

How impact is assessed under the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (“REF”)

Summary

The 2014 REF replaces earlier Research Assessment Exercises (“RAE”) to enable the higher education funding bodies to allocate research grants between Higher Education Institutions (“HEI”). For the first time impact will be one of the criteria evaluated in order that “benefit to the wider economy and society” is taken into account when allotting funding¹. This document has been created to provide an overview of how research is assessed for those involved in research in international development. It also identifies members of the research assessment panels with international development experience.

The REF

The REF is a single assessment framework spanning all disciplines, each submission will be appraised by expert sub-panels, operating under the ambit of four main panels (classified as Panels A, B, C and D) for each of 36 Units of Assessment (“UOA”) defined in the REF. These UOA range from clinical medicine to classics. Broadly Panel A covers health, Panel B, Sciences, Panel D, the Arts and Panel C a mixture of social science, law and architecture. Panel’s A and C are most relevant to international development research. Panel C includes “anthropology and development studies” as one UOA while Panel A expressly refers to “international development” as a possible area of impact.

The key information relating to the REF is included in two documents: REF 2014: Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions and REF 2014: Panel Criteria and Working Methods.

Elements of a Submission

Submissions must be made by 29 November 2013 in each UOA that the HEI decides to submit in. Normally an HEI will only make one submission in each UOA. There are 3 key elements to each submission:

- 1) Outcomes: details of publications and other assessable output.
- 2) Impact: impact template and case studies documents.
- 3) Environment: research environment information.

Each element carries a weighting in terms of the overall result awarded to each submission (from four stars through to unclassified). Outcome is weighted at 65%, impact at 20% and research environment at 15%. The weighting for impact will rise in subsequent REF.

¹ REF2014 (2011). *Decisions on Assessing Research Impact*. p3. Available at: http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/decisionsonassessingresearchimpact/01_11.pdf

Impact

Under the REF impact is defined as “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health the environment or quality of life beyond academia”².

Impact includes (but is not limited to) an effect on change or benefit to: “the activity attitude awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Impact includes the reduction or prevention of harm risk cost or other negative effects”³.

Submissions relating to Impact

Two separate templates related to impact need to be completed for each submission: the impact case studies template, which are supposed to show how research conducted provided a strong impact and the impact template, which aims to capture information on engagement with and approach to non-academic users of research. Both forms will be used to appraise the “reach and significance” of the impact – the assessment criteria⁴.

The impact case studies template

The number of case studies that must be included depend on the number of staff entered in the submission. A minimum of two case studies must be included.

Institutions are advised to select as case studies the strongest examples of impact which are based on excellent research. The research must have been done in the period 1 January 1993 to 31 December 2013 and the impact of the research must be demonstrated in the period 1 January 2008 to 31 July 2013.

The template requires the submitting institution to show how the underpinning research referred to in the case studies made “a distinct and material contribution” to the impact claimed⁵. The nature and extent of the impact must be discussed. Details of the beneficiaries and evidence (or indicators) of the extent of the impact described should be included.

In the “REF 2014: Panel Criteria and Working Methods” the four panels, which divide the 36 UOA within their respective remits, provide further guidance. Within each panel’s remit a list of impact areas is included (for example, the economy or health and welfare) and for each impact area a non-exhaustive list of indicators which serve to provide evidence of impact is listed. The guidance for each panel differs in terms of detail.

As noted, impacts can be international and the international context is explicitly mentioned by a number of panels. For Panel A UOA (which generally relates to health) “international

² *Ibid.*, p26

³ *Ibid.*, p26

⁴ REF2014 (2011). *Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions*. p6.
<http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/assessmentframeworkandguidanceonsubmissions/GOS%20including%20addendum.pdf>

⁵ *Ibid.*, p53

development” is explicitly mentioned as an area of impact, and indicators that serve to demonstrate impact in this area include: “measures of improved international equality, food security, welfare or inclusion” and “documented evidence of changes to international development policies”⁶.

The impact template

This form requires information which shows the approach taken to supporting and enabling impact from research conducted in the UOA in the period 1 January 2008 to 31 July 2013. This information is required to contextualise the assessment of impact. The template includes four distinct sections which should include the following information:

- Context: the main non-academic users of the research and the main types of impact.
- Approach to impact: the approach to interacting with non-academic users.
- Strategy and plans: to support impact from research.
- Case studies: the relationship between the approach to impact and the case studies.

Panel Members and Assessors with International Development Experience

Each of the 36 sub-panels judge submissions by HEI in their respective UOA. This is done in accordance with the pre-defined assessment framework, discussed above. Panels consist of members and assessors. Each sub-panel is under the guidance of one of four main panels. These panels check that decisions are consistent with the framework.

The sub-panels were appointed by the four UK funding bodies through an open process of nominations. Assessors are appointed to each sub-panel to extend “the breadth and depth of expertise”⁷. They are appointed either to assess the impact or the outputs of the submissions. They play an equal role to panel members in judging the submissions.

Assessors are/will be appointed by the four main panels on the recommendation of the sub-panel chairs from a list of nominees in 2012 and 2013 in order to provide more user experience with which to assess impact or to fill disciplinary gaps in the panel’s composition. The REF 2014 list of panel members is updated regularly and the website states that these lists will continue to be updated as additional assessors are appointed⁸. The commentary below on panel members (including assessors) is correct as at 18 July 2013⁹.

⁶ REF 2014 (2012). *Panel Criteria and Working Methods*. p32. Available at: http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/panelcriteriaandworkingmethods/01_12.pdf

⁷ *Ibid.*, p5

⁸ REF 2014 (2013). *Panel Membership*. Available at: <http://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/panelmembership/>

⁹ *Ibid.*

Timeframe

Further to a pilot REF exercise in 2012 (which provided examples of impact case studies) in January 2013 the submissions system was launched, submissions close in November 2013. Throughout 2014 the submissions will be assessed and in December 2014 the outcomes will be published. In spring 2015 submissions, panel overview reports and submissions will be published¹⁰.

Panel members with international development experience

The experience of panel members has been checked in the following relevant UOA and main panels:

- Main Panels A and C.
- Panel C: Sub Panel 17 - Geography, Environment Studies and Archaeology
- Panel C: Sub Panel 18 - Economics and Econometrics
- Panel C: Sub Panel 21 - Politics and International Studies
- Panel C: Sub-Panel 24 - Anthropology and Development Studies
- Panel A: Sub-Panel 1 - Clinical Medicine
- Panel A: Sub-Panel 2 – Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
- Panel A: Sub-Panel 3 – Allied Health Professions
- Panel A: Sub-Panel 5 – Biological Sciences
- Panel A: Sub-Panel 6 – Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science

Main Panel A

Professor Alan Barrett – University of Texas Medical Branch. He is a specialist in tropical diseases

(Viruses transmitted by mosquitos and ticks). His research centres on vaccine development and therapeutics. He has collaborated with a wide range of research centres worldwide including the Division of Vector Borne Diseases and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr Malcolm Skingle – GlaxoSmithKline. He is the Director of European Academic Liaison and Global External Affairs. The extent of his engagement with international health issues is unclear.

Professor Mi Ja Kim - University of Illinois. Her research interests include the study of nursing quality in various countries including certain developing countries like Thailand and South Africa.

Main Panel C

Professor Cara Aitchison – University of St Mark and St John. Her background is in Geography and Social and Environmental Justice. The extent of her international development experience is unclear.

¹⁰ REF2014 (2013). *Panel Criteria and Working Methods*. p50. Available at: http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/panelcriteriaandworkingmethods/01_12.pdf

Professor Frans Berkhout – Director Global Change Institute, Professor of Innovation and Sustainability.

Professor Alan Penn – UCL. Professor Built Environment. He is currently the leader of a £5m building sustainable communities KE programme. He is particularly interested in sustainable development.

Dr Martin Walsh – Oxfam. His role is to commission research to support development and humanitarian responses.

Panel C, sub-panel 17 – Geography, Environment Studies and Archaeology

Professor Richard Black – University of Sussex. Head of Global Studies. He was formerly CEO of “Migrating Out of Poverty” a research consortium funded by DFID.

Professor Nina Laurie – Newcastle University. Professor of Development and the Environment. Through DFID exchange programmes she has taught in Bolivia, Peru and Chile. She is interested in the social inclusion/exclusion that comes with development.

Professor Philip Rees – University of Leeds. Population geographer. His recent work includes assessing the environmental sustainability of urban services and forms. His experience of international sustainability is not clear.

Professor David Thomas – University of Oxford. Geomorphologist with an interest in climate change and development.

Professor Neil Adger – University of Essex. His research is in the area of environmental geography and global environmental change. He was one of the authors of the 2007 Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He led the chapter on Human Security. He has recently received NERC/ESRC/DFID funding to investigate health, livelihoods, ecosystem services and poverty alleviation in population deltas.

Professor Jennifer Robinson – UCL. She teaches “The Future of Cities” and has published “Ordinary Cities between Modernisation and Development”. Her work incorporates perspectives from poor cities. Her previous research investigated the relationship of power and space in South Africa.

Ms Louise Shaxson – Overseas Development Institute. She previously worked at DFID running socio-economic methodologies. Her primary interest is in finding a robust evidence base for policy.

Panel C, sub-panel 18 - Economics and Econometrics

Professor Oriana Bandiera – LSE. Development economist.

Professor Adrian Wood – University of Oxford. Department of International Development. From 1977-1985 he worked at World Bank. Between 2000-05 he was the chief economist for DFID.

Panel C, sub-panel 21 – Politics and International Studies

Professor Roland Dannreuther – University of Westminster. His primary focus is international energy policy.

Professor Andrew Hurrell – University of Oxford. Professor of International Relations. His work includes the interaction between global inequality and international institutions.

Professor Colin McInnes – Aberystwyth University. Much of his previous work has focused on health, foreign and security policy, in particular HIV and AIDS. He is currently engaged on a major project relating to global health governance.

Professor Vivienne Jabri – Kings College London. Professor of War Studies. While her work is not chiefly related to international development, she studies the related subjects of war and political violence. She previously gained European Commission funding for collaborative research on the relationship between security and war, and their implications for liberties and rights.

Professor Nicola Phillips – University of Sheffield. Her work is in the field of the political economy of development. Her current research relates to labour exploitation and trafficking.

Professor Shirin Rai – University of Warwick. Some of her work takes a political economy approach; her dominant interest is gender issues which she has studied in India.

Panel C, Sub-panel 24 – Anthropology and Development Studies.

Professor Hastings Donnan – Queen's University Belfast. He has undertaken research on a number of subjects relevant to development: conflict, war and violence. He has conducted research in a variety of developing country contexts.

Professor Katrina Brown - University of Exeter. She has led international research teams on the environment and development, environmental change, poverty alleviation and is co-Chair of the International Programme Advisory Committee of the DFID-NERC-ESRC Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation Programme.

Professor Jo Beall – British Council. She led the Development Studies Institute at LSE from 2004 – 2007. Her areas of expertise are international development, cities, fragile states and conflict and governance.

Professor Naila Kabeer – SOAS. Professor of Development Studies. Her books include: "Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Poverty Eradication and Social Protection in Asia".

Professor Oliver Morrissey - University of Nottingham. Professor of Development Economics. Formerly Director of the Centre for Research in Economic Development and International Trade (CREDIT).

Dr Laura Rival - University of Oxford. While her work is chiefly anthropological she has conducted research on development and environmental policies in Latin America.

Dr Mark Robinson – DFID. Head of Government and Conflict.

Professor Bob Simpson – Durham University. Department of Anthropology. He gained a Wellcome Biomedicine Fellowship which enabled him to carry out research on the reception of new reproductive and genetic technologies. He has worked extensively in South Asia.

Professor David Wield – The Open University. Professor of Innovation and Development. His international development experience is unclear.

Dr Heather Marquette – University of Birmingham. Department of International Development. She undertakes governance related research.

Professor Philip Woodhouse – University of Manchester. A trained agricultural scientist he has worked with the FAO. He was the head of the Institute for Development Policy and Management between 2003 and 2006.

Panel A, Sub Panel 1 – Clinical Medicine

Professor Aziz Sheikh – University of Edinburgh. Centre for Population and Health Sciences. He has explored the interface between culture (ethnicity and religion), health and healthcare delivery. The extent of his international development experience is not clear.

Professor Jonathan Weber – Imperial College London. Professor of Communicable Disease. He has undertaken considerable research on HIV/AIDS. He was appointed to his current position at Imperial College in order to establish a new department to study HIV. He co-founded the WHO network for HIV categorisation in 1992 and advises WHO, UNAIDS, DFID and the EC on aspects of HIV infection.

Professor Peter Winstanley – University of Warwick. Dene of Medicine. His primary interest is malaria. In the past he has established a Wellcome Trust Tropical Centre at Liverpool, and from 1995 – 2009 was its director. He developed a unit in Malawi into a Wellcome Trust Major Overseas Programme.

Dr Jaqueline Parkin – GlaxoSmithKline. Trained in infectious diseases, she is a specialist in HIV medicine. She is currently Vice President in R & D and in this role she has pushed for more effective therapies for diseases of the developing world.

Panel A, Sub Panel 2: Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care

Professor David Leon – London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. His research areas include global health. He has conducted research in Europe and Central Asia with people from all income levels.

Professor Edwin van Teijlingen – University of Bournemouth. Professor of Reproductive Health Research. He has undertaken overseas research, largely based in Nepal. His research projects include an evaluation of a community based project that aimed to improve the uptake of ante natal care. His latest project is “Improving Access to Research Literature for Higher Education Institutions in Nepal” to address gaps in teaching and learning in the Nepalese higher education sector.

Professor Caroline Fall – University of Southampton. Professor of International Paediatric Epidemiology and Consultant Child Health. Her current work involves co-ordinating a programme of research involving five centres in India, to trace the health of children and adults whose size at birth was recorded.

Professor James Newell – University of Leeds. His work focuses on improving delivery of health services in lower and middle income countries. He is Co-Director of COMDIS HSD a major research programme consortium funded by DFID that addresses health services delivery in Bangladesh, China, Ghana, Nepal, Pakistan, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda. He previously worked at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and was seconded to the African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF) in Tanzania where he worked on the impact of improved treatment facilities for HIV in Africa.

Panel A, Sub Panel 3: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy

Professor Roger Watson – University of Hull. Faculty of Health and Social Care. Most of his work relates to ageing and he has conducted some international work in China, although the international context does not seem to be his primary focus.

This sub-panel is poorly represented in terms of members with international development experience.

Panel A, Sub Panel 5: Biological Sciences

Professor Malcolm Press – University of Birmingham. Head of Life and Environmental Sciences. His work focuses on the interaction between parasitic plants and their hosts. His past projects have been funded by DFID and various charities.

Professor Mike Boots – University of Exeter. Centre for Ecology and Conservation. He is interested in understanding the evolution and ecology of infectious disease and he uses epidemiological models of human tropical disease. He has a particular interest in vector borne human disease.

Professor Pat Heslop Harrison – University of Leicester. His interests include tropical crops and biodiversity.

Professor John Pickett – Rothamsted Research. At Rothamsted he led experimental research on agents for new methods of pest control. He has published on insect resistant GM crops and “Achieving sustainable Striga control for poor African farmers”

Panel A, Sub-Panel 6 – Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science

Professor Julie Fitzpatrick – Moredun. Scientific Director Moredun Research Institute. She also holds a Chair in Food Security in the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences at the University of Glasgow. Her research interests focus on livestock health and disease in the UK and in developing countries.

Professor Keith Goulding - Rothamsted Research. Head of Sustainable Soils and Grassland Systems and Scientific Director of the Centre for Soils and Ecosystem Function. He is also a visiting Professor at China Agricultural University.

Professor Christopher Elliott – Queens University Belfast. School of Biological Sciences. The extent of his international development work/experience is unclear but as a director of the ASSET technology group he has established multiple collaborations with technology companies across the world. The aim is to lower the cost of early detection of contamination across the whole food chain. He is a Director of the Institute of Global Food Safety.

Professor Euan Phimster – University of Aberdeen. He specialises in agricultural and resource economics. His current projects include energy poverty and access to electricity in Ghana.

Dr Jonathan Brookes – OECD. He works in the field of agricultural policy, trade and development.

Professor Tim Wheeler – DFID. Professor of Crop Science and Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor. He has published extensively on how climate change could impact on the sustainability of agriculture and food.

Professor Philip White – The James Hutton Institute. Involved in work relating to environment plant interactions. He has acted as a consultant to the World Bank and FAO for projects relating to plant and mineral nutrition.