

Background

Following the June 2020 announcement of the revised submission deadline and extension to the impact assessment period for REF 2021, the REF team are engaging with the sector on potential further revisions to the exercise to take account of the effects of COVID-19 on submissions.

Proposed mitigations are outlined for each of the submission areas – outputs, impact and environment below.

Page 2 outlines the questions we are asking the sector about these proposed mitigations and provides details of how to complete the accompanying survey.

Outputs

Delayed outputs, originally expected to be publicly available by 31 Dec 2020

- Delayed outputs may be submitted, where originally expected to be publicly available by 31 Dec 2020
- Can be submitted in final form (if available by 31 March 2021) or as accepted manuscript / pre-dissemination version
- Will require audit evidence of delay / date originally expected and of journey to being effectively shared / publicly available

Affected outputs statement

- Can provide *optional* statement of *up to* 100 words to explain to the panel how output has been affected by COVID-19; not expecting statement to be provided for all affected outputs
- Statement to help the panels understand set of submitted materials in relation to the original intended output; panels will only assess submitted materials
- Audit evidence required

Removing the minimum of one output requirement

- Can apply min one of reduction for staff member with no eligible output due to COVID-19 (inc any eligible through mitigations) **AND** where the staff member has been unable to produce an eligible output before COVID-19 due to equality-related circumstances
- Reductions made through existing REF6a process at the point of submission

Open Access 'other' exception

- Where an in-scope output has not met open access requirements because of disruption related to COVID-19, the 'other exception' may be applied
- 'Other exception' for 2020 outputs not included in the risk identification process for open access compliance

Impact

Affected impact case studies statement

- Where there has been very significant disruption to an impact, the submitting HEI can provide contextual information to the panels
- Optional statement of *up to* 100 words, only containing information that would not otherwise fit in case study template (e.g. particular challenges in accessing evidence)
- Not expecting statement to be provided for all affected case studies
- Statement to help the panels to understand wider context for submitted case study
- Panels will only assess submitted materials
- Information provided should be verifiable

Environment

Institutional-level statement on COVID-19

- Can provide *optional* statement of *up to* 500 words as part of institutional-level environment statement (REF5a)
- HEIs submitting to only one UOA and not completing a REF5a will also be able to provide statement
- To provide context to panels on *particular* effects of / response to COVID-19 - not expecting general statements
- Information must be verifiable
- Approach of 'no detriment' to assessment of submissions on basis of statement, or where not provided

Guidance on forward looking aspects

- Addendum to the panel criteria, published by 31 July
- Acknowledging challenges facing submitting units / institutions, providing points of guidance for consideration, indicating panels' expectations
- Further information on application of assessment criteria (vitality and sustainability)

Survey questions

Outputs

- Taken as a whole, the proposed modifications for outputs are appropriate (indicate level of agreement)
- Please provide any comments on your answer, including where applicable any considerations in relation to interdisciplinary research and/or equality and diversity (500 words)

Impact

- The additional statement proposed for affected impact case studies is appropriate (indicate level of agreement)
- Please provide any comments on your answer (300 words)

Environment

- The proposed modifications for the environment are appropriate (indicate level of agreement)
- Please provide any comments on your response (300 words)

How to respond to the survey

- The survey on the proposed mitigations is available at <https://ref.ac.uk/events/consultation-webinar-on-proposed-modifications-to-the-2021-research-excellence-framework/>
- The deadline for responses is noon, Wednesday 8 July 2020
- Further FAQs, including on areas related to the proposed mitigations will be available from Monday 29 June
- Any questions about the proposed mitigations and survey can be sent to info@ref.ac.uk
- Decisions on further mitigations to REF 2021 will be announced in July