

Guidance from REF (taken from Paras 264-269, Panel Criteria and Working Methods 2019)
Main Panel D supplementary criteria – additional information for outputs

In all cases where the role of the researcher, or the research process, is not evident within the submitted output, submitting units are strongly encouraged to submit a statement of up to 300 words.

For outputs where the role of the researcher or the research process is not evident in the submitted output, submitting units have the following options in choosing how best to present the output (irrespective of the classification):

- As a single item, with a 300-word supporting statement.
- As a multi-component output, with a 300-word supporting statement.
- As a single item, supported by contextual information (previously called a 'portfolio'). Both the item and the contextual information may include moving image, sonic, visual or other digital media or written text, as appropriate, **to enable the panel to access the research dimensions of the work** and to assess its significance, originality and rigour. The 300-word statement should be used to indicate **what is the output and what is the contextual information**.
- As a multi-component output, supported by contextual information (previously called a 'portfolio'). Both the output and the contextual information may include moving image, sonic, visual or other digital media or written text, as appropriate, **to enable the panel to access the research dimensions of the work** and to assess its significance, originality and rigour. The 300-word statement should be used to indicate **what is the output and what is the contextual information**.

The entirety of the material submitted (the output and the 300-word statement where provided) should provide the panel with coherent evidence of the research dimensions of the work in terms of:

- **The research process** – the question and/or issues being explored, the **process of discovery, methods and/or methodologies, the creative and/or intellectual context or literature review** upon which the work draws, or challenges or critiques
- **The research insights** – the **findings, discoveries or creative outcomes** of that Process
- **The dissemination** – **how and where the insights or discoveries were 'effectively shared'**. This needs to satisfy the REF requirements around the dates at which work first entered the public domain. The principle that no output will be privileged or disadvantaged on the basis of the publisher, where it is published or the medium of its publication, will also apply in relation to the broad range of modes through which practice outputs enter the public domain.

The bullet points above are derived from the REF definition of research as set out in the 'Guidance on submissions', Annex C. They are intended to assist HEIs by providing a flexible framework for the succinct and coherent presentation of the output. The objective is to enable panels to assess the originality, significance and rigour of the research. **The sub-panels will ignore any additional material that includes evaluative commentary on the perceived quality of a research output.**

The format for the presentation of outputs (irrespective of their classification) is flexible, within the requirement to limit the format either to an electronic submission, which is submitted via the REF submission system either as a URL, Digital Object Identifier (DOI), or by uploading a PDF; or as physical material which is sent to the REF team, and which may include digital/electronic material on a media storage device e.g. USB, CD. An individual output cannot be submitted both electronically via the REF submission system and as a physical output.

There will be many outputs that will meet the REF definition of research as "a process of investigation, leading to new insights effectively shared" without the need for additional information, and these may include examples of creative practice.

Questions and considerations for practice research materials

Does your 300 word statement:

- Outline the research aims/imperatives/questions which led the inquiry?
- Indicate the 'lineage' of your research (other practice/research in this area) and its contribution to knowledge?
- Indicate a rigorous process (methods) through which this inquiry was pursued?
- State where the output or outputs were published, performed, shown or distributed? (part of a claim to significance)?
- Indicate the research significance of the output in relation to the field identified?

N.B. Any parts of the above can and should be expanded, evidenced and articulated further within the accompanying portfolio (see below for portfolio guidance)

Advice on 300 words (questions for reviewers – taken from Robin Nelson's workshop)

- Does the statement introduce itself as a research summary or an artist's statement?
- Does the statement indicate the lineage of the submission, pointing up its contribution to knowledge ('Originality')?
- Does the statement indicate a rigour of process?
- Does the statement briefly state where the PaR was distributed (part of a claim to Significance)?
- Does the statement confuse artistic significance with research significance?

Other questions to help guide submissions and review (from Journal of Artistic Research 2014)

- Does the submission contain a description of the question, issue or problem that is explored?
- Does the submission show evidence of innovation in content, form or technique in relation to a form of practice?
- Is the submission contextualized? This may include social, artistic and/or theoretical issues
- Does the submission provide new kinds of knowledge, interpretation, insights or experiences?
- Is the submission's methodology adequate and thorough?

Feedback on practice based submissions from the last REF (UOA 35)

- Rigorous PaR work across UOA 35 explicitly articulated a research imperative, methods by which it was explored, and how these related to previous work on this topic by others'
- 'the 300 word statements too often displayed a misunderstanding of what was being asked for and provided evidence of impact from the research, or a descriptive account akin to a programme note, **rather than making the case for practice as research**'
- 'in relation to some PaR, inadequate documentation of the research imperatives, process or outcomes was provided'
- 'As in 2008 the best outputs in PaR were distinguished by clearly articulated research objectives. In a number of instances, the presentation of practice needed no more than a well- turned 300 word statement to point up the research inquiry and its findings'
- 'The most successful portfolios helped the assessors by providing a pathway through the material submitted so it was clear what the research contribution was and why specific pieces of evidence were provided'
- 'Concision and selectivity in the presentation of portfolio materials was often key to the clarity of a project's research imperatives'

General Advice

- Think about how the materials included operate alongside the 300 word statement to 'reveal the research dimensions' of the practice. This means editing and selecting only relevant materials to include in the portfolio
- Document the process of research as well as its outcome, reflecting on choices made and methods chosen - the timeline might help with this
- Offer the assessor a clear route through the materials submitted through an opening statement, research timeline or contents document, indicating a 'pathway' through those materials
- Go to the REF website and look at a few 300 word statements for practice based submissions in your area from successful institutions
- Think about double weighting for practice based research projects including a range of outputs over a significant amount of time. The REF definition of a double weighted output in 2014 was one which was 'contingent upon the completion of a particularly complex and extensive period of workshop/studio practice'
- Engage in informal peer review to get feedback on your own work and also to see how others are formulating their practice research submissions.

Feedback from External Review of PaR Outputs: October 2019

- The apparently random layout of items in FigShare makes it difficult for an assessor to know what is to be reviewed and to come first to a 300-word statement, then to the key PaR outcome, and finally, to further "portfolio" documentation
- The 300-word statements are generally on the right lines – they need careful work to maximise their usefulness to assessors
- In respect of further "portfolio" documentation, complementary writing is very helpful in revealing the rigour of process and pointing up the insights the researcher has gleaned for dissemination. However, efforts should be made to keep this succinct (2-3 pages?). Some of the complementary writing here is substantial (30 pages - article length). Whilst such writing in this submission is productive, it might be edited into a more succinct version, perhaps with the longer version made additionally available to an assessor. REF panel members are asked to drill down until they can make an assured judgement, but their time is limited.
- A good index to a portfolio which leads the reviewer to key information, while providing fuller material as an option is ideal
- Given that the work overall here indicates a PaR/practice-based disposition, it is interesting that much of the submission is written. The extent to which the practice is up for review is not always clear. Where there is article-length complementary writing (and in some cases a published article), you might consider submitting the PaR outcome and the writing as a double weighted output

Examples of practice research projects and different modes of presentation
(taken from the PRAG-UK meeting – 23rd January 2019)

Please do visit the PRAG-UK website for further information, a glossary of terms and a useful set of resources: <https://prag-uk.org/>

Shreepali Patel (film) 'The Crossing' www.storylabresearch.com – a multiscreen installation, exploring the trafficking of women, through immersive sound design, visual effects and a range of different presentations: physical 360, multiscreen, 360 VR, screen interactive.

Sally Mackey (applied theatre) Challenging Place and Performing Local Places projects:
<http://www.performingplaces.org/> www.challengingplacehalfmoon.org

Scott McLaughlin (music) <http://lutins.co.uk/ResonantSystems.html>

Anna Furse (theatre) <http://www.iamnotapieceofmeat.com/>

Lauren Redhead (music) <http://research.gold.ac.uk/24827/>