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Higher Education Funding Council for England

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

Prudent Planning – Funding and the REF

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The Research Mission

‘To develop and sustain a dynamic and internationally competitive sector that makes a major contribution to economic prosperity and national well-being and to the expansion and dissemination of knowledge’

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The Government View

‘A world-class research base that delivers strong economic impact’

The Purpose of REF

- To secure the continuation of a world-class, responsive research base across the full academic spectrum within UK HE through
  - Funding: selective funding allocations informed by quality assessment
  - Benchmarking and information: establishing reputational yardsticks
  - Accountability: demonstrating that public investment in research is effective

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REF will (1)

- Drive up quality across the HE research base and in all forms of research
- Support and encourage innovative and curiosity-driven research including new approaches, new fields and interdisciplinary work

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REF will (2)

- Reward and encourage the effective sharing, dissemination and application of research findings and the productive interchange of research staff and ideas between HEIs and business

REF will (3)

- Reward and encourage HEIs that deliver benefits to business, the economy and society….

The Research-Driven Contribution

- The supply of highly-skilled people
- The formation of new knowledge-based businesses
- Improving the performance of existing businesses
- Better-informed public policy-making, and improved public services
- Attracting inward investment from global business

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REF will (4)

- Produce and publish quality assessments that are comprehensible, produced by a transparent process, and benchmarked against international standards and which identify the very best HE research, wherever this is carried out.
- Support better management and sustainability of the HE research base

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REF & Quality

- Drive up quality to maintain international competitiveness.
- Funding selectively and based on sufficiently fine-grained quality judgements to give a clear incentive to improve quality.
- Spotlight lower quality work

REF and Innovative Research

- Continuing innovation is essential to our competitive position internationally including through a steady stream of new products and processes.
- Through the block grant enable HEIs and researchers to pursue new avenues and take risks.
- Emphasize originality in our criteria for excellence.

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REF and Dissemination

- Sharing of findings is essential to the research process.
- Effective application is key to supporting economic growth
- Emphasising impact and engagement in our criteria
- Assessment procedures which encourage early full publication and active application of excellent research outcomes

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REF and Quality Assessments

- To inform users and stakeholders
- To give assurance that our money is well-spent.
- To drive funding allocations
- Introducing robust, transparent and efficient assessment approaches that are developed in close consultation with all our stakeholders and command their assent

REF and Research Management

- Inform institutional managers about the quality of research in their departments – including where this may be declining.
- Improved hard management information – statistics
- Improved internal management systems

What has Changed?

- Building on the success of RAE2008
- Expert Review informed by Metrics
- Impact instead of Esteem
- Lower Burden

Impact (1)

- Metrics supporting Expert Review
- Impact principles aligned with RCUK
- Major involvement of research users in design & assessment
- Portfolio with Case Studies & Narrative about identifiable benefit

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Impact (2)

- Impact during assessment period
- Underpinned and developed from excellent research
- Work grounded department with continuing engagement
- Pro-formas to gather information.
- Broad approach to benefit

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Volume (1)

- Sustainability a key policy
- Staff in some disciplines grown faster than real-money increases
- Inevitable limit on funded volume or unit of resource drops
- Funding must be selectively allocated to best work

Volume (2)

- Not necessarily an institutional issue
- May be a subject issue
- May be a workload model issue
- Clarity over costs essential
- Scholarship vs Research

What do Institutions do now?

- Publish excellent outputs
- Review research environment – inter-disciplinary work, support of early-career staff, equality and diversity
- Engage with users of research
- Review and record impact
- Review portfolio of work
- Consider volume issues

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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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