REF Cycles, Open Access and the Competitive Academic Marketplace

Research Active Staff Workshop

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Argent Court

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Session Aims

- To discuss how Open Access protocols are changing the academic landscape

- To explore publishing patterns emerging from the REF cycles

- To discuss the effect of REF on Early Career Researchers

- To equip participants with strategies for responding to changing REF2021 demands from the university and their departments

Session Overview

- Welcome / Introductions
- Talk: Lindsay Wood, Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP)
- Brief exercise
- Talk: Lucy Oates, Open Access Publisher, OUP
- Brief exercise
- Coffee break
- REF Cycles

Introductions

- What about REF or Open Access do you find most threatening?

- What about REF or Open Access do you find most encouraging?

Guest Speakers

- Lindsay Wood, E-Repositories Manager, Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP)

- Lucy Oates, Open Access Publisher, OUP

The Five-Level Writing Process

1. Inventing
2. Planning
3. **Drafting**
4. **Revising (macro-edits)**
5. **Editing (micro-edits)**

Finding Time for Writing

Firstly, you need to **find gaps in your schedule.** The pre-work task should help with this:

- Draw two circles, for pie charts.

- Divide the first one up according to how you using your working hours on a weekly basis.

- Divide the second circle, according to how you are paid to spend your time.

- How do they compare?

Making Time for Writing

Secondly, you need to allocate the right gaps to your writing and research, on a regular basis:

- First drafts and new ideas work best when your critical mind is 'jet-lagged': early morning; late at night; during timed/free-writing exercises; while you are otherwise distracted. What works for you?

- Revising is an intermediary stage, requiring more time, but still needing space to generate new material

- Editing requires mental alertness and can be very draining, so should be broken up into small pieces and spaced out.

Try and find slots in your weekly schedule for all three.

REF Audit

1. Work out what you've already finished for REF 2021.

2. Work out what you still need to do. Are there things you haven't yet started / know nothing about?

3. Break the remaining work down into three categories: drafting, revising and editing.

4. Start to plan, for yourself, what kind of writing you will be doing in the gaps in your schedule, and on what specific projects.

What problems arise from this?

RAE / REF

The first UK research assessment was conducted in 1986.

The purpose, then and now, has always been to measure the effectiveness of government funding of HE, and decide on future funding allocations.

The main characteristics of REF today emerged with the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

Main Characteristics of RAE

- Individual researchers are assessed on 4 outputs

- Outputs are measured on a scale of 1-4, (or 'unclassified') according to:

  - National vs international reach

  - Originality, significance and rigour of scholarship

- Research organised by 'Units of Assessment' (subjects)

But what counts as 'research'?

REF 2014

REF 2014 introduced some new elements:

- Impact assessment (see 'Further Resources' at end of slides)

- Benchmarking against international standards

- Various process measures to reduce administrative burden, reduce negative industry patterns from RAE and promote equality and diversity

The 'REF Cycle'

What does this mean?

- Patterns in the market

- Planning ahead

- Hiring (and firing?)

- Quality measures and accountability

- What you have to demonstrate as a researcher

What else...?

The Effects of REF on Publishing

The REF cycle has had a significant impact on academic publishing:

- End-loading the publishing pattern in the cycle

- Prioritising existing expertise in the later stages

- Introducing Open Access

- Pushing research toward articles over monographs

- Eroding the value of edited collections and published chapters

What else...?

Effects of REF Cycle on ECRs

These are some of the issues:

- Changing the pattern/timing for hiring new researchers

- Pressure to show 'REFfability' in job applications

- Greater competition for space in 4* journals

- Effect on job security: staff with weak REF profiles have been moved to teaching-only roles

(Points taken from a talk by Charlotte Mathieson and in reference to her blog for Nadine Muller.)

Other effects?

July 2016: The Stern Review

Read it online:

'Building on Success and Learning from Experience: An Independent Review of the Research Excellence Framework'

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541338/ind-16-9-ref-stern-review.pdf

The Review makes 12 recommendations, which are as yet awaiting further debate before implementation.

The 12 Recommendations

1: All research active staff should be returned in the REF.

2: Introduce flexibility for some faculty members to submit more and others less than the average.

3: Outputs should not be portable.

4: Panels should continue to assess on the basis of peer review, but with clear metrics and transparency of process.

5-7: More flexibility relating to impact.

8-9: Introduce a new, institutional level Environment assessment criteria

10-12: Improving efficiency and strategy relating to REF data collection and analysis

REF 2021: What can you do?

The basic requirements haven't changed. You will have to manage four sets of expectations:

- The Research Excellence Framework

- The University of Warwick's REF strategy

- Your *department's* interpretation of REF and UoW strategy

- Your own ambitions as a researcher

And you still need roughly four outputs, which will be rated out of 4. Russell Group departments will set targets for researchers, out of 16.

How are you coping? How did you cope with REF2014, if you submitted?

Strategies

- Plan ahead:
    - Writing time
    - Publishing options
    - Sabbatical time
- 'Banking' material for next cycle
- Research top class journal publishing patterns:
    - Submission windows
    - Time from submission to publication

Other suggestions...?

The Five-Level Writing Process

1. Inventing
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Editing Your Work

Task:

- Taking a sample of your writing, we will run it through a number of diagnostic checks.

- Then swap with the person next to you and check their work for similar errors.

The Belcher Diagnostic Test

A 3-step process for quick-editing your academic writing at a sentence level, searching for:

Words that need to be deleted

Words that need to be added

Words that need to be changed

Taken from Belcher, W.L. (2009) *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 235-252.

1. Words that need to be deleted

- Search for **and** and **or**

- Search for prepositions and conjunctions: e.g. **by**, **of**, **to, from**, **in**, etc.

- Check for passive voice: **is** / **has been**

Check each sentence with 3 or more prepositions:

There have been some changes **to** the Library policy **in** order **to** improve the satisfaction **of** students with regards **to** the availability **of** books and articles **in** academic journals.

1. Words that need to be deleted

Suggested revision:

The Library changed its policy to improve student satisfaction with availability of books and journal articles.

Also count the number of **verbs**, look for the active subject-verb-object relation to clarify long, complex sentences.

2. Words that need to be added

- Search for **this/these**, **it** and **they/them**.

Check to see if you need to clarify the referent in these words:

There are seven schools in this area. If you have children and would like to know more about them, please contact the City Council.

2. Words that need to be added

- Search for **this/these**, **it** and **they/them**.

Check to see if you need to clarify the referent in these words:

There are seven schools in this area. If you have children and would like to know more about them, please contact the City Council.

2. Words that need to be added

There are seven schools in this area. If you have children and would like to know more about **these schools**, please contact the City Council.

3. Words that need to be changed

- Check plural/singular agreements
- Check spellings of common homonyms: accept/except, complimentary/complementary, affect/effect, etc.
- Check spellings of common mistyped words: from/form, ratio/ration, etc.
- Check apostrophes
- Check all pronouns

List Your Common Errors

Belcher stresses the impossibility of diagnosing every mistake you might personally make on a regular basis.

So, **maintain a list** of things to search for based on feedback you've received.

Take a few moments now to make some notes to start this list.

Further Support

- Your departmental Director of Research and Research Committee members

- PVC for Research, Pam Thomas:
  look out for announcement of UoW REF2021 Strategy events

- RAS One to One Consultations

- RAS Resource Bank on Impact

- Charlotte Mathieson's blogs here and here

- Wendy L. Belcher's *Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*