

Privacy Notice for Research Impact Evidence Collection for REF 2029

Introduction

This Privacy Notice explains how Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, also known as Royal Holloway, University of London, collects, uses, stores and shares personal data provided as evidence of the impact of its research for submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029.

This notice applies to individuals and organisations who provide corroborating evidence to support REF Impact Case Studies. For the purposes of data protection legislation, Royal Holloway is the data controller.

This Privacy Notice supplements Royal Holloway's Data Protection Policy and is issued in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003, and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

What is the REF and why is it important?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the system for assessing the excellence of research in UK higher education institutions. It is run by Research England on behalf of the UK Government. Our performance in REF affects the amount of core government funding returned to our University, thereby affecting our ability to conduct future research. The exercise takes place approximately every seven years: universities will submit to the next assessment (REF 2029) in autumn 2028.

Why have you been contacted?

You have been contacted by a researcher or Royal Holloway's Professional Services staff to provide us with evidence (and/or your contact details, including name, position, organisation and email address) to help us demonstrate that our research has made an impact outside of academia. The evidence may consist of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data types. The most common method of providing evidence for REF Impact Case Studies is in the form of qualitative testimonies (usually no more than 1,000 words).

By sharing your experience or data, you are helping the University show how collaborative research translates into meaningful change beyond academia.

How we use your data and our legal basis for processing

The information you provide will be used by Royal Holloway to support the development, verification and submission of Impact Case Studies to the Research Excellence Framework (REF). This includes using the evidence to substantiate claims about the impact of our research and to meet REF requirements for quality assurance and audit.

The processing of personal data for these purposes is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest, as part of Royal Holloway's functions as a higher education institution. The lawful basis for this processing is Article 6(1)(e) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

Impact Case Studies describe the wider benefits and outcomes of research undertaken at Royal Holloway. For REF 2029, case studies must demonstrate impacts that occurred between 1 August 2020 and 31 July 2028. In the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, occurring beyond academia.

Where will your evidence be stored?

The data you provide will initially be stored on the University's secure server which will only be accessible to relevant members of staff. Ahead of submission to the REF, corroborating evidence may be shared with external parties for the purposes of peer review. Where any external parties are located outside the UK, appropriate safeguards will be put in place to ensure that personal data is protected in accordance with data protection law.

For how long will your evidence be kept?

The information you provide to us will be held by the Royal Holloway University for as long as necessary for the purposes of the REF exercise and any future reporting and analysis of our research activity; this may mean that it is archived and retained in perpetuity.

What will happen to your information after it has been submitted to the REF?

Once submitted to the REF, your personal data will be subject to a Privacy Notice and associated data protection policies issued by UKRI (the organisation which brings together the seven disciplinary research councils, Research England and Innovate UK).

Once with UKRI, any case study may be passed to the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) or Scottish Funding Council (SFC) who may need data to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research and to carry out their statutory functions connected with funding higher education and analyse and monitor the REF. This may result in case studies (but not corroborating evidence) 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 General Data Protection Regulation. 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, to respect its confidentiality and will only process it in accordance with instructions issued for the purposes specified by UKRI. All those with access to your data are bound by confidentiality arrangements.

The REF submission will be subject to audit. This would normally involve audit queries being sent to Royal Holloway for us to answer. However, there is a very small chance that you will be contacted by Research England to confirm your corroborating evidence.

Will your information be published?

Impact Case Studies will be made public after submission via the REF website, except when marked as confidential or for redaction (in which case a redacted version will be published). Please contact the member of staff requesting evidence from you to discuss the confidentiality level of the evidence you are providing, and/or the Impact Case Study it is supporting.

Even where a case study is published, your contact details will not be published. Your corroborating evidence will not be published in full. However, it may be quoted within the published case study. Your name and job title may be referenced in the case study unless otherwise agreed with the University ahead of REF submission.

Information published for the REF may also be repurposed and republished by the University, for example, on our Department news webpages.

If you have confidential information that you do not wish to be published

The REF 2029 guidance recognises that some evidence used in Impact Case Studies may be of a confidential or sensitive nature. Royal Holloway will only submit confidential material with prior permission from the corroborating individual or organisation.

Confidential Impact Case Studies will only be shared with the REF team and those involved in the assessment process. All panel members, assessors, observers and the panel secretariat are bound by a confidentiality agreement.

Submitted Impact Case Studies identified as 'not for publication' or the elements for 'redaction' will be destroyed by the REF team once no longer required for assessment purposes.

If you think that your data is sensitive or should be kept confidential, please discuss this with your Royal Holloway contact or email REF@rhul.ac.uk.

Your rights and further information

You have rights under data protection law in relation to the personal data we hold about you. These include the right to request access to your data, to request correction of inaccurate data, and, in certain circumstances, to object to or request restriction of how your data is processed.

As this processing is carried out as part of the University's public task, not all rights will apply in all circumstances.

If you have concerns about how your personal data has been used, you have the right to raise a complaint with the University. You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) at www.ico.org.uk. Royal Holloway's ICO registration number is Z7056965.

To exercise your rights or to ask questions about this notice, please contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@rhul.ac.uk.

Questions or comments

If you have any questions or comments regarding this notice, or you wish to exercise any of your rights, you should email Royal Holloway's Data Protection Officer via dataprotection@rhul.ac.uk.

Please read other privacy notices relevant to services you may access at Royal Holloway.

Changes to this notice

Because of changes to legislation or institutional data management policies, we may have cause on occasion to amend elements of the information processing described above. If this should happen, we will always alert you by publishing the latest version of our Privacy Notice [here](#) and, where possible, emailing or postal mailing you.

Last updated on: 20 April 2026