

# REF 2021 consultation on the draft guidance and criteria

## Page 2: Respondent details

Q1. Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of:

Representative body

Q2. Please provide the name of your organisation.

Engineering Professors' Council

Q3. If you would be happy to be contacted in the event of any follow-up questions, please provide a contact email address.

j.rich@epc.ac.uk

Q4. If your response is in relation to specific main panels, please indicate which one(s):

Main Panel B: Physical sciences, Engineering and Mathematics (Sub-Panels 7-12)

Relevant to all

Q5. We are seeking views during the consultation on both the draft guidance on submissions and the draft panel criteria and working methods. Please select the documents for which you would like to provide a response:

Both documents

## Page 3: Guidance on submissions: Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework

Q6. 1a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework':

Agree

## Page 4: Guidance on submissions: Part 2: Submissions

Q7. 2a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 2: Submissions':

Agree

## Page 5: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff details (REF1a/b)

Q8. 3a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Staff details':

Neither agree nor disagree

Q9. 4. Possible indicators of research independence are set out at paragraph 130, including a reference to a list of independent fellowships. This list is intended to guide institutions on determining independence for staff holding fellowships from major research funders. The list is not intended to be comprehensive. Do you have any comments on the clarity, usefulness, or coverage of this list? (Indicative 300 word limit)

We are content with this.

Q11. 6a. Do you agree with the proposed ineligibility of staff based in a discrete department or unit outside the UK?

No

**6b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (Indicative 300 word limit)**

This is problematic as a number of institutions are seconding staff to sub-entities or basing them in Europe (as a response to Brexit), but this would make them ineligible. The small number of affected returns in 2014 may be far higher in 2021 as a result. This measure would have the unintended consequence of excluding and discouraging international research and collaborations.

## Page 6: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff circumstances (paragraphs 149 to 193)

Q12. 7a. The proposed approach for taking account of circumstances will achieve the aim of promoting equality and diversity in REF 2021:

Neither agree nor disagree

Q13. 7b. The potential advantages of the proposed approach outweigh the potential drawbacks identified:

Strongly agree

## Page 7: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs (REF2)

Q15. 8a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs' is clear:

Agree

Q16. 9. A glossary of output types and collection formats is set out at Annex K, to provide increased clarity to institutions on categorising types of output for submission. Do you have any comments on the clarity and usefulness of this annex? (Indicative 300 word limit)

It is useful.

Q17. 10a. Paragraph 206.b sets out the funding bodies' intention to make ineligible the outputs of former staff who have been made redundant (except where the staff member has taken voluntary redundancy). Do you agree with this proposal?

No

**10b. Please provide any further comments on this proposal. (Indicative 300 word limit)**

We do not see the need for this as these staff should be treated similarly to staff who have moved to another institution or those who have retired. Nor do we think the classification of whether redundancy was voluntary or non-voluntary can be checked as this is confidential information. We are also concerned about the unintended consequences that this proposal might encourage HEIs to make staff redundant deliberately to game the REF. We feel this issue would be better dealt with in the environment statement.

Q18. 11a. Do you agree with the proposed intention to permit the submission of co-authored outputs only once within the same submission?

Yes

## Page 9: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 3: Impact (REF3)

Q22. 13a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact' is clear:

Agree

## Page 10: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Sections 4-5: Environment data and environment (REF4a/b/c-REF5a/b)

Q23. 14a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment data' is clear:

Agree

Q24. 15a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment' is clear:

Agree

## Page 11: Guidance on Submissions: further comments

Q25. 16. Please provide any further comments on the 'Guidance on submissions', including Annexes A-M. (Indicative 500 word limit)

- We are concerned about the definition of 'research independence', specifically in the context of engineering, because it is not uncommon in engineering disciplines to bring in practitioners from industry on fractional academic (Category A) contracts who are not independent in an academic context. We would suggest suggest greater for HEIs that offer only a single type of academic contract.
- We would like to see some guidance regarding the eligibility of former staff who have retired or died.

## Page 12: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 2: Unit of assessment descriptors

Q26. 1. Do the UOA descriptors 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.

UOA 11: Computer Science and Informatics

UOA 12: Engineering

UOA 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning

## Page 13: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 1: Submissions

Q27. 2a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

Agree

Q28. 2b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

Agree

## Page 14: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 2: Outputs

Q30. 3a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

Agree

Q31. 3b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

Agree

## Page 15: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 3: Impact

Q33. 4a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

Neither agree nor disagree

Q34. 4b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

Neither agree nor disagree

Q35. 4c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact', in particular on:- where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria. Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (Indicative 300 word limit)

We are still unconvinced that the definition and examples of how the broader interpretation of research impact will be interpreted. We would appreciate more guidance on what is required: levels, quality standards, significance, etc.

## **Page 16: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 4: Environment**

Q36. 5a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment':

Agree

Q37. 5b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment':

Agree

## **Page 17: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 4: Panel procedures**

Q39. 6a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

Agree

Q40. 6b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

Agree

## **Page 18: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 5: Panel working methods**

Q42. 7a. a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

Agree

Q43. 7b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

Agree

## **Page 19: Overall panel criteria and working methods**

Q45. 8a. Overall, the 'Panel criteria and working methods' achieves an appropriate balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the panels.

Agree

**8b. Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the main panels. (Indicative 300 word limit)**

The process changes since 2014 do not appear to be very large and we are content with the continuity.