

Exploring Options for Future Research Assessment



21 June 2021



Stern Review and consultation

Stern Review recommendations:

- Relax link between UoA staff numbers and case studies required
- Introduce institutional level case studies
- Soften link between impact and outputs
- Expand definition to include impact on teaching within HEI and academic impacts
- Highlight importance of public engagement impacts and impacts on cultural life



Impact in REF 2021

Changes introduced:

- Impact weighting increased to 25%
- Impact template included in Environment template
- Additional guidance on 'reach and significance' and public engagement
- Guidance on using quantitative data
- Impact continued from ICS submitted in 2014 are eligible
- Broaden relationship with research

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?

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 and promoting impact on non-academic research users?
2. What do you think is needed to support impact in the future?
3. How could a national assessment system better recognise and reward impact e.g. on a wider range of audiences, at local level, resulting from research across institutions?
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?

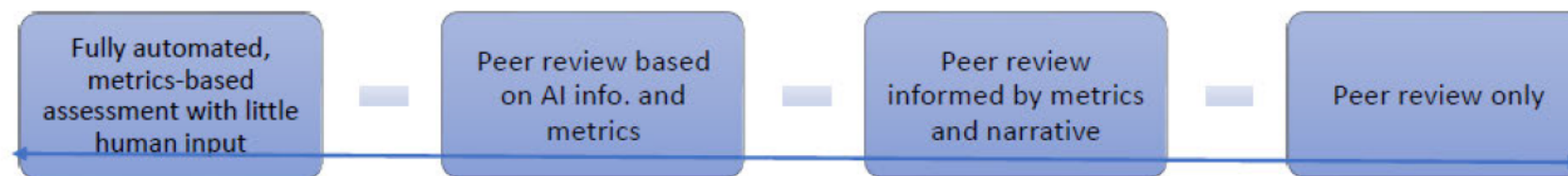
How should research be assessed?

- What are the features of a healthy research assessment system?

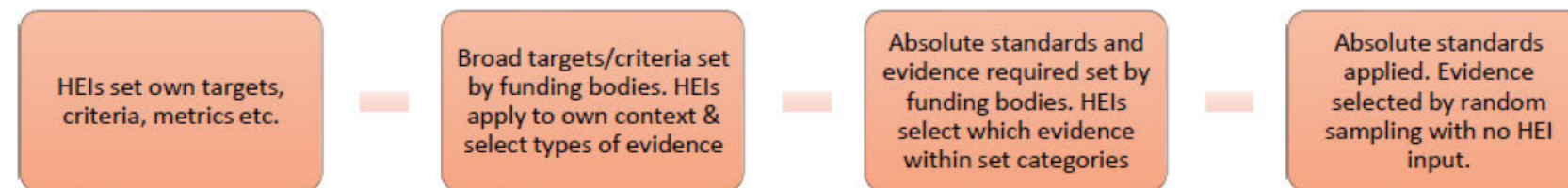
(e.g. equitable approach, transparent criteria and processes, proportionate burden)

- 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 impact?
- Which approaches might unintentionally create barriers or perverse incentives?
- What types of impact might this system discriminate against?
- Which approaches might reduce burden on institutions and researchers?

