

Research Excellence Framework (REF) Impact Evidence Data Collection: Privacy Notice

What is the REF and why is it important?

Every seven years all UK research institutions are assessed for the quality and impact of their research in an exercise known as the 'Research Excellence Framework' or 'REF'. Our success in this exercise is important for our reputation for research excellence, as well as demonstrating to UK taxpayers who fund much of our research of its value to society. There is also a direct link to core government funding returned to each institution, thereby affecting our ability to conduct future research.

Why have I been contacted?

We believe you will be able to help us in developing an impact claim for our REF submission. We hope that you will be able to provide us with corroborating evidence and/or your contact details so you can be contacted during the REF assessment process to corroborate our impact claims.

What will Cambridge do with my information?

The information that you provide will be used to support the development and submission of the University's return to the REF, which forms part of our public task as a higher education institution. The data will initially be stored on the University's secure server which will only be accessible to relevant members of staff. Ahead of submission to the REF, corroborating evidence may be shared with external parties for the purposes of peer review. If any of these external parties are based outside the UK, we will ensure that the data sharing is done safely and securely. In providing evidence you consent to any such data transfers, should they be necessary.

The information you provide to us will be held by the University of Cambridge for as long as necessary for the purposes of the REF exercise and any future reporting and analysis of our research activity; this may mean that it is archived and retained in perpetuity. In addition to the above, your personal data will be handled in accordance with the University's general data protection provisions at: <https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/general-data>.

What will happen to my information after it has been submitted to the REF?

Once submitted to the REF, your personal data will be subject to a Privacy Notice and associated data protection policies issued by UKRI (the organisation which brings together the seven disciplinary research councils, Research England and Innovate UK). Once with UKRI, any case study may be passed to the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) or Scottish Funding Council (SFC) who may need data to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research and to carry out their statutory functions connected with funding higher education and analyse and monitor the REF. This may result in case studies (but not corroborating evidence) being released to other users including academic researchers or consultants (commissioned by the funding bodies), to carry out research or analysis, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation. Where information not previously published is released to third parties, this will be anonymised where practicable. UKRI will require that anyone who has access to your data, held in UKRI's records, paper or electronic, to respect its confidentiality and will only process it in accordance with instructions issued for the purposes specified by UKRI. All those with access to your data are bound by confidentiality arrangements.

The REF submission will be subject to audit. This would normally involve audit queries being sent to Cambridge for us to answer. However, there is a very small chance that you will be contacted by Research England to confirm your corroborating evidence.

Further general details of the last REF (REF2021) are available at: <http://www.ref.ac.uk/>.

Will my information be published?

Impact cases studies will be published after submission, except when marked as confidential or for redaction (in which case a redacted version will be published). Please contact the REF Deputy Manager (Impact) Stephanie Swain to discuss the confidentiality level of the case study you have been asked to support: Stephanie.Swain@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Even where a case study is published, your contact details will not be published. Your corroborating evidence will not be published in full. However, it may be quoted within the published case study. Your name and job title may be referenced in the case study unless otherwise agreed with the University ahead of REF submission.

Information published for the REF may be repurposed and republished by the University, for example on Department news webpages or in the University's global impact map: [Impact Map | University of Cambridge](#).