

REF 03.2011
July 2011

Responses to the consultation should be completed online by 5 October 2011

This document sets out the draft assessment criteria and working methods of the REF 2014 panels, for consultation. The finalised criteria and working methods will be published in early 2012.

Consultation on draft panel criteria and working methods



Higher Education Funding Council for England
Scottish Funding Council
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland

Consultation on draft panel criteria and working methods

To	Heads of publicly funded higher education institutions in the UK Academic subject associations Organisations with an interest in commissioning or using academic research, including businesses, public sector bodies, charities and other third-sector organisations
Of interest to those responsible for	Research
Reference	REF 03.2011
Publication date	July 2011
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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This document sets out the draft assessment criteria and working methods of the main and sub-panels for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), for consultation.
2. The final panel criteria and working methods will be published in early 2012. Taken together with 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions' (REF 02.2011), which was published earlier this month, they give a comprehensive description of the information required in submissions to the REF, and how the REF panels will assess submissions.

Key points

3. The REF is a process of expert review. Expert sub-panels for each of 36 units of assessment (UOAs) will carry out the assessment, working under the leadership and guidance of four main panels.
4. UK higher education institutions (HEIs) will be invited to make submissions by 29 November 2013. The REF main and sub-panels will assess submissions during 2014, and results will be published in December 2014. The results will inform the allocation of research funding by the UK higher education funding bodies, from 2015-16.
5. This document sets out a generic statement of criteria and panel procedures (Part 1), and a statement of the criteria and working methods of each of the four main panels (Part 2 – these are available for download alongside this document at www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/03_11/).

Action required

6. Please respond to this consultation by Wednesday 5 October 2011 using the online form. This can be accessed alongside this document at www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/03_11/

Further information

7. Further information about the REF is available at www.ref.ac.uk.
8. Enquiries from members of staff at UK higher education institutions should be directed in the first instance to their institutional REF contact. These contacts for each institution are listed at www.ref.ac.uk under Contact.
9. Other enquiries should be addressed to info@ref.ac.uk.

Introduction

10. This document sets out the draft assessment criteria and working methods of the main and sub-panels for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), for consultation. It sets out the draft generic assessment criteria and common procedures to be followed by all panels, and a draft statement of the criteria and working methods to be employed by each of the four main panels and their sub-panels.

11. The questions for consultation are shown at Annex A – responses should be completed online via the link at the REF publication 03.2011, which can be accessed at www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/.

12. Each main panel has been instructed to develop a common set of criteria and working methods for its group of sub-panels. Distinct criteria or approaches for particular sub-panels will only be permitted where they are justified by differences in the nature of research in the disciplines concerned. This approach reflects feedback from the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) that greater consistency across the exercise is desirable.

13. The REF team provided guidance to the panels on developing their criteria and working methods. 'Guidance to panels' is available at www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/.

14. Following this consultation, the final criteria and working methods will be published in early 2012. Panels will not be permitted to depart from the final criteria once published, other than in exceptional circumstances that cannot be accommodated within the published framework. In such cases, we will publish the reason and details of the change as an amendment.

15. An overview of the REF assessment framework and guidance to institutions on preparing their submissions, including the data requirements and definitions that apply, are set out in 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions' (REF 02.2011). That publication together with the final panel criteria and working methods will describe comprehensively the data required in submissions, and how panels will use the data and apply the criteria in undertaking their assessments. We may issue supplements to the guidance at later dates to clarify points of detail regarding submissions, but such supplements will not request any new items of data.

Part 1: Generic statement of assessment criteria and panel procedures

The Research Excellence Framework

16. The Research Excellence Framework is the new system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions in the UK. It replaces the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which was last conducted in 2008.

17. The purpose of the REF, the general principles governing its conduct, and an overview of the REF framework are set out in Part 1 of REF 02.2011, 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions' (hereafter 'guidance on submissions').

Expert panels

18. The REF will be a process of expert review, with discipline-based expert panels assessing submissions made by HEIs in 36 units of assessment (UOAs). An expert sub-panel for each of the 36 UOAs will conduct a detailed assessment of submissions in its UOA. The sub-panels will work under the leadership and guidance of four main panels: Main Panels A, B, C and D.

19. In brief, the sub-panels are responsible for:

- assessing each submission made in its UOA and recommending the outcomes for each submission to the main panel
- contributing to the criteria and working methods of their main panels.

The four main panels are responsible for:

- developing the panel criteria and working methods
- ensuring adherence to the published procedures and consistent application of the overall assessment standards by the sub-panels
- signing off the outcomes of the assessment.

The roles and responsibilities of the main and sub-panels are described fully at Annex B.

20. The main and sub-panels were appointed by the four UK funding bodies through an open process of nominations, as described in 'Units of assessment and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 01.2010). As we indicated in REF 01.2010, we have sought to ensure that the membership of the main and sub-panels comprises individuals who have experience in conducting, managing and assessing high quality research, as well as experts who are well-equipped to participate in the assessment of research impact from a private, public and third sector perspective. In appointing the panels, due regard was given to the desirability of ensuring that the overall body of members reflects the diversity of the research community.

21. The membership of each panel is at www.ref.ac.uk under Expert panels.

22. During 2013, additional assessors will be appointed to extend the breadth and depth of expertise on the sub-panels, and their details will be published. Assessors will have the following expertise and input:

- a. Those with professional experience of making use of, applying or benefiting from academic research, to participate in particular in assessing the impact elements of submissions.
- b. Practising researchers with specific expertise, to participate in assessing research outputs.

23. Assessors will play a full and equal role to sub-panel members in developing the sub-profiles for either the impact or outputs element of the assessment. They will be fully briefed and will attend panel meetings as necessary. The process for appointing assessors is at Annex C.

24. The main and sub-panels will undertake their roles within the common framework for assessment set out in 'guidance on submissions' (Part 1) and the generic statement of criteria and panel procedures (Part 1 of this document). Part 2 of this document sets out in more detail the criteria and working methods that each of the main panels and its sub-panels will employ when assessing submissions.

Submissions and units of assessment

25. Part 2 of this document provides draft descriptors of each UOA (see Section 1 of each of the main panels' draft statements of criteria and working methods). A list of the 36 UOAs is also available at Annex D of 'guidance on submissions'.

26. Institutions will be invited to make submissions by 29 November 2013, in each UOA they elect to submit in. Each submission must contain, in summary:

- a. **REF1a/b/c:** Information on staff in post on the census date, 31 October 2013, selected by the institution to be included in the submission.
- b. **REF2:** Details of publications and other forms of assessable output which they have produced during the publication period (1 January 2008 to 31 December 2013). Up to four outputs must be listed against each member of staff included in the submission.
- c. **REF3a/b:** A completed template describing the submitted unit's approach during the assessment period (1 January 2008 to 31 July 2013) to enabling impact from its research, and case studies describing specific examples of impacts achieved during the assessment period, underpinned by excellent research in the period 1 January 1993 to 31 December 2013.
- d. **REF4a/b/c:** Data about research doctoral degrees awarded and research income related to the period 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2013.
- e. **REF5:** A completed template describing the research environment, related to the period 1 January 2008 to 31 July 2013.

27. The generic eligibility definitions and data requirements set out in 'guidance on submissions' apply to all submissions.

Multiple submissions

28. Institutions will normally make one submission in each UOA they submit in. They may exceptionally, and only with prior permission from the REF manager, make more than one submission (multiple submissions) in the same UOA. All requests for multiple submissions will be considered against the generic criteria set out in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 50-51). The draft panel criteria in Part 2 indicate the extent to which each main panel expects requests for multiple submissions in their UOAs, given the nature of the disciplines covered. Part 2 also states any additional criteria that will need to be satisfied when requesting multiple submissions in the respective UOAs.

Cross-referral of parts of submissions

29. Parts of submissions may be cross-referred to other sub-panels for advice where the relevant main and sub-panel chairs advise that this is necessary. The generic procedures for cross-referral are set out in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraph 75d). Within this framework, Part 2 of this document provides further details about each main panel's approach to cross-referring parts of submissions.

Assessment criteria

30. As with previous RAEs, the assessment process is based on expert review. Each sub-panel will examine the submissions made in its UOA, taking into account all the evidence presented. Each sub-panel will use its professional collective judgement to form an overall view about each submission and recommend to the main panel an overall quality profile to be awarded to each submission made in its UOA.

31. The definitions of the starred levels in the overall quality profile are below.

Table 1: Overall quality profile: Definitions of starred levels

Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

32. In forming their overall quality judgements, the sub-panels will assess three distinct elements of each submission – outputs, impact and environment – against the following generic criteria:

- a. **Outputs:** The sub-panels will assess the quality of submitted research outputs in terms of their 'originality, significance and rigour', with reference to international research quality standards. This element will carry a weighting of **65 per cent** in the overall outcome awarded to each submission.
- b. **Impact:** The sub-panels will assess the 'reach and significance' of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture that were underpinned by excellent research conducted in the submitted unit, as well as the submitted unit's approach to enabling impact from its research. This element will carry a weighting of **20 per cent**.
- c. **Environment:** The sub-panels will assess the research environment in terms of its 'vitality and sustainability', including its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. This element will carry a weighting of **15 per cent**.

33. All sub-panels will apply these generic assessment criteria and the associated weightings for each element, in forming the overall quality profiles to recommend to their main panel.

Assessment process

34. Sub-panels will assess all of the components of submissions: research outputs, impact and the research environment (including data on the environment). This reflects an underpinning principle that sub-panels will assess each submission in the round. They will not make collective judgements about the contributions of individual researchers to a submission but about a range of information relating to the unit being assessed.

35. When assessing a submission sub-panels will develop a 'sub-profile' for each of the three elements (outputs, impact and environment). The sub-profiles will show the proportions of activity judged to meet each of four starred levels (defined at Tables 4 to 6). The three sub-profiles will be combined into an overall quality profile, by assigning the weightings at paragraph 32. An explanation of the method for combining the sub-profiles is at Annex B of 'guidance on submissions'.

36. In recommending the overall quality profile of each submission to its main panel, each sub-panel will:

- a. Reach a collective decision, within the framework of the exercise and in accordance with the published statement of criteria and working methods. Sub-panels will debate the reasoning behind the quality profiles in sufficient detail to reach collective conclusions, and will make recommendations to the main panel on the basis of their collective judgements. Sub-panels will seek to achieve a consensus on all the overall quality profiles to be recommended to its main panel. If a consensus cannot be achieved, decisions will be taken by majority vote, with the chair holding a casting vote.

- b. Confirm to the main panel that each submission has been assessed against the published criteria for that UOA (including in cases where parts of submissions have been cross-referred to other sub-panels for advice).
- c. Confirm that each submission has been examined in sufficient detail to form robust judgements, and that appropriate expertise has been deployed in assessing submissions.

37. When debating and endorsing the quality profiles recommended by its sub-panels, each main panel will confirm that the assessment procedures and criteria have been applied by each sub-panel within its remit in accordance with the published statements of criteria and working methods, and that the sub-panels have consistently applied the overall standards of assessment.

38. The working methods of each main panel and its group of sub-panels are set out in more detail in Part 2.

Assessment outcomes

39. The primary outcome of the panels' work will be an overall quality profile awarded to each submission. Sub-panels will recommend the overall quality profiles to their main panel, and each main panel will provide the REF team with a complete set of quality profiles awarded to each submission made in its group of UOAs, for publication in December 2014.

40. The overall quality profiles will show the proportion of each submission that is judged to meet each of four 'starred' quality levels and 'unclassified', in steps of 1 per cent. The starred quality levels are defined in Table 1.

41. In addition to the overall quality profiles to be published by the REF team, each main panel will provide the following reports and feedback from the exercise early in 2015:

- a. Sub-profiles in respect of each submission.
- b. A report confirming its working methods and providing an overview of its observations about the state of research (strengths, weaknesses, vitality of activity and scope of impacts achieved) in the areas falling within its remit. These reports will include a section provided by each sub-panel.
- c. Concise feedback on each submission summarising the reason for the quality profile awarded, with reference to the published criteria of the sub-panel that assessed it. The REF team will send this feedback only to the head of the institution concerned. In the case of joint submissions, we will provide this feedback confidentially to the heads of all of the institutions involved.
- d. Minutes of the sub-panel and main panel meetings for the assessment phase of the exercise. These will be published to provide a public record of how the panels conducted their business.

42. Further information about the publication of submissions and other data is set out in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 33 to 38).

43. The results of the REF are not subject to appeal. The UK funding bodies have considered carefully the question of appeals, and concluded that the absence of an appeals process does not make the assessment process any less robust.

Staff

44. The criteria for determining which staff are eligible to be included in institutions' submissions are common for all UOAs, and are set out in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 78 to 83).

45. In all UOAs, up to four research outputs must be listed against each member of staff included in the submission. A maximum of four outputs per researcher will provide panels with a sufficient selection of research outputs from each submitted unit upon which to base judgements about the quality of that unit's outputs. Consultations on the development of the REF confirmed that this is an appropriate maximum volume of research outputs for the purposes of assessment.

46. HEIs are allowed to list the maximum of four outputs against any researcher, irrespective of their circumstances or the length of time they have had to conduct research.

Individual staff circumstances

47. As a key measure to support equality and diversity in research careers, in all UOAs individuals may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty in the assessment, where their circumstances have significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period. This measure is intended to encourage institutions to submit all their eligible staff who have produced excellent research.

48. 'Guidance on submissions' sets out the information required in submissions where a member of staff is returned with fewer than four outputs (paragraph 96) and lists the range of circumstances that apply (paragraph 92). The list of applicable circumstances set out in paragraph 92 of 'guidance on submissions' is repeated at paragraph 49 below for completeness, followed by the procedures and criteria for determining the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty in the assessment.

49. Category A and C staff may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty in the assessment, if one or more of the following circumstances significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period:

- a. **Clearly defined circumstances**, which are:
 - i. Qualifying as an early career researcher (ECR) (as defined at paragraphs 85 and 86 of 'guidance on submissions').
 - ii. Part-time working.
 - iii. Maternity, paternity or adoption leave. (Note that maternity leave may involve related constraints on an individual's ability to conduct research in addition to the

defined period of maternity leave itself. These cases can be returned as 'complex' as described at sub-paragraph b below, so that the full range of circumstances can be taken into account in making a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty).

iv. Secondments or career breaks outside of the higher education sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

b. **More complex circumstances** that require a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that can be reduced without penalty. These circumstances are:

i. Disability. This is defined in 'guidance on submissions' (Part 4, Table 2 under 'Disability').

ii. Ill-health or injury.

iii. Mental health conditions.

iv. Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave. (These may include but are not limited to: medical issues associated with pregnancy or maternity; health and safety restrictions in laboratory or field work during pregnancy or breastfeeding; constraints on the ability to travel to undertake fieldwork due to pregnancy or breast-feeding.)

v. Childcare or other caring responsibilities.

vi. Gender reassignment.

vii. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed at paragraph 190 of 'guidance on submissions'.

Clearly defined circumstances

50. For clearly defined circumstances, as defined in sub-paragraph 49a, Tables 2 and 3 set out the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty in the assessment, depending on the duration of the circumstance (or combination thereof).

51. In all UOAs, submitted staff who satisfy the definition of ECRs in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 85 and 86) may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty, as set out in Table 2.

Table 2: ECRs: Number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty

Date at which the individual first met the definition of an ECR	Number of outputs may be <i>reduced</i> without penalty by up to:
Between 1 August 2009 and 31 July 2010	1
Between 1 August 2010 and 31 July 2011	2
After 1 August 2011	3

52. Submitted staff who have other clearly defined circumstances – or who are an ECR and have other clearly defined circumstances – may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty, as set out in Table 3. These circumstances can be cumulative, and institutions should calculate the total absence due to the circumstances affecting an individual.

53. If an individual is both an ECR and has another clearly defined circumstance, a single calculation of the total absence should be made, and Table 3 applied. In such cases the period from 1 January 2008 up to the date at which the individual became an ECR should be calculated as an absence. For example, an individual became an early career researcher on 1 January 2010 and they worked part-time (0.5 FTE) for two of the years during the period up to the census date. Their total 'absence' would be 36 months, so their outputs may be reduced by up to two.

Table 3: Other clearly defined circumstances: Number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty

Total absence from contracted work over the period 1 Jan 2008 to 31 Oct 2013 (total months):	For part-time staff this equates to contracted hours for the following average FTE over the period 1 Jan 2008 to 31 Oct 2013¹:	Number of outputs may be <i>reduced</i> without penalty by up to:
0 – 13.99	0.801 – 1	0
14 – 27.99	0.601 – 0.8	1
28 – 48.99	0.301 – 0.6	2
49 or more	0.3 or less	3

54. In addition to Tables 2 and 3, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to two, without penalty, for the following:

- a. Junior clinical academics, defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 30 April 2013.
- b. Category C staff who are employed by the NHS, whose research is primarily focused in the submitting unit.

55. For clearly defined circumstances (including ECRs), the sub-panel will accept the reduction in outputs and assess the remaining outputs without any penalty, wherever the number of outputs has been reduced according to Tables 2 and/or 3 as appropriate to the circumstances, and where the panel considers that the submission includes sufficient evidence of the

¹ The total FTEs in this column are equivalent to the 'total months' in column 1, based on a total of 70 months for the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013.

circumstance(s). The panel secretariat will examine the information in the first instance and advise the sub-panels on these cases. The panel secretariat will be trained to apply these criteria on a consistent basis across all UOAs.

56. Where an institution wishes to include a combination of clearly defined and more complex circumstances relating to an individual, the institution should return these as 'complex' so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances.

Complex circumstances

57. For more complex circumstances, as defined in sub-paragraph 49b, the institution will need to make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted. As far as is practicable, the impact of these circumstances on an individual's ability to work productively throughout the assessment period should be equated to the impact of clearly defined absences, and the number of outputs reduced in line with Table 3. To aid institutions in making these judgements the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) will provide worked examples of complex circumstances, which will indicate the appropriate reduction in outputs for a range of particular circumstances. These will be available at www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF from September 2011.

58. All individuals with complex circumstances will be considered by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) on a consistent basis across all UOAs. The terms of reference and composition of the EDAP are available at www.ref.ac.uk under Equality and diversity. The EDAP will make recommendations about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty to the relevant main panel chairs, who will make the decisions. The relevant sub-panels will then be informed of the decisions.

59. Where an institution wishes to include a combination of clearly defined and more complex circumstances relating to an individual, the institution should return these as 'complex' so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances.

60. Information about complex circumstances relating to an individual will be kept confidential to the REF team, the EDAP and main panel chairs, as described in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraph 98), to enable individuals to disclose the information in a confidential manner.

Maternity leave

61. The proposals at paragraphs 52 to 60 above recognise that periods of maternity leave may be accompanied by additional constraints related to pregnancy and maternity. The proposals would take account of these by inviting institutions to explain the full range of circumstances, which will be considered by the EDAP.

62. In discussions with the REF panels, a possible alternative approach was identified to taking account of pregnancy and maternity: that staff who had periods of maternity leave during

the assessment period may reduce the number of outputs by one for each discrete period of maternity leave, without penalty in the assessment. This alternative approach is based on the view that each period of maternity leave, and any associated constraints on work, is generally sufficiently disruptive of an individual's research work to merit the reduction of an output.

63. Respondents to the consultation are invited to comment on the proposals for determining the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty in the assessment for staff with a range of individual circumstances, as set out in paragraphs 50 to 60. Respondents are also invited to comment specifically on the proposed options for taking account of pregnancy and maternity.

Decisions about individual staff circumstances

64. Where the submission does not include sufficient evidence or meet the stated criteria, or if particular circumstances do not merit the full proposed reduction in outputs, the missing outputs will be recorded as unclassified. For example, an individual became an ECR in January 2011 but only one output is submitted rather than two. In this case the submitted output will be assessed, and the 'missing' output recorded as unclassified.

Research outputs

65. The generic criteria for assessing outputs and the definitions of the starred quality levels for the outputs sub-profile are as follows:

Table 4: Outputs sub-profile: Criteria and definitions of starred levels

The criteria for assessing the quality of outputs are 'originality, significance and rigour'.	
Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

66. In Part 2, the main panel statements of criteria provide a descriptive account of these generic assessment criteria and starred level definitions as they apply to each main panel. These are provided to inform their subject communities on how the panels will apply the criteria and

definitions in making their judgements. These descriptive accounts should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions.

67. An underpinning principle of the REF is that all types of research and all forms of research output across all disciplines shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Panels have been instructed to define criteria and adopt assessment processes that enable them to recognise and treat on an equal footing excellence in research across the spectrum of applied, practice-based, basic and strategic research, wherever that research is conducted; and for identifying excellence in different forms of research endeavour including interdisciplinary and collaborative research, while attaching no greater weight to one form over another.

68. 'Guidance on submissions' (Annex C) sets out the generic definition of research. Any assessable form of output that embodies research is eligible for assessment, as set out in paragraphs 105 to 107 of the same document. The main panels' statements of criteria and working methods in Part 2 of this document provide further descriptive accounts of the diversity of research outputs that may be applicable in their UOAs. These are provided to inform their subject communities and should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions in 'guidance on submissions'.

Co-authored outputs

69. A co-authored or co-produced output will count as a single output in the assessment for each author against which it is listed. Where two or more co-authors or co-producers of an output are returned in different submissions (whether from the same HEI or different HEIs), any or all of these may list the same output. In Part 2, the panels provide further guidance about:

- a. Whether additional information is required about the contribution of the individual member of staff to a co-authored output; and, if so, how the panels will take account of this information when undertaking the assessment.
- b. Whether a co-authored output may be listed against more than one member of staff returned within the same submission.

Double-weighted outputs

70. Institutions may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted (count as two outputs) in the assessment, according to the procedures set out in 'guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 123 to 126). In Part 2, the main panels describe how they will judge if an output is of sufficient scale and scope to merit double-weighting in the assessment, and state whether in their UOAs institutions may include a 'reserve' output with each output requested for double-weighting.

Use of additional information and citation data

71. In all UOAs panels will assess outputs through a process of expert review. In doing so, panels may make use of additional information – whether provided by HEIs in their submissions, and/or citation data provided by the REF team – to inform their judgements. In all cases expert review will be the primary means of assessment. In Part 2, the panels set out the following:

- a. Whether they will make any use of citation data in the assessment.
- b. Whether they require any of the types of additional information listed in ‘guidance on submissions’ (paragraph 127).
- c. How they will use any such information to inform their assessments.

72. Those panels using citation data will do so within the framework set out in ‘guidance on submissions’ (paragraphs 131 to 136). In particular, they will consider the number of times an output has been cited as additional information about the academic significance of submitted outputs. No panel will make use of journal rankings or journal impact factors in the assessment. Panels will continue to rely on expert review as the primary means of assessing outputs, in order to reach rounded judgements about the full range of assessment criteria (‘originality, significance and rigour’). They will also recognise the significance of outputs beyond academia wherever appropriate, and will assess all outputs on an equal basis, regardless of whether or not citation data is available for them. They will recognise the limited value of citation data for recently published outputs, the variable citation patterns for different fields of research, the possibility of ‘negative citations’, and the limitations of such data for outputs in languages other than English. Panels will also be instructed to have due regard to the potential equality implications of using citation data as additional information.

73. Given the limited role of citation data in the assessment, the funding bodies do not sanction or recommend that HEIs rely on citation information to inform the selection of staff or outputs for inclusion in their submissions (see ‘guidance on submissions’, paragraph 136).

Impact

74. The generic definition of impact for the REF provided in ‘guidance on submissions’ (Annex C) is broad, and any impact that meets this definition is eligible for assessment, in any UOA. The panels’ statements of criteria and working methods in Part 2 provide some further descriptive accounts of the diversity of impacts that may be applicable in their UOAs. These are provided to inform their subject communities and should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions in ‘guidance on submissions’.

75. ‘Guidance on submissions’ sets out the generic submission requirements in relation to impact, including the number of case studies required in each submission (paragraph 156), the eligibility criteria for impact case studies (paragraphs 158 to 162), the requirement for a completed impact template (paragraphs 149 to 155), and guidance on completing impact case studies (Annex G).

76. Sub-panels will assess all the evidence provided in the completed impact template (REF3a) and the submitted case studies (REF3b), and will initially form an impact sub-profile for

each submission by attributing a weighting of 20 per cent to the impact template (REF3a) and 80 per cent to the case studies (REF3b). Panels will apply their expert judgment based on all the information provided in the impact template and case studies, before confirming the impact sub-profiles.

77. The main panel statements of criteria in Part 2 provide guidance on the forms of evidence that would be appropriate for submissions to include in the impact template (REF3a) and in case studies (REF3b). They also state how the panels will assure that the quality of research that underpins impact case studies is at least equivalent to two star quality.

78. The generic criteria for assessing impact and the definitions of the starred quality levels for the impact sub-profile are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Impact sub-profile: Criteria and definitions of starred levels

The criteria for assessing impacts are ‘reach and significance’: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In assessing the impact described within a case study, the panel will form an overall view about its ‘reach and significance’ taken as a whole, rather than assess ‘reach’ and ‘significance’ separately.• In assessing the impact template (REF3a) the panel will consider the extent to which the unit’s approach described in the template is conducive to achieving impacts of ‘reach and significance’.	
Four star	Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Three star	Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Two star	Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
One star	Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Unclassified	The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit.

79. In Part 2, the four main panel statements of criteria provide a descriptive account of these generic assessment criteria, as they will be applied by the four main panels. These are provided to inform their subject communities on how the panels will apply the criteria and definitions in making their judgements. These descriptive accounts should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions.

Environment

80. ‘Guidance on submissions’ sets out the generic requirements for the environment element of submissions, which comprise:

- a. Standard data on research doctoral degrees awarded, research income and research income-in-kind (REF4a/b/c).

- b. A completed environment template (REF5).

81. In Part 2 the panel criteria provide guidance on the forms of evidence that would be appropriate for submissions to include in the environment template (REF5), including any quantitative indicators that should be provided within REF5.

82. REF panels will form an environment sub-profile by assessing the information submitted in REF5, informed by the data submitted in REF4a/b/c. When the REF team provides submissions to sub-panels, we will supply a standard analysis of the quantitative data submitted in REF4a/b/c, in respect of each submission in that UOA, and aggregated for all submissions in that UOA (see 'guidance on submissions', Annex H). Panels will consider these data within the context of the information provided in REF5, and within the context of the disciplines concerned. In Part 2, panels' criteria statements indicate how the data analyses will be used in informing the assessment of the research environment.

83. The generic criteria for assessing the environment and the definitions of the starred quality levels for the environment sub-profile are as follows:

Table 6: Environment sub-profile: Criteria and definitions of starred levels

The research environment will be assessed in terms of its 'vitality and sustainability'. Panels will consider both the 'vitality and sustainability' of the submitted unit, and its contribution to the 'vitality and sustainability' of the wider research base.	
Four star	An environment that is conducive to producing research of world-leading quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
Three star	An environment that is conducive to producing research of internationally excellent quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
Two star	An environment that is conducive to producing research of internationally recognised quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
One star	An environment that is conducive to producing research of nationally recognised quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability.
Unclassified	An environment that is not conducive to producing research of nationally recognised quality.

84. In Part 2, each of the main panel statements of criteria provide a descriptive account of these generic assessment criteria, as they will be applied by their panels. These are provided to inform their subject communities on how the panels will apply the criteria and definitions in making their judgements. These descriptive accounts should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions.

Panel procedures

85. The following procedures will be applied by all main panels and sub-panels.

Confidentiality arrangements

86. All REF main and sub-panel chairs, members, assessors, secretaries, advisers and observers are bound by the terms of the REF confidentiality arrangements as detailed at Annex D. These arrangements have been put in place to enable the effective management and operation of the REF, and for the protection of panel members.

Panel competence to do business

87. Each main and sub-panel will consider, confirm and document its competence to do business at the start of each assessment meeting, taking into consideration the range of expertise as well as the numbers of panel members present.

88. Where there is a foreseen absence of a sub-panel chair at a main panel meeting, the main panel should consider whether it requires the attendance of the deputy sub-panel chair in order to be competent to do business. Attendance of the deputy sub-panel chair at main panel meetings will only be allowed in this case, and at the discretion of the main panel chair.

Dealing with absences of the chair

89. Each main and sub-panel will elect a deputy chair for planned and unforeseen absences of the chair, and in cases where there is a major conflict of interest for the chair. In the absence of the chair, the deputy will chair meetings of the panel. Where both the chair and deputy declare a conflict of interest in the same institution, the panel will nominate one of the remaining members to officiate in that instance.

Conflicts of interest

90. All REF main and sub-panel chairs, members, assessors, secretaries, advisers and observers are subject to the arrangements for managing potential conflicts of interest set out at Annex E.

Panel-instigated audit

91. 'Guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 67 to 72) set out the arrangements for audit and verification of information provided by HEIs in their REF submissions. In addition to the auditing of a proportion of submitted information from each institution by the REF team, panels will be asked to draw attention to any data they would like the REF team to verify; these data will also be investigated.

92. Where a panel identifies an audit query to raise, the panel secretary will raise the query on behalf of the panel with the REF team. Where there may be circumstances (for example, as a result of secretariat conflicts of interest) under which panel members do not wish to raise an audit query through the panel secretariat, the panel chair will raise the query with the REF team on behalf of the panel.

93. A further statement on the verification arrangements for REF data will be issued in due course. It will include details of the actions to be taken by panels, the REF team and/or the funding bodies in cases where an institution fails to verify submitted information.

Recording panel decisions

94. The panel secretariat will minute the procedures followed by panels, and these will be published after the conclusion of the exercise. Panels will not make or record collective judgements about individuals' contributions to submissions. The panel secretariat will record the panels' collective judgements about the sub-profiles and overall quality profiles in respect of each submission.

Annex A

Consultation questions and response information

1. We invite responses to the draft REF panel criteria and working methods set out in Part 1 and Part 2 of this document. Responses to this consultation will help the REF panels and the REF team to refine the criteria and working methods for the final version to be published in January 2012.
2. This annex sets out the consultation questions, for information only. Responses should be made by completing an **online form** available alongside this document at www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/03_11/ by **midday on Wednesday 5 October 2011**.
3. All responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case HEFCE on behalf of the four funding bodies. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. We have a responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means responses to this consultation are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Further information about the Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk. Equivalent legislation exists in Scotland.

Consultation questions

1. Overall draft panel criteria and working methods

- a. The generic and four main panel statements achieve an appropriate balance between consistency across the exercise and allowing for justifiable differences between the four main panels.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- b. Are there particular aspects of the criteria and working methods that should be more consistent across all the main panels? Are there differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria? Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s).

2. Individual staff circumstances

- a. The proposals for determining the number of outputs that may be reduced without

penalty, for staff with a range of individual circumstances, are appropriate (Part 1, Tables 2 and 3).

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b. Please comment on these proposals. Respondents are also invited to comment specifically on:

- whether Tables 2 and 3 are set at appropriate levels
- the proposed options for taking account of pregnancy and maternity (Part 1, paragraph 62)
- whether a consistent approach across the exercise is appropriate, or whether there are any specific differences in the nature of research that justify differences in the approach between UOAs or main panels.

If commenting in respect of particular panels or disciplines, please state which.

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For the remaining questions, please provide a separate response for each main panel criteria statement (Parts 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D of this consultation)

3. Main panel criteria and working methods

a. The main panel statement achieves an appropriate balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the sub-panels.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b. Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the sub-panels within this main panel. Please state the UOA(s) on which you are commenting.

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4. Submissions and units of assessment (Section 1)

- a. Do the **UOA descriptor and boundary** statements provide a clear and appropriate description of the disciplines covered by the UOAs? Please include any suggestions for refining the descriptors and state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

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- b. Please comment on the main panel's criteria in relation to **multiple submissions** in its UOAs.

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5. Assessment criteria: outputs (Section 2)

- a. Overall, the main panel criteria relating to outputs are clear and appropriate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- b. Please comment on the criteria in Section 2, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

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6. Assessment criteria: impact (Section 3)

- a. Overall, the main panel's criteria relating to impact are appropriate and helpful to institutions in preparing submissions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- b. Please comment on the criteria in Section 3, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

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7. Assessment criteria: environment (Section 4)

a. Overall, the main panel criteria relating to environment are clear and appropriate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b. Please comment on the criteria in Section 4, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

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8. Working methods (Section 5)

a. Overall, the working methods of the main panel and its sub-panels are clear and appropriate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

b. Please comment on the working methods, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

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Annex B

Roles and responsibilities of panels

Role of a main panel

1. Each main panel will provide leadership and guidance to a group of sub-panels. In particular, the role of a main panel is:

- to produce a document setting out the criteria and working methods for the group of sub-panels under its remit. In doing so, the main panel will ensure:
 - the criteria and working methods adhere to the overall assessment framework
 - the criteria and working methods are as consistent as far as possible across the sub-panels within each main panel's remit, and vary between the sub-panels only where justified to the REF Steering Group
 - the academic community has been consulted effectively when developing the criteria and working methods
 - other appropriate stakeholders have been consulted, particularly when developing criteria relating to the assessment of impact. This includes stakeholders from the private, public and third sectors who are informed by, make use of or benefit from academic research in the disciplines covered by the panel
- to work with the sub-panels during the assessment period to ensure adherence to the criteria, working methods and equal opportunities guidance
- to work with the sub-panels during the assessment period to calibrate the assessment standards between sub-panels and ensure the consistent application across the framework of the overall assessment standards
- to sign off the assessment outcomes for all submissions made to the sub-panels, based on the work and advice of the sub-panels
- to give advice as requested by the REF team and funding bodies on aspects of the assessment process
- to produce a final report on the state of research in the disciplines covered by the sub-panels and its wider benefits.

2. In signing off the assessment outcomes, the main panel will confirm that it has worked with the relevant sub-panels to ensure the sub-panels have adopted reasonable and consistent approaches to the assessment of all forms of research, including basic, applied, practice-based and interdisciplinary research; and that each sub-panel has applied the quality thresholds for the exercise to a consistent standard.

3. Final responsibility for the effective conduct of the assessment process for the REF lies with the four UK higher education funding bodies' chief executives (or equivalent). Decisions about academic judgements in the assessment will remain the responsibility of the panels. The main panels will report their progress in reaching assessment outcomes to the four funding bodies; and will report the final outcomes to the funding bodies at the conclusion of their

assessment. In the event of any dispute about the assessment process that cannot be resolved within the main panel, the decision of the UK funding bodies will be final.

Role of a sub-panel

4. The role of a sub-panel is:
 - a. To consult on and contribute to the criteria and working methods of the group of sub-panels within a main panel, and develop any necessary criteria and working methods specific to the individual sub-panel, for approval by the main panel.
 - b. To work within the agreed criteria and methods, and under the guidance of the main panel, to assess submissions.
 - c. To advise the main panel and REF team on cross-referrals to other sub-panels of submitted material and any need for additional expertise required to assess submissions.
 - d. To produce draft assessment outcomes for each submission to be recommended for sign-off by the main panel, and associated concise feedback for submissions.
5. We intend that the working relationship between a main panel and its sub-panels be close and collaborative, with sub-panels developing their criteria collectively as far as possible within a main panel, and each sub-panel assessing submissions through an iterative process in dialogue with the main panel. Main and sub-panel meetings will be timed to enable such iteration, and the main panel chair and additional members will be expected to attend a range of sub-panel meetings.
6. Sub-panels will be assisted where appropriate by additional expert assessors, in assessing submissions.

Annex C

Process for appointing additional assessors

1. The process for appointing assessors to sub-panels will be as follows:
 - a. In October 2012 the REF team will survey HEIs about their submission intentions, to assist with planning of the assessment phase and with identifying areas where the appointment of additional assessors would be desirable. Through the survey we will ask HEIs to identify which UOAs they intend to make submissions in, and for each submission to indicate:
 - the likely volume of staff
 - the main areas of research and impact to be included in the submission and the likely volume of work in each area (this will need to be in sufficient detail for panels to understand the breadth and depth of expertise required for the assessment, and in particular to inform the recruitment of additional assessors)
 - the likely volume of work to be submitted in languages other than English.
 - b. In light of the survey results, sub-panels will make recommendations to the main panel on their need for expert assessors where they have identified a substantive role on the panel to be filled.
 - c. Each main panel will review the sub-panels' recommendations, bearing in mind the need for sufficient users to cover the main areas of impact expected across its sub-panels; the need for each assessor to hold a substantial role where appointed; and the possibility for the appointment of assessors to multiple panels to assist with the assessment of interdisciplinary research.
 - d. Sub-panel chairs, in discussion with their main panels, will recommend individuals for appointment as assessors. These will be selected from among the nominations already made, or, where additional nominations are required, by seeking further nominations.
2. The chief executives of the four UK funding bodies will be responsible for the appointment of assessors. Once appointed, the names of assessors will be published on the web alongside the panel membership. Assessors will be paid fees and expenses on the same basis as panel members.
3. As the REF progresses, main panels or sub-panels may recommend to the funding bodies the appointment of a small number of members or assessors in addition to those appointed through the processes outlined above, to provide further expertise where this is necessary, for example after submissions have been received. Where a candidate with the appropriate expertise has not been nominated, the main or sub-panel may recommend that the funding bodies seek further nominations from an appropriate body, or co-opt a member or assessor whose expertise is known to the panel. The funding bodies will co-opt no more than a small proportion of each panel's members and assessors, in addition to making appointments through the process at paragraph 1 of this annex.

Annex D

Confidentiality and data security arrangements for REF panels

Introduction

1. This document sets out arrangements for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) panels to maintain the confidentiality and security of information they generate and have access to throughout the REF process (referred to throughout this annex as 'Confidential Information'). All REF main and sub-panel chairs, members, assessors, secretaries, advisers and observers are bound by the terms set out below. For the purpose of this annex and Annex E, these people will all be referred to as 'Panel Members'.
2. This annex deals only with the relationship between the four UK higher education funding bodies on the one hand and Panel Members on the other. It does not give rise to any rights or obligations to or from higher education institutions participating in the REF.

Purpose

3. The objectives of the confidentiality arrangements are as follows:
 - a. Subject only to any legal obligations on the UK higher education funding bodies to disclose further information, in order to properly manage the REF we wish to ensure that the only public comment from REF panels and their constituent members on individual submissions is limited to:
 - the overall assessment outcomes awarded to each submission (comprising the overall quality profile and the three sub-profiles for outputs, impact and environment); and
 - the concise written feedback on submissions provided in confidence to heads of institutions.
 - b. Subject to any overriding legal obligation, we wish to avoid any situation in which parties not involved in the assessment process approach or place pressure on Panel Members to disclose information about the panel's discussion of particular submissions. In other words, maintenance of confidentiality is essential if Panel Members are not to be inhibited from expressing their opinions freely in panel discussions, which is essential to the effective operation of the REF as an expert review exercise.
 - c. Given the nature of the information that Panel Members will have access to, the confidentiality arrangements also set out measures to prevent acts by a Panel Member which might, in certain circumstances, lead to a claim being made against them or the UK higher education funding bodies for breach of data protection legislation; breach of a common law duty of confidentiality; defamation; infringement of intellectual property rights in research outputs; or otherwise give rise to financial or reputational losses for which a legal claim is made.

Panel Members' obligations

General obligations

4. Acceptance of the obligations owed to each of the four UK higher education funding bodies set out in this annex is a condition of appointment as a Panel Member. By accepting the appointment, Panel Members agree to these terms. The chief executives of the four UK higher education funding bodies reserve the right to terminate appointments in the event of any breach of these terms.
5. Panel Members shall only use Confidential Information for the purposes of the REF. Confidential Information must be handled in accordance with reasonable instructions given by the REF team. In particular, the REF team may require the deletion of any Confidential Information or all copies of Confidential Information, or to take such additional reasonable steps to preserve the security of the Confidential Information as the REF team may determine. Panel Members must promptly comply with any such instructions.
6. Confidential Information shall not be disclosed to any other person except Panel Members and the REF team. All reasonable steps shall be taken to ensure that other people cannot have access to the information, whether held in paper or electronic copy. In particular:
 - a. It is important to remember that computer systems, and specifically e-mail, are not necessarily secure, and Panel Members shall agree to exercise appropriate caution when using them.
 - b. Information will be made available to members via the REF Panel Members' Web-site. This is a secure password-protected web-site and passwords must not be divulged to any other person.
7. Nothing in this agreement prevents Panel Members from disclosing information after it becomes freely available in the public domain (without the breach of any obligation of confidentiality), or that which they are required by law to disclose, or that which was already known and not subject to confidentiality obligations before being disclosed in the context of the REF. It would be prudent, however, to contact the REF manager in advance to discuss any such disclosure.
8. Some Confidential Information may have to be disclosed by the UK higher education funding bodies under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or other legislation. If any requests for information are received, these must be passed to the REF manager immediately for consideration and action, and should not be responded to by Panel Members.
9. If there is any doubt with regard to any issue of confidentiality, either in general terms or in relation to a particular piece of information, Panel Members should seek advice from the REF manager.
10. The obligations set out in this annex will subsist indefinitely.

Specific obligations during the criteria-setting phase (2011)

11. During the course of the criteria-setting phase REF panels will be provided with a range of information, such as draft guidance documents, and sample citation data or sample 'impact case studies' relating to specific institutions.

12. Where such Confidential Information has not already been made public by the REF team, copies shall not be made except as is necessary to carry out functions as a Panel Member. Originals and any copies that may be made of such Confidential Information shall be destroyed, or returned to the REF manager, as soon as they are no longer needed for that function or on the request of the REF manager, whichever is sooner. This provision applies equally to paper copies or those stored in electronic or other non-paper formats.

Specific obligations during the assessment phase (2013-14)

13. During the assessment phase Panel Members will have access to a range of Confidential Information, including information provided by institutions in their submissions and information generated by the panels when assessing those submissions.

14. In accordance with paragraph 5 of this annex, the REF team will set out detailed confidentiality and data security arrangements for the assessment phase of the REF in advance of it commencing. Compliance with these expanded arrangements by Panel Members will be a condition of continuing as a REF Panel Member.

15. We expect that the detailed obligations will cover the following broad areas:

a. **Information contained in REF submissions.** Institutions will submit a range of information to the REF team for assessment by the REF panels. We will develop arrangements for access to, storage, retention and destruction of such information by Panel Members. Within their submissions, institutions will be able to identify specific items as particularly sensitive (for example, for commercial reasons). We will develop specific arrangements for the treatment of such information by Panel Members (for example, the handling of material which is patented or patentable).

b. **Information generated by REF panels when assessing submissions.** We will develop arrangements for:

- the storage, retention and destruction of Panel Members' notes and provisional assessment scores that are generated in developing the profiles to be awarded to submissions
- restricting Panel Members' discussion of submissions or information deduced from submissions with anyone who is not a panel member.

16. Further guidance will be included on ensuring the security of Confidential Information through Panel Members' access to or use of the REF Panel Members' Web-site, e-mail, personal notes, and printed and electronic copies of information.

Annex E

Managing conflicts of interest

1. The primary purpose of the 2014 REF is to produce overall quality profiles for each submission made by institutions, which will be used by the UK higher education funding bodies in determining the main grant for research to the institutions which they fund. The REF is governed by the principles of equity, equality and transparency. To ensure these principles are adhered to, we set out below arrangements for recording declarations of interest and avoiding potential conflicts of interest.

2. It is the responsibility of all main panel chairs and members, sub-panel chairs and members, panel advisers and panel secretaries, observers and assessors (hereafter collectively referred to as Panel Members) to declare any interests in accordance with this policy. The procedure to be followed depends on whether an interest is a major interest or a minor interest. If a Panel Member is unsure whether they have an interest that should be declared, they should seek advice from the panel secretariat.

Declarations of major interest

3. All Panel Members are asked to make a declaration of their major interests through the REF Panel Members' Web-site. For the purpose of REF, major interests are defined as:

- a. Any UK higher education institution(s) at which the individual is employed.
- b. Any UK higher education institution(s) at which the individual has been employed since January 2008.
- c. Any UK higher education institution(s) at which the individual has been engaged in substantial collaboration since the start of the assessment period (1 January 2008). This might include organisations at which the individual has visiting lecturer/fellow/professor or similar status, or has worked on a commercial contract or consultancy basis.
- d. Any UK higher education institution(s) at which the individual's partner and/or immediate family member is employed or is engaged in substantial collaboration.
- e. Any financial or commercial interest in a UK higher education institution(s).
- f. Any minor interest(s) ruled by a panel chair to be treated as a major interest.

Panel procedures for major interests

4. A complete list of the declared major interests of Panel Members will be prepared by the REF team and made available to panels when they start their work.

5. Panel Members will be asked to update the REF team regularly on any additional interests, through the REF Panel Members' Web-site. Complete lists of declared interests will be updated and circulated accordingly on an ad hoc basis.

6. Panel Members must ensure their declarations of major interests are up-to-date in advance of any meeting at which any institution(s) in which they have a major interest is to be discussed. Panel Members must withdraw from that part of the meeting at which the institution in which they have a major interest is to be discussed. Withdrawals due to major interests shall be minuted.

Requests for information

7. Panel Members are likely to receive numerous invitations to discuss issues concerned with REF 2014. Although the REF team seeks improved clarity and transparency during this exercise through the dissemination of information, we do not wish Panel Members to compromise their position by entering into discussions which could be perceived to give a particular individual or institution an unfair advantage.

8. Therefore Panel Members should not discuss issues concerning individual departmental or institutional submissions that in any way breaks the confidentiality agreements they have entered into in order to work on the REF. However, they may accept invitations to talk at meetings where a number of different institutions are represented, for example those arranged by a professional body or subject association to discuss the REF process in general terms. If any member has concerns over a potential conflict of interests or the propriety of a proposed action they should discuss it with the REF manager. Panel Members are not expected to suspend normal relations with their colleagues and peers during the exercise. They should not feel in any way obliged, for example, to withdraw from external examining, or participation in appointment committees. They are, however, asked to exercise caution in dealings with individual departments, or with subject associations or similar bodies, where there is an actual or clearly inferable connection with their panel membership.

Declarations of minor interests

9. Any interest that could lead a reasonable observer to doubt the impartiality of a Panel Member's assessment that is not a major interest must be declared by that Panel Member as a minor interest. Minor interests should be declared on an ad hoc basis to the chair of the relevant main panel or sub-panel. Declarations of minor interests shall be minuted. In each case it shall be for the chair to decide what effect, if any, the existence of a minor interest shall have on a Panel Member's participation in the assessment. This shall also be minuted.

10. Minor interests could include, for example:

- A Panel Member supervises or co-supervises one or more doctoral students from a submitting institution, or who went on to become an academic staff member within a submission made to the panel.
- A Panel Member was supervised as a doctoral student by a research-active staff member within a submission made to the panel.
- A Panel Member is co-investigator or co-holder of a grant with the submitting institution.
- A Panel Member, or their partner or immediate family member, is employed by a 'user' organisation that is the focus of an impact case study.

- A Panel Member is on the editorial board of a journal series published by a submitting department or unit, or has co-organised a conference or conference series with a submitting department.
- A Panel Member has acted during the assessment period as a member of an appointment or promotions committee for a submitting department or unit, or has provided references for staff members returned in the submission.
- A Panel Member acts as an external examiner for research degrees for a submitting department or unit.

11. The sub-panel chair will decide on the appropriate steps taken to manage such interests. These could include:

- The panel notes the declaration.
- The Panel Member does not take sole or lead responsibility for assessing the relevant aspect of the submission.
- The minor interest – or a group of minor interests relating to an institution – held by a Panel Member shall be treated as a major interest.

List of abbreviations

ECR	Early career researcher
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
PGR	Postgraduate research
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
UOA	Unit of assessment