submit new ones in future years.



5. Festival of Social Sciences

The Social Science Impact Accelerator programme has up to £10,000 per year (2023–28) to support public engagement events led by Royal Holloway's social scientists. Events will take place at the annual ESRC Festival of Social Science (during October/November each year) to promote awareness of UK social science research to new audiences.

There will be a mix of virtual and face-to-face events, held across the UK, by involved universities.

- For more information visit: <https://festivalofsocialscience.com/>

Applications will run annually. Successful applicants will be offered public engagement training, advice from the Social Science Impact Accelerator team, and marketing support from ESRC. Researchers on all contract types can apply.



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**



Eligibility for staff opportunities

We welcome applications from researchers working in any social science discipline, at all career stages. We are keen to support Early Career Researcher (ECR) staff whenever possible.

We welcome multidisciplinary teams/proposals that are social-science led, and with over 50% of social science underpinning research.

To apply for our opportunities, colleagues need to:

1. Check their contract type is eligible for the opportunity (see [this slide](#))
2. Have approval from their Head of Department and/or line manager
3. Ensure that the project is underpinned by [social science](#) research (it is not a requirement that the research is related to previous UKRI funding.)

For a full overview of the eligibility and review criteria, as well as examples of some of the strengths and weaknesses from the latest round of funding, please visit [our website](#).

Overview of SSIA funding streams for PhD students

The Social Science Impact Accelerator offers opportunities for PhD students to enhance their profile, grow skills in impact and knowledge exchange, and develop partnerships to build impact. Opportunities include:

- 1. Placements**
- 2. Public engagement bursaries**

We welcome applications from all PhD students in social science disciplines at Royal Holloway, with prior approval from your supervisor.

You must be enrolled as a PhD student with at least 6 months until your submission deadline (you would not be eligible if you have submitted your thesis).

We do not recommend applying for a placement within the first 6 months of a PhD project when students tend to focus on research development and methods training.

1. PhD placements

- PhD students can apply for placements to spend time at an external organisation to work on social science projects and initiatives, beyond the scope of their PhD. All placements must be designed to benefit the student's development and career chances, in addition to enhancing the University's impact and knowledge exchange capabilities within social science. The placement must equate to 1–3 months full-time in duration.
- Students who choose a full-time placement will need to interrupt their PhD for that period. Students who opt for a part-time placement must work the equivalent hours over a longer period and cannot work more than 20 hours per week.
- Students will be paid in line with the UKRI-rate (currently £400 a week) and be allocated an additional travel and expenses budget up to £200 per week, to be agreed on a case-by-case basis. Funds will be paid in one up-front payment.

PHD Placements cont.

Students will need to source their own placement before applying. In some cases, if you are unable to find a placement, the Social Science Impact Accelerator team may be able to connect students with relevant regional stakeholders in a topic area that interests them.

Email SocialScienceImpact@rhul.ac.uk to discuss this before applying.

We expect to run this call once or twice a year depending on the quality and number of successful applications. Keep an eye on the [SSIA webpage](#) for future opportunities.



2. PhD public engagement bursaries

- PhD students can apply for a bursary to enable them to enhance their public engagement skills by working on a project to promote a piece of social science research or impact activity, beyond academia.
- The bursary will support the student to enhance their profile in anticipation of becoming a more competitive researcher.
- The funding will support the student to manage a communication and/or public engagement focused project with clear objectives and target audience. Projects that have a clear ambition for long-term or sustained impact will be prioritised.
- PhD public engagement bursaries are fixed upfront payments of £2,000 per student, covering 5 weeks of full-time work (or part-time equivalent). In addition, £1,000 for project will be allocated to the academic staff member supporting the student, to be spent on communications materials, events and other project resources.

PhD Public Engagement Bursaries

The PhD bursary project should be completed within 6 months.
Activities could include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a blog/website/social media channel
- Producing creative outputs: videos, blogs, artwork, infographics etc. to showcase research
- Running a training session or workshop for external stakeholder
- Any public engagement event
- Formal working group, expert panel or similar
- Talk, presentation or similar

Visit [our website](#) to see the projects on offer



Review criteria

In the review process, the panel will take the below criteria into account.

- The proposed initiative clearly articulates 'a challenge or opportunity to be addressed'.
- The proposed initiative builds on the applicant's past or current social science research.
- The proposed initiative demonstrates the potential for achieving change for non-academic beneficiaries.
- The applicant's plan to spend the funding is clear, credible and feasible within given timeframe, and offers good value for money.
- There is a high-quality plan to gather evidence of outcomes and impact.
- The initiative sets the foundation for long-term sustainable impact beyond the duration of the activity.
- The applicant clearly articulates their motivation to develop their impact and engagement skills.

Meet the SSIA Steering Group



Chair/Academic Lead

Professor Kathy Rastle

PROFESSOR OF COGNITIVE
PSYCHOLOGY



R&I Lead

Sue Starbuck

DIRECTOR, RESEARCH
& INNOVATION



ECR Rep

**Dr Maria Magalhaes
Lopes**

DIRECTOR, RESEARCH
& INNOVATION



**Professor Michael
Spagat**

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS



Beccy Bowden

CEO, SURREY COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



Stephen Martin

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ENTERPRISE M3 LOCAL
ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP



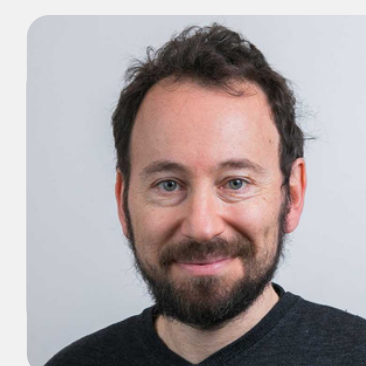
Dr Martina Hutton

SENIOR LECTURER
IN MARKETING



Chris Howorth

SENIOR LECTURER, PROFESSIONAL
PRACTICE & ESRC IAA MOBILITY
DELIVERY LEAD



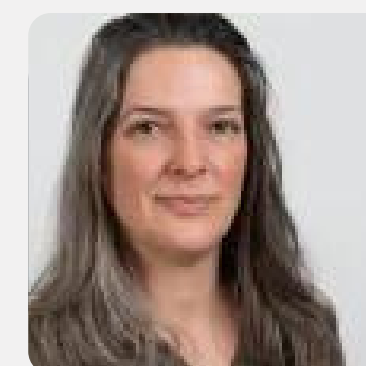
Dr James Sloam

PROFESSOR OF POLITICS



**Professor Alexandra
Palombi**

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH STUDIES



Dr Emily Glorney

SENIOR LECTURER AND
CHARTERED FORENSIC
PSYCHOLOGIST

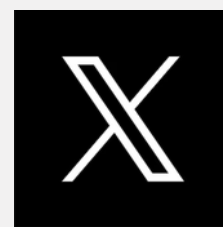


**Professor Jessie
Ricketts**

PROFESSOR OF
PSYCHOLOGY

Social Science Impact Accelerator (SSIA) team

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