

Annex A

Consultation questions and response form

1. Responses to the consultation should be made by completing the form below, and returning it by e-mail by **midday on Wednesday 16 December 2009**.
2. All responses should be e-mailed to ref@hefce.ac.uk. **In addition:**
 - a. Responses from institutions in Scotland should be **copied to** Pauline Jones, Scottish Funding Council, e-mail pjones@sfc.ac.uk.
 - b. Responses from institutions in Wales should be **copied to** Linda Tiller, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, e-mail linda.tiller@hefcw.ac.uk.
 - c. Responses from institutions in Northern Ireland should be **copied to** the Department for Employment and Learning, e-mail research.branch@delni.gov.uk.
3. We will publish an analysis of responses to the consultation. Additionally, all responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case HEFCE. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. We have a responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means responses to this consultation are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Further information about the Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk. Equivalent legislation exists in Scotland.

Respondent's details

Are you responding: (Delete one)	On behalf of an organisation
Name of responding organisation/individual	Association of Art Historians (AAH) Design History Society (DHS) Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB)
Type of organisation (Delete those that are not applicable)	Academic association or learned society
Contact name	Matt Lodder
Position within organisation	AAH Administrator
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Consultation questions

(Boxes for responses can be expanded to the desired length.)

Consultation question 1: Do you agree with the proposed key features of the REF? If not, explain why.

The three groups responding collectively to this consultation all endorse the REF's emphasis on peer review and on the measures that have been put in place to identify the very highest quality outputs. We do not agree with the following key features:

- 1) The amalgamation of disciplines into single sub-panels to which institutions can only make a single submission. Practices, outputs and impact in Art and Design can be very different from those of the History of Art, Architecture and Design. Merging these groups in a single panel forces institutions to artificially describe distinctive disciplinary practices in a single narrative and runs the risk of failing to make visible the high quality of the UK's specialist research.
- 2) The 25% weighting placed on impact. This is not because we oppose impact *per se* (as all three subjects work closely with areas such as the creative and heritage industries) but because of the untried and untested nature of the methodology involved.

All three groups want specifically to protest vigorously against the disappearance of the highly regarded disciplines of the History of Art, History of Architecture and History of Design from the panel title into which we have been amalgamated. **The panel should be re-titled: Art & Design; History of Art, Architecture and Design.**

We also want to raise serious concerns about the fact that the 2008 UoA 30 (Architecture & Built Environment) is to be combined with the old UoA 31 (Town & Country Planning), inevitably diluting the percentage of historians on the larger panel to which many Schools of Architecture will be submitted. We will therefore need reassurances that architectural historians will be adequately represented on this new combined panel as well.

Consultation question 2: What comments do you have on the proposed approach to assessing outputs? If you disagree with any of these proposals please explain why.

Comments are especially welcomed on the following proposals:

- that institutions should select research staff and outputs to be assessed
- for the categories of staff eligible for selection, and how they are defined
- for encouraging institutions to submit – and for assessing – all types of high-quality research outputs including applied and translational research
- for the use of citation information to inform the review of outputs in appropriate UOAs (including the range of appropriate UOAs, the type of citation information that should be provided to panels as outlined in Annex C, and the flexibility panels should have in using the information)

and on the following options:

- whether there should be a maximum of three or four outputs submitted per researcher
- whether certain types of output should be 'double weighted' and if so, how these could be defined.

All categories of Hefce-funded staff should be eligible for inclusion, including fractional staff. We do not agree with the use of citation indices which are not robust in the Arts and Humanities. Having consulted with our respective memberships, there is no strong feeling whether four or three outputs would be better. There are arguments to be made for three outputs in order to reduce the burden on assessors and (for the SAHGB), the rigour that four outputs demands. There is a view that researchers (rather than the panel) should be allowed to 'double weight' substantial pieces of work – examples of which might include detailed catalogues, monographs or exhibitions representing a substantial part of the researcher's life-time work.

Consultation question 3: What comments do you have on the proposed approach to assessing impact? If you disagree with any of these proposals please explain why.

Comments are especially welcomed on the following:

- how we propose to address the key challenges of time lags and attribution
- the type of evidence to be submitted, in the form of case studies and an impact statement supported by indicators (including comments on the initial template for case studies and menu of indicators at Annex D)
- the criteria for assessing impact and the definition of levels for the impact sub-profile
- the role of research users in assessing impact.

We welcome the inclusion of translational research in the REF in the knowledge that much of the work produced by Historians of Art, Architecture and Design is used in the context of exhibitions, media and the creative and heritage industries. Our concern is over the highly inadequate methodology currently available for this assessment. Given that most works in the humanities take approximately a decade to generate citations, it is important that the methodology can manage a substantial delay between the output in question and any measurement of the impact involved. Similarly, the REF impact assessment must allow for considerable movement and shifts of emphasis between the original output and the eventual impact – there needs to be allowance made both for researchers who generate their own impact directly (e.g. a scholar who appears in a television documentary based around their own research or an academic who is also the curator of an exhibition) and those whose work is used by others to generate impact (e.g. a similar documentary which is presented by a non-academic host but is based on academic research that is often not publicly acknowledged or an exhibition which draws on the research of multiple scholars).

The AAH, DHS and SAHGB are very concerned that the narratives requested in case studies will simply reward high quality rhetoric rather than acknowledge the often subtler ways in which our research feeds into the public environment. The menu of indicators is particularly weak for the Arts and Humanities and needs to be expanded to include a larger range of social and cultural benefits including raising an awareness and appreciation for our role in generating public understanding of national and international cultural heritage.

The three societies oppose the creation of separate stand-alone user panels for a number of reasons:

- 1) The experience of RCUK's knowledge transfer panels is that it is difficult to get high-level research users to dedicate the substantial time and energy required to make these assessments;

they will need extensive training in order to gain the confidence of the communities that they are assessing.

2) Research users will be unable to assess the quality of the original research that generated the impact (except if the grades that work were awarded in earlier RAE assessments are provided to these users' panels). Unless Hefce is happy to see poor quality research rewarded for its high impact, the original materials will have to be assessed; here academic judgement will be crucial, something that will increase rather than lower the burden of assessment.

In addition, the SAGB note that their members' work often takes place as a subset within a larger, diverse department or unit. Its impact is often very different from that of other elements within the same department. Therefore, it is important that careful distinctions are drawn in assessing the impact of architectural history and that of associated disciplines, such as the architectural sciences.

Thus while we do not oppose impact *per se*, we are suggesting that in REF 2013 any impact assessment should be run as a parallel exercise without funding implications. We would argue that to run an impact assessment with poor quality measures and poor quality preparation would prove more damaging to our long-term arguments for future public funding than not running it at all.

Consultation question 4: Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to assessing research environment?

The three societies recognise that because of the size of their respective disciplines, Historians of Art, Architecture and Design will be submitted to a larger sub-panel with other areas in the Humanities. But the current insistence on assessing research environment through a single submission means that it will be difficult to disaggregate and reward different disciplines within a single institution. It runs the grave risk of Hefce determining internal university or college structures. The three societies believe that a fairer and more robust system would allow for formal groupings within sub-panels which would allow for appropriate submissions to targeted disciplinary areas. It would also make History of Art, Architecture and Design visible externally. Given that the REF is an important international measure of esteem, the UK should be highlighting the high quality of its specialist subjects, not hiding them.

We also strongly argue that Hefce should not insist on a 'critical mass' in making assessments. In the History of Art, Architecture and Design, as well as in other humanities disciplines, it is possible to produce work of the highest international quality and impact in very small units.

Consultation question 5: Do you agree with our proposals for combining and weighting the output, impact and environment sub-profiles? If not please propose an alternative and explain why this is preferable.

Historians of Art, Architecture and Design have long traditions of working with the creative and heritage sectors and with private and public museums and galleries. But while the all three societies generally welcome the inclusion of impact as a measure, we do not agree with its current weighting. We also do not agree with its current implications for funding. 25% is too high for an untried and untested methodology. We would prefer either to have impact assessed as a separate stand-alone parallel measure that could be considered alongside a combined measure of output and environment (making it visible, but **not** carrying any funding implication). If that is

not possible because of external government pressure, we would re-balance the combination so that the most tried and tested measure, that is the peer-review of outputs rises to 70% and the other measures are given equal weighting at 15% each. This is preferable because the current pilot study will not be completed in time to ensure robust indicators for impact that will carry confidence either for the academic or non-academic communities.

Consultation question 6: What comments do you have on the panel configuration proposed at Annex E? Where suggesting alternative options for specific UOAs, please provide the reasons for this.

The three groups responding to this consultation and their members are dismayed at the complete disappearance of the Histories of Art, Architecture and Design from the proposed panel configuration. We are very different disciplines, both amongst ourselves, and from the already highly diverse groups who make up practice-based Art and Design. There is currently considerable trust in the nature of the assessments that were made by the 2008 RAE panel 64; the RAE results were also highly beneficial to the international reputation and impact of UK humanities scholarship in the visual arts. This visibility will be lost in the REF unless there is the potential to ensure that work in our disciplines is separately submitted to, and assessed by, experts and expert users in our fields.

Following the high level of research ratings in the past three RAE exercises, we have an extremely strong international reputation both for the quality of our outputs and their impact on the cultural and heritage industries in both the UK and abroad. We would argue very strongly that the disappearance of our disciplines from the panel title is extremely damaging to the UK's reputation in these subjects (e.g. the formalisation of Design History in the UK has been the blueprint for similar initiatives internationally). As a minimum, all three Societies wish to see the panel entitled: **Art & Design; History of Art, Architecture and Design**. In addition, the Society of Architectural Historians wants reassurance that there will be a significant percentage of scholars with an understanding of the history of architecture in the merged Architecture & Built Environment and Town & Country Planning.

We also need to note that Art & Design employs a high number of fractional staff, many of whom submitted the full four outputs in 2008. This already made the assessment burden very high for colleagues in this area and would make it difficult for them to incorporate other disciplinary areas. This means that there must be a sufficient number of expert Historians of Art, Architecture and Design (where work is already very diverse both in terms of methodology, period and place) to provide robust assessments that are fair and consistent with previous exercises. We would also insist that 'users' who assess our work understand the nature of what we do and how it is demonstrated publically.

We have consulted separately and widely with all our members on the actual panel configuration. DHS members have a clear and conclusive preference for their inclusion in the panel with Art & Design. This is not the case for History of Art where a substantial percentage of AAH members have a strong preference for a combined panel with Classics and Archaeology where the constituent groups would be of similar sizes and where 'user groups' would have considerable overlap. There is no appetite amongst all three societies for a merger with History, whose members rarely use visual material to make their primary arguments. In all cases, as discussed above, there is strong agreement on the fact that wherever we are placed, we need to be visible

in the panel title and have the potential to make a separate submission from whichever group with whom we are amalgamated.

We understand that the Archaeologists are concerned that a configuration with History of Art, Architecture and Design might mean a loss of additional QR funding and note that the current Hefce configurations (where Archaeology is with History and History of Art, Architecture and Design is joined with Art and Design) merge groups whose unit of resource was very differently weighted in the 2008 RAE. We would like to have an explanation about how funding decision will be made for panels where groups have been artificially combined in this way. Will the unit of resource be determined at the highest panel level or at sub-panel level?

Finally, we believe that the proposal for creating 'informal' sub-groups should be replaced with the clarity of formal sub-groups, allowing for common criteria but for differential expert assessment and appropriate user groups. This would recognise the very substantial differences between the outputs assessed under a single sub-panel heading and ensure the visibility of some of the UK's most important specialist disciplines such as the History of Art, Architecture and Design.

Consultation question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach to ensuring consistency between panels?

We agree that there should be consistency within the large overall panel groupings but the very different natures of disciplines also needs to be recognised within the sub-panels.

Consultation question 8: Do you have any suggested additions or amendments to the list of nominating bodies? (If suggesting additional bodies, please provide their names and addresses and indicate how they are qualified to make nominations.)

There are not enough appropriate nominating bodies for users of the research outputs in the History of Art, Architecture and Design. If private corporations such as Marks and Spencer can make nominations, the AAH would suggest, for example, that the British Association of Antique Dealers, Sotheby's, Christies and Bonhams are allowed to make nominations. Likewise, the choice of museums and galleries does not seem fully representative. Although we note that the Ashmolean can make a nomination, the Fitzwilliam and the Whitworth galleries are missing as are the University museums in Scotland such as the Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh. We would also recommend the inclusion of private or civic galleries such as White Cube in London, or the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol. The DHS recommend the inclusion of the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, London while the SAHGB recommend the inclusion of the Architecture Registration Board.

Consultation question 9: Do you agree that our proposed approach will ensure that interdisciplinary research is assessed on an equal footing with other types of research? Are there further measures we should consider to ensure that this is the case and that our approach is well understood?

We are concerned about how interdisciplinary work will be assessed. It is not enough to cross refer an individual's outputs to another panel for comment as a single piece of work might involve research ranging from the archaeological sciences and GIS, at one extreme, to religious studies

and literature, at the other. There needs to be explicit guidance to panels on how to manage work that goes beyond their immediate range of expertise.

Consultation question 10: Do you agree that our proposals for encouraging and supporting researcher mobility will have a positive effect; and are there other measures that should be taken within the REF to this end?

We believe that researcher mobility (for example, between museums and HEIs) will have a positive effect but stress that the outputs rather than the mobility itself should be rewarded.

Consultation question 11: Are there any further ways in which we could improve the measures to promote equalities and diversity?

There needs to be careful attention paid to the outputs expected from fractional staff (often female) and from early career staff.

Consultation question 12: Do you have any comments about the proposed timetable?

We believe that given the need to assess the pilot study on impact and the short time period (5 years) between cycles that the REF should take place at least one year later than is currently proposed with submissions taking place at the end of 2013 rather than the end of 2012. There would also considerable value in ensuring some overlap with the previous RAE period. This would give a much greater sense of a unit's longer-term approach to outputs, environment and impact rather than rewarding short-term changes.

Consultation question 13: Are there any further areas in which we could reduce burden, without compromising the robustness of the process?

The current proposals which involve a separate users' and a separate assessors' group seem overly burdensome both to manage and to ensure transparency; a single sub-panel (with sub-groups representing different disciplines and users) should undertake the work involved rather than essentially having three panels (sub-panel, assessors' panel and user's panel) for every area.

Consultation question 14: Do you have any other comments on the proposals?

We wish to simply reiterate the insistence of all three societies that the panel in which we sit must include the title: **'History of Art, Architecture and Design'**