

Annex A: Summary of initial decisions and areas for further consultation

	Decisions	Areas for further consultation	Means of consultation
Timing	The next assessment exercise will take place in 2028. Submissions will be made in late 2027 and outcomes will be announced in December 2028.	None	N/A
Volume measure	Institutions will not submit staff to REF 2028	What practical challenges may institutions face in implementing these changes?	Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)
	Staff data will be gathered directly from HESA to determine the volume		
	REF 2021 staff eligibility criteria will be used to identify staff posts that contribute to the volume measure	How might the funding bodies mitigate against these challenges?	
	The funding bodies will calculate the volume using an average FTE of eligible staff across AYs 25/26 and 26/27	What would be the impact of these changes on individual researchers and particularly those with protected characteristics?	
	Institutions will be able to request an exemption from submission for very small disciplinary areas		
	Institutions will be able to undertake a light-touch refresh of their REF 2021 Codes of Practice, where appropriate		
Outputs submission	REF 2028 will fully break the link between individual staff members and unit submissions	What impact would these changes have on individual researchers and particularly those with protected characteristics? What impact would these changes have on institutions in preparing output submission? What might be the unintended consequences of these changes?	Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)
	In REF 2028, HEIs will be required to submit 2.5 outputs per FTE of volume-contributing staff in each disciplinary area where they have activity	None	N/A

	<p>Institutions may submit outputs produced by any staff member where there is a demonstrable and substantive link to the submitting institution within the REF assessment period</p>	<p>What may be the unintended consequences of allowing the submission of outputs produced by those on non-academic or teaching-only contracts?</p> <p>Should outputs sole-authored by postgraduate research students be eligible for submission? If so, should this include PhD theses?</p> <p>What would be appropriate indicators of a demonstrable and substantive link to the submitting institution?</p>	<p>Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)</p>
	<p>Institutions will be able to submit one output to multiple submissions, provided it falls within the UOA descriptors</p>	<p>Do the proposed arrangements for co-authored outputs strike the right balance between supporting collaboration and ensuring that assessment focuses on the work of the unit?</p> <p>Are there any further considerations around co-authored outputs that need be taken into account?</p>	<p>Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)</p>
	<p>There will be no minimum or maximum output requirements for individual staff members. However, units will be required to explain how their submitted output pool is representative of the research undertaken within the disciplinary area</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>Given there is no minimum output requirement for volume-contributing staff there is no need for a process to account for individual equality-related circumstances</p> <p>REF 2028 will include consideration of the impact of equality-related circumstances within an overall process for determining potential reductions in output requirements at submission level. The process will not be</p>	<p>What impact would changes to staff and unit circumstances have on individual researchers and particularly those with protected characteristics?</p>	<p>Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)</p>

	based on the aggregation of individual equality-related circumstances.		
Open access	UKRI open access compliant publications will be considered to meet the REF 2028 open access requirements without additional action from the author and/or institution	The funding bodies will consult with the sector before developing the full REF 2028 open access policy	Open access consultation (Autumn/Winter 2023/24)
	Until new policies come into force, institutions should continue to follow REF 2021 open access policies	None	N/A
People, culture and environment	The focus of the environment element will be expanded to People, Culture and Environment	None	N/A
	This element will make up 25% of the overall quality profile	None	N/A
	People, Culture and Environment will be assessed at both institution level and disciplinary level	The content of each statement will be determined in the criteria-setting phase in consultation with the expert panels and the wider sector	Consultation on Guidance on submissions and Panel criteria (Winter 2024/25)
	The score for the institutional-level statement will constitute at least 20% of the People, Culture and Environment sub-profile for each submission. It will also be published separately to ensure transparency	The contribution of the institutional-level statement to the discipline-level quality sub-profile will be agreed dependent on the content of each statement	
	The format of the people, culture and environment statement will move towards a more tightly defined, questionnaire-style template	Further work to identify suitable metrics/data/indicators for both unit and institutional-level statements is planned and will include a strong consultative component with the sector	Commissioned exploration of metrics/data/indicators (Autumn/winter 2023)
	There will be data and evidence requirements to ensure that the statements focus on demonstrable outcomes		
Contribution to knowledge and understanding	The assessment of outputs will be expanded to include the assessment of a unit's contribution to knowledge and understanding	None	N/A
	This element will include assessment of outputs and a structured explanatory statement	None	N/A

	The Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding element will make up 50% of a unit's quality profile	None	N/A
	The structured statement will make up at least 10% of the quality sub-profile for this assessment element	We will consult with the main- and sub-panels on the appropriate contribution of the statement in the context of specific disciplines	Consultation on Guidance on submissions and Panel criteria (Winter 2024/25)
	The explanatory statement will require HEIs to outline: - their wider contribution to knowledge and understanding in the disciplinary area, supported by evidence and data - the contributions that enable the research of others outside the HEI - how the outputs submitted are representative of the research undertaken within the disciplinary area	Further work to identify suitable metrics/data/indicators for the explanatory statement is planned and will include a strong consultative component with the sector.	Commissioned exploration of metrics/data/indicators (Autumn/winter 2023)
		We will consult with the main- and sub-panels on the appropriate content of the statement in the context of specific disciplines	Consultation on Guidance on submissions and Panel criteria (Winter 2024/25)
Engagement and impact	The 'impact' element will be expanded to Engagement and Impact	None	N/A
	This element will include assessment of impact case studies and a structured explanatory statement which sets out the wider contribution research activities to society and the economy	Further work to identify suitable metrics/data/indicators for the explanatory statement is planned and will include a strong consultative component with the sector.	Commissioned exploration of metrics/data/indicators (Autumn/winter 2023)
		We will consult with the main- and sub-panels on the appropriate content of the statement in the context of specific disciplines	Consultation on Guidance on submissions and Panel criteria (Winter 2024/25)
	The Engagement and impact element will make up 25% of a unit's quality profile	None	N/A
	The structured statement will make up at least 20% of the quality sub-profile for this assessment element. The funding bodies intend to weight the statement on a sliding scale, proportionate	To what extent do you support weighting the impact statement on a sliding scale in proportion to the number of case studies submitted?	Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)

	to the number of case studies submitted to ensure that its contribution to the sub-profile is no less than that of a single impact case study		
	<p>The number of case studies required in each submission will be determined by the average FTE of volume-contributing staff in the unit.</p> <p>Institutions will be required to submit a minimum of one impact case study per disciplinary submission.</p> <p>The funding bodies propose to revise the thresholds between case study requirements.</p>	<p>What will be the impact of reducing the minimum number to one?</p> <p>What will be the impact of revising the thresholds between case study requirements?</p>	Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)
	In REF 2028, units will no longer be required to demonstrate that the research underpinning impact case studies is of minimum 2* quality	None	N/A
Unit of Assessment structure	REF 2028 will retain the REF 2021 Unit of Assessment structure and will include advisory panels on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Interdisciplinary research	The funding bodies invite views from institutions and disciplinary communities on any disciplinary developments since REF 2021 that would require changes to be made to the UOA structure.	Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)
	A separate panel will be appointed to undertake assessment of the institutional-level People, Culture and Environment statement	None	N/A
Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic	The funding bodies intend to retain the statements on Covid impact that were used in REF 2021, and to require some consideration of how Covid impacts have been addressed in output selection as part of Codes of Practice	<p>What is your view on the proposed measures to take into account the impact of the Covid pandemic?</p> <p>What other measures should the funding bodies consider to take into account the impact of the Covid pandemic?</p>	Initial decisions consultation (summer/autumn 2023)