

## Q&A from 'REF 2029 Panels – applying to be a panel member' Webinar, Monday, 3 March 2025 – 14.00-15.00

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#### Audience questions

#### To what extent is Medr encouraging Welsh universities to support staff to apply by ensuring proper time and resource is available?

Medr has discussed the support that institutions could provide to their staff at a recent meeting of our Research and Innovation Committee which is attended by senior institutional leaders. As a result, we are aware some institutions have clarified support they are providing to their staff, for example in providing sabbatical leave for those who have undertaken panel roles, or providing back fill support for teaching. Some institutions have informed us they are awaiting the outcomes of recruitment to agree specific support they will provide. We would advise speaking with your line manager if you are interested in applying for roles to find out what support would be available from your institution.

#### In a panel application would you emphasise your niche expertise within a Unit of Assessment or conversely the ability to deal with broader coverage in the field?

In forming the panels, consideration will be given to bringing together membership that provides both breadth and depth of disciplinary expertise. We are looking for both types of expertise and we would advise providing specific detail about your areas of strengths linked clearly to the criteria. To make a great application be specific about your expertise including what has shaped you, and how you have shaped others. Here are some additional tips:

- Explain why you are a good fit and why your expertise is relevant
- Target your response directly to what has been asked. The term 'relevance' in the question means explaining why the information you're providing is relevant for the role; so it's clear why you are interested and a good match for the role.
- Give tangible examples. The title of your role isn't enough for us to understand exactly what you have done, what you have achieved, what you learned, and how this will shape how you will approach this role.
- Don't list everything you have done, choose your most relevant experience. Explain why it matters, what you learned, and what you'd bring to the role.
- The scorers can only score the text that you provide, we can't extrapolate what it might mean in relation to requirements. Be explicit!
- The scorers will not look up references separately so include what you need to say in the form itself.

#### When ranking an output, do you have to provide written notes explaining or defending your decision?

We are unable to answer this question as the panels' ways of working and criteria setting stage will be developed with oversight from the Main Panels once they are appointed.

## Can you tell us more about the application process? Is it just the forms to complete or are there going to be any interviews, tasks, or further assessments?

There is one application form that covers all roles; applicants are not interviewed or asked to complete any further assessments.

Each role has its own page and application form. You should complete the page for each role you would like to be considered for. If you are not interested in a role leave that page blank.

This recruitment phase is for the criteria setting phase and while we expect most panellists will stay on for the assessment phase, there will be a further recruitment round for the assessment phase.

## From a work/life balance perspective, would I need to extend my working day in order to fulfil duties. Is it possible to be a REF panel member without having to take such a step?

While the time commitment for panel roles is substantial, the workload varies in terms of role and panel.

As we approach the assessment phase the REF team will continue to review workload expectations. A clearer understanding of time commitments once the REF team receive data on 'submission shapes' through the 'Survey of Submission Intentions' in 2027. The REF team will work with panels in the criteria phase to allow them to plan the recruitment for the assessment phase. This will consider the workload estimates to ensure a fair and transparent distribution of responsibilities across panels.

You may find it helpful to speak with your line manager about support that may be available to enable you to participate in a way that provides work-life balance.

## Could payments be clarified as this is going to factor in applicant decision-making?

Information is available from the REF 2029 website [REF 2029 main and sub-panel recruitment – REF 2029](#)

Panel members will be paid a fee for their role across the duration of the REF:

- **Sub-panel chairs** - £18,000 in total: £6,000 in the criteria phase and £12,000 in the assessment phase
- **Sub-panel deputies** - £13,500 in total: £4,500 in the criteria phase and £9,000 in the assessment phase
- **Sub-panel members** - £10,000 in total: £3,334 in the criteria phase and £6,666 in the assessment phase
- **Main panel specialist experts** - £18,000 in total: £6,000 in the criteria phase and £12,000 in the assessment phase.

## Are there any detailed documents as to what is expected for each role?

All information pertaining to REF panel roles and the application process can be found on the REF 2029 website: [REF 2029 main and sub-panel recruitment – REF 2029](#)

## Who should we get support from before applying at our institutions, is it only our line manager?

Although this process is an open recruitment you must have the support of your institution before applying. We advise speaking to your line manager and Dean of Research; you can also contact your institution's REF Manager for more information about the process to secure support for your application.

## Please can you confirm that roles are open to all staff, based on skills/application form of course, and are not restricted to academic staff only?

Yes, roles are open to all staff who have experience that meets the application requirements and not solely restricted to academic staff.

Main panel expert roles are open to all staff who have experience that meets the application requirements. We want to hear from individuals with varied expertise who can bring unique perspectives to the panels. This includes professional and technical staff who contribute to research as well as those who have experience beyond academia such as those involved in policy work, community-based experience or have lived experiences as well as those with an understanding of diverse research practices, outputs and engagement practice. Applicants with specific expertise in areas like international standards, People, Culture and Environment (PCE), impact, or interdisciplinary research—where the expertise does not directly align with a specific discipline or Unit of Assessment (UoA)—can apply for a main panel expert role.

Sub-panel member roles are open to practising researchers in that discipline/unit of assessment. These applicants may also bring additional expertise in areas such as commissioning, applying, or utilising research, as well as expertise in impact, engagement, and people, culture, and environment.

For the assessment phase we will recruit assessors in engagement and impact and PCE to support the sub panels where needed. These applicants may not be practising academics but hold expertise in assessing these elements.

We encourage applicants from all backgrounds to apply, even if you are not certain that meet every criterion listed. Research shows that some groups are less likely to apply. For example women and individuals from underrepresented groups may hesitate to apply unless they meet every point. To counteract this and foster diversity, scorers will view the criteria flexibly.

## For the main panel specialist "Experts in the use, application, and wider benefits of research" role, is this open only to practitioners?

No, this role is not open only to practitioners. We encourage individuals with varied expertise who can bring unique perspectives in: International, People Culture and

Environment, experts in research use, application and wider benefits, and Interdisciplinarity.

- **International experts** – experience of leading research in at least one country outside of the UK. They will ensure the assessment criteria reflect international standards
- **People, Culture and Environment experts** – experience of leading and delivering initiatives that create positive cultures and supportive environments
- **Experts in the use, application and wider benefits of research** – experience in using research in the private, public, or third sectors. They ensure the fair assessment of research impact
- **Interdisciplinary experts** – experience leading and using interdisciplinary research. They will ensure the fair assessment of interdisciplinary research and work closely with other panels to maintain consistency.

**If I have commitment towards other research projects, in addition to work, how should I balance between these research projects, and the REF commitment?**

We would encourage you to discuss with your line manager your work commitments and how that might interact with REF commitments. Institutions will have their own policies for support that they are able to provide, for example in providing backfill support.

**Can an applicant apply to more than one role (for example, sub-panel member, main panel member user expert, main panel member PCE, or interdisciplinary)?**

Yes, you can apply for more than one role. There is one application form that includes sections for each of the roles. Each role has its own page and application form. You should complete the page for each role you would like to be considered for. If you are not interested in a role please leave that page blank.

Do ensure you tailor your application for the specific roles you are interested in.

This recruitment phase is for the criteria setting phase and while we expect most panellists will stay on for the assessment phase, there will be a further recruitment round for the assessment phase.

**Would you elaborate on diversity within the panels regarding career stage and early career researchers? E.g., At what stage should we apply? Do you expect a panel member to fulfil specific criteria in terms of research output/impact etc?**

We are seeking to build panels that bring together a mix of skills, expertise, and backgrounds including career stages. We recognise that valuable research perspectives are drawn from a wide variety of career pathways and stages and actively encourage applications that reflect a full range of professional and academic experiences. Early stage career researchers are encouraged if you have experience that aligns to the requirements, even if you do not meet all of the criteria.

**How long is the assessment process?**

We estimate that panel members will need to commit approximately 40 to 60 days over the course of the exercise. This will depend upon the panel and your role in it and the

phase to which you are appointed. The concentration of time commitment will vary over the course of the REF and we expect this to split into one third for criteria setting (which lasts until June 2026) and two thirds for the assessment phase (which lasts until March 2030, including reporting).

## Further information

If you have any questions directly relating to the application please contact [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk) using the subject 'REF expert panel recruitment'

Further resources, including recordings of the REF team's town hall information session on applying to be a panel member are available from [Resources – REF 2029](#)

Please contact [research@medr.cymru](mailto:research@medr.cymru) for REF 2029 queries relating to the Welsh higher education sector.