

ARMA REF Forum

Rebecca Fairbairn

REF Director

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What is the Research Excellence Framework?

REF is owned and led by the four UK higher education funding bodies. REF:

- informs allocation of around £2bn of block-grant funding each year
- provides accountability for public investment in research
- continually evolves, alongside our research base
- (given the connection to allocation of funds) inevitably drives behaviour and therefore is a significant policy instrument across the UK

REF 2021



REF2029

2025

Winter

Weightings confirmed.
PCE Pilot Report published.
Strategy, People and Research Environment guidance published.
Engagement and Impact guidance published.
Updates to Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding guidance published.
Updated timetable published.

2026

Spring



Expert panels meet to develop guidance.
Assessment of Codes of Practice begins.

Autumn

Final full guidance and Panel Criteria set.

Winter

Special requests open.
Publication of SG papers.

2027

Spring

Survey of submission intentions opens.

Summer

Submission intentions and special requests close.

Autumn

Submission window opens.
Additional panel recruitment.

2028

Autumn

Submission deadline.

Winter:

Assessment phase begins.

2029

Spring-Autumn

Assessment continues...

Winter:

Results published (planned for December 2029).

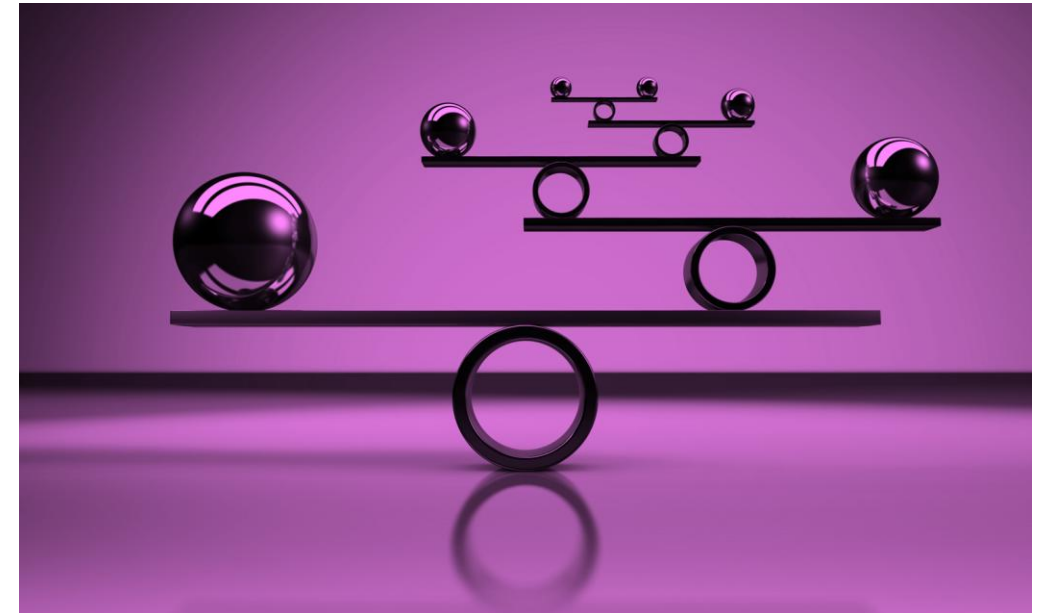
Criteria
setting

Submissions

Assessment

Published on 10 December 2025:

- Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) guidance
- Confirmed weightings
- Updates to Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU) guidance
- Engagement and Impact (E&I) guidance
- An updated timetable
- The People, Culture and Environment Pilot report



Research England: Small Unit Exceptions

- Revising the Small Unit Exception process, including:
 - Expanding the FTE eligibility criteria for Small Unit Exceptions.
 - Refining the eligibility criteria and assessment process to improve transparency.
 - A strengthened approach to communication and engagement – emphasising both the spirit and criteria of the policy.
- These developments draw on regular engagement with the REF community and other stakeholders from the sector.
- The refined SUE process balances the need to limit burden while promoting inclusivity across REF 2029.

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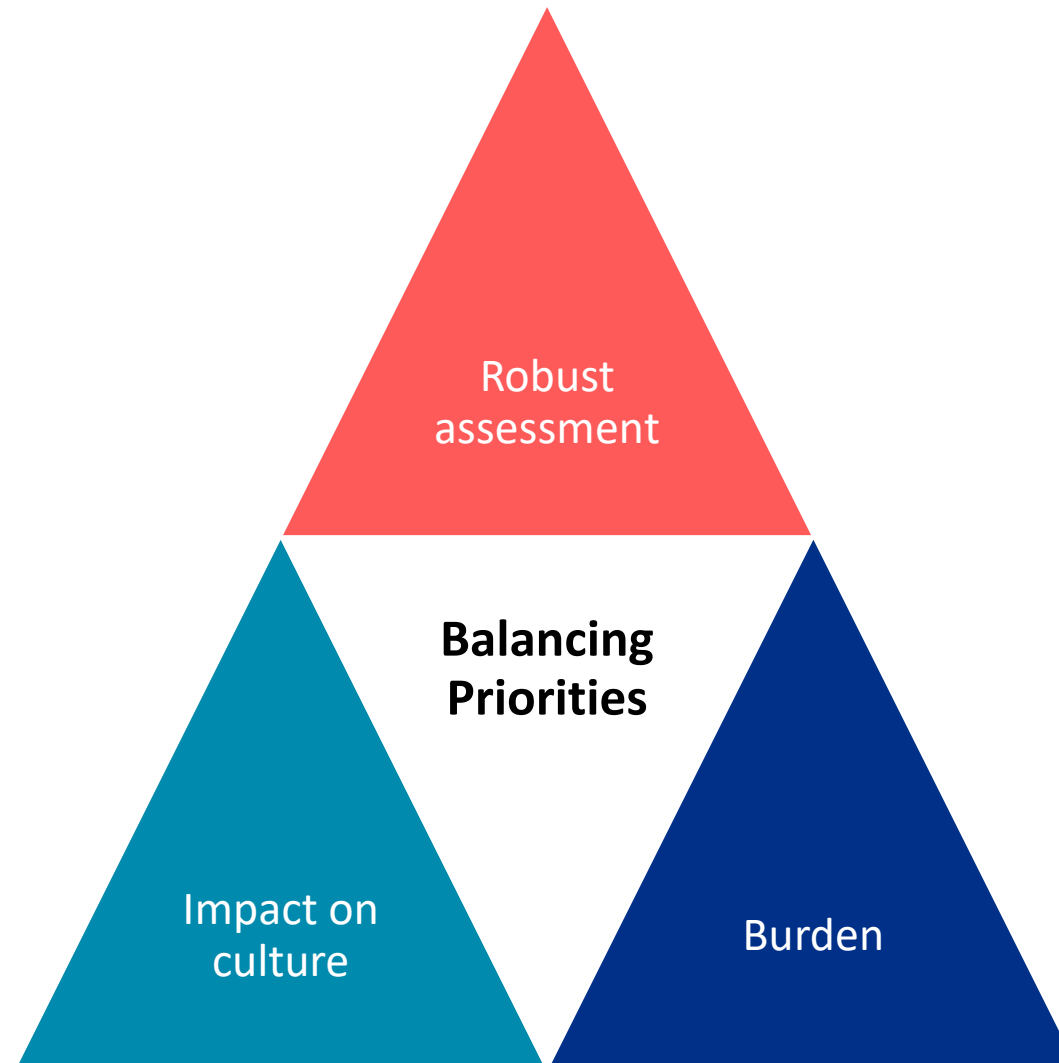
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What's next?



What now? Padlet on the ARMA website...

1. SPRE
quantitative
data

2. Describing a
SPRE “unit”

3. Statement on
the Community

4. Named
individuals in
SPRE statements

And... possible
SPRE indicator
text

What are we asking? 1/2

1. SPRE quantitative data: can you see any practicalities that will make this more difficult than in REF 2021?
2. Describing a SPRE “unit”: what guidance do you need from us?
3. Statement on the Community: what do you need from us to support you to confidently describe this?
4. Named individuals on SPRE statements: should we advise against this?

What are we asking? 2/2

Language on possible indicators:

- Is it clear what is required?
- How robust is it?
- What would be involved in collecting these data? What would be required to give confidence to use these?
- Is it inclusive?

Thank you and stay in touch

- Use QR code to sign up for **REF updates** straight to your inbox.
- Please visit **get involved** on our website to view current opportunities.
- Email us at **info@ref.ac.uk** if you have any suggestions about how we can improve our guidance for you.



 @ref2029.bsky.social

 Research Excellence Framework