Dear [Name],

Freedom of Information request: Subject Cost Weights - ref UKRI – 2018/0138 RE

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request submitted on the 4th September 2018 in which you requested the following:

Your Request:

Please could you send me:

1. Your definitive document that sets out the analysis and principles that led you to the subject cost weightings for REF2014

2. Any update you may have written for REF 2021

3. And could you also send me these weightings by each unit of assessment.

4. These are a list of HRCS illnesses
   Rheumatoid arthritis
   Osteoarthritis
   Gout
   Back and neck pain
   Other musculoskeletal disorders
   Which unit of assessment would you expect to find researchers into these fields?

Our response:

I can confirm that UKRI holds some of the information that you have requested. Our response is detailed below:

1. Your definitive document that sets out the analysis and principles that led you to the subject cost weightings for REF2014

   The REF is not a costing process. The REF provides research quality information which informs the separate research funding allocations of the four UK funding bodies. Research England (RE) is the funding body for England and a part of UK Research and Innovation
(UKRI). The other three funding bodies are not part of UKRI and any queries about their processes must be directed to them. The remainder of this response relates solely to England.

Research England was created in March 30th 2018. Prior to that date, its research funding functions were carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

We are not aware of a single document which could be described as the definitive account of the rationale for the cost weights employed in the funding allocations based on the 2014 REF.

The rationale for the current system of grouping subjects into three cost bands dates back to 1997. It is outlined in the attached HEFCE circular letter


Decisions on the allocation of the REF2014 Units of Assessment to cost bands are likely to have been taken by HEFCE in January, February or March 2015. RE does not hold the relevant Board Papers and they are listed as exempt from publication on the archived HEFCE website. It is possible that they were considered exempt for a limited period (probably until universities and colleges had been advised of their funding allocations) and that publication ought to have happened when the exemption expired. The Office for Students – which acts as the successor body to HEFCE for most governance purposes – is likely to hold a full record of HEFCE Board Papers and may take a different view on disclosure to HEFCE.

2. Any update you may have written for REF 2021

No decisions have been taken concerning cost weights in the years after REF2021. Cost weights have never been decided prior to the completion of the REF (or its predecessor the RAE) and there are no plans to do so in the current cycle.

3. Could you also send me these weightings by each unit of assessment

The current cost weights are given below. Please note that these are the weights employed in the current academic year in conjunction with REF2014 data. There are no weightings for use with REF 2021 data for reasons described above.


4. These are a list of HRCS illnesses (Rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, back and neck pain, other musculoskeletal disorders). Which unit of assessment would you expect to find researchers into these fields?

The scope of each REF panel is outlined in the Panel Criteria and Working Methods. The 2014 version – underpinning the exercise used in current funding allocations - is in the public domain.

https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/pubs/2012-01/

The REF 2021 criteria are available in draft form. They are the subject of a live consultation. The final criteria will be published later this year.
The submitting institution decides which panel work is assigned to. However, as it is common for work to fall within the scope of more than one panel, processes exist for cross-referring work or making use of specialist advice where panels need this in order to make an assessment.

If you have any queries about this response please contact me, or if you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to request a review of our decision, please write to:

**Complaints Officer**
UK Research and Innovation
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon
SN2 1FL
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Enquiry/Information Line: Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745. Further information about the Office of the Information Commissioner can be found at [http://www.ico.gov.uk/](http://www.ico.gov.uk/)

Yours sincerely,

**Information Manager**
UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team
Email: foi@ukri.org