

Audit and data verification procedures

Updated July 2013



All information added or updated in July 2013 appears in italics

	Scope of verification	Method of verification	Scheduling	Outcome of verification
<p>Sample-based audit</p> <p><u>Staff (REF1a/b/c)</u></p>	<p>A selection of staff submitted by each HEI in at least one and up to four UOAs will be audited, depending on the scale of the HEI's submissions. For this sample we will seek to verify staff eligibility, submitted FTE, category (A or C), and individual staff circumstances cited in REF1b.</p>	<p>Eligibility HEI to verify eligibility, FTE and category by providing relevant extracts of contracts, payroll or personnel records, or associated job descriptions.</p> <p><i>For Category A staff: PDFs exported directly from or screenshots of payroll systems. Evidence formats must demonstrate that the data provided are in the state which they held on the payroll system and have not been subject to alteration (e.g. an Excel spreadsheet will not be accepted)</i></p> <p>AND</p> <p><i>Copies of relevant extracts from staff contracts or full contracts with relevant information highlighted (with sensitive data such as salary information removed).</i></p> <p><i>For Category C staff: extracts from a contract or other employment document confirming the employer on the census date and that the individual's responsibilities include carrying out research.</i></p>	<p><i>A request for evidence relating to the staff sample will be sent to all HEIs in early December 2013. The deadline for responses will be in late January 2014.</i></p> <p><i>Evidence received from HEIs may subsequently be followed up if required. Such requests for further evidence will require a response within 10 working days (or for queries relating to staff circumstances, 15 working days).</i></p>	<p>If a member of staff's eligibility cannot be verified, the individual and their associated outputs will be removed from the submission.</p> <p>The FTE or category of a member of submitted staff may be adjusted.</p> <p>Where an individual's circumstances in REF1b cannot be verified, any 'missing' outputs will be graded as 'unclassified'.</p>

		<p>Staff Circumstances <i>For staff included in the sample, HEI to verify staff circumstances by stating how it assured itself that the cited circumstance(s) took place, and what evidence it had consulted. Due to the sensitivity of such information we will not request original documentation. Appropriate forms of evidence that the HEI may have used could include records of contracted working hours, leave or time taken off work, contracts or secondment agreements, health assessments, or correspondence with medical professionals or other authorities. (This is not an exhaustive or prescriptive list of examples.)</i></p>		
<p><u>Impact case studies (REF3b)</u></p>	<p>A sample of impact case studies will be audited, including some case studies submitted by each HEI (in one or more UOAs). Selection of the sample will be based on advice from the sub-panels.</p> <p>We will seek to verify the eligibility of impact case studies and corroborate key claims made about the impacts.</p>	<p>HEI to provide further information or evidence about the underpinning research (for example, to verify it was undertaken at the submitting HEI). Evidence may include relevant extracts of staff contracts, records of research grants, or other appropriate evidence.</p> <p>To corroborate claims about the impact, we will use one or more sources of corroboration that have been listed in section 5 of the case study template:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We may request a copy of a confidential document or corroborating statement held by the HEI. • We may contact a user whose contact details have been provided, to seek corroboration directly from them. • Sub-panels may refer to any publicly available material listed. 	<p><i>Impact case studies can be audited at any time throughout the assessment period; the bulk of these requests will occur between March and June 2014.</i></p> <p><i>Requests will require a response within 10 working days unless otherwise specified.</i></p> <p><i>Requests for outputs that underpin a case study will require a response within 15 working days.</i></p>	<p>If the HEI cannot verify the eligibility of the impact case study it will be graded as ‘unclassified’.</p> <p>Where a specific claim made within the impact case study is not corroborated through audit, the sub-panel will disregard this claim when making their assessment.</p>

<p>Data comparisons</p> <p><u>Staff and research outputs</u></p>	<p>We will compare submitted staff with other submissions (within and between HEIs), <i>against external datasets such as Research Council employed staff</i> and submitted outputs with RAE submissions.</p> <p>Targeted audits will be carried out where these data comparisons identify potential discrepancies.</p>	<p>Requests may include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of staff eligibility or FTE where the individual has been returned in more than one submission. <i>Acceptable forms of evidence are the same as for the REF1a/b/c Staff sample audit described above.</i> • Verification of the date that an output became publicly available, particularly if it <i>was published early in the REF period or is marked as 'pending' publication</i> (for example, by providing a letter from the publisher). 	<p><i>Requests for evidence will commence from January 2014.</i></p> <p><i>Requests will require a response within 10 working days unless otherwise specified.</i></p>	<p>Adjustment of data as appropriate, or grading an ineligible output as 'unclassified'.</p>
<p><u>Environment data (REF4a/b/c)</u></p>	<p>The REF submission system will validate REF4 data against data held by HESA and other agencies, at HEI level. Targeted audits of environment data will be carried out, where either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the HEI submits REF4 data close to the submission system limits, indicating potentially ineligible data may have been returned to the REF • A comparison of REF and HESA data at subject level indicates a potential discrepancy in the way the HEI has allocated data to REF UOAs. 	<p>If audited, the institution will need to provide <i>an explanation of the discrepancies identified by the data comparison. Acceptable evidence will include details of any environment data that has been returned to the REF but not to HESA (or other relevant agency), and/or a description of how they have allocated data to REF UOAs.</i></p>	<p><i>HEIs will be contacted with queries from February 2014 onwards.</i></p> <p><i>Requests will generally require a response within 10 working days unless otherwise specified.</i></p>	<p>Where additional data (not held by the relevant agency) are not demonstrably eligible, the submission will be adjusted and such data will be removed. Where the allocation of data to UOAs cannot be justified, the submission will be adjusted accordingly.</p>

<p>Panel instigated queries</p> <p><u>All aspects of submissions</u></p>	<p>Sub-panels may instigate audits to verify specific information relating to any aspect of a submission. The REF audit team will request further information or evidence from the HEI, as appropriate to the query.</p> <p>Examples of types of panel instigated queries include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff based in a discrete department or unit outside of the UK. We may request further explanation or evidence to verify the connection of the research activity of such staff to the submitting unit. • Individual staff circumstances. We may request further information about the timing/nature of individual staff circumstances or further details of the career history of an early careers researcher (ECR), if required to make a judgement about the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs. <i>For ECRs, we will in the first instance request further information to explain how the individual did not meet the definition of an ECR prior to the point at which ECR status is claimed. This could include details about the nature of previous contracts and/or details of how their previous work did not include independent research. If necessary, we may request copies of original documentation that relates to an ECR's contract or career history.</i> • Co-authorship. Details of an individual's contribution to a co-authored output may be requested, to verify their substantial research contribution. • Quality of research underpinning an impact case study. Where sub-panels consider there is a need to review underpinning research outputs to assure the quality threshold has been met, they will in the first instance seek to source the outputs themselves. Where this is not possible, we may request a copy of the output from the HEI. <i>(Fifteen working days will be given to source the output. We will expect institutions to have ensured the outputs are potentially available, but do not expect or encourage HEIs to collect them in advance, in anticipation of a potential audit request.)</i> Where an institution cannot provide a copy of an underpinning output on request (after the panel members have attempted to source it themselves), the sub-panel will disregard that output in the assessment. 	<p><i>Panel instigated audits can occur at any point throughout the assessment period; the majority of these requests will occur between Jan – June 2014.</i></p> <p><i>Requests will require a response within 10 working days unless otherwise specified.</i></p> <p><i>Requests for outputs that underpin a case study, and requests relating to individual staff circumstances, will require a response within 15 working days.</i></p>	
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