

Information Notice

This notice explains how the University of Aberdeen handles your personal information when you provide information, evidence and/or a written supporting statement to corroborate our REF2029 submission.

Who are we?

The organisation responsible for your personal information in terms of data protection legislation is the University of Aberdeen.

What is the REF2029?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is the UK-wide exercise for assessing research across all publicly funded universities. This exercise looks at quality of research and the impact our research is having on society and the economy. The results are used to assess public funding for universities and determines our funding allocation over a 6-year period; it therefore greatly affects our reputation and plays a crucial role in our accountability as a publicly funded institution. For further information about the REF, please refer to the University of Aberdeen privacy notice [here](#).

Each university is required to submit impact case studies (ICS), which are short, summary reports demonstrating how our research is making difference to society and the economy. Each ICS needs to be evidence-led, through external data sources and are often informed by statements from research users. Examples of previous case studies can be viewed using the following database: <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact>.

What is the role of information in the REF?

We collect and use information to prepare the University's bid for public funding of research as part of the REF exercise. Our lawful basis for using your personal information in this way is that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the University. Conducting research is a core function of the University under the Universities (Scotland) Act, and processing of the information is required to secure public research funding.

What type of information might we collect and use about you?

We collect the following information about you: your name and contact details, your role and organisation, and your evaluation of our research.

What are you being asked to provide?

As a 'user' of University of Aberdeen research, we are requesting information, evidence and/or a written supporting statement to corroborate one of our REF impact case studies. We will give you more details of exactly what is needed, however it is likely to include details of how our research has benefited, informed or supported your organisation.

Disclosing your information

The information you provide that is included in the University's REF2029 submission will be shared with Research England, who will undertake the REF assessment on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies. Research England is part of the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI). The privacy notice describing the way that UKRI will handle personal information submitted to them is available [here](#).

The suppliers we use for IT support may have access to your personal information in order to provide that service to the University. Our third-party supplier arrangements are regulated by contracts designed to protect the information and limit the way it is used. We may disclose personal information to other recipients in exceptional circumstances or when required to do so by law.

Is the information you provide viewable in the public domain?

This is entirely up to the research user. We will ask whether a statement from yourself can be shared publicly. We will never publish identifying information unless given permission to do so – any supporting information can be entirely redacted upon publication if requested. Testimonials or letters of support will be treated as highly confidential and will not be published under any circumstances.

Your rights

You have the right to obtain a copy of your personal information, and to ask us to correct inaccurate or incomplete personal information. Under certain conditions, you can also ask us to restrict the way we use your personal information, erase your personal information and object to the University processing your personal information. We may not be able to comply with your request in every case. If we cannot do as you ask, we will always reply to you and explain our position.

There is no charge to make a request, but we may need evidence to confirm your identity before we respond in full. You can ask about your privacy rights or make a request about your personal information by contacting the University Data Protection Officer at the address below.

If are dissatisfied with the way the University has handled your personal information or dealt with your data protection issue, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner's Office can be contacted via their website at www.ico.org.uk/concerns/.

How long will we store your information?

The information you provide to the University that is not in the public domain will be destroyed securely at the end of the audit period (Spring of 2030).

Is the information you provide confidential?

Yes, it is. If case studies include any information that a research user provides, it will be treated in strict confidence from conception through to assessment. All panel members and the panel secretariat are bound by confidentiality and data security agreements, this includes provision of confidential information via secure, password-protected systems. Any evidence will be destroyed at the end of the REF assessment period.

Data protection at the University

If you have any questions about the University's handling of your information, or your rights under privacy laws, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer in the following ways:

By email: dpa@abdn.ac.uk

By post: King's College, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX

By telephone: 01224 272596