

# Initial views on REF timetable

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# REF 2021

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# Introduction

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## Purpose of webinar and survey

- Considerations around key options for:
  - submission deadline
  - broad approach to taking account of effects on impact
- Seek initial input to inform development

## Q&A

- Sessions included later on
- Publish further FAQs early next week

## Survey

- Avenue through which we're collecting views on these issues

# Overview

## REF submission deadline

Question we're asking

Funding bodies' position

Review of the options

Approach to decisions

Q&A

## Approach to mitigating effects on impact submissions

Question we're asking

Funding bodies' position

Review of the options

Approach to decisions

Q&A

Break in between, and will cover further evidence and information we're seeking at the end

# Submission deadline

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- Evidence on range of ways in which submissions were being affected
- REF put on hold on 24 March; 27 Nov 2020 submission deadline no longer applies
- Census date for staff (31 July 2020) remains in place
- Will provide eight months' notice of new deadline
- In addition to revised deadline, some details of framework will need adapting to take account of effects of Covid-19

# Question 1: submission deadline

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At this point in time, what is your preference for the revised REF submission deadline?

- A. A single deadline, by 31 March 2021
  - B. A phased deadline, starting with staff & outputs in March 2021
  - C. A delay of six months or more for all aspects
  - D. Other (please specify)
- Please provide a brief rationale for your answer (350 words)

# What is the funding bodies' current view on this?

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- Framing position: assessment of the original period + take account of effects
- Recognise uncertainty is difficult
- Want consultation to take place when have fuller picture, & right decisions can be taken
- Timescale for short delay is challenging in this regard
- No easy answers or perfect solution, but have heard clear arguments either way – seeking to understand more about these

# Criteria

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- Robust assessment, that carries the confidence of the sector
- Meets the principles of the REF – equality, equity and transparency
- Minimises additional burden (and seeks to reduce it, where possible)
- Can take account of affected areas of submissions

# What would the exercise look like with a single deadline in March?



# What are alternative approaches?

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- A single deadline, six months or more after the original deadline:
  - Intermediate: AY 20/21 (between May and July 21)
  - Later: AY 21/22 (From Aug 21)
- In either case, funding informed in full from 23/24 on
- Phased deadline:
  - Staff & outputs submitted first (e.g. by March 2021)
  - Followed by other elements – discussion needed on timing and sequence, but likely to allow funding to be informed for 22/23

# What are the benefits & challenges of the March single deadline?

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## Benefits

- Building on existing preparation work – minimal additional activity
- Proximity to census date / assessment periods
- Momentum / 'getting on with it' / not starting again
- Funding informed according to original timetable

## Challenges

- Decisions before extent of disruption known & consultation during disruption period – need to revise again?
- Timing with HEI cycles
- 4 months may not be sufficient for all disciplines and HEI types, for all elements
- May have uneven effects – different HEI types, equality & diversity

# What are the benefits & challenges of a longer single deadline?

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## Benefits

- More time to understand extent of disruption – a more stable date
- Longer recovery period for HEIs
- Longer period for development & consultation
- More familiar timetable (in AY 21/22 option)

## Challenges

- Assessment further away from census date / assessment periods
- Prolonged preparation period: new priorities + may increase burden
- Resourcing issues around temporary staff
- Informs funding in full a year later

# What are the benefits & challenges of a phased deadline?

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## Benefits

- Accounts for differing effects on elements
- Maintains momentum
- Longer period for development & consultation around impact
- Likely to inform funding on original timescale

## Challenges

- Requires some decisions before extent of disruption known
- Complexity in submission & assessment process
- Timing with HEI cycles
- Delay period may not be sufficient for all cases

# When and how will decisions be taken?

- The views gathered through the online survey will inform the funding bodies' decision as to whether an early single deadline (by 31 March 2021) is feasible.
- In addition to considering the weight of opinion in favour of each option, the funding bodies will consider the strength of the arguments put forward.
- The funding bodies will assess this against the criteria for revising the exercise, in taking their decision.
- We will seek to announce outcomes in late May.
- Will include further details about next steps.

# How should views be given?

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- Through the online survey, available on the REF website: [ref.ac.uk](https://ref.ac.uk)
- Will gather brief details about the respondent, and includes the two questions covered in this webinar
- Deadline for responses: noon, 5 May 2020
- Q&A: publish answers on Monday 27 April to any additional FAQs received by noon, Friday 24 April (to [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk))
- Details later on about feeding in views on issues not covered in this webinar

# Questions



# Break



# What issues are facing impact submissions?

## Evidence

- Evidence gathering and corroboration from key bodies

## Impact arising

- Planned activity, esp international / cultural / educational settings

## Writing up

- Resourcing issues for case study authors

## Question 2: impact

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The end of the assessment period for impact is 31 July 2020. Which of the following options would you prefer as an initial step towards taking account of the effects of Covid-19 on impact submissions?

- A. Universal extension to the assessment period for impact to the 31 December 2020.
  - B. Keep 31 July 2020 in place as the end of the assessment period, but ensure a case-by-case mitigation route for individual, affected case studies that have been delayed past this point.
  - C. Other (please specify) 50 words
- Please provide a brief rationale for your answer (max 350 words):

# What would each option look like?

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## Universal extension

- 31 December 2020 would become the new date for the end of the assessment period for impact
- Any submitting unit may include examples of impacts arising up until this new date, irrespective of the effects of Covid-19
- May need to work alongside further mitigations for impact submissions

## Case-by-case

- Allow submission of case studies with impact arising past 31 July where planned impact / activities affected by / responding to Covid-19
- Various ways this could operate – full details would need discussion
- May need to work alongside further mitigations for impact submissions

# What's the funding bodies' current view on this?

- Focus still on same period, but want to take due account of effects on submissions
- Evidence on effects on impact – suggests widespread, and some significant
- Aware of some support for extending deadline in view of this
- Want to understand more about arguments for and against as broad approach to mitigating effects
- End of period in view, and understand need for clarity soon

# What are the benefits & challenges of a universal extension to 31 Dec?

	Benefits	Challenges
Universal extension	Simplicity, in view of possible scale of affected material	Potential to generate more work
31 December 2020	In REF 2021 assessment window, and aligns with end of publication period	May not help in many cases

May also need to look at combining extension (whether universal, or case-by-case) with additional mitigations

# What other mitigations could be considered?

Area	Mitigations
Impact arising / impact activities	Additional statement
Gathering evidence	Postponement of submission deadline  Amend requirements for up front evidence submission (deadline, audit, etc)
Writing up	Postponement of submission deadline

- Issues around reductions
- Beginning stages of developing this, and want to engage further

# When and how will decisions be taken?

- The views gathered through the online survey will inform the funding bodies' decision as to whether to make a universal extension to the impact deadline.
- In addition to considering the weight of opinion in favour of each option, the funding bodies will consider the strength of the arguments put forward.
- The funding bodies will assess this against the criteria for revising the exercise, in taking their decision.
- We will seek to announce outcomes in late May.
- Further details about next steps will also be provided.

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# Questions



# Further views & evidence

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- There are issues to consider in relation to other aspects of the exercise
- Will be seeking to engage on these issues in period ahead
- Welcome further views and evidence to inform position and options development
- Particular areas we welcome views on include:
  - Further options for taking account of effects on impact submissions
  - The extent to which planned outputs are affected, and are not expected to appear on time
  - Any equality and diversity issues arising for submission preparation in the context of Covid-19

# Further information

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- Contact: [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk)
- Further Q&A available next week on the REF website:  
[ref.ac.uk](http://ref.ac.uk)