

The REF

REF2021 Research
Excellence
Framework



Jonathan Seckl, April 2018

Key purposes of REF are:

- inform the **selective allocation of funding for research**
- provide accountability for public investment in research and produce **evidence of the benefits** of this investment
- provide **benchmarking** information and establish **reputational yardsticks...** (for HE sector and public).

REF2014: Submission metrics

	RAE2008*	REF2014	REF2021
Number of submissions	39 / 67	31 / 36	?30
Number of joint submissions	5 (121 FTE)	6 (410 FTE)	5?
Category A staff FTE	1,640	1,753	>2,250 (real growth ~10%)
Category A staff H/C	1,684	1,852	
Sector	52,401	52,077	
Research outputs	6,511	6,158	6,000-6,500
Research income (includes RCUK facility income-in-kind)	£573m	£1,013m	Growing, but 6 th in UK
Research doctoral degrees awarded	2,109	3,021	?
Impact case studies	-	203	~170

* ECA not included

REF2014 Results: Power rankings

Rank	HEI	Cat A FTE	4*	3*	2*	1*	U/C	Power	GPA	Prop Staff Sub	Number of Submissions
1	University of Oxford	2409.27	48	39	11	1	0	1.00	3.34	86.82%	31
2	University College London	2565.61	43	39	15	2	1	0.97	3.22	91.89%	36
3	University of Cambridge	2087.61	47	40	12	1	0	0.86	3.33	95.06%	32
4	University of Edinburgh	1753.08	38	45	15	2	0	0.63	3.18	83.28%	31
5	University of Manchester	1561.16	35	47	16	1	0	0.54	3.16	77.98%	35
6	Imperial College London	1256.86	46	44	9	1	0	0.52	3.36	91.88%	14
7	King's College London	1369	40	45	13	2	0	0.51	3.23	79.69%	27
8	University of Nottingham	1404.38	32	49	17	2	1	0.46	3.09	78.99%	32
9	University of Bristol	1137.73	36	47	15	1	0	0.40	3.18	91.31%	31
10	University of Leeds	1149.06	32	50	15	2	0	0.38	3.13	74.86%	33
11	University of Southampton	1112.96	33	51	14	1	0	0.38	3.15	89.75%	26
12	University of Sheffield	1043.1	33	52	13	1	0	0.36	3.17	74.24%	35
13	University of Glasgow	1099.39	31	50	17	2	0	0.36	3.10	83.79%	32
14	University of Warwick	930.68	37	50	12	1	0	0.34	3.22	83.47%	23
15	University of Birmingham	1065.31	28	53	16	2	0	0.33	3.07	80.71%	33
16	Newcastle University	887.95	31	48	19	1	0	0.29	3.09	79.64%	28
17	Cardiff University	737.7	40	47	11	1	0	0.28	3.27	62.41%	27
18	University of Durham	740.36	33	50	15	1	0	0.25	3.14	78.76%	23
19	Queen's University Belfast	868.11	25	52	21	2	0	0.25	2.99	95.19%	28
20	Queen Mary University of London	670.81	34	52	13	1	0	0.23	3.18	73.63%	21

size vs research power: $r^2 = 0.95$

REF Subject Position

University of Edinburgh Research Power Position by REF Submission (2014)



REF - Edinburgh UoAs by research power

UoA	Number of submissions, UK	Research Fortnight /THES Power Rank
01: Clinical Medicine	31	5
04: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	82	4
05: Biological Sciences	44	4
06: Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science (joint submission with SRUC)	29	1
07: Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences (Geosciences and Geography)	45	1 st THES power
08: Chemistry (joint submission with University of St Andrews)	37	3
09: Physics (joint submission with University of St Andrews)	41	4
10: Mathematical Sciences (joint submission with Heriot-Watt University)	53	5 th THES power
11: Computer Science and Informatics	89	1
15: General Engineering (joint submission with Heriot-Watt University)	62	1 st THES power
16: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning (joint submission with Heriot-Watt University)	45	2
17: Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology	74	51
18: Economics and Econometrics	28	12
19: Business and Management Studies	101	16
20: Law	67	4
21: Politics and International Studies	56	8
22: Social Work and Social Policy	62	3
23: Sociology	29	1
24: Anthropology and Development Studies	25	4
25: Education	76	5
26: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism	51	10
27: Area Studies	23	9
28: Modern Languages and Linguistics A: Modern languages and Celtic and Scottish studies	57	11
28: Modern Languages and Linguistics B: Linguistics	57	8
29: English Language and Literature	89	22
30: History	83	3
31: Classics	22	5
32: Philosophy	40	5
33: Theology and Religious Studies	33	4
34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	84	7
35: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	84	13

20/31 UoAs in UK top 5

Edinburgh UoAs environment and impact

UoA	Impact rank	Impact 4* %	Highest impact 4* %	Environment rank
01: Clinical Medicine	15 th	74%	100% (Bristol/Dundee)	5 th
04: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	10 th	81%	100% (Swansea, Stirling)	1 st
05: Biological Sciences	3 rd	80	92 (York)	1 st
06: Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science (joint with SRUC)	8 th	77	100 (Warwick, Aber ⁿ)	1 st
07: Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences	21 st	31	77 (UEA)	13 th
08: Chemistry (joint with University of St Andrews)	21 st	28	76 (Durham)	9 th
09: Physics (joint with University of St Andrews)	12 th	46	83 (Manch)	3 rd
10: Mathematical Sciences (joint with Heriot-Watt University)	18 th	30	87 (Oxford)	10 th
11: Computer Science and Informatics	21 st	48	90% (Newcastle)	9 th
15: General Engineering (joint with Heriot-Watt University)	9 th	60	84 (Oxford)	10 th
16: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning (with Heriot-Watt)	9 th	56	90 (Cardiff, Bath)	9 th
17: Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology	51 st	0	80 (Sussex)	38 th
18: Economics and Econometrics	17 th	13	100 (Bristol)	6 th
19: Business and Management Studies	32 nd	47	84 (Cambs)	17 th
20: Law	2 nd	87	100 (Ulster)	6 th
21: Politics and International Studies	12 th	50	87 (Oxford)	1 st
22: Social Work and Social Policy	18 th	56	100 (LSE/UCL/Oxf/Yrk)	1 st
23: Sociology	9 th	54	100 (York)	3 rd
24: Anthropology and Development Studies	4 th	60	100 (Belfast)	6 th
25: Education	9 th	76	100 (Durh, Notts, Sheff)	1 st
26: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism	16 th	40	100 (Bristol)	11 th
27: Area Studies	14 th	13	100 (LSE, Exeter)	15 th
28: Modern Languages and Linguistics A: Modern languages	23 rd	36	100 (Cardiff)	4 th
28: Modern Languages and Linguistics B: Linguistics	15 th	34		11 th
29: English Language and Literature	36 th	30	100 (Kingst ⁿ /New/Swan)	17 th
30: History	24 th	40	100 (Herts) 68 (KCL)	24 th
31: Classics	15 th	27	66 (Cambs)	14 th
32: Philosophy	16 th	37	80 (Keele/Brum/UCL)	5 th
33: Theology and Religious Studies	11 th	40	87 (Lancs)	2 nd
34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	16 th	58	90 (HWU), 87 (York)	19 th
35: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts			100 (Gold/OMU/Soton)	7 th

3 in impact top 5

12 in envirt⁺ top 5

REF – Clear messages

- **Bigger does better**
 - Languages and Linguistics together would have been 4th
 - Education with Sports Science would have been 2nd
 - 160 Chancellors Fellows contributed to leap-frogging Manchester
- **Joint submissions raised our research power, but not universally recognised**
- **2015 we stated.... “Room for improvement in all elements: Suggest...**
 1. All long-term R/T&R appointments 4x4* (seniors) or strong 4* potential (ECRs)
 2. UoAs with substantially more 3* than 4* should carefully review recruitment and staff development strategies”
 3. Impact:
 - Comparative analysis of HEIs performing particularly well
 - Review processes to ensure capture impact effectively and report optimally
 - Draw specific lessons, e.g.
 - MVM how did Bristol do so well in UoA1?
 - CSE all 7 outcomes UK top 5, 5/7 impacts outside top 10.
 - HSS How can the impact of History become sector best?
 - plan impact cases now

REF2021 – what's new?

(quite a lot as Stern got his way)

- **Staff**
 - **All staff** with *“significant responsibility for research”* (contractual)
 - ‘independent’
 - at least 0.2 FTE and with a substantive connection with HEI
 - Complex process if <100% (HESA return)
- **Outputs 60%**
 - n= 1-5/FTE,
 - average 2.5 outputs/FTE
- **Portability**
 - both former and new HEIs claim outputs

- **Impact increased weight 25%**
 - Criteria still *'reach and significance'*
 - adding Public Engagement
 - Impact on teaching/curriculum will count
 - Cases - similar number
 - Underpinning work at least 2*, published 1/8/2000 - 31/12/2020. Impact must take place 1/8/2013 - 31/7/2020
 - “routine provision of audit evidence” for case study templates, not given to panels
 - More standardised rules for reporting... to emerge
 - Some updating/reuse of cases allowed.. Not easy to get 4*
 - Gets many more of the marks - especially as the impact template is now in 'environment', this turns 16% to 25%

Getting ever more important

- **Environment** (*'vitality and sustainability'*) **15%**
 - more structured
 - PhD students
 - grant spend
 - staff development, equality and diversity (Athena Swan)
 - Open access and data
 - infrastructure
 - Supporting interdisciplinarity
 - Supporting collaboration with "organisations beyond HE"
 - forward research strategy
 - Institutional component (common to an HEI's UoAs)
 - Impact template

4* rules, but volume is crucial

- UoE
 - £75m in SFC REG
 - £364m competitive grants 2016-17 (>6% growth p.a. since 2012)
- Each additional 4* output (assuming rest of Scotland static)
 - ~ £20-30k p.a. REG income
 - ~ £50-70k for 4* impact
- Each additional 3* paper
 - ~ £5-10k p.a. REG income
- 4th in UK is >95% related to volume, rest is quality
 - don't get big without quality, but..
 - to catch Cambridge (3rd) we need >220 4x4* FTEs

- What is the optimal strategy for REF2021?
 - Staff... maximise number (assume ~all have 3*, prefer 4*)
 - Outputs ... new approach
 - Impact ... **crucial**
 - Environment ... lots happening with City Deal-DDI