

REF 2021 consultation on the draft guidance and criteria

Page 2: Respondent details

Q1. Please indicate who you are responding on behalf of:

Charity

Q2. Please provide the name of your organisation.

British Pharmacological Society

Q3. If you would be happy to be contacted in the event of any follow-up questions, please provide a contact email address.

natalie.harrison@bps.ac.uk

Q4. If your response is in relation to specific main panels, please indicate which one(s):

Main Panel A: Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (Sub-Panels 1-6)

Q5. We are seeking views during the consultation on both the draft guidance on submissions and the draft panel criteria and working methods. Please select the documents for which you would like to provide a response:

Both documents

Page 3: Guidance on submissions: Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework

Q6. 1a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 1: Overview of the assessment framework':

Agree

1b. Please provide any comments on Part 1. (Indicative 300 word limit)

About us The British Pharmacological Society (BPS) is the primary UK learned society concerned with research into drugs and the way they work. The Society has around 4,000 members working in academia, industry, regulatory agencies and the health services, and many are medically qualified. The Society covers the whole spectrum of pharmacology, including laboratory, clinical, and toxicological aspects. Pharmacology is a key knowledge and skills base for developments in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries, and is therefore fundamental to a thriving UK industry and R&D. The Society publishes three scientific journals: the British Journal of Pharmacology, the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology, and Pharmacology Research and Perspectives. Broadly agree, with two minor points. 1.1 It would be useful to have specific discipline identifiers and elements of the drug discovery process highlighted as part of the impact case studies. Having key words in impact case studies would allow richer use of the data in the future. 1.2 Continuing impact, for resubmission of impact case studies previously submitted in REF2014, does not need additionality of research, only significant development of the impact. This is surprising for an assessment that is meant to reward research. As such, greater clarity on what constitutes a significant development of impact would be helpful. However, we welcome the acknowledgement that the impact of a specific output can increase, over time, and that submission of a new impact case study would be considered without a need for additional research.

Page 4: Guidance on submissions: Part 2: Submissions

Q7. 2a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 2: Submissions':

Agree

2b. Please provide any comments on Part 2. (Indicative 300 word limit)

Broadly agree, with one point. 2.1 There is a concerning paragraph in the UOA3 descriptor (para 68) which states: "Bodies of research more explicitly linked to UOA 1 (Clinical Medicine), UOA 2 (Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care), UOA 4 (Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience), UOA 5 (Biological Sciences), and UOA 6 (Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences) should be submitted to those panels and such outputs submitted to UOA 3 will be cross-referred." This is a departure from 2014 and will concern a number of institutions that their biomedical or clinical research might get bounced from UOA3. Cross-referral makes it more difficult to get consistency in the rating of outputs within a sub-panel and we would therefore caution against the wholesale cross-referral that appears to be proposed here. Related to this concern, for UOA3, we recommend appointing a pharmacologist on this sub-panel to correctly deal with some of the pharmacology-related material and to avoid wholesale movement of areas of discipline moving between units.

Page 5: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff details (REF1a/b)

Q8. 3a. The guidance is clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Staff details':

Agree

Q9. 4. Possible indicators of research independence are set out at paragraph 130, including a reference to a list of independent fellowships. This list is intended to guide institutions on determining independence for staff holding fellowships from major research funders. The list is not intended to be comprehensive. Do you have any comments on the clarity, usefulness, or coverage of this list? (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Q10. 5a. Do you agree with the proposed eligibility of seconded staff set out at paragraphs 121.c to d?

Yes

Q11. 6a. Do you agree with the proposed ineligibility of staff based in a discrete department or unit outside the UK?

Yes

Page 6: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 1: Staff circumstances (paragraphs 149 to 193)

Q12. 7a. The proposed approach for taking account of circumstances will achieve the aim of promoting equality and diversity in REF 2021:

Agree

Q13. 7b. The potential advantages of the proposed approach outweigh the potential drawbacks identified:

Agree

Q14. 7c. Please provide any further comments on these proposals, including any suggestions for clarifying or refining the guidance. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 7: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs (REF2)

Q15. 8a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 2: Research outputs' is clear:

Agree

8b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 2. (Indicative 300 word limit)

This could be more explicit (e.g., define 'Decoupling').

Q16. 9. A glossary of output types and collection formats is set out at Annex K, to provide increased clarity to institutions on categorising types of output for submission. Do you have any comments on the clarity and usefulness of this annex? (Indicative 300 word limit)

- 9.1 Impact on health and welfare of animals (including those used in research) is mentioned in Table 1, under areas of impact, but should also be included in the text.
 9.2 Refinement should be included as an example of type of impact in the second column of Table 1. Currently, only Reduction and Replacement are mentioned.
 9.3. In Table 1, p 103: please include animal science in the list of impact examples under 'public policy'.

Q17. 10a. Paragraph 206.b sets out the funding bodies' intention to make ineligible the outputs of former staff who have been made redundant (except where the staff member has taken voluntary redundancy). Do you agree with this proposal?

No

10b. Please provide any further comments on this proposal. (Indicative 300 word limit)

10.2 In terms of equality and diversity, we would argue there should be no differentiation between somebody who has their department closed (i.e. been made redundant) versus somebody who has retired when the institution has the choice to return their outputs or not.

Q18. 11a. Do you agree with the proposed intention to permit the submission of co-authored outputs only once within the same submission?

Yes

11b. Please provide any comments on this proposal. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 8: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 2: Research activity cost for UOA 4

Q19. 12a. How feasible do you consider to be the approach set out at paragraphs 267 to 271 for capturing information on the balance of research activity of different costs within submitting units in UOA 4? (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Q20. 12b. Are the examples of high cost and other research activity sufficiently clear to guide classification? (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Q21. 12c. Please provide feedback on any specific points in the guidance text as well as the overall clarity of the guidance. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 9: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Section 3: Impact (REF3)

Q22. 13a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact' is clear:

Agree

13b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 3. (Indicative 300 word limit)

13.1 We believe that the definition of impact was broadly appropriate within the biomedical sciences but we would support better inclusion of impacts that address societal concerns e.g. 3Rs research. Communication of definitions of impact could be clearer and more consistent. We also recommend that clear guidance be given during the submission process regarding what is an 'impact' (e.g. new jobs) compared to a 'pathway to impact' (e.g. creation of a company). Such definitions should not exclude 'narrative impact' e.g. work leading to a change in policy. 13.2 We would still reinforce our previous comment that REF should consider allowing key words in impact case studies to better allow interrogation of the database after the process is completed. 13.3 Paras 285–293: Although it is made clear that the list is not prescriptive, all the examples focus on people, society and infrastructure etc. If there is scope here, please specify that 'impact' can include case studies in animal science that provide evidence for impact on animal welfare and/or the 3Rs.

Page 10: Guidance on submissions: Part 3, Sections 4-5: Environment data and environment (REF4a/b/c-REF5a/b)

Q23. 14a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment data' is clear:

Agree

14b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 4. (Indicative 300 word limit)

14.2 Para 318–319: All the examples focus on people (students/researchers) and infrastructure. If there is scope here, please include training of supporting staff who might not be engaged directly in 'research' but whose input is vital (e.g. NACWOs, NTIOs etc).

Q24. 15a. The guidance in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment' is clear:

Agree

15b. Please provide any comments on Part 3, Section 5. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 11: Guidance on Submissions: further comments

Q25. 16. Please provide any further comments on the 'Guidance on submissions', including Annexes A-M. (Indicative 500 word limit)

16.1 The level definitions for UOA- A are not clearly defined, by comparison with those for UOAs-B+.

Page 12: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 2: Unit of assessment descriptors

Q26. 1. Do the UOA descriptors provide a clear and appropriate description of the disciplines covered by the UOAs? Please include any suggestions for refining the descriptors and state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

Where relevant, please state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

1.1 As per our previous comments, we recommend discipline tags/key words in the impact case studies. We recommend that authors should nominate discipline tags for their output/impact submissions to better represent interdisciplinarity and allow a more granular look at the impact/involvement of individual disciplines. Adding discipline tags might reduce the need for multiple submissions to UOAs, or the need to publish sub-profiles for disciplines as is proposed in the consultation.

Page 13: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 1: Submissions

Q27. 2a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

Agree

Q28. 2b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions':

Agree

Q29. 2c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 1: Submissions', in particular on:- where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria. Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (Indicative 300 word limit)

2.1 We note that the criteria for definition of impact are less precise for Main Panel-A than for the MPs. We understand that some degree of flexibility is needed, but believe that this will apply to the other MPs also. We urge Main Panel-A to reconsider this point and recommend the adoption of criteria similar to those developed by Main Panel-B.

Page 14: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 2: Outputs

Q30. 3a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

Agree

Q31. 3b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs':

Agree

Q32. 3c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 2: Outputs', in particular on:- the proposed criteria for double-weighting outputs in Main Panels C and D, and on whether requests to double-weight books should automatically be accepted- whether Annex C 'Main Panel D – outputs types and submission guidance' is helpful and clear - where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria. Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 15: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 3: Impact

Q33. 4a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

Agree

Q34. 4b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact':

Agree

Q35. 4c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 3: Impact', in particular on:- where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria. Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 16: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 3, Section 4: Environment

Q36. 5a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 3, Section 5: Environment':

Agree

Q37. 5b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment':

Agree

Q38. 5c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 3, Section 4: Environment', in particular on:- whether the difference in section weightings across main panels is sufficiently justified by disciplinary difference (paragraphs 322 and 323)- whether the list of quantitative indicators provided at www.ref.ac.uk is clear and helpful- where further clarification is required- where refinements could be made- whether there are areas where more consistency across panels could be achieved- whether there are differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria. Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s). (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 17: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 4: Panel procedures

Q39. 6a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

Agree

Q40. 6b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 4: Panel procedures':

Agree

Q41. 6c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 4: Panel procedures', in particular on:- where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 18: Panel criteria and working methods: Part 5: Panel working methods

Q42. 7a. a. Overall, the criteria are appropriate in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

Agree

Q43. 7b. Overall, the criteria are clear in 'Part 5: Panel working methods':

Agree

Q44. 7c. Please comment on the criteria in 'Part 5: Panel working methods', in particular on: - where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.

Page 19: Overall panel criteria and working methods

Q45. 8a. Overall, the 'Panel criteria and working methods' achieves an appropriate balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the panels.

Agree

8b. Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the main panels. (Indicative 300 word limit)

No comments.