

Guidance on redacting impact case studies for publication

This document supplements the technical guidance on excluding parts of submissions from publication for REF 2021, available on the REF website: <https://ref.ac.uk/guidance/excluding-parts-of-submissions-from-publication/>. This document does not specify new guidance or requirements, but instead provides additional areas of consideration for HEIs identifying whether and how to redact impact case studies for publication.

Why might an HEI need to redact an impact case study for publication?

At the end of REF 2021, the funding bodies intend to publish submitted impact case studies as a searchable database. This means that the impact case studies will be publicly available and HEIs and researchers may therefore need to provide redacted copies for publication in the database. This guidance has been developed in conjunction with the REF sub-panels to provide areas of consideration for institutions identifying whether they need to redact impact case studies submitted to REF 2021 for publication.

It is an HEI's responsibility to consider and make redactions where necessary and this guidance does not provide prescriptive or specific advice on what redactions must be made. Instead, it provides principles and considerations for HEIs to take into account when reviewing documents for possible redaction.

Institutions may need to exclude parts of their submissions, including information in impact case study templates, from publication where publication of that information is likely to cause harm to an individual or organisation. This may be due to:

- commercial sensitivity or protection of intellectual property rights
- information that was provided by a third party, where publication is likely to constitute an actionable breach of confidence
- defence or security considerations
- health and safety considerations (for example, individuals conducting animal research)
- premature release of information about public policy development
- a breach of legal privilege
- protection of the rights of individuals under data protection legislation

There may be an overlap between confidential information (of the kind outlined above) and security classified information in impact case studies. The REF team have established separate processes for the submission and assessment of impact case studies containing classified information for REF 2021. However, non-classified information may still require redaction before an impact case study is published. HEIs may use this document to inform their consideration of whether redactions are required.

What might an HEI need to redact in an impact case study?

It is the institution's responsibility to decide on and make redactions to impact case studies for publication. In determining what (if any) information in an impact case study requires redaction, institutions should consider:

- whether publication of the information (including names and the fact that an individual/organisation is involved with the research / impact) risks the security of the
 - researchers
 - subjects and/or users
 - individuals/organisations providing corroborating evidence
- whether publication of the information risks the security of the information itself

Redactions only need to be made to the REF3 impact case study template. Corroborating evidence and underpinning research will not be published, except for explicit references, citations or quotations from them in the REF3 impact case study template.

How might an HEI approach redacting an impact case study for publication?

Technical guidance on redacting impact case studies for publication has been provided on the REF website here: <https://www.ref.ac.uk/guidance/excluding-parts-of-submissions-from-publication/>

Different institutions will have different processes for writing impact case studies and making redactions. Where appropriate, institutions should consider the following when deciding on and making redactions:

- Share guidance (both from the REF team and internal HEI guidance) on redacting impact case studies with impact case study researchers and authors
- Central teams should work with researchers and impact case study authors on whether and what redactions are required for impact case studies, rather than either the centre or researchers being solely responsible to ensure both understand any requirements
- Ensure the document remains readable and retains its general meaning following redactions. Where it does not, consider whether the case study should be marked as 'not for publication' rather than only redacted.

What does the REF team do to ensure the confidentiality of redacted impact case studies?

The REF team have undertaken a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) of the submissions system to ensure that confidentiality and data protection have been considered in the design of the system. A copy of the DPIA is available on the REF website. A DPIA for the REF assessment systems will be published in April 2021. All REF 2021 panel members are bound by confidentiality and data security agreements. Panel members also undertake their assessment using secure systems.