

# HEFCE survey – internationalisation of REF

## 1. What do you think the key benefits would be of expanding the REF internationally?

Please select up to three from the list below

- International benchmarking of research quality
- Increased UK research reputation
- Improved researcher collaboration
- Potential for increased investment in UK research
- Cost-savings to the HE sector
- Enhanced process of peer review
- Shaping the international agenda for research assessment
- None
- Other (if selected, please specify)

## 2. What do you think the key challenges would be in expanding the REF internationally?

Please select up to three from the list below

- Potential for increased burden/cost
- Comparability of research environment internationally
- Comparability of disciplines internationally
- Practical issues (e.g. language barriers)
- Potential for diminished reputation of REF
- Diversity in research systems and funding processes internationally
- None
- Other (if selected, please specify)

## 3. In view of the potential benefits and challenges overall, how supportive would you be of further work to explore the issues in more depth?

- Supportive
- Not supportive
- Don't know
- Other (please specify)

BPS approached our Committee of Heads and Professors of Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacology for input (i.e. those responsible at a department level) and received a low response rate which may indicate a general lack of enthusiasm. Furthermore, opinion was exactly split between respondents. Taking into account the comments, BPS members are broadly not supportive.

## 4. Have you got any further comments relating to internationalisation of REF?

A number of points were raised by BPS members, including:

- Concern that REF internationalization would be restricted to English-speaking countries, while of practical advantage, would limit the scheme. In many branches of science such as pharmacology, research in non-English speaking countries would be a useful comparator
- This could create a high burden on academic peer review processes in the UK
- There is a clear potential for increased cost which could divert funds from other aspects of higher education
- Internationalisation of REF would by definition shape the research assessment agenda internationally and given the mixed views within the UK, similar contradictory views could be held elsewhere

- Damage to diversity in research systems is a risk
- Various metrics are already available and utilised to compare individual research outputs and institutions. While these have shortcomings, the REF system does too
- Already, various international funding agencies are moving to a REF-like system and many UK academics have been involved in advising and conducting mock assessments overseas. This resource investment may not therefore be warranted.

### **About BPS**

BPS is the primary UK learned society concerned with research into drugs and the way they work. Our members work in academia, industry, and the health services, and many are medically qualified. The Society covers the whole spectrum of pharmacology, including laboratory, clinical, toxicological and regulatory aspects.

Clinical pharmacology is the medical speciality dedicated to promoting safe and effective use of medicines for patient benefit. Clinical pharmacologists work as consultants in the NHS and many hold prominent positions in UK Universities.