

## GREAT2023 - RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK PREPARATIONS

### Background

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the nationally recognised assessment of research quality in the UK. The outcome of the assessment plays an important role in determining the research reputation of an institution and its position in league tables. The last exercise took place in 2021, and a new one is expected in 2027/2028. The procedures, submissions and outcomes of previous exercises can be openly consulted in [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk). It is not yet known what format the next exercise will take, but the HE sector widely expects this to be closely based on the procedures adopted in REF2021.

The GREAT exercises in the run-up to REF2021 served the University well, helping to coordinate and focus our efforts to optimise the submission. Principally, the annual GREAT exercises played a crucial part in the development of the research culture, environment and aspirations of the University, both at an institutional level as well as the level of individual academics. Participation in GREAT connects academics and research leaders at all levels with the practices and expectations in their discipline. It allows them to estimate the standards of their current work and calibrate their future aspirations.

Importantly, the annual GREAT exercises were inclusive in that as many academic researchers as possible were encouraged to engage in both submitting research work to be assessed and in the internal assessment processes.

The university will retain the ethos of GREAT exercises and use the preparation process embodied as part of the journey towards greater research excellence. As such, any administrative burden must be weighed against the positive contribution it makes to the University culture. The principles of the REF preparations that were developed as part of the previous submission process will remain and are included in Appendix 1 for reference.

### GREAT2023 – Actions

The university is beginning the next cycle of its REF preparation process and launching the first of the GREAT (Greenwich Ref Assessment Trials) exercises for the current REF period (1 January 2021 onwards) – **GREAT2023**. The following actions are requested from individual academic staff members and Faculty Associate Deans (Research & Knowledge Exchange).

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange) hosted three GREAT2023 Roadshows; launching GREAT2023 and a Q&A session. Please refer to the presentation and the recordings available [here](#) if you were unable to attend.

#### Actions for individual academic staff

- **Ensure that your outputs are uploaded into GALA.** Journal Articles & Conference Proceedings with an ISSN **CANNOT** be submitted to the REF unless they meet REF [open access requirements](#). Journal articles and Conference proceedings that are not [GOLD Open Access](#), have to follow the [GREEN Open Access route](#), whereby they must have been deposited in the institutional repository within 3 months from the date of acceptance. The

exception to this for the purposes of GREAT2023 are new starters who have not yet deposited outputs into GALA. New starts should follow the [instructions here](#), and deposit a maximum of three outputs for assessment as part of GREAT2023.

- **By 1 May 2023, select up to a maximum of 3 outputs (published since 1 January 2021) that you consider to be your best publications (of a quality suitable for REF submission)** for internal assessment during the GREAT2023 exercise. Staff will need to complete an online form (<https://forms.office.com/r/nm1N9p93mm>), providing a GALA ID for the output, and confirm the title of the output and the year of publication. Outputs selected for assessment must be **open access compliant** in line with the current [REF Open Access Policy](#).
- For items that are newly deposited into GALA during April 2023, please wait until you have received confirmation of a GALA ID for the publication as this will be required during the selection process as described above.
- **For staff who submitted outputs last year (2022) for consideration**, you can replace either one or both with new outputs for internal assessment as part of GREAT2023. The total number of outputs per staff member that will be assessed as part of GREAT2023 will be 3; therefore, if you submitted two last year, and are not replacing either then you can only submit 1 output as part of GREAT2023. When completing the form above, please indicate that the new output is replacing a previously identified one. GRE will write to all staff who submitted outputs last year detailing those that were selected and whether these were open access compliant (where relevant to the output type).
- **In determining which outputs to submit to GREAT2023**, staff should identify those outputs which they believe to be Internationally Excellent or World Leading. For definitions of these, please refer to [REF Panel Guidance and Working Methods](#) document, specifically paragraphs 190 – 205. Individual staff should also consult with their Research Centre/Group leads on possible outputs to submit to GREAT2023.
- **For specific disciplines, authors will be requested to supply a “Output Statement”** when submitting their outputs for internal assessment. This section is particularly important to correctly assess the output, particularly in relation to its significance [but this statement is not assessed/scored itself]. This is not meant to be a copy of the abstract of the output; it is meant to provide additional information to the assessors that highlights the importance and impact that the work has had both in academia and beyond (industry, society, etc.). [100 word maximum]. Please See Appendix 2 for those outputs which require this information. **Additionally, for specific UoAs and output types, additional information is required to assist assessors in understanding the author contribution, research process, etc.** Please consult the [REF2021 Panel Criteria and Working Criteria](#) guidance (in particular paragraphs 214-272), and summaries available at Appendix 2. For outputs with multiple co-authors (greater than 15), staff will need to provide information on the significant contribution they made to the output (e.g. contributing either to the conception and design of the study; to the organisation of the conduct of the study; to carrying out the study; or to analysis and interpretation of study data) [300 word maximum].
- **Consider the submission of a potential Impact Case Study (ICS)** in discussion with your Research Centre/Group Leader and Associate Deans (Research & Knowledge Exchange), using the template [available](#), and submit using the GREAT2023 ICS Form [<https://forms.office.com/r/qJxNcCwXbQ>] by **31 July 2023**. This is a very high-level, light touch summary of potential impact arising from your research. Additionally, staff who developed impact case studies for REF2021 (those that were

submitted or not) can [update these](#) with any additional impact that has accrued since the 1 August 2020 or based on feedback provided during previous GREAT exercises.

#### Additional Actions for Faculty Associate Deans - Research & Knowledge Exchange

- Facilitate the communication of information about the REF preparation process across your Faculty.
- Feedback comments and concerns from academic staff to Neil Cormack-Bissett (n.cormack-bissett@gre.ac.uk)
- Confirm the composition of current Research Centres/Groups in your Faculty, using the data provided by GRE, and submit completed Research Centre/Group forms to Lara Everest-Bland ([l.everest-bland@gre.ac.uk](mailto:l.everest-bland@gre.ac.uk)) by 1 August 2023.
- Identify senior research academics to participate in the internal assessment process. This should include potential leaders of Research Groups.

## APPENDIX 1

### Research Excellence Framework Preparations - Guiding Principles

In developing its methodology, timetable and processes the University of Greenwich will be guided by ensuring that it meets the following five attributes and principles:

**Developmental:** The preparation for REF plays a key part in the development of the research culture, environment and aspirations of the University both at an institutional level as well at the level of individual academics. Participation in the REF preparation connects academics and research leaders at all levels with the practices and expectations in their discipline. It allows them to estimate the standards of their current work and calibrate their future aspirations. The institution and its members must use the preparation process as part of the journey towards greater research excellence and not view it as an administrative burden.

**Inclusivity:** The preparations must include as many academic researchers as possible in both submitting research work to be assessed and in the internal assessment processes. It is important that as many staff as it is sensible and practical take part in internal assessments in order to ensure that a good understanding of REF rules and procedures is not confined to a very few senior staff. This will require appropriate training processes and rigorous methodologies that take into account the range of expertise of the assessors. However, whilst the preparations for REF must be inclusive, the submission itself will be as selective as needed in order to meet the aims of the university REF strategy.

**Rigour:** The preparation process must be such that it provides accurate data on which to make submission decisions. This requires those involved at any stage of the process to approach the preparations in a highly rigorous manner, to avoid wishful thinking and to have an accurate knowledge of the published REF guidance and practices. Ultimately, research quality assessments are reflections of academic opinions but these opinions should be arrived at with the highest possible regard for rigour and with full appreciation of the institutional and personal consequences of inaccurate assessments. Generally, assessments of research quality will be made anonymously.

**Externality:** Rigorous Internal assessment needs to be calibrated against external reference points. This is usually provided by soliciting the views of appropriate External Assessors and by adequately considering the views of internal staff who have participated in REF panels. However, some additional measure of externality can also be provided by using published REF2014 profiles and submissions. Similarly, in some disciplines, the use of bibliometric data can provide useful proxy indicators that can be taken into account as part of a wider assessment of research quality.

**Continuous:** The preparation process takes place continuously throughout the year and across the REF cycles. It will be based on annual Greenwich REF Assessment Trials (GREAT-Cycles). The process will also comprise critical milestones when decisions and actual submissions are made. These points will be dictated by the actual REF timetable that will be issued by HEFCE (or RUK) in due course. A detailed timetable of activities will be developed and maintained as part of the preparations. This will be shared widely across the research community.

**Transparency:** The process must be as open and transparent as possible whilst maintaining the rigour and externality principles. This relates to the data upon which decisions are made and the governance bodies which make them. Academic staff submitting research work to GREAT-Cycles will be informed in a timely manner about the outcome of internal and external assessment and, in due course, of the decisions made in relation to their eventual inclusion in a particular Unit of Assessment. There will be a right of Appeal against non-selection to REF.

## Governance

The REF preparation process will be governed by the following bodies:

**REF Strategy Working Group:** This is the senior body that will have strategic responsibility on behalf of UoG in relation to REF. It will be chaired by the Deputy VC for Research and Enterprise. It will include the Deputy PVC for R&E, the Directors of GRE, ILS and HR, together with members of academic staff chosen on the basis of their REF experience and subject coverage within the group. This group will be supported by the REF Project Manager (Head of Research Services). The group will develop the preparation timetable and methodology, REF Code of Practice and approve the Unit of Assessments' Statements of Intent. It will make the final recommendations to the VC and Academic Council in relation to the submission of individual Units of Assessment. It will provide regular reports of progress to the University Research and Enterprise Committee.

**REF Operational Working Group.** This group will be responsible for the data gathering and management systems required to carry out the internal and external assessment, collate income and doctoral data and interface with the central REF systems and personnel. It will be chaired by the Deputy VC for Research and Enterprise and include: REF Project Manager, Research Finance Manager, Research Repository Administrator, Postgraduate Research Office Manager, Planning and Statistical Analyst Officer, Equality & Diversity Manager and representation from HR and ILS.

**REF Equality and Diversity Group:** This group will review Personal Circumstances and carry out the Equality and Impact Assessments at the end of each internal assessment cycle. It will report its findings to the REF Strategy Working Group, but none of its members will be part of the REF Strategy Working Group. The membership of this Committee will be agreed by the Research and Enterprise Committee.

**Appeals Panel:** This internal group will be an independent body with responsibility for reviewing staff appeals against exclusion from the REF submission, to determine the final outcome of each case presented. The membership of this committee will be agreed by the University Research and Enterprise Committee.

**Faculty REF Working Groups.** The REF preparation within each Faculty will be coordinated by a Faculty REF Working Group. This group will review the research environment structure within the Faculty, including Research Groups and potential Units of Assessment. It will also coordinate the assessment of outputs and impact cases following the methodology determined by the REF Strategy Working Group. At least one member of each of these groups will sit on the REF Strategy Working Group.

## Appendix 2

### Additional information for outputs

#### *Main Panel A*

Information about the research process and content is welcomed for all non-text or practice-based outputs where it is not evident within the output itself (up to 300 words). This includes, but is not limited to, patents, software or standards documents, and applies to all Units of Assessment in this Main Panel (PC 252).

The above does not include information about significance. Any information about the significance of the output will be disregarded (PC 253).

#### *Main Panel B*

All Units of Assessment within Main Panel B require a description of the research process and content where this is not evident within the output (up to 300 words).

For reviews, they also welcome the identification of the original research content or new insights reported (up to 300 words) (PC 254-255).

**Units of Assessment 11 and 12 only** invite factual information (up to 100 words) to be provided to outline the significance of the output. This could include evidence of recognition, impact on the state of the art, where it led to further developments, or has been applied (PC 256). The information provided must be verifiable and externally referenced where possible.

#### *Main Panel C*

For any submission where the research content and/or process is not evident in the output, such as non-text outputs or teaching materials, submissions should include a statement identifying the research questions, methodology and means of dissemination (up to 300 words) (PC 259).

**For practice-based outputs**, submissions should include an explanatory presentation in an easily-handled paper-based format to allow the panel to understand the output without visiting it and to make a judgement of its research contribution. These additional submissions can include images, figures and diagrams (PC 260).

Where the form of an output makes it necessary, this paper-based submission can be supplemented by additional visual material such as a video (PC 262).

**For software and data sets**, a full written description should be provided including details of how and where the data set or software can be accessed (PC 261).

#### *Main Panel D*

For any submission where the role of the researcher or the research process is not evident in the output, UoAs are strongly encouraged to include a statement identifying the research process, insights and means of dissemination (300 words) (PC 264-269).

For outputs where the role of the researcher is not evident, UoAs have the following submission options (PC 265):

- a single item with a 300-word supporting statement
- a multi-component output, with a 300-word supporting statement
- a single item supported by contextual information (formerly called a portfolio). In this case the 300-word statement should be used to indicate which elements are the output, and which the contextual information.
- a multi-component output supported by contextual information (formerly called a portfolio). In this case the 300-word statement should be used to indicate which elements are the output, and which the contextual information.

Where a research output is a contribution to an anthology, edited book, special issue of a journal, or curatorial project, the whole work should be submitted. Units of Assessment may provide a statement (up to 300 words) to clarify the nature of the individual's contribution (PC 270).

Groups of short items such as creative writing, encyclopaedia or dictionary entries may be submitted as a single output in a portfolio style where such work embodies research as defined in the Guidance for Submissions. A statement of up to 300 words must be included to explain the rationale behind the grouping (PC 271).