

FAQs: Impact Assessment Case Study Process

UPDATED ON 16.09.2024

RE: General Conditions and Collaborative Submissions

Does the term “collaborative submission” apply to those involving multiple authors from the same institution or is it reserved for those involving multiple universities only?

For the purposes of IACS, a collaborative submission is one which is submitted jointly by two or three HEIs. One partner HEI should be identified as the coordinating partner for administrative purposes. For both individual and collaborative submissions, a single point of contact for the IACS should be identified in the IACS template, which should be submitted by the President’s Office or equivalent.

A case study is being prepared that is collaborative and in partnership with an organisation that is not a HEI. Where can we indicate that this is a collaborative submission rather than an individual one? Should they also sign the submission?

In the context of the IACS process, ‘collaborative submission’ refers only to case studies submitted in collaboration with other HEIs as only HEIs are eligible for consideration for the allocation of Performance Funding.

However, the case study may describe an initiative involving external collaboration or partnership with stakeholders or organisations beyond the Higher Education system.

Please note that an IACS is an opportunity to showcase an initiative where an institution has successfully delivered on national policies and strategic priorities. It is not a funding proposal for the initiative described by the case study. Internal allocation of the funding will be at the discretion of the awarded institution, and Performance Funding, where awarded, may be used to expand and progress existing initiatives (including that described by the case study), or to fund new initiatives that contribute towards the achievement of national strategies and policies in alignment with the System Performance Framework 2023-2028.

HEIs that are awarded Performance Funding will be required to submit monitoring and evaluation frameworks and budgets for their proposed projects to the HEA for approval prior to commencement. For Performance Funding projects involving partner organisations, the prior agreement of the HEA must be obtained in circumstances where it is intended to transfer a portion of the funding award to a partner organisation to support project activities.

A formal agreement should be put in place between the HEI and the partner organisation in advance of the transfer of funds to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in relation to the use of and reporting on project funds. This would include, but not be limited to, the maintenance of supporting documentation and reporting of progress and expenditure.

RE: Adherence to Template and Word Count Limits

Is it okay to include references to academic papers in the footnotes without a hyperlink?

Footnotes should not be used as they would fall outside of the template text boxes. References to research may be included within the narrative using parentheses and will contribute to the word count of the section. Please note that formal academic referencing is not required for the purposes of the IACS.

The guidelines state that “hyperlinks to written material will be removed or redacted.” Is it okay to hyperlink to a video?

A hyperlink to a video should not be included in the IACS. Additional appendices and hyperlinks are not permitted, and any additional material provided will not be taken into consideration. Hyperlinks to any additional material will be redacted/removed before the IACS is shared with the evaluation panel. This is to ensure the fairness of the process.

The guidelines state that "Impact Assessment Case Studies should adhere strictly to the word limits for each section. Any words in excess of the word count limits for each section will be redacted prior to evaluation." With that in mind:

(1) Does the word count include text within diagrams?

Data and data labels in tables and graphs are excluded from the word count limit. Stand-alone text, prose, or readable text within figures, including diagrams, process maps, and timelines, are included in the template word count limits.

Institutions are responsible for providing an accurate word count, inclusive of figures, and may be asked to provide figures in a format that facilitates automated word counting (i.e. PDF or Word, rather than jpeg or PNG).

If uncertain whether the text within a figure would count towards the word count limit, you may contact systemperformance@hea.ie in advance of the deadline for advice. Please note, that while every effort will be made to provide a prompt response, we cannot guarantee a same-day response. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that eligibility requirements and conditions have been met, including that word count limits have not been exceeded, prior to submission. Resubmission of the case study will not be permitted after the deadline.

(2) Do logos count as words?

Words contained in logos are not included in the word count.

RE: Eligibility requirements and IACS conditions.

Where an initiative has previously been awarded or supported by public funding, is it suitable to feature as the focus of an IACS?

A case study that features an initiative previously supported by public funding other than Performance Funding is eligible for consideration for Performance Funding and may be submitted for evaluation. The implementation section of the IACS template requests that HEIs include information on *‘the availability and deployment of resources to support implementation and their use.’*

A case study that features an initiative that was the focus of a case study awarded Performance Funding previously is not eligible for consideration for Performance Funding unless there has been substantive evolution of the initiative over a time period spanning more than one System Performance Framework cycle as demonstrated by the institution in the IACS submission. Institutions considering such a submission must contact the HEA (systemperformance@hea.ie) to discuss this eligibility requirement.

RE: Allocation and conditions of Performance Funding.

Will the HEA determine the level of performance funding awarded to successful institutions?

Yes, as per the IACS process outlined in the Information Pack, the HEA will determine the allocation of Performance Funding in 2024 on the basis of an evaluation of IACS by an expert evaluation panel. With reference to the IACS rank and scores, the Panel will make recommendations to the HEA regarding the allocation of Performance Funding, including on the number and scale of awards. The Panel will be advised that, as the available funding is limited and is awarded in recognition of exemplary performance, only a small number of case studies should be recommended for award.

Will the HEA reach out to successful institutions for more detail on potential projects in order to make this determination?

The HEA will not contact successful institutions for more detail on potential projects in order to make a determination on the size of the awards. An IACS is an opportunity to showcase an initiative where an institution has successfully delivered on national policies and strategic priorities. It is not, however, a funding proposal for the initiative described by the case study. As per the ‘Evaluation Criteria,’ in the evaluation and scoring of case studies, no marks will be awarded for effects which could potentially be generated in future if the initiative were to continue and/or expand. The Panel will make a recommendation to the HEA with regard to the number and scale of awards with reference to the IACS rank and scores.

The IACS Information Pack states: 'Performance Funding can be used to expand and progress existing initiatives, or to fund new initiatives that contribute towards the achievement of national strategies.' Does this mean that an institution in receipt of Performance Funding has discretion on how to allocate the funding internally?

Yes, internal allocation of the funding is at the discretion of the awarded institution. Performance Funding may be used to expand and progress existing initiatives, or to fund new initiatives that contribute towards the achievement of national strategies and policies in alignment with the System Performance Framework 2023-2028. HEIs that are awarded Performance Funding will be required to submit monitoring and evaluation frameworks and budgets for their proposed projects to the HEA for approval prior to commencement and will be required to comply with reporting and monitoring requirements set out by the HEA for the duration of their Performance Funding projects.

The IACS information pack states: 'HEIs may use funding awarded to support a maximum of 3 separate projects. The minimum budget for a project is €250,000.' Does this mean each institution in receipt of Performance Funding has the potential to fund up to 3 x €250,000 projects, or that 3 x €250,000 projects will be allocated across the winning HEIs?

This means that the minimum budget for any Performance Funding Project is €250,000 and that if successful, a HEI can submit a maximum of 3 projects to be supported by the award to the HEA for approval. So, should a HEI be awarded €1 million, they could, for example, submit one project with a budget €1 million, or three projects with budgets of €250,000, €350,000 and €400,000. They could not, however, submit three projects with budgets of €200,000, €300,00 and €500,000 because the first project's budget would be less than the minimum budget allowed, and they could not submit four projects with a budget of €250,000 each because the maximum number of projects that can be supported by a single award is 3.