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Higher Education Funding Council for England





The Future of Research Policy & Funding

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RAE Outcomes (1)

- The results
 - We got what we asked for
 - No cliff-edge – profiles
 - Granular and informative
 - Research of all kinds recognized
 - Excellence where found

RAE Outcomes (2)

- The funding outcomes
 - Driven by the results? Yes – quality & volume
 - Science Protection
 - Panel comparability – not relevant
- Issues
 - Volume caps, quality thresholds
 - Sustained excellence
 - Strategic changes to pot sizes

The View from Northavon House

- HEFCE funds Institutions
- Institutions make a difference
- Institutional Missions
- Challenges

Introduction: The Policy Context

- National policy and HEFCE research funding
- Principles of Research Assessment
- Overview of REF

National Policy

Government policy:

- A strong and innovative national research base is essential to support national prosperity in a globalised knowledge based economy – impact.
- Need to strengthen links between undertaking research and developing new products and services
- Science and innovation investment framework, 2004-14

The logo for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), featuring the lowercase letters 'hefce' in a blue, cursive-style font.

HEFCE Research Funding

- HEFCE research grant is part of the dual support system – working together with parallel funding streams from other sources
- It is also one of several funding streams from HEFCE (including HEIF for example) which together support policy aims for HE to contribute to economic growth and innovation



HEFCE Research Funding (2)

Our grant for research is allocated to enable universities to:

- Maintain a research base of world leading quality across the full range of disciplines
- Create capacity which enables the sector to respond flexibly to changing needs of stakeholders, the economy and society
- Undertake research funded from other sources
- Support innovative research, including in new fields and opening new lines of enquiry, and making connections across the full range of disciplines



HEFCE Research Funding (3)

Research funding is allocated:

- As a block grant which the institution may spend in ways they consider will best meet these aims
- Selectively by reference to robust indicators of research quality
- We also strive to avoid either:
 - Micromanaging the system through targeted allocations or detailed incentives, **or**
 - Too broad an approach creating undesired incentives, or not supporting important activity



Key Research Policy Challenges

Changing demands on the UK research base in a time of uncertainty

- Post-recession economy with new forms of economic activity
- Social, political and environmental challenges
- New technology on research methods and dissemination
- Development of public policy to meet those challenges

The International Challenge

- Maintaining competitiveness
- Innovation – engagement between research/knowledge and users
- UK attractiveness for researchers
- International Collaboration

Competing for funding

- Strong growth, followed by recession
- Business/Industry support
- Charities
- Dual Support

Research Strategy

- Collaboration/Engagement
- Training the next generation of researchers
- Organization and leadership
- Securing and Allocating Funding

Research Assessment: Principles

HEFCE undertakes research quality assessment:

- As an assurance mechanism
- To provide information and benchmarking for HEIs, research users and others
- As an essential element in our funding allocation process



REF: overview

- REF is a unified framework for funding and assessing research
- Its primary focus is still excellence, but
 - In context of the policy aims above; and
 - Always taking account of the breadth and diversity of research done in HE

REF: overview (2)

- REF is a work in progress: following previous consultations we have already moved some way from where we started
- REF is not only about basic research, nor is it only about bibliometrics
- We are developing a range of assessment approaches which can be combined in different ways to fit particular subject fields and types of research

REF: overview (3)

We see REF as a further development of what we do now, not something completely new

- We aim to avoid unhelpful perturbations in funding
- We aim to build upon the lessons of RAE – including examples of good practice in RAE that we wish to carry forward into REF

REF: working with stakeholders

- We are developing REF in continuing consultation with partners and stakeholders – and have already heard and acted on views on some aspects
- We are committed to reducing the burden on HEIs, but we need to discuss how to achieve this without losing responsiveness to sector concerns

Framework for assessment (1)

Our starting points are:

- National policy imperatives
- Responses to last year's consultation – unanimous that there may be a problem but much less so on the solution
- Lessons to be learnt from the RAE experience – especially from the enhanced provision made by panels in 2008

Framework for assessment (2)

RAE defines excellence in terms of

- Significance
- Originality
- Rigour

Originality and rigour remain essential criteria for all research.

In REF we are looking for more explicit recognition of social, economic and public policy impact, as well as academic significance.

Framework for assessment (3)

RAE assessed a body of research activity in terms of:

- Quality of outputs
- Research environment
- Esteem

In REF the priorities are to capture:

- Quality of outputs
- Economic, social and public policy impact
- Research environment

Tools for assessment

The toolkit:

- Bibliometric analysis
- Expert review of outputs
- Other available indicators
- Submission of information by HEIs

All of these would be collected and interpreted with advice and input from expert panels as required

Assessing outputs

This should remain the dominant factor in assessment:

- Using bibliometrics, expert review of outputs, or a combination of these, as appropriate to each subject group
- The bibliometrics pilot is looking at different models for producing and using citation indicators. The options remain open at this stage.
- We expect further development of this new tool in the lead up to a full REF exercise in 2013

Assessing impact

In October last year we initiated discussion on how to account for economic and social impact in the REF:

- Expert panels could form judgements based on evidence provided by the institution, and with input from users
- We are looking to identify a robust and workable approach, that can be adapted as necessary for different subject groups
- Research users to be involved in the design of REF and the process of assessment

To sum up...

- We remain committed to supporting an excellent, diverse and innovative research base that responds to policy aims and user needs
- And in particular to supporting research that is both excellent and valued by users
- REF as it is developing offers us a range of approaches to bring this about
- Today is part of a process of consultation with a range of stakeholders and we value your input



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