

REF 2029: background and updates

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Purpose of the REF

The REF funding bodies have agreed 3 purposes for the exercise:

- inform the allocation of block-grant research funding to HEIs based on research quality;
- provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment; and
- provide insights into the health of research in HEIs in the UK.

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme/initial-decisions>

Rationale of the design of the REF 2029

“The changes create an assessment exercise that will underpin:

- a research system that produces **high-quality, rigorous** research that is **open** to all;
- an **inclusive and collaborative** research system that supports a **diversity** of people, ideas, institutions, methodologies, outputs, and activities; and
- an **engaged and impactful** research system that connects research with wider society to bring about positive socio-economic change.”

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme/initial-decisions>

REF 2029 changes in approach from REF 2021

Shift from assessment at an individual level to an institutional and disciplinary level:

- Staff volume determined by average of two years of data from HESA staff return – determines number of outputs and impact case studies, but no staff list submission
- Decoupling of staff and outputs
- New assessed narrative elements to provide a broader view
- Emphasis on support for research culture

REF 2029 components

The new assessed elements will be:

- Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding (50%)
- Engagement and Impact (25%)
- People, Culture and Environment (25%)

The disciplinary structure (Units of Assessment, or UOAs) will be the same as for REF 2021.

Element	Weighting	Submission component	Contribution to element	Overall contribution
Contribution to knowledge and understanding (CKU)	50%	Outputs	at most 90%	45%
		Disciplinary-level statement	at least 10%	5%
Engagement and Impact (E&I)	25%	Impact case studies	80% for units >40FTE	20%
		Disciplinary-level statement	20% for units >40FTE	5%
People, culture and environment (PCE)	25%	Disciplinary-level statement	at most 80%	20%
		Institutional-level statement	at least 20%	5%

Timetable

Summer 2025	Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding policy module and associated Code of Practice guidance Engagement and Impact policy module
Winter 2025	PCE definitions published
Winter 2025/26	Code of Practice deadline
2026	Final full guidance set
2027	Submission intentions deadline
Nov 2028	Submission deadline
Dec 2029	Results published

Data from the 2025/26 and 2026/27 HESA Staff returns will be used to determine volume

A detailed timetable can be found at <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/about/timetable/>

Framework development

Announcements to date:

- [Future Research Assessment programme evaluation activity](#)
- [Initial decisions](#)
- [Update on Initial Decisions](#)
- [PCE update January 2024](#)
- [PCE pilot](#)
- [Open Access Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice guidance](#)
- [Volume Measure guidance](#)

The latest guidance can be found at
<https://2029.ref.ac.uk/guidance/>

REF 2029 website: <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/>

Framework development

Consultation/policy development to come:

- Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding and associated Code of Practice guidance (Summer 2025)
- Engagement and Impact policy (Summer 2025)
- PCE definitions published (Winter 2025)
- Code of Practice deadline (Winter 2025/26)
- Final full guidance set (2026)
- Submission intentions deadline (2027)

Any questions? Get in touch with your divisional [REF Contact](#) or refinfo@admin.ox.ac.uk

