

20th October 2017

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Dear Colleague,

Invitation to nominate panel members for the Research Excellence Framework 2021

1. I am writing to the Transport Planning Society as an association or organisation which has confirmed an interest, or we have identified as having a potential interest, in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF).
2. The REF is the system for assessing the quality and impact of research in UK higher education institutions (HEIs). It was first conducted in 2014, and replaced the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The REF will be undertaken by the four UK higher education funding bodies: the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.
3. The REF exercise will be completed in 2021 and the results will be used by the four funding bodies to drive their allocations of research funding to HEIs. It will also provide useful benchmarking information and reputational yardsticks, and provide accountability for public investment in research and demonstrate its benefits.

Expert panels

4. The REF will be undertaken through a process of expert review. HEIs will be invited to make submissions which will be assessed by 34 subject-based expert sub-panels, working under the guidance of four main panels. Further information on the panel structure, the roles, responsibilities and workload of panel members and the criteria for appointment can be found in the publication 'Roles and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 2017/03) available at www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.

5. High calibre panel chairs and members who command the confidence of the academic community and wider stakeholders will be essential to the success of the REF. The four main panel chairs have been appointed (their details are available at www.ref.ac.uk) and we are currently in the process of appointing the sub-panel chairs.

Nominating panel members

6. On behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies, I would like to invite your association or organisation to nominate candidates to be panel members. Nominations should be completed online at www.ref.ac.uk/about/nompan by **noon, 20 December 2017**.

7. There is no limit on the number of individuals you can nominate and we would encourage you to consider a wide range of individuals to cover the full breadth of your research interests.

8. The funding bodies are seeking nominations of candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds, institution types and geographical region. We particularly welcome nominations of candidates from groups previously under-represented on assessment panels, including women, people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, and disabled people.

9. We are inviting nominations for candidates to be:

- additional main panel members (with expertise in leading, commissioning or making use of interdisciplinary research, leading research internationally, or senior level experience in the commissioning, use or wider benefits of research)
- sub-panel members and assessors (including practising researchers, individuals with expertise in commissioning, applying or making use of research, and interdisciplinary advisers).

10. We would like to receive nominations of individuals who have served previously on REF or Research Assessment Exercise panels, as well as those for whom this would be a new experience. Heads of HEIs may not be nominated as panel members.

11. Individuals who are nominated will need to confirm that they are willing and able to serve as a panel member, before their names and contact details are put forward. Nominating bodies should also ensure that nominees are aware of the provisional timetable and workload implications.

12. Full details on the roles and the workload implications can be found in 'Roles and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 2017/03) available at www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.

Equality and diversity in the nominations process

13. To help achieve our aim of increasing the representativeness of the expert panels, all associations or organisations wishing to submit nominations for REF panel membership will need to provide information about how equality and diversity issues were taken into account in putting forward nominations. We have provided guidance and a template for this purpose online at www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.

Further information

14. Further information about the REF can be found on our website at www.ref.ac.uk.

15. If you have any queries, or you do not wish to receive future correspondence about the REF, please do get in touch at admin@ref.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Hackett', written in a cursive style.

Dr Kim Hackett
REF Manager

REF2021 Research
Excellence
Framework

Taking part in REF 2021

A guide for research users

October 2017



Taking part in REF 2021

A guide for research users

The REF results inform strategic decisions

What is the REF?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK's world-leading system for assessing the excellence of research in higher education institutions. The REF outcomes are used to calculate about £2 billion per year of public funding for universities' research, and affect their international reputations. The results also inform strategic decisions about national research priorities. The next REF will be undertaken in 2021 by the four UK higher education funding bodies.

The REF was first carried out in 2014, replacing the previous Research Assessment Exercise. It included for the first time an assessment of the broader impact of universities' research beyond academia: on the economy, society, culture, public policy and services, health, the environment and quality of life – within the UK and internationally.

Impact was assessed through the submission of case studies, which described the changes or benefits brought about by research undertaken by researchers at the institution. Across all disciplines, 44 per cent of impacts were judged to be outstanding. This reflects universities' productive engagements with a very wide range of public, private and third sector organisations, and direct engagement with the public.

In 2014, 44 per cent of impacts were judged to be outstanding

REF2014
Research Excellence Framework

The research of **154**
UK universities was assessed



They made **1,911** submissions including:

- **52,061** academic staff
- **191,150** research outputs
- **6,975** impact case studies

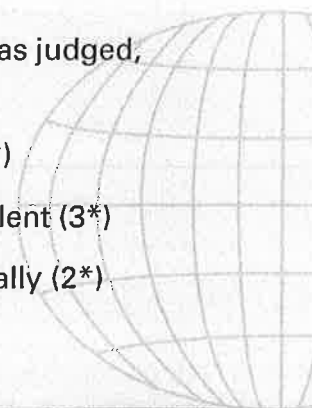
The **overall quality** of submissions was judged, on average to be:

30% world-leading (4*)

46% internationally excellent (3*)

20% recognised internationally (2*)

3% recognised nationally (1*)



What role do research users play?

'Research users' are people outside of academia in the private, public or third sectors, who make use of university research in their organisation or professional activity - by commissioning research or collaborating with academic researchers, for example.

Research users play a key role on the REF's expert panels, sitting alongside senior academics. The expert panels assess submissions, including the quality of research, impacts described, and the research environment. In the 2014 REF, working under the guidance of four main panels, 36 expert panels assessed 1,911 submissions, including almost 7,000 impact case studies.

Research users' expertise and their experience of working with research and researchers play a vital role in the REF. As panel members they ensure that the assessment criteria enable the REF to capture effectively the wider impact of UK research. They work closely with academic panel members and other research users to evaluate the reach and significance of research impacts beyond academia.

As well as participating as panel members, research users will be able to take part in REF2021 as impact assessors. These roles will be filled at a later stage in the process.

In the 2014 REF, the role of research users was highly valued by the UK's research community and their contribution was described as 'hugely beneficial' and 'invaluable to the process'.

What are the benefits for research users of taking part?

Over 250 research users participated in the expert panels in REF 2014. They enjoyed bringing their professional perspectives to the assessment and appreciated the opportunity to contribute to a crucial part of the UK's research funding landscape. According to their feedback, the REF gave them:

- Insight into current developments in research relevant to their professional lives
- Excellent networking opportunities with research leaders and senior professionals in private, public or third sectors
- An enhanced appreciation of the connections that can be made between researchers and stakeholders
- Increased understanding of the potential barriers to engagement with researchers and how to overcome them
- Opportunities to encourage better understanding of organisations' research needs
- A chance to contribute to the allocation of public funds.

**Research users
have a key role
on REF panels**

**Insight into
current
developments
in research**

What is expected?

Research users can participate in the REF panels as main panel members or sub-panel members. The extent and nature of participation varies across roles and phases:

Main panel members	
2018	Develop assessment criteria and panel working methods Consult with other stakeholders Time commitment: 6-8 full-day meetings
2020	Evaluate need for additional panel members Prepare for assessment phase Time commitment: 2-3 full-day meetings
2021	Oversee assessment of impact submissions Calibrate assessment standards across sub-panels Time commitment: 5-6 full-day meetings, plus 10-15 days to review materials

Sub-panel members	
2018	Contribute to the development the assessment criteria and working methods Consult with other stakeholders Time commitment: 6-8 days
2020	Evaluate need for additional panel members Prepare for assessment phase Time commitment: 2-3 days
2021	Participate in all meetings of the sub-panel (initial meetings for briefing, calibration meetings, and all assessment meetings) Produce draft assessment outcomes and feedback Time commitment: 10-12 full-day meetings, plus 20-25 days to review materials

Fees and expenses

Panel members will receive fixed fees covering each of the three periods, to be paid at regular intervals. Travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed according to an agreed scheme.

Equality and Diversity

The funding bodies recognise that diversity of thought and experience contributes fundamental insight and value to the work of the REF panels. Nominations are therefore encouraged from diverse candidates, in particular from women, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBT+ people and those with disabilities, as well as international applicants.

How to apply to be a REF panel member

Panel members are appointed through a nominations process. Nominations may be made through any association or organisation with a clear interest in the conduct, quality, funding or wider benefits of publicly funded research except for mission groups and individual UK universities. Information on the nominations process can be found at www.ref.ac.uk/about/nompan

Deadline for nominations: 20 December 2017

Questions? Please contact Gina Reid at info@ref.ac.uk.