

# Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework

## Page 1: Respondent details

Q1. Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of

Representative body

**Please provide the name of your organisation**

History UK (<http://www.history-uk.ac.uk>)

## 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?

Generally, we welcome the maintenance of some continuity of approach with the previous REF cycle. It provides HEIs with a benchmark against which to measure performance, and to review outputs, impact and environment. The focus on equality in REF2014, was also welcomed.

## Page 3: Unit of assessment structure

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

The History Unit worked well in the past and should be maintained with a panel of experts that represents all fields of history and has a good gender and BME balance.

## Page 4: Expert panels

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

Yes

**Comments:**

There is a natural symmetry to the simultaneous development of submissions guidance and panel criteria; moreover early development and availability of the guidance to HEIs would be desirable.

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

**Comments:**

Our members were divided on this question. One responded felt that it is good to bring in extra expertise nearer the submission to ensure a fair and balanced appraisal. However, it was also noted that ideally, the main panels and sub-panels should be appointed at the same time, since taking decisions away from the sub-panels may influence the reliability of the exercise.

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

Yes

**Comments:**

We broadly agree that the open application process for the chairs of the main and sub-panel is appropriate. However, there is some feeling that some greater consideration of participation of under-represented groups is required. For example, women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are less likely to apply. It was suggested that HEFCE should take advice from appropriate bodies to ensure that the application process is as open as possible. Nominations from learned societies and representative organisations may also be source for nominations. However, these organisations are also subject to similar problems of under-representation.

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

A more transparent approach, taking on board the issues of under-representation as described above (4) should be taken. Arguably the post 92 sector was not properly represented in 2014. More thought needs to be given to this, given the numbers of both staff and research students concerned.

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

Yes

**Comments:**

Please see responses above.

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

We would recommend that the following additions are made to the nominating bodies:  
Women's History Network

## 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?

The current arrangements do not take full account of part time staff and staff who have interdisciplinary research interests. Whilst it makes sense on the face of it, to attach staff to their HESA cost centres, this approach is not without problems. Some disciplines will appear in more than one unit of assessment, for example.

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

In view of more recent developments in some institutions which designate certain staff as on teaching only contracts, this definition is problematic. In particular, many early career historians take teaching only contract, yet they still carry out research. There needs to be more flexibility in the definition. There is a potential contradiction in the guidelines between 'excellence' and 'comprehensiveness' – both are not possible. Most academics will have an element of research in their contracts – but are not all able to perform (in relation to research) at the same high level.

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

Responses to this proposal were broadly positive:

- Given the realities of admin workloads (student satisfaction, pastoral needs - much higher rates of special needs, and mental health issues in student populations) this would seem a step in the direction of not excluding staff who - in order to teach at university level - HAVE to be active researchers.
- It also allows for the development of a small number of detailed, lengthy or difficult-to-research outputs, that is, concentration and focus on excellence, rather than outputs for outputs' sake. It favours the strategic deployment of research time and funds in smaller departments. Also, it ensures that a department or subject area rather than individuals, are assessed in REF.

There were some more cautious comments:

- It was felt that whilst an average of 2 outputs per FTE is not unreasonable, this might impact negatively on some groups who have previously been allowed to submit under 'special circumstances rules'. Individuals from these groups (relating to gender and disability, for example) were under-represented in the last REF.
- It was also felt that outputs should still be connected to staff members in the sense that if an academic is no longer a full-time faculty member then the institution should not use those publications otherwise a false impression of the research culture of a department might be presented.

Finally, one of our members felt that two outputs for each FTE seems low, considering the time span that the new REF will cover. In the last REF submissions were 4, or less if the FTE had been on leave during the census period. I would suggest that 3 would be about right.

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

Similarly, feedback to this response was varied

A number of respondents felt that 4 should be the maximum.

- Otherwise, a small number of individuals' work may dominate the REF return, which might be deleterious overall – but in any case, in smaller departments, would lead to a lack of balance in the return.

- We would prefer that History maintained a maximum of 4 outputs for each staff member.

Other members were happier with a higher upper limit:

- It would be retrograde to put an upper limit on this as some historians, who have access to sabbatical leave and reduced teaching hours, are extremely productive. 10 could be a maximum.

- However – a department should not be able to rely solely on a big hitter. This is potentially the best and most equitable way to stop game playing as opposed to an all-out assault on individual ownership and portability by disconnecting publications from the person who produces them and associating publications solely with the institutions where the academic was resident at the time of publication.

It was also noted that many institutions do not have such people (big hitters) at all:

post-92s tend to employ all colleagues on the basis of both teaching and research. This may limit the capacity in this part of the sector to find colleagues with that spread of output. And if other circumstances are also not considered relevant to output (see above), the REF will cease to be a measure of excellence and become a measure of historical weight of numbers.

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

Our members did not agree on this:

- Yes, everyone should contribute at least one. This is unlikely to be a problem in history where most staff members in most departments are research active. It would ensure that big departments were no longer able to exclude staff who are very much part of their department for tactical reasons. It is important to ensure that the research score reflects a department as a whole.

- I would support History endorsing a minimum of one for each staff member.

However, a number of members preferred an option of a minimum of 3 outputs:

- If historians are research active, and well supported by their HEI, then setting a minimum of 3 outputs would seem fair. Hopefully double-weighting of outputs would still be allowed as well.

Moreover, the dangers of a 'one size fits all' model were cautioned against:

REF cycles are short given true gestation periods for outstanding work. Until we have invented magic to make one hat fit all, in all seasons, and for all of time - we will risk not being prepared for the realities of the future if we take this approach!

### 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?

There was significant criticism for acceptance of publication as a marker to identify outputs:

- Acceptance for publication presupposes that most outputs are in the form of journal articles. Across a range of panels, this simply won't be true. The double-weighted monograph, almost all forms of creative practice research (performances, art works, exhibitions, films, etc.) will not be caught by this process.

- In terms of History outputs, 'acceptance for publication' is a double-edged sword. Journals can take 18 months to 3 years to actually publish history articles and they come under extreme pressure near the end of the REF census period. Monograph contracts can be signed off several years before delivery of the final manuscript as well. So, it would retrograde for HEIs to use this as a suitable marker. They need to be more aware of these publishing delays in History and the pressures put on staff to submit.

- It was noted that more weight might be given to digital publishing as well as physical text, including digitised collections of documents with a scholarly editorial apparatus attached.

As some members noted, publication is a suitable marker. Whilst the challenges of verification are not especially great for some forms of output – standard journal articles are the key case – the creative practice disciplines, book chapters and monographs, are problematic. Date of publication would be the only reasonable date to use.

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

HEIs normally have confidential committees or working groups that decide on the eligibility of outputs, often with reports from blind referees. They use subject specific expertise and therefore offer a fair appraisal of the outputs. If these processes are not followed, with due regard to equality and diversity, then the exercise is futile. This can often be a laborious process, whereby the acceptance of pieces would have to be verified internally. It adds bureaucracy which is unnecessary if publication were to be taken as the marker. The challenge here is to adequately resource these committees or working groups and pay a fair rate to external assessors.

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

Members had very strong responses to this question, which for the most part were negative. Here are a selection of comments:

- By taking portability away, ownership of research is given to the institutions. Individual researchers are undermined and the institutions benefit. There are plenty of legitimate reasons for academics switching institutions. But I am also concerned that institutions which have given substantial support to an academic's research over some years will see little point in continuing to do so if 'poaching' continues to take place, and is rewarded
  - I am not sure how HEFCE proposes to limit this institutional games-playing, but one way would be to ban institutions from putting individuals on very short-term and clearly exploitative contracts into the REF?
  - Timing. A lot of people and units will be adversely affected by moves they have made before the consultation began. The institutions weren't 'gaming the system' when they made appointments as part of a normal turnover process. The individuals who sought new posts were not 'gaming' when they sought to develop their careers.
  - HEFCE must also realise that if some institutions lose staff and others gain them for REF motives, this is also about colleagues' perceptions of a given institution's support for their activity. We have heard the argument that good research is sometimes 'poached'. There is an equally valid argument that sometimes good research is claimed by an institution which, in fact, did nothing to support it.
  - With the way in which the REF has been structured up to this point, many former JRFs, Post Docs and those on one year positions have striven to publish monographs and articles because the old rules suggested this was what a department might look for. Removing portability will negate all of this work.
  - If there were to be any exception for an early career scholar, how should this be defined? If according to the RHS that on average historians gain a permanent position in the UK around 37 this makes any such categorization, considering the condition of the job market, highly problematic. This would also make it impossible for junior members of the profession to identify straightforward and transparent avenues by which to develop their careers.
  - We think non-portability would affect all groups. We consider it potentially discriminatory for female and early career researchers who tend to move more often than established senior male academics. This is bad for teaching and learning, leadership and public engagement as well as fossilising research cultures in institutions.
- Suggestions:
- A cut-off date for portability in each REF cycle would be a compromise. We would prefer non-portability to be dropped entirely.
  - Past RAEs sometimes did a 50/50 split of outputs, perhaps this could be revisited so that the institution keeps some of the outputs. This may stop last minute poaching as well.
- These effects are best mitigated by rethinking the non-portability issue so that, instead of a blanket decision relating to the whole period, non-portability becomes relevant, pro-rata, during the last 24 months of the cycle.

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

Some members felt that this was an idea with potential, but that it needed to be very carefully thought out. One member suggested that if a historian leaves their HEI within 12 months of the end of the census period, then the new HEI should only be entitled to 50% of their outputs.

Other members felt more strongly that the link between work and the author should remain. They did not see why ownership, particularly when considering the amount of work junior and mid-career researchers invest in the development of their research profile, should be effectively owned by the institutions where they work. The whole question of sharing across institutions, where proportionality would be complicated to calculate, is indicative of the problems inherent in detaching work from the academic author.

Overall, there was a general feeling that proportional sharing, whilst it might have some merits, is much too complex to administer and does not recognise the work of the individual.

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?

Yes

**Comments:**

There was a general agreement that this should be implemented.

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

Where History departments/teams are involved in RCUK funded collaborative research with museums, heritage sites or art galleries, their staff should be included in the REF. Category C should therefore remain to recognise this new way of funding research in History related fields.

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

This needs to be more clearly defined to classify research assistants who are producing suitable outputs for the REF.

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

It was pointed out by a member that this proposal has serious implications for those areas which have high numbers of people working in fractional contracts (though this isn't the case in history, per se). These colleagues already have significant challenges in submitting to the REF in terms of the management of their outputs.

Certainly, if they got support to carry out and write up their research, then they should be eligible and not debarred. Nobody teaching at HE should not be actively researching their field/or the teaching thereof, whichever is appropriate. However, stipulating a minimum output may be inappropriate.

## 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?

The key way by which external collaboration can be supported by the REF is to add them to the criteria by which environments statements may assessed. Such collaborations will not be central to all institutions' submitting units, so this would be best managed as a 'possible' rather than mandatory element of environment.

For example, History department/teams are particularly good at working with museums, heritage sites and art galleries. Where collaborative research takes place then there should be proper recognition of this – regarded of whether this in funded or not.

## 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:**

Yes – probably. This seems a sensible approach as the publication of outputs is usually beyond the control of the author.

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

We believe that history departments/colleagues should support the suggestions presented in paragraphs 71 and 72 of the consultation document are very welcome. In the aftermath of the exercise, it might also be helpful if some exemplary cases were championed on the HEFCE website. This gives university senior managers quite a big incentive to value work beyond boundaries.

The proposal to have interdisciplinary champions on each sub-panel is an excellent idea. There are a significant number of historians who are genuinely interdisciplinary and they have not been well served by previous RAEs and the REF. They should not be forced to choose which unit to be assessed in, but could submit relevant outputs to two units e.g. a scholar who researches in History and English.

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:**

Our members felt very strongly about the issue of quantitative data: • No. This does not work for Humanities subjects. • This is inappropriate for History. It should only be used in the Sciences and Social Sciences. • I have no objection to quantitative data per se, but it is difficult to achieve with History – with long lead-ins to publication – and also, which metrics would one select? With a certain level of balance here this would be OK, but to simply go for quantitative data for a subject like history, with no wider set of considerations, I think will be quite damaging. In terms of citations, there are many small fields where research can have a great impact which feeds through into other disciplines – although simply looking at frequency of citations will not do justice to the contribution. Particularly in early modern or medieval studies, unlike modern history, or social sciences and hard sciences, the level of citations alone does not really compare with other subjects or reflect the traction work might receive. This should be weighted somehow according to the size of the subject area, where work is published and how it is received in reviews within academic journals to truly capture the nature of the research and its quality.

## 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:**

We feel that consistency with the original process is important. The sector is still learning how to maximise the benefits of its research, and changing the measurement process too soon will mean that behaviours are likely to change to take account of the new measurements.

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

This would be very much welcome, and our members generally supported this recommendation. As one member noted, impact needs to have a wider timescale and take recognition of portability for historians who change HEIs. In the past it was not acceptable for impact to be based on research carried out in previous employment. It also needs to recognise interdisciplinary research more.

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?**

It was generally felt that the two definitions were clear and helpful, and that the alignment of definitions would lead to more fairness in how the disciplines are treated.

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

These criteria are felt to be problematic and difficult to apply consistently across the panels. For example, our members felt that reach and significance needs to be interpreted more widely in History. It is unwise to pigeon-hole impact when historians are doing diverse research and outreach. Main panels must be the arbiters of definitions within the purview.

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

More and clearer guidance would be helpful – and models of good practice for collecting and collating impact evidence from such evidence would be a helpful addition to the REF guidance.

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?

**Comments:**

Our members had a mixed view of this issue and clearly it this needs to be given further thought. The problems related to the tensions between institutional support and academic independence. • Up to a point 'yes'. The key issue here is that the institution (unit) needs to demonstrate that the research and the impacts were supported by policies in that unit as part of its impact statement. • Impact should be shared proportionately between institutions • The REF needs to take cognisance of portability and the long-term research projects that historians carry out. • Yes. The best impact case studies are collectively-produced, unlike outputs which are often individually produced in History. The team and its home base should therefore own the impact case study. • Yes – but this must remain flexible. I think in principle it depends on the nature of the impact activity and the amount of institutional resources which have been invested. If we are talking about aspects of institutional outreach, the putting on of exhibitions etc. then certainly. Those aspects of impact which do not receive the same sort of infrastructural investment on behalf of the institution, or the underpinning research which goes alongside this, should be provided within a level of portability because I think the central question remains one of ownership and academic independence.

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?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comment.

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?

There were very few responses to this:

- One member supported the use of the same criteria to determine the number of case studies as was used for REF 2014.

However, another member noted that the suggested approach of including mandatory fields is clearly sensible. And for the smallest submissions (which can be excellent submissions) the requirement for 2 case studies was clearly a disproportionate burden on the unit and on the panel assessing the unit.

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:**

Based on the positive response above, this seems a fair approach. However, there were still some reservations as noted in 26 above.

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

This varied. As one member pointed out, the inclusion of details of funders is not necessarily appropriate as not all case-studies are based on funding, and so the inclusion of a funder field might lead to unfair assessment of the case study.

There was a general feeling that too much standardisation of the process, would reduce flexibility in our responses. If the fields are included, they should really be optional and not become part of the assessment process (in which case they are effectively mandatory, and they presuppose a certain kind of impact case study).

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?

This proposal is welcome and History should support this, as it reflects the variety of research and bodies of work undertaken in History and its allied disciplines. However, it also important that demonstrable quality needs defining. Using nationally recognised research in the REF seemed appropriate for History.

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

Yes

**Comments:**

This time frame takes good account of the kind of long term research that historians undertake.

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?

Members agreed that this is broadly to be welcomed:

- However, rigour would definitely need defining! It would be best to stick with nationally recognised research as the basis of underpinning research. Standards of rigour really relate to methodologies: these are best determined by main panels in each of the key domains.

We support the idea of measuring rigour, perhaps by reducing the two-star eligibility criterion to one-star. This might be particularly helpful for researchers working in collaboration with community projects.

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

Members generally felt that whilst further guidance about evidence is to be desired, demands for more audit data are not desirable:

- It was difficult to know how to quantify this in the REF. Historians agonised about how to evidence their impact and there was insufficient guidance about his. Sharing case studies helped, but we would rather see concrete evidence of acceptable evidence.

- Very clearly audit evidence should be available for all impact claims. But the submission of all of this data is probably a mistake. We recommend an audit process where random sampling tests the claims made.

We do not think this would be workable in view of the high volume of paperwork/files this would generate and the burden on staff.

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

Members generally felt that whilst further guidance about evidence is to be desired, demands for more audit data are not desirable:

- It was difficult to know how to quantify this in the REF. Historians agonised about how to evidence their impact and there was insufficient guidance about his. Sharing case studies helped, but we would rather see concrete evidence of acceptable evidence.
- Very clearly audit evidence should be available for all impact claims. But the submission of all of this data is probably a mistake. We recommend an audit process where random sampling tests the claims made.

We do not think this would be workable in view of the high volume of paperwork/files this would generate and the burden on staff.

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

The main concern here was in relation to timing. It is already late in the cycle for HEIs to adapt to the changes. Impact evidence takes a long time to develop and is time-consuming to collect – this needs a quick decision, not a drawn-out one.

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?

The key elements of any such provision must be:

That the research continues as research activity – i.e. If this is part of an ongoing research project, then it should be allowed.

That new impacts can be shown – i.e. that the impact claimed in 2021 is additional to that claimed in 2014.

## 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?

**Comments:**

There were mixed responses to this: • This would be difficult for historians if it was an absolute requirement • Yes – grant income, PhD completions, number of ECRs mentored etc. would speak objectively about a programme rather than sustained prose. • Repetition needs to be minimised, but whilst quantitative data might enable this, it can also create problems for smaller departments with limited resources.

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

Reporting of this varies across HEIs that teach history and so it would be problematic if an absolute requirement.

It might be better to have a more structured approach to some questions such as the numbers of colleagues running through the promotions schemes in the REF period (from ERC to SL, to Reader to Prof). But the issue with this kind of data is that it always favours larger units. The stats are pretty meaningless for units with fewer than 15 or so FTE staff.

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?

Yes, it needs to avoid metrics for History environment submissions for a start and let historians show a range of evidence. Some short descriptions of case studies of partnerships beyond the academy as part of the environment statement – but without overlapping with the impact cases – might be one way forward.

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

Yes

**Comments:**

Absolutely! The restrictions that journals place on historians are ridiculous! Academic historians are HEFCE funded and should stop having their research restricted by journals that demand cash for instance open access.

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

Not particularly, History privileges monographs and publishing houses need to make some return on their investment for publication. Digital – whether open access or not – should receive more value.

## Page 10: Institutional level assessment

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

There was general support for this suggestion:  
This is a useful suggestion because it connects the institutional policies much more firmly with the experiences of research staff on the ground, and is therefore to be welcomed.  
This would take account of the broad range of research undertaken by HEIs and is a commendable approach. It should encourage better support and funding for research within HEIs.

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

Inclusivity is important and recognition of start-up areas of research and early career researchers.

## 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?

If all research active staff are to be included this would be useful, but this is complicated. Not all units will necessarily find themselves selected for inclusion in an institution-level case study (how many case studies will there be at the higher level)? If a unit is not selected, does this disadvantage them, no matter what their other impacts might be? Much more clarity is needed on this proposal.

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?

**Comments:**

Our members had varied views on this: • Yes. It gives some continuity for longitudinal comparisons – and that is quite important. • No. It should be increased to 25% as promised in the previous REF! This would reduce outputs to 60%. • 20-25 per cent but no higher. After all, impact has to be based on research, which needs to be published in some way. Therefore the research and its publication needs to be privileged in terms of weighting. Yes. The impact of many pieces of historical research can be hard to quantify, and good research always takes time to develop and to translate into a set of impacts which can be measured. To increase the proportion given to impact, therefore, would damage the space needed for the production of difficult, high quality, historical research, thus the current weighting should remain.

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

**Comments:**

Again, there was not agreement on this, clearly more clarity is required. Yes – subject to the caveats above at Question 40. More is clarity is required here. NO - It should be 60%, 5%, 20% & 15%.

## Page 12: Proposed timetable for REF 2021

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

There are concerns about the way in which the timetable has been affected by the consultation process. We are now in early 2017 – and there will be further work after March to refine the proposals. In the meantime, time moves on. Is it fair to institutions who will need to make some adjustments to their data, their processes (and possibly their policies) in order to accommodate the very short time frame remaining? It is possible that the timeframe is actually too short?

## Page 13: Other

Q55. 44. Are there proposals not referred to above, or captured in your response so far, that you feel should be considered? If so, what are they and what is the rationale for their inclusion?

We have the following final comments (and strong feelings!) from members:

- We are uneasy about the potential for inequality being written into the system if all the proposals are adopted. I'm particularly concerned about the implications of proposals in paragraph 48.
- Special circumstances disproportionately affect women, carers, and disabled people who are under-represented in research roles. There are very significant implications (and probably unintended consequences) to not taking these things into account. Wanting to get rid of this category belies the equality agenda discussed in the sections on panel selection and is potentially retrograde.
- The REF (and the RAE preceding it) are an expensive political exercise that does not benefit anybody other than politicians. The quality of research is not decided by a panel - but the ongoing debate that is undertaken by the active experts in the discipline - the REF reduces research to an A-level paper competition that is getting ever more fretful over overall high results. Game playing and safe publishing are rife and fostered by its presence.

Further political toys, such as open access (making all research paid for by British Taxpayers available globally!) is the biggest practical political joke and only surpassed by trying to camouflage total ignorance of why humanity needs research behind a game of 'who happens to be cleverest at guessing where the goalposts are'.

It should also be noted that the response have been drawn from a number of our steering committee members. Inevitably this has led to some contradiction in some of the answers, particularly where I was not able to record a clear YES or NO response. Nevertheless, I/we hope that this document gives you a strong flavour of the concerns that our members have. I would like to stress that this represents the direct expression of the hugely varied needs and hence strengths of UK HEI. As one of our members noted: 'If such diversity cannot be catered for by the REF, then we should not seek to kill off diversity but to kill the REF, or at any rate change it to work for diversity'.

Finally, despite this variability, it should be noted that there is a very strong agreement that the non-portability issues needs to be revisited.

## 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.

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