

Annex C: Definitions of research and impact for the REF

Definition of research for the REF

1. For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.
2. It **includes** work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship²¹; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It **excludes** routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also **excludes** the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.
3. It **includes** research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports (as defined at paragraph 251).

Definition of impact for the REF

4. For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia (as set out in paragraph 7).
5. Impact **includes**, but is not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit to:
 - the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
 - of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals
 - in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.
6. Impact **includes** the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects.
7. For the purposes of the impact element of the REF:

²¹ Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.

- a. Impacts on research or the advancement of academic knowledge within the HE sector (whether in the UK or internationally) are **excluded**. (The submitted unit's contribution to academic research and knowledge is assessed within the 'outputs' and 'environment' elements of REF.)
- b. Impacts on students, teaching or other activities both within and beyond the submitting HEI are **included** (see the 'Panel criteria', paragraphs 290 to 291).