

Research Excellence Framework 2028: issues for further consultation following initial decisions

Overview



The four UK higher education funding bodies (Research England, SFC, HEFCW and DfE NI) are publishing key decisions on the high-level design of the next research assessment exercise and outlining issues for further consultation. These decisions represent a shift towards a broader and more holistic approach to research assessment.

This survey is hosted by Research England (part of UKRI) on behalf of the four UK funding bodies. The survey is available to download below as PDF (in both English and Welsh). Please only respond to the consultation using the survey.

See the full initial decisions document, annexes and supporting documents: [<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme/initial-decisions> <<https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jisc.ac.uk%2Ffuture-research-assessment-programme%2Finitial-decisions&data=05%7C01%7CNatascha.Klein%40re.ukri.org%7C4c75d2e575b74ce1a43608db6c1f049d%7C8bb7e08edaa44a8e927efca38db04b7e%7C0%7C0%7C638;>]

Following the publication of these initial decisions, further work is required to develop the more detailed guidance and criteria. This survey is asking for your input on specific policy aspects. Please see Annex A of the initial decisions document for details.

Personal Details

The responses to this consultation will be considered by the boards (or equivalent) of the funding bodies in late-2023. Further decisions on the high-level design of REF 2028 will be announced in Winter 2023.

We will commit to read, record and analyse responses to this consultation in a consistent manner. For reasons of practicality, usually a fair and balanced summary of responses rather than the individual responses themselves will inform any decisions made. In most cases the merit of the arguments made is likely to be given more weight than the number of times the same point is made. The funding bodies reserve the right to take into account the nature of the respondent in our weighting of the analysis.

All responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the relevant Freedom of Information Acts across the UK. The Acts give a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case the four UK funding bodies. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. We have a responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means that responses to this consultation are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. For further information about the Acts see the Information Commissioner's Office website, <https://ico.org.uk/> <<https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fico.org.uk%2F&data=05%7C01%7CNatascha.Klein%40re.ukri.org%7C96fc5abd72af4089fd8008db6c24d6f3%7C8bb7e08edaa44a8e927efca38db04b7e%7C0%7C0%7C638;> or, in Scotland, the website of the Scottish Information Commissioner, <https://www.itpublicknowledge.info/home/ScottishInformationCommissioner.aspx> <<https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.itpublicknowledge.info%2FHome%2FScottishInformationCommissioner.aspx&data=05%7C01%7CNatascha.Klein%40re.ukri.org%7C96fc5abd72af4089fd8008db6c24d6f3%7C8bb7e08edaa44a8e927efca38db04b7e%7C0%7C0%7C638;>

1 What is your name?

Name *(Required)*

2 What is your email address?

Email *(Required)*

3 What is your organisation/institution?

Organisation/Institution *(Required)*

4 Are you answering on behalf of your organisation/institution or as an individual?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- Individual
- Organisation/Institution

Volume Measure

The funding bodies propose to draw staff data directly from HESA to calculate the volume measure, using an average staff FTE over Academic Years (AYs) 25/26 and 26/27 (piloted in AY 24/25) (Annex A, paragraphs 4-7).

5 What practical challenges may institutions face in implementing these changes?

6 How might the funding bodies mitigate against these challenges?

7 What would be the impact of these changes on individual researchers and particularly those with protected characteristics or other underrepresented groups?

Details of protected characteristics can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics> <<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>>

Output Submission

The funding bodies propose to fully break the link between individual staff members and unit submissions (Annex A, paragraphs 12-18).

8 What would be the impact of these changes on individual researchers and particularly those with protected characteristics or other underrepresented groups?

Details of protected characteristics can be found at:

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9 What impact would these changes have on institutions in preparing output submissions? For example, what may be the unintended consequences of allowing the submission of outputs produced by those on non-academic or teaching-only contracts?

10 Should outputs sole-authored by postgraduate research students be eligible for submission? If so, should this include PhD theses?

11 What would be appropriate indicators of a demonstrable and substantive link to the submitting institution?

12 Do the proposed arrangements for co-authored outputs strike the right balance between supporting collaboration and ensuring that assessment focuses on the work of the unit?

13 Are there any further considerations around co-authored outputs that need be taken into account?

Impact Case Studies

The funding bodies propose to reduce the minimum number of impact case studies required to one. They also propose to revise the boundaries, including splitting the lowest boundary (Annex A, paragraph 33-37). The funding bodies are particularly keen to hear the views of institutions with small units.

14 What will be the impact of reducing the minimum number to one?

15 What will be the impact of revising the thresholds between case study requirements?

16 To what extent do you support weighting the impact statement on a sliding scale in proportion to the number of case studies submitted?

Unit of Assessment

The funding bodies propose to retain the REF 2021 Unit of Assessment structure (Annex B). The funding bodies invite views from disciplinary communities and institutions on any disciplinary developments since REF 2021 that would require changes to be made to the UOA structure.

- 17** If the UOA structure is relevant to you/your organisation, please indicate clearly any changes that you propose to the UOA structure and provide your rationale and any evidence to support your proposal.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The funding bodies intend to retain the statements on Covid impact that were used in REF 2021, and to require some consideration of how Covid impacts have been addressed in output selection as part of Codes of Practice.

- 18** What is your view on the proposed measures to take into account the impact of the Covid pandemic?

- 19** What other measures should the funding bodies consider to take into account the impact of the Covid pandemic?

Cymraeg in HEFCW

Welsh and English are the official languages of Wales. HEFCW treats the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality in the conduct of its public business in Wales. We recognise the important role higher education (HE) has in fulfilling the Welsh Government's vision for a bilingual Wales.

- 20** What positive or adverse effects will the proposals have on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

21 Could the proposals be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?