

## Privacy notice for Future Research Assessments

This Privacy notice outlines the processing activities by the University of Sussex relating to the submission of future research assessments, including Research Excellence Frameworks or equivalent exercises, and particularly REF2029. It covers the following:

- Overview
- About the Research Excellence Framework
- The basis for processing your information
- Information we collect about you and how we use it
- Disclosure of your information
- Retention of your information
- Your rights including access to your information
- How to contact us and UK Research and Innovation

This notice should be read in conjunction with the University's [Privacy Consent Form for Future Research Assessments](#).

### Overview

The University of Sussex is registered as a data controller with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Our registration reference is Z6428144.

You can refer to the University's [Privacy notice](#) for more information about our commitment to processing personal data in a way that is compliant with data protection legislation. This includes the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation ('UK GDPR') (as implemented by the Data Protection Act 2018), and the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679.

The Data Protection Officer for the University of Sussex is Alexandra Elliott, Head of Information Management and Compliance. If you have any queries concerning your personal data and how it is processed, you can contact the Data Protection Officer at [dpo@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@sussex.ac.uk).

Reference to "information" in the remainder of this document means personal data. When we refer to "REF" in the remainder of this document, we mean all future research assessments, including the Research Excellence Frameworks or equivalent exercises, and particularly REF2029.

### About the Research Excellence Framework

REF is the UK's system for assessing the excellence of research in UK higher education providers. The REF outcomes are used to inform the allocation of around £2 billion per year of public funding for universities' research. Research England manages the REF on behalf of all the four UK higher education funding bodies:

- Research England;
- Scottish Funding Council;
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; and
- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.

The funding bodies' shared policy aim for research assessment is to secure the continuation of a world-class, dynamic and responsive research base across the full academic spectrum within UK higher education.

The REF objectives are to:

- provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment;
- provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use in the higher education sector and for public information; and
- inform the selective allocation of funding for research.

Impact is assessed primarily through the submission of case studies, which describe the changes or benefits brought about by research undertaken by researchers at the institution. Impressive impacts were found across all disciplines (or 'Units of Assessment' / 'UoAs'), with 93% of our research impact assessed to be 'outstanding' or 'very considerable' in REF2021. Information about the REF and how the University has performed in the past can be found [here](#).

### **The basis for processing your information**

The University processes your information in connection with supporting the preparation of our submission to REF on the basis that you give us appropriate, explicit consent. You may decide to withdraw your information from use in our submission. For more information on how to do so, please see **Your rights including access to your information** section below.

### **Information we collect about you and how we use it**

The information we collect about you includes your name, job title, organisation and contact details, and documents you supply as evidence (e.g. testimonial, data, etc.).

Your information is collected and held by the University with the REF process managed by the [Research Information, Quality and Impact \(RIQI\)](#) team. Your information may be accessed by other University staff involved in this area, including academic or Professional Services staff, and internal and/or external academics who undertake peer review of submission materials.

Any information you choose to provide to the University is used as corroborating evidence in one or more impact case studies or environment statements as part of our submission to REF. You can find further information about what data was collected in previous REFs on their website, in particular the '[Guidance on submissions](#)' document. Annex G of that document sets out the data that we are required to share with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Information you provide, subject to your appropriate, explicit consent, may also be used in material published by the University to showcase the quality and impact of its research, including on Research and News webpages, social media, and promotional material such as prospectuses and posters. The information will not be in coded form and your name - and details such as your job title and organisational affiliation - may be provided in these narrative statements.

### **Publishing the information you provide**

The results of the assessment exercise will be published by UKRI, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies, and made available on the [REF website](#).

Those parts of submissions that contain factual data and textual information about research activity will also be published online by UKRI, on behalf of the four UK higher education

funding bodies, as well as by the University. Published information is likely to include textual information including impact case studies and impact/environment statements **in which you may be referenced**. Your name, job title and organisation may be included in this textual information, but can be redacted by the RIQI team prior to submission (e.g., in relation to commercially sensitive or other confidential information). While REF panels will have access to this information, redaction will prevent it from being published online at the end of the exercise.

Other personal details will normally be removed, but may be submitted to REF via a separate part of the submission (e.g., contact details).

### **Disclosure of your information**

Research England is part of UKRI, and under our arrangement with them, UKRI has the role of 'Data Controller' for information submitted by the University for REF.

Once submitted by us, UKRI may pass your information, or parts of it, to any of the following organisations that need it to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research and to carry out their statutory functions connected with funding higher education:

- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE)
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

UKRI, and the organisations listed above, use the information to analyse and monitor the REF. This may result in information being released to other users including academic researchers or consultants (commissioned by the funding bodies), to carry out research or analysis, in accordance with data protection legislation. Where information not previously published is released to third parties, this will be anonymised where practicable.

UKRI requires that anyone who has access to your information, held in UKRI's records, will respect its confidentiality and will only process it in accordance with instructions issued for the purposes specified by UKRI.

Parts of your information will also be passed to the REF expert panels and the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, whose members are independent of UKRI, for the purpose of conducting a systematic evaluation of submissions, in accordance with predetermined criteria and methods. All panel members are bound by confidentiality arrangements.

Research England may contact you in the event of an audit, to corroborate the information you have provided.

We will only share your information as part of future government-regulated systems of research assessment, and will send information about impact case studies and environment statements to UKRI for the purposes of future REFs.

Whenever we share your information for the purposes outlined above, we will do so with appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the confidentiality and security of your information.

### **Retention of your information**

We retain all information used in the development of the REF submission until completion of the REF audit process and publication of the results. You can check with your University partners, or the [RIQI team](#), for more specific timelines.

We retain copies of the textual elements of the submission (impact case studies, environment templates) for 10 years after the end of each REF exercise as per the University's [Master Records Retention Schedule](#) in order to facilitate future REF submissions.

### **Your rights including access to your information**

You may request access to any of your information that is held by us, restrict our use of your information, or withdraw your information from use in our submission. Further information about your data protection rights can be found on the University's [data protection pages](#) or by contacting the University's Data Protection Officer, Alexandra Elliott, Head of Information Management and Compliance at [dpo@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@sussex.ac.uk).

Once submitted by us to the REF, you have the right to request a copy of any information that UKRI holds about you. Further information about UKRI's Privacy notice, and guidance on making a subject access request to them, can be found on the Research England's [data protection website](#).

### **How to contact us and UKRI**

If you have any questions about our Privacy notice or the information we hold about you, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer by email at [dpo@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@sussex.ac.uk) or you can write to Alexandra Elliott, Data Protection Officer, University of Sussex, Sussex House, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RH.

If you have any concerns about your information being used for these purposes, please contact UKRI at [dataprotection@ukri.org](mailto:dataprotection@ukri.org) or you can write to their Data Protection Officer, UK Research and Innovation, Polaris House, Swindon, SN2 1FL.

This Privacy notice was last updated in April 2024.