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**REF** 2017/04

November 2017

Updated April 2018

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# REF 2021

## Decisions on staff and outputs

This document sets out the funding bodies' decisions on several areas of the Research Excellence Framework 2021, following consultation activity. The decisions concern the submission of staff and outputs in the exercise, and further related aspects of the framework.

# REF 2021: Decisions on staff and outputs

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## To

Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions

Heads of higher education institutions in Northern Ireland

Heads of higher education institutions in Scotland

Heads of higher education institutions in Wales

Heads of alternative providers in England

Subject associations

Organisations with an interest in commissioning and using academic research including businesses, public sector bodies, charities and other third sector organisations

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## Of interest to those responsible for

Research, planning

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## Reference

REF 2017/04

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## Publication date

November 2017

Updated April 2018

(See paragraph 41, p8)

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## Enquiries to

Gina Reid

tel 0117 931 7392

email [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk)

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## Executive summary

### Purpose and key points

1. This document sets out the funding bodies' decisions on the submission of staff and outputs in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), and decisions on further related aspects, as follows:

- submitting staff
- small submissions
- submitting outputs
- number of impact case studies required
- UOA structure and multiple submissions
- eligibility to participate in the REF for providers in England.

### Action required

2. This document is for information. No action is required by higher education institutions. Further detailed guidance to institutions on preparing their submissions for the REF will be published in mid-2018.

## Background

3. In December 2016, following an independent review of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the four UK higher education funding bodies published a 'Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework' (HEFCE 2016/36)<sup>1</sup>. We received 388 responses to the consultation. A detailed summary of responses is available on the REF website<sup>2</sup>.

4. Informed by responses to the consultation, in September 2017 the funding bodies published 'Initial Decisions on the Research Excellence Framework 2021' (REF 2017/01). That document set out decisions on several high-level aspects of the framework, including measures to support interdisciplinary research further, arrangements for assessing impact and the unit of assessment (UOA)-level environment, decisions relating to institutional-level assessment, and information about the UOA structure and recruitment of panels<sup>3</sup>.

5. Before the funding bodies could take decisions, further evidence and discussion were required on some aspects of the framework, including the eligibility of institutions to participate in the exercise, submission of staff, and output portability. Decisions on these and related aspects are set out here. In September 2017, we sought further views in particular on key questions relating to staff and outputs (HEFCE Circular letter 33/2017), and gathered estimates from institutions of the number of staff in scope for submission. A summary of responses we received is attached at Annex A.

## Decisions on staff and outputs

### Submitting staff

#### Identifying staff for inclusion

6. We will implement the recommendation of the Stern review that **all staff with significant responsibility for research** are returned to the REF, provided they are independent researchers. As confirmed in responses to HEFCE Circular letter 33/2017, contractual status will identify the majority of academic staff who have a significant responsibility for research, particularly in research-intensive universities. Recognising that there are staff who have more significant responsibility for other activities, including knowledge exchange, professional practice, and scholarship, we will implement an approach whereby higher education institutions (HEIs), working with their staff and with guidelines, identify who is in scope for submission among staff meeting core eligibility criteria. These staff categories will be defined as follows:

- a. **'Category A eligible'** describes staff meeting core eligibility criteria, who will form the total pool of eligible staff. Building on the definition of Category A staff in REF 2014, 'Category A eligible' staff will be defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date, whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'<sup>4</sup>. Staff should have a substantive connection with the submitting institution (see paragraph 16). For staff on 'research only' contracts, the eligible pool should only include those who are independent researchers, and not research assistants (see paragraph 15).
- b. **'Category A submitted'** describes the staff from among the total pool who have been

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<sup>1</sup> The Stern review, 'Building on Success and Learning from Experience' (2016), is available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-excellence-framework-review>. The 'Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework' (HEFCE 2016/36) is available at [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201636/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201636/).

<sup>2</sup> 'Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework: Summary of responses' (REF 2017/02), available at [www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/consultationonthesecondresearchexcellenceframeworksummaryofresponses.html](http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/consultationonthesecondresearchexcellenceframeworksummaryofresponses.html).

<sup>3</sup> See 'Roles and recruitment of the expert panels' (REF 2017/03), available at [www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.html](http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.html).

identified as having significant responsibility for research on the census date. This will include all staff on research-only contracts who are 'Category A eligible'. Staff on 'teaching and research' contracts will be included according to the processes described at paragraph 7.

7. Submissions into UOAs should be made as follows:

- Where the 'Category A eligible' staff definition accurately identifies staff in the submitting unit with significant responsibility for research, the unit should submit 100 per cent of staff.
- Where it does not accurately identify staff (on 'teaching and research' contracts) in the submitting unit who have significant responsibility for research, the institution will need to implement processes to determine this. Institutions will need to develop, consult with staff on, and document in their code of practice, the processes to be followed for identifying who among those meeting the definition of 'Category A eligible' staff have significant responsibility, and are therefore in scope for submission. The onus will be on institutions to provide evidence that 'Category A eligible' staff on 'teaching and research' contracts who are not submitted do not have significant responsibility for research.

8. The submission approach may vary by UOA where employment practices vary at this level. The institution's criteria for identifying staff should be developed collaboratively with the academic staff body and evidence of institution-wide consultation on the criteria should be available in the institution's code of practice (see paragraphs 18 to 20). The processes should be context dependent, drawing on standard ways of working at the institution, and it should be possible to test these criteria fairly and evenly against the responsibilities of all academic staff.

9. In the case of joint submissions, it will be for each institution to develop and apply its own processes to identify 'Category A submitted' staff. It will not be necessary to apply the same approach across both institutions.

### Census date

10. The **census date** for staff will be **31 July 2020**. We intend to work with the Higher Education Statistics Agency to enable close alignment between the information collected in the staff record and the submission requirements for the REF.

### Significant responsibility for research

11. Staff with significant responsibility for research are 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. Research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared. Staff engaged exclusively in scholarship would not be considered to have a significant responsibility for research.

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<sup>4</sup> Individuals whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research' are staff returned to the Higher Education Statistics Agency Staff Collection with an academic employment function of either 'Academic contract that is research only' or 'Academic contract that is both teaching and research' (identified as codes '2' or '3' in the ACEMPFUN field).

12. In recognition of differences across institutions in how staff responsibilities are determined, the funding bodies do not consider it appropriate to set a generic criterion relating to a minimum proportion of time allocated for research. However, we recognise that, as indicated in responses to HEFCE Circular letter 33/2017, many institutions will want to draw on the proportion of time that is allocated for research to identify staff in scope. The funding bodies consider that this will be an appropriate approach, where there is a clear and agreed rationale for the proportion that is set.

13. Responses to HEFCE Circular letter 33/2017 outlined several key attributes that would identify staff actively engaged in research, including PhD supervision and eligibility to apply for research grants. However, responses also highlighted differences in these attributes by discipline area. Working with the main panels, we will provide further guidance on identifying staff with significant responsibility in the guidance on submissions and panel criteria. This guidance will not prescribe a fixed set of criteria that all staff would be required to meet, but will set out a 'menu' of what we consider may be appropriate indicators of significant responsibility.

### Independent research

14. Similarly, responses to HEFCE Circular letter 33/2017 outlined several key attributes that would identify independent researchers, which also highlighted differences in these attributes by discipline area (see Annex A).

15. As outlined in Annex A to HEFCE Circular letter 33/2017, we will work with the main panels to provide further guidance appropriate to the discipline areas on the definition of an 'independent researcher', including guidance on which fellowships would usually be considered to meet the definition. The guidance will build on a generic definition, developed from that 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'.)

### Substantive connection

16. Staff appointed on the minimum eligible fractional contract (0.2 FTE) who do not have a clear connection to the submitting institution will not be eligible for inclusion. A **statement** will be required for all submitted staff on the minimum 0.2 FTE contract of employment that describes the **connection of the staff member to the submitting institution**, as evidence of the eligibility of the staff member. This may include, for example, postgraduate research (PGR) student supervision responsibilities.

17. We will consult the main and sub-panels on a full range of indicators that might evidence a substantive connection, and will develop guidance on instances when a statement may not be required for staff on the minimum fractional contracts (for example, staff employed in the creative arts where fractional contracts are standard practice, or staff with caring responsibilities or other personal circumstances).

### Codes of practice

18. The funding bodies will require **all institutions** submitting in REF 2021 to provide a

**code of practice** (COP). The COP will need to cover:

- The institution's processes for ensuring a fair approach to selecting outputs (see paragraph 25).
- Where applicable, 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.

19. Each institution's COP will need to be approved by the relevant funding body, with advice from the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP). We will provide guidance on developing COPs to support institutions in meeting their own obligations in law. Following feedback on REF 2014, we will work with EDAP to develop more detailed guidance, including a template, for COPs.

20. The funding bodies wish to ensure the early development and publication of COPs, to give clarity around institutions' approaches to identifying staff in scope. We intend to provide the guidance and template to institutions in mid-2018. This will include the final timetable for submission and review. The provisional timetable for submission is spring 2019, with publication intended by the end of that calendar year.

#### **Staff identifiers**

21. The funding bodies consider that the benefits offered by persistent staff identifiers are significant, in terms of increased efficiency, transparency and interoperability in the research data landscape. In view of changes to staff submission in REF 2021 and the stage of the exercise, we do not consider it feasible to mandate the Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) as the staff identifier in REF 2021. However, we give notice that we expect to require ORCID as a staff identifier in future exercises and the funding bodies **strongly encourage** an **ORCID** to be provided for all 'Category A submitted' staff in REF 2021.

#### **Category C staff**

22. In recognition of the key contribution that staff defined as 'Category C' make to the collaborative effort of UK higher education (HE) research, the funding bodies have decided that this contribution should be **captured** where applicable in the **environment element** of the exercise. This should include the number of Category C researchers whose research is primarily focused in the submitting unit, and their contributions to the unit's research (as indicated in the outputs element) and to its impact. The panel criteria will set out the main panels' expectations in relation to this requirement.

23. The definition of Category C staff will follow the REF 2014 definition as individuals employed by an organisation other than an HEI, whose contract or job role (as documented by their employer) includes the undertaking of research, and whose research is primarily focused in the submitting unit on the census date (31 July 2020).

#### **Small submissions**

24. We will develop arrangements to allow institutions to request the **exclusion of very small units** (fewer than 5 FTE) from submission in **exceptional circumstances**. This

intends to recognise concerns raised about the potential burden of meeting the submission requirements in instances where the research focus of one or a very small number of staff (employed with significant responsibility for research) is not related to other areas of research in the institution, and is usually in the remit of a UOA in which the institution has not submitted in previous exercises.

## Submitting outputs

### Decoupling staff from outputs

25. The number of outputs required for each submission will be determined by the FTE of 'Category A submitted' staff. The total FTE of 'Category A submitted' staff will provide a volume measure suitable for funding purposes, to be determined by each funding body. There will be flexibility to return outputs from across the unit's staff, within minimum and maximum limits for each individual. Institutions will need to set out in their codes of practice the processes for ensuring a fair approach to selecting outputs.

26. The **average number** of outputs required **per FTE** will be **2.5**. The number of outputs for each submission will be calculated by multiplying the total FTE of 'Category A submitted' staff by 2.5. Rounding will be applied to give a whole number of outputs for return.

27. A **minimum of one output** will be required for each staff member with significant responsibility for research employed in the submitting unit on the census date. There will be no minimum requirement for submitting outputs of staff who have left the institution. For exceptional cases, where the requirement to submit a minimum of one output per staff member exceeds the average 2.5 outputs per FTE in the unit, the higher number of outputs should be returned (unless individual or unit circumstances apply: see paragraphs 30 to 32).

28. A **maximum of five outputs** may be attributed to individual staff members (including staff who have left). The attribution of the maximum number of outputs to a staff member will not preclude the submission of further outputs on which that staff member is a co-author, where these are attributed to other staff in the unit.

29. Data on the distribution of outputs across staff in the unit, including staff who have left, will be provided to the sub-panels for consideration in relation to the assessment of the environment.

### Individual and unit circumstances

30. The funding bodies will promote measures in REF 2021 to support equality and diversity. It is important that these measures are proportionate in terms of their burden and complexity. We will develop the information requirements for these measures in consultation with EDAP and the main panels, and set this out in the detailed guidance on submissions. We intend that the information requirements will be reduced from the REF 2014 measures.

31. We will put in place arrangements to allow staff to be returned **without the required minimum of one output** where certain **exceptional individual circumstances** have affected their ability to meet the requirement. For each member of staff to whom these

circumstances do apply, the required number of outputs for the submitting unit will be reduced by one.

32. Responding to concerns raised in the consultation, and informed by advice from EDAP on this issue, we will also develop **measures to account for 'unit circumstances'**. These measures will seek to recognise the cumulative effect on the output pool available to submitting units that have 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. The measures will allow submitting units an **optional reduction in the number of outputs** required from the submitting unit overall, in relation to the proportion of staff in the unit with circumstances meeting set criteria. These measures will be additional to the reduction outlined in paragraph 31.

### Output portability

33. We will implement a **transitional approach to the non-portability of outputs** in REF 2021, whereby outputs may be submitted by **both** the institution employing the staff member on the census date **and** the originating institution where the staff member was previously employed as Category A eligible<sup>5</sup> when the output was demonstrably generated.

34. In recognition of the issues raised in the consultation responses relating to the date of acceptance as a suitable marker<sup>6</sup>, the funding bodies have decided that for REF 2021 'demonstrably generated' will be determined by the date when the output was **first made publicly available**.

35. We will consult the main panels on the full set of eligibility criteria for output submission. This will include consideration of outputs first made publicly available when the researcher was a PhD student. In general, for outputs to be eligible for submission there will not be a requirement for former staff members to remain employed in academia on the census date. This would allow, for example, the submission of outputs by staff who have moved into a different sector, died or retired.

36. Where output metadata is sufficient to allow identification of multiple instances of the same output across submissions, the quality of the output will be assessed once within the same UOA. However, the eligibility criteria will need to be met individually by each institution submitting the output.

### Open access

37. Evidence gathered through a recent survey on open access (OA) shows that, for over 80 per cent of outputs in the scope of the policy, either the outputs met the REF policy requirements in the first year (1 April 2016 to 1 April 2017), or an exception to the policy requirement is known to have applied. This reflects significant progress toward the policy intent to increase substantially the proportion of research that is made available open access in the UK.

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of being employed on the census date.

<sup>6</sup> See REF 2017/03.



38. The funding bodies have carefully considered the evidence gathered in the survey relating to the policy's deposit requirements. We wish to continue building on the progress achieved to date and to maintain the momentum towards developing new tools to implement deposit as soon after the point of acceptance as possible. We therefore confirm the implementation of the REF OA policy as previously set out. The policy will **require outputs** 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.

39. Taking account of some of the practical concerns raised through the survey in relation to deposit on acceptance, we will introduce a **deposit exception** in to the policy from 1 April 2018. This exception 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**. The exception will read: 'The output was not deposited within three months of acceptance date, but was deposited within three months of the earliest date of publication.' This exception will remain in place for the rest of the REF 2021 publication period.

40. Further detail on the evidence assessed to make this decision is based at Annex B. The REF OA policy has been updated to include the additional exception. A full report of the UK-wide survey on the delivery of funders' open access policies will be published early in 2018.

## Impact

41. Following feedback from the sector, the initial threshold for impact case studies will be increased to **20 FTE** (from 15 FTE). Submissions will therefore include a total of **one case study**, plus **one further case study per up to 20 FTE** staff returned for the first 20 FTE, after which one further case study will be required **per up to 15 FTE**. The requirement will decrease after 110 FTE, to one further case study **per up to 50 FTE** returned. Submissions will therefore include a **minimum of two case studies**. The updated requirements are illustrated in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**

FTE of Category A submitted staff	Number of case studies
Up to 19.99	2
20 to 34.99	3
35 to 49.99	4
50 to 64.99	5
65 to 79.99	6
80 to 94.99	7
95 to 109.99	8
110 to 159.99	9
160 or more	10, plus one further case study per additional 50 FTE

## UOA structure and multiple submissions

### Criminology

42. The **assessment arrangements for criminological research** in place in the previous exercise **will continue in REF 2021**. These arrangements included: the explicit recognition that criminological research may fall within the boundaries of the sub-panels for Law, Social Work and Social Policy, and Sociology, with such work welcomed by all three sub-panels; the appointment of joint assessors; cross-panel calibration; and oversight by Main Panel C.

43. This decision has been taken in view of the weight of support for maintaining continuity with the UOA structure from 2014<sup>7</sup>, and in recognition of the submission of criminological research across multiple sub-panels in the previous exercise. Informed by dialogue with the subject communities, we will work with Main Panel C and Sub-panels 18 (Law), 20 (Social Work and Social Policy) and 21 (Sociology) to strengthen these arrangements in REF 2021, ensuring effective calibration, assessment and oversight.

### Forensic science

44. Submission of research in forensic science should continue to be returned in the most appropriate UOA for its assessment. The expert panels will begin developing their criteria for the assessment in 2018. This will include producing descriptors of the UOAs, and we will work with the main and sub-panels to provide a clearer steer to institutions on where to submit forensic science research as they develop these descriptors.

45. Additionally, we will invite institutions to **identify forensic science outputs** during the process of submission, in whichever UOA they are submitted. In a similar approach to the interdisciplinary research identifier, the forensic science identifier will help to ensure appropriate assessment – this could be, for example, via cross-referral, the use of joint assessors, or existing expertise on the panel in which the outputs are submitted. Additionally, it will generate a quality profile for all forensic science outputs that will be combined in the main panel overview reports with a section on forensic science submissions, thereby increasing the visibility of outcomes for this area of research.

### Multiple submissions

46. Multiple submissions are defined as more than one submission by a single HEI in a particular UOA. Maintaining **consistency with the process followed for REF 2014**, multiple submissions will be allowed only in exceptional circumstances and with prior permission from the REF manager. The panel criteria will set out the sub-panels' expectations with regard to receiving multiple submissions.

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<sup>7</sup> See REF 2017/03.

## Eligibility to participate in the REF for providers in England

47. We have previously indicated that, in view of the HE landscape changes, there is a requirement for more detail on eligibility for different types of HE provider in England. In England, HEFCE-funded HEIs (including connected institutions) and alternative providers with university title will be eligible to participate in the REF, where they also meet the criteria in paragraph 48.

48. We expect all providers (in all UK countries) submitting to the REF to have research degree provision. This includes institutions with validation, sub-contractual or franchise arrangements with other higher education institutions. Institutions wishing to participate in the exercise will also be required to meet the submission requirements that will be set out in the detailed guidance on submissions.

49. The Higher Education and Research Act (2017) sets out eligibility to receive quality-related research funding in England, which is informed by the outcomes of the REF, in relation to the Act's 'eligible higher education providers'. Those institutions meeting the above criteria, but not seeking eligibility for funding, will be welcome to participate as a benchmarking exercise.

50. The government is currently seeking views on behalf of the Office for Students on the proposed new regulatory framework for higher education in England<sup>8</sup>. We expect to base the criteria for eligibility to submit to REF on the Office for Students' Register and associated Regulatory Framework, but we expect that those applying under current regulations will remain eligible for the 2021 exercise.

## Further guidance

51. This document, together with the 'Initial decisions on the Research Excellence Framework 2021' (REF 2017/01), sets out the decisions of the funding bodies on the broad framework for REF 2021, following the Stern review of the exercise in 2016. Further guidance on the implementation of this framework will be published, as follows:

- a. **Summer 2018:** We will publish the draft 'Guidance on submissions', setting out the information that will be required in institutions' submissions, and the generic definitions and criteria that will apply. This will be published alongside the consultation on the 'Panel criteria and working methods', and detailed guidance on developing codes of practice.
- b. **January 2019:** We will publish the final 'Guidance on submissions' and 'Panel criteria and working methods'. These documents will set out how – within the overarching assessment framework – the REF main and sub-panels will apply the assessment criteria, and will provide further guidance on the data requirements for submissions. The 'Panel criteria' will be developed by the four REF main panels with input from their sub-panels.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Securing student success: Risk-based regulation for teaching excellence, social mobility and informed choice in higher education', accessible at <https://consult.education.gov.uk/higher-education/higher-education-regulatory-framework/>.

# List of abbreviations

<b>COP</b>	Code of practice
<b>CRIS</b>	Current research information systems
<b>EDAP</b>	Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel
<b>FTE</b>	Full-time equivalence
<b>HE</b>	Higher education
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution
<b>OA</b>	Open access
<b>ORCID</b>	Open Researcher and Contributor ID
<b>PGR</b>	Postgraduate research
<b>REF</b>	Research Excellence Framework
<b>TRAC</b>	Transparent Approach to Costing
<b>UOA</b>	Unit of Assessment

# Annex A

## Sector consultation on staff submission and output portability

### Background

1. Following the 'Initial decisions on the Research Excellence Framework 2021' (REF 2017/01), the four UK funding bodies sought feedback on the details required to finalise the proposed approach to output portability and identifying staff who have a significant responsibility for research.
2. The consultation closed on 29 September. We received 161 responses via email. Responses were from a broad range of stakeholders across the sector (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Categories of respondents to the REF consultation on staff and outputs**

Higher education institution	113	70%
Individual	29	18%
Subject association or learned society	9	6%
Representative body	8	5%
Department or research group	2	1%

3. We also sought estimates from institutions of the number of staff likely to be submitted in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

### Non-portability of outputs

4. Respondents were requested to provide feedback on the two proposed transitional approaches for implementing non-portability:
  - a. A simplified model, whereby outputs would be eligible for return by the originating institution (where the research output was demonstrably generated and at which the member of staff was employed) **as well as** by the newly employing institution.
  - b. The hybrid approach, with a deadline (to be determined), after which a limited number of outputs would transfer with staff, with eligibility otherwise linked to the originating institution.
5. Of the 157 respondents who expressed an opinion on non-portability of outputs, 85 per cent supported the simplified model. Around 90 per cent of higher education institutions (HEIs) stated a preference for this model, along with 100 per cent of respondents from representative bodies, subject associations and learned societies.
6. The most frequently cited reason for supporting the simplified model was the belief

that it would create less additional burden for HEIs, while the hybrid model was felt to be too complex and burdensome to be implemented at this point in the assessment cycle. Several respondents acknowledged that this would involve double-counting outputs in some instances. This was not deemed to be a significant issue, however, with several respondents citing the multiple submission of co-authored papers in REF 2014. Respondents also indicated that this model represented a fairer option for both staff and institutions, while supporting researcher mobility.

7. Just over 8 per cent expressed a preference for the hybrid model (a further 7 per cent of respondents stated no clear preference). The primary reason for selecting this model was the belief that it would reduce game-playing by institutions in the form of a last-minute 'transfer market'. Some also argued that it represented a fairer model for HEIs, particularly for smaller, non-research intensive institutions, by recognising and rewarding the support provided to researchers during their time in an institution.

8. In addition to general concerns around increased burden (expressed by supporters of both models), some specific implementation challenges were identified. The majority of these related to the question of defining (and demonstrating) where an output was generated. A number of respondents indicated that date of publication would be the least burdensome means of determining this. However, it was noted that this approach could be challenging for non-published outputs (for example, portfolios).

9. Questions were raised around the submission of staff who move institution more than once in the cycle, or who were employed simultaneously by multiple institutions at the time of publication. It was noted that it would be challenging to track outputs of former members of staff, especially where additional information on outputs is required by the panel.

10. Clarification was also sought on whether institutions would be able to submit staff who have moved onto a non-UK HEI or a career outside higher education, as well as those who have retired or died.

### **Staff submission**

11. Respondents indicated broad support for the proposal to enable HEIs, working with their staff and with guidelines, to identify who is in scope for submission to the REF. It was noted, however, that clear guidelines would be required for those institutions choosing not to submit 100 per cent of their staff in scope.

### **Staff with significant responsibility for research**

12. There was no clear consensus on the generic attributes that may help HEIs identify staff with significant responsibility for research. Several respondents indicated that contractual status was an appropriate indicator for their institution. Many respondents highlighted the need for flexibility in the criteria, to accommodate disciplinary differences and recognise the changes to an individual's career pathway that might occur during the REF period.

13. A commonly cited indicator was the time allocated for research in a workload model,

which was suggested by just over 40 per cent of respondents to be an appropriate means of identifying a significant responsibility for research. However, there were varied views on the appropriate minimum proportion, with suggestions ranging from 10 to 30 per cent; 20 per cent was the most commonly suggested proportion. Suggestions also included:

- authorship of a REF-eligible output
- holding a research grant (as primary or co-investigator)
- eligibility to supervise postgraduate research students
- inclusion of research objectives in annual review.

14. Responses also provided feedback on the approaches that would be used to identify staff, with workload models and career pathways most frequently suggested.

### **Independent researchers**

15. Responses to the questions on staff submission largely did not distinguish between the definitions of 'significant responsibility for research' and 'independent researcher', when proposing characteristics. As above, many respondents highlighted the difference in the attributes of 'research independence' between disciplines and institutions. For example, while undertaking doctoral study was regarded as a mark of independence in certain subject areas, particularly those with high numbers of practitioners, it was cited as evidence of non-independence in others.

16. Criteria identified specifically in relation to research independence included:

- authorship of a REF-eligible output
- holding a research grant (as primary or co-investigator)
- eligibility to supervise postgraduate research students
- undertaking self-directed research
- holding a research fellowship
- significant input into design of research
- leading a research group or a work package.

### **Staff submission survey**

17. We received 105 valid responses, across the six Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) peer groups, to the request to provide data on the estimated number of staff who meet the core eligibility criteria and, among these, who have significant responsibility for research.

18. Modelling based on the estimates provided by institutions found the projected number of eligible academic staff full-time equivalence (FTE) with significant responsibility for research to be 83,800 FTE (rounded to the nearest 100) by 2019-20. This represents a 60 per cent increase on the number submitted in REF 2014 (52,061 FTE).

19. However, this estimate includes the data returned by several institutions that reported

they would not submit 100 per cent of staff, but at this point had returned an estimate for staff with significant responsibility that matched the estimate of staff meeting the core eligibility criteria.



# Annex B

## Summary of survey responses on deposit requirement for REF open access policy

### Background

1. HEFCE (on behalf of the four UK funding bodies), Jisc, Wellcome and Research Councils UK surveyed higher education institutions in autumn 2017, to understand further the extent to which they are meeting funders' requirements and the tools they are using to do so. This included a set of questions to review the readiness of the sector for the implementation of the deposit on acceptance policy for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 from April 2018, as per the REF open access policy<sup>1</sup>. We received 113 responses to the survey, from institutions across the Transparent Approach to Costing peer groups. The full survey report will be published in early 2018.

### Summary of survey responses on deposit requirement

2. As noted in the main document (paragraph 37) the survey data shows significant progress toward the REF policy intention to increase substantially the proportion of research that is made available on an open access basis in the UK. Full analysis of the survey responses will be published in early 2018.

3. The survey sought to understand the approach institutions have taken to implementing the REF open access policy from 1 April 2016 to 1 April 2017. Over 85 per cent of institutions have implemented an institutional policy which fits the acceptance policy requirement from 1 April 2016, regardless of the flexibility in the policy for the first two years until April 2018.

4. Institutions were asked to state their preference regarding the deposit requirement after 1 April 2018. There was support from a majority (72 per cent) of respondents for the policy to retain the flexibility allowed from 1 April 2016 to 1 April 2018, by changing the policy requirement from April 2018 to allow deposit up to three months after publication.

5. Institutions cited the largely manual processes required for acceptance as the main reason for this preference, stating that tools to support acceptance are not developed enough to automate the processes. A third of these respondents said that they are meeting the requirement to deposit within three months of publication via automated systems, namely current research information systems (CRIS), which are able to ingest data from available sources. Respondents noted that for them to be able to implement acceptance, further work needs to be done to engage all stakeholders to provide the necessary provision of data for automation of this process.

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Policy for open access in the next Research Excellence Framework: Updated November 2016' (HEFCE 2016/35), [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201635/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201635/).

6. Other reasons respondents gave for publication include that it is the most pragmatic approach for institutions and will assist with policy compliance. Respondents noted that there have been issues with engaging the academic community, and the reliance on the author to be involved at the point of acceptance can be problematic. Others cited practical implementation issues such as not being able to set embargo lengths at acceptance, the ambiguity over the date of acceptance, and concerns with compliance where the lead author is from outside of the UK.
7. Approximately 20 per cent of institutions that selected a preference for deposit within three months of publication mentioned that they advocated deposit within three months of acceptance, with some suggesting that they would continue to promote a policy in relation to acceptance. Others recommended that acceptance should be implemented as the policy for the REF after REF2021.
8. Some 23 per cent of respondents stated a preference for the policy to remain as it stands, requiring deposit as soon as possible after acceptance, and no later than three months after that date. These respondents highlighted the advocacy already undertaken by institutions to promote the deposit on acceptance policy, and felt that changing the policy intent at this stage would not be helpful. Over half of the respondents noted the importance of having the author engaged in the process, and the ability to capture the author's accepted and final peer-reviewed manuscript at acceptance. Respondents mentioned that some publishers do not set embargos on author accepted manuscripts and that content can therefore be made accessible at this stage.
9. Respondents highlighted other actions that are triggered at acceptance, such as exploring the option of Gold Open Access publication with authors before publication, making sure that Research Council UK and other funder acknowledgements are included therefore ensuring compliance with other funders' requirements, and triggering workflows for research data management.
10. Some respondents who preferred a policy relating to the date of acceptance sought some level of flexibility in the policy, to allow for outputs that cannot meet the requirement.
11. Evidence collected on the tools used to identify outputs demonstrates reliance on manual workflows for outputs deposited both on acceptance and publication. While evidence shows that CRIS and other repository systems are able to ingest metadata on publication, the survey indicates that this facility is not being used universally. Institutions noted that Jisc's Publication Router will be crucial to implementing the policy on acceptance, and encouraged publishers to engage with this service.



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Nicholson House  
Lime Kiln Close  
Stoke Gifford  
Bristol BS34 8SR

tel 0117 931 7392  
email [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk)  
[www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk)

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