

Submitting practice research outputs to REF2021:

Key guidance from 'Guidance on Submissions' and 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods' documents

WHAT KINDS OF RESEARCH CAN BE SUBMITTED?

For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as **a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared**. (GoS, Annex C, 1)

An underpinning principle of the REF is that for each discipline all types of research and **all forms of research output shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis** [...] across the spectrum of applied, practice, basic and strategic research, (PCWM, 43)

All forms of output, in any language, will be considered equitably, with no distinction being made between the type of research or form of output submitted. The sub-panels will neither advantage nor disadvantage any type of research or form of output. (PCWM, 206)

Outputs can be submitted under the following categories: artefact, authored book, chapter in book, composition, conference contribution, confidential report for an external body, design, devices and products, digital or visual media, edited book, exhibition, journal article, patent/published patent application, performance, research data sets and databases, research report for an external body, scholarly edition, software, translation, website content, working paper, other (including but not limited to creative bodies of enquiry, design processes, multi-platform projects, creative writing collection, a collection of creative and/or critical work) (GoS, Annex K)

It is not unusual for an output submitted to the sub-panels in Main Panel D to encompass a number of different output types [...] . Submitting institutions should select a single output type, and the panel will judge the research content of the material submitted regardless of the classification. (PCWM, 210)

HOW WILL IT BE ASSESSED?

The sub-panels will assess the quality of submitted research outputs in terms of their '**originality, significance and rigour**'. (GoS, 26.a)

Originality will be understood as the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. Research outputs that demonstrate originality may do one or more of the following: produce and interpret new empirical findings or new material; engage with new and/or complex problems; develop innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques; show imaginative and creative scope; provide new arguments and/or new forms of expression, formal innovations, interpretations and/or insights; collect and engage with novel types of data; and/or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice, and new forms of expression. (PCWM, 191)

Significance will be understood as the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice. (PCWM, 192)

Rigour will be understood as the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies. (PCWM, 193)

HOW SHOULD RESEARCH BE SUBMITTED?

For **outputs where the role of the researcher or the research process is not evident in the submitted output**, submitting units have the following options in choosing how best to present the output (irrespective of the classification):

- As a single item, with a 300-word supporting statement.
- As a multi-component output, with a 300-word supporting statement.
- As a single item, supported by contextual information (previously called a 'portfolio'). Both the item and the contextual information may include moving image, sonic, visual or other digital media or written text, as appropriate, to enable the panel to access the research dimensions of the work and to assess its significance, originality and rigour. The 300-word statement should be used to indicate what is the output and what is the contextual information.
- As a multi-component output, supported by contextual information (previously called a 'portfolio') [...] (PCWM, 265)

The material submitted should provide sufficient information to allow the panel to assess the **research process** (the question and/or issues being explored, the process of discovery, methods and/or methodologies, the creative and/or intellectual context or literature review upon which the work draws, or challenges or critiques), **research insights** (the findings, discoveries or creative outcomes of that process), and **time and manner of dissemination** (how and where the insights or discoveries were 'effectively shared'). (PCWM, 266 and Annex C)

There will be many outputs that will meet the REF definition of research as "a process of investigation, leading to new insights effectively shared" without the need for additional information, and these may include examples of creative practice. (PCWM, 269)

The **format for the presentation of outputs** (irrespective of their classification) is flexible, within the requirement to limit the format either to an electronic submission which is submitted via the REF submission system either as a URL, DOI, or by uploading a PDF; or as physical material which is sent to the REF team, and which may include digital/electronic material on a media storage device e.g. USB. An individual output cannot be submitted both electronically via the REF submission system and as a physical output. (PCWM, 268)

The following characteristics might apply [...] to the research effort associated with a **double-weighted output**:

- the production of a longer-form output (e.g. book, long-duration creative work or multi-component output) demonstrating sustained research effort
- the generation of an extended or complex piece of research
- the collection and analysis of a large body of material
- the use of primary sources which were extended, complex or difficult to access
- the presentation of a critical insight or argument which was dependent upon the completion of a lengthy period of data collection or investigation of materials
- the undertaking of a complex, extended and/or multi-layered process of creative investigation (individual or collective)
- the investigation of a given theme in considerable depth, from different perspectives, and/or in relation to different contexts. (PCWM, 246)