

# Research Excellence Framework UK 2014-2021

*“Societies which invest in ideas and research are generally more creative, more productive, more resilient, more open, more profound and more equipped to face and understand challenge”*

Lord Nicholas Stern 2016. *Building on Success and Learning from Experience:*  
An Independent Review of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Commissioned by the Minister of Universities and  
Science UK 2015. <https://www.bisa.ac.uk/files/Consultations/ind-16-9-ref-stern-review.pdf>

## Main differences between the REF and ERA

Funding is informed by the REF including creative works and NTO's (unlike Australia where funding is initiated through HERDC which specifically excludes artistic practice and performance as research. ERA also excludes in-kind contributions

Related to this, the majority of Cat1 ACGR grant schemes in Australia are inaccessible for the arts. (Australia Council Grants are excluded from registering for ACGR status). Increasing number of Cat 2&3 grants for STEM but only one Research Council (ARC) for non-STEM.

In the UK the Arts & Humanities has its own research council with a wider range of funding opportunities. This gives weight to the inclusion of artistic research in the REF

More mature in its acceptance of NTO's as equal to any other form of research output

More dialogue around impact beyond research, longer reach and a greater acknowledgement of the impact of the arts in society

## Main points and recommendations from the Stern Review

Main difference between the 2014 REF and the previous RAE's was the introduction of the "impact factor"

Main push in the 2014 REF was to evaluate "end users" and benefits to society

Submitted by the institution in which the output was "demonstrably generated"

Metrics not used in 2014 REF

## Towards the 2021 REF

Acknowledge that research and teaching are intertwined and often “jointly produced” and not often covered in the research focused narratives

The definition of impact be broadened and deepened to include “public engagement and understanding on cultural life”

All research active academics should be entered as an accurate representation of the institution.

UK consider all output types on equal merit

Each researcher should submit between 0-6 outputs

Multi-disciplinary and collaborative work to be assessed by a special panel

Weighting of assessment to stay at 65% (outputs) and impact (not less than 20%)

Assessment continue to be done primarily on the basis of peer review, but “metrics should be provided to support panel members in their assessment, and panels should be transparent about their use” (Peer reviewing used more extensively in the REF than the ERA)

## **Main criticisms highlighted in the Stern Review**

The cost of the exercise is becoming disproportionate (£246m)

Scope for “gaming” (hiring fractional research staff from international institutions, movement of staff)

Highly selective submissions and confined numbers of staff submitted to remain below the threshold

Stress on academics and pressure on administrators involved in REF

# Panel D

<b>Main Panel D</b>	1
<b>UOA 27: Area Studies</b>	26
<b>UOA 28: Modern Languages and Linguistics</b>	33
<b>UOA 29: English Language and Literature</b>	43
<b>UOA 30: History</b>	50
<b>UOA 31: Classics</b>	58
<b>UOA 32: Philosophy</b>	69
<b>UOA 33: Theology and Religious Studies</b>	75
<b>UOA 34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</b>	83
<b>UOA 35: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts</b>	92
<b>UOA 36: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</b>	110

# Assessment of Panel D submissions (key points)

Increase in cross-disciplinary research, particularly in product & digital design, film, curatorship, media studies, conceptual & performance based practice

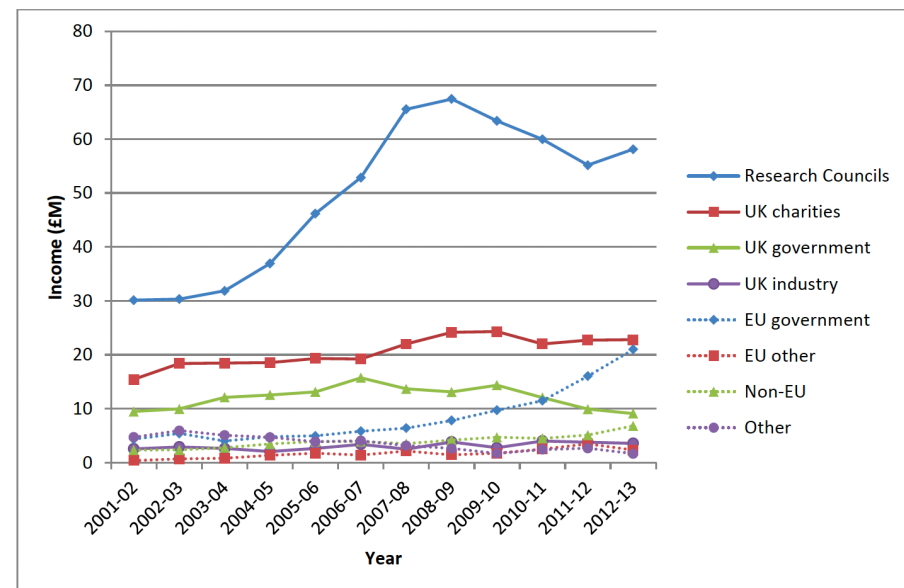
An acceptance of the equal importance of cultural capital and its contribution to social fabric of life (health, wellness, tourism, identity, knowledge, innovation)

Public commissions are regarded as research income

Panel membership includes artists, designers and performers, taking into consideration “subject expertise, geographic location and institutional type”

Tapping European funds through linkages. While overall income dropped in some 2 digit fields, there was some growth in EU funded projects, interdisciplinary and industry linkage grants (industry matching funding). The reduction in Research Council and UK government funding was put down to the recession in the UK.

Figure 1: Research grant income for Main Panel D subjects reported to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, by source (income in 2012-13 prices)



## Quotes from the post REF assessment of panel D

“Submissions within Main Panel D demonstrated the considerable strength and contribution of arts and humanities research in the UK” (para 3,p1)

The ‘Panel criteria and working methods’ clearly stated that the sub-panels in Main Panel D would ‘neither advantage nor disadvantage any type of research or form of output, whether it is physical or virtual, textual or non-textual, visual or sonic, static or dynamic, digital or analogue’ (paragraph 48); and would not ‘privilege any journal or conference rankings/lists, the perceived standing of the publisher or medium of publication, or where the research output is published’ (para 75, p14)

“Given the value to society as a whole of the impact of research undertaken by disciplines covered by main panel D, there is a strong case for not just continued but improved investment in research in these areas”

“The international members also observed that assessment of non-text research in the creative and performing arts and design was noteworthy for engaging with the difficult task of distinguishing between advanced practice presented as research, and practice based work that fulfilled the definition of research as set out for the REF 2014” (para 3, p 24)

“Art & Design is the largest sector for the production of research through practice, and as such is a leader in the elaboration of emergent approaches to knowledge. The sector has become one of the most important for the development of innovative and productive interdisciplinary research” (para 4, p90)

“There are too many instances where the sector still has difficulty distinguishing excellent professional practice from practice with a clear research dimension” (Music UOA 35 para 1, p100)



# Quotes from art & design, sub panel UOA 34 assessment

“While there was a reduction of 17.6% in submissions and a 31.9% reduction in impact items compared to the previous 2008 RAE, the quality and impact of the 2014 REF increased.

“**Over 60%** of the submitted work was considered to be world leading or internationally excellent” (para 2, p84)

**Table 2: UOA average profiles**

	% 4*	% 3*	% 2*	% 1*	% uc
<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Outputs	18.5	42.6	30.0	7.7	1.2
Impact	<b>36.6</b>	<b>44.7</b>	13.6	3.9	1.2
Environment	40.5	40.8	15.5	3.0	0.2

“A marked feature of practice based research was its embracing of interdisciplinary approaches to research production...the sector is a leader in interdisciplinary research” (para 1, p85)

“The intellectual and theoretical underpinning of graphic design and communication design was thought to be generally weak: a range of installation and performance practice in fine art was unfocused with unclear research parameters” (para 4, p85)

“All forms of publishing remain core to the sector... comprising 57% of the total submission, indicating that a considerable amount of submitted text did not come from art history, but from areas of art and design practice” (para 2, p87)

“REF 2014 shows that art & design research has been very effectively converted into social and economic impact that has had a transformational effect across the UK and internationally” (para 3. p88)

## **Feedback from CHEAD and individual responses to the Stern review**

Lack of coherence between the submission guidance and panel criteria caused confusion

The review says little about how the REF has affected teaching

Representatives on the assessment panels need to be improved

Definition of research active is a major concern. The current system does not take into account practitioners who do not identify themselves as researchers, or RA staff who are hired to produce outputs well after their employment ceases. This should be controlled and determined by the institution rather than a rigid definition set by the REF

Practice as research can have longer lead in times than for journals, and artists tend not to submit works in progress, diminishing their research as impact as it develops

Acceptance for publication is not a marker to identify outputs for artists, as most of the bulk of the work takes place prior to publication or exhibition

This are problems of portability for staff moving between institutions during the 2 years before the REF

REF measurement is driving habits in some institutions

# Feedback from CHEAD and individual responses to the Stern review

CHEAD does not support sharing proportional outputs between institutions, rather the full output should be submitted by both institutions where applicable

Impact has worked well for artists but it would benefit from a broadening and deepening of the definitions to include social and community and teaching, including academic impact.

Public engagement is a strength of the arts so CHEAD would welcome some definition on this in the future.

Establishing rigor standards is problematic for many forms or practice as research, originality and significance are better contributors to impact for the arts.

Employment rates as an impact measure, inevitably linked to University funding. This is measured too early to reflect arts employment and does not reflect the multiple jobs that artists chose to do as self-employed practitioners

The joint Higher Education Institutions reported that they had not been ambitious enough in reporting the work of arts practitioners

How “research active” will be defined in the REF. Stern review suggest that all academics be counted, the sector responded by saying this is problematic because artists, along with nurses and teachers can be very active in professional practice sense but not always in the REF sense. HEFCE have responded with a sector wide definition of research active not based on contract types. Considering whether to exclude art practitioners where they do not meet the REF definition of research. The benefit being that you have a small but strong submission

# Towards metrics

Support generally for the use of quantitative data to support creative outputs but care must be taken to avoid “gaming” of social media metrics for instance, Quantitative data therefore should not erode the focus on peer reviewing as a primary approach of assessment. Measuring impact at public venues through questionnaires for instance may affect the public's responses to future events, seen as an imposition on the experience of event itself. CHEAD emphasizes the value of narratives in terms of establishing “intentions, philosophies and styles” (CHEAD, para 1.p 10)

Large commercial main stream performances will score highly in a metrics based measurement, but this is not a measure of research knowledge or innovation


A metrics based measurement will prove even more problematic for engagement than it currently does for impact, therefore peer reviewing should be the first and foremost approach to measuring engagement and its relationship to impact.

*For the past 30 years, Australian governments have conflated the nation's cultural creativity with its economic prosperity. This has promoted a mood of metrical madness – the measuring of anything and everything in a way that is methodologically suspect, morally insidious and not a little daft.*

# Innovation Nation?

## Innovation nation? Australia tumbles to 23rd place in a benchmark index of global innovation



TONY YOO | 

JUN 16, 2017, 9:58 AM

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### Global Rankings

1	Switzerland (No. 1 in 2016)	14	Japan (16)
2	Sweden (2)	15	France (18)
3	Netherlands (9)	16	Hong Kong (China) (14)
4	United States of America (4)	17	Israel (21)
5	United Kingdom (3)	18	Canada (15)
6	Denmark (8)	19	Norway (22)
7	Singapore (6)	20	Austria (20)
8	Finland (5)	21	New Zealand (17)
9	Germany (10)	22	China (25)
10	Ireland (7)	23	Australia (19)
11	Republic of Korea (11)	24	Czech Republic (27)
12	Luxembourg (12)	25	Estonia (24)
13	Iceland (13)		

Global Innovation Index 2017 – top 25 countries. (Source: GII)

Australia has slipped several notches on measures of innovation development in the past year, falling four places to 23rd spot on a prominent global index.

## For us to consider

Push to include NTO's in HERDC for funding parity and recognition

Collective and unified direction through our peak bodies

Establish an Academy of the Arts with our own research council

Establish a national alumni to draw on as proof of impact, engagement and employment

Forge a more relational narrative between research, teaching and students in ERA

Focus on internationalising and collaborating with our research

More representative assessment panels for PLR

Dialogue about a future post mining boom, where mechanisation and AI will necessitate a refocus on arts, health and tourism

Control the growth of metrics based measurement by peer reviewing for quality, relevance and context

*“Asking to explain excellence is a bit like asking a biologist what extra-terrestrial life would look like. The answer: we don't know it, but we will when we see it.”*

Claus Madsen, Senior Adviser at the European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere  
<http://www.eras.ac.uk/2013/03/research-excellence-rather-than-excellence-itself/>

# Key documents

Lord Nicholas **Stern Review**, 2016. *Building on Success and Learning from Experience: An Independent Review of the Research Excellence Framework (REF)*. Commissioned by the Minister of Universities and Science UK 2015. <https://www.bisa.ac.uk/files/Consultations/ind-16-9-ref-stern-review.pdf>

*The Stern report assesses the previous RAE in 2008 and the REF conducted in 2014 to offers recommendations for the next REF in 2021.*

**Higher Education Funding Council for England** Consultation on the Second Research Excellence Framework, 2016. (HEFCE) [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)

*HEFCE's response to the Stern Report*

**Research Excellence Framework 2014** Overview from Panel D and sub panels 27-36 (art, design & communications, languages, philosophy, media studies etc.)  
<http://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/paneloverviewreports/>

**Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD)** Consultation on the Second Research Excellence Framework, 2017 <http://chead.ac.uk/>

## Upcoming conference

### Westminster Higher Education Forum Keynote Seminar Next steps for developing the 2021 Research Excellence Framework

*with*

**Kim Hackett**, REF Manager and Head of Research Assessment, HEFCE

*and*

**Professor Dianne Berry**, *University of Reading and Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel*; **Michelle Double**, *University of Leeds*; **Tom Frostick**, *University Alliance*; **Matthew Guest**, *GuildHE*; **Jonathan Legh-Smith**, *BT*; **Professor Martin McQuillan**, *Kingston University London*; **Dr Lisa Mooney**, *University of East London and Interdisciplinary Research Advisory Panel*; **Alan Palmer**, *MillionPlus*; **Dr Malcolm Skingle**, *GSK*; **Professor Deborah Smith**, *University of York and N8 Research Partnership* and **Dr Carl Walker**, *University of Brighton and National Senior Management Survey*

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*Morning, Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
Central London*