

## **Case Study B: Impact Research Assistants**

Alongside research and impact training for all staff and PhD students, we have set up a Research Assistantship Scheme for PhD students, to enable them to gain paid experience on research projects. One of these projects, which started in 2018, is focused on supporting researchers who are writing REF Impact Case Studies, which is coordinated by the Impact Research Fellow. The aim of this project is to collect rigorous evidence material to be submitted as part of the Case Studies whilst supporting the skill development and experience of PhD students in Research Impact.

This project also provides PhD students with invaluable skills and experience in relation to the REF, which will be advantageous when they apply for academic as well as research support roles. It can be difficult to get to grips with potential non-academic career paths whilst pursuing a PhD, so this experience of one potential route is aimed at broadening out the options for PhD students following completion. Specialist training in impact, evaluation and qualitative research methods is provided by the Impact Research Fellow and the Research Assistants work with researchers across the University, enabling them to learn more about disciplines beyond their own research.

So far we have had 13 Impact Research Assistants employed to work on Impact Case Study related projects and 2 of these have now found full-time employment in research administration or REF support roles. One of the Research Assistants who is now in full-time employment spoke very positively about how the experience had opened up further career opportunities as well as helped them secure their new position:

“Working as an Impact RA has had a huge effect on my future plans. Twelve months ago I was looking forward to working in academia as a lecturer and had aspirations to take on full time role this academic year. However, having spent 9 months working as part of REF Impact team at Bath Spa University I decided that this was a role I enjoyed and looked for full-time employment linked to this role.

The short period that I worked as an Impact RA helped develop the skills I already possessed through my previous role [...] with regard to communicating with people, organising information and planning. Having decided to seek employment linked to working within a REF team it became apparent that my decision to expand on the part-time role I had at Bath Spa University had fallen at an opportune moment whereby Universities were starting to advertise for full-time staff to enhance their own REF departments as the 2021 submission date starts to loom. I managed to secure interviews at 3 Russell Group universities followed by an offer of employment.”