

REF-Manager

User Guide

Version 3.0.0

Research Excellence Framework Submission Management

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Abstract

This User Guide provides comprehensive documentation for REF-Manager, a web-based application designed to help UK university departments manage their Research Excellence Framework (REF) submissions. The guide covers all features including colleague and output management, quality assessments, risk assessment, portfolio optimisation, and reporting.

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1 Getting Started

1.1 Logging In

1. Navigate to your REF-Manager URL
2. Enter your username and password
3. Click **Log In**

1.2 Understanding Your Role

REF-Manager uses role-based access control with four distinct roles:

Role	Description	Capabilities
Administrator	Full system access	All features
Observer	Read-only access	View all, export
Internal Panel	Departmental reviewer	Rate assigned outputs
Colleague	Staff member	Manage own outputs

Table 1: User roles and their capabilities

Users may have multiple roles with combined permissions.

1.3 Navigation

The main menu provides access to:

- **Dashboard:** Overview and statistics
- **Colleagues:** Staff management
- **Outputs:** Research output management
- **Critical Friends:** External reviewer management
- **Internal Panel:** Internal reviewer management
- **Reports:** Analytics and export
- **Tasks:** Task tracking
- **Admin:** System administration (Administrators only)

2 Dashboard

The dashboard provides an at-a-glance overview of your REF preparation status.

2.1 Statistics Cards

The dashboard displays key metrics:

- **Total Colleagues:** Returnable staff count
- **Total Outputs:** All tracked outputs
- **Approved Outputs:** Ready for submission

- **In Review:** Currently being assessed
- **Pending Requests:** Outstanding items

2.2 Quality Distribution

A visual chart shows the distribution of outputs by quality rating:

- **4:** World-leading
- **3:** Internationally excellent
- **2:** Recognised internationally
- **1:** Recognised nationally
- **U:** Unclassified

3 Managing Colleagues

3.1 Adding a Colleague

1. Navigate to **Colleagues**
2. Click **Add Colleague**
3. Complete the required fields:
 - Staff ID (unique identifier)
 - First and Last name
 - FTE (0.1 to 1.0)
 - Contract type
 - Category
 - Unit of Assessment
4. Click **Save**

3.2 Colleague Categories

Category	Description
Independent	Leads own research programme
Non-Independent	Contributes to others' research
Post-Doctoral	Post-doctoral researchers
Academic	Teaching-focused academic staff
Research Assistant	Research support roles
Support	Administrative/technical support

Table 2: Colleague categories

3.3 Required Outputs

REF-Manager calculates required outputs based on FTE:

- Formula: $FTE \times 2.5$ (rounded down, maximum 5)
- Example: 0.8 FTE = 2 outputs required

4 Managing Outputs

4.1 Adding an Output

1. Navigate to **Outputs**
2. Click **Add Output**
3. Complete the form:
 - Colleague (select author)
 - Title
 - Publication Type
 - Publication Year (2021-2028)
 - Publication Venue
 - Authors (all authors in citation format)
 - Author Position
 - Unit of Assessment
4. Click **Save**

4.2 Publication Types

Code	Type
A	Journal Article
B	Book
C	Book Chapter
D	Conference Paper
E	Patent
F	Software
G	Performance/Exhibition
H	Other

Table 3: Publication types

4.3 Output Status Workflow

Outputs progress through the following statuses:

Draft → Submitted → Internal Review → External Review → Approved

With alternative paths to Revision or Rejected as needed.

5 Quality Assessments

5.1 Rating System

REF-Manager uses the standard REF quality ratings:

Rating	Description	GPA Value
4	World-leading quality	4
3	Internationally excellent	3
2	Recognised internationally	2
1	Recognised nationally	1
U	Unclassified	0

Table 4: Quality ratings

5.2 Multi-Dimensional Ratings

Each output can receive three independent ratings:

1. **Internal Panel Rating:** From departmental reviewers
2. **Critical Friend Rating:** From external reviewers
3. **Self-Assessment:** From the output author

The average rating is automatically calculated from available assessments.

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 Risk Score Components

Each output has a composite risk score (0-1 scale):

Score	Level	Colour	Action
0.00–0.24	Low	Green	Proceed
0.25–0.49	Medium-Low	Yellow	Monitor
0.50–0.74	Medium-High	Orange	Mitigate
0.75–1.00	High	Red	Urgent

Table 5: Risk levels

6.2 Risk Components

Content Risk (60% weight)

- Panel disagreement likelihood
- Methodology concerns
- Approach controversies

Timeline Risk (40% weight)

- Based on publication status
- Published = 0.00, Planned = 1.00

6.3 Open Access Compliance

Open Access compliance is critical for REF eligibility:

- Non-compliant outputs flagged with minimum 0.85 risk
- Check deposit dates and licences
- Verify compliance before submission

7 REF Submissions

7.1 Creating a Submission Scenario

1. Navigate to **Reports → Submissions**
2. Click **Create Submission**
3. Enter name, UOA, and year
4. Save

7.2 Submission Metrics

Each submission calculates:

- **Quality Score:** GPA-style average
- **Risk Score:** Portfolio risk level
- **Representativeness:** Research area coverage
- **Equality Score:** Staff inclusion percentage
- **Gender Balance:** Representation metric

8 Reports and Export

8.1 Available Reports

- Submission Overview
- Quality Profile
- Staff Progress
- Review Status
- Risk Dashboard
- Comprehensive Report

8.2 Export Formats

- **Excel:** Full data with formatting
- **CSV:** Simple tabular data
- **LaTeX:** Professional reports
- **JSON:** Risk analysis data

9 Task Management

9.1 Creating Tasks

1. Navigate to **Tasks**
2. Click **Create Task**
3. Enter title, description, category, priority
4. Assign to user and set due date
5. Save

9.2 Task Priorities

Priority	Urgency
Low	When possible
Medium	This week
High	This week, prioritise
Urgent	Immediate

Table 6: Task priorities

10 Getting Help

10.1 Documentation

Additional documentation available:

- Quick Start Guide
- Technical Documentation
- Troubleshooting Guide

10.2 Contact

- **Email:** george.tsoulas@york.ac.uk
- **GitHub:** <https://github.com/gtsoulas/ref-manager>