

REF Strategy Group Meeting 06 March 2025 – Executive Summary

- REF Readiness and KPIs: The group needs a quantitative method to evidence REF readiness for presentation to URC/UEB. An action was raised to identify quantitative Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for outcomes related to REF readiness, which will need approval by the REF Strategy Group.
- Risk Register Updates:
 - Risk 3 (HESA return/HR Transformation): Updated due to the HR Systems team's planned dissolution post-2026, which currently handles the HESA staff return. The Statutory Returns Coordination Group will discuss this.
 - Risk 7 (Low PGR numbers): Requires more extensive mitigation, as external funding limitations affect most HEIs.
 - Risk 11 (Publishing ambitions/Open Access): The University has agreed to fund additional publication charges for Gold Open Access when required by funding bodies, alongside encouraging the Green Open Access route.
- Open Access Policy Update: Research England's new policy module (published 11 Dec 2024) changed deposit requirements to "within 3 months of being published," but the message to staff remains to deposit manuscripts upon acceptance. The institutional policy is immediate Open Access unless publishers have an explicit embargo. Exceptions for non-compliance and outputs authored by staff not included in the volume measure were noted.
- Volume Measure Guidance: Discussion focused on the EDI implications of removing individual staff circumstances. Decisions on contracts related to staff inclusion need to be communicated earlier in the cycle. The upcoming REF forum will discuss these changes, with further discussion at the June REF Strategy Group meeting, which will also consider the initial volume measure check.
- Draft REF2029 Code of Practice – HESA Staff Return: The section on outputs will be added after Research England releases its "Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding" policy module in summer 2025. There was clarification that research independence should be considered persistent, but ambiguity remains whether this applies to the contract or person.
- REF 2029 Timeline: Faculties should consider what to ask for in the November 2025 output check to reassure colleagues. For the June 2025 impact check, full narratives will not be required; these will be requested in 2026 after full guidance is released regarding how engagement should be included in narratives. The timeline was approved.