

13th November 2017

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Dear Dr Michael,

Invitation to nominate panel members for the Research Excellence Framework 2021

1. I am writing to the Society for Reproduction and Fertility as an association or organisation which has confirmed an interest, or we have identified as having a potential interest, in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF).
2. The REF is the system for assessing the quality and impact of research in UK higher education institutions (HEIs). It was first conducted in 2014, and replaced the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The REF will be undertaken by the four UK higher education funding bodies: the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.
3. The REF exercise will be completed in 2021 and the results will be used by the four funding bodies to drive their allocations of research funding to HEIs. It will also provide useful benchmarking information and reputational yardsticks, and provide accountability for public investment in research and demonstrate its benefits.

Expert panels

4. The REF will be undertaken through a process of expert review. HEIs will be invited to make submissions which will be assessed by 34 subject-based expert sub-panels, working under the guidance of four main panels. Further information on the panel structure, the roles, responsibilities and workload of panel members and the criteria for appointment can be found in the publication 'Roles and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 2017/03) available at www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.

5. High calibre panel chairs and members who command the confidence of the academic community and wider stakeholders will be essential to the success of the REF. The four main panel chairs have been appointed (their details are available at www.ref.ac.uk) and we are currently in the process of appointing the sub-panel chairs.

Nominating panel members

6. On behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies, I would like to invite your association or organisation to nominate candidates to be panel members. Nominations should be completed online at www.ref.ac.uk/about/nompan by **noon, 20 December 2017**.

7. There is no limit on the number of individuals you can nominate and we would encourage you to consider a wide range of individuals to cover the full breadth of your research interests.

8. The funding bodies are seeking nominations of candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds, institution types and geographical region. We particularly welcome nominations of candidates from groups previously under-represented on assessment panels, including women, people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, and disabled people.

9. We are inviting nominations for candidates to be:

- additional main panel members (with expertise in leading, commissioning or making use of interdisciplinary research, leading research internationally, or senior level experience in the commissioning, use or wider benefits of research)
- sub-panel members and assessors (including practising researchers, individuals with expertise in commissioning, applying or making use of research, and interdisciplinary advisers).

10. We would like to receive nominations of individuals who have served previously on REF or Research Assessment Exercise panels, as well as those for whom this would be a new experience. Heads of HEIs may not be nominated as panel members.

11. Individuals who are nominated will need to confirm that they are willing and able to serve as a panel member, before their names and contact details are put forward. Nominating bodies should also ensure that nominees are aware of the provisional timetable and workload implications.

12. Full details on the roles and the workload implications can be found in 'Roles and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 2017/03) available at www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.

Equality and diversity in the nominations process

13. To help achieve our aim of increasing the representativeness of the expert panels, all associations or organisations wishing to submit nominations for REF panel membership will need to provide information about how equality and diversity issues were taken into account in putting forward nominations. We have provided guidance and a template for this purpose online at www.ref.ac.uk/publications/2017/rolesandrecruitmentoftheexpertpanels.

Further information

14. Further information about the REF can be found on our website at www.ref.ac.uk.

15. If you have any queries, or you do not wish to receive future correspondence about the REF, please do get in touch at admin@ref.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Hackett', written in a cursive style.

Dr Kim Hackett
REF Manager