REF 2021 – consultation and next steps

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Open Forum, 4 October 2018

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Consultation

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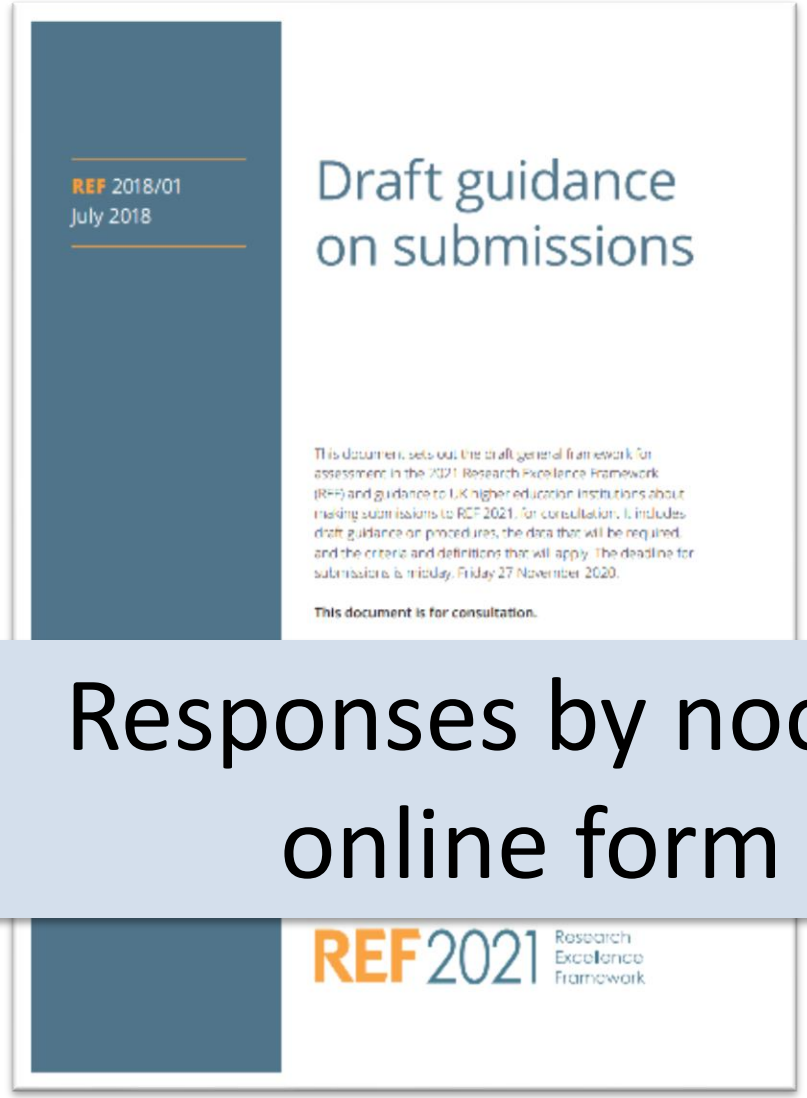
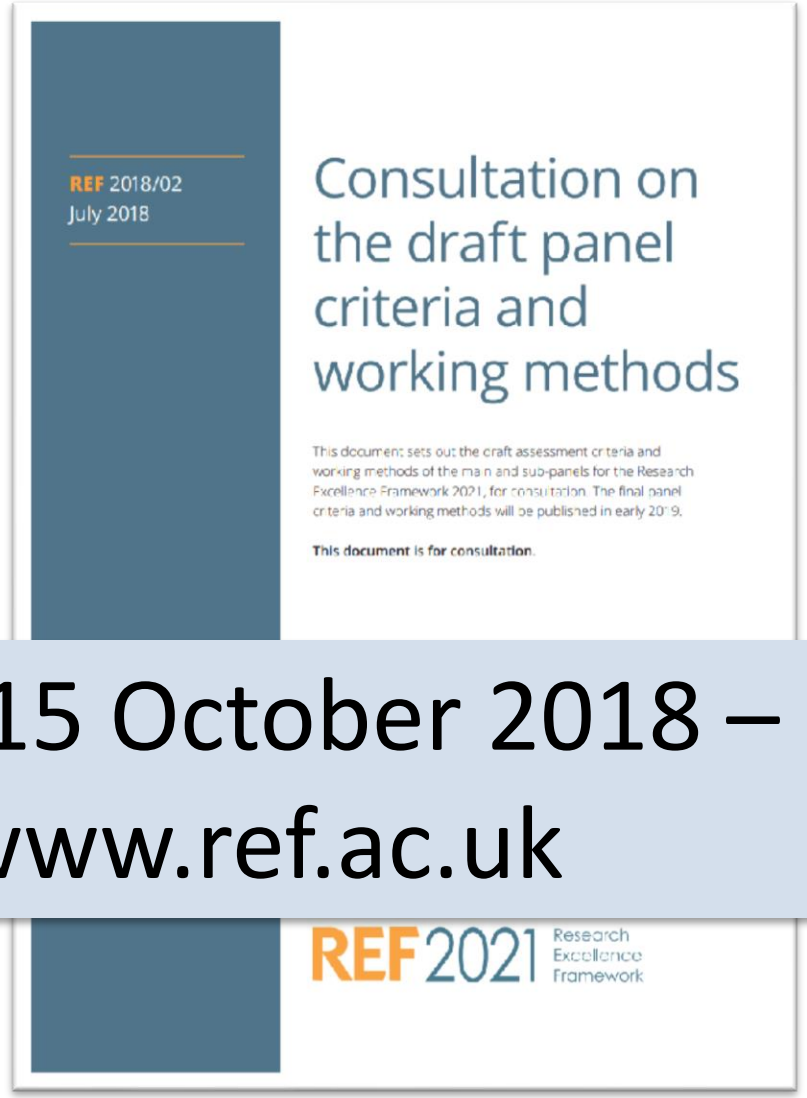

REF 2018/01
July 2018

Draft guidance on submissions

This document sets out the draft general framework for assessment in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) and guidance to UK higher education institutions about making submissions to REF 2021, for consultation. It includes draft guidance on procedures, the data that will be required, and the criteria and definitions that will apply. The deadline for submissions is midday, Friday 27 November 2020.

This document is for consultation.

REF2021 Research Excellence Framework


REF 2018/02
July 2018

Consultation on the draft panel criteria and working methods

This document sets out the draft assessment criteria and working methods of the main and sub-panels for the Research Excellence Framework 2021, for consultation. The final panel criteria and working methods will be published in early 2019.

This document is for consultation.

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Responses by noon, 15 October 2018 – online form at www.ref.ac.uk

Guidance on submissions

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Specific consultation areas

- Proposed approach for taking account of staff circumstances
- Some specific points, inc around eligibility:
  - clarity, usefulness and coverage of the list of independent research fellowships
  - proposed eligibility arrangements for seconded staff
  - proposed ineligibility of staff based in a discrete department or unit outside the UK
  - proposal to make ineligible the outputs of former staff who have been made redundant (except where the staff member has taken voluntary redundancy)
  - eligibility of co-authored outputs more than once within the same submission
  - clarity and usefulness of the glossary of output types
  - capturing cost activity level in UOA 4
- PLUS comments on overall clarity of the guidance, including annexes

Panel criteria - consultation

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We invite comments on:

- whether the criteria are appropriate and clear
- where further clarification is required
- where refinements could be made
- where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- where differences between disciplines could justify further differentiation between main panels

PLUS specific questions on:

- double-weighted outputs
- Main Panel D guidance on output types
- section weightings in the Environment statement

Staff submission

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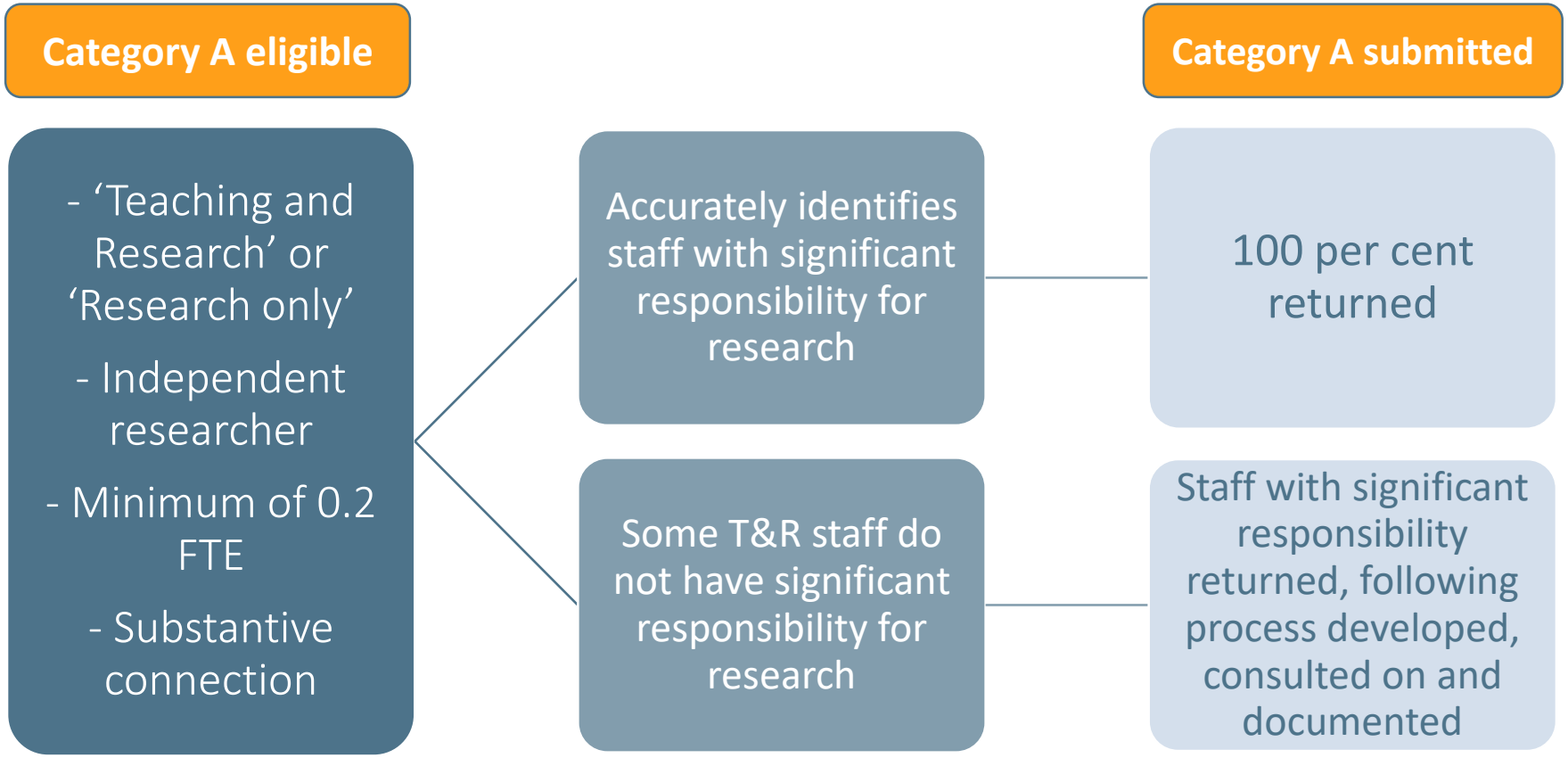
- All staff with significant responsibility for research should be returned to the REF



- Approach may vary by UOA where employment practices vary at this level

More on eligibility

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Substantive connection

- Statement required for staff on 0.20-0.29 FTE
  - evidence of participation in and contribution to the unit's research environment
  - evidence of wider involvement in the institution
  - evidence of research activity focused in the institution
  - period of time with the institution
- Statement not required where particular personal and discipline-related circumstances apply

Independent researcher

- An individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme
- Guidance includes indicators to support HEIs
- Research assistants / associates not normally eligible

Significant responsibility

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Staff for whom:

Explicit time and resources are made available…

- proportion of time allocated for research, as determined in the context of the institution's practices and applied in a consistent way
- research allocation in a workload model or equivalent.

…to engage actively in independent research…

- eligibility to apply for research funding as the lead or co-applicant
- access to research leave or sabbaticals
- membership of research centres or institutes within the HEI.

…and that is an expectation of their job role.

- current research responsibilities as indicated in, for example, career pathways or stated objectives
- expectations of research by role as indicated in, for example, job descriptions and appraisals.

Outputs– decoupling

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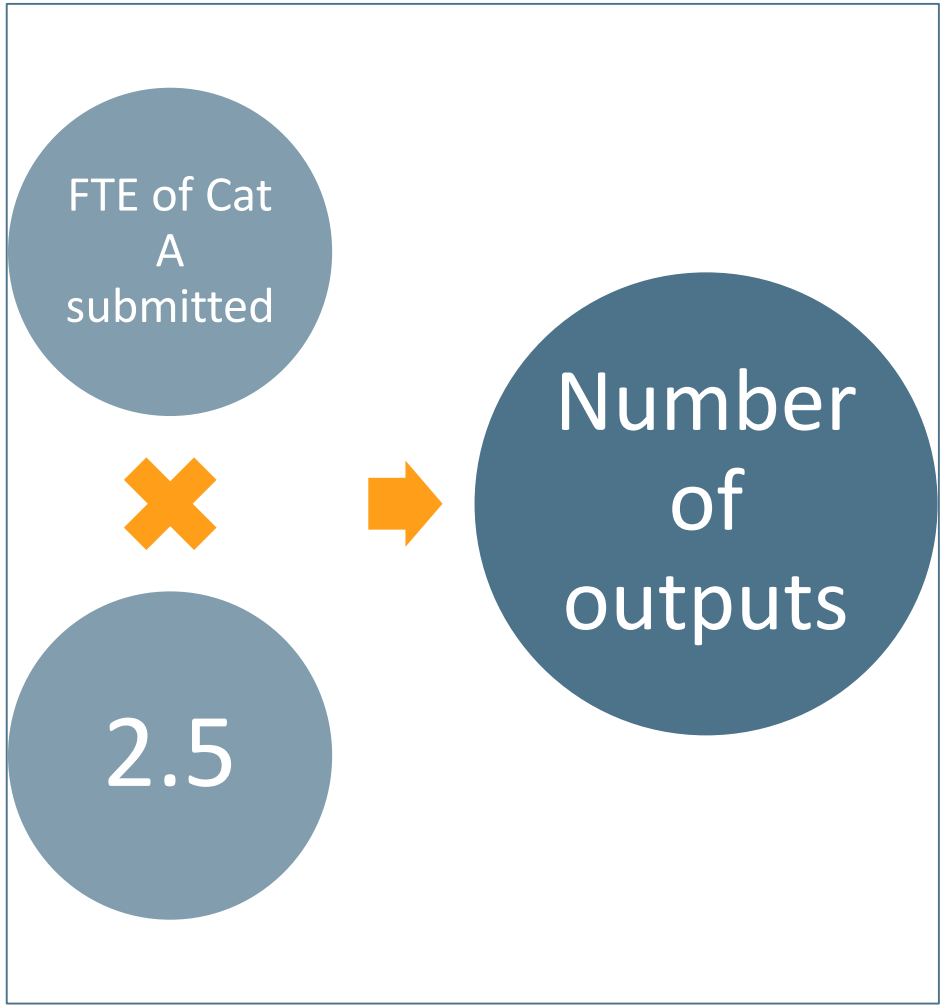
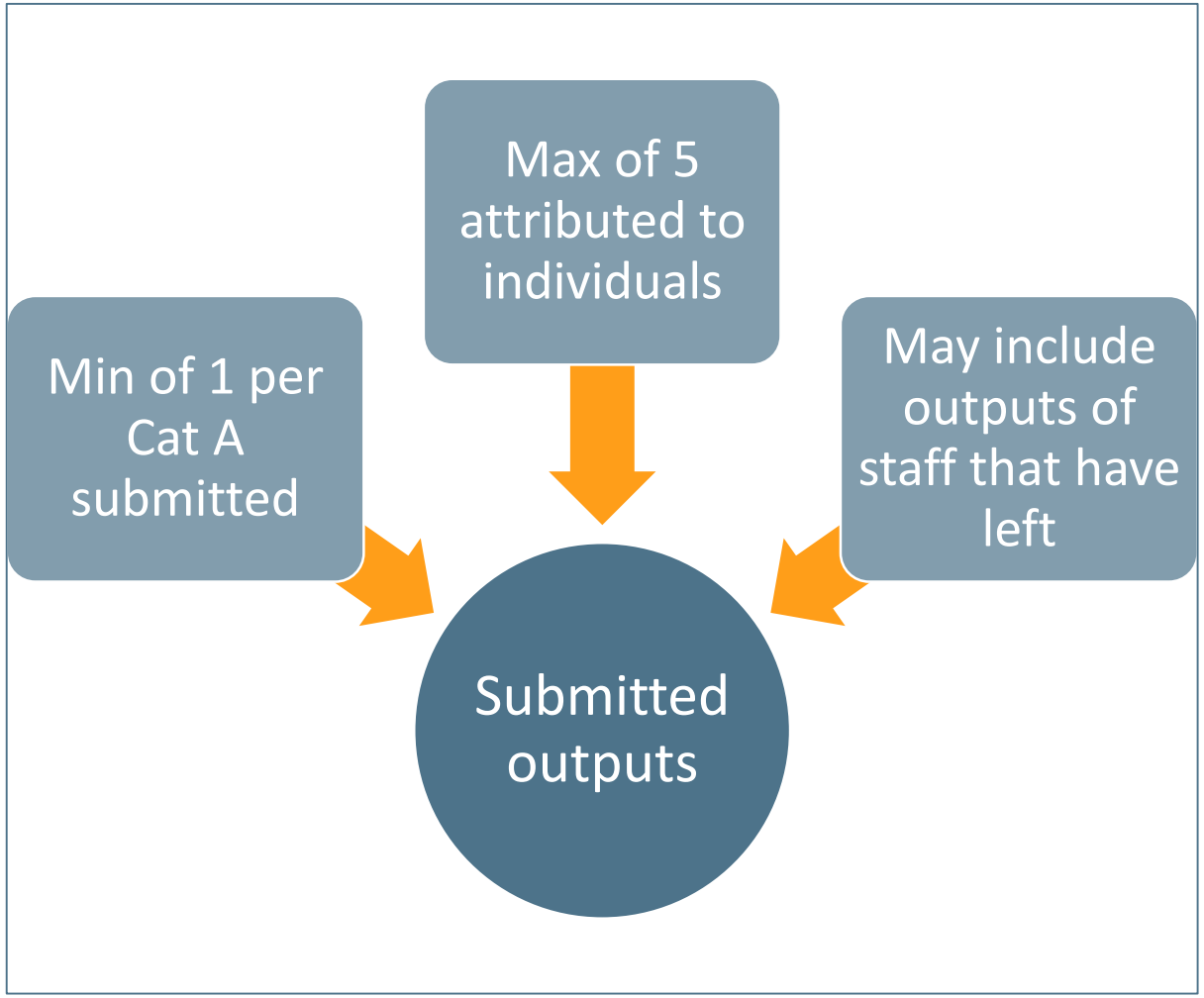
- Number of outputs per submission



- Output pool to include



Outputs – non-portability

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- Outputs may be submitted by:
  - the institution employing the eligible staff member on the census date; and
  - the institution employing the eligible staff member when the output was demonstrably generated
- ‘Demonstrably generated’ – date when the output was first made publicly available
- For former staff:
  - Includes: for staff still employed, but no longer on eligible contract, outputs produced while employed as eligible; and outputs of staff on secondment / leave of absence
  - Excludes: any outputs produced before / after period of eligible employment; outputs of staff made redundant (subj to consultation)

Background to proposals

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- Clear feedback from 2016 REF consultation that we need measures to take account of individual circumstances
- Decisions document (Nov 2017) set out two measures:
  - Reducing number of outputs required for units with high proportions of staff with individual circumstances
  - Removing minimum of one output requirement for those with exceptional circumstances
- During development, significant concerns that approach based on effects of circumstances on unit's overall output pool, rather than on individual contributions to it, not sufficient to ensure E&D fully supported

Proposed approach

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- Defined reductions for different types of circumstances – recognises overall effects on output pool, as well as individual's ability to contribute at same rate as other staff
- Expect many units will wish to manage effects of circumstances within flexibility given by the decoupling of staff and outputs, and reduction in number of outputs required per FTE
- Up to 1.5 output reduction per staff member
- More simplified approach to submitting information – requests at unit, not individual, level

Staff circumstances – reductions

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Reduction in unit's required no. of outputs

Optional reduction in output requirement where staff have not been able to research productively due to individual circumstances. Defined reductions for:

- Early career researchers
- Secondments/career breaks
- Family-related leave
- Clinical lectureships

Plus circumstances equivalent to absence that require a judgement

Removal of minimum of one output

- Exceptional circumstances where the individual **has not been able to produce an output**
- Individual may be returned without min. of one output
- Unit's output requirement will be further reduced by one

Codes of practice

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Code of practice to cover:		
Process for ensuring a fair approach to selecting outputs	Process(es) for determining who is an independent researcher	Process(es) for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (where not submitting 100%)

- Draft Guidance on codes of practice, including template at www.ref.ac.uk.
- EDAP will examine the codes and advise the funding bodies.
- Deadline for submission: 7 June 2019.
- Publication intended by end of 2019.

Outputs – open access

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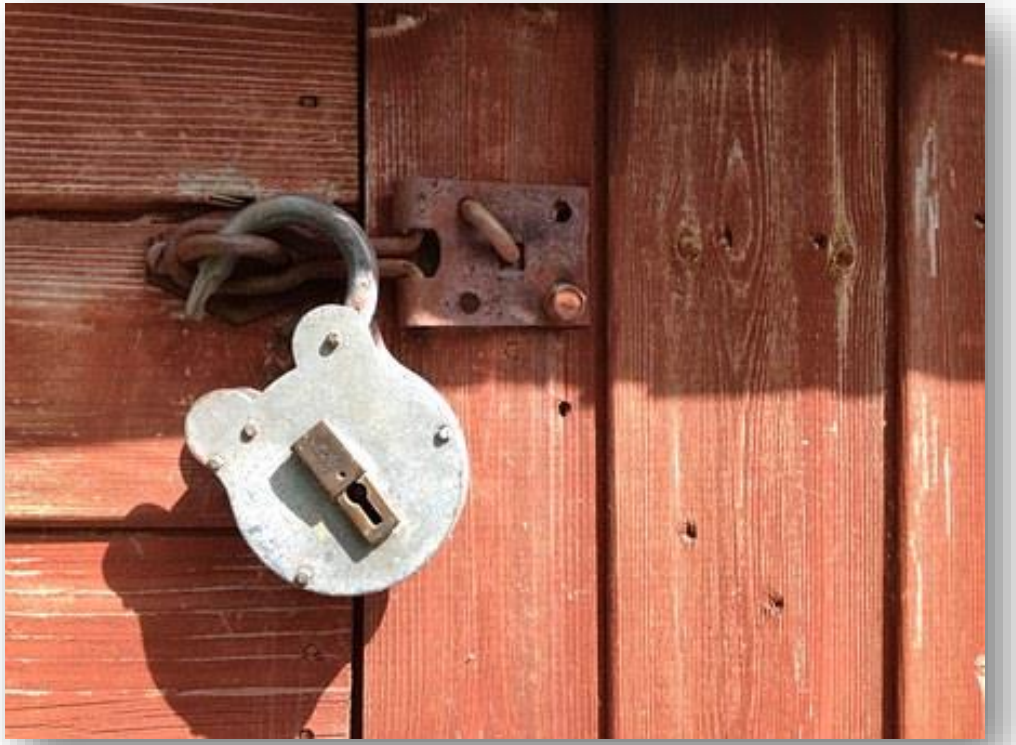
- Outputs deposited as soon after the point of acceptance as possible, and **no later than three months** after this date from 1 April 2018.
- Deposit exception from 1 April 2018 – outputs remain compliant if they are deposited up to three months after the date of publication.
- Additional flexibility – 5% tolerance band per submission



Impact

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Consistency with REF 2014

- Impact remains non-portable
- 2* quality threshold
- Timeframe:
  - 1 January 2000 - 31 December 2020 for underpinning research
  - 1 August 2013 - 31 July 2020 for impacts

Refinements

- Impact template integrated into Environment statement
- Impact on teaching *within* (and beyond) own HEI is eligible
- Enhanced clarity on scope of underpinning research – bodies of work
- Guidance on submitting continued impact case studies
- Aim for enhanced clarity in guidance on public engagement

Impact – criteria

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Reach	Significance
• the extent and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, as relevant to the nature of the impact. (It will not be assessed in geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries.)	• the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance, policies, practices, products, services, understanding, awareness or well-being of the beneficiaries.

- Case studies describing **any type(s)** of impact welcomed (extensive – but not exhaustive – list of examples of impact and indicators at Annex A)
- Case studies describing impacts through public engagement welcomed
- Case studies must provide a clear and coherent narrative supported by verifiable evidence and indicators
- Panel expectations in relation to receiving continued case studies
- Additional guidance on impacts on teaching within the submitting HEI

Impact – underpinning research

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- Panels recognise that the relationship between research and impact can be indirect and non-linear
- Underpinning research as a whole must be min. 2* quality
- Case studies must include up to six key references (not every output referenced has to be 2*) – HEIs can consult the outputs glossary in the Guidance on submissions
- Can also include indicators of quality e.g. evidence of peer-reviewed funding, prizes or awards for individual outputs etc.
- May be a body of work produced over a number of years or may be the output(s) of a particular project

Environment template

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Sections

a. Unit context, research and impact strategy.

b. People, including:
   a. staffing strategy and staff development
   b. research students
   c. equality and diversity.

c. Income, infrastructure and facilities.

d. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society.

Information about the unit's support for impact to be included across the four sections

Environment template

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Weighting

- Main Panel A, B and C will attach equal weighting to each of the four sections
- Recognising the primary role that people play as the key resource in the arts and humanities, Main Panel D will attach differential weight to sections:
  - Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy (25%)
  - People (30%)
  - Income, infrastructure and facilities (20%)
  - Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society (25%)

Specific consultation on whether the difference in section weightings across main panels is sufficiently justified by disciplinary difference

Institutional level assessment of environment

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- Institutional-level information will be appended to the UOA-level environment template and will be taken into account by the sub-panel when assessing the unit-level statement.
- Pilot of the standalone assessment of the discrete institutional-level environment will draw on this submitted information.
- Outcomes from the separate pilot exercise will **not** be included in REF 2021 but will inform future research assessment.

Timetable

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Spring 2018	Panels met to develop criteria
Summer to Autumn 2018	Consultation on draft guidance and criteria Draft guidance on codes of practice **Consultation deadline: noon, 15 October 2018**
Early 2019	Publish final guidance and criteria
2019	Complete preparation of submission systems **Submission deadline for codes of practice: noon, 7 June 2019**
2020	Submission phase **Submission deadline: noon, 27 November 2020**
2021	Assessment phase **Publication of results: December 2021**

Further information

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- Consultation survey: https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/DTZ1O/
- www.ref.ac.uk (includes all relevant documents and FAQs)
- Enquiries from staff at HEIs should be directed to nominated institutional contact (available at www.ref.ac.uk/contact)
- Other enquiries to info@ref.ac.uk