REF2021 Framework Summary

On 23 July 2018, Research England published draft REF2021 Guidance on Submissions (GoS) and Panel Criteria and Working Methods (PCWM), launching a national consultation on both documents across the sector. Finalised versions of both documents are expected to be published by in January 2019. More detailed information on REF2021 is available at: https://warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/researchstrategy/ref2021

The below summary is not intended to be exhaustive and colleagues should read and make reference to both documents, noting that the PCWM should be read and interpreted alongside the GoS.

**Key Headlines**

- All staff with a ‘significant responsibility for research’ must be returned to REF.
- The total number of outputs required by submitting units = 2.5 x FTE of ‘Category A submitted’ staff.
- A minimum of one output must be attributed to each staff member returned, with no more than five attributed to any individual.
- The outputs of former ‘Category A eligible’ staff can be submitted to REF where the output was first made publicly available within the REF period and during the period of eligible employment.
- ‘In-scope’ outputs must be compliant with the REF Open Access policy.
- New measures have been introduced to ensure equality and diversity (E&D) in research careers will be promoted, and the University must develop, document and implement of code of practice outlining its processes for (i) identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (where applicable), (ii) determining research independence and (iii) selecting outputs.
- A reduction in the total output requirement may be requested if staff are Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and where applicable individual circumstances, such as career breaks, family-related leave, ill health or disability, have constrained the ability of affected staff to produce outputs.
- Submitting units may request that the minimum of one output requirement be removed for staff only in a very limited number of exceptional circumstances.
- The University must submit an institutional-level environment statement which will not be scored separately, but will inform the REF panels’ assessment of the unit-level environment narrative.
- Citations data will be considered as additional indicators of the significance of an output where panels consider this appropriate for their discipline.
- The weighting of Impact has increased from 20% of the overall quality profile awarded to 25%, and this 25% will rest entirely on the assessment of impact case studies.

**Submissions**

- The REF submission deadline is 27 November 2020. Each submission will contain data on:
  - Current/former staff data (REF1a/b);
  - Assessable outputs (REF2);
  - Impact case studies (REF3);
  - Research doctoral degrees awarded, research income and income-in-kind (REF4a/b/c);
  - An institutional-level environment statement and a completed template describing the submitted unit’s research and impact environment (REF5a/b).

**REF Outcome**

- Quality level definitions for each of the assessment components can be found at Annex A of the GoS.
- The assessment comprises the following assessment components with fixed weightings across panels:

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<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60% Total output pool (REF2)</td>
<td>25% Impact case studies 100% (REF3)</td>
<td>15% Institutional and unit-level narrative</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Research doctoral degrees</td>
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<td>Research income</td>
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<td>Research income-in-kind (REF4a/b/c and 5a/b)</td>
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Staff Eligibility / Submission

- A diagram illustrating staff eligibility in REF2021 is set out in Figure 1 on page 44 of the GoS.
- ‘Category A eligible’ staff are academic staff on T&R or R-O contracts at 0.2 FTE or greater, on the University payroll on 31 July 2020. T&R staff are automatically considered to be independent researchers (i.e. undertake self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual’s research programme). R-O staff must be independent researchers to be eligible for REF submission.
- ‘Category A submitted’ staff are those ‘Category A eligible staff’ who have a significant responsibility for research (i.e. explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role). This will include R-O staff who are independent researchers and all T&R staff with a significant responsibility for research.
- For staff on 0.2 to 0.29 FTE contracts, the University will need to produce 200 word statements evidencing their ‘substantive connection’ to the submitting unit, except where those fractional contracts are due to caring responsibilities, other personal circumstances, approaching retirement or it being normal discipline practice.
- ‘Category C’ staff (individuals employed by an organisation other than an HEI, such as the NHS, a Research Council unit or charity) will be considered in the environment template (REF5b) and will not be eligible to submit outputs to REF.
- The potential to request multiple submissions within a single UOA is limited, with only the following sub-panels normally expecting to receive such requests:
  - Sub-panel 26 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)
  - Sub-panel 32 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory)
  - Sub-panel 33 (Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film & Screen Studies)
  - Sub-panel 34 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies...)

Outputs

- Each individual returned to REF is no longer required to have four outputs. Submissions will consist of pools of outputs, subject to a minimum (one) and maximum (five) limit per submitted individual.
- Each submitting unit will return a number of outputs determined by multiplying the FTE of ‘Category A submitted’ staff on 31 July 2020 by 2.5, rounded to the nearest whole output.
- The maximum limit of five outputs for a given staff member does not prevent the inclusion of further outputs on which that staff member is a co-author, provided it is allocated to another eligible co-author.
- Outputs of former ‘Category A eligible’ staff can be submitted to REF provided that the individual was not made redundant (this excludes voluntary redundancy).
- Outputs of new staff who have moved institutions during the REF period (i.e. have joined a new institution since 1 January 2014) may be submitted to REF by both the new employing institution and the institution where they were employed when the outputs were first made publicly available.
- To be eligible for REF, outputs must have been made first publicly available between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020. Outputs first published in their final form during this period, but that were ‘pre-published’ online in 2013, are eligible for submission.
- Submitting units may request a reduction to the total pool of outputs if staff are ECRs, or if staff have had individual circumstances such as absence due to secondments, career breaks, periods of family-related leave, illness or disability.
- Submitting units may request for the minimum of one output requirement to be removed only for staff affected by very exceptional circumstances such as only very recently qualifying as an ECR or long term absence due to illness, caring responsibilities or mental health.
- Each individual returned to REF can only be returned in one UOA (i.e. an individual’s outputs cannot be split across multiple UOAs).
- Co-authored outputs can be submitted only once per UOA, but can be sent to multiple UOAs by the University.
- Citations data will be used to inform the assessment where this is considered appropriate for their discipline by the relevant panel.

Impact

- Each submitting unit must return a minimum of two impact case studies. Submissions over 20 FTE will require an additional case study per additional 15 FTE up to 110 FTE. Submissions over 110 FTE will require one further case study per additional 50 FTE.
• The impact case study template is broadly the same as REF2014 but contains additional sections to capture information about underpinning grants, eligibility periods and standardised factual information.

• Completed impact case study templates must describe specific examples of impacts achieved during the period 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020, underpinned by research of at least 2* quality in the period 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2020.

• Submitting units will still need to describe their approach to enabling impact during the REF period, but this will be assessed as part of the environment template (REF5b).

• Impact is eligible for submission by the institution(s) where the underpinning research was conducted.

• The impact of research on teaching within the institution will be eligible but panels will expect this to form part of a wider submission, rather than the sole basis of a case study.

• Guidance to enable more consistent presentation of quantitative evidence or ‘indicators of impact’ has been developed for use when writing case studies.

• Where they meet the eligibility criteria, including the time windows for underpinning research and impact, case studies continued from examples submitted in REF2014 will be eligible for submission in REF2021.

• Auditable corroborating evidence for impact claims will need to be provided at the point of submission.

Environment

• The University must complete an institutional-level environment template describing its strategy and resources to support and enable impact, relating to the period 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020.

• Each submitting unit must complete an unit-level environment template describing its environment for research and enabling impact, relating to the period 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020.

• The Institutional-level statement will not be scored separately, but will be used by sub-panels to inform their assessment of the unit-level statement.

• The contribution of ‘Category C’ staff will be provided in the ‘collaboration and contribution’ section of the unit-level environment narrative.

• Guidance on a range of supporting environment indicators has been produced by the Forum for Responsible Research Metrics for use when writing both environment statements (REF5a and REF5b).

• A pilot exercise on the standalone assessment of the institutional-level environment will run in parallel to REF2021 and its outcome will inform future REF exercises.

• Sub-panels will use the information in the unit-level environment statement together with data on PhD awards, Research Income and Income-in-kind to form an environment sub-profile which will account for 15% of a unit’s overall REF outcome.

• HESA data will be used to provide institutional data on PhD awards and Research Income, and the University will be responsible for allocating these data to the relevant REF UOA.

Who to contact

• For REF2021 policy queries, please contact R.seavers@warwick.ac.uk, Head of Research Planning (REF Manager) or the REF Planning Team at REFplanning@warwick.ac.uk.

• For queries relating to Impact, please contact your relevant Faculty Impact Manager (R&IS) in the first instance, escalating any urgent matters to Sarah.M.L.Hall@warwick.ac.uk, Head of Research Impact, R&IS.

• For queries relating to Open Access, please go to http://warwick.ac.uk/OpenAccessREF or contact publications@warwick.ac.uk