



[Redacted]

2 October 2023

Dear [Redacted],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00665

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 4 September in which you requested the following:

Your request:

My FOI request relates to the consultation regarding the proposals for REF 2028. It is stated on the UKRI website that: "These modifications come after a full two years of activities during which the UK higher education funding bodies, as part of the Future Research Assessment Programme<<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme>> (FRAP), reviewed how national research assessment is carried out in the UK. They include wide consultation with the sector, such as roundtable events and two written consultations, and a number of commissioned evidence reports and analyses." I would like to understand the details of the consultation process, specifically:

- 1. Who was invited to take part in these consultations and roundtables? Please provide full details of who was eligible to take part in the consultations and roundtables, how they were made aware of the consultations and roundtables and the time period over which the consultations took place and the number of roundtables and when they occurred.*
- 2. Please provide details of who responded to the consultations and attended the roundtables, including how many people took part.*
- 3. Please provide the materials sent to participants in the written consultations, the questions asked, and the expected format of responses.*
- 4. Please provide any materials distributed to attendees at the roundtables and presentation materials used at the roundtables.*
- 5. Please provide any reports or analysis generated as a result of these consultations.*

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold information relevant to your request. Please see the information below and attached.

Some of the information you have requested is publicly available and we have included links to this information where this is the case. Details of sector engagement during the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) are outlined in the [Summary of stakeholder engagements¹](#) document on the FRAP website. This is attached here as Appendix 1, and this document, and annexes, are referred to in the responses below.

- 1. Who was invited to take part in these consultations and roundtables? Please provide full details of who was eligible to take part in the consultations and roundtables, how they were made aware of the consultations and roundtables and the time period over which the consultations took place and the number of roundtables and when they occurred.**

In June 2021, a series of early engagement events were held. These included a large-scale virtual event for around 140 Pro-Vice Chancellors (or equivalent) (27 May 2021), a series of meetings with research users (29

¹ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/91811/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>
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September and 23 November 2021), and focused roundtable discussions on the following themes: Supporting Early Career Researchers (14 June 2021) (Appendix 2), Supporting diverse research roles (16 June 2021) (Appendix 3), Supporting diverse researchers (17 June 2021) (Appendix 4), Supporting a dynamic research system with socio-economic impact (21 June 2021) (Appendix 5), Supporting rigorous and open research (23 June 2021) (Appendix 6), and Supporting diverse research contributions (24 June 2021) (Appendix 7).

Participants for the roundtables were invited via different routes. For the Pro-Vice Chancellor event, representatives from all UK HEIs were invited. Early career researchers were recruited via UKRI's ECR Forum; industry representatives were invited via the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB); others via nominations from national academies, learned societies, and representative organisations e.g. the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA).

Feedback on REF 2021 was gathered through two surveys. From November 2021 until 26 January 2022 a survey was launched inviting feedback on the REF 2021 exercise from all participating institutions. Heads of institutions in England were informed via a circular letter sent by [email²](#) (Appendix 8); similar letters were sent by the other funding bodies to institutions in the devolved nations.

A parallel survey, running on the same timeframe, was carried out to gather feedback on REF 2021 from individuals. The summary was open to 'any individuals with an interest in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021'. A summary of the questions and responses can be found in the Annex B of the Summary of stakeholder engagements available on the FRAP website [here³](#) (also Appendix 1). The survey was promoted via the FRAP webpages and social media accounts of the four funding bodies.

The consultation on the design of the UK's future research assessment system (FRAP consultation) (Appendix 9) was an open consultation, open to 'any organisation, group or individual with an interest in the conduct, quality, funding or use of research'. The consultation was open from 22 February until 6 May 2022. The consultation was announced on Funding Body websites, for example as a news item on the [UKRI website⁴](#), and via their social media accounts. Heads of institutions in England were informed via a circular letter sent by [email⁵](#) (Appendix 10); similar letters were sent by the other funding bodies to institutions in the devolved nations. The consultation was promoted through online 'town hall' events on 22 March and 6 April. During the time period when the consultation was open, it was also advertised on the [FRAP website⁶](#).

2. Please provide details of who responded to the consultations and attended the roundtables, including how many people took part.

We received 105 responses to the survey inviting feedback on the REF 2021 exercise from all participating institutions. A summary of these responses can be found in Annex A of the Summary of stakeholder engagements available on the FRAP website [here⁷](#) (Appendix 1).

721 responses were received to the survey gathering feedback from individuals on REF 2021. A summary of stakeholder engagements is available on the FRAP website [here⁸](#) (Appendix 1).

280 responses were received to the FRAP consultation. A summary of the responses is available in Annex C of the Summary of stakeholder engagements available on the FRAP website [here⁹](#) (Appendix 1).

We are unable to provide the exact number of attendees who attended each of the roundtables as we no longer hold this information. Apart from the larger-scale event for Pro-Vice Chancellors, most roundtables had 10-15 attendees.

3. Please provide the materials sent to participants in the written consultations, the questions asked, and the expected format of responses.

² <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/RE-021221-CircularLetter-FeedbackREF2021.pdf>

³ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9181/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/news/funding-bodies-launch-consultation-on-future-research-assessment/>

⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/publications/consultation-on-the-uks-future-research-assessment-system/>

⁶ <https://beta.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme>

⁷ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9181/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>

⁸ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9181/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>

⁹ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9181/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>

The attached circular letter relating to the REF 2021 feedback survey (Appendix 8) contains the survey questions as an annex. Responses were submitted as Word or PDF documents via email to researchpolicy@re.ukri.org.

The survey gathering feedback from individuals on REF 2021 was completed via an online form. The questions can be found in Annex B of the Summary of stakeholder engagements available on the FRAP website [here](#)¹⁰(Appendix 1).

The FRAP consultation document is attached (Appendix 9); this document provides details of the consultation and questions. Responses were submitted via an online form.

4. Please provide any materials distributed to attendees at the roundtables and presentation materials used at the roundtables.

No materials were sent to attendees in advance of the Roundtables. The presentations delivered at the events are attached (Appendices 2 – 7).

5. Please provide any reports or analysis generated as a result of these consultations.

The following report was produced following these consultations: the [Summary of stakeholder engagements](#)¹¹; located on the FRAP website (Appendix 1).

Exempt information

Some information has been redacted from the documents provided as it involves personal data. The names and signatures of individuals contained within some of the attached documents, as well as names of individuals who took part in consultations and round tables are considered to be personal data and exempt under section 40(2) of the FOIA. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance


Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

¹⁰ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9181/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>

¹¹ <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/9181/1/REF2028-research-excellence-framework-2028.pdf>