

## Output Scoring Process

### Context

1. This document details the University-wide process (commencing in AY 2025-26) for scoring the quality of REF-eligible research outputs.
2. This document replaces previous research output scoring processes, which were operating between 2021 to 2023.
3. This document provides information on operational processes for research output scoring for the **purpose of ensuring that early scoring activity targets the right outputs. The process will also give some indicative information about stocktaking and REF readiness** in preparation for a future REF submission. It **DOES NOT** provide detail on the University's final REF output selection criteria or processes, and outputs that are not scored as part of the process described may be scored at a later date, for potential inclusion in our submission. **REF Output selection criteria will be addressed separately** in the University's REF29 Code of Practice, developed through consultation and co-development with stakeholders, once REF guidance is finalised.
4. This scoring process has been developed to allow the University to systematically score the REF-eligible Research Output pool in a manageable and workable manner, proportionate to the resource and time available to support the process.
5. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and is available [via REF Team]
6. A communication plan is available [via REF Team], reflecting our commitment to visible and inclusive communication mechanisms.
7. This process will be reviewed annually to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and that it adheres to principles of equity and transparency.
8. To promote a workable process, proportionate to workload and tolerable burden, the process allows for some degree of flexibility at a discipline/ UOA level, but maintains consistency and fairness, based on oversight across all panels by the REF Team.

REF-eligible Research Output Scoring Process – AY 2025-26			
<p><b>TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH CURRENT REF2029 GUIDANCE</b></p> <p><b><u>SECTION 3 – VOLUME MEASURE GUIDANCE</u></b></p> <p><b><u>SECTION 4 – CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</u></b></p> <p><b><u>SECTION 8 – CODE OF PRACTICE</u></b></p>			
PROCESS	ACTIONS	STAKEHOLDERS	RATIONALE
<b>Stage 1 – Summer / Autumn 2025</b> <b>(Training to enhance accuracy and onboarding scorers)</b>			
<p><b>Introduce an intensive output quality / scoring training provision</b> in each UoA (for authors and prospective internal panel scorers) drawing on high-quality REF21 output submissions (REF database of 4* / 3* outputs).</p> <p>Training will include bespoke REF <b>EDI training</b> to cover unintended bias / responsible research assessment. [We will also introduce ‘responsible assessment intention statements’ – informed by REF21 good practice, recapping best practice checklist for assessors]</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> [in partnership with <b>UOALs and ADRIs</b>] to coordinate the design and delivery of bespoke training sessions on output quality and scoring based on REF subpanel criteria, across all potential units, with input from HR to address <b>EDI requirements</b>.</p> <p>[Communication Plan – Inclusive training and development provision]</p>	REF Team / HR / UOALs / ADRIs	<p><b>COP guidance 11.1</b> relating to Requirements for Output Selection</p> <p><b>COP guidance 13.2.4</b> relating to mandatory training on EDI</p> <p><b>COP guidance 13.3</b> relating to mandatory EIAs</p>
<p><b>Identify and onboard internal panel members.</b></p> <p>Based on the above training provision – <b>UoA leaders and</b></p>	<p><b>UOALs / ADRIs</b> to nominate appropriate internal colleagues to form internal output quality assessment panels, with due regard for principals of EDI.</p>	REF Team / UOALs / ADRIs	<p><b>COP guidance 11.1</b> relating to Requirements for Output Selection</p>

<p><b>Associate Deans will identify a small and select panel</b> of reliable, internal UoA scorers ensuring appropriate coverage of sub-disciplines and output types / methods. We will also introduce training for each panel, customised per UoA.</p> <p>Appointment of internal panel members is based on an agreed set of essential and desirable criteria and will typically include the UoA leader [See footer below]</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to coordinate the design and delivery of UoA-specific training sessions for panels on output quality and scoring based on REF criteria and quality thresholds, with particular emphasis on responsible research assessment practice and EDI.</p>		<p><b>COP guidance 12.9</b> relating to Procedures for Ensuring Submissions are Representative</p> <p><b>COP guidance 13.3</b> relating to mandatory EIAs</p>
<p><b>Identify and onboard external panel members.</b></p> <p>Appointment of external panel members is based on an agreed set of essential and desirable criteria [See footer below].</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to review external assessor criteria and coordinate recruitment/retention of appropriate external assessors, with input from <b>UOALs</b>.</p> <p><b>UOALs / ADRIS</b> to nominate appropriate external colleagues to form external output quality assessment panels, with due regard for principals of EDI.</p> <p><b>REF Team</b> to coordinate appointment of new external casual workers in adherence to HR SAF and RTW processes and agree budget / fees.</p>		

<p><b>Stage 2 – Autumn / Winter 2025 (Author self-identification)</b></p>			
<p><b>Invite all staff with an expectation of research in their role to self-identify their own eligible outputs</b> (published in the REF eligible period 01/01/2021 to present) that they believe have a score <b>greater than or equal to a supplied quality threshold</b> (see below).</p> <p>For each identified output, staff should provide a score and supporting commentary for Originality, Significance and Rigour.</p> <p>It is not necessary to include any outputs that have been previously scored in earlier round (e.g. in 2022/2023)</p> <p>Where a member of staff believes they have <b>more</b> than 10 outputs meeting the supplied threshold, they should select the best 10. Note that this limit of 10 is to maintain efficiencies at this stage and may be relaxed depending on the final REF guidelines and resulting Code of Practice.</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to lead development and communication of criteria to facilitate identification and submission of self-selected outputs, with input from relevant <b>UOALs</b>, ensuring that the full range of output types is acknowledged and supported, from the full range of eligible authors.</p> <p>[Communication Plan – inclusive communication to <b>all</b> research generating staff]</p>	<p>REF Team / UOALs / All staff with an expectation of research in their roles.</p>	<p><b>COP guidance 11.1</b> relating to Requirements for Output Selection</p> <p><b>COP guidance 12.4</b> relating to Policies and Procedures for Selection of Outputs for Submission</p> <p><b>CKU guidance 5.1</b> relating to Core Requirements of Eligible Outputs</p>

<p>The <b>quality threshold for self-identification will be customised</b> to reflect Unit size, shape and quality estimates based on past data and other intelligence.</p> <p>This is intended to manage workload and promote workable volumes of outputs to score in each batch. [Typically, this will be set at 3* or 4* quality]. Further outputs may be requested for scoring at a later date.</p> <p>Criteria can be customised to reflect panel-specific guidance – e.g. 100-word statement. 300 word contextual.</p> <p>In the absence of reliable systems by which to auto-generate the eligible output pool, an eligible output will be identified as such if it was <b>generated whilst an author was employed at Edinburgh Napier</b>. An exception will apply for long-form outputs based on emerging guidance on substantive link/ portability for long-form output types.</p>			
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<p><b>Designing data capture fields/ survey:</b> The Output self-identification stage will include mechanisms for a consistent approach to capturing mandatory data associated with each output. This will enable meaningful and consistent data reporting.</p>	<p><b>UOALs</b> to assist <b>REF Team</b> with design of self-identification survey questions for submission of self-selected outputs, to ensure the capture of relevant data about e.g. UoA alignments, research areas and output types.</p> <p><b>UOALs</b> to assist <b>REF Team</b> with creating fields and or / identifying existing Worktribe fields to capture data e.g. on output types / subject areas / potential UoAs/ Open Access status.</p>	<p>REF Team / UOALs</p>	<p><b>COP guidance 12.9</b> relating to Procedures for Ensuring Submissions are Representative</p> <p><b>CKU guidance 7.</b> relating to Representative Submissions</p>
<p><b>Reconciling self-identification with local intelligence.</b> UoA Leaders and Associate Deans will provide oversight of the self-identification data, providing validation that those staff with expectations of research have properly engaged in the process based on their known research activity / personalised objectives. Any identified non-responders will be contacted to verify their non-response and/or consider eligible outputs in Worktribe. [Communication plan]</p>	<p><b>UoALs and ADRIs</b> to work with <b>REF Team</b> to promote maximum engagement from all eligible stakeholders. [Communication plan -- inclusive communication to <u>all</u> research generating staff]</p> <p>See EIA for detail on proactive action for protected characteristics at self-identification stage.</p>	<p>UOALs / ADRIs / UOALs</p>	
<p>[PAUSED FOR 2025-26 – awaiting system updates/ Worktribe expertise]</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to coordinate collection of data relating to eligibility of outputs from leavers, so as to</p>	<p>REF Team / HR / IS / Head of Research Governance</p>	<p><b>VM guidance 6.</b> relating to Eligible Contracts</p>

<p><b>Identify all eligible outputs generated by ‘eligible’ leavers</b> using Worktribe systems expert (i.e. Those with eligible employment links and excluding staff made compulsory redundant).</p>	<p>delimit the pool of potential eligible outputs.</p>		<p><b>CKU guidance 5.</b> relating to Eligible Outputs</p>
<p><b>Stage 3 – Winter 2025 (Internal scoring and calibration sifting)</b></p>			
<p>Outputs in the pool identified above <b>progress to 2 x independent internal scorers per output.</b></p> <p><i>volume management:</i> if self-identification approach results in an unmanageable volume of outputs for internal scoring stage, set progression threshold higher, and/or introduce volume caps per author. Retain the remaining output details on file for next scoring round.</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to work with <b>UOALs</b> to finalise a representative and workable selection of outputs to be reviewed internally.</p> <p><b>REF Team</b> to coordinate internal scoring rounds (possibly with support from S3 colleagues in the schools) including clear instructions on REF scoring criteria and quality thresholds, plus the <a href="#">ENU EDI Assessor Checklist</a>, detailing our expectations around unbiased and responsible assessment.</p> <p>The 12-point scoring scale will be applied (low, solid, high) to reflect REF21 good practice.</p>	<p>REF Team / UOALs</p>	<p><b>COP guidance 12.9</b> relating to Procedures for Ensuring Submissions are Representative</p> <p><b>CKU guidance 7.</b> relating to Representative Submissions</p>
<p>Internal scorers are a small and select group of highly-reliable, experienced and trained internal assessors, identified at stage 1</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to ensure transparency and equity in the application of selection criteria, with clear rationale recorded for each appointee.</p>	<p>REF Team / Internal Review Panels / S3</p>	<p><b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection</p>

<p>training provision.</p> <p>(This will typically include the UoA leader scoring a batch of, or in some cases, all outputs in a unit).</p>			<p><b>COP guidance 13.2.4</b> relating to mandatory training on EDI</p>
<p>Ask <b>internal scorers to provide a score</b> and supporting commentary for Originality, Significance and Rigour and return scores.</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to facilitate direct input of scores and comments by reviewers to central scoring system / database (NB: Worktribe functionality paused for 2025-26)</p>	<p>REF Team / Internal Review Panels / S3</p>	<p><b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection</p>
<p>Convene <b>internal calibration scoring panels</b> (of <b>UoA leader plus min 2</b> highly reliable, experienced and trained UoA scorers) to sense check the independent internal scores and conduct calibration / override exercise if necessary (e.g. where scores are disparate, or trends of inaccuracy are identified). <i>Panel training should include bespoke <a href="#">EDI training</a> to understand unintended bias and responsible assessment.</i></p>	<p><b>UOALs</b> to identify appropriate internal reviewers to join calibration panels, ensuring that principals of EDI and Responsible Research Assessment are followed. (<a href="#">EDI training</a>)</p> <p><b>UoAL</b> is responsible for overseeing all output scores and providing validation of the agreed internal score, based on transparent and consistent criteria and clear justification.</p>	<p>REF Team / UOALs / Calibration Panels</p>	<p><b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection</p> <p><b>COP guidance 13.2.4</b> relating to mandatory training on EDI</p>
<p>Panel <b>calibration outcomes will be clearly justified and recorded</b> for transparency with a member of REF team present to ensure fairness and transparency. (<a href="#">EDI training</a>)</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to organise, chair and clerk calibration panels and ensure that final, calibrated scores and comments are recorded in Worktribe and/or in a secure central location.</p>	<p>REF Team / UOALs / Calibration Panels</p>	<p><b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection</p>

	<b>REF Team</b> is responsible for challenging inconsistencies, lack of transparency or non-adherence to DORA. <a href="#">(EDI training)</a>		
<b>Stage 4 – Winter / Spring 2026 (manageable batch to externals)</b>			
Depending on volume, size and shape per UoA, <b>select manageable batch of outputs to progress to external score.</b> For some UoAs, this may only consist of the highest scored outputs (where the threshold will vary per UoA). It may also include selected outputs where there is unresolved, internal disagreement re scores.	<b>REF Team</b> to support <b>UOALs</b> in identifying a representative and manageable batch of outputs to progress to appropriate external assessors for review. <a href="#">(EDI training)</a>	REF Team / UOALs	<b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection
<b>Prioritise any other outputs which require external perspective</b> to enhance internal accuracy (e.g. <i>how would an external assessor score this confidential report and on what basis?</i> ). This is so that the good practice can be replicated internally.	<b>REF Team</b> to support <b>UOALs</b> in identifying additional outputs which it would be beneficial to progress to appropriate external assessors for review.	REF Team / UOALs	<b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection
<b>Send outputs for external review and ask external scorers to provide a score</b> and supporting commentary for Originality, Significance and Rigour and return scores.	<b>REF Team</b> to coordinate distribution of outputs to external assessors for review, including clear instructions on REF scoring criteria and quality thresholds, plus the <a href="#">ENU EDI Assessor Checklist</a> , detailing our	REF Team / UOALs / External Assessors	<b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection

	<p>expectations around unbiased and responsible assessment.</p> <p>The 12-point scoring scale will be applied (low/solid/high) to reflect REF21 good practice.</p> <p><b>REF Team</b> to receive completed reviews from external assessors and record the scores and comments in Worktribe and/or a secure central location, in preparation for the moderation stage.</p>		
<b>Stage 5 – Spring 2026 (Moderation)</b>			
<p><b>Convene UoA-specific moderation panels</b> (including external rep) to agree and assign final scores.</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to organise, chair and clerk moderation panels, comprising <b>UOALs</b> and <b>internal and external reviewers</b> appropriate to the UOA, where all scores and comments for each output are considered and moderated, and a final score agreed.</p> <p><b>REF Team</b> is responsible for challenging inconsistencies, lack of transparency or non-adherence to DORA.</p>	REF Team / UOALs / Internal and External Reviewers	<b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection
<p>Consider mechanisms for providing qualitative feedback to authors to enhance quality (but</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to work with <b>UOALs</b> to agree appropriate and manageable methods for sharing</p>	REF Team / UOALs	<b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection

<p>retaining principles of decoupling) [Communication Plan]</p>	<p>constructive, developmental feedback with authors. [Communication Plan]</p>		
<b>Stage 6 – Summer 2026</b>			
<p><b>Stocktaking and Reporting REF Readiness.</b> Collation of scoring data will be used to inform REF readiness and quality reporting. [Communication Plan]</p> <p>Scoring data is stored securely in adherence to data governance /protection regulations in central, system /location.</p> <p>Scoring data is used by the REF team for REF readiness reporting purposes only and will not be used for any other assessment of quality / performance .</p>	<p><b>REF Team</b> to collate, analyse and report outcomes of scoring exercise to Academic Board / R&amp;IC. [Communication Plan]</p> <p><b>REF Team</b> to update REF Data Processing Statement with assistance from <b>Head of Research Governance.</b></p>	<p>REF Team and Head of Research Governance.</p>	<p><b>CKU guidance 21.1</b> relating to CoP and Output Selection</p>
<b>2026-27 – Reflect, Update and Commence Next Scoring Round</b>			

## Annex A – Scoring panel criteria

### **Criteria for external critical peers using the following criteria:**

- Essential - Independent from Edinburgh Napier University
- Essential - Submitted high-quality outputs to a previous REF
- Essential - Familiarity /knowledge of the UoA descriptor disciplines
- Essential – Confident in [DORA](#) principles – use of responsible metrics
- Desirable – Experience of peer reviewing in other sector forums (incl. in previous Napier REF process if proven to be reliable)
- Desirable – Track record of REF output scoring reliability (e.g. in capacity as a REF2021 critical friend for ENU)
- Desirable – REF2014 or REF2021 subpanel member

### **Criteria for internal staff members who will conduct your independent, internal output reviews (this is extracted from 2023 round and may be refreshed for 2025-26)**

It is anticipated that this group of experts should include participation from the UoA leader, relevant Head of Research, plus other senior staff selected to review the outputs according to the following criteria:

- Essential - Familiarity /knowledge of the UoA descriptor disciplines
- Essential – Demonstrable track record generating internationally excellent or world-leading quality outputs
- Essential – Confident in [DORA](#) principles – use of responsible metrics
- Desirable – Promoted via the University’s internal promotion framework
- Desirable - Active member of the research leadership team within the School (UoAL/ HoR / Centre lead / Subject lead)

## Annex B – Eligible Output Types

**Output types:**

[See Annex K](#) - intended to highlight the diversity of research outputs that may be submitted in any UOA. **Any assessable form of output** that embodies research is eligible for assessment.

**ENU Intention statement:**

**For each discipline all types of research and all forms of research output shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis.** Scorers will refer to the REF21 defined panel criteria and assessment processes that enables them to recognise, **and treat on an equal footing,** excellence in research across the spectrum of applied, practice, basic and strategic research, wherever that research is conducted; and for REF identifying excellence in different forms of research endeavour including interdisciplinary and collaborative research, while attaching **no greater weight to one form over another.**

## Annex C – Scoring Scale

Rating	4			3			2			1			U
<b>Definitions of starred levels</b>	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, rigour and significance.			Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, rigour and significance but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.			Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, rigour and significance.			Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, rigour and significance.			Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.
<b>Point grade</b>	4+	4	4-	3+	3	3-	2+	2	2-	1+	1	1-	0

