REF2021

AUGUST 2017

Update from the UCL REF Team

INTRODUCTION

We have received many emails lately about the Research Excellence Framework asking for details around the submission criteria for the next exercise. In response, we thought that it would be helpful to give a detailed update on what we know so far, particularly in light of recent communications from HEFCE following the Stern Review and consultation.

Please note that other than the requirements for Open Access, until we have the final submission criteria next year, the models that HEFCE are proposing presently may still change, as they are still open for consultation and review.

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SCHEDULE

The next exercise will be REF2021 so if we assume that if it follows a similar model to REF2014, the timetable is likely to be as follows:

Indicative Timetable	
Late 2017	Appoint panels by Christmas, more detail to be agreed at start of 2018
Mid 2018	Publish guidance on submissions and panel criteria
Early 2019	Invite HEIs to make intention of submissions
31 July 2020	End of assessment period (for research impacts, the research environment and related data)
27 November 2020	Closing date for submissions
31 December 2020	End of publication period for publication of research outputs and outputs underpinning impact case studies
2021	Assessment year
December 2021	Publication of outcomes
Spring 2022	Publications of submissions and reports

CONSULTATION OUTCOMES
HEADLINES

On 19 July HEFCE held a webinar providing updates on REF 2021 presented by David Sweeney (HEFCE Director, Research and Knowledge Exchange) and Kim Hackett (REF Manager). They provided an overview of the consultation outcomes along with suggestions of 'direction of travel' for the shape of the next exercise.

Consultation Headlines:

- The funding bodies accept the Stern recommendations that **staff-submission should change**. It was agreed that submitted staff should only be those engaged in research activity but, despite criticism, it was felt there was no alternative to the use of contract status to determine eligibility;
- **The consultation responses strongly supported 'all-staff' inclusion**. The most compelling cases in favour were to do with staff morale and the consequences of exclusion. It was also felt that selection did not give a rounded view of activity;
- For REF2021 **selection will be restricted to independent researchers**;
- **Proposal to use HESA Cost Centres codes to automatically determine which UoAs staff should be submitted to** was strongly resisted and that notion **has been dropped.**

STAFF SUBMISSION

The webinar inferred that staff-selection is over in-line with the Stern recommendations. HEIs will instead have to agree on one of two options for the type of UoA submission that they make.

Submission Options

A /   **A 100% submission at UoA level**
B /   **An institutional 'Identification of Staff in of Scope' model** (ie non-100% submission at UoA level)

Although technically these options are still open for consultation, practically this dual-option model is clearly the preferred choice of the funding councils.

For those units choosing **Option A** the pool for staff eligibility will most likely be as follows:

- Teaching & Research or Research Staff;
- Independent Researchers;
- Those who are on a minimum of 0.2 FTE contract;
- Those where there is a substantive connection between the person & HEI (this will need to be evidenced through a statement about their connection).

Submission will be at UoA level so in practice at UCL we could have 35 units with a 100% submission and one unit with a non-100% submission. The audit of 100% submission will be based on HESA returns (as with intensity for REF2014). Even with a 100% submission, Codes of Practice will be required. These will mainly cover how output selection was made, but they will also need to refer to the fact the 100% submission route has been taken.

For those units that choose **Option B** auditable documentation will be required to demonstrate why those staff who are not being submitted to the REF are not in scope and those UoAs who adopt option B will need to provide at least:

- Evidence of agreement between HEI and staff of non-eligibility;
- Documentation including that which demonstrates career pathway or evidence from a workload model);
- Details of the process they have undertaken in their Codes of Practice.

The Identification of Staff in Scope model is felt to suit practitioner-based disciplines or other instances where staff may not be required to carry out research. This will clearly be the more burden intensive option, and for that reason alone is not expected to be applied widely.

It is likely that HEIs and UoAs will need to make a submission of intentions at an early stage in the process (likely to be mid 2018) as the number of staff to be put into the REF will determine the number of outputs required per FTE.

More details of this discussion can be found on the WonkHE Blog
**http://wonkhe.com/blogs/analysis-update-reforms-ref-2021/**

PORTABILITY

In terms of the contentious issue of non-portability of research outputs, very polarised views came out of the consultation. HEFCE have now presented the following models for consultation:

Model 1 / Both old and new HEIs can submit the same output and have credit for it (i.e. the institution where the research output was demonstrably generated and at which the member of staff was employed would be able to retain full credit. However, the credit would *also* go to the new institution).

Model 2/ A Hybrid model reliant on staff move dates
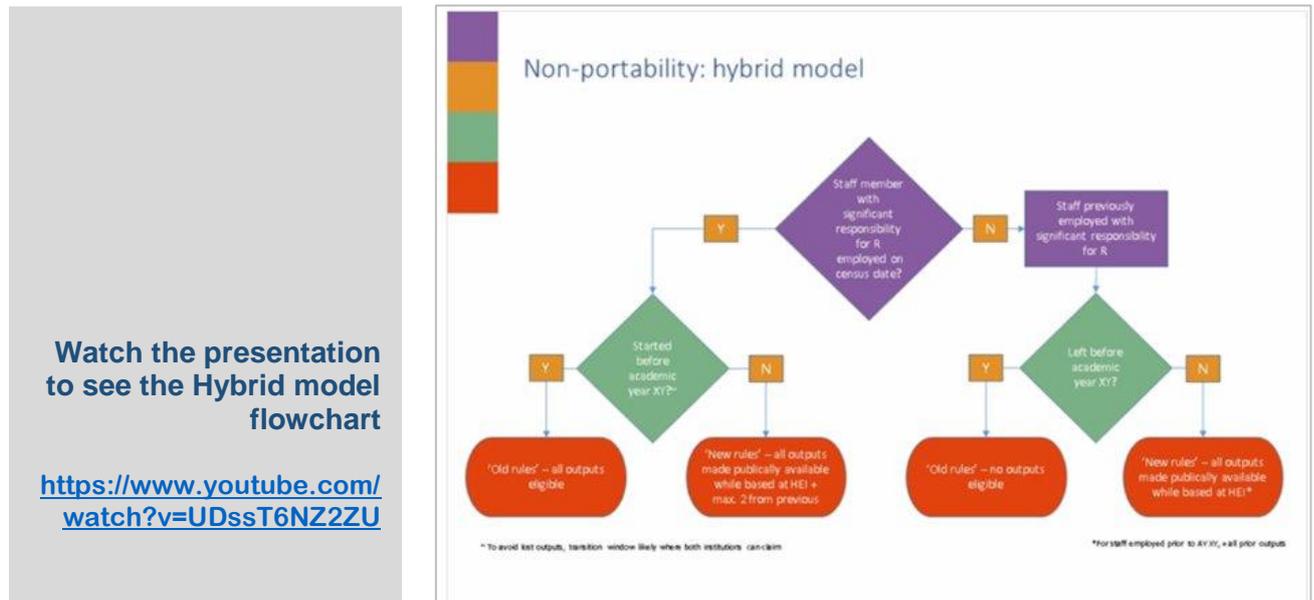
Watch the presentation to see the Hybrid model flowchart

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDssT6NZ2ZU

Non-portability: hybrid model

Both options have their pros and cons. With **model one** where both organisations (i.e. the previous and new HEI) can submit the paper, this will reduce burden but lose precision in the overall scoring in that it will facilitate double-counting. Double-counting already happens of course on multi-authored papers submitted by more than one HEI. The **Hybrid model** is more complicated and being reliant on staff move dates would be burden intensive.

HEFCE have stressed these options are still under consultation and that they still want input from HEIs. Discussions will take place through to September suggesting decisions will not be announced until late September or October at the earliest.

More details of this discussion can be found on the HEFCE blog
http://blog.hefce.ac.uk/2017/07/20/the-portability-or-non-portability-of-research

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OUTPUTS

The number of outputs to be submitted per head (or FTE) is still to be determined. We do know that there will be a minimum of 1 per person but the average numbers and maximum are still to be agreed. The numbers will be dependent on the number of FTEs that HEIs are intending to submit as the intention is still to keep the overall number of outputs submitted to the exercise similar to the number that went to REF2014.

The partial retaining of the link between staff and outputs does mean that there will still need to be equality and diversity measures in place (such as Codes of Practice and reductions in the number of outputs required where circumstances apply) and data on representativeness in environment statements.

MAIN PANEL APPOINTMENTS

As I am sure you are aware, the main panel chairs for REF2021 have been appointed and are:

- **Main Panel A: Medicine, health and life sciences**
  Professor John Iredale, Pro Vice-Chancellor Health, University of Bristol

- **Main Panel B: Physical sciences, engineering and mathematics**
  Professor David Price, Vice-Provost (Research), University College London

- **Main Panel C: Social sciences**
  Professor Jane Millar OBE, Professor of Social Policy and former Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, University of Bath.

- **Main Panel D: Arts and humanities**
  Professor Dinah Birch CBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, University of Liverpool

We would of course like to congratulate Professor Price on his appointment.

REF OPEN ACCESS POLICY

Reports on compliance with the REF open access policy continue to be sent out to Faculty Deans, Heads of Department and other department contacts once a month. Following the last set of faculty compliance figures (below), concerned faculties and departments have discussed with the Open Access Team how best to improve authors' engagement with the REF policy. In some faculties 200-300 papers are already ineligible for the REF because they were not uploaded to RPS within 3 months of the first online publication date. Please note:

- The message "This publication is live and available in the repository" in RPS does *not* indicate that a paper has been uploaded. Authors should make sure they understand how to check whether their papers have been uploaded. See the guide "Has my paper been uploaded" on this page: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/open-access/deposit;
- There is an exception for papers published as Gold open access with a licence allowing re-use. All other papers should be uploaded. Some journals, such as Nature and Science, do not offer a Gold open access option; the manuscripts must be uploaded to RPS;
- The compliance figures only show papers that authors have recorded in RPS. The Open Access Team sends engagement reports to departments, showing authors who do not

appear to be using RPS. Contact the Open Access Team (open-access@ucl.ac.uk) for information about how to use these reports;

- Contact the Open Access Team if you would like to receive copies of the compliance and engagement reports or for any other OA matter.
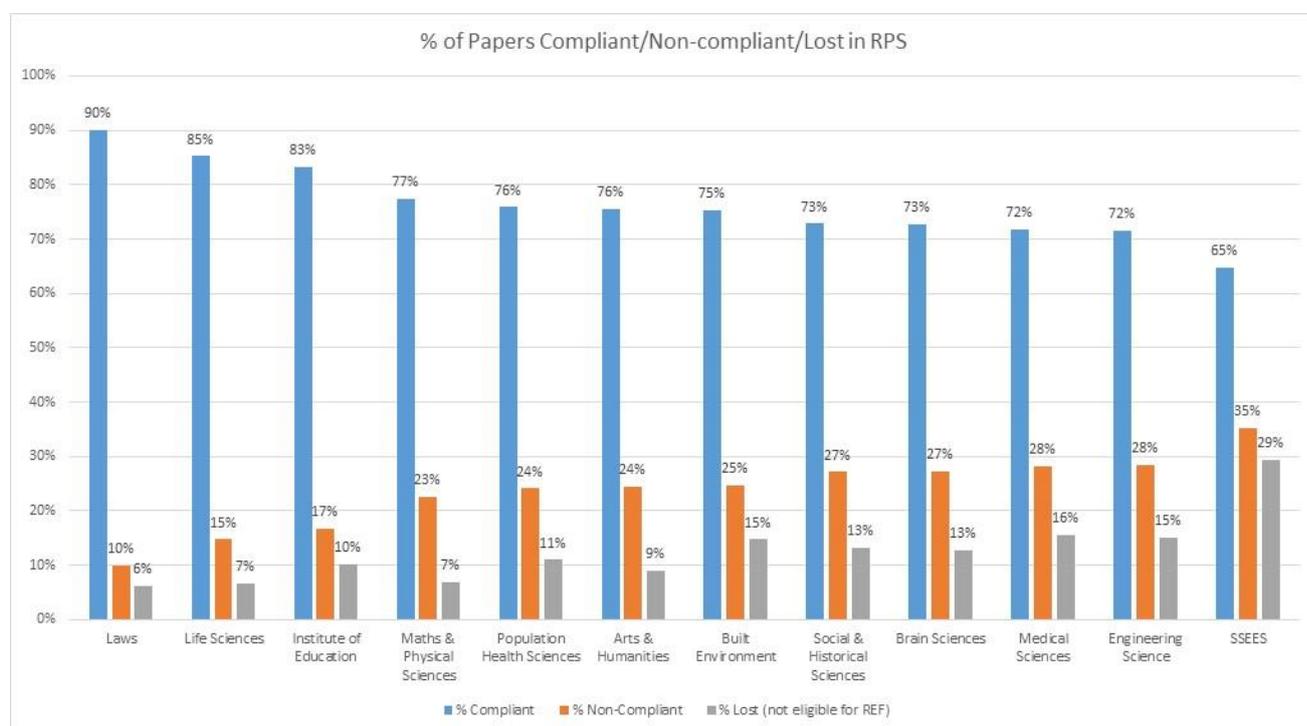
IMPACT CASE STUDIES

HEFCE have not yet discussed the impact issues from the consultation so we are in the dark on many of these. However, we do expect the case study element to be broadly similar to REF2014. For example the definition of 'impact' is unlikely to change significantly and we expect we will need a similar number of case studies overall.

In UCL, the Research Impact Curation and Support team have been meeting hundreds of researchers over the last year or so who may have promising case studies and will be working with Faculties to create initial shortlists by early 2018. The list is a starting point and will be grown, monitored and honed as we approach 2020 and most Faculties have appointed or are in the process of appointing a REF Faculty Impact Lead. If you have outstanding examples of REF-eligible impact (see http://www.ucl.ac.uk/impact/internal-impact-resources/ref-and-impact) we may have missed let us know at rics@ucl.ac.uk.

RPS UPDATE

The RPS live system was upgraded to version 5.3 during June. All the RPS environments (including the UAT test system and the Pre-Production version) have the current live production data on them.

The RPS Steering Group will confirm the date of the next upgrade over the next few weeks. Our licence with Symplectic, from whom we purchase the system, has been updated to the full Enterprise version and this activates the Assessment and Impact Modules within RPS. The modules are currently being tested and guidance will be shared shortly on how you will be able to use RPS for internal assessment of outputs.