

## Research Excellence Framework 2029 privacy notice

### How we use your information during the Research Excellence Framework 2029 (REF2029)

This privacy notice tells you what to expect the University of Lancashire to do with your personal data (or personal information) when we use it for the purposes of REF2029. It reflects current REF guidance; however further guidance from Research England is expected during 2026. This privacy notice will be updated, if necessary, if and when further guidance is published. Personal data is any information which relates to and identifies you. Data protection legislation (the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018) set out how we should handle your personal information.

This privacy notice applies to the following groups of individuals:

- **Current University of Lancashire employees** who were employed during the REF Assessment Period who are eligible for inclusion in any aspects of the REF2029 submission.
- **Former University of Lancashire employees** employed during the REF assessment period or in the years leading up to start of the REF assessment period (length to be determined) who have produced research outputs during the REF assessment period based on research conducted whilst at the University and which are eligible for submission to the REF based on REF2029 guidelines (to be finalised).
- **Individuals who are not employed by University of Lancashire** but who have provided information e.g. testimonials concerning the development of impact case studies in relation to the University's preparations for the REF2029 exercise.

### Our contact details

The University of Lancashire is the controller of the personal data we process, unless otherwise stated. We are registered with the Information Commission and our registration number is Z5512420.

There are many ways you can contact us, including by phone, email, social media and post. See our [main contact details](#).

You can [contact the Impact and Outputs Unit](#) (Research and Knowledge Exchange Service) using any of the contact information on our website.

### Our Data Protection Officer

University of Lancashire's Information Governance Manager & Data Protection Officer can be contacted on [DPFOIA@lancashire.ac.uk](mailto:DPFOIA@lancashire.ac.uk). Further information and contact details can be found on the [data protection pages](#) of our website.

## **What personal information will we use?**

The University will use information contained in Impact Case Studies, Strategy, People, and Research Environment statements and Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding.

You may have provided information for one or more impact case studies or strategy, people, and research environment statements as part of our submission to the REF2029. These narrative statements may include identifying information such as your name, job title and organisational affiliation. We will also use other information such as your date of birth, research groups, and contract dates along with details of your research.

You can find further information about the types of data being collected on the [REF website](#). The majority of information can be found on the [REF 2029 Guidance webpage](#).

## **Why do we use your personal data?**

Your information will be used to support the development and submission of the University of Lancashire's return to REF2029. This may include the provision of information to external parties for peer review ahead of submission, including statements and data which may identify you. Once submitted, your information will be used by the REF team based at Research England (RE), which manages the REF nationally on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies. RE is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Once we have submitted your personal data to the REF team at RE, UKRI becomes a controller of that information for UK GDPR purposes.

The purpose of the REF2029 is to assess the quality of UK research and to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research by the four UK higher education funding bodies. The REF2029 outcomes are used to calculate about £2 billion per year of public funding for universities' research and affect their international reputations. The results also inform strategic decisions about national research priorities. The next REF will be undertaken in 2029.

The REF was first carried out in 2014, replacing the previous Research Assessment Exercise. It included for the first time an assessment of the broader impact of universities' research beyond academia: on the economy, society, culture, public policy and services, health, the environment and quality of life, within the UK and internationally.

The guiding principles of REF 2029, outlined in [Section 1 of the official guidance](#), form the foundation of our approach. These principles—equity, equality, diversity, inclusion, and transparency—inform every stage of the REF process. To uphold these values, we will collect and use data on protected characteristics in a responsible and proportionate manner, ensuring that our practices remain inclusive and evidence-based. Engagement and Impact is assessed through the submission of case studies which describe the changes or benefits brought about by research undertaken by researchers at the University of Lancashire. Impressive impacts were found across all disciplines, with 44 per cent of submissions judged to be outstanding. You can view a database of case studies submitted [in 2014](#) and [in 2021](#).

Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding is the assessment of the outputs of research. [The REF 2029 guidance defines research](#) as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared. Effectively shared includes research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports.

### **What is the lawful basis for this processing?**

The University can only process personal data about you if there is a lawful basis from the UK GDPR which allows us to do so. The lawful bases on which we rely for processing this type of information are as follows:

**Article 6(1)(e)**, which allows us to process personal data where it is necessary to perform a task in the public interest. The REF is carried out on behalf of UKRI to fulfil one or more of its statutory functions. The processing the University of Lancashire undertakes is necessary to enable the performance of these statutory functions in the public interest.

Where we process information which is special category data for the purposes set out in this notice (special category data is information about your race, ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data used for ID purposes, health, sex life or sexual orientation), we rely on the following legal bases from the UK GDPR and DPA:

**Article 9(2)(g) UK GDPR**, which allows us to process special category data if the processing is necessary in the substantial public interest and there is a basis to do so in law. The law which allows us to rely on this basis is **section 10 DPA** by virtue of **Schedule 1(6) DPA**, which relates to processing that is necessary for a statutory function (namely UKRI's statutory functions). Further information about the safeguards we have in place when processing personal data for these purposes can be found in the policy [Data Protection: Processing special category data and criminal convictions data](#).

**Article 9(2)(j) UK GDPR**, which allows us to process special category data for archiving, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes, where there is a basis to do so in law. The law which allows us to rely on this basis is **section 10 DPA** by virtue of **Schedule 1(4) DPA**.

**Article 9(2)(a) UK GDPR**, which allows us to process special category data where you provide us with your explicit consent to do so.

### **Who will my personal information be shared with?**

We only share your personal data with another person or organisation where the law allows us to and we consider it to be appropriate under the circumstances.

For the purposes of the REF, we will share your personal data with the following parties:

- **Research England (RE)** which manages the REF nationally on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies. RE is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Once we have submitted your personal data to the REF team at RE, UKRI becomes a controller for that information for UK GDPR purposes.

UKRI may pass your data, or parts of it, to any of the following organisations that need it to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research and to carry out their statutory functions connected with funding higher education:

- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE)
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Some of your data (Unit of Assessment, HESA staff identifier code and date of birth) will also be passed to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to enable it to verify coded data returned to it as part of our [HESA staff return](#). Data returned to the REF will be linked to that held on the HESA staff record to allow UKRI and the organisations listed above to conduct additional analysis into the REF and fulfil their statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 (England, Wales and Scotland) or the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Northern Ireland).

UKRI and the organisations listed above will use the information to analyse and monitor the REF2029. This may result in information being released to other users including academic researchers or consultants (commissioned by the funding bodies), to carry out research or analysis, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. Where information not previously published is released to third parties, this will be anonymised where practicable.

UKRI will require that anyone who has access to your data, held in UKRI's records, paper or electronic, will respect its confidentiality and will only process it in accordance with instructions issued for the purposes specified by UKRI.

Parts of your data will be passed to the REF expert panels and the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (whose members are independent of UKRI) for the purpose of conducting a systematic evaluation of submissions, in accordance with predetermined criteria and methods. Panels will make judgments about the material contained in submissions and will not form quality judgments about individuals. All panel members are bound by confidentiality arrangements.

To see how UKRI will process your personal data once we make our REF submission, view the UKRI REF2029 privacy notice. This has not yet been published by UKRI but will be available on the [REF2029 website](#) in due course.

- **Processors:** We use processors who are third parties who provide elements of services for us e.g. hosted IT systems. We have contracts in place with our processors, which means that they cannot do anything with your personal data unless we have instructed them to do it. They will hold it securely and retain it for the period we instruct.
- **Peer reviewers** who are external parties who will review our proposed entries prior to submitting to RE.

### **Publishing information about your part in our submission**

The results of the assessment exercise will be published by UKRI on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies in 2029. The published results will not be based on individual performance, nor identify individuals.

Those parts of submissions that contain factual data and textual information about research activity will also be published by UKRI on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies and will be made available online. Published information is likely to include textual information including impact case studies in which you may be referenced. Your name and job title may be included in this textual information. Other personal and contractual details, including your date of birth, will be removed. We will check impact case studies and strategy, people and research environment templates prior to submission to ensure that personal data (other than names and job titles) are removed. UKRI will also publish a list of the outputs submitted by us in each UOA. This list will not be listed by author name.

### **Sending your information outside the EEA**

Occasionally we may need to send your personal data outside the European Economic Area (EEA) e.g. to obtain a service from a processor. We only transfer personal data outside the EEA if there is a lawful basis to do so and appropriate safeguards are put in place to protect your information and ensure it remains secure. UKRI does not store any of the data we submit for the REF outside the EEA.

### **How long will we keep your personal information?**

The University of Lancashire will retain information relevant to the REF2029 exercise for up to 20 years following submission to RE. After 20 years, information with potential historical value will be presented to the University Archives for permanent preservation.

### **Your data protection rights**

Under data protection law, you have rights we need to make you aware of. The rights available to you depend on our reason for processing your information. Further information about each of these rights can be found on the [Information Commission's website](#). To exercise any of these rights, please contact the Information Governance team on [DPFOIA@lancashire.ac.uk](mailto:DPFOIA@lancashire.ac.uk).

#### **Your right of access**

You have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information. This right always applies. There are some exemptions, which means you may not always receive all the information we process. For further information or to make a request, please see the [data protection pages of our website](#).

#### **Your right to rectification**

You have the right to ask us to rectify information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete. This right always applies.

#### **Your right to erasure**

You have the right to ask us to erase your personal information in certain circumstances.

#### **Your right to restriction of processing**

You have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your information in certain circumstances.

#### **Your right to object to processing**

You have the right to object to any processing we carry out, if we carry it out on the basis that it forms part of our public task or is in our legitimate interests. You also have the right to object to your personal information being used for direct marketing purposes.

**Your right to data portability**

This only applies to information you have given us. You have the right to ask that we transfer the information you gave us from one organisation to another, or give it to you. The right only applies if we are processing information because we have your consent or because it is necessary for your employment contract, and the processing is automated.

**Your right to complain**

We work to high standards when it comes to processing your personal data. If you have queries or concerns, you can contact the Information Governance Manager & Data Protection Officer. You can see our [data protection complaints procedure](#) on our website.

If you remain dissatisfied, you can make a complaint about the way we process your personal data to the Information Commission, which is the UK supervisory authority for data protection. Further information can be found on the [Information Commission's website](#).