REF 2021 Decisions

Catriona Firth, Deputy REF Manager
23 November
British Academy

REF 2021 - overview

- Changes since REF 2014
- Key decisions
- Further development of guidance

REF2021

Key changes since REF 2014

REF2021

- Submission of all staff with significant responsibility for research

- Transitional approach to non-portability of outputs

- Decoupling of staff from outputs

- Broadening and deepening of definitions of impact

- Open access requirements

- More structured environment statement with additional sections (impact, institutional-level information, interdisciplinary research)

- Weightings

Submission of staff

REF2021

- All staff with significant responsibility for research should be returned to the REF

- 'Category A eligible' staff:
  - Teaching and Research or Research-only
  - Independent researcher
  - Minimum of 0.2 FTE
  - Substantive connection

- 'Category A submitted': staff from total pool identified as having significant responsibility for research on the census date (31 July 2020)

- Expectation that HEIs will submit 100% of eligible staff

- Alternative route whereby HEIs can implement a process, in discussion with staff, for identifying who has significant responsibility.

Submission of staff

REF2021

Significant responsibility for research

- 'those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role.'

- No clear consensus in consultation on generic criteria – variations across disciplines and institutions

- Guidance will set out a 'menu' of what we consider may be appropriate indicators of significant responsibility.

Independent research

- Variation in key attributes also identified in the consultation

- Guidance will build on generic definition used in REF 2014 (undertaking 'independent research, leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of research work'.)

Codes of practice

REF2021

- All submitting HEIs required to provide information on the institution's processes for ensuring a fair approach to selecting outputs

- Those not submitting 100% of staff will also need to cover the institution's processes for identifying 'Category A submitted' staff for any UOA in which it is not submitting 100 per cent of 'Category A eligible' staff.

- Guidance and a COP template will be developed with EDAP and provided to institutions mid-2018.

- The provisional timetable for submission is spring 2019, with publication intended by the end of 2019.

Outputs - decoupling

REF2021

- Number of outputs determined by FTE of 'Category A submitted' staff.

- The average number of outputs required per FTE will be 2.5.

- Minimum of **one** and maximum of **five** outputs per individual staff member

- Individual circumstances: staff may be returned without min. of one output where certain exceptional individual circumstances have affected their ability to meet the requirement. This will be subtracted from no. of outputs required by submitting unit.

- Unit circumstances: optional reduction for units with higher proportions of staff who have not been able to research productively throughout the period because of individual circumstances, even though they may meet the requirement for the minimum of one output.

Outputs - portability

REF2021

- Transitional approach to non-portability
- Outputs may be submitted by:
  - the institution where the research was demonstrably generated; and
  - the institution employing the staff member on the census date
- 'Demonstrably generated' will be determined by date when the output was first made publicly available
- Outputs by staff who have left academia may be submitted
- Full eligibility criteria to be defined by panels

Outputs

REF2021

- Measures to support interdisciplinary research:
  - At least one appointed member on each sub-panel to oversee and participate in the assessment of interdisciplinary research
  - Interdisciplinary identifier for outputs in submission system
  - Discrete section in environment template for interdisciplinary research

- Submission of reserve output permitted where publication of the preferred output will postdate the submission deadline

- Quantitative data may be used to inform the assessment of outputs, where panels consider this appropriate for the discipline

Impact

REF2021

- Consistency with REF 2014:
  - Impact remains with institution where research was generated
  - Impact must be underpinned by excellent research of minimum 2* quality
  - Timeframe:
    - 1 January 2000 - 31 December 2020 for underpinning research
    - 1 August 2013 - 31 July 2020 for impacts

- Impact template to be included as explicit section in environment element

- Case studies continued from examples submitted in 2014 **will be eligible** for submission in 2021 but will have to demonstrate additionality

- Number of case studies: one case study + one further case study per up to 15 FTE returned, for the first 105 FTE. After 105 FTE, one further case study per up to 50 FTE returned.

Impact

- Broaden and deepen definitions of impact
  - More detailed guidelines on impact through public engagement
  - Include impact on teaching within submitting unit's institution
  - Include impact arising from research activity and bodies of work
- Institutional-level impact case studies **will not be included** in REF 2021.
- Pilot of assessment of institutional-level impact case studies will instead inform decisions about the most appropriate way to give recognition and reward to institutions for this activity in future exercises.

Open access

REF2021

- Survey on open access shows that 80% of outputs in the scope of the policy, either met REF policy requirements in the first year (1 April 2016 to 1 April 2017), or were exempt.

- Outputs required to be deposited as soon after the point of acceptance as possible, and **no later than three months** after this date (as given in the acceptance letter or email from the publication to the author) from 1 April 2018.

- We will introduce a deposit exception from 1 April 2018, which will allow outputs unable to meet this deposit timescale to remain compliant if they are deposited up to three months after the date of publication.

- Full report of the UK-wide survey on the delivery of funders' open access policies will be published early in 2018.

Environment

REF2021

Unit of Assessment level

- Introduction of a more structured template, including information on:
  - equality and diversity
  - approach to enabling impact
  - approach to supporting collaboration
  - structures to support interdisciplinary research
  - section on open research

Institutional Level Assessment

- Institutional-level information **will be included** in the UOA-level environment template and **will be assessed** by the relevant sub-panel in REF 2021.

- Pilot of the standalone assessment of the institutional-level environment will draw on this submitted information.

- Outcomes from the separate pilot exercise **will not be included** in REF 2021.

Outcomes and weightings

- Overall excellence profile and three sub-profiles (outputs, impact, and environment)

- Five-point scale: 1*-4* and Unclassified

- Weightings :
  - Outputs – 60 per cent.
  - Impact – 25 per cent.
  - Environment – 15 per cent

Further development of guidelines

REF2021

- Consultation and workshops to develop guidelines relating to impact:
  - workshop on additionality and research activity/bodies of work in late January
  - workshop to develop guidelines on public engagement in early February
- Outcomes will feed into development of guidance on submissions and panel criteria in 2018.
- Sub-group of Forum for Responsible Research Metrics developing list of quantitative indicators for environment template

Timetable

REF2021

Autumn 2017	Appoint sub-panel chairs Invite nominations for panel members Further decisions on the arrangements for submitting staff and outputs
Winter 2017-18	Appoint panels
Spring 2018	Panels meet to develop criteria
Summer to Autumn 2018	Publish draft guidance, and consultation on panel criteria
Winter 2018-19	Publish final guidance and criteria
2019	Complete preparation of submission systems
2020	Submission phase
2021	Assessment phase