

REF Research Output Quality Criteria

	4* : World-leading	3* : Internationally excellent	2* : Internationally recognised	1* : Nationally recognised
Originality	Outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative in developing new paradigms, concepts, techniques or outcomes.	Significantly novel, innovative and/or creative in developing concepts, techniques or outcomes.		
Originality and/or Significance	Agenda-setting: Research that is leading or at the forefront of the research area.			
	Instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences.	A catalyst for, or important contribution to, new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences.	Involves incremental and cumulative advances, which might include new knowledge but which conform with existing ideas and paradigms, or use established techniques or approaches.	An identifiable contribution to understanding, but largely framed by existing paradigms or traditions of thinking, methodology and/or practice.
Significance	A primary or essential point of reference.	An important point of reference.	A recognised point of reference.	
	Major influence on the intellectual agenda of a research theme or field.	Contributing important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence.		
	A major expansion of the range and depth of the research and its application, including: ~ Major changes in policy or practice. ~ Major influence on processes, production and management. ~ Major influence on user engagement.	A significant expansion of the range and depth of the research and its application, including: ~ Significant changes to policies and practices. ~ Significant influence on user engagement. ~ Significant influence on processes, production and management.	Providing valuable knowledge, and a useful contribution to the range and depth of the research and its applications, including: ~ Influence on policy or practice. ~ Influence on user engagement. ~ Influence on processes, production and management.	Useful knowledge, but unlikely to have more than a minor influence in the field, including: ~ Minor influence on policy or practice. ~ Minor influence on processes, production and management. ~ Minor influence on user engagement.
	Instantiating an exceptionally significant, multi-user data set or research resource.	Generation of a substantial, coherent and widely admired data set or research resource.		
Rigour	Application of exceptionally rigorous research design and techniques of investigation and analysis, and the highest levels of intellectual precision.	Application of robust and appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis, with intellectual precision.	Thorough and professional application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.	Competent application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.

This table is intended to help guide assessments on research quality and may be used in conjunction with the published advice on panel working methods from REF2021 (available at <https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/panel-criteria-and-working-methods-201902/>). Inevitably judgment will be required.