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The UK higher education funding bodies have recently published their initial decisions on REF 2028. Please see the [Future Research Assessment Programme](#) for further information.



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Submission system data requirements

The information on this page will enable institutions to prepare data to import to the REF submission system and provides further details of the data required in submissions, extending the guidance provided in the 'Guidance on submissions' (REF 20019/01) and 'Panel criteria' (REF 2019/02) documents.

The information in these documents may change to reflect any amendments to the submission system, which is currently under development. Any changes will be highlighted in subsequent versions of the documents.

For further information on the REF 2021 Submission system please visit the [submission system page](#).

► **Guidance on import/export file formats**

This document provides details of the structure of the import/export file formats, including the names of the tables and fields and details of the expected data types and field lengths. It should be read in conjunction with the 'Guidance on submissions' and 'Panel criteria'.

The import/export file formats have been updated bring them in-line with the submission system. Most of the changes involved the renaming of fields or values. Some new fields have been added when the implementation of the part of the system required them to be. The postal address details have been removed from the case study contacts as they are no longer required. The impact case study grants section has been redesigned due to better understanding of the requirements for this section.

[Download the guidance on import/export file formats as a PDF](#)
(updated Dec 2020) (394 KB)

[Download the guidance on import/export file formats as a word document](#) (updated Dec 2020) (67 KB)

► **Import file templates**

Below are template REF import files in XML, JSON and Microsoft Excel formats.

[Download an example import file for REF 2021 as JSON \(5 KB\)](#)

[Download the JSON schema for the REF 2021 import \(33 KB\)](#)

[Download an example import file for REF 2021 as XML \(8 KB\)](#)

[Download the XML schema for the REF 2021 import \(33 KB\)](#)

[Download the import file for REF 2021 as Excel \(30 KB\)](#)

► **Output information requirements**

The Excel document below sets out the specific information that will be required for different types of research outputs. This provides additional information to the generic requirements set out in Part 3 Section 2 of the 'Guidance on submissions' and all fields set out in the 'Guidance on import/export file formats'.

[Download the Output information requirements as Excel \(30 KB\)](#)

► **Submission system validation rules**

The submission system validation rules have been produced to provide the detailed validation rules for each of the fields. This document is aimed at developers and users who will be importing data into the system.

[Download the submission system validation rules as a PDF \(Dec 2020\) \(360 KB\)](#)

[Download the submission system validation rules as a word document \(Dec 2020\) \(100 KB\)](#)

► **REF form templates**

The Impact case studies template (REF3) and the Unit of assessment level environment template (REF5b) must be submitted as PDF and Word documents. Institutions should use the templates provided, with or without borders. These templates will also be available within the submission system.

The Institutional level environment template (REF5a) will be made available when the pilot panel publishes the final guidance and criteria in summer 2019.

[Download the Impact case study template as a Word document \(updated 26.11.2020\) \(39 KB\)](#)

[Download the Impact case study template without borders as a Word document \(updated 26.11.2020\) \(39 KB\)](#)

[Download the Unit of assessment level environment template as a Word document \(updated 26.11.2020\) \(38 KB\)](#)

[Download the Unit of assessment level environment template without borders as a Word document \(updated 26.11.2020\) \(39 KB\)](#)

[Download the Institutional-level environment template \(form REF5a\) \(updated 26.11.2020\) \(38 KB\)](#)

[Download the Institutional-level environment template \(form REF5a\) without borders \(updated 26.11.2020\) \(39 KB\)](#)

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