Institutional-Level Assessment in REF

ARMA, York, 18/09/19
Kim Hackett, REF Director

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Why?

From Stern:

• We should reward those institutions which have a dynamic and creative research environment, a vision and direction for their research and related activities, and a plan to deliver impact through their research.

• Some of these aspects of environment reflect the strategy, support and actions of the institution as a whole.

• Creating a new, dual level, Environment template should reduce the amount of duplication currently presented in the multiple individual submissions at Unit of Assessment level

• Having an institutional-level environment statement would provide a more holistic view of the HEI, allowing the REF to capture institution-wide strategic objectives and cross-cutting structures and initiatives.

• In order to enable the sub-panels to assess the research environment of the Unit of Assessment, they should each be provided with a copy of the relevant Institutional Environment statement so that they can understand the context for each unit’s research environment
What?

Consult on Stern  Consider feedback  Set out decisions
Consultation responses – opportunities and concerns

• will allow the submitting unit to focus on unit-specific support within the institutional context and explain how the unit implements institution-wide policy frameworks
• reduce duplication and increases consistency
• concerns about incorporating into outcomes - could lead to the masking of ‘pockets’ of excellence (and weakness) within an institution
• pilot required to look at interaction
• may favour some institution types
• late stage of cycle
• widespread support for an institutional section in the unit-level template
What?

Decisions

• Introduce an institutional-level element to the environment at UOA level

• Pilot the discrete assessment of the institutional-level environment section
  • not formally assessed in 2021
  • Inform inclusion of aspect in next assessment exercise
How?

Draft guidance and criteria
Consultation
Final guidance and criteria
Pilot guidance and criteria
How?

Draft guidance on submissions:

• REF5a: Institutional-level statement. One per HEI, to be appended to the unit-level environment template and will be taken into account by the sub-panel when assessing the unit-level template. Exception for HEIs submitting in one UOA only.

• REF5b: Unit-level template, one per submission.

• 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.
How?

Consultation feedback:

• More clarity on sub-panel assessment and relationship between 5a and 5b
• Support for small & specialists to optionally return REF5a
• Increase word limits
• More guidance on REF5a template
• Greater clarity sought on pilot
• Support expressed, including on indicators (with some Qs)
Final guidance and criteria:
• Word limits increased
• REF5a optional for small & specialist submitting in one UOA only
• Further description of SP assessment and cross-referencing between statements
REF5a in REF 2021

• Statements will be appended to REF5b unit-level submissions for panel review
• Material should not be repeated, but statements should cross-refer
• Will inform and contextualise assessment of unit-level – won’t be separately scored for REF 2021
• REF5a optional for small & specialist submitting in one UOA only
• Separate pilot of the *standalone assessment* of the institutional-level environment
REF 2021

Institutional-Level Environment Pilot – ARMA
York, 18/09/19
Dr Rosa Scoble – Pilot panel member
Panel

- Chair: Professor Chris Day – VC Newcastle University.
- Panel members recruited through EOI:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor John Cattell</td>
<td>Historic England</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Stephen Conway</td>
<td>University of Oxford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Nandini Das</td>
<td>University of Liverpool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Michael Fitzpatrick</td>
<td>Coventry University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Sir Barry Ife</td>
<td>Guildhall School of Music and Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Andrew Jones</td>
<td>City, University of London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Linda King</td>
<td>Oxford Brookes University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Fiona Lettice</td>
<td>University of East Anglia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Dewi Lewis</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Weiru Liu</td>
<td>University of Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Ruth Northway</td>
<td>University of South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Mark Ormerod</td>
<td>Keele University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Murray Pittock</td>
<td>University of Glasgow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Michael Rayner</td>
<td>University of the Highlands and Islands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Rosa Scoble</td>
<td>Brunel University London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Martin Tillotson</td>
<td>University of Leeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Alisdair Wotherspoon</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Dianne Berry (Observer)</td>
<td>University of Reading</td>
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Development of ILEPP’s guidance

• Panel met November 2018 to set framework for guidance, criteria and working methods, and consider the evaluation framework.
• Draft guidance published April 2019
• Sector workshops May 2019: To get views of the sector, on guidance, benefit and burden: good representation and engagement.
• Feedback on the day and circa 25 written responses.
  • Summary in final guidance (Annex C)
• Panel met June 2019 to review consultation feedback and agree changes
• Guidance published September 2019
Key issues from consultation

• Positive views...
  • Will give focus to institutional activities
  • Drives engagement between institution and unit activities

• However...
  • Some reservations about added burden – recognise that may reduce for future
  • Lack of clarity about the pilot and inclusion of institutional template (REF5a) in sub-panel assessment
  • Concerns about cross referencing and avoidance of duplication
  • Significant concerns about use of TRAC clusters
  • Pilot guidance too detailed and prescriptive
  • Some concerns around REF4 data, word limits and weighting
Guidance and Criteria following consultation
Assessment criteria

• Same criteria of vitality and sustainability as unit-level assessment.

• **Vitality**: will be understood as the extent to which the institution promotes and facilitates a thriving, inclusive and collaborative research culture, and enables impact within research units. This should be based on a clearly articulated and overarching strategy for research and enabling its impact across the institution.

• **Sustainability**: will be understood as the extent to which the research environment ensures the future health, diversity, wellbeing and wider contribution of the institution and its research units, including investment in people and infrastructure.
Sections, weighting and word limits

• Submission requirements for REF5a:
  • Context and mission: *Provides context to the submission and is not scored.*
    • Other three sections equally weighted
  • Strategy
  • People
  • Income, infrastructure and facilities

• Word limits for submissions based on FTE category A staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Category A submitted staff returned by institution (FTE)</th>
<th>Word limit for environment statement (REF5a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 99.99</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 499.99</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 – 999.99</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 or more</td>
<td>5,500</td>
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Data

• Panel receive data from REF4a/b/c (and standard analyses) aggregated to IL institution.
• The panel will **NOT** use clustering in the pilot assessment
• The panel will undertake *post hoc* analyses of outcomes, to identify trends and patterns in the results, to inform its recommendations.
Assessment

- Calibration prior to assessment; ongoing monitoring and moderation
- Submissions read and scored by three members: min one with REF experience.
- Research users advise on a range of submissions.
- The panel judge each submission on its own merits.
- Quality profile using standard REF 4* model
- Will not inform overall sub-profiles, but will inform pilot panel recommendations
Integration with Unit-level

• **Working:**
  • No cross membership between the pilot panel and the main and sub-panels.
  • The panel chair will meet with the main and advisory panel chairs for coordination
  • No discussion of individual submissions or assessments.

• **Assessment:**
  • The panel will undertake triangulation with published environment sub-profiles
  • The panel will also review a sample of HEIs’ UL environment submissions
  • The panel will not be able to conclude until after publication of the REF results
Recommendations and feedback

• The panel will make a recommendation whether and how IL assessment included for future exercises.

• Individual HEI scores not published
  • Scores (anonymised) used to support recommendations.

• Narrative feedback provided to heads of institutions

• Individual scores will not be provided to institutions
  • Pilot is to assess of viability of IL assessment not assessment of HEIs
Guidance for institutions (Annex A)

- *Annex reduced in length following feedback.*
- Issues for institutions to consider in submissions include:
  - Size, structure and mission.
  - Local context, research focus and disciplinary spread.
  - Progress, strategic aims and plans for future.
  - Support for impact and engagement within and outside academia.
  - Staffing strategy and support for staff and students
  - Commitment to equality and diversity
  - Strategies for generating research income.
  - Infrastructure and resources and in-kind funding
  - Open research
  - Support for interdisciplinary research
Indicators for the IL environment

• Institutions use indicators relevant to their own context.
  • Consider principles (and measures) developed by Forum for Responsible Research Metrics.

• Key areas:
  • Recruitment by age profile;
  • Professors and senior staff by equalities characteristic;
  • Gender pay gap
  • IL commitment to staff support and progression.
    • Accreditations can support submissions but these are NOT requirements.
    • e.g.’s: Athena Swann; Race Equality Charter; HR Excellence in Research; Stonewall Equality Index