

REF 2021 consultation on the draft guidance and criteria

Respondent details

Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of: *

As an individual

Business

Charity

Department or research group

Higher Education Institution

Public sector organisation

Representative body

Subject association or learned society

Other (please specify):

Please provide the name of your organisation. *

If you would be happy to be contacted in the event of any follow-up questions, please provide a contact email address.

If your response is in relation to specific main panels, please indicate which one(s): *

Main Panel A: Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (Sub-Panels 1-6)

Main Panel B: Physical sciences, Engineering and Mathematics (Sub-Panels 7-12)

Main Panel C: Social Sciences (Sub-Panels 13-24)

Main Panel D: Arts and Humanities (Sub-Panels 25-34)

Relevant to all

We are seeking views during the consultation on both the draft guidance on submissions and the draft panel criteria and working methods. Please select the documents for which you would like to provide a response:

Both documents

Guidance on Submissions only

Panel Criteria and Working Methods only

Guidance on submissions: Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework

1a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

1b. Please provide any comments on Part 1. (300 word limit)

No comments.

Guidance on submissions: Part 2: Submissions

2a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 2: Submissions':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2b. Please provide any comments on Part 2. (300 word limit)

Paragraph 69 suggests that the funding bodies will query 'significant anomalies' between the pattern of staff FTE submitted in UoAs against that submitted in HESA Cost Centres. This holds a danger of an unnecessary increase in burden on both institutions and the funding bodies, given the acknowledged variation and disparities between the two mappings.

The proposals for requesting exceptions from submission for small units (paragraphs 70-74) are sensible.

Multiple Submissions: Paragraph 66 indicates that multiple submissions will be an exception and paragraphs 75-79 provide more details. Paragraph 75(c) allows for an exception where merging institutions "anticipate difficulty in achieving academic cohesion". If this is an acceptable reason in this instance, why is it not acceptable in the more general circumstance of two separate groups, units or departments operating within the boundaries of a single UoA? Paragraph

75(d)(ii) bullet 2 is key in recognising the possible circumstance, which is determined by the local circumstances, not by the abstract view of the sub-panel.

Paragraph 104 suggests that there are improved procedures for cross-referral. Aside from the mechanism itself, institutions are likely to need further reassurance that a request will be granted and that the resulting assessment be accepted by the 'home' UoA.

Interdisciplinary Research: it is clear that the funding bodies are making attempts to ensure that interdisciplinary research is appropriately assessed. However, paragraph 105(f) is somewhat vague.

We are concerned that there is not adequate provision for multi-disciplinary submissions; i.e. those that naturally comprise a unit of predominantly monodisciplinary outputs from a range of disciplines.

Paragraph 106(b) notes the possibility of an output being listed in more than one submission. Will the output be given a single rating to be used in all submissions in which it is listed, or will the rating depend on the contribution of each relevant co-author?

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff details (REF1a/b)

3a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Staff details':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 1. (300 word limit)

In providing evidence of the contribution of fractional staff (paragraph 123), it may also be appropriate to require demonstration that the individual's activities at their substantive institution are distinct. Whilst the provisions in paragraph 126 are welcome, it would seem to be appropriate to require institutions positively to flag that one of these circumstances apply, rather than to omit the statement.

Paragraph 140 identifies a set of positive inclusion criteria. It might also be appropriate to identify a set of negative exclusion criteria.

Paragraph 142 discusses the revision of the total output requirement where unsubmitted staff should have been included. It should be made clear whether the change in FTE will also affect the number of impact case studies required.

The approach to documenting early career researchers (ECR) is potentially short-sighted. Paragraphs 145 and 146 require institutions to record additional information that by its nature (assuming it is a Y/N flag) is only relevant for REF2021. It would be better to capture in HESA, on a regular and on-going basis, the date on which an individual first became an independent researcher, and then to use that to determine ECR status in the REF (or for any other purpose).

This would provide much richer information on research capacity, development and performance, including the possibility of a longitudinal profile of the ECR population.

The last criterion at paragraph 146(a), that the employment could be at an overseas organisation, may be problematic to evidence, given international variations in practice and terminology. Institutions may benefit from some practical support, such as through FAQs.

Paragraph 148(f) raises the question of the point in time for the FTE: the date of leaving or the date of the relevant publication? What if they have two publications, and were on different FTEs at the time of each publication?

4. Possible indicators of research independence are set out at paragraph 130, including a reference to a list of independent fellowships. This list is intended to guide institutions on determining independence for staff holding fellowships from major research funders. The list is not intended to be comprehensive. Do you have any comments on the clarity, usefulness, or coverage of this list? (300 word limit)

The provision of the list of fellowships is useful. It includes awards made by the European Research Council, but does not make reference to the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships, some of which are likely to be deemed to require independence. There may be other charitably-funded fellowships that are relevant. Discussion with and through the AMRC is suggested.

Paragraph 130 states that "each indicator may not individually demonstrate independence" and we are concerned that this particularly applies to the final bullet in the list. It may be appropriate to strengthen that bullet point, or to be clear that it should not be used solely.

5a. Do you agree with the proposed eligibility of seconded staff set out at paragraphs 121.c to d?

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

5b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

The only comment relates to paragraph 121(f)(ii): if those contracts were fractional and totalled 1 FTE, then both institutions ought to be able to include the individual, as both have a valid and 'live' contract of employment.

6a. Do you agree with the proposed ineligibility of staff based in a discrete department or unit outside the UK?

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

6b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

This proposal does not have our full support. It seems reasonable that staff in subsidiary or autonomous overseas campuses are not eligible, as they are not part of the UK research environment.

Conversely, it does not seem reasonable that staff in research units or field stations should automatically be excluded. Such units might logically be argued to be a necessary extension of the parent organisation's research, in order to undertake the particular type of research to the highest level and with the most impact, and in which they invest. That this might require some additional burden specific to the REF for institutions is a decision for the institutions themselves, to which they may not be averse as it is also likely to be in their interests.

As noted in the consultation, the automatic exclusion of such research units might disproportionately affect some submissions and some UoAs, which might in due course lead to institutions deciding to invest less in such subject areas, to the detriment of the UK's contribution to those key topics, such as tropical medicine. This is potentially a case of assuming that the HESA return is wholly correct and an absolute and appropriate standard against which to check.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff circumstances (paragraphs 149 to 193)

7a. The proposed approach for taking account of circumstances will achieve the aim of promoting equality and diversity in REF 2021:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree**
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any comments on your answer. (300 word limit)

The consultation recognises the burden on institutions but does not acknowledge the effect on the affected staff: experiences from 2014 were that individuals with relevant personal circumstances, and in particular the more problematic and long-term ones, were often distressed by having to go through the process, however sensitively it was handled.

Whilst there may be a reduction in sensitive information being provided to the funding bodies and EDAP, the same level of information will need to be collected and considered by institutions as in 2014, in order to manage cases appropriately. The burden is therefore not being reduced.

There is a non sequitur in the consultation question where it identifies drawbacks to the proposals. If staff with circumstances are permitted to submit fewer outputs, including not submitting the minimum of one, they are going to be less represented. It would seem impossible to have it both ways.

There is a confusion in the logic being applied, worthy though it is. The outputs being submitted are a skewed sample; the exercise is not designed to take or require a random or representative sample.

Paragraph 154 seems to suggest that institutions have to justify the variation from 2.5 outputs per FTE on the basis of the individual circumstances, as defined, which is contrary to the structure of the process, as defined elsewhere, e.g. “HEIs are expected to select outputs on the basis of quality ... to reflect the full breadth of the highest-quality research of the submitting unit” (paragraph 269); paragraph 286 has similar wording.

7b. The potential advantages of the proposed approach outweigh the potential drawbacks identified:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree**
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any comments on your answer. (300 word limit)

The requirement to request reductions in advance of the census date is to be welcomed, so that there are no hostages to fortune. However, this would seem at first sight to disadvantage those individuals who have relevant circumstances late in the census period. The deadline of March 2020 for such requests mitigates against this issue. However, it also means the reviewers (EDAP) will need to turn requests round quickly. Similarly, the appeals process will need to be rapid. As the requests are to be made through the submission system, this also needs to be in place in time, and we note that a pilot version is due for release in Autumn 2019, meaning that this initial release will need to be robust and reliable enough to support ‘production’ use.

7c. Please provide any further comments on these proposals, including any suggestions for clarifying or refining the guidance. (300 word limit)

With respect to reductions due to periods of secondment (paragraph 167), presumably this means that there should be no submitted outputs associated with the individual during this period.

With respect to paragraph 177, does this apply only to those staff who are completing their clinical training as at the census date, or does it apply to any staff who completed their training during the census period (or in the period as defined for ECR status)?

The transfer of the minimum of one output requirement indicated in paragraph 185 will involve the transfer of sensitive personal information, which needs to be appropriately managed.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs (REF2)

8a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs' is clear:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree**

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 2. (300 word limit)

In providing a profile of staff outputs (paragraph 196) the funding bodies will wish to ensure that individuals with zero outputs are not identifiable, as this may breach the basis under which their individual circumstances were disclosed and considered.

Paragraph 197(c)(i) indicates that the author needed to be employed, but does not explicitly state that they had to be employed in an eligible Category A position. This is necessary to avoid excluding those staff who have moved from outside the HE sector. However, it does suggest that outputs authored by a member of staff whilst they were a PhD student are not eligible. This should be made explicit if it is the case, and needs to be consistent with the FAQ response.

Similarly, paragraph 197(c)(ii) indicates that the former staff member needed to be an employee at the time of publication, thus ruling out outputs when they were a PhD student. Paragraph 206(a) reiterates this. Again, this is inconsistent with the current FAQ response.

With respect to OA requirements, does paragraph 229 mean that Gold outputs meet all of the requirements, regardless of when the AM was deposited? If so, or if not, this should be clearly stated. If Gold outputs meet the requirements, then they should not be treated and recorded as exceptions.

With respect to the provision of citation data (paragraph 282), will the data be appropriately normalised before being provided to the sub-panels, or will they be expected to use raw citation data, with all of the issues that that entails?

9. A glossary of output types and collection formats is set out at Annex K, to provide increased clarity to institutions on categorising types of output for submission. Do you have any comments on the clarity and usefulness of this annex?

Annex K is a useful inclusion. It might be argued that Annex C of the 'Panel criteria' should be incorporated into Annex K of the Guidance because, whilst it has been generated by Panel D, it is more generally applicable.

10a. Paragraph 206.b sets out the funding bodies' intention to make ineligible the outputs of former staff who have been made redundant (except where the staff member has taken voluntary redundancy). Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes
- No**
- Other (please specify):

10b. Please provide any further comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

If one considers this to be an assessment of the research of a unit, then all research produced by the unit, regardless of the status of the author at a later point in time (i.e. the census date) should be included.

If, however, this is an assessment of past research and future plans in order to inform future funding of the unit's research, then it is reasonable to exclude outputs of posts made redundant, as the unit has indicated itself that it is not supportive of the continuation of that post.

The challenge of the proposal is that it is reducing to the level of the individual decisions about inclusion, whereas one of the main principles of the exercise is to decouple staff and outputs. If an institution had decided to cease research activity in a particular discipline or sub-discipline, one might consider that no such outputs should be included, whether or not the authors had been made redundant.

In addition, there are a range of circumstances in which redundancy takes place, both voluntary and involuntary, including at the end of fixed-term contracts. The proposal would seem to be suggesting that the outputs of those on fixed-term contracts that have ended would not be eligible, which is not desirable for the individuals.

A final operational observation is that the funding bodies (and institutions) will need to beware issues of confidentiality about the terms of someone leaving, as these may not be able to be shared internally or externally.

11a. Do you agree with the proposed intention to permit the submission of co-authored outputs only once within the same submission?

Yes

No

Other (please specify):

11b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (300 word limit)

We fully support this proposal, as the assessment is of the unit as a whole. If the entities are discrete in a broadly-defined UoA, then there would be a case for multiple submissions. The provisions of paragraph 261 provide a means by which substantial pieces of co-authored work might be appropriately recognised.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research activity cost for UOA 4

12a. How feasible do you consider to be the approach set out at paragraphs 267 to 271 for capturing information on the balance of research activity of different costs within submitting units in UOA 4? (300 word limit)

If this is recognised as necessary for UoA 4, might it also be pertinent to some other subjects, e.g. geography? And where should the funding bodies draw the line of materiality, e.g. combinatorial chemistry?

12b. Are the examples of high cost and other research activity sufficiently clear to guide classification? (300 word limit)

No comments.

12c. Please provide feedback on any specific points in the guidance text as well as the overall clarity of the guidance. (300 word limit)

No comments.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 3: Impact (REF3)

13a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact' is clear:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

13b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 3. (300 word limit)

We believe that the conditions and way to include continuing case studies (paragraphs 308-310) is appropriate and clear. However, given the amount of dialogue that this part of the draft Guidance has elicited, the funding bodies may wish to provide some supplementary information, e.g. through FAQs, to clarify any misunderstandings that are arising.

Some concerns have been raised about the inclusion of commercially confidential information. Whilst some provisions are discussed, and were also in place in 2014, some business collaborators may refuse to allow certain information to be included. Whilst this may not be fully resolved, one additional option may be for the funding body(s) to be a party to a non-disclosure agreement with the business, as at the moment there is a contractual gap: the company has no contractual protection from the funding bodies, only from the university, which is not controlling the access by panel members.

Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Sections 4-5: Environment data and environment (REF4a/b/c-REF5a/b)

14a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment data' is clear:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

14b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 4. (300 word limit)

In paragraph 341, it is not clear how the funding bodies will include the balance of research-related deferred capital, as it will be stated at institutional level rather than attributed to UoAs. Is this something that will be required of institutions as part of their submission of data for REF 4b?

Similarly, in paragraph 343 the funding bodies will exclude collaborative or subcontracted income to the extent that it is identified separately. Should there not be an explicit requirement of institutions so to do in their submission of data?

15a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment' is clear:

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 5. (300 word limit)

In paragraph 351(b), one might expect the inclusion of knowledge exchange, to reinforce the integrated view of the funding bodies and of their various policy areas.

Paragraph 364 implies that EDAP will read all People sections of all submissions. Is this practical or reasonable?

We note that paragraph 360 states that there is no expectation that the environment element of a submission will relate to a single department or coherent organisational unit, and yet it seems possible that sub-panels are likely to mark down any incoherence, even if only subconsciously.

Guidance on Submissions: further comments

16. Please provide any further comments on the 'Guidance on submissions', including Annexes A-M. (500 word limit)

In the impact case study template in Annex G, Section B, Question 3, better guidance is needed on bodies of work, as the current material only reflects the citing of standard outputs.

In Annex H, there is relatively little guidance provided on the required content of the institutional-level environment statements in comparison to that provided for the UoA-level statements in Annex I. The funding bodies may therefore wish to expand the guidance in this area.

In Annex I, Section 1, one might expect explicit requirements in respect of research integrity and open research. In Section 2, research staff should be explicitly mentioned.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 2: Unit of assessment descriptors

1. Do the UOA descriptors provide a clear and appropriate description of the disciplines covered by the UOAs? Please include any suggestions for refining the descriptors and state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

X All

- UOA 1: Clinical Medicine
- UOA 2: Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
- UOA 3: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
- UOA 4: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
- UOA 5: Biological Sciences
- UOA 6: Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences
- UOA 7: Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
- UOA 8: Chemistry
- UOA 9: Physics
- UOA 10: Mathematical Sciences
- UOA 11: Computer Science and Informatics
- UOA 12: Engineering
- UOA 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
- UOA 14: Geography and Environmental Studies
- UOA 15: Archaeology
- UOA 16: Economics and Econometrics
- UOA 17: Business and Management Studies
- UOA 18: Law
- UOA 19: Politics and International Studies
- UOA 20: Social Work and Social Policy
- UOA 21: Sociology
- UOA 22: Anthropology and Development Studies
- UOA 23: Education
- UOA 24: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
- UOA 25: Area Studies
- UOA 26: Modern Languages and Linguistics
- UOA 27: English Language and Literature
- UOA 28: History

- UOA 29: Classics
- UOA 30: Philosophy
- UOA 31: Theology and Religious Studies
- UOA 32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
- UOA 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies
- UOA 34: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

Where relevant, please state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

The statement in paragraph 64 about only flagging interdisciplinary research in exceptional circumstances seems to be contradictory to the funding bodies' desire to identify all such research. The sub-panel may be well placed to handle IDR, but that should not lead to IDR not being identified as such. Furthermore, in any over-arching analysis, the UoA would be likely to be inaccurately presented if much of its IDR had not been identified.

Should the interests of UoA 3 in public health be more clearly defined in order to distinguish it from that of UoA 2?

Some UoAs make reference to pedagogical research (e.g. Maths at paragraph 88) but many do not, which seems to be an oversight.

UoA 16 (paragraph 103) has a particularly short descriptor in comparison to other UoAs. Equally, UoA 12 (paragraph 91) has a disproportionately long descriptor.

Paragraph 107 is a clear statement about cross-referrals. It might be said in relation to all cross-referrals. Conversely, paragraph 110 is not clear ("the arrangements noted above"), mainly because it is a replication of paragraphs 116 and 121, but without the preceding paragraph (115 and 120 respectively).

In paragraph 123, palaeoanthropology is initially listed as one of three broad fields of anthropology, but is then included within the definition of biological anthropology rather than being itself expanded.

All of Panel D's UoAs include the text of paragraph 135. This gives the impression that they are more open to interdisciplinary research and the possibility of cross-referral. Conversely, it might mean that the other Panels are more deterministic in their view of their disciplines. It would be appropriate to have this statement in all UoAs. (Paragraphs 156 and 157 overlap in their content.)

Paragraph 165 includes film, television and screen studies. This is notable, given the decision to move those subject areas to UoA 33 and the renaming of that UoA. This dual location is likely to cause some confusion, although it also provides flexibility for institutions to choose to continue to submit their film and screen studies research to UoA 34, thus making the national profiling of such work more difficult.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 1: Submissions

2a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions', in particular on:

- where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

Paragraph 170 indicates a rather narrow assumption about interdisciplinary research, that it is “normally” across main panels rather than between sub-panels within a main panel area. The language of this statement is not supportive of the principles on IDR set out by the funding bodies.

Paragraph 174 recognises that submissions may not comprise units from an organisational structure. This needs to be reflected in panels’ assessment of the environment statements.

Panel A’s approach to pedagogical research in its disciplinary areas (paragraph 178) is different to that of the other main panels. Are UoAs 23 and 30 also expecting to receive Panel A’s pedagogical research? It would seem to be more appropriate for all the main panels to take the same approach. This is not the only example of Panel A seeking to be different. There is a danger of this Panel being overly driven by a medically-based approach. This proposal also seems to undermine or discourage the presentation of impact case studies underpinned by pedagogical research in the relevant subject areas, which would be unfortunate.

If Engineering feels the need and has the ability to provide output sub-profiles (paragraph 188), is there any case for them also doing so for impact sub-profiles?

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 2: Outputs

3a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

- Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

3b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

3c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs', in particular on:

- the proposed criteria for double-weighting outputs in Main Panels C and D, and on whether requests to double-weight books should automatically be accepted

- whether Annex C 'Main Panel D – outputs types and submission guidance' is helpful and clear

- where further clarification is required

- where refinements could be made

- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved

- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

With respect to paragraph 220, this is a clearer statement than that in the Guidance at paragraph 106(b), on which we have raised a query in response to question 2a, and presumably applies across all submissions in which a co-author is linked to the output.

The criteria for double-weighting are appropriate. Panel D's statement at paragraph 239 indicates that books will not be automatically accepted as double weighted, and their statement at paragraph 237 that a statement "may" be submitted leaves the institution with no realistic choice other than to submit a statement. It would not seem appropriate to assume that all books (for some or all panels?) are automatically worthy of double-weighting, and it should be necessary to include a statement to evidence the claim. This approach will be easier to implement consistently across all UoAs. If the decision is made that books should be automatically double-weighted, the position on edited collections needs to be clear, as this form of output is not listed in paragraph 239.

Why are paragraphs 244 and 246 not the same?

With respect to the provision and use of citation data (paragraphs 263-264), will the data be appropriately normalised before being provided to the sub-panels, or will they be expected to use raw citation data with all of the potential pitfalls that that entails?

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 3: Impact

4a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact', in particular on:

- where further clarification is required
- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

The language used by Panel A in paragraph 282, in comparison to that in paragraph 283 by the other panels, has been interpreted negatively by the community. If Panel A wants to encourage both new and continuing case studies, as indicated by the REF Director at the London consultation meeting, then the wording should say that. Preferably, the statements should be the same for all panels, as stated for Panels B, C and D. Long lead-in times can apply across all disciplines, not just those in Panel A.

Paragraph 306 allows for the underpinning research to be a body of work, but there is no substantive description of what this might look like. A similar comment has been made in the context of the Guidance.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 4: Environment

5a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

5b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment':

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

5c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment', in particular on:

- whether the difference in section weightings across main panels is sufficiently justified by disciplinary difference (paragraphs 322 and 323)
- whether the list of quantitative indicators provided at www.ref.ac.uk is clear and helpful
- where further clarification is required
- where refinements could be made
- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved
- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria.

Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (300 word limit)

Paragraph 329 recognises that the submission may not relate to a single coherent unit. However, addressing the strategies and approaches of multiple groups may undermine the overall presentation, as well as taking more space.

The requirement in paragraph 347 implies disclosure by individuals of payments received personally rather than through their institution. Whilst this may reflect common practice in some areas and be relevant information, it may place the individual in a problematic position with respect to their substantive employer.

Paragraph 351 is sensible, and presumably could be usefully replicated for the other Panels.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 4: Panel procedures

6a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

Strongly agree

Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

- Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 4: Panel procedures', in particular on:- where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made. (300 word limit)

No comments.

Panel criteria and working methods: Part 5: Panel working methods

7a. a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 5: Panel working methods', in particular on: - where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made. (300 word limit)

With respect to paragraph 361, to what extent will the main panels make use of or rely on the minutes of the sub-panels?

Paragraph 368 should indicate the minimum number of sub-panel members to whom each output will be allocated, in a similar fashion to paragraph 369 about each case study.

Paragraph 388(b) places the decision of cross-referral with the REF Director. Are they in a more competent position than the combination of the requesting institution and the relevant sub-panel to make the decision, or is this purely for administrative convenience or to ensure consistency?

In the context of paragraph 395 and where a submitted person is deemed to be ineligible and hence is removed from the submitted FTE, that could take the submission below a threshold for the number of case studies. The guidance should be clear as to whether there would be an effect, and if so who will determine which case study will be removed and on what basis. This also relates to our response to question 3b on the Guidance relating to paragraph 142 of that document.

Overall panel criteria and working methods

8a. Overall, the 'Panel criteria and working methods' achieves an appropriate balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the panels.

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8b. Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the main panels. (300 word limit)

As noted in the responses to the other questions, there are some areas in which there could be greater consistency across the main panels.

In Annex D, paragraph 3(c) allows for collaborations since the start of the assessment period. Should it also consider involvement in research prior to 2014 that underpins one or more case studies? Similarly, should 3(e) also include commercial or ownership interests in a body involved in a case study? These may both be thought to be examples of minor interest, which might be incorporated in the list at paragraph 11, which recognises employment by a user organisation, but not ownership of a beneficiary.