

**PREPARING OUR PUBLICATIONS:
NOTES TO HELP REF2021 & NEWCASTLE'S INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS**

Faculty of Medical Sciences - April 2017

For REF 2021 it is imperative that Faculty maintains and builds on its strong UoA rankings from REF2014. Similarly, funding panels judging our key research infrastructure applications (e.g. the NIHR BRC) place important emphasis on publication metrics. This document is aimed at ensuring that every research active member of academic staff maximises opportunities when submitting manuscripts. Faculty has taken external guidance from multiple past members of REF panels. Their insights inform the following list, which is followed by more detailed notes on the next page. We would be most grateful if you could refer to the list when preparing manuscripts.

1. **4 star publications will remain *far* more valuable than 3 star publications in the REF2021.**
2. **3 star publications are the minimum requirement for REF2021, and every researcher must aim to have at least one in time for REF2021.**
3. **Abstracts are absolutely key, and must convey the importance of your study to the field.**
4. **Middle author publications seem likely to count in REF2021 but only where a clear contribution to the work is absolutely clearly stated in the relevant "contributions" section.**
5. **Joint first, last or corresponding authorship is likely to count in REF2021.**
6. **It is vital that we list all our affiliated institutions – e.g. if you have an honorary contract with a hospital, list the Uni *and* Trust affiliations.**
7. **We must acknowledge all funders – e.g. if your work has involved the NIHR BRC in any way (direct or indirect support) or used funds from schemes like the JRES committee or MRC Confidence in Concept, please list these in the Acknowledgements. Always try and publish in Open Access journals, and understand the rules regarding these.**
8. **It is always good to show your manuscript to a senior mentor before submitting it.**

The acronym ACADEMIC may serve as an aide-memoire, and you may wish to pin this first page to your notice board.

Abstract – clearly state the importance

Contribution – joint first or last author is likely to count

Acknowledgement – list all your funders, particularly Newcastle ones and Open **A**ccess

3* **D**esirable – we all need at least one

4* **E**xcellent – these are proportionally far more valuable than 3* in REF

Middle author – make it absolutely clear that your contribution added to the paper

Institution – list all your contracted affiliations, and remember the hospital

Consult – show your paper to a mentor before it goes

Notes (corresponding to the numbers in the list above)

1. The HEFCE funding arising from REF places far more proportional emphasis on 4* than 3* returns. Therefore, if you have manuscripts considered 3* at this early stage in the REF cycle, but which, with extra work, could reach a discovery journal standard, it is better to delay submission and get the extra data. The research deans will be happy to advise on this.

2. The details of REF2021 are still to emerge, but it is highly likely that all (or nearly all) academic staff with R in their contract will be returned, but that the minimum number of submissions will be small (perhaps as low as 1, as opposed to 4 last time). It is therefore essential that everyone strives to produce at least one paper of at least 3* quality. The difficulty is working out what is 3*, and this has been the principal focus of our discussions with REF2014 panel members. In general, highly cited papers, particularly in a top tier broad readership or discovery journal, or 1st in its subject area, are more likely to make 3*. It is very hard to be certain of 3*-ness beyond this, as manuscripts are judged by panel members on a case-by-case basis, and there is an inevitable degree of subjectivity. Authors are encouraged to promote their publications as broadly as possible and to encourage colleagues to cite their work in review articles. We are happy to discuss any cases where there is doubt, and we continue to work with former panel members to check how closely our estimations of 3* and 4* ratings correlate with theirs.

3. Abstracts/summaries of papers should be written with an emphasis on explaining why the study is of particular importance to the field and its likely impact on medicine. Of note, UoA1 panel and subpanels are mainly comprised of clinician scientists and the impact of a basic science publication to medicine should be spelled out clearly in the abstract. REF panellists typically have to read over 500 papers, and it is only human that some will read the abstract carefully and the remainder of the paper relatively quickly. As described below, showing your manuscript to a senior mentor is always encouraged, but this is especially so for the abstract. There has been limited research on whether article titles have an impact on citation rates. Curiously, this suggests that a title of 30 – 40 word length, containing an acronym and with two components separated by a colon could have a positive correlation with citation rate! This is possibly due to the way that electronic searches of literature are undertaken.

4. Contributions to publications must be maximised and clearly stated in the “author contributions” section of a paper (which we all tend to write in a hurry!). Unless the level of contribution to the work is made obvious there is a very high risk that the panel will assume the contribution is insufficient and the paper will not be ranked. **This is of particular importance for multi-author collaborative projects where an author is neither 1st, last (senior), or corresponding author, even if it is published in a “discovery” level journal. Ensure that the “author contribution” section explicitly states any input that you have made to the study, that this clearly adds something “extra” to the paper, and that it is clear you contributed to design and writing.** Of note, statements that lack this information or which simply refer to provision of reagents, samples or access to datasets will, in the absence of additional intellectual or experimental inputs, be at high risk of resulting in a zero ranking in the REF.

5. Wherever possible explore the possibility of joint 1st, senior or corresponding author status. This allows us to show the value of collaborative research and acknowledge the contributions of both senior and junior staff within research teams.

6. Newcastle almost certainly loses opportunities to highlight the strengths of certain specialties, particularly in NIHR applications. NIHR uses RAND analyses, which measure Newcastle’s place in terms of university *and* Trust publications. It costs us nothing to have >1 affiliation, and if you have dual affiliation, please remember always to list Newcastle University and the Newcastle upon Tyne

Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in your papers. This is likely to reap rewards for future NIHR infrastructure applications in particular.

7. There is a slight organisational tendency to forget to acknowledge pump-priming funding provided locally. It is very important that we get into the habit of listing our main funders and our local sources in the Acknowledgements section of papers. This makes a big difference, particularly to our NIHR BRC, whose number of acknowledgements are recorded and compared with those of competitors. However, the same applies to other Newcastle NIHR/MRC/WT infrastructure and to our local pump-priming schemes like MRC Confidence in Concept and the JRE Scientific Committee charity. If you are going to publish work arising from these schemes please inform the scheme's director that you are submitting (for their files) and ask them if they want any particular form of words to be used.

Similarly, we must be compliant with [open access publication requirements](#). **Authors are responsible for depositing the accepted manuscript in ePrints, using the MyImpact system within 90 days of publication.** We expect that this policy will change to *90 days from acceptance* on 1 April 2018. Pls should also check that their research profile and citations on [Scopus](#) are properly recorded and are up to date. A guide to help you do this can be found on the Research Impact page of the [Library website](#).

8. If possible, show your manuscript to a close, senior mentor or equivalent before submitting. This may help with the decision of whether to “hang fire and go for something 4*” and with getting a second opinion on whether you have optimised the opportunities highlighted above. As mentioned previously, the most important thing of all is to get a second opinion on whether a senior colleague sees the importance of your work in the abstract. The Research Deans would be happy to advise if you wish.

Whether we like it or not, there is a game to be played to get the best result for Newcastle in the REF, and other places tend to play this game very creatively. While details have not been confirmed, it seems possible that nearly every academic with R in their contract will be returned next time. Every individual is expected to have to return at least one paper, the “maximum” that can be returned for a given PI is likely to be between four and six, and the average required across the organisation is likely to be two. We must stress that the final REF “rules” are yet to be published. However, based on our current understanding, the “game” for now appears to be ensuring that everyone gets *at least one clear 3* paper*. Building collaborations within and between Institutes/Faculties clearly increases the likelihood of achieving this. Our ambition must be to have no 2* returns in REF2021, to ensure that we have an average of at least two papers for all returnable staff, and that we have as many 4* papers as possible.

THANK YOU.

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