



Council of Deans of Health response to the REF 2021 consultation on the draft panel criteria and working methods

Part 3: Assessment criteria

Section 1: Submissions

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

c. 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.

We believe that there is a group of R&T staff who should not be considered to be independent by virtue of their categorisation as R&T staff and where the exceptional circumstances provision of paragraph 120 is not the appropriate route to identify these staff. This group of staff are individuals who are recruited from professional or clinical areas into a broad range of UOAs who may come to the institution without a PhD or any recent experience of conducting independent research. We encourage this cross-fertilisation from the professions and clinical areas into the research base and often, after a period of registration for a PhD or a structured transitional training programme, these people will become very productive researchers drawing on their substantial professional or clinical experiences. But if at the census date they have not yet completed this transition through a structured training programme, these staff will appropriately have significant responsibility for research but are not yet independent researchers. We suggest that this could be addressed by a modest alteration to Figure 1, page 44 where the test for independence is addressed before the question "Are they on a teaching and research or research only contract" rather than only applied to 'Research Only' staff. Without this alteration there is a risk that this very positive recruitment route will be inadvertently penalised.

In addition to the above, we think there is a more general issue. In many universities, including ours, staff are recruited to do combined research and teaching but their research is not always independent,

particularly at the beginning – it would not fulfil the definitions of independence that the draft guidance suggests be applied to Research only staff. Thus some R and T staff have significant responsibility for research but are clearly not independent researchers. Applying the definition of independence only to Research only staff means that they are not treated the same as R+T staff working at the same level. We feel this could easily be dealt with as in the paragraph above by applying the test for independence to Research and Teaching staff as well as to Research only staff. [We think that the reason this has not been highlighted previously is that in some traditional universities R+T staff are somehow regarded as "better" than R only staff which is clearly discriminatory both to the staff groups and against universities where this is not the perception].

In figure 1 flowchart (page 44), we feel that the text in circle 'Evidence of substantive connection required for those on 0.2 FTE contracts' should be 'Evidence of substantive connection required for those on 0.2-0.29 FTE contracts'.

We would like to seek greater clarity on what 100% submission means.

Section 2: Outputs

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

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

✓ *Neither agree nor disagree*

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

Regarding the use of citation data, the Council of Deans of Health would like to underline the potential issues with this for Panel 3 where the relevance and interpretability of citation data across such a diverse range of disciplines makes this difficult to apply equitably. The panel should be advised to use extreme caution in using citation data as set out in section 263.

Section 3: Impact

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

c. 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.

The Council of Deans of Health would welcome if the discipline(s) concerned would be clearly identified in the impact case studies. We suggest that for UOA 3, Research England should ask the submitting institutions to provide details of the number of submitted individuals holding a professional registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (nurses and midwives) or the 11 core professions regulated by the Health Care Professions Council. This is to help estimate the number of individuals from these professions who have significant responsibility of research in UK Universities.

It is evident that UOA 3 covers distinct disciplinary areas and therefore we suggest that for UOA 3 as well the institutions should receive outputs sub-profiles in line with what has been offered to the Sub-panel 12: Engineering (Paragraph188).

Section 4: Environment

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

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

✓ *Strongly agree*

c. 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.

The Council of Deans of Health would like to ask for data relating to the number of submitted individuals who hold a clinical/professional recordable qualification to be provided as part of the submitting Unit's environment statement. This could be a marker, a mentioning of registration with professional bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council or the Health and Care Professions Council.

Some of our members are worried that the examples given take us back several REF cycles and ask institutions to collect data from staff on 'indicators of esteem'. This was burdensome and not particularly productive in assessing Research Excellence. We should narrow the possible indicators of contribution and collaboration or abandon this.

Part 4: Panel procedures

Consultation question 6 (Part 4: Panel procedures):

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

✓ *Agree*

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

✓ *Strongly agree/Agree*

c. Please comment on the criteria in Part 4: Panel procedures, in particular on: where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

No comment.

Part 5: Panel working methods

Consultation question 7 (Part 5: Panel working methods):

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

✓ *Strongly agree/Agree*

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

✓ *Strongly agree/Agree*

c. 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

No comment.

Consultation question 8: overall panel criteria and working methods

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

✓ *Agree*

b. Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the main panels.

Achieving this balance will always be difficult given the huge differences between subject areas. It is good to

see that changes have been made from feedback from REF 2014 for example critical pedagogy research can be submitted to any appropriate UoA.

For more information contact:

Dorothea Baltruks, Senior Policy and Research Officer, dorothea.baltruks@cod-health.ac.uk