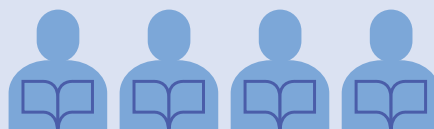


The research of **154** UK universities was assessed

They made **1,911** submissions including:

- **52,061** academic staff
- **191,150** research outputs
- **6,975** impact case studies

36 expert sub-panels reviewed the submissions, overseen by **four** main panels:



898 academic members **259** research users

The **overall quality** of submissions was judged, on average to be:

- ★★★★★ **30%** world-leading (4*)
- ★★★★ **46%** internationally excellent (3*)
- ★★★ **20%** recognised internationally (2*)
- ★ **3%** recognised nationally (1*)

Overall results

The results of the 2014 REF demonstrate the high quality and enhanced international standing of research conducted in UK universities. Through the assessment, the expert panels found:

'Excellence'

- Significant improvement was found in the quality of research since the last assessment exercise. On average across all submissions, **22% of outputs were judged world-leading (4*)**, up from 14% in the previous exercise in 2008. A further **50% were judged internationally excellent (3*)**, up from 37%.
- These increases are consistent with independent evidence about the improved performance of UK research and the views of the international members of the REF panels.
- Significant improvement was found across a broad range of universities.

'Diversity'

- Excellence was found across all types and forms of research including applied, basic, practice-based and strategic research; and in all forms of research endeavour including collaborative, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.
- Research outputs from early career researchers and staff with circumstances such as maternity leave or part-time working were rated just as highly as research from other staff.
- World-leading work remains concentrated in the most research-intensive universities and was again found in many diverse UK universities, with submissions of all sizes. Benchmarked against international standards, **three-quarters of the universities had at least 10% of their submitted work graded as world-leading (4*)**. The **top quarter had at least 30% graded as world-leading (4*)**.

'Impact'

- For the first time, the assessment provides evidence of the impact of UK research. Impressive impacts were found in all disciplines, and from many diverse UK universities with submissions of all sizes.
- On average across all submissions, **44% of impacts were judged outstanding (4*)** by over 250 external users of research, working jointly with the academic panel members. A further **40% were judged very considerable (3*)**.
- Outstanding impacts on the economy, society, culture, public policy and services, health, the environment and quality of life – within the UK and internationally – were found. These reflect universities' productive engagements with a very wide range of public, private and third sector organisations, and engagement directly with the public.

Average results for all submissions

		4*	3*	2*	1*	U
Overall quality of all the submissions was, on average:		30%	46%	20%	3%	1%
Overall quality is derived from three elements – outputs, impact and environment. They were graded, on average:	Outputs	22%	50%	24%	4%	1%
	Impact	44%	40%	13%	2%	1%
	Environment	45%	40%	13%	2%	0%

Aims of the REF

The four UK higher education funding bodies allocate about £2 billion per year of research funding to UK universities. They aim to support a dynamic and internationally competitive UK research sector that makes a major contribution to economic prosperity, national wellbeing and the expansion and dissemination of knowledge.

To distribute funds selectively on the basis of quality, the funding bodies assess universities' research through a periodic exercise. This was previously known as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), and was last conducted in 2008.

The 2014 REF replaced the RAE. It assessed the quality and impact of UK universities' research in all disciplines and the results will be used to allocate research funding from 2015-16.

How it works

The REF is a process of expert review, carried out in 36 subject-based units of assessment (UOAs).

2011-2012 Preparation

The UK funding bodies appointed the REF expert panels, consulted the sector and published the criteria and guidelines for the exercise.

2012-2013 Submissions

Each institution decided which UOAs to submit in, and prepared their submissions. Submissions were made by 29 November 2013.

2014 Assessment

Expert panels – comprising 898 academics and 259 research users – reviewed the submissions. The results were published on 18 December 2014.

Equality and diversity

Each university selected which staff to include in their submissions. To be eligible, staff needed to have been employed by the university on 31 October 2013, with an academic contract that included research responsibilities.

To support equality and diversity each university applied a code of practice on the fair and transparent selection of staff, and conducted an equality impact assessment.

Allowances were made for early career researchers and staff with other circumstances (such as maternity leave or part-time working) to be submitted with fewer outputs. Universities submitted 28% of staff with these circumstances, up from 13% in RAE 2008.

What was assessed

Outputs: 65 per cent of the overall results

Definition for the REF 'Outputs' are the product of any form of research, published between January 2008 and December 2013. They include publications such as journal articles, monographs and chapters in books, as well as outputs disseminated in other ways such as designs, performances and exhibitions.

Information provided in submissions Universities submitted up to four outputs for each member of staff they selected for inclusion in their submissions.
Submissions could request that an output of extended scale and scope be 'double-weighted' by the panel (that is, counted as two outputs in the assessment).

Assessment criteria The panels assessed the quality of outputs against the criteria of '*originality, significance and rigour*'.
The assessment was based on peer review of the outputs. Some panels considered the number of times the output had been cited, as contextual information to support peer review.

Impact: 20 per cent of the overall results

Definition for the REF 'Impact' is any effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.

Information provided in submissions Each submission included:
Impact case studies. These four-page documents described impacts that had occurred between January 2008 and July 2013. The submitting university must have produced high quality research since 1993 that contributed to the impacts. Each submission included one case study, plus an additional case study for every 10 staff.
An impact template. This document explained how the submitted unit had enabled impact from its research during the period from 2008 to 2013, and its future strategy for impact.

Assessment criteria Impact case studies were assessed in terms of the '*reach and significance*' of the impacts.
Impact templates were assessed in terms of how far the approach and strategy are conducive to achieving impacts.

Environment: 15 per cent of the overall results

Definition for the REF 'Environment' refers to the strategy, resources and infrastructure that support research.

Information provided in submissions Each submission included:
An environment template. This document describes the submitted unit's research strategy; its support for research staff and students; its research income, infrastructure and facilities; and its research collaborations and wider contributions to the discipline.
Statistical data. Universities provided data on the amount of research income they received each academic year (from 2008-09 to 2012-13) from different types of sources, and on the number of research doctoral degrees awarded in each of these years. These were based on data that institutions report annually to the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Assessment criteria The research environment was assessed in terms of its '*vitality and sustainability*'.