

Institutional-Level Assessment in REF

ARMA, York, 18/09/19
Kim Hackett, REF Director



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REF 2021

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Why?

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From Stern:

- We should reward those institutions which have a dynamic and creative research environment, a vision and direction for their research and related activities, and a plan to deliver impact through their research.
- Some of these aspects of environment reflect the strategy, support and actions of the institution as a whole.
- Creating a new, dual level, Environment template should reduce the amount of duplication currently presented in the multiple individual submissions at Unit of Assessment level
- Having an institutional-level environment statement would provide a more holistic view of the HEI, allowing the REF to capture institution-wide strategic objectives and cross-cutting structures and initiatives.
- In order to enable the sub-panels to assess the research environment of the Unit of Assessment, they should each be provided with a copy of the relevant Institutional Environment statement so that they can understand the context for each unit's research environment

What?

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Consult
on Stern

Consider
feedback

Set out
decisions

What?

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Consultation responses – opportunities and concerns

- will allow the submitting unit to focus on unit-specific support within the institutional context and explain how the unit implements institution-wide policy frameworks
- reduce duplication and increases consistency
- concerns about incorporating into outcomes - could lead to the masking of 'pockets' of excellence (and weakness) within an institution
- pilot required to look at interaction
- may favour some institution types
- late stage of cycle
- widespread support for an institutional section in the unit-level template

What?

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Decisions

- Introduce an institutional-level element to the environment at UOA level
- Pilot the discrete assessment of the institutional-level environment section
 - not formally assessed in 2021
 - Inform inclusion of aspect in next assessment exercise

How?



How?

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Draft guidance on submissions:

- REF5a: Institutional-level statement. One per HEI, to be appended to the unit-level environment template and will be taken into account by the sub-panel when assessing the unit-level template. Exception for HEIs submitting in one UOA only.
- REF5b: Unit-level template, one per submission.
- Pilot of the standalone assessment of the discrete institutional-level environment will draw on this submitted information.
- Outcomes from the separate pilot exercise will not be included in REF 2021 but will inform future research assessment.

How?

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Consultation feedback:

- More clarity on sub-panel assessment and relationship between 5a and 5b
- Support for small & specialists to optionally return REF5a
- Increase word limits
- More guidance on REF5a template
- Greater clarity sought on pilot
- Support expressed, including on indicators (with some Qs)

How?

Final guidance and criteria:

- Word limits increased
- REF5a optional for small & specialist submitting in one UOA only
- Further description of SP assessment and cross-referencing between statements

REF5a in REF 2021

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- Statements will be appended to REF5b unit-level submissions for panel review
- Material should not be repeated, but statements should cross-refer
- Will inform and contextualise assessment of unit-level – won't be separately scored for REF 2021
- REF5a optional for small & specialist submitting in one UOA only
- Separate pilot of the *standalone assessment* of the institutional-level environment

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Institutional-Level Environment Pilot –

ARMA York, 18/09/19

Dr Rosa Scoble – Pilot panel member



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Panel

- Chair: Professor Chris Day – VC Newcastle University.
- Panel members recruited through EOI:

Professor John Cattell	Historic England	Professor Weiru Liu	University of Bristol
Dr Stephen Conway	University of Oxford	Professor Ruth Northway	University of South Wales
Professor Nandini Das	University of Liverpool	Professor Mark Ormerod	Keele University
Professor Michael Fitzpatrick	Coventry University	Professor Murray Pittock	University of Glasgow
Professor Sir Barry Ife	Guildhall School of Music and Drama	Mr Michael Rayner	University of the Highlands and Islands
Professor Andrew Jones	City, University of London	Dr Rosa Scoble	Brunel University London
Professor Linda King	Oxford Brookes University	Professor Martin Tillotson	University of Leeds
Professor Fiona Lettice	University of East Anglia	Mr Alisdair Wotherspoon	Independent
Professor Dewi Lewis	Independent	Professor Dianne Berry (Observer)	University of Reading

- EDAP chair as observer, supports consistent approach across REF and informs equalities considerations
- Additional international members to be appointed prior to assessment

Development of ILEPP's guidance

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- Panel met November 2018 to set framework for guidance, criteria and working methods, and consider the evaluation framework.
- Draft guidance published April 2019
- Sector workshops May 2019: To get views of the sector, on guidance, benefit and burden: good representation and engagement.
- Feedback on the day and circa 25 written responses.
 - Summary in final guidance (Annex C)
- Panel met June 2019 to review consultation feedback and agree changes
- Guidance published September 2019

Key issues from consultation

- Positive views...
 - Will give focus to institutional activities
 - Drives engagement between institution and unit activities
- However...
 - Some reservations about added burden – recognise that may reduce for future
 - Lack of clarity about the pilot and inclusion of institutional template (REF5a) in sub-panel assessment
 - Concerns about cross referencing and avoidance of duplication
 - Significant concerns about use of TRAC clusters
 - Pilot guidance too detailed and prescriptive
 - Some concerns around REF4 data, word limits and weighting

Guidance and Criteria

following consultation

Assessment criteria

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- Same criteria of vitality and sustainability as unit-level assessment.
 - **Vitality:** will be understood as the extent to which the institution promotes and facilitates a thriving, inclusive and collaborative research culture, and enables impact within research units. This should be based on a clearly articulated and overarching strategy for research and enabling its impact across the institution.
 - **Sustainability:** will be understood as the extent to which the research environment ensures the future health, diversity, wellbeing and wider contribution of the institution and its research units, including investment in people and infrastructure.

Sections, weighting and word limits

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- Submission requirements for REF5a:
 - Context and mission: *Provides context to the submission and is not scored.*
 - Other three sections equally weighted
 - Strategy
 - People
 - Income, infrastructure and facilities
- Word limits for submissions based on FTE category A staff

Number of Category A submitted staff returned by institution (FTE)	Word limit for environment statement (REF5a)
1 – 99.99	4,000
100 – 499.99	4,500
500 – 999.99	5,000
1000 or more	5,500

- Panel receive data from REF4a/b/c (and standard analyses) aggregated to IL institution.
- *The panel will NOT use clustering in the pilot assessment*
- *The panel will undertake post hoc analyses of outcomes, to identify trends and patterns in the results, to inform its recommendations.*

Assessment

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- Calibration prior to assessment; ongoing monitoring and moderation
- Submissions read and scored by three members: min one with REF experience.
- Research users advise on a range of submissions.
- The panel judge each submission on its own merits.
- Quality profile using standard REF 4* model
- Will not inform overall sub-profiles, but will inform pilot panel recommendations

Integration with Unit-level

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- **Working:**

- No cross membership between the pilot panel and the main and sub-panels.
- The panel chair will meet with the main and advisory panel chairs for coordination
- No discussion of individual submissions or assessments.

- **Assessment:**

- The panel will undertake triangulation with published environment sub-profiles
- The panel will also review a sample of HEIs' UL environment submissions
- The panel will not be able to conclude until after publication of the REF results

Recommendations and feedback

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- The panel will make a recommendation whether and how IL assessment included for future exercises.
- Individual HEI scores not published
 - *Scores (anonymised) used to support recommendations.*
- Narrative feedback provided to heads of institutions
- Individual scores will not be provided to institutions
 - Pilot is to assess of viability of IL assessment *not* assessment of HEIs

Guidance for institutions (Annex A)

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- *Annex reduced in length following feedback.*
- Issues for institutions to consider in submissions include:
 - Size, structure and mission.
 - Local context, research focus and disciplinary spread.
 - Progress, strategic aims and plans for future.
 - Support for impact and engagement within and outside academia.
 - Staffing strategy and support for staff and students
 - Commitment to equality and diversity
 - Strategies for generating research income.
 - Infrastructure and resources and in-kind funding
 - Open research
 - Support for interdisciplinary research

Indicators for the IL environment

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- Institutions use indicators relevant to their own context.
 - Consider principles (and measures) developed by Forum for Responsible Research Metrics.
- Key areas:
 - Recruitment by age profile;
 - Professors and senior staff by equalities characteristic;
 - Gender pay gap
 - IL commitment to staff support and progression.
 - Accreditations can support submissions but these are NOT requirements.
 - *e.g.'s: Athena Swann; Race Equality Charter; HR Excellence in Research; Stonewall Equality Index*