

Exploring Options for Future Research Assessment

23 June 2021



REF and open research

- Open access requirements introduced in REF 2021
- Section in environment template on how the unit is 'progressing towards an open research environment'

However:

- OA requirements currently apply to limited set of outputs
- Focus on outputs, along with criteria of 'originality, significance and rigour', seen to discourage investment in open research e.g. open datasets



REF and research integrity

Section on research integrity in environment statement

However:

- Pressure on individuals to publish high volumes of research and in 'top journals'
- Null results not published as not seen as 'REFable'
- REF results reward novelty – no incentive to replicate studies

Future Research Assessment Programme

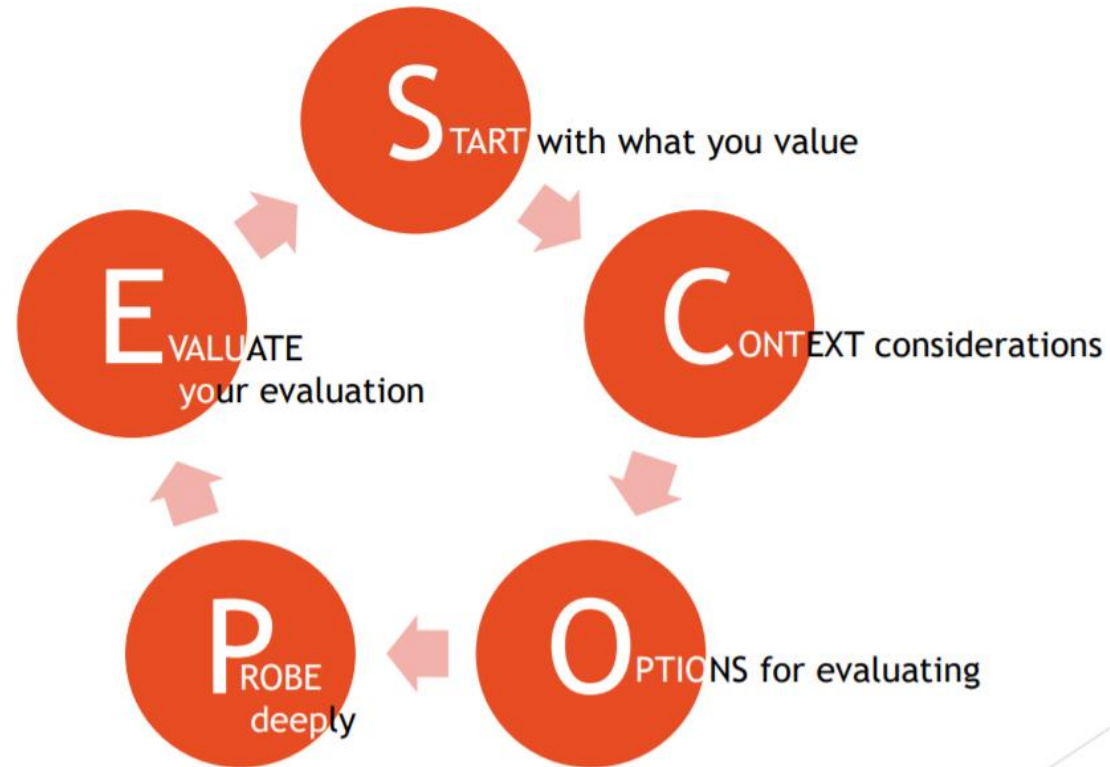
- Programme launched by the four UK Higher Education Funding Bodies in May 2021
- Overseen by the four funding bodies with advice from an international advisory group, chaired by Sir Peter Gluckman
- Aims to investigate possible approaches to the evaluation of research performance in the UK that can:
 - encourage and strengthen the emphasis on delivering excellent research and impact,
 - support a positive research culture,
 - while simplifying and reducing the administrative burden on the HE sector.



Future Research Assessment Programme

- Four complementary strands:
 - Learning the lessons from REF 2021. Evaluation package, including ongoing work, independent analyses and consultation with stakeholders.
 - Understanding international practice in national research assessment. What is done elsewhere, what works well? How the does UK system look from the outside?
 - Developing alternative models and enhanced approaches to research assessment. What are the alternatives including radical change and more evolutionary options?
 - Listening to views, concerns and perspectives on national research evaluation from a range of stakeholders. How are the different approaches received? What will the consequences be for the UK research system?

SCOPE: 5 stages for doing evaluation responsibly



<https://inorms.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/scope.pdf>

Parameters

Why are we evaluating?
Do we need to evaluate at all?

- There will continue to be a system for assessing the excellence of HE research in the UK
- Any future system will need to:
 - enable the selective **allocation** of funding for research
 - provide **accountability** for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment
- And it will continued to be governed by the underpinning principles of equity, equality, and transparency

What should be assessed?

1. What characterises an excellent research system? What elements are required to allow UK research and researchers to thrive?

- Inputs (strong talent pipeline, diversity of researchers)
- Activities (rigorous research methods, collaboration)
- Outputs (full diversity of output types)
- Outcomes & impact (e.g. significant positive impact at local, national and international levels)

2. Which of these elements should be recognised and rewarded in a national research assessment exercise?

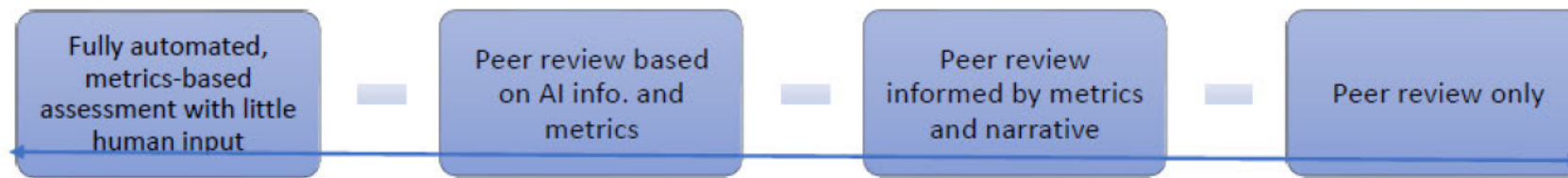
Discussion questions

1. What impact does the current REF have on supporting research integrity and open research?
2. What do you think is needed to support research integrity and open research in the future?
3. How could a national assessment system better recognise and reward practices relating to research integrity and open research?
4. What elements of the research system should a future exercise assess e.g. should research activities be included or should it continue to focus on outputs and impact?

How should research be assessed?

- What are the features of a healthy research assessment system?
(e.g. equitable approach, transparent criteria and processes, proportionate burden)
- What is required in order to recognise and reward those elements we want to see in the research system?
- How do we 'evaluate with the evaluated'?





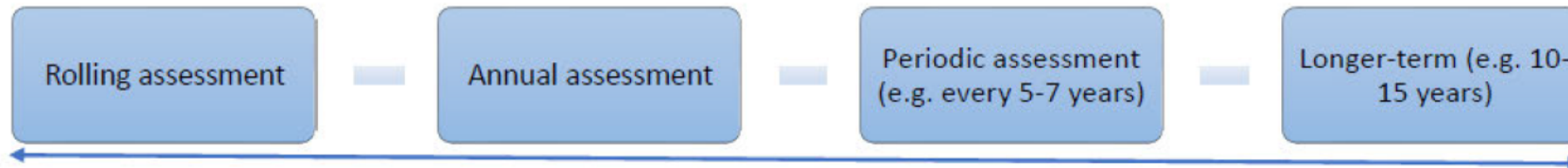
Automation



Centralisation (of requirements/criteria and submission elements)



Granularity



Frequency

Models to stimulate discussion

- ▶ Evolution of current system
- ▶ Metrics-based approach
- ▶ Performance agreements/self-evaluation
- ▶ Résumé for research organisations

NOT a shortlist!

Key questions

- Which approaches might best support the recognition and reward of practices relating to research integrity and open research?
- Which approaches might unintentionally create barriers or perverse incentives?
- What groups might this system discriminate against?
- Which approaches might reduce burden on institutions and researchers?

