

REF 2029 Town Hall

Codes of practice guidance update – output selection

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What is the Research Excellence Framework?

REF is owned and led by the four UK higher education funding bodies



- It:
 - informs allocation of around £2bn of block-grant funding each year
 - provides accountability for public investment in research
 - continually evolves, alongside our research base
 - (given the connection to allocation of funds) inevitably drives behaviour and therefore is a significant policy instrument across the UK

Principles and functions for REF 2029:

1. REF should fulfil the following purposes:

- **Inform the allocation** of block-grant research funding to HEIs based on research quality
- Provide **accountability for public investment** in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment
- Provide **insight into the health of research** in HEIs in the UK.

2. REF should underpin:

- A research system that produces **high-quality, rigorous** research that is **open** to all;
- An **inclusive and collaborative** research system that supports a diversity of people, ideas, institutions, methodologies, outputs, and activities; and
- An **engaged and impactful** research system that connects research with wider society to bring about positive socio-economic change.

3. REF decision making should be driven by:

- **Robustness** of assessment outcomes
- Impact of the system on **research culture**
- Ensuring that the **bureaucratic burden** of the system is proportionate.

From Initial Decisions published in June 2023.

Overview

- **Introduction to Code of Practice (CoP)**
 - Requirement for REF 2029
 - Sets a minimum standard for participation
 - Must be approved by funding bodies

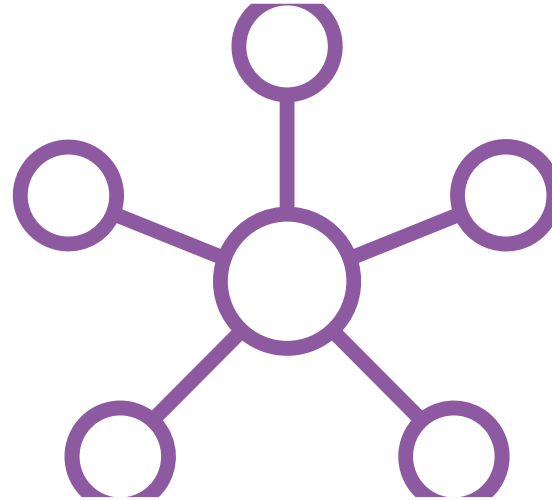
Principles of CoP

CoP built on three core principles:



Robustness

Accurate reflection
of the sector



Transparency

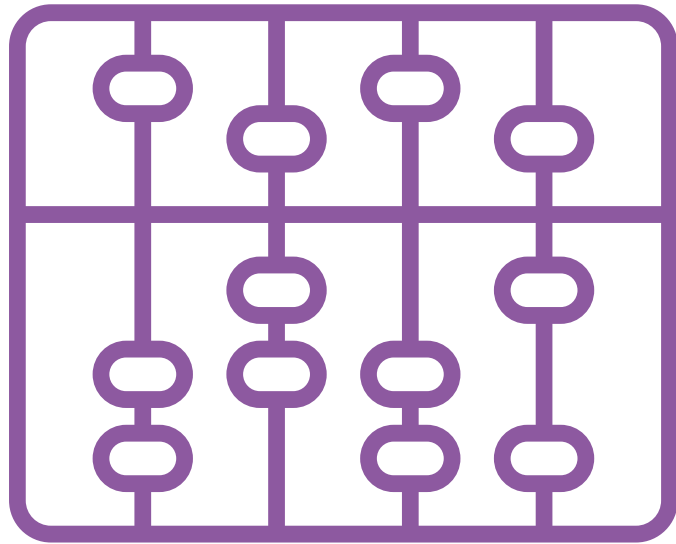
Clear decision-
making processes



Equity and inclusivity

Fair and impartial
decisions, promoting
diversity

CoP Guidance Modules



Volume measure

January 2025



Output selection

June 2025

CoP Guidance

- All REF 2029 guidance will be formally finalised in 2026 and therefore guidance modules may be subject to small revisions in the interim.
- However, we do not envisage substantial change to the CoP guidance. We may make clarifications where necessary.

CoP Submission and Approval

- **Submission Window Deadlines:**

- 1 August 2025: aiming for approved CoPs by November 2025
- 3 October 2025: aiming for approved CoPs by January 2026
- 5 December 2025: aiming for approved CoPs by March 2026
- 6 February 2026: aiming for approved CoPs by May 2026
- **ADDITIONAL WINDOW TO BE ADDED IN SUMMER 2026**

- **Approval Timeline:** Maximum 3 months

Update to research independence

Appeals

13.4.2 - A query or appeals process is not necessary in cases where the individual's job description at the time of appointment, or where there has been no change in expectation, explicitly states a primary purpose of supporting the research of others or carrying out another's research plan, such as can be the case with Research Assistants.

Policies and procedures for selection of outputs for submission

12.5 Policies and procedures for identifying substantive link to outputs

12.6 Policies and procedures for selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

12.7 Policies and Procedures for assigning outputs to UoA(s)

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Policies and procedures for selection of outputs for submission cont..

12.8 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

- HEIs should outline how **procedures** have enabled and supported diverse output types in their disciplinary context and how these have been **considered** for selection (as per sub-section 5.6 in the CKU guidance).
- This should include a description of the processes used to encourage and recognise diverse research outputs and how this reflects their commitment to responsible research assessment.

Policies and procedures for selection of outputs for submission cont..

12.9 Procedures for ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken within the submitting unit during the REF period

- The CoP should outline a transparent, robust and equitable and inclusive process
- the procedures should outline how the following indicators of representation will be considered in submissions
 - Submitted outputs are reflective of the research strategies and structures of the submitting unit over the REF period, including contributions to large-scale research programs, networks, or national/global initiatives.
 - Submitted outputs reflect the diversity of research outputs produced within the submitting unit including how different and diverse types of research are included in the submission.
 - Submitted outputs reflect contributions from multidisciplinary collaborations and institutional partnerships, supporting sustainable contributions to knowledge and understanding.

Policies and procedures for selection of outputs for submission cont..

12.10 Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

- The funding bodies expect institutions to adopt responsible research assessment practices in the selection of outputs for submission.
- While a specific approach is not prescribed, institutions should outline how their selection processes reflect principles of equality, fairness and transparency and institutions are encouraged to consider established frameworks
- Institutions should explain how they do or do not use quantitative indicators in decision making, and how this aligns with their broader research assessment values.

EIA guidance

Guidance has been developed on conducting an EIA in REF 2029

The guidance includes information about the relevant equalities legislation

Key messages

- An EIA is required as part of the Code of Practice.
- REF processes are public functions
- **The focus is on institutional process**
- Consistent criteria can still create unequal outcomes
- EIAs should assess both process design and impact.
- The EIA is a live document.
- The EIA may be revisited if policies or procedures change

Template

Updated to include the CKU elements of the CoP

Some queries to date

- Structure
- EIA
- Updates

Thank you and stay in touch

- Use QR code to sign up for **REF updates** straight to your inbox.
- Email us at **info@ref.ac.uk** if you have any suggestions about how we can improve our guidance for you.

