



Research
England

Circular letter

Update on REF 2029 People, Culture and Environment (PCE)

To	Heads of Research England-funded Higher Education Providers
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Enquiries to	info@ref.ac.uk

Dear Vice-Chancellor or Principal

People, Culture and Environment in REF 2029

1. The REF website today contains an update on work commissioned and plans agreed by the REF Steering Group in relation to the People, Culture and Environment (PCE) element of REF 2029. This can be accessed here <https://ref.ac.uk/news/people-culture-and-environment-update-january-2024/>.
2. Following a commissioning exercise launched in autumn 2023, the REF Steering Group has announced that independent research and consulting organisation Technopolis has been contracted to develop indicators that could be used for the assessment of PCE in REF 2029. Technopolis will engage extensively with the research community to co-develop a shortlist of indicators to be used to evidence and support institutions' REF 2029 PCE submissions as part of a structured questionnaire.
3. Throughout the last months of 2023, UK funding bodies' staff have worked with our UK REF Team to host and participate in a series of meetings, round-tables and discussions to hear the community's views on the PCE element of the next REF. Hundreds of people from across the sector engaged. In addition, 150 responses were received to the invitation to submit written input to the assessment of PCE. Overall, the community has expressed clear support for the principle of an increased emphasis on PCE in the next REF, while outlining concern around the need for careful consideration of the reporting burden on the sector and the potential dangers of metricising culture or prescribing what good looks like.

4. The REF Steering Group is committed to the development of a robust set of indicators and a robust process for assessment of PCE within REF. Therefore, the extended timeframe announced in December 2023 will also be used for more in-depth testing of the indicators developed. A pilot will be undertaken which will involve the drafting of example PCE submissions by a sample of higher education institutions (HEIs) for assessment by pilot panels in a selected number of Units of Assessment (UoAs).
5. Initial details on the PCE indicators project and the pilot, and a revised timeline for REF 2029, can be found on the REF 2029 website <https://www.ref.ac.uk/about/timetable/>. Further details on how to engage with the pilot will be published in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dame Jessica Corner
Executive Chair