

REF 2021

HEI Debrief

17 May 2022

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REF Director



Research
England



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

hefcw



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

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Agenda

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- Introduction - David Sweeney
- Overview of key messages – Kim Hackett
- Reflections from panel chairs
- Q&A with panel chairs
- Looking ahead – Q&A with funding bodies and FRAP

What was assessed

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Panels assessed the **overall quality** of each submission

Outputs

185,594 research outputs reviewed, attributed to over 76,000 staff

60%

Impact

6,781 impact case studies reviewed

25%

Environment

Environment data and template were reviewed

15%

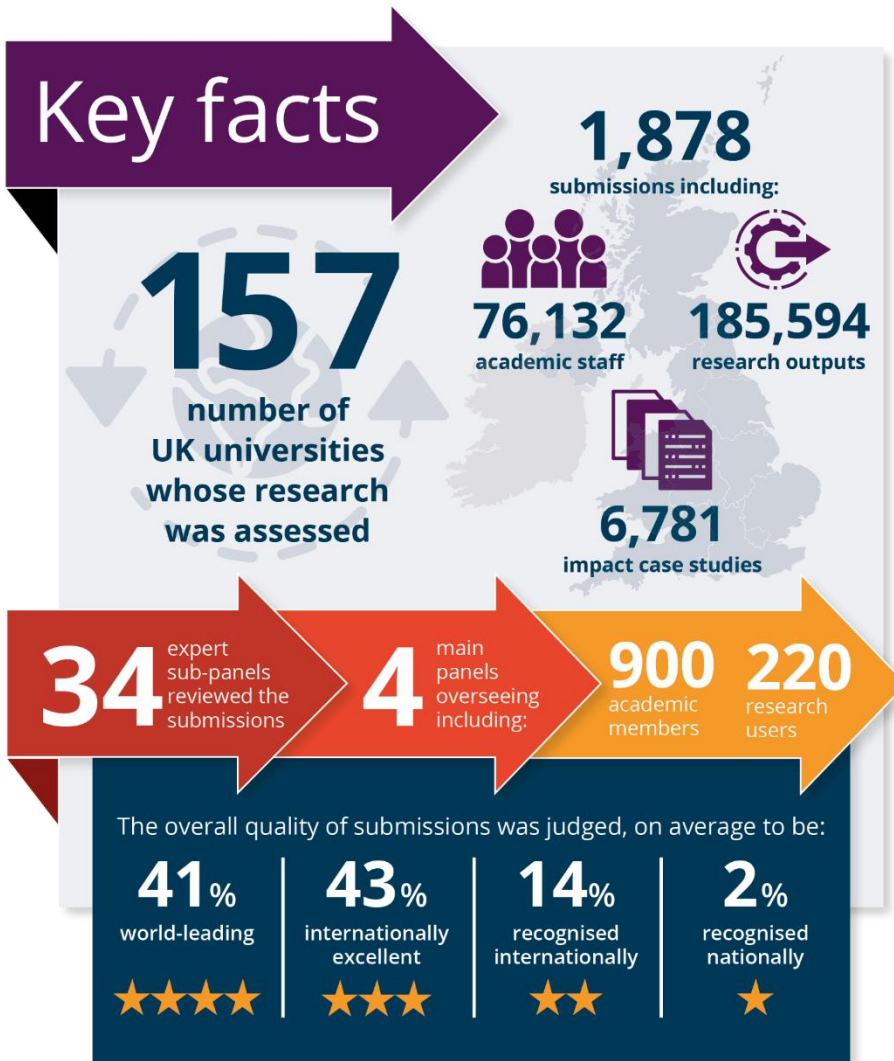
REF 2021 submissions

REF2021

- Changes in submission of staff and outputs across 2014 and 2021 have led to significant increase in volume of staff returned
- Size of increase varies across main panels – with differing effects on total outputs and case studies submitted, compared to REF 2014

	Submissions (2021)	Submissions (2014)	Cat A submitted FTE (2021)	Cat A submitted FTE (2014)	% change in FTE	Number of outputs (2021)	Number of outputs (2014)	Number of impact case studies (2021)	Number of impact case studies (2014)
UK sector	1,878	1,911	76,132	52,061	46%	185,594	191,950	6,781	6,975
Main Panel A	312	312	19,983	13,608	47%	48,872	50,298	1,460	1,621
Main Panel B	354	403	18,393	13,347	38%	45,153	49,317	1,483	1,667
Main Panel C	658	614	23,451	14,413	63%	56,649	52,212	2,260	2,040
Main Panel D	554	582	14,305	10,691	34%	34,920	39,321	1,578	1,647

REF provides UK picture of world-leading research, **REF2021** produced across breadth of universities' activity



46%
increase
in staff

Assessment outcomes based on submission of all staff with significant responsibility for research in participating UK universities

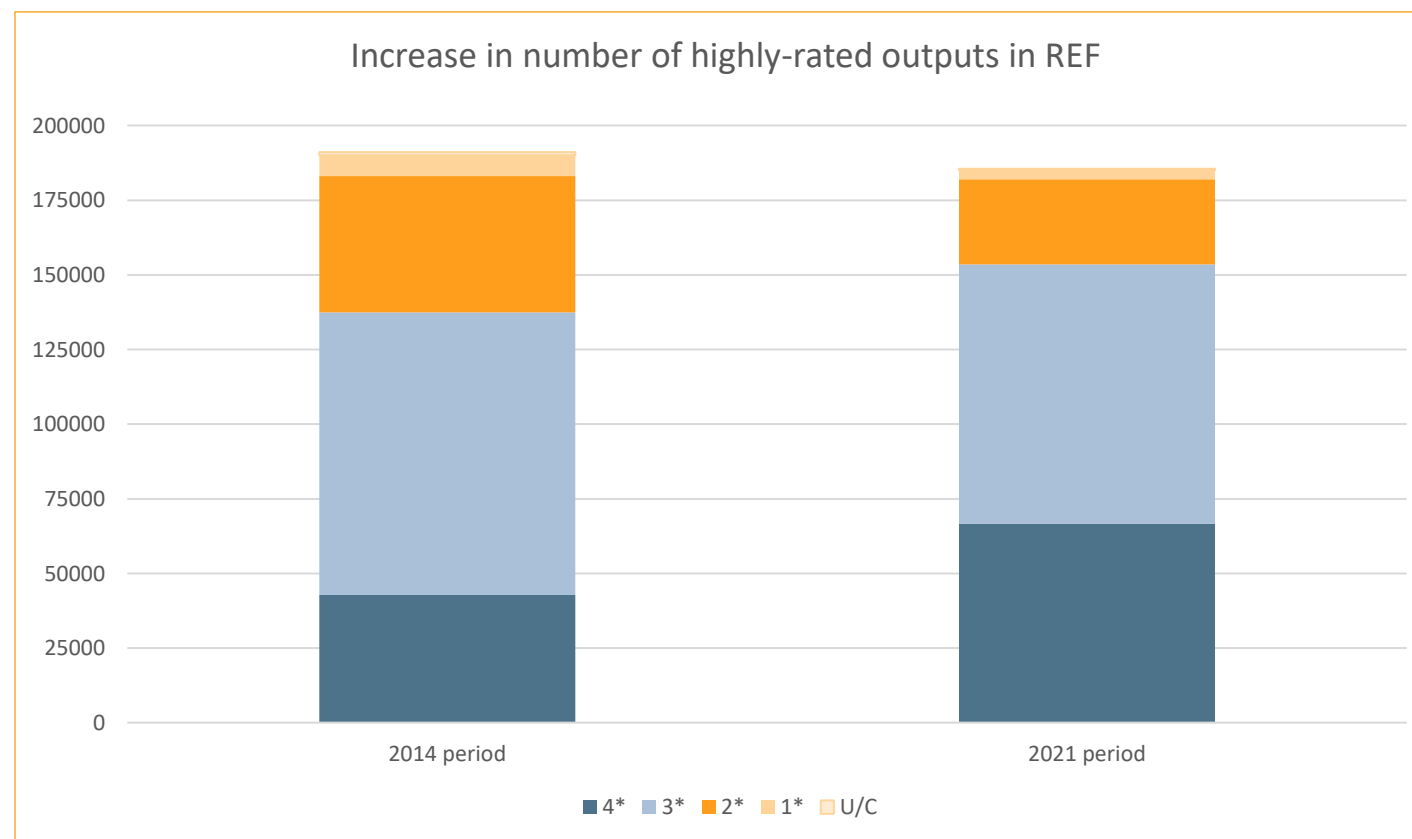
1-5
outputs

Greater flexibility for universities to identify highest-quality examples

Rule changes for REF 2021 have allowed greater capture of world-leading outputs

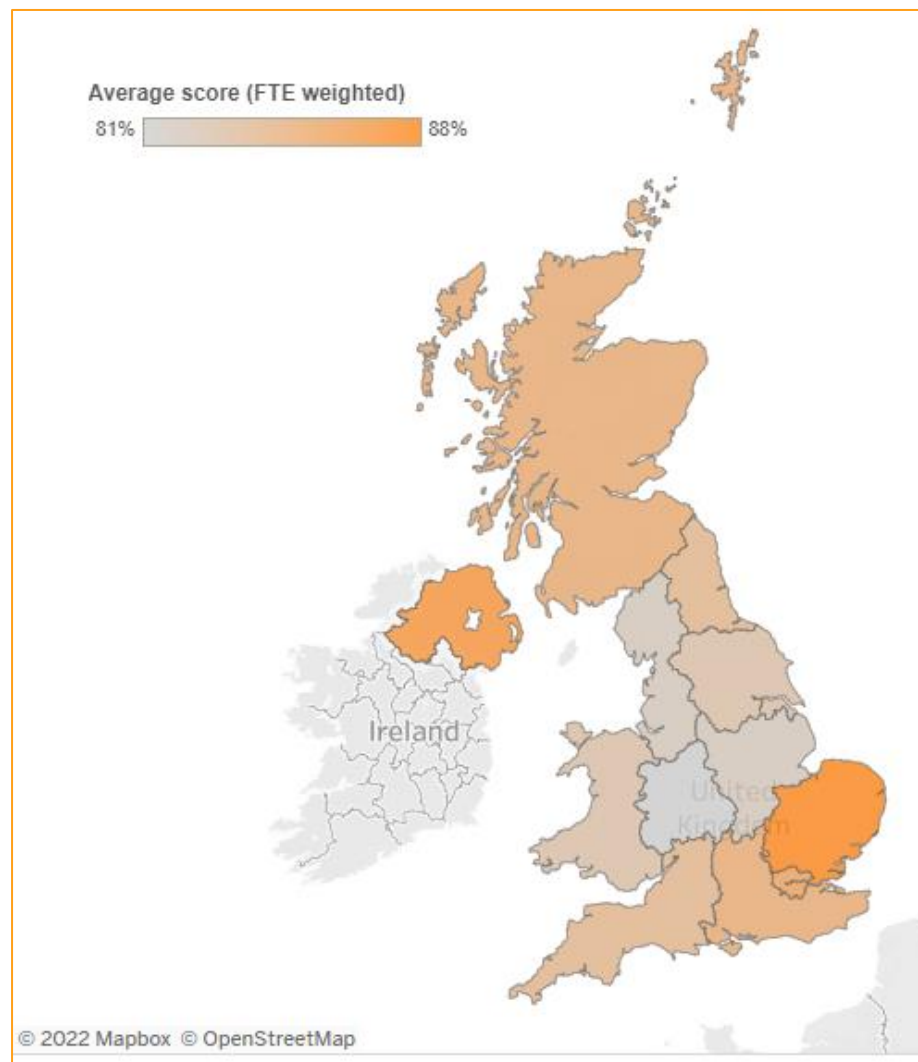
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- Most significant increase in proportion of 4-star activity seen in assessment of research outputs
- Aligns with wider evidence, indicating UK continues to increase share of highly-cited papers



Excellence is widely distributed – across UK nations and English regions

Regional average percentage 4*+3* (FTE weighted) - Overall



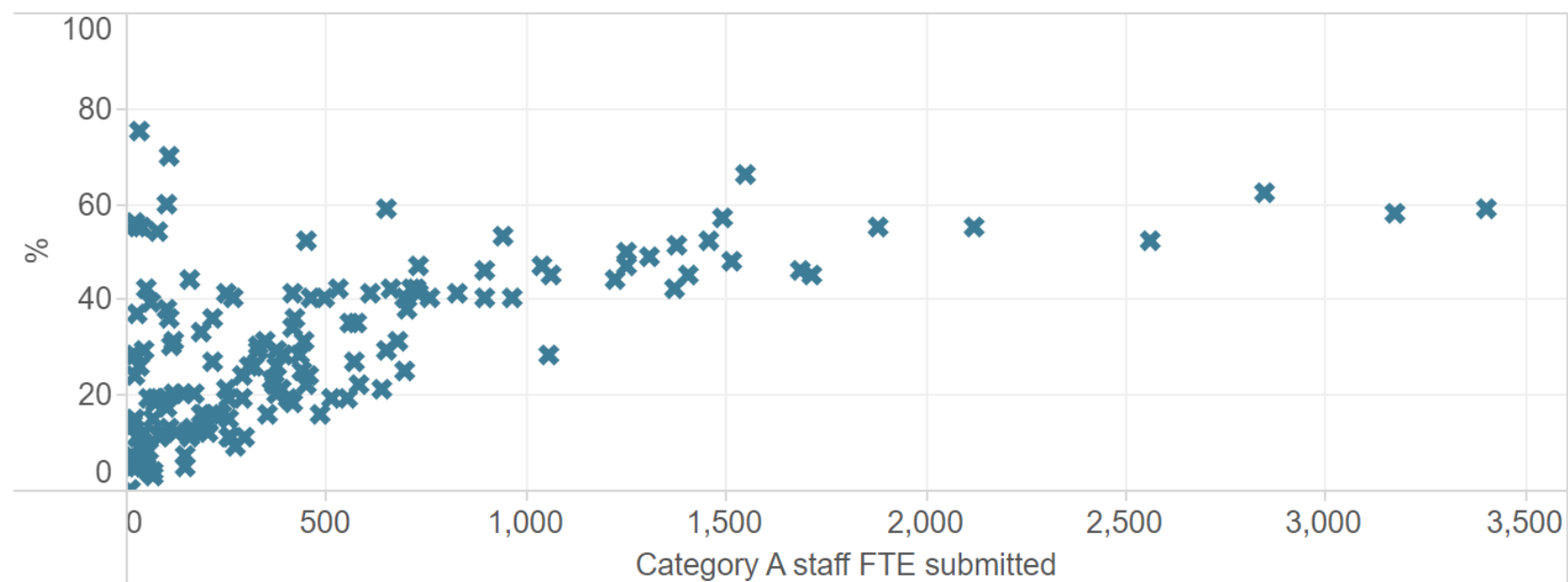
- Over 80% world-leading and internationally excellent research across all regions and UK nations

Excellence is widely distributed – and across many and diverse universities

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- Top quarter of universities with at least 41% world-leading; three quarters of universities with over 15% world-leading; world-leading quality identified in 99% of universities
- Excellence was found in institutions with submissions of all sizes

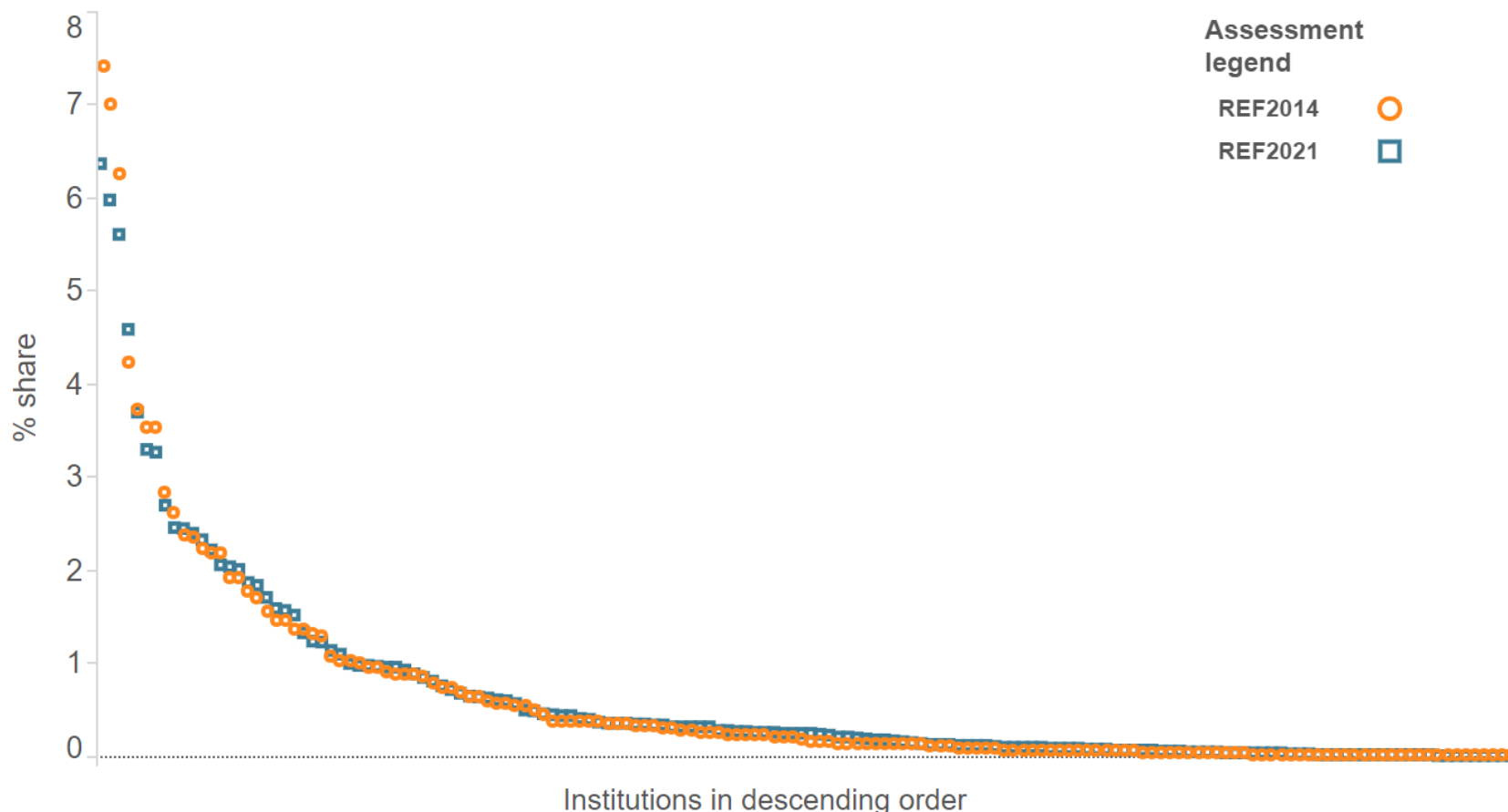
Institutional average percentage 4* (FTE weighted) by total size of institutions' submissions



The outcomes provide a significant degree of differentiation, similarly to REF 2014

- Change in share at the top end reflecting strong performance across wider set of universities

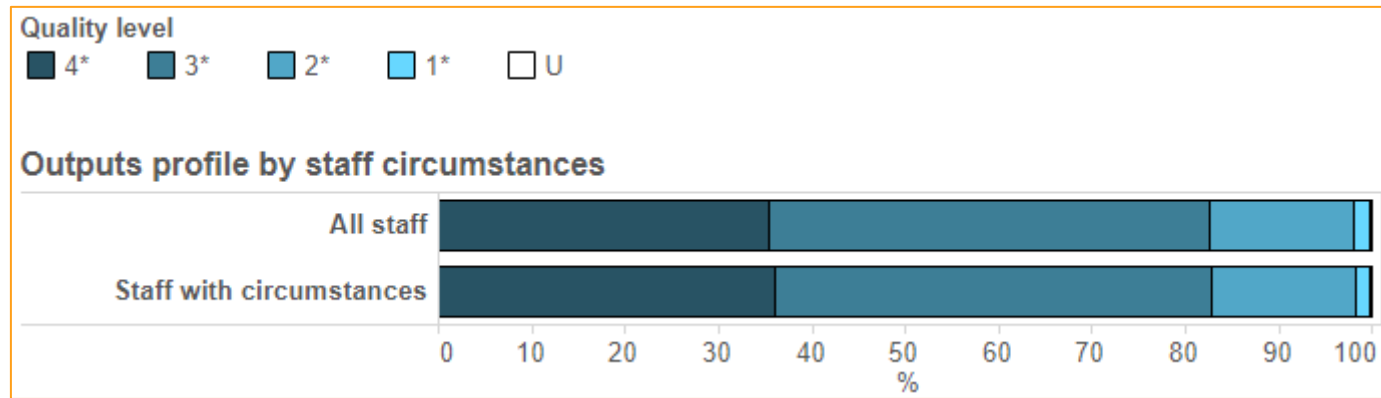
Institutional share of 4* quality and volume



For each exercise institutions are listed in descending order and therefore the order of institutions is different for REF 2014 and REF 2021

The assessment framework enabled the diversity of research units to be recognised

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- Outputs of staff with circumstances found to be of equally high quality
- New approach to accounting for circumstances supported the inclusion of staff without penalty
- Excellence in outputs was noted across all types and forms of research
- Examples of excellence in interdisciplinary research seen across sub-panels

Impressive evidence of wider benefits to economy and society

Outstanding case studies

- 50% impact judged 'outstanding' (4*)
- 38% 'very considerable' (3*)

Diverse benefits

- Assessment captured diverse and rich ways research benefitting society

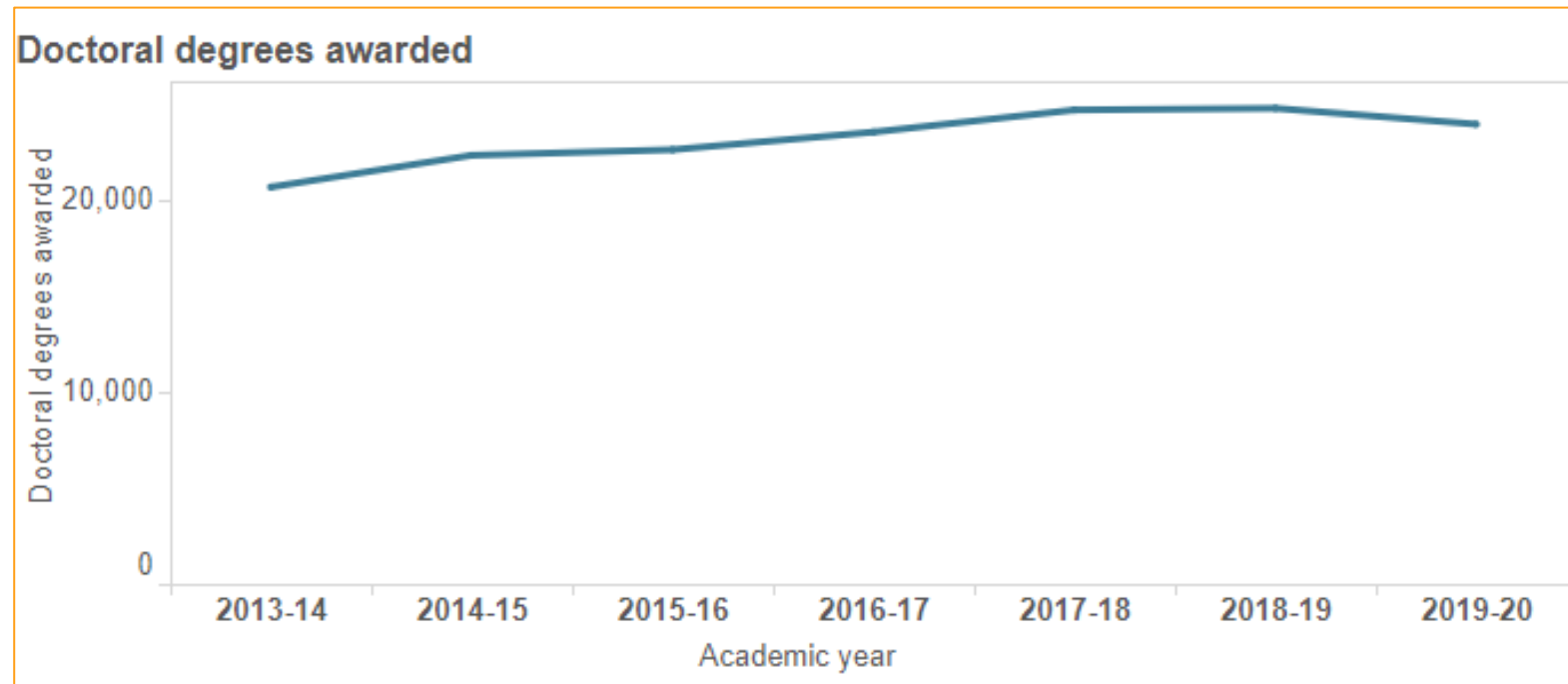
Enabling impact

- Rich evidence of investment in realising impact from research
- Reflected in established partnerships and robust evidence in submitted impacts

Research environment

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- Submitted evidence in environment continues to demonstrate vitality and sustainability of research, with improvements in evidence noted
- Across all submissions:
 - £46 billion research income reported
 - 162,000 research degrees awarded



The resilience and investment of universities and panels was central to robust completion of the assessment in the face of Covid disruption

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- Many significant contributions captured in impact
- Universities engaged readily and responsively to development of mitigations during final months of submission period
- Panels recognised effects of Covid on submission preparation and took account of this in assessment where appropriate
- Panels responded flexibly to changes required to assessment process, including to the timetable and format of meetings, to deliver robust assessment

Institutional-level environment pilot

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- Stern review recommendation to include institutional-level (IL) environment submission.
- Pilot panel (ILEPP) undertaking assessment of IL submissions:
- Assessment on Strategy, People and, Income, infrastructure and facilities sections.
 - ILEPP will agree profile based on assessment for each HEI
 - Confidential feedback to be provided to HEIs
 - IL triangulation with sub-panel assessment
- ILEPP continues to June
- ILEPP report and recommendations to be published summer 2022

Further information

REF2021

- www.ref.ac.uk includes:
 - All results data
 - Summary data by UOA and further analysis
 - Panel overview reports (18 May 2022)
- Confidential feedback will be sent to HEIs in June 2022
- Submissions and further reports will be published in June 2022
- ILEPP report and recommendations to be published summer 2022
- For information on the development of plans for future of research assessment, see: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/future-research-assessment-programme>
- For information about research funding, contact relevant funding body