

REF2021 audit briefing

What is the REF?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is carried out every six to seven years, by the four UK higher education funding bodies. The REF is a collaborative exercise to assess the quality of research taking place within higher education institutions, and the results of the REF drive an institution's reputation, league tables, and research funding.

One important part of the REF is the submission of Impact Case Studies, which are assessed in REF panels. Impact Case Studies demonstrate the effects and benefits of our research on the wider society, economy, culture, policy, health, or environment, which goes beyond academia.

You have received this briefing because we aim to include your engagements with University of Exeter research in a REF Impact Case Study. We're very grateful for your assistance in demonstrating the impact of our research. The purpose of this briefing is to summarise the audit process for Impact Case Studies, and to explain why you may be contacted, and how the data you have provided is used.

The REF audit

As part of the REF2021 process, REF will audit a sample of Impact Case Studies. The aim of this audit is to give assurance that the data we submit is accurate and reliable – the REF panels need to make their assessments based on accurate data, in order to maintain confidence in the REF. Impact Case Studies from all UK Higher Education institutions will be audited as part of this process, and the audit supports the principle of fairness, by ensuring all submissions are made on an equal basis.

The REF panellists begin by nominating Impact Case Studies they wish to audit, which is then supplemented with a random selection by REF, in order to ensure a reasonable spread across all units of assessment and institutions.

Once Impact Case Studies are selected for audit, REF will seek to verify their eligibility by corroborating the key claims the case studies make about their impacts. To do this, REF will use multiple sources of information, including contacting partners that engaged in the research and impact activities. **Therefore, you may be contacted by the REF team directly, or indirectly via the University of Exeter, in order for them to corroborate these claims.** Impact case studies can be audited at any time during the assessment period, and we anticipate most requests will occur between March and June of 2021.

Your Privacy

You can find full details of how the University and REF will store and use your data in our Impact Case Study Privacy Notice.

For more information on any of the above or the REF in general, please visit <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/ref2021/> or contact the University of Exeter REF team on **Exeter-REF-2021@exeter.ac.uk**