

**Changes to the REF 2021 Submission system:  
relating to the 'Guidance on revisions'**

**July 2020**

## **Aim of this guidance**

1. In March 2020, the funding bodies put the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 on hold in response to the effects of COVID-19. The exercise restarts on 31 July 2020 with a revised submission date of 31 March 2021. To take account of the effects of COVID-19 on institutions' REF submissions, the funding bodies have agreed a set of revisions to the exercise. These revisions, including to the overall timetable, are set out in the 'Guidance on revisions to REF 2021'.
2. This document describes the impact of the changes to the guidance and timeframe on the submission system. It outlines planned additional data items and how that data will be collected. It also outlines data that is no longer required in the light of the new timeframe.
3. Changes to the submission system are expected to be released in September 2020.

## **Changes to outputs (REF2)**

4. For outputs, there will be a checkbox to indicate that the output has been delayed due to COVID-19 and is being submitted in accordance with the provisions for returning delayed outputs set out at paragraphs 28-34 of the 'Guidance on revisions'. The checkbox will default to 'false' or 'no'. If the checkbox is completed for an output, there will be no errors raised if the publication date is later than 31 December 2020 or is not provided.
5. The output type selected for delayed outputs should be that of the final output, even if it is not yet in that form due to delays.
6. For each delayed output, there will also be the facility to provide an affected output statement (max. 100 words). A statement should only be returned in accordance with the guidance on affected output statements at paragraphs 35-40 of the 'Guidance on revisions'.
7. Functionality relating to outputs that are pending publication will be deactivated. Outputs that have already been flagged as pending publication will now be classed as ordinary outputs. Any outputs currently marked as being reserve outputs for pending publications will need to be updated so they are no longer marked as pending publication and outputs nominated as reserves will need to be removed. System validation will be updated to flag up any outputs pending publication (and any linked reserves) so that HEIs are directed to correct any data before final submission.
8. All outputs must be submitted by the deadline. There is no option to upload outputs after the deadline of noon, 31 March 2021 has passed.

## **Changes to impact case studies (REF3)**

9. The facility to add an optional statement (max. 100 words) for impact case studies significantly affected by COVID-19 will be available in the submission system. Affected case study statements should not be added directly within the case study template. A statement should only be returned in accordance with the guidance on affected case study statements at paragraphs 53-62 of the 'Guidance on revisions'.
10. There will be a checkbox available for HEIs to mark the affected case study statement as 'not for publication' where its publication is likely to cause harm to an individual or organisation.

## **Changes to institutional level environment statement (REF5a)**

11. The facility to provide the COVID-19 annex (max. 500 words) will be available for each institutional-level environment statement in the submission system. COVID-19 annexes should not be added directly in the REF5a template. This annex, in relation to COVID-19 and the environment for research and impact, should be returned according to the guidance set out in paragraphs 63-71 of the 'Guidance on revisions'.
12. This facility will also be available to HEIs not submitting a REF5a.

## **How to enter data related to the revisions**

13. The additional data items described above will be available on the data entry screens for REF2, REF3 and REF5a and will be available to any user with read/write permissions for those forms.
14. The fields will also be available within the standard import format, so can be imported and merged into existing data. The updated schema will be published by September 2020. The REF team will also provide a standalone Excel template by September 2020 to enable HEIs to prepare and import in bulk data related to the COVID-19 revisions only.