

REF 2021 - GLOSSARY

Assessment criteria = The panels will use the following criteria to assess the quality of each element of the submission:

- Outputs – 'originality, significance and rigour'
- Impact – 'reach and significance'
- Environment – 'vitality and sustainability'

Assessment period = This refers to impact case studies (underpinned by research conducted from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2020), research environment, and data about research income and research doctoral degrees awarded. The assessment period is 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020.

Category A eligible staff = Academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date, and whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'. Staff should have a substantive connection with the submitting institution. Staff on 'research only' contracts should meet the definition of an independent researcher. Staff meeting these criteria will form the total eligible staff pool.

Category A submitted staff = Category A eligible staff who have been identified as having significant responsibility for research on the census date: these will be submitted to REF.

Census date = The date on which staff must be in post at the submitting institution and meet the eligibility criteria to be returned as Category A submitted staff is 31 July 2020.

Code of practice = Each institution making a submission is required to develop, document and apply a code of practice on determining who has significant responsibility for research, who is an independent researcher and the selection of outputs in their REF submissions. ([LSE's REF code of practice](#) is to be finalised subject to approval June 2019)

Double-weighting = Institutions may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted (count as two outputs) in the assessment.

Early career researcher (ECR) = Category A staff who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.

Guidance on submissions = This document specifies the data requirements, definitions and criteria for submissions by Higher Education Institutions. [REF Guidance on Submissions](#)

Impact = An effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.

Impact case study (ICS) = A completed [impact case study template](#) setting out how excellent research conducted by the submitting institution between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2020 has resulted in impact(s) beyond academia between 1 August 2013 and 31 July 2020.

Impact reach = The extent and/ or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, e.g., constituencies, numbers of groups, as relevant to the nature of the impact.

Impact significance = The degree to which impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance, policies, practices, products, services, understanding, awareness or wellbeing of the beneficiaries.

Independent researcher = A member of staff who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme.

Interdisciplinary research = For the purposes of REF, interdisciplinary research is understood to achieve outcomes (including new approaches) that could not be achieved within the framework of a single discipline. Interdisciplinary research features significant interaction between two or more disciplines and / or moves beyond established disciplinary foundations in applying or integrating research approaches from other disciplines.

Joint submission = Two or more UK institutions may make a joint submission in a UOA, where this is the most appropriate way of describing research they have developed or undertaken collaboratively. Panels assess a joint submission in the same way as submissions from single institutions.

Knowledge exchange = A two-way exchange between researchers and research users, to share ideas, research evidence, experiences and skills. Knowledge exchange refers to any process through which academic ideas and insights are shared, and external perspectives and experiences brought in to academia. Note that for REF purposes knowledge exchange is the means by which impacts can be achieved, but only impacts are assessed in REF. [Learn more about REF Impact](#)

Main panel = The sub-panels work under the leadership and guidance of four main panels. [REF panels](#)

Multiple submission = Institutions may exceptionally make more than one submission in the same UOA. Requests must be submitted by December 2019.

Open Access (OA) = A publishing model that enables peer-reviewed outputs of scholarly research to be made freely available online. It can be achieved through deposit of an authoritative version of the research output in an institutional or subject repository (Green OA) or by publication in journals which are made available free of charge online (Gold OA). [How to deposit scholarly research at LSE](#)

Output = The product of research, as defined in REF (e.g. a journal article or book). An underpinning principle of REF is that all forms of research output, in any language, will be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Outputs must have been first made publicly available between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020.

Overall profile = The overall quality profile for REF comprises the scores for the three sub-profiles: outputs (60 per cent), impact (25 percent), and environment (15 per cent).

Panel criteria and working methods = The [REF panel criteria](#) document sets out the details of the criteria and working methods that the panels will apply when assessing submissions and includes descriptions of the disciplines covered by each UOA.

Publication period = Outputs submitted to REF 2021 must have been first made publicly available between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020.

Research assistant = An individual member of academic staff whose primary employment function is 'research only', and who is employed to carry out another individual's research programme rather than as an independent researcher in their own right.

Research = For the purposes of REF, research is defined as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared'.

Research Environment = A description of how the submitting Institution/ UOA:

- enables impact from its research, and its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base, economy and society.
- ensures the future health, diversity, wellbeing and wider contribution of the unit and the discipline(s), including investment in people and in infrastructure
- encourages the effective sharing and management of research data

Data on PhDs awarded and research income received over the REF period is also considered as part of the research environment element of the REF.

Significant responsibility for research = Staff with significant responsibility for research are those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role.

Staff circumstances = Measures to take account of the effect of individuals' circumstances on research productivity during the period. These measures will allow an optional reduction to the total number of a unit's required outputs. They also allow an individual to be returned without the required minimum of one output without penalty in the assessment, where the circumstances have had an exceptional effect on productivity, such that the staff member has not been able to undertake research for 46 months or between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020.

Starred level definitions = Each item submitted to REF is scored as one of the following: 4* (world leading); 3* (internationally excellent); 2* (internationally recognised); 1* (nationally recognised) or unclassified.

Submission deadline = The date on which all Higher Education Institutions must submit their REF data is 27 November 2020.

Submission = A submission comprises a complete set of data about staff, outputs, impact and the research environment, returned by an HEI in any of the 34 UOAs.

Submitted unit = A group or groups of staff identified by the HEI as working primarily within the remit of a UOA and included in a submission, along with evidence of the research produced during the publication period, examples of impact underpinned by research in the unit, and the structures and environment that support research and its impact.

Sub-panel = In each of the 34 UOAs an expert sub-panel of academics and research users will conduct a detailed assessment of submissions.

Sub-profile = Each of the three elements of the assessment – outputs, impact and environment – will receive a sub-profile, showing the proportion of the submission that meets each of the starred quality levels

Underpinning research = Impacts described in the impact case studies must be based on research of at least two-star quality that was produced during the period from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2020.

Unit of Assessment (UOA) = Submissions in REF 2021 will be made in [34 discipline-based 'units of assessment'](#).