

# What the REF means for me

## Key questions for academics and researchers

### How many outputs do I need to submit?

**Short answer:** *minimum of one output, unless you have exceptional circumstances.*

Unlike REF 2014, the number of outputs required is calculated at the level of the submitting unit, rather than linked to an individual. Whereas staff returned to REF 2014 had to submit four outputs, each individual returned to REF 2021 has to have a minimum of one output attributed to them, unless they have experienced circumstances that mean that they do not have an eligible output (see below). A maximum of five outputs can be attributed to an individual. Overall, a unit has to submit outputs equal to 2.5 times the full-time equivalent (FTE) of submitted staff e.g. a unit with 14 members of staff with a combined FTE of 10 would need 25 outputs. This flexibility is often referred to as 'decoupling' as the output requirement is no longer fully tied to individuals, allowing UOAs to choose which outputs to submit from the pool of outputs produced by their staff.

### Can I take my impact case study with me if I move institutions?

**Short answer:** *No.*

REF assesses the impact of a unit not the impact of individuals. As in REF 2014, impact case studies therefore can only be submitted by the unit where the underpinning research was carried out.

### Can I take my outputs with me if I move institutions?

**Short answer:** *Yes.*

If you change institution during the REF cycle, your new institution can submit your outputs, provided they employ you on an eligible contract on the census date (31 July 2020). This is the same as in REF 2014. In addition, your former institution can submit outputs that you produced while under their employment.

### I have experienced circumstances that have affected my ability to produce outputs. Can this be taken into account?

**Short answer:** *Yes.*

Institutions are required to enable their staff to declare any circumstances that might have affected their ability to research and must make appropriate adjustments to their expectations of your contribution to the output pool. Depending on the cumulative effect of circumstances on your unit, it may decide to use the flexibility offered by decoupling to shape the output pool (i.e. where some staff submit more and some submit fewer than the 2.5 outputs average, ensuring everyone has at least one and no more than five outputs attributed to them) OR may request a reduction in the total number of outputs required from the unit. In addition, if you do not have a REF-eligible output, your unit may request that you be submitted with zero outputs instead of the minimum of one.

### Are institutions able to select which staff they submit to REF 2021?

**Short answer:** *No.*

Participating institutions are required to submit all eligible staff with significant responsibility for research. Where this does not include ALL members of staff on teaching and research or research only contracts, institutions may develop a process for identifying those with significant responsibility. This process must be agreed by staff representative groups and be documented in the institution's code of practice.

### How does REF 2021 use citation data and journal impact factors?

**Short answer:** *some sub-panels use citation data as part of their assessment of outputs. REF 2021 does **not** use journal impact factors.*

The following sub-panels will consider the number of times a journal article or conference proceeding (if it has an ISSN) has been cited as additional information about its significance:

**1** (Clinical Medicine), **2** (Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care), **3** (Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy), **4** (Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience), **5** (Biological Sciences), **6** (Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences), **7** (Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences), **8** (Chemistry), **9** (Physics), **11** (Computer Science and Informatics) and **16** (Economics and Econometrics).

These panels will continue to rely on expert review as the primary means of assessing all outputs; citation data forms only one element of the assessment. All citation data will be provided to the sub-panels by the REF team. The panels are aware that citation data is not always a reliable indicator of an output's significance. REF 2021 will not use journal impact factors or any other hierarchy of journals in their assessment of outputs.

### Does everyone need to have an impact case study?

**Short answer:** *No.*

The focus of the assessment of impact is on the impact of the submitted unit's research, not the impact of individuals' research. The impact of a unit's research is assessed through specific examples i.e. impact case studies. The number of case studies required in each submission will be determined by the number (FTE) of Category A submitted staff returned in the submission, starting at a minimum of 2 case studies per unit and rising to 10 plus one extra case study for every 50 FTE staff for units with more than 160 staff.

### Will the scores given to my outputs be made publicly available?

**Short answer:** *No.*

All individual scores are destroyed as soon as the sub-profiles for each submission (i.e. the overall score for outputs, impact and environment for each UOA) are agreed. Individual output scores will not be published but a list of submitted outputs will be published after completion of REF 2021. These outputs will not be attributed to staff and staff names will not be published.

### Who should I contact for more information about the REF?

Each university has its own REF institutional and technical contacts. You can find the details for all institutions here: [www.ref.ac.uk/contact/](http://www.ref.ac.uk/contact/)