

Circular letter

Feedback on REF 2021

To	Vice-Chancellor or Principal
Reference	RE-CL-2021-12
Publication date	2 December 2021
Enquiries to	General queries to researchpolicy@re.ukri.org

Dear Vice-Chancellor or Principal

Feedback on REF 2021

1. We are writing with an invitation to provide feedback on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.
2. The UK higher education funding bodies are inviting feedback from a strategic perspective on the REF from all institutions that participated in the exercise. This feedback will form a core part of our understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of the exercise, and will enable us to identify where refinements may be made in future. In addition to gathering this formal feedback, we will seek wider sector views through an online survey aimed at individuals and representative bodies. This survey draws on the findings of the 'Understanding perceptions of the Research Excellence Framework among UK researchers' report (<https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8542/1/understanding-perceptions-of-the-research-excellence-framework-among-uk-researchers.pdf>) and seeks to understand how widely the views expressed are shared across the research community.
3. Feedback received will feed into the Future Research Assessment Programme, launched by the funding bodies in May 2021. Further information about the Programme can be found here: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme>.



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4. At this stage we are seeking feedback from higher education institutions that participated in REF 2021 only, and request that only one response is made per institution. Your response should be returned by noon on 26 January 2022 using the following link: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme>. A response template is provided at Annex A to guide institutions where this is found helpful. **Please limit your response to 4 pages.**

5. The funding bodies also wish to understand how individuals within the wider research community have experienced REF 2021. To this end, we have launched an online survey (<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme/individual-feedback-survey-on-the-ref-2021>). We would be grateful if you could draw this to the attention of relevant staff (researchers and those in research-related roles) within your institution. Please note that this survey is aimed at individuals and the funding bodies do not expect to receive responses from institutions via this route.

6. All responses received by the deadline will be reviewed. A summary of responses and the full text of all responses received will be published on the FRAP website.

Further information

7. Any enquiries should be directed to researchpolicy@re.ukri.org.

Yours sincerely



David Sweeney, Executive Chair



Annex A

1. We are seeking feedback from a strategic perspective on REF 2021. The areas on which we are seeking feedback are set out in the response template below. Please make use of this template if it is helpful.
2. We have set out in [Table 1](#) some information you may find it helpful to consider when compiling your response. This is intended as an aide memoire; we are not expecting each aspect listed in the table to be addressed in answer to the questions below, unless relevant to your response.
3. Please return feedback as a Word document (max. 4 pages) using the following link: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme>.

Name of institution	[Enter institution name]
1. What, in your view, are the most important features of REF 2021 for higher education institutions? Why?	
2. In relation to preparing REF submissions, what positive reflections do you have on the process? Why?	
3. In relation to preparing REF submissions, which aspects of the process were challenging? Why?	
4. Please describe any benefits you identify in participating in the REF for your institution.	
5. Please describe any negative implications you identify in participating in the REF for your institution.	
6. What positive and negative effects did the key changes since REF 2014 have?	
7. How did COVID-19 affect your submissions to REF 2021? To what extent were the mitigations put in place helpful?	
8. Are there any further comments you would like to add regarding REF 2021?	

¹ Research England (RE) is a council of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), a non-departmental public body with responsibility for research and innovation funding in the UK, established by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. <https://www.ukri.org>



Table 1

When compiling a response, you may find it helpful to consider the following:		
Aspects of the REF	The different levels within the institution to which comments pertain	The key changes since REF 2014 (relevant to submission process)
Submitted units Staff (including staff circumstances) Outputs (including open access) Impact (including the definition of impact) Environment Panel structure and recruitment Interdisciplinary research Policy, guidance and communications Information technology systems.	Institution Submitted unit or department Individual researcher.	Submission of all staff with significant responsibility for research Submission of outputs at unit level Submission of outputs of previously-employed staff Open access requirements for in-scope outputs Revised weighting of assessment elements Strengthened measures to promote equality and diversity Institutional-level environment statement Strengthened measures to support the submission and assessment of interdisciplinary research Changes made to the submission and assessment of impact, including broadening guidance, revising template, inclusion of impacts on teaching, submission of continued case studies. Further information on the key changes since REF 2014 is available in the 'Guidance on submissions' (REF2019/01) https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/ .

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