



REF 2021 consultation on the draft guidance and criteria

Response from the Chartered Association of Business Schools

15 October 2018

The original request for feedback is available at:

<https://www.ref.ac.uk/news/draft-guidance-and-criteria-set-out-detailed-arrangements-for-ref-2021/>

Respondent details

Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of: *

- As an individual
- Business
- Charity
- Department or research group
- Higher Education Institution
- Public sector organisation
- Representative body
- Subject association or learned society
- Other (please specify):

Please provide the name of your organisation. *

If your response is in relation to specific main panels, please indicate which one(s): *

- Main Panel A: Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (Sub-Panels 1-6)
- Main Panel B: Physical sciences, Engineering and Mathematics (Sub-Panels 7-12)
- Main Panel C: Social Sciences (Sub-Panels 13-24)
- Main Panel D: Arts and Humanities (Sub-Panels 25-34)
- Relevant to all

We are seeking views during the consultation on both the draft guidance on submissions and the draft panel criteria and working methods. Please select the documents for which you would like to provide a response:

- Both documents
- Guidance on Submissions only
- Panel Criteria and Working Methods only

Guidance on submissions: Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework

1a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

1b. Please provide any comments on Part 1. (300 word limit)

The guidance on submissions is effective in clearly setting out what is intended and the processes involved.

Guidance on submissions: Part 2: Submissions

2a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 2: Submissions':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2b. Please provide any comments on Part 2. (300 word limit)

The proposal to circulate a pilot version of the submission software is welcome and will be very useful for HEIs. Is there a contingency for slippage in the timetable for sharing this software?

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff details (REF1a/b)

3a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Staff details':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 1. (300 word limit)

We were unable to see any guidance on whether a 0.2 FTE Category A staff member can submit up to 5 outputs, notwithstanding their contractual status. Is it the case that the aggregated FTE of the unit will drive the number of required outputs e.g. 50.2 FTE =126 outputs, of which 5 outputs can come from the 0.2? Or is the maximum of 5 outputs per returnee adjusted for such fractional appointments i.e a 0.2 may only contribute a maximum (and a minimum) of 1 output?

Attention needs to be given to the potential for gameplaying through subtle changes in roles within institutions. The REF should therefore ask when staff moved to learning and teaching contracts from research or research and teaching contracts. Could there be a policy such that contractual status on a specified date determines the employee's status in the REF? Under such a policy subsequent contractual changes would not affect the employee's status under REF.

We welcome the requirement to provide an evidential statement of substantive connection to the unit for staff on small fractional contracts. However, indicators of participation and contribution to the unit's research environment by way of 'involvement in research centres or clusters' should require more than merely being a member of the relevant centre/cluster, which could simply become a paper exercise. Institutions should be able to evidence active involvement, such as attendance and presenting at centre seminars, involvement in organising centre events etc.

In certain disciplines, or for particular staff where the minimum fractional contract applies (paragraph 126), institutions should be required to flag which circumstance is appropriate within the submission. This would seem more transparent and appropriate rather than only being subject to an audit check.

Further clarity is required on data requirements for former staff about the date applied to the FTE of the REF-eligible contract (paragraph 148.f).

4. Possible indicators of research independence are set out at paragraph 130, including a reference to a list of independent fellowships. This list is intended to guide institutions on determining independence for staff holding fellowships from major research funders. The list is not intended to be comprehensive. Do you have any comments on the clarity, usefulness, or coverage of this list? (300 word limit)

The possible indicators of research independence set out at paragraph 130 look generally fit for purpose.

The list of fellowships could be expanded to include some of the European Commission Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships, which would fit the definition of independent researchers.

5a. Do you agree with the proposed eligibility of seconded staff set out at paragraphs 121.c to d?

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

5b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

6a. Do you agree with the proposed ineligibility of staff based in a discrete department or unit outside the UK?

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

6b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff circumstances (paragraphs 149 to 193)

7a. The proposed approach for taking account of circumstances will achieve the aim of promoting equality and diversity in REF 2021:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any comments on your answer. (300 word limit)

The proposed approach seems to have been well thought through, taking practical considerations into account. That said, there is some concern as to whether this will actually promote equality and diversity.

Regarding the more complex circumstances included in paragraph 161.e, there is no guarantee that there will be parity between institutions in the way that these issues are approached to ensure non-discrimination against individuals. Paragraph 187 may seek to address this concern by requiring that the information returned in the request includes sufficient details about the effect of the individual circumstances but this requires clarification about what would constitute 'sufficient details' based on 'verifiable evidence' and what 'supporting documentation' would need to be available for audit.

7b. The potential advantages of the proposed approach outweigh the potential drawbacks identified:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any comments on your answer. (300 word limit)

7c. Please provide any further comments on these proposals, including any suggestions for clarifying or refining the guidance. (300 word limit)

Consideration should also be given to the unintended 'game-playing' that might arise from institutions requesting reductions in the minimum of one output to zero for some staff that have had circumstances which could justifiably lead to such a judgment but who do have suitable outputs nonetheless. The unit then returns one or more outputs for these staff, whilst reducing the overall number required. This seems to go against the intentions behind the guidance of promoting equality and diversity.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs (REF2)

8a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs' is clear:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 2. (300 word limit)

9. A glossary of output types and collection formats is set out at Annex K, to provide increased clarity to institutions on categorising types of output for submission. Do you have any comments on the clarity and usefulness of this annex?

10a. Paragraph 206.b sets out the funding bodies' intention to make ineligible the outputs of former staff who have been made redundant (except where the staff member has taken voluntary redundancy). Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify):

10b. Please provide any further comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

We agree with this intention but it is worth bearing in mind that voluntary redundancy is often used as a way of avoiding compulsory redundancies so the distinction made is somewhat tenuous.

Bearing in mind the de-coupling of outputs from staff, is that provided that the output was made public whilst the individual was at the institution (and therefore the institution has invested in and supported that output), then it should be an eligible output for the unit pool. There is an argument

that individuals made redundant would want to be able to show on their CVs that their outputs have been returned to REF.

11a. Do you agree with the proposed intention to permit the submission of co-authored outputs only once within the same submission?

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

11b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

Further clarification may be needed on whether the consideration of the scale and scope of the output (for the purposes of the double weighting request) will be exactly the same as it is where a double weighting request is made for a sole authored output.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research activity cost for UOA 4

12a. How feasible do you consider to be the approach set out at paragraphs 267 to 271 for capturing information on the balance of research activity of different costs within submitting units in UOA 4? (300 word limit)

12b. Are the examples of high cost and other research activity sufficiently clear to guide classification? (300 word limit)

12c. Please provide feedback on any specific points in the guidance text as well as the overall clarity of the guidance. (300 word limit)

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 3: Impact (REF3)

13a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact' is clear:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 3. (300 word limit)

It's good to see the inclusion of impact in supporting student learning, but this should be accompanied by the clear proviso that this is achieved through original outputs and not simply by assembling prior work by others.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Sections 4-5: Environment data and environment (REF4a/b/c- REF5a/b)

14a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment data' is clear:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 4. (300 word limit)

It is a sensible clarification to accommodate the differences between HEIs with some being rather more narrowly focused than the large conventional 'university'.

15a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment' is clear:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 5. (300 word limit)

Guidance on Submissions: further comments

16. Please provide any further comments on the 'Guidance on submissions', including Annexes A-M. (500 word limit)

It is useful to have this material. It is well-organised and thoughtfully provided.

Open Access - Further guidance is required on the types of evidence that would be expected and acceptable in an audit request for open access exceptions where the output is unable to meet the deposit requirements.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 2: Unit of assessment descriptors

1. Do the UOA descriptors provide a clear and appropriate description of the disciplines covered by the UOAs? Please include any suggestions for refining the descriptors and state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

- All
- UOA 1: Clinical Medicine
- UOA 2: Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
- UOA 3: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
- UOA 4: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
- UOA 5: Biological Sciences
- UOA 6: Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences
- UOA 7: Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
- UOA 8: Chemistry
- UOA 9: Physics
- UOA 10: Mathematical Sciences
- UOA 11: Computer Science and Informatics
- UOA 12: Engineering
- UOA 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
- UOA 14: Geography and Environmental Studies
- UOA 15: Archaeology
- UOA 16: Economics and Econometrics
- UOA 17: Business and Management Studies
- UOA 18: Law

- UOA 19: Politics and International Studies
- UOA 20: Social Work and Social Policy
- UOA 21: Sociology
- UOA 22: Anthropology and Development Studies
- UOA 23: Education
- UOA 24: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
- UOA 25: Area Studies
- UOA 26: Modern Languages and Linguistics
- UOA 27: English Language and Literature
- UOA 28: History
- UOA 29: Classics
- UOA 30: Philosophy
- UOA 31: Theology and Religious Studies
- UOA 32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
- UOA 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies
- UOA 34: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

Where relevant, please state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 1: Submissions

2a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions', in particular on:

- where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 2: Outputs

3a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs', in particular on:

- the proposed criteria for double-weighting outputs in Main Panels C and D, and on whether requests to double-weight books should automatically be accepted
- whether Annex C 'Main Panel D – outputs types and submission guidance' is helpful and clear
- where further clarification is required
- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

The proposed criteria for double-weighting outputs in Main Panel C are appropriate, and while requests to double-weight books should not automatically be accepted, they should be accepted more frequently. This should only relate to sole authored and co-authored books, not edited collections.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 3: Impact

4a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact', in particular on:

- where further clarification is required
- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 4: Environment

5a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment', in particular on:

- whether the difference in section weightings across main panels is sufficiently justified by disciplinary difference (paragraphs 322 and 323)
- whether the list of quantitative indicators provided at www.ref.ac.uk is clear and helpful
- where further clarification is required
- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 4: Panel procedures

6a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 4: Panel procedures', in particular on:- where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made. (300 word limit)

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 5: Panel working methods

7a. a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 5: Panel working methods', in particular on: - where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made. (300 word limit)

Overall panel criteria and working methods

8a. Overall, the 'Panel criteria and working methods' achieves an appropriate balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the panels.

- Strongly agree
- Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

8b. Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the main panels. (300 word limit)