

REF 2021

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Discussion: Delays to REF - issues for HEIs and assessment

- REF Team is
 - Cognisant of making decisions at time of huge uncertainty
 - Taking views of the sector and panels in various ways
 - Need to meet the principles of the REF – equality, equity and transparency

Q&A

Survey on submission deadline and impact

- Live on REF website <https://www.ref.ac.uk/guidance/training-and-events-materials/webinar-and-survey-initial-views-on-ref-timetable/>

Key effects captured

Completing submissions

- Clinical / health-related
- General resourcing
- Key priorities
- REF review / committee structures
- E&D related issues
- REF teams furloughed

Outputs

- Publishers
- Performance-based
- Suspension of research activity
- Collating / packaging physical outputs
- Resourcing for output review/selection

Impact

- Evidence gathering and corroboration from key bodies
- Impact activity, esp international / cultural / educational settings
- Resourcing for ICS authors

Environment (HEI & unit level)

- Resourcing, inc academic and support
- Forward-looking aspects currently in flux
- PhD completions for 19/20
- Income

Submission deadline

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- REF put on hold on 24 March;
- 27 Nov 2020 submission deadline no longer applies
- Census date for staff (31 July 2020) remains in place
- REF team will provide eight months' notice of new deadline
- In addition to revised deadline, some details of framework will need adapting to take account of effects of Covid-19

Submission delay – current Suggestions

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- A single deadline for whole submissions – 31 March 2021 
 - Later assessment schedule
 - Funding allocations from AY 22/23 as planned
- A single deadline, e.g. July or November 2021 
 - In either case, funding informed in full from AY 23/24
- Phased deadline: 
 - Staff & outputs submitted first (e.g. by March 2021)
 - Followed by other elements shortly after
 - Discussion needed on timing and sequence, but likely to allow funding to be informed for AY 22/23

What issues are facing impact submissions?

Evidence

- Evidence gathering and corroboration from key bodies

Impact arising

- Planned activity, esp international / cultural / educational settings
- Different sectors (private, public, third) will recover at different rates

Writing up

- Resourcing issues for case study authors

Impact – current suggestions

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Universal extension



- 31 December 2020 would become the new date for the end of the assessment period for impact
- Any submitting unit may include examples of impacts arising up until this new date, irrespective of the effects of Covid-19
- May need to work alongside further mitigations for impact submissions

Case-by-case

- Allow submission of case studies with impact arising past 31 July where planned impact / activities affected by / responding to Covid-19
- Various ways this could operate – full details would need discussion
- May need to work alongside further mitigations for impact submissions

What further mitigations could be considered?

Area	Mitigations
Impact arising / impact activities	Additional statement
Gathering evidence	Postponement of submission deadline Amend requirements for up front evidence submission (deadline, audit, etc)
Writing up	Postponement of submission deadline

- Issues around reductions in numbers of case studies
- REF team want to engage further to develop thinking

Discussion



Further views & evidence

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- There are issues to consider in relation to other aspects of the exercise
- REF team will be seeking to engage on these issues in period ahead
- Welcome further views and evidence to inform position and options development e.g.
 - Further options for taking account of effects on impact submissions
 - The extent to which planned outputs are affected, and are not expected to appear on time
 - Any equality and diversity issues arising for submission preparation in the context of Covid-19

Further information

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- Contact: info@ref.ac.uk
- Further Q&A available next week on the REF website:
ref.ac.uk

What are the benefits & challenges of the March single deadline?

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Benefits

- Building on existing preparation work – minimal additional activity
- Proximity to census date / assessment periods
- Momentum / 'getting on with it' / not starting again
- Funding informed according to original timetable

Challenges

- Decisions before extent of disruption known & consultation during disruption period – need to revise again?
- Timing with HEI cycles
- 4 months may not be sufficient for all disciplines and HEI types, for all elements
- May have uneven effects – different HEI types, equality & diversity

What are the benefits & challenges of a longer single deadline?

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Benefits

- More time to understand extent of disruption – a more stable date
- Longer recovery period for HEIs
- Longer period for development & consultation
- More familiar timetable (in AY 21/22 option)

Challenges

- Assessment further away from census date / assessment periods
- Prolonged preparation period: new priorities + may increase burden
- Resourcing issues around temporary staff
- Informs funding in full a year later

What are the benefits & challenges of a phased deadline?

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Benefits

- Accounts for differing effects on elements
- Maintains momentum
- Longer period for development & consultation around impact
- Likely to inform funding on original timescale

Challenges

- Requires some decisions before extent of disruption known
- Complexity in submission & assessment process
- Timing with HEI cycles
- Delay period may not be sufficient for all cases



What are the benefits & challenges around impact?

	Benefits	Challenges
Universal extension To 31 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplicity• Within REF 2021 window aligns with publication period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May generate more work• May not help in many cases
Case-by-case approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility recognises the range of impacts and sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment more complex• May generate more work for HEIs and panels