

## **REF 2021 news for UOA 4 Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience**

31<sup>st</sup> January 2019

Today sees the publication of the REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions, Guidance on Codes of Practice and on the Panel Criteria and Working Methods

<https://www.ref.ac.uk>. These documents are the product of extensive consultation and are designed to provide clarity on the full range of activities related to REF 2021.

The disciplines of psychology, psychiatry and neuroscience have been actively involved in this process and their views have been taken into account in arriving at the final forms of the guidance. We are writing to fill you in on two important developments related to UOA 4 arising from this consultation.

### Research cost levels

Following concerns about the wide range of research costs across the UOA, the REF team considered a proposal to differentiate the cost levels of individual outputs. Over the summer, a pilot exercise assessed the feasibility of the approach and there was wider consultation with HEIs and learned societies regarding its potential value.

Feedback from the 61 participating HEIs indicated that the process of assigning cost activity to outputs was moderately straightforward. However, responses to the wider consultation on this issue were mixed. A significant minority of respondents including key bodies within UOA 4's subject communities set out clear reservations. Some respondents were opposed to the principle of using REF to capture information on funding and expressed some related concerns that it may lead to an alignment of cost and quality in the assessment. Many considered that the proposed approach would skew the selection of outputs and that this could distort investment and research focus in these disciplines more widely.

Sub-panel 4 discussed the outcomes from the pilot and the consultation at its meeting on 14 November. After extensive consideration of risks and benefits, it advised the funding bodies that the differentiation of research cost by output had high levels of risk and did not have sufficiently broad support from the community to proceed. The decision was supported by the REF Main Panel A and the REF Steering Group decided not to pursue this approach. Thus in common with all other UOAs in REF2021, there will be no classification of outputs by research cost in UOA 4. Colleagues in the funding and policy teams at Research England and the other funding bodies will continue to consider how best to approach the funding question outside of the REF process.

### Appointment of a qualitative methods expert for the assessment phase

In response to requests from the relevant academic communities, the REF team agreed to make an early appointment to the sub-panel of a specialist in qualitative methods for the assessment phase. The process of appointing to this role has started and will draw from the nominations for sub-panel membership in Spring 2018. This appointment will be announced at the earliest opportunity.

Over the coming period the sub-panel will continue to support broad understanding of the REF 2021 process and how it applies to our disciplines. We will keep open all channels of communication and are committed to ensuring that REF processes are applied with fairness, consistency and transparency in our UOA.

Yours sincerely

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