

# MPLS IMPACT AWARDS GUIDANCE

Please read the guidance notes before applying to MPLS Impact Awards.



**Application/Nomination deadline:** Thursday 7 May 2026

## Context

The annual MPLS Impact Awards aim to foster and raise awareness of impact by rewarding individuals and teams at a local level. These awards also prepare the ground for the impact case studies that will be needed for future impact reporting, e.g. Research Excellence Framework (REF). Awards are presented at the MPLS Reception in 2026 (event date to be confirmed), with a pay award of £1,000 (minus taxes) made to the individual.

## Eligibility

MPLS Impact Awards are open to all researchers in Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division, this includes academics, postdoctoral researchers, postgraduates, and technicians. To be eligible, staff should be employed by any MPLS department, and DPhil students should be registered in any MPLS department. Individuals or groups can apply directly (self-nominate), or be nominated by one or more person (nominators).

Researchers who have submitted (or intend to submit<sup>1</sup>) an application for a *Vice Chancellor's Award* can be nominated.

However, projects/researchers that have received either a *Vice Chancellor's Award*<sup>2</sup>, or a *commendation for Vice Chancellor's Awards*<sup>2</sup>, or *received a MPLS Impact Award*, are not eligible to be nominated for an MPLS Impact Award for the same project, in a similar or related category, unless demonstrably significant progress has been made.

Nominations of large research programme teams/consortia are not eligible, however their researchers can be nominated for their individual achievements. It is required that significant effort to progress impact occurred when the nominee(s) has/have been a part of MPLS Division.

## Award categories

Individuals may be nominated in any *one* of the following five categories, and should note that Early Career<sup>3</sup> awards will be considered across four of these categories (Commercial, Social, Public Engagement with Research, and Policy).

- **Commercial Impact**

To recognise researchers at any career stage for research that has had significant commercial/economic impact since 1 August 2021. Examples could be the establishment of spin-out companies, contributions from collaborative working with business, or research that has led to licensing deals or the development of new products, tools and technologies. This category is open to those that have provided a financial return, or those that are not commercially profitable yet.

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<sup>1</sup> includes the current call of Vice Chancellor's Breakthrough Researcher Award (Category 5), Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Award (6) and Collaboration for Innovation Award (7).

<sup>2</sup> Includes all past Vice Chancellor's Awards.

<sup>3</sup> within ten years of completing their DPhil (excluding any career breaks or leave for care, maternity or similar reasons). This category excludes nominations for Faculty Staff or Associate Professors, and is exclusively to recognise *Early Career Researchers'* independent engagement with external organisations or end-users, as laying the foundations for future impact. Nominations should demonstrate engagement that is beyond what might be expected, as compared with their peers.

- **Social Impact**

To recognise researchers at any career stage for research that has had a significant social impact since 1 August 2021. The social impact category could include a broad range of impacts of research, such as those on wider society, health and wellbeing, advocacy, ethical and cultural issues, practice, public health, social enterprise, the third sector, culture and the environment, etc. There is a separate category for public policy.

- **Public Engagement with Research Impact**

To recognise researchers at any career stage who have achieved significant impact since 1 August 2021 through high-quality *public engagement with research* activities. High-quality public engagement with research is any project that seeks to inform and inspire, consult or collaborate with defined public audiences in a purposeful manner that utilises appropriate methods and is suitably evaluated.

- **Policy Impact**

To recognise researchers at any career stage for research that has had significant policy impact since 1 August 2021. The award will recognise successful efforts involving use of, or communication of research that influenced policy at a local, national or international level, either through working with politicians, civil servants, practitioners, regulatory organisations or other policymakers or influencers.

- **Technician Impact**

To recognise technically skilled people and technical roles working in research teams or in research departments who have contributed significantly towards underpinning research/resources/programmes that have realised/are likely to realise economic or social impact from research.

## How to apply

The application process is intended to be light touch, with REF definitions for impact applied. All current and retired academic staff and senior researchers are eligible to apply (unless otherwise specifically stated under the category details). Individuals are welcome to submit applications relating to themselves or to nominate others. The intention is that only one award will be made in each category, apart from in exceptional cases.

Applications should indicate which category of award is being applied for and include an evidenced account describing the activity in question, the contribution of the nominee/applicant and, in particular, a short verifiable statement of the impact (or likely impact in the case of Early Career Impact and Public Engagement with Research Impact categories).

Supporting links may be included for relevant documents or online resources to support the nomination, such as, statement of support from external beneficiary, or end user, links to toolkits, or evidence of impact/evaluation. However, this is not an opportunity to exceed the word count by submitting expanded justifications for the nomination or a standard letter of support.

The application/nomination should be submitted to [epsrcaa@mpls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:epsrcaa@mpls.ox.ac.uk) by **Thursday, 7 May 2026**.

## Assessment process

Once applications have been received, Heads of Department will be invited to endorse or otherwise comment on all applications from their department. All endorsed applications will then be assessed by a cross-department panel.

### Impact Award Judging Panel

- Prof Niki Trigoni (Computer Science) - Chair
- Prof Gail Preston (Biology)
- Prof Nick Hawes (Engineering)
- Prof Hazel Assender (Materials)
- Prog Laura Herz (Physics)

## Contact information

Please direct any queries in the first instance to Dr Anuj Bhatt and Hyea Matthews-Palmer at [epsrcaa@mpls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:epsrcaa@mpls.ox.ac.uk).

## Assessment criteria

The Panel will be looking at MPLS Impact Award applications for clear **evidence**:

1. that impact has been achieved (or is likely to be realised in future – for PER category, and ECR nominees), and is underpinned by research;
2. of the nominee's contribution towards the impact;
3. of the significance/scale of the impact – such as the importance or magnitude of change/benefit;
4. of the reach of the impact – such as extent or range of people or organisations to benefit.

## Key Deadlines

Application/Nomination submitted by: 7 May 2026

Department Endorsement submitted by: 15 May 2026

MPLS Impact Awards Panel meeting: 19 Jun 2026

MPLS Impact Awards Reception (TBC): Sep/Oct 2026 (TBC)