

Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework

Page 1: Respondent details

Q1. Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of

Charity

Please provide the name of your organisation

Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)

Page 2: Overall approach

Q2. 1. Do you have any comments on the proposal to maintain an overall continuity of approach with REF 2014, as outlined in paragraphs 10 and 23?

Agree.

Page 3: Unit of assessment structure

Q3. 2. What comments do you have about the unit of assessment structure in REF 2021?

Agree – retain UOAs as 2014. In REF 2014 most of our disciplines' outputs were captured in SP 16 (Architecture & Built Environment) which we consider the most appropriate place for them.

Page 4: Expert panels

Q4. 3a. Do you agree that the submissions guidance and panel criteria should be developed simultaneously?

Yes

Comments:

Agree, recognising that broad UOAs may require more than the SP chair for the coverage.

Q5. 3b. Do you support the later appointment of sub-panel members, near to the start of the assessment year?

No

Comments:

While the lead in time on REF2014 might be reduced, there should remain enough time to embed SP members and to align them with the criteria, particularly on broad UOAs. Non-academic panel members benefit from earlier appointment and the opportunity to input to discussions – particularly of impact.

Q6. 4. Do you agree with the proposed measures outlined at paragraph 35 for improving representativeness on the panels?

Yes

Comments:

35(c) There should be an option for nominees to decline providing E&D information.

Q7. 5a. Based on the options described at paragraphs 36 to 38 what approach do you think should be taken to nominating panel members?

36. Agree, retain previous approaches.

A more open nominations process will add complexity and may even produce perverse outcomes

Q8. 5b. Do you agree with the proposal to require nominating bodies to provide equality and diversity information?

Yes

Comments:

CIBSE (and most professional institutions) hold such data and would be able to respond to an E&D questionnaire.

Q9. 6. Please comment on any additions or amendments to the list of nominating bodies, provided alongside the consultation document.

We believe that the list of nominating bodies is broadly appropriate. Any organisation which responds to this consultation should automatically be on the list. In some more practical areas, such as engineering, there may be appropriate user bodies who may be able to nominate appropriate practitioners. Those bodies already on the list should be encouraged to consider this where appropriate and to liaise with those user bodies.

Page 5: Staff

Q10. 7. Do you have any comments on the proposal to use HESA cost centres to map research-active staff to UOAs and are there any alternative approaches that should be considered?

No comments.

Q11. 8. What comments do you have on the proposed definition of 'research-active' staff described in paragraph 43?

No comments.

Q12. 9a. The proposal to require an average of two outputs per full-time equivalent staff returned?

Agree.

Q13. 9b. The maximum number of outputs for each staff member?

Five maximum (to avoid 'star' researchers skewing overall outcomes).

Q14. 9c. Setting a minimum requirement of one for each staff member?

Agree.

The essential feature is to create a representative sampling regime that limits the opportunity for 'gaming'.

Q15. 10a. Is acceptance for publication a suitable marker to identify outputs that an institution can submit and how would this apply across different output types?

Yes, including electronic publication – see also below.

Q16. 10b. What challenges would your institution face in verifying the eligibility of outputs?

No comment.

Q17. 10c. Would non-portability have a negative impact on certain groups and how might this be mitigated?

We suggest that if the Institution that receives the funding 'owned' the output it might simplify matters and mitigate the 'transfer-window' effect of prized researchers moving between institutions in the run-up to the REF deadline.

Q18. 10d. What comments do you have on sharing outputs proportionally across institutions?

Agree – subject to our comments in 10(c).

Q19. 11. Do you support the introduction of a mandatory requirement for the Open Researcher and Contributor ID to be used as the staff identifier, in the event that information about individual staff members continues to be collected in REF 2021?

Comments:

No views. We consider this is a matter for the research institutions to advise.

Q20. 12. What comments do you have on the proposal to remove Category C as a category of eligible staff?

No views. We consider this is a matter for the research institutions to advise.

Q21. 13. What comments do you have on the definition of research assistants?

No views. We consider this is a matter for the research institutions to advise.

Q22. 14. What comments do you have on the proposal for staff on fractional contracts and is a minimum of 0.2 FTE appropriate?

No views. We consider this is a matter for the research institutions to advise.

Page 6: Collaboration

Q23. 15. What are your comments in relation to better supporting collaboration between academia and organisations beyond higher education in REF 2021?

We welcome any measures to increase the visibility of collaborations outside HE.

Agree that the environment section is the best place to capture this information.

Page 7: Outputs

Q24. 16. Do you agree with the proposal to allow the submission of a reserve output in cases where the publication of the preferred output will post-date the submission deadline?

Yes

Comments:

However, on-line publication pre-dating the submission deadline should be admissible.

Q25. 17. What are your comments in relation to the assessment of interdisciplinary research in REF 2021?

(a) A single interdisciplinary champion on broad-based subpanels would probably not suffice. 2 or 3 specialist assessors would work better.

(b) Agree.

(c) Agree.

Q26. 18. Do you agree with the proposal for using quantitative data to inform the assessment of outputs, where considered appropriate for the discipline? If you agree, have you any suggestions for data that could be provided to the panels at output and aggregate level?

No

Comments:

Peer review should remain the primary approach. Citation was excluded from REF2014 and was not much missed. We have a concern that citation 'clubs' can arise which occasionally create streams of 'closed-loop' research of little collective merit.

Page 8: Impact

Q27. 19. Do you agree with the proposal to maintain consistency where possible with the REF 2014 impact assessment process?

Yes

Comments:

See comments below on this topic.

Q28. 20. What comments do you have on the recommendation to broaden and deepen the definition of impact?

(78) Agree generally but excluding academic impacts (especially if citation is used in metrics). Teaching impacts could/should be captured in TEF. Other academic impacts can be deduced through the Environment section. In applied sciences like architecture & engineering, 'good impacts' generally manifest as those listed in 79(b).

Q29. 21. Do you agree with the proposal for the funding bodies and Research Councils UK to align their definition of academic and wider impact?

Yes

If yes, what comments do you have on the proposed definitions?

Agree – but excluding academic impacts (as before). While alignment of funding bodies & RCUK definitions is welcomed for consistency, submitting research institutions should be given scope to frame their impacts – since it's important for the subpanel to understand their approach and thinking.

Q30. 22. What comments do you have on the criteria of reach and significance?

In applied sciences, 'reach' and 'significance' are important and relatively easy for research institutions to frame and for subpanels to assess.

Q31. 23. What do you think about having further guidance for public engagement impacts and what do you think would be helpful?

Indeed, REF2014 led to confusion between dissemination and actual impact – and some submitting institutions (often the less mature) suffered as a result. We welcome further guidance on public engagement but it would be important to issue this material during 2017.

Q32. 24. Do you agree with the proposal that impacts should remain eligible for submission by the institution or institutions in which the underpinning research has been conducted?

Yes

Q33. 25. Do you agree that the approach to supporting and enabling impact should be captured as an explicit section of the environment element of the assessment?

Comments:

In REF2014 the delineation of 'impact', with interrelated template & case studies worked well. They framed an assessment procedure unbounded by other things which helped concentrate minds. Incorporating 'impact' within the 'environment' template may allow submittals to major on their stronger suite and to leave the other to be inferred. Academic-dominated subpanels often struggle with 'impact' – so a lack of clarity around the edges may favour an established research institution with a good environment but low attention to impact.

Q34. 26. What comments do you have on the suggested approaches to determining the required number of case studies? Are there alternative approaches that merit consideration?

No comment.

Q35. 27. Do you agree with the proposal to include a number of mandatory fields in the impact case study template to support the assessment and audit process better (paragraph 96)?

Yes

Comments:

No comment.

Q36. 28. What comments do you have on the inclusion of further optional fields in the impact case study template?

No comment.

Q37. 29. What comments do you have in relation to the inclusion of examples of impact arising from research activity and bodies of work, as well as from specific research outputs?

Agree.

Q38. 30. Do you agree with the proposed timeframe for the underpinning research activity (1 January 2000 - 31 December 2020)?

Yes

Q39. 31. What are your views on the suggestion that the threshold criterion for underpinning research, research activity or a body of work should be based on standards of rigour? Do you have suggestions for how rigour could be assessed?

R/R/S should be retained as criteria. We agree that 'rigour' is crucial but hard to capture alone. 'Reach' gives a measure of uptake which is an important part of impact and also helps to underscore/validate 'rigour'. The definition of 'significance', while sometimes problematic, can be satisfactorily resolved collectively by all SP members. Hence assessing all 3 criteria assists SP members to align.

Q40. 32a. The suggestion to provide audit evidence to the panels?

Audit is important where submissions assert more than they evidence. But in UOAs where REF 2014 threw up few cases of further substantiation being called for, audit may impose a significant additional burden for both institutions and panels which will rarely be needed. Thus we'd favour an approach similar to REF2014 – allowing the subpanel to call for further substantiation as the need arose.

Q41. 32b. The development of guidelines for the use and standard of quantitative data as evidence for impact?

Agree, common metrics that enable impacts across all UOAs to be ranked is crucial. It's important to make this requirement known early in the REF 2021 run in.

Q42. 32c. Do you have any other comments on evidencing impacts in REF 2021?

None.

Q43. 33. What are your views on the issues and rules around submitting examples of impact in REF 2021 that were returned in REF 2014?

We agree that REF2021 should admit impacts returned in 2014 but be focused on 'additionality'. We suggest a copy of the 2014 impact submission should be returned for reference but that the onus to demonstrate 'additionality' be left with the submitting institution.

Page 9: Environment

Q44. 34a. Do you agree with the proposal to change the structure of the environment template by introducing more quantitative data into this aspect of the assessment?

Yes

Comments:
No comment.

Q45. 34b. Do you have suggestions of data already held by institutions that would provide panels with a valuable insight into the research environment?

No comment.

Q46. 35. Do you have any comment on the ways in which the environment element can give more recognition to universities' collaboration beyond higher education?

Agree with the principle of giving more recognition to 'external' collaboration. But setting consistent criteria will be difficult. Our view is that (as with some aspects of impact) the onus to demonstrate collaboration and its benefit to their research environment should remain with the submitting institution.

Q47. 36. Do you agree with the proposals for providing additional credit to units for open access?

Yes

Comments:
No comment.

Q48. 37. What comments do you have on ways to incentivise units to share and manage their research data more effectively ?

No comment.

Page 10: Institutional level assessment

Q49. 38. What are your views on the introduction of institutional level assessment of impact and environment?

(a) We query the need for institutional level assessment since overall impact and environment can be determined by some form of aggregation of scores achieved for each UOA submitted.

(b) We do not support institutional level scores being reflected in each UOA submission since it will benefit mediocre submissions from otherwise excellent institutions and harm excellent submissions from mediocre ones.

Q50. 39. Do you have any comments on the factors that should be considered when piloting an institutional level assessment?

See 38(a) above.

Page 11: Outcomes and weighting

Q51. 40. What comments do you have on the proposed approach to creating the overall quality profile for each submission?

As previously, we oppose incorporating institutional level weighting in the quality profile for each submission.

Q52. 41. Given the proposal that the weighting for outputs remain at 65 per cent, do you agree that the overall weighting for impact should remain at 20 per cent?

No

Comments:

We would prefer to retain the quality profile and weightings used in REF 2014 – centred on each submission and excluding institutional-level scores. We consider with UOAs in 'applied sciences' that there is a strong case to increase each submission's impact weighting from 20% to 25%.

Q53. 42. Do you agree with the proposed split of the weightings between the institutional and submission level elements of impact and environment?

No

Comments:

See above

Page 12: Proposed timetable for REF 2021

Q54. 43. What comments do you have on the proposed timetable for REF 2021?

We suggest that early guidance on public engagement impacts should be published during 2017.

(The timetable does not indicate when subpanels are to be formed). Please see our answer to Q 3b.

Page 14: Contact details

Q56. If you would be happy to be contacted in the event of any follow-up questions, please provide a contact email address.

mfilas@cibse.org