

REF 2029 Updated Guidance: Engagement and Impact Element

1. Overview: this briefing sets out **headlines** from the recently [updated guidance](#) on the **engagement and impact** (E&I) element of the **2029 Research Excellence Framework** (REF).¹ NB: this interim guidance may be subject to small revisions and further development.

The **finalised REF 2029 guidance**, including the 'Panel criteria and working methods', is due to be published autumn 2026.

2. Headlines: headlines from the updated guidance on the REF 2029 E&I element include:

- **Weighting:** the E&I element will carry a 25% weighting of the overall assessment score.
- **Continuity with REF 2021:** the REF 2029 E&I guidance aims to provide continuity with REF 2021 with assessment based on the reach and significance of ICS and retention of the REF 2021 submission ICS template structure. A previous proposal for a supplementary disciplinary-level E&I statement has been dropped.
- **Eligible period for impact:** 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2028.
- **Eligible period for underpinning research:** 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2028.
- **Removal of 2* quality threshold for underpinning research:** with the removal of the 2* quality threshold for underpinning research, the underpinning research need now only meet the [REF definition of research](#).
- **Recognition of the contribution of engagement to impact:** panels will recognise the contribution of engagement to impact within the existing criteria of reach and significance and the ICS template structure, and encourage ICS narrative discussion of appropriate engagement strategy/activities and indicators of responsible practices that enabled impact, enhancing reach and/or significance.
- **Recognition of diverse HEI impact contributors (non-assessed):** there will be additional ICS space to optionally recognise HEI impact contributors beyond the research producers. Any past or present member of staff or student who has contributed significantly to the ICS can be included. Non-assessed: this data is for recognition purposes only and will not be shared with panels.
- **ICS template word limit:** the substantive content fields of the ICS (the summary of the impact, underpinning research and details of impact sections) will be limited to an overall hard maximum of 2,200 words, but panels encourage brevity.
- **SPRE and impact:** as in REF 2021, REF 2029 will continue to assess and value - through the strategy, people and research environment (SPRE) statements - strategies, support, structures and cultures that encourage and enable impact creation.

¹ Research England, et al., *REF 2029 Guidance*. Swindon: Research England, 2025.