# Lancaster University principles for an initial internal REF Stocktake

## Overview

The next Research Excellence Framework (REF 2029) submission will be in November 2028, with the results due in December 2029. The four main REF panels sub-divided into 34 disciplinary based Units of Assessment (UOA) remain from REF 2021. The REF panels, made up from national and international experts, will assess the quality of research outputs, research impact and research environment submitted by UK universities. Summary results in the form of a quality profile are published at the level of the UOA for each university that enters a submission to the REF.

The allocation of Research England’s annual QR block grant (Quality Related income) is driven by the results of the REF and QR funding is worth approx. £26 million annually to Lancaster. This QR income is part of the government’s dual support for research, supporting our research activity by enabling research that is not externally funded as well as contributing to the shortfall on UKRI funded projects.

Given the value of the REF exercise, it is important that we are well prepared to ensure our submission properly represents the research excellence at our university.

## Stocktake

The first internal stocktake for REF 2029 will take place between May and September 2024. It is important to begin REF preparations now as it allows us to assess where our outputs are currently rated and give chance to offer support to encourage higher rated outputs. It is noted that activity may have already started to take place and therefore this initial REF stocktake does not have an expectation that any processes already underway should be restarted. The stocktake is expected to build on these initial foundations and not replace them. We have designed the stocktake to be conducted in a defined period of time and with minimal burden. The overall objective for REF 2029 is to perform to our highest ability. The Stocktake is intended to assess the current position of Lancaster outputs and establish those likely to be high quality, with the aim of understanding the qualities a 4\* output. This knowledge can be used to ensure future outputs include these quality characteristics. Where possible [PURE](https://pure.lancs.ac.uk/workspace/personal/overview/) must be used to propose outputs for review and will include the following principles:

## Principles of first internal stocktake for REF 2029.

1. To ensure (via the Library) that outputs are recorded on Pure and to check Open Access compliance or exceptions, and to understand evolving issues concerning Open Access, based on current information for eligibility in REF2029.
2. Focus on outputs.
3. Submission period for REF is anything published from 01/01/2021 and not included in the last REF.
4. Ensure that a proportion of outputs are assessed externally.
5. Work within a strong culture of EDI.
6. Propose a maximum of 5 outputs per person for 3 or 4\*outputs only.
7. Ensure no detriment to those who do not currently have any papers to propose.
8. Use the Pure REF assessment module for consistency of approach and recording assessments.
9. Where work has already begun, continue with processes in place.
10. No current requirement for 100 words for outputs for Engineering and SCC in the initial internal assessment.
11. REF outputs should be scored on a 13 Points scale (see below)
12. Continue to assess training and support for experienced and new members of staff.
13. Impact case Studies are not the main focus of this stocktake but will be assessed in due course.

### The Faculty’s Role

It is important that faculties oversee the local delegation of our preparation processes within their own departments and that there is understanding of the current published REF criteria (and ultimately the panel criteria for their specific discipline when available) which will guide the REF panels in their assessments.

### The Department’s Role

*Departments’ Ratings of Outputs:* Departments will, under the supervision of their faculties, conduct processes to examine research outputs to inform our initial estimation for each output of the most likely ratings in the REF exercise. It is acknowledged that this is not a perfect process, and any review can only provide the most likely rating for an individual output, but we should endeavour to make the process as realistic as we can. This will require iteration over the next four years up to the submission as we consider these outputs in more detail. Departments may use a mix of internal peer review, senior department staff with experience of the REF or staff from other relevant departments, and external expert review. It is recognised that this will generate a range of opinions on each output that the university will use to form their assessment as to which outputs should be submitted to the REF in order to maximise our position.

Heads of Department will ensure that mentoring and developmental support is provided to academic staff, based on the emergent outcomes of the ratings review process. Guided by the outcomes of this process, constructive feedback will be provided to individual staff in a supportive manner. In some cases, Heads of Department may identify individuals who could benefit from additional support to help their professional development. It is important that such advice is provided within departments in a developmental and supportive manner.

These internal estimates of the ratings of outputs used in preparation for the REF will not be used in promotion or probation cases for individuals, as these are approximations used to guide this specific REF process.

It is important that we begin looking at outputs now for several reasons:

* The REF publication period began on 1 January 2021.
* We need to identify whether the outputs being considered are eligible for submission according to the various open access and other publication criteria set out by Research England. There is a large volume of work required across the university because of the high number of outputs to be reviewed in order to select those for submission. All outputs considered for REF will require initial checks based on current information but when final guidance is released this could change.
* Where staff can benefit from mentoring and further development or training this can be targeted appropriately and in a timely manner.

We need to identify those outputs which are most likely to be rated as 4\*, and this will require a great deal of discussion and reflection to select the appropriate outputs.

Departments are required to propose some outputs for external review, this process cannot be managed in PURE currently. To ensure outputs are rated equally and independently, the following criteria for external reviewers is important although not essential.

* Experience of panels within either REF21 or REF14
* Independent view
* Knowledge of subject area

Departments are being asked to provide the information on their provisional output rating estimates by the **20th September 2024**. Departments are required (where possible) to record proposed outputs in [Pure](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/support-for-researchers/research-services/research-information--systems/pure/) so that the [Library](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/open-access/) can start the process of checking the eligibility of those outputs.

## Scoring

All outputs will be scored on a 13 point scale. This will be broken down as

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **4+** | **4** | **4-** | **3+** | **3** | **3-** | **2+** | **2** | **2-** | **1+** | **1** | **1-** | **0 (ungraded)** |
| Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour. | | | Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence. | | | Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour. | | | Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour. | | | Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment. |

Where there is uncertainty on scores, reviewers should mark as realistically as possible and include comments.

## Guidance

Guidance is available for proposing, assessing and reviewing outputs in PURE and can be found on the RES webpages including a summary of REF 29 guidelines and more information on consultations taking place.