REF Webinar: developing policy on staff and outputs

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Introduction

• Structure
  • Identifying staff who have a significant responsibility to undertake research
  • Output portability

• Feedback
  • Webinar questions
  • Blog post comments
  • Email researchpolicy@hefce.ac.uk
REF consultation responses

• 391 responses; 147 from HEIs
• Clear consensus in many areas...
• ...but also differences of opinion
• Trade-offs in implementing the ‘Stern principles’
Research Staff and the REF

‘It is important that all academic staff who have any significant responsibility to undertake research are returned to the REF.’

• Reflecting on Stern’s key aims:
  • Address negative consequences for individual staff
  • More rounded view of research activity
Research Staff and the REF

- From the consultation responses:
  - Broad support for Stern recommendation to include ‘all staff with significant responsibility to carry out research’.
  - Proposal to use contract status alone not supported.
  - Broad support for limiting to independent researchers.
  - Strong concerns about use of cost centres to allocate to UOAs.
  - Support for weakening link between staff and submitted outputs.
  - Concern to consider E&D issues carefully.
Research Staff and the REF

• Funding bodies’ view:

  • Accept Stern’s recommendation, and aim to address negative effects
  • Staff submission has changed – about staff activity, not judgement of performance
  • No clear alternative for *easily* identifying staff with a significant responsibility to undertake research
  • Seeking to address burden concerns in developing proposals for alternative
Defining the staff pool

Our starting point

• Teaching and Research or Research-only
• Independent researcher
• Minimum of 0.2 FTE
• Substantive connection
Defining the staff pool

Submission options

• 100 per cent submission
  • UOA level
  • Avoiding additional burden

• Institutional identification of staff in scope
  • Those required to carry out research – auditable documentation where there is no expectation of this (e.g. career pathway or workload model)
  • Require agreement between institution and staff
  • Process set out in Codes of Practice
Decoupling

• Part of wider package of proposals around staff and outputs
• Average number and max to be determined
• Minimum of 1, in line with revised approach to identifying staff and in recognition of concerns about representativeness of submissions
• Measures to promote equality and diversity to include:
  • Codes of practice on applying criteria for identifying staff, and approach to output selection
  • Reductions in number of outputs required where circumstances apply
  • Data on representativeness of outputs in environment
Questions
Portability of outputs

• Stern aim to address
  • Distortion to investment incentives
  • Effects on staff recruitment and retention

• From the consultation responses
  • Significant concerns about:
    • effects of proposal
    • timing in cycle
    • practical issues of implementation
Portability of outputs

- Funding bodies’ view:
  - Understand and accept Stern recommendation that credit is given to originating institution
  - Recognise concerns raised in consultation
  - Need for transitionary arrangements
  - Subsequent engagement – hybrid models and trade off with complexity and burden
Portability of outputs

- Simplicity and low-cost implementation
  - Both originating and new institutions eligible to submit
  - Taking account of Stern’s concerns and sector responses to consultation
  - Some loss of precision
Non-portability: hybrid model

Staff member with significant responsibility for R employed on census date?

- **Y**
  - Started before academic year XY?~
    - **Y**
      - ‘Old rules’ – all outputs eligible
    - **N**
      - ‘New rules’ – all outputs made publically available while based at HEI + max. 2 from previous

- **N**
  - Staff previously employed with significant responsibility for R
    - **Y**
      - Left before academic year XY?
        - **Y**
          - ‘Old rules’ – no outputs eligible
        - **N**
          - ‘New rules’ – all outputs made publically available while based at HEI*
    - **N**
      - ‘Old rules’ – no outputs eligible

~ To avoid lost outputs, transition window likely where both institutions can claim

*For staff employed prior to AY XY, + all prior outputs
Questions
Next steps

• Further feedback, comments, questions:
  • Blog posts
  • Email researchpolicy@hefce.ac.uk

• Further discussion, evidence and modelling
• Initial decisions on these issues – autumn

• Other aspects of the REF
  • Initial decisions: part I
  • Sub-panel chair recruitment
  • Detailed policy development
Thank you for listening

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