The UK Research Excellence Framework (REF)

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Summary

- The research funding system
- Assessing research quality
The Research Funding System
Research funding flows to HE

Approx total: £6bn*

7 UK Research Councils: £1.2bn
(NB. This is under 50% of the RC total. The rest goes to Research Council Institutes, international facilities for UK researchers, etc)

Business: £676m
Contract research = £376m
Consultancy = £310m

Technology Strategy Board £282m

HEIF £150m (facilitates user engagement)

Other non-commercial
Including charities, RDAs and other government departments c.£1516m

HEFCE research funding: £1.6bn
Mainstream QR = £1.05bn
Research degree fund = £240m
Charity support = £198m
Business QR = £64m

European Commission £404m
Other international £114m

Dual support

* This is an estimate. Excludes informal flows, funding in kind and other funding streams that universities themselves may channel into research.
Research Councils operate UK-wide

Separate HE Funding Bodies for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
Quality-related research funding in England

- National Research Libraries £6 million
- Research degree programmes £240 million
- Charity research support £198 million
- Business research support £64 million
- Mainstream QR £1 billion
• Funding on the basis of **excellence**
• Excellence wherever it is found
• Expert judgments – peer review
• Research Councils: *prospective* evaluation of projects
• HE Funding Bodies: *retrospective* evaluation of performance
Assessing research quality
Overview:

Purpose of the REF

- The REF is a process of expert review
- It replaces the RAE as the UK-wide framework for assessing research in all disciplines
- Its purpose is:
  - To inform research funding allocations by the four UK HE funding bodies (approximately £2 billion per year)
  - Provide accountability for public funding of research and demonstrate its benefits
  - To provide benchmarks and reputational yardsticks
Overview:

Overall process

- Universities make submissions
- Submissions in 36 discipline-based Units of Assessment
- Universities select which eligible staff to include in submissions
- Submissions are assessed by sub-panels, one for each Unit of Assessment
- Sub-panels are grouped into 4 main panels, responsible for consistency
- Results provided as quality profiles
Overview:
The assessment framework

Overall quality

Outputs
- Maximum of 4 outputs per researcher

Impact
- Impact template and case studies

Environment
- Environment data and template

65%
20%
15%
Overview:

The assessment framework

Overall quality

Outputs
Maximum of 4 outputs per researcher

Impact

Environment

65%
20%
15%

Assessed for originality, significance and rigour
The assessment framework

Overview:

Overall quality

Outputs
Maximun of 4 outputs per researcher

Impact
Impact template and case studies

Environment
Environment data and template

65%

20%

15%

“an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia”
The assessment framework

Overview:

Assessed for **reach** and **significance**
Overview:

The assessment framework

- **Outputs**: Maximum of 4 outputs per researcher

- **Impact**: Impact template and case studies

- **Environment**: Environment data and template

**Overall quality**

- 65%

Forward research strategy and metrics of activity
Overview:
The assessment framework

Overall quality

Outputs
  Maximum of 4 outputs per researcher

Impact

Environment

Assessed for vitality and sustainability

65%
Current status

- Submissions received November 2013
- Assessment complete
- Results published 18 December 2014
- Extensive program of evaluation
Summary

- The research funding system
- Assessing research quality
Thank you for listening

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