



# **Impact through university business collaboration**

*New challenges for researchers*

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Eurolics workshop on University Business collaboration

26 November 2015



EUROPE

# Outline

- The value of impact of academic research
- 2 examples



Research Excellence Framework 2014



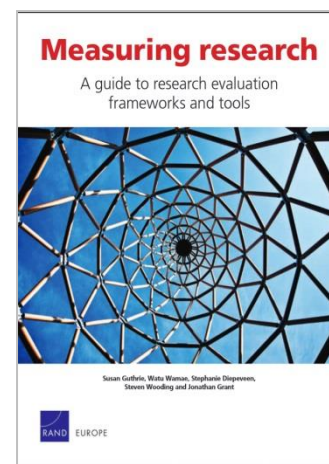
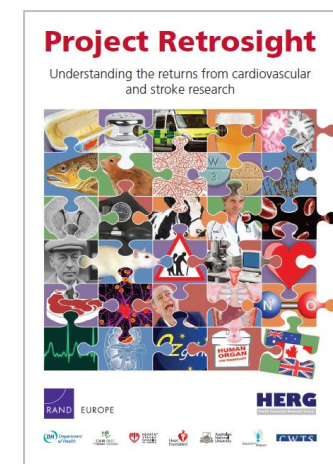
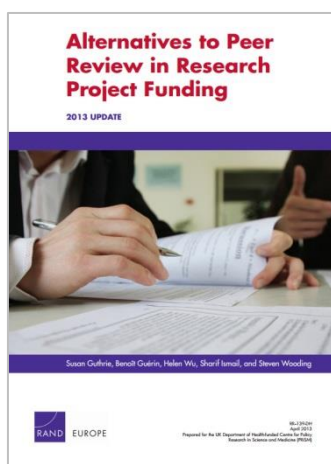
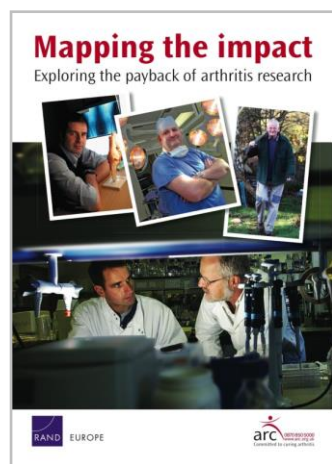
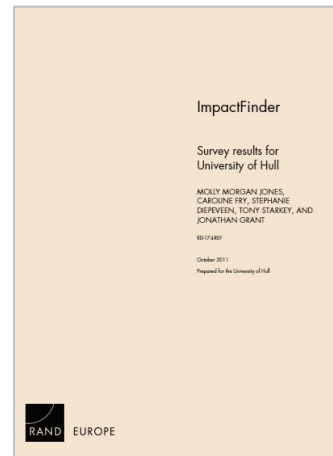
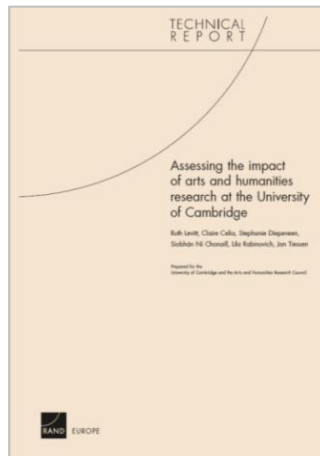
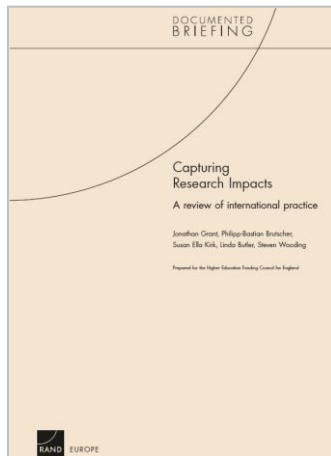
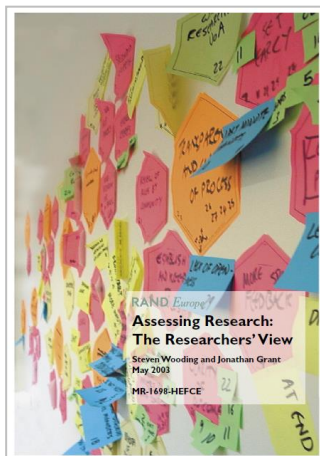
High-performing research units

# RAND Europe is an independent not-for-profit public policy research institute



helping to improve policy and decisionmaking  
through research and analysis

# RAND Europe have a track record in research evaluation



# What is impact?

“ an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia



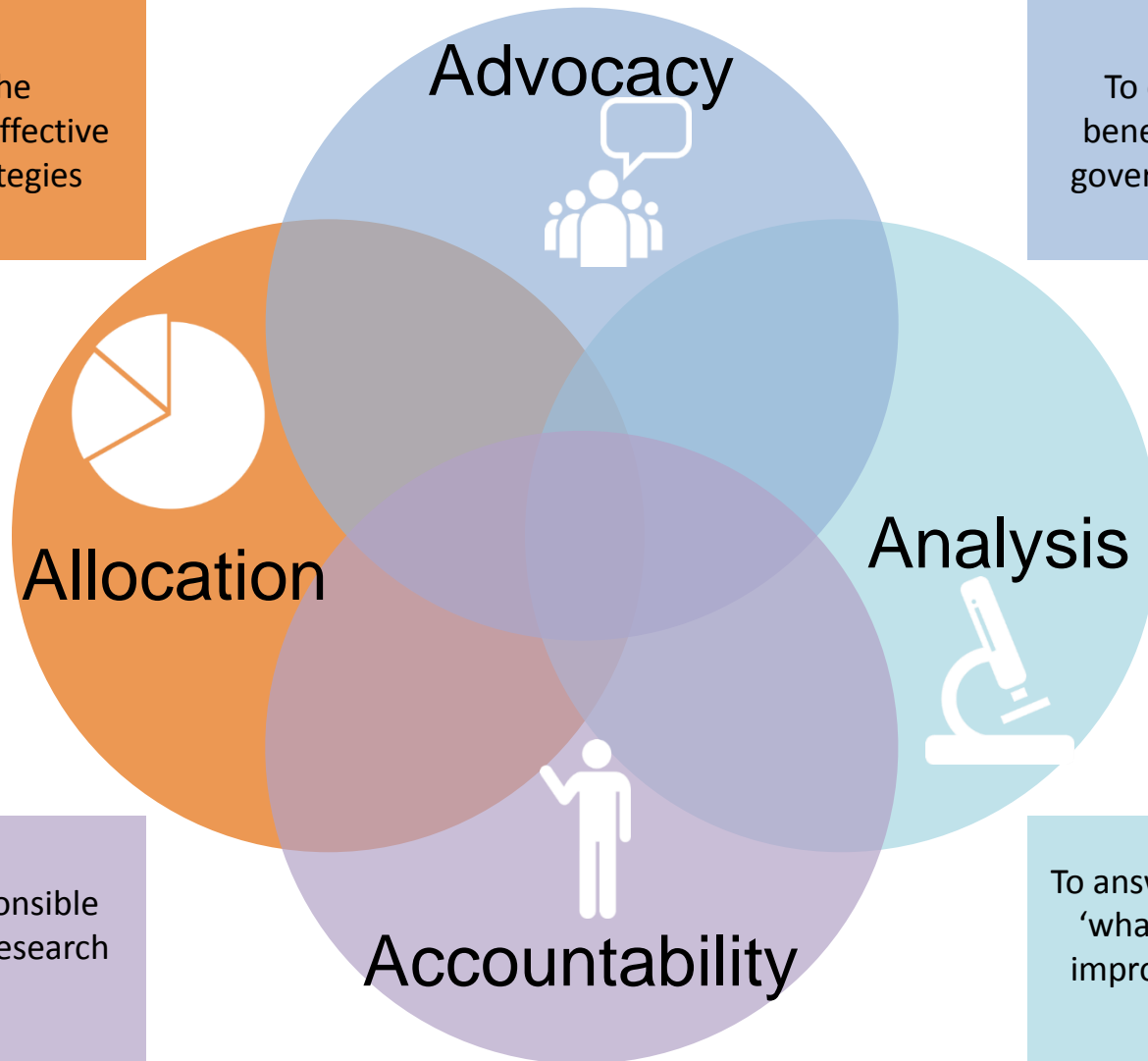
**REACH**  
**SIGNIFICANCE**



# Why is impact important?

To support the development of effective investment strategies

To demonstrate the benefits of research to government and society



To promote responsible management of research funds

To answer questions about 'what works' and make improvements based on data



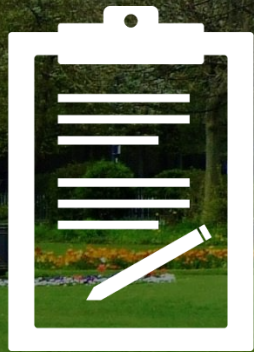


# Evaluation of the impact element of the Research Excellence Framework 2014

*Role of research users*



The UK uses a dual funding system to fund research conducted in universities



Grants



Quality related



# The Research Excellence Framework 2014



**£1.7bn**

funding allocated  
across the UK

**154**

universities  
assessed

**1,911**

submissions  
produced

# The Research Excellence Framework 2014



Outputs



Research  
environment



Research  
impact

# The assessment of impact



Bibliometrics



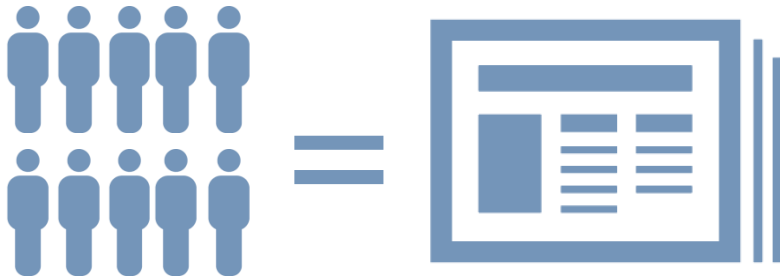
Surveys



Economic  
analysis



Case  
studies





# Overall objectives of the evaluation



Review the challenges and perceived benefits of the methodology being implemented



Determine whether it is fit for purpose in meeting the aim for assessing impact



To inform the development of future REF exercises

# What is a research user?

- I am defining them as the 'beneficiaries of research'
- These can be divided into:

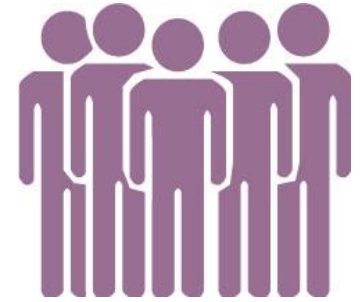


Public

Private

3<sup>rd</sup> Sector

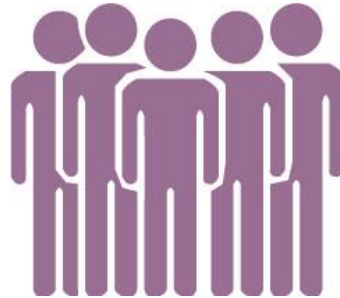
# Role of research users throughout the process



- Research process
  - Collaborating with
  - Providing an outlet for the uptake of academic knowledge
- Submission process
  - Providing evidence of impact for case studies
  - Providing testimonials
- Assessing impact
  - Reviewing and scoring impact case studies and strategies



# Role of the research user in preparing the impact case studies



# The benefits to research users of engagement

Individual interviewees		Organisational interviewees	
Direct benefits	Indirect benefits	Direct benefits	Indirect benefits
None	Relationship building	None	Relationship building
Establishment of a new collaboration	Demonstrate the value of the HEI's research	Demonstrate the value of HEI research	
	Interesting to be part of the process	Benefits of the wider impact agenda	
		Having case studies to explicitly refer to	



Benefit of reviewing and affirming relationships was also highlighted by the academic community

# HEIs perceived that the submission process had put an undue burden on research users

[Academics] *'worried that pestering people they collaborate with could jeopardise their relationship'*. (HEI perspective)

*'it was a manageable task'... Requests were not overly onerous'* (Research user)



Academics felt that this exercise has changed the dynamics of relationships. There are divided views on the effect of this; ranging from that it has been productive to damaging



# HEIs perceived that the submission process had put an undue burden on research users although this was not their experience

[Academics] *'worried that pestering people they collaborate with could jeopardise their relationship'*. (HEI perspective)

*'it was a manageable task'... Requests were not overly onerous'* (Research user)



Academics felt that this exercise has changed the dynamics of relationships. There are divided views on the effect of this; ranging from that it has been productive to damaging



Research users commented on the positive benefits of strengthening and reaffirming relationships



Users estimated it took 2 hours to provide a testimonial, and up to 4 hours, where additional data was required

# Challenges of engaging research users in preparing impact case studies

Individual interviewees		Organisational interviewees
Significant challenges	Insignificant challenges	Challenges
Time		Problem of contribution/attribution
The fact it was a new exercise		Lack of institutional memory
None	Collecting data retrospectively	Ability to identify the right person in the organisation
Investing the right amount of time and energy		Being asked for commercially sensitive information
Collecting sales data		The time and effort required
		Ensuring consistency in all evidence provided across the organisation
		Estimating the monetary value of research and the magnitude of impact

# Consequences of the process

- The impact case studies (REF3b) submitted may not be representative of the actual impact of research in the sector

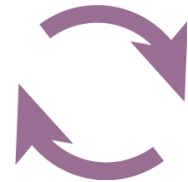
## Sufficiency of evidence



Movement of individuals in  
HEIs/research user  
organisations

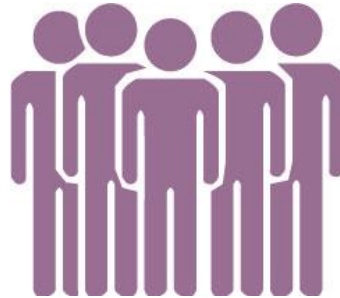


Commercially sensitive  
or classified evidence



Certain types of impact  
indicating 'softer' change

# Role of the research user in assessing the impact case studies



# 27% of individuals who reviewed the impact element were research users



At least 1 academic and 1 research user reviewed each case study

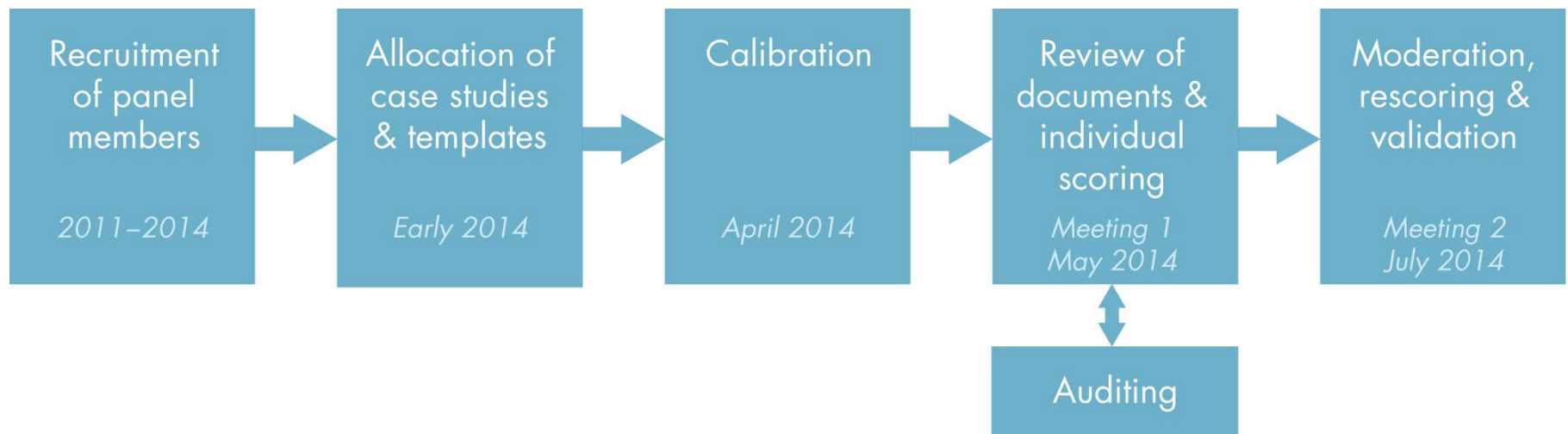
The combination of perspectives was important



Research users were particularly important in qualifying the value of some impact statements

# Bringing together different perspectives of academics and research users was seen to be successful and valuable

*'It was a stroke of genius to get people together to get that consensus generated.'*





# Research users found benefits in building networks and raising awareness of research taking place

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## Impact assessors

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Networking/collaboration  
(44/74)

Academic research (37/74)

Process of assessment (27/74)

Breadth of impact (10/74)

HEI impact/engagement  
strategies (9/74)

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# The burden of involvement was a significant challenge to engaging research users



**11 days (median)**  
**7 – 15 days (inter-quartile range)**



# Characteristics of high-performing research units

Work done by RAND Europe in collaboration with the Policy Institute at King's



# We identified five key themes associated with high performing research units...



People

# We identified five key themes associated with high performing research units...



**Leadership, culture and values**

# We identified five key themes associated with high performing research units...



## Strategy and funding



# We identified five key themes associated with high performing research units...



## Collaboration and networks

# We identified five key themes associated with high performing research units...



## Institutional and departmental practice



The Policy Institute at King's

...Which we organised into a conceptual model...






● Pre-requisite  
● Enabling



The Policy Institute at King's

# ... And made the following observations

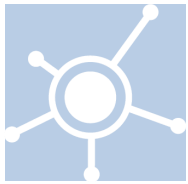
**Box H:** Observations about characteristics of units with high research performance

- A. In high-performing research units more of the staff have PhDs, professorial positions, international experience and externally funded salaries
- B. High-performing research units prioritise recruiting the best and retaining them
- C. High-performing research units provide training and mentorship programmes to develop staff, while offering rewards for strong performance
- D. The leaders of high-performing research units have earned 'accountable autonomy' within their higher education institution
- E. Staff within high-performing research units display a distinct ethos of social and ethical values
-  F. High-performing research units have strategies that are real, living and owned, and more than merely a written document
-  G. High-performing research units receive more income per researcher than the average research unit
-  H. High-performing research units enable and encourage researchers to initiate collaborations organically as opposed to using a top down approach





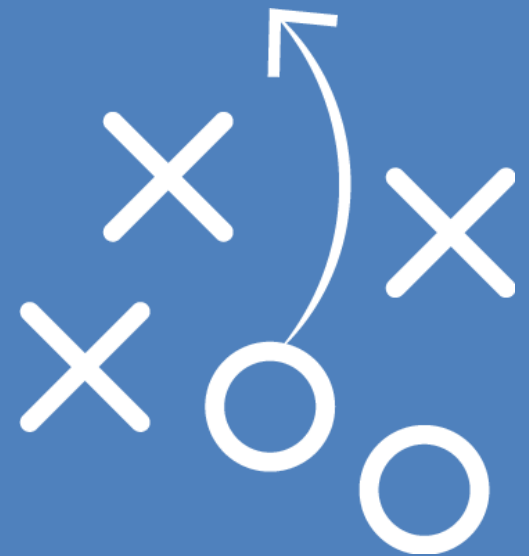
**Collaboration  
and networks**



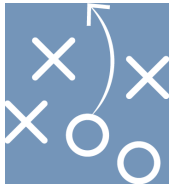
High-performing research units enable and encourage researchers to initiate collaborations organically as opposed to using a top down approach

- Role of the individual in facilitating the collaboration
- Importance of partnering with high performers, rather than on geography
- Collaboration was thought to support impact
- Importance of discipline specificity





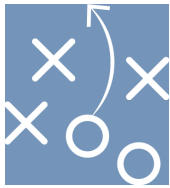
**Strategy and funding**



High-performing research units have strategies that are real, living and owned, and more than merely a written document

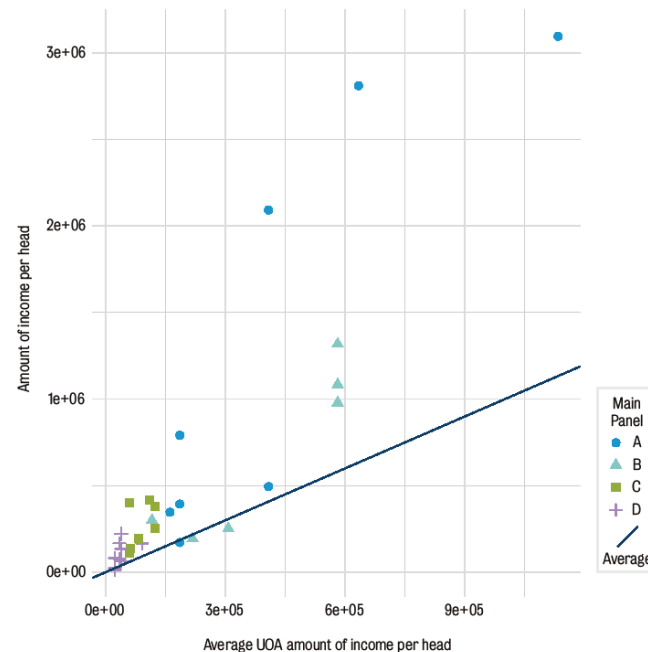
- Strategies can create alignment
  - Process is as important as the output
- Role of strategic themes groups
  - These are often themed across ‘grand challenges’
  - Aim to cross discipline and facilitate interdisciplinary responses to key global challenges





# High-performing research units receive more income per researcher than the average research unit

**Figure 5:** High-performing research units have more research income per head than average



‘All of these systems and processes, and even just making sure that you’re employing the very best staff, etc can only happen if you are assured of funding through research routes, through QR, HEIF, impact acceleration etc. The continuity of these funding routes are absolutely crucial to supporting impact, enterprise, bid writing and support for new grants etc’.





**People**



# In high-performing research units more of the staff with international experience and externally funded salaries

Figure 4e

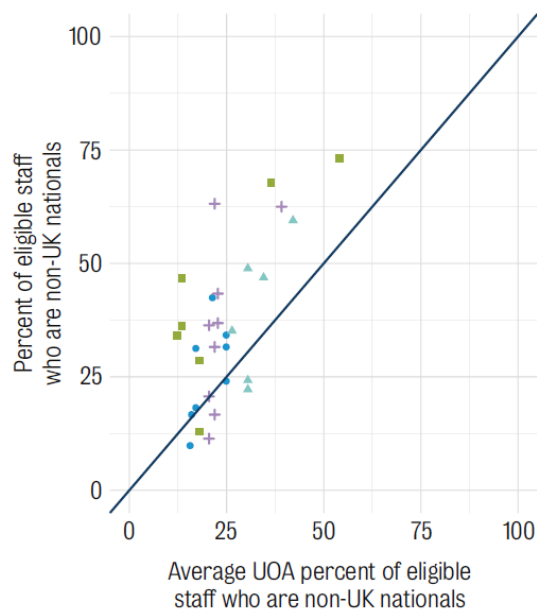


Figure 4d

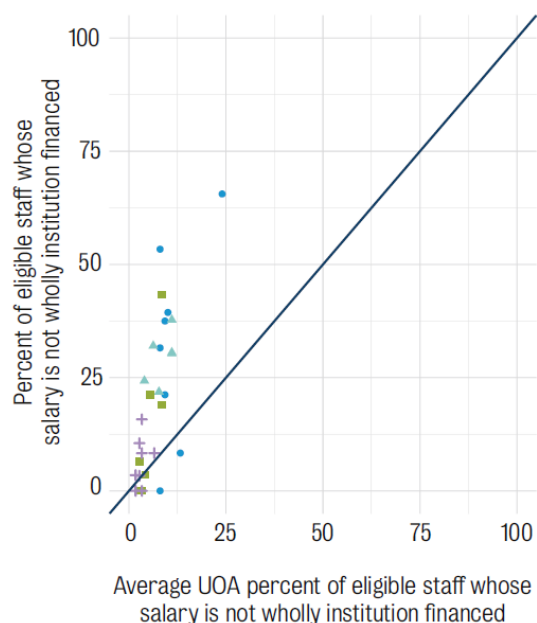
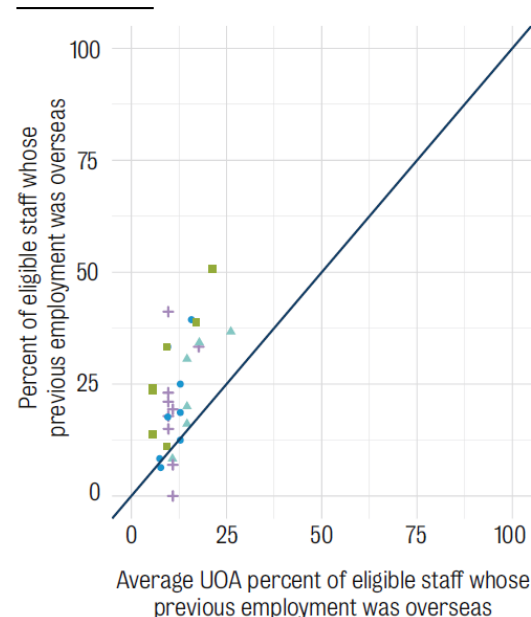


Figure 4g



Average

Main Panel



A



B



C



D



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