

# Consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework

## Page 1: Respondent details

Q1. Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of

Subject association or learned society

**Please provide the name of your organisation**

British Association of Film Television and Screen Studies

## Page 2: Overall approach

Q2. 1. Do you have any comments on the proposal to maintain an overall continuity of approach with REF 2014, as outlined in paragraphs 10 and 23?

We agree that an incremental approach is in the best interests of the sector and of Film/Screen Studies.

## Page 3: Unit of assessment structure

Q3. 2. What comments do you have about the unit of assessment structure in REF 2021?

We are seriously concerned that our discipline, Film/Screen Studies, is not represented by name in the current panel descriptors (see §26). Film/Screen Studies is not Media Studies, the latter being more social science based, while Film/Screen Studies is closer in many respects to the paradigms familiar in literary study. Different research organisations represent these two disciplines. UCAS lists 164 institutions currently offering Film/Cinema Studies at UG level and there are over 1000 postgraduate courses (Masters and PhD). There are some 400 academics that belong to Film/Screen Studies, and there are more than 150 academics across the country who carry the title of (full) Professor of Film or Cinema studies. However, the discipline is fragmented in part because of lack of visibility in the REF. Colleagues are submitted to a variety of sub-panels including 28, 29, 35, 36. We would therefore like to see Film/Screen Studies distinguished from Media Studies in panel titles and descriptors, and a recognition that the two disciplines should be represented on sub-panels by distinct subject experts.

## Page 4: Expert panels

Q4. 3a. Do you agree that the submissions guidance and panel criteria should be developed simultaneously?

Yes

**Comments:**

We can see the sense in ensuring consistency in this approach. We therefore support it, provided that the points made in response to Q2 are taken into account.

Q5. 3b. Do you support the later appointment of sub-panel members, near to the start of the assessment year?

Yes

**Comments:**  
No comments.

Q6. 4. Do you agree with the proposed measures outlined at paragraph 35 for improving representativeness on the panels?

Yes

**Comments:**  
No comments.

Q7. 5a. Based on the options described at paragraphs 36 to 38 what approach do you think should be taken to nominating panel members?

We support nomination by relevant professional bodies rather than a completely open process as the latter would significantly increase the burden.

Q8. 5b. Do you agree with the proposal to require nominating bodies to provide equality and diversity information?

Yes

**Comments:**  
No comments.

Q9. 6. Please comment on any additions or amendments to the list of nominating bodies, provided alongside the consultation document.

We wish to include as a nominating body the British Association for Film, Television and Screen Studies, a professional association established in 2010 with an annual conference and a significant membership across the disciplines it represents (see [www.baftss.org](http://www.baftss.org)).

## Page 5: Staff

Q10. 7. Do you have any comments on the proposal to use HESA cost centres to map research-active staff to UOAs and are there any alternative approaches that should be considered?

We agree that all R-active staff should be submitted and that HESA codes be used to identify them.

Q11. 8. What comments do you have on the proposed definition of 'research-active' staff described in paragraph 43?

None.

Q12. 9a. The proposal to require an average of two outputs per full-time equivalent staff returned?

While we understand that the REF burden should be reduced, we are concerned that the proposal to eliminate a structure of special circumstances, which has been perceived as clear and supportive, and which is in this proposal mentioned tangentially as a consequence of variable outputs per member of staff (§48), is inappropriate. It is also more broadly tied to the issue of ECRs, which we address in our response to Q10.

We believe that the possible consequences of variable outputs add an unwelcome shift in a well-established system, and will lead to negative consequences and game-playing with unintended consequences. We are therefore not in favour of the proposals made in §47-52.

However, we agree that if the REF includes all R-active staff, there should be some reduction in outputs. We therefore suggest that there should be one per ECR and two for all other staff. We do not accept that this would lead to unrepresentativeness in a unit (§49, §51).

Q13. 9b. The maximum number of outputs for each staff member?

See 9a.

Q14. 9c. Setting a minimum requirement of one for each staff member?

See 9a.

Q15. 10a. Is acceptance for publication a suitable marker to identify outputs that an institution can submit and how would this apply across different output types?

The issue of portability is the single most contentious issue for colleagues in our discipline. In our consultation, we received more comments on portability than any other part of the consultation. The generic point of principle mentioned frequently was the ideological shift from research belonging in some sense to the individual to being owned by an institution. This shift is unacceptable to our members as it does not represent the way arts and humanities researchers conceive of research. The consultation document acknowledges that the portability proposal would lead to difficulties, but these are couched initially as difficulties for the institutions rather than for the individual researchers (§55-56). §56 begins to acknowledge negative impacts on individuals, but then seeks to ask us for ways to mitigate those impacts as if portability were an accepted baseline. We wish to protest in the strongest possible terms that portability as thus envisaged is unfair, impractical, regressive and will not stop game-playing.

There are also what seem to us to be intractable problems which impact disproportionately on PhDs and ECRs, who are the future of the disciplines, and on colleagues working short-term contracts. For example, colleagues on a 24-month contract or doing a PhD produce a journal article or a book proposal within that period; if they then get a permanent contract at a different university, the proposal would mean that they also would not be able to port over their article/book because they completed it at a different institution. This eventuality is recognised (§56), but the 'solution' is then countered by an unintended consequence relating to emeriti. While this may be resolvable, it means a complex (new) set of 'special circumstances' sitting uncomfortably with the principle of continuity established at the start of the consultation.

There are even more complications one might argue for colleagues coming to the UK from abroad. Publications before 2013 but prior to being hired might well not be counted.

Q16. 10b. What challenges would your institution face in verifying the eligibility of outputs?

See above.

Q17. 10c. Would non-portability have a negative impact on certain groups and how might this be mitigated?

See above.

Q18. 10d. What comments do you have on sharing outputs proportionally across institutions?

In our discipline where the monograph is key (as has been recognised by double-weighting), a research project can last 4-5 years, passing through a number of institutions, all of whom may be supportive in various ways, as a result of which it is difficult to know how it should be shared proportionally across institutions (§57).

Q19. 11. Do you support the introduction of a mandatory requirement for the Open Researcher and Contributor ID to be used as the staff identifier, in the event that information about individual staff members continues to be collected in REF 2021?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

Q20. 12. What comments do you have on the proposal to remove Category C as a category of eligible staff?

Agree; it is an unnecessary complication.

Q21. 13. What comments do you have on the definition of research assistants?

It would be normal in our discipline to consider RAs who have authored or co-authored REFable to be bona fide researchers, and therefore should be counted.

Q22. 14. What comments do you have on the proposal for staff on fractional contracts and is a minimum of 0.2 FTE appropriate?

We agree with the submission of a statement outlining the link between the colleague and the unit.

## Page 6: Collaboration

Q23. 15. What are your comments in relation to better supporting collaboration between academia and organisations beyond higher education in REF 2021?

No comments.

## Page 7: Outputs

Q24. 16. Do you agree with the proposal to allow the submission of a reserve output in cases where the publication of the preferred output will post-date the submission deadline?

Yes

**Comments:**

We agree as this is a particular issue with monographs in our discipline.

Q25. 17. What are your comments in relation to the assessment of interdisciplinary research in REF 2021?

We agree that all three suggestions (17a-c) are sensible ways forward with little additional burden.

Q26. 18. Do you agree with the proposal for using quantitative data to inform the assessment of outputs, where considered appropriate for the discipline? If you agree, have you any suggestions for data that could be provided to the panels at output and aggregate level?

**Comments:**

We have no view on this as metrics are not used in our discipline.

## Page 8: Impact

Q27. 19. Do you agree with the proposal to maintain consistency where possible with the REF 2014 impact assessment process?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

Q28. 20. What comments do you have on the recommendation to broaden and deepen the definition of impact?

Agree with what is proposed in §78.

Q29. 21. Do you agree with the proposal for the funding bodies and Research Councils UK to align their definition of academic and wider impact?

Yes

**If yes, what comments do you have on the proposed definitions?**

Agree with what is proposed in §79.

Q30. 22. What comments do you have on the criteria of reach and significance?

No comments.

Q31. 23. What do you think about having further guidance for public engagement impacts and what do you think would be helpful?

We believe that impact is not generic in the way that the comments in §81 suggest, and that it should be left to the sub-panels to determine guidance.

Q32. 24. Do you agree with the proposal that impacts should remain eligible for submission by the institution or institutions in which the underpinning research has been conducted?

No

**Comments:**

It is not sensible given that much research is individual/group-specific, and that individuals and groups move, making it impractical for the collection of long-term impact data (as expressed in §82). The argument made in §83 about the disruption of institutional plans for impact is not appropriate for our disciplines, and is redolent of the ideological shift we identified in our response to Q9a, and which we oppose.

Q33. 25. Do you agree that the approach to supporting and enabling impact should be captured as an explicit section of the environment element of the assessment?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

Q34. 26. What comments do you have on the suggested approaches to determining the required number of case studies? Are there alternative approaches that merit consideration?

We believe that in our disciplines impact is not as easy to identify as in STEM, and would like to see a differentiation between STEM, Social Sciences, and Arts and Humanities.

Q35. 27. Do you agree with the proposal to include a number of mandatory fields in the impact case study template to support the assessment and audit process better (paragraph 96)?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

Q36. 28. What comments do you have on the inclusion of further optional fields in the impact case study template?

None.

Q37. 29. What comments do you have in relation to the inclusion of examples of impact arising from research activity and bodies of work, as well as from specific research outputs?

We can conceive of Impact projects, particularly those developed by groups of colleagues where shared expertise derived from work in progress, specialist knowledge etc is 'being impactful'. Such impact, arising from 'bodies of work' (rather than tied to a specified research output) is exactly the sort of activity that should be submissable under 'Impact'.

Q38. 30. Do you agree with the proposed timeframe for the underpinning research activity (1 January 2000 - 31 December 2020)?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

Q39. 31. What are your views on the suggestion that the threshold criterion for underpinning research, research activity or a body of work should be based on standards of rigour? Do you have suggestions for how rigour could be assessed?

For the reasons suggested in §102, we are not convinced that the link with 'rigour' is appropriate.

Q40. 32a. The suggestion to provide audit evidence to the panels?

Yes, if it is not onerous.

Q41. 32b. The development of guidelines for the use and standard of quantitative data as evidence for impact?

Yes, if it is not onerous.

Q42. 32c. Do you have any other comments on evidencing impacts in REF 2021?

No comments.

Q43. 33. What are your views on the issues and rules around submitting examples of impact in REF 2021 that were returned in REF 2014?

In our discipline, it is unlikely that we could find an appropriate number of 'new' impacts. We therefore favour retaining the possibility without detriment of case studies submitted in REF2014 with (or without) additionality, as long as this is made clear in the submission.

## Page 9: Environment

Q44. 34a. Do you agree with the proposal to change the structure of the environment template by introducing more quantitative data into this aspect of the assessment?

Yes

**Comments:**

We support anything that reduces the burden of composition.

Q45. 34b. Do you have suggestions of data already held by institutions that would provide panels with a valuable insight into the research environment?

No.

Q46. 35. Do you have any comment on the ways in which the environment element can give more recognition to universities' collaboration beyond higher education?

No comments.

Q47. 36. Do you agree with the proposals for providing additional credit to units for open access?

Yes

**Comments:**

Agree with proposals in §116.

Q48. 37. What comments do you have on ways to incentivise units to share and manage their research data more effectively ?

No comments.

## Page 10: Institutional level assessment

Q49. 38. What are your views on the introduction of institutional level assessment of impact and environment?

We are not convinced that taking this away from the local unit would lead to more clarity, but we accept the general point that it would avoid duplication (see §120).

Q50. 39. Do you have any comments on the factors that should be considered when piloting an institutional level assessment?

No comments.

## Page 11: Outcomes and weighting

Q51. 40. What comments do you have on the proposed approach to creating the overall quality profile for each submission?

No comments.

Q52. 41. Given the proposal that the weighting for outputs remain at 65 per cent, do you agree that the overall weighting for impact should remain at 20 per cent?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

Q53. 42. Do you agree with the proposed split of the weightings between the institutional and submission level elements of impact and environment?

Yes

**Comments:**

No comments.

## Page 12: Proposed timetable for REF 2021

Q54. 43. What comments do you have on the proposed timetable for REF 2021?

No comments.

## Page 13: Other

Q55. 44. Are there proposals not referred to above, or captured in your response so far, that you feel should be considered? If so, what are they and what is the rationale for their inclusion?

No comments.

## Page 14: Contact details

Q56. If you would be happy to be contacted in the event of any follow-up questions, please provide a contact email address.

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