

What might be the consequences of the Innovation Strategy and the R&D People & Culture Strategy: A REF / QR example

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[This piece is based on one of the topics discussed in a webinar session for the 2021 ARMA Conference. The session title was 'Creating Strategies and Operational Approaches to Research and Impact in Practice', involving a discussion between [Saskia Gent](#) and Ian Carter.]

The UK government published its [Innovation Strategy](#) and its [R&D People & Culture Strategy](#) in July 2021. They got mixed reactions. But what might be the consequences?

Strategies ought to take some time to play out. These two both need some implementation planning; and a whole lot of funding. For the latter, we'll need to wait for the Spending Review at the end of October.

However, we can start to speculate about the effects of these two Strategies on some key structures and mechanisms, and we'll start with the REF. In particular, the balance of weighting across the three elements of Outputs, Impact and Environment. Apposite because of the REF's centrality to the funding of academic research, and timely because the UK's approach to research assessment is [currently under review](#).

So, drawing on the observations and language of the two Strategies:

- Cultures, behaviours and leadership & management need to be improved; these are all part of the Environment. So, perhaps the weighting of the Environment should be increased.
- A culture of 'publish or perish' is problematic; this suggests that (certain types of) outputs are given too much weight. Therefore, perhaps the weighting of Outputs should be reduced.
- Innovation is important, drawing on research through engagement, translation, exchange and outcome as reflected in Impact. Innovation also depends on relationships, which is about the Environment. So, perhaps the weightings of Impact and of Environment should be increased.
- Skills gaps need to be identified and filled, and the R&D workforce (all sectors, especially business) needs to be increased; skills development is Impact, and workforce production (PGRs) is Environment. Therefore, perhaps increase the weightings of Impact and Environment.

Following this logic, what might that mean for the balance of weightings?

How about equal weights for Outputs, Impact and Environment?

One can feel the reaction to reducing the primacy of Outputs! But is that not the whole point? Or at least one of them.

Supporting innovation, in all its forms, and enabling a 'better', more productive environment (whatever productive means; that's another question) is central to both concerns about cultures and effects.

Of course, increasing the weightings for Impact and the Environment confidence in the assessment of those areas. In particular, the approach to assessing Environment might

need some adjustment, without resorting to individual-level indicators. It will be interesting to see what the review of the Institutional-Level Environment Statements recommends.

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