

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

Next steps on REF 2029

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2029 Steering Group

18 December 2025



What is the Research Excellence Framework?

REF 2021

- informs allocation of around £2bn of block-grant funding each year
- provides accountability for public investment in research
- continually evolves, alongside our research base
- drives behaviour and therefore is a significant policy instrument across the UK



Principles and functions for this exercise:

1. REF should fulfil the following purposes:

- **Inform the allocation** of block-grant research funding to HEIs based on research quality
- Provide **accountability for public investment** in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment
- Provide **insight into the health of research** in HEIs in the UK.

2. REF should underpin:

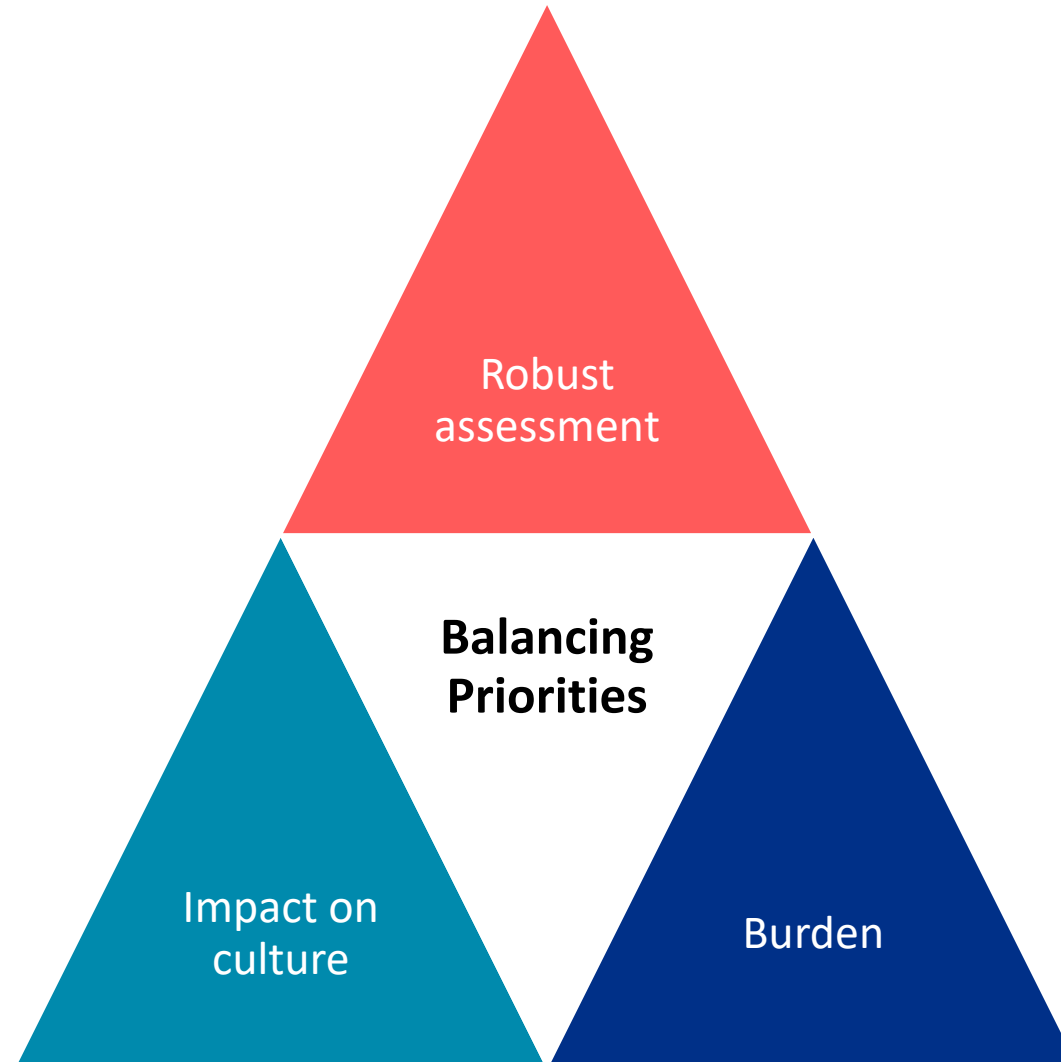
- A research system that produces **high-quality, rigorous** research that is **open** to all;
- An **inclusive and collaborative** research system that supports a diversity of people, ideas, institutions, methodologies, outputs, and activities; and
- An **engaged and impactful** research system that connects research with wider society to bring about positive socio-economic change.

3. REF decision making should be driven by:

- **Robustness** of assessment outcomes
- Impact of the system on **research culture**
- Ensuring that the **bureaucratic burden** of the system is proportionate.

From Initial Decisions published in June 2023.

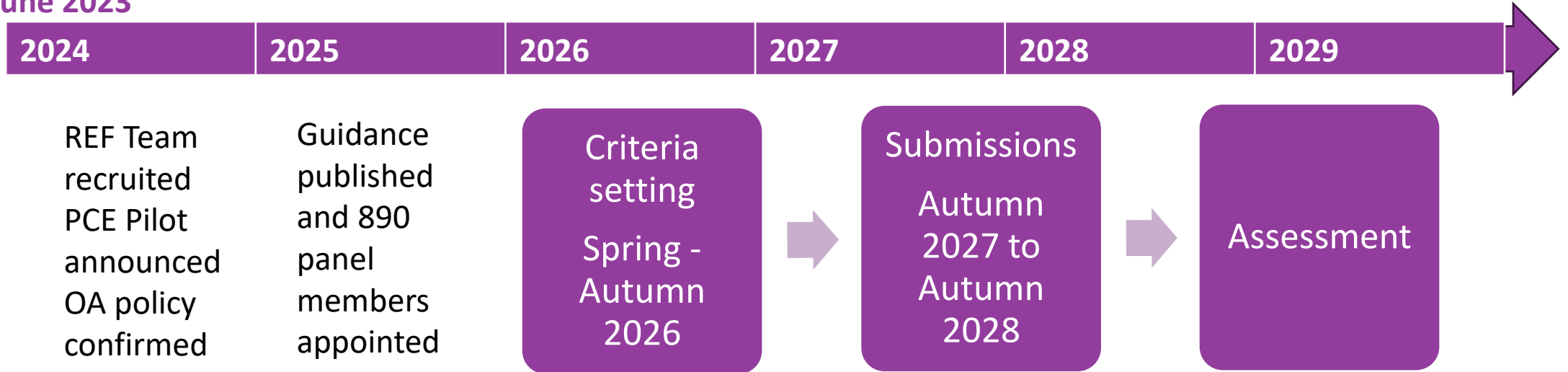
Developing the policy framework



REF 2029 timeline

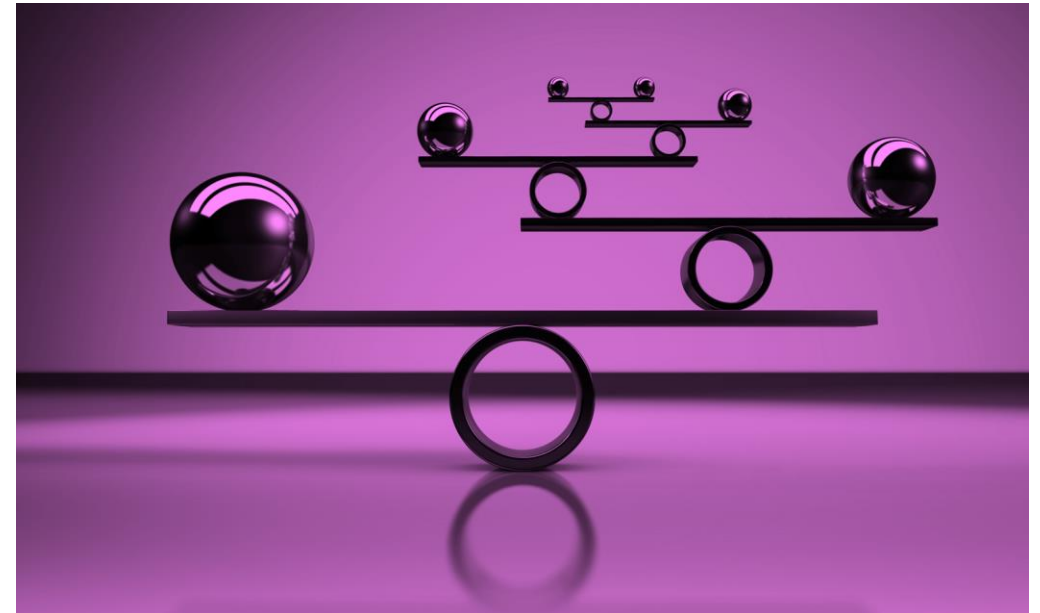
**Initial
Decisions
June 2023**

**Results:
Dec 2029**

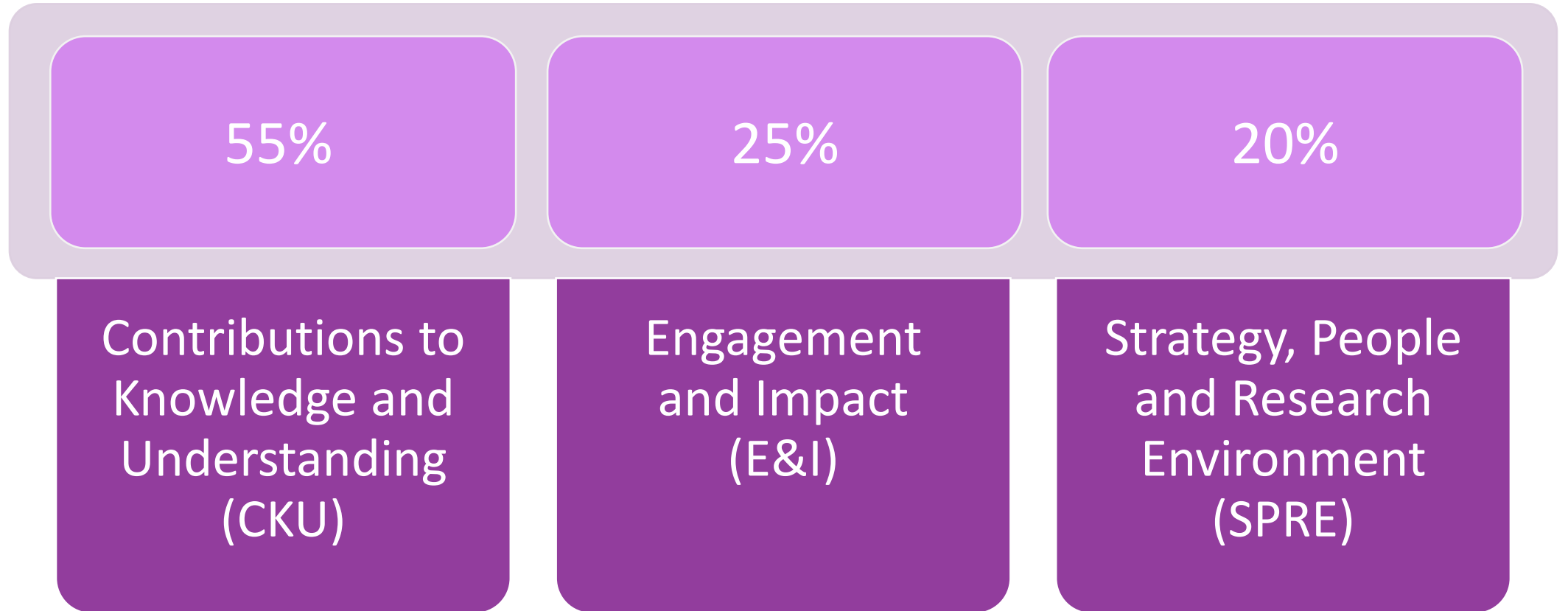


Published on 10 December 2025

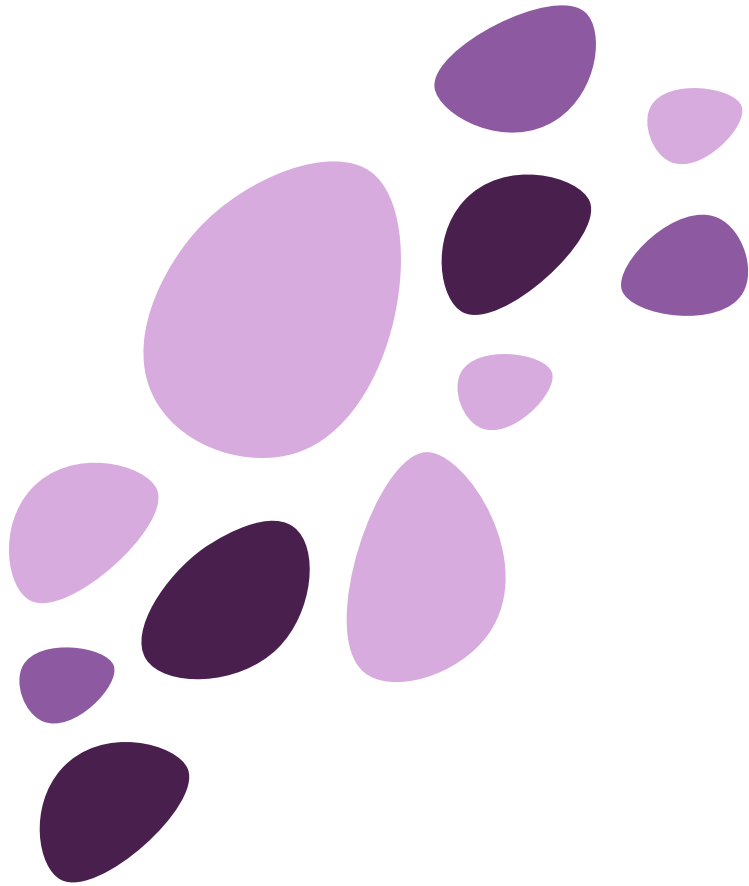
- Weightings confirmed
- Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) guidance
- Updates to Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU) guidance
- Engagement and Impact (E&I) guidance
- An updated timetable
- The People, Culture and Environment Pilot report



Confirmed weightings for REF 2029



Strategy, People and Research Environment



- Celebrates how research strategies enable the building of excellent cultures and research environments.
- Recognises the people who undertake, enable or support research, engagement and impact
- Encourages sustainable and ethical research practices
- Highlights strong, inclusive environments that enable people to conduct world-class research.

Developing Strategy, People and Research Environment for REF 2029

Strategy, People and Research Environment

People, Culture and Environment Pilot

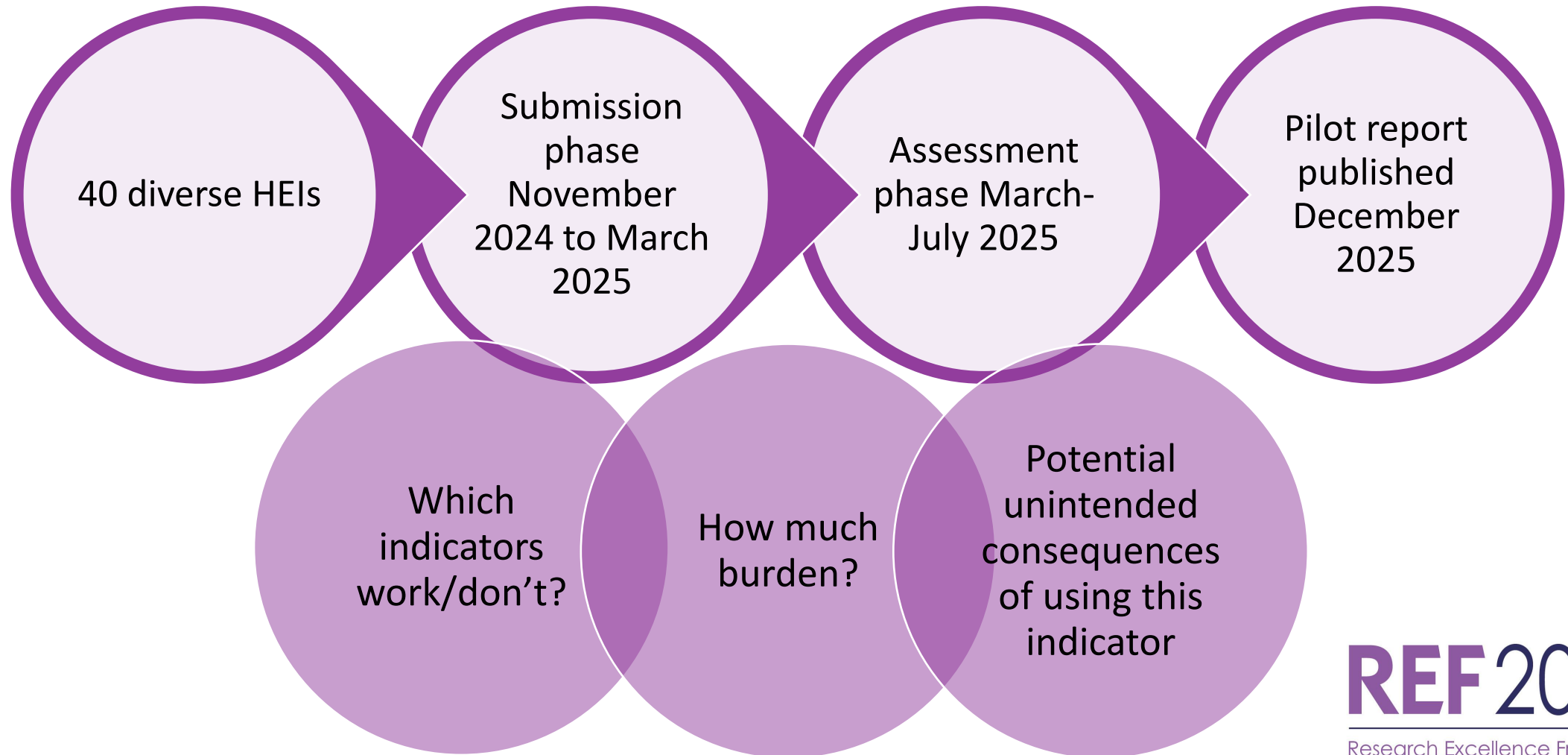
Indicators Project

Initial decisions

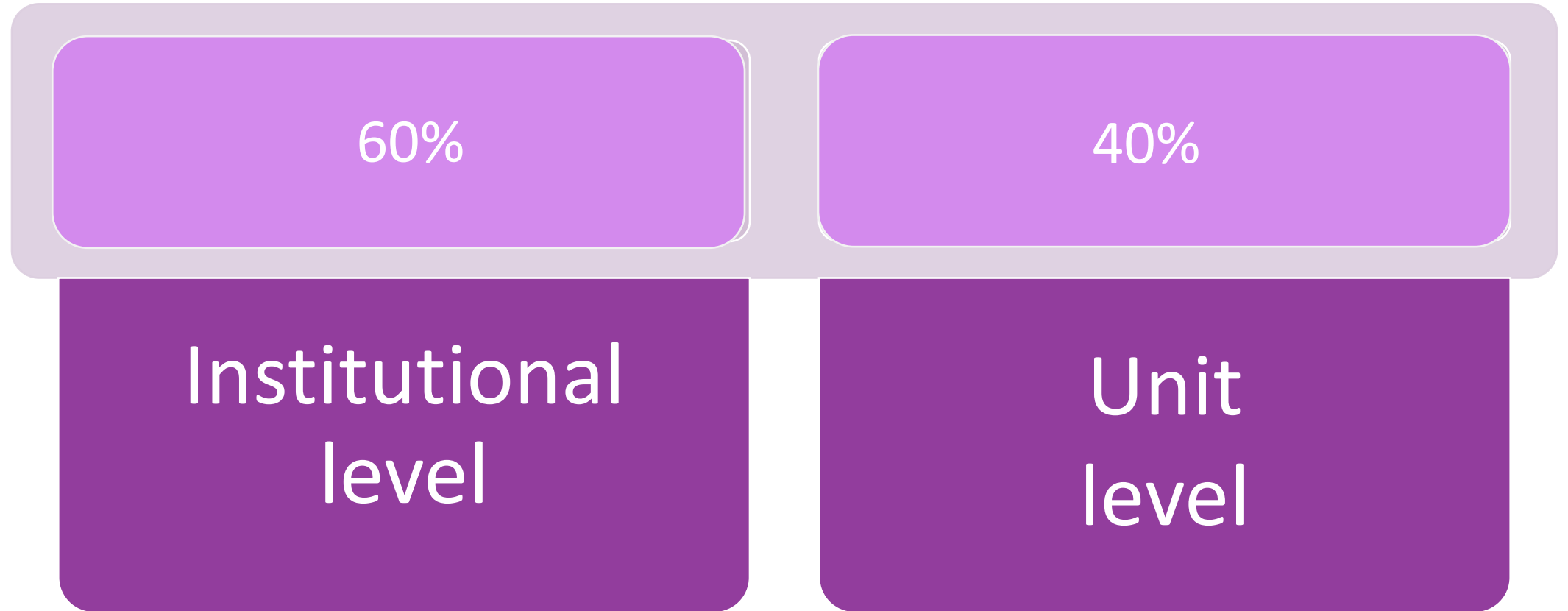
Future Research Assessment Programme

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

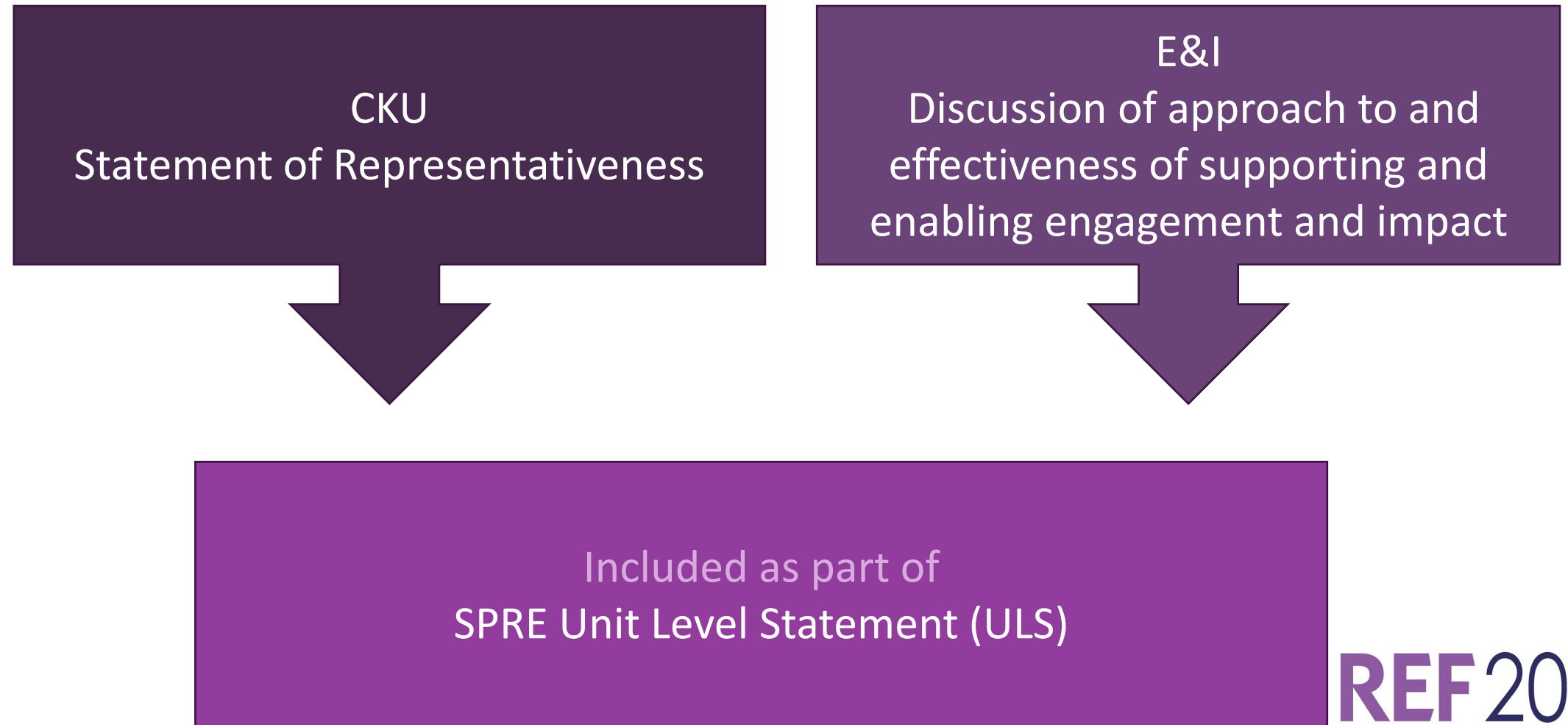
People, Culture and Environment (PCE) - Pilot exercise



SPRE weightings



Disciplinary statements and representativeness








Substantive link policy (Portability)



Limited portability introduced for longform/extended process research outputs for 5 years

Engagement and Impact

-  Template and approach retained from REF 2021.
-  1 Minimum case studies reduced to one
-  2* quality threshold removed.
-  Guidance encourages discussion of engagement strategies and responsible practices
-  Unit-level statements from 'Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding' (CKU) and 'Engagement and Impact (E&I)' removed

Selective submissions

No multi-track
approach

Exploring optional
REF flexibility for
smaller units

Full details to
follow

REF2029 next steps

2025

Winter

Weightings confirmed.
PCE Pilot Report published.
Strategy, People and Research Environment guidance published.
Engagement and Impact guidance published.
Updates to Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding guidance.

2026

Spring

Expert panels meet to develop guidance.

Autumn

Final full guidance is set.

Winter

Special requests open.
Publication of SG papers.

2027

Spring

Survey of submission intentions opens.

Summer

Submission intentions and special requests close.

Autumn

Submission system opens.
Additional panel recruitment.

2028

Autumn

Submission deadline.
Assessment phase begins.

2029

Results published (planned for December 2029).

Criteria setting




Submissions



Assessment

Thank you and stay in touch

- Use QR code to sign up for **REF updates** straight to your inbox.
- Please visit **get involved** on our website to view current opportunities.
- Email us at **info@ref.ac.uk** if you have any suggestions about how we can improve our guidance for you.

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 Research Excellence Framework

