



# Research Excellence in Vietnam (REV)

Going Global Partnership Project

Towards Excellent in Research and Knowledge Transfer

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Purpose of the REV</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Scope of the REV</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Process</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Assessment Framework</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Assessment Results</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>9</b>

# Introduction

## Going Global Partnership Project, British Council Vietnam

A Collaboration between the University of Portsmouth, Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Bournemouth University, University of Mining and Geology and Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (Project Team: Prof Raymond Lee, Dr Bui Thi Ngoc Thuy, Hoang Minh Nguyen, Dr Milena Bobeva, Dr Alastair Morrison, Dr Nga Nguyen and Dr Bui Dinh Tien).

The aim of this project is to propose initial guidelines on the high-level design of a research assessment framework in Vietnam, which will be considered by the relevant Ministries for further development, in consultation with the stakeholders involved. This framework is suggested to be called [Research Excellence in Vietnam \(REV\)](#).

The project team has appointed an expert panel in developing this framework. Members of this panel include:

- ❖ Prof Raymond Lee, University of Portsmouth (Project Lead)
- ❖ Prof Bruce Brown, previously PVC Research University of Brighton and UK REF Main Panel Chair
- ❖ Prof Nachiappan Chockalingam, Staffordshire University, previously UK REF panel member
- ❖ A/Prof Pham Van Tuan, LYDINC Institute of Education and Engineering
- ❖ Dr Tran Nam Tu, Ministry of Education and Training
- ❖ Dr Pham Xuan Thao, Ministry of Science and Technology.

## Purpose of the REV

- To advance research excellence that has academic and socioeconomic impact within Vietnam and globally.
- To embed a sustainable research culture and environment to support excellence in research across the Vietnamese higher education system.
- To establish reliable performance indicators for the excellence of research being undertaken within Vietnamese higher education institutions, informing policy and strategic development, and make this information publicly available.

## Scope of the REV

- The REV recognises the strategic research priorities for Vietnam as a nation, while supporting the diversity of the visions and missions across the Vietnamese higher education institutions.
- The REV supports Vietnam's aspiration to become an upper middle-income country with a knowledge-based economy by 2030. Research impact will drive innovation, prosperity and well-being.
- The REV will evolve as academics and institutions are developing more expertise in the assessment process.
- The REV includes assessment of pedagogic research and its impact. The quality assurance and accreditation processes in Vietnam will consider the outcomes of the REV, and look at how teaching and learning may have been shaped and informed by research including pedagogic work.

It is recommended that the Ministry should consider how higher education institutions be rewarded for research excellence. A funding formula may be applied to the outcomes of the research assessment for the allocation of research funding support to the higher education institutions. This may be based on the volume of research reaching defined quality thresholds. However, the assessment should not involve any consideration of the subsequent funding provided. There may also be other ways to provide incentives to drive research excellence, e.g. linking the assessment outcomes to eligibility for research funding and PhD scholarship bids, establishment of national strategic research centres.

## The Process

Research will be assessed using a national framework (as presented here) on a periodic basis (e.g. every 5 years, to be agreed after these initial guidelines are developed), although higher education institutions are expected to do their own internal self-assessments annually.

Participation of the higher education institutions in REV will be optional. Institutions with missions which are primarily teaching and learning may choose not to participate in the assessment. However, higher education institutions will be required to take part in REV if they would like to receive direct allocation of research funding from the Ministry, assuming that such reward is available as recommended earlier in this document.

Research is broadly defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights and/or knowledge, shared effectively. There will be five assessment panels according to the broad disciplinary areas as defined by the research field classification of the Ministry of Science and Technology in Vietnam.

### Natural sciences

Physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, mathematics, earth and environmental sciences, geography, archaeology

### Engineering and technology

Engineering, computer sciences, informatics, architecture, built

### Medical and pharmaceutical sciences

Clinical medicine, public health, primary care, allied health professions, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, psychology, psychiatry, neurosciences

### Agricultural sciences

Agriculture, food and veterinary sciences

### Social sciences, arts & humanities

Economics, management and business studies, law, social work and sociology, anthropology, education, languages, history, classics, philosophy, theology, religious studies, sport and tourism, art and design (history, practice and theory), drama and dance, films and performing arts

The REV is a criterion-referenced exercise against quality levels as defined by international and national standards of research excellence. To ensure the credibility of the assessment process, the assessment panel will comprise academics appointed by the Ministry locally as well as internationally. The panel will also include stakeholders with specialist knowledge in the appropriate field, beneficiaries or “users” of research from the public sector, business or industry.

The REV will adopt a single framework which underpins the submission and assessment process across all disciplines, with common rules and procedures, standard definitions, and broad generic criteria. It is understood that some research areas are specific to Vietnam, especially social sciences (such as Marxist - Leninist philosophy, Vietnamese studies). They should be assessed using the same framework, benchmarking against international standards. This may pose some challenges in the assessment, but specific guidance may be developed in these areas.

Higher education institutions will make submissions to the assessment panels relevant to their disciplinary areas. For the first round of REV, the assessment panels will not have subpanels or be further divided into units of assessment. (This will be the next stage of development as the volume of research increases and more assessment expertise has been developed.)

## The Assessment Framework

There will be three elements of research assessment.

### (1) Research Outputs

Outputs are the published or publicly available products of research, which can take many forms. These include books, monographs, chapters in books and journal articles as well as performances, exhibitions and other practice research outputs, software, patents, conference proceedings, translations, and digital and visual media.

Research outputs should be assessed by peer review according to originality, significance and rigour:

- “Originality” refers to the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field.
- “Significance” refers to the extent to which the work has influenced the development of knowledge and scholarship, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.
- “Rigour” refers to the extent to which the work adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies.

An assessment panel may decide to use acceptable metrics or citation data to inform their assessment if it is considered appropriate. They will only be used as supplementary information, and peer review is always the primary means of assessment. Impact factor is not

an acceptable metric as it was originally created as a tool to help librarians identify journals to purchase and has a number of well-documented deficiencies as a tool for research assessment. The REV supports the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). Panels will be advised to take note of the limitations of any metrics employed and the suitability in different academic disciplines.

The volume of research outputs which will be submitted for assessment will depend on the number of academic staff in each submission unit, although not every staff member needs to submit outputs and each staff member may submit up to a certain number of outputs. This recognises the fact REV is not an assessment of individuals but that of the unit of submission in a disciplinary area.

The assessment panel will appoint specialist reviewers (nationally and internationally) to adequately assess outputs from a wide range of disciplines. The panel may not be able to assess all the outputs due to the large volume of submissions but will assess a selected number of outputs to ensure the assessment is robust, fair and reliable.

Each research output will be rated according to the following criteria:

4*	•quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour
3*	•quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence
2*	•quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
1*	•quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
0 Unclassified	•outputs not reaching the standard of 1*, or not regarded as research outputs

Regarding interdisciplinary research output, where there is sufficient expertise within an assessment panel, the output will be assessed within the panel. However, where the panel identifies the need for additional expertise from panel in another disciplinary area to assess the output in full, the output may be referred for joint assessment, or where the panel considers it does not have the required expertise, the output may be cross referred. In any case, the original panel will retain the responsibility for recommending the quality profile for all the interdisciplinary work that has been submitted.

## (2) Research Engagement and Impact

Engagement is defined as the interaction between researchers and research end-users for the mutually beneficial transfer of knowledge, technologies, methods or resources.

Socioeconomic impact is defined the demonstratable effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.

Submission will consist of both impact case studies and an accompanying statement to evidence engagement and impact activity beyond case studies. Details of the assessment will be determined after this high-level guideline has been developed. The number of case studies will be dependent on the number of staff members submitted in each unit of assessment.

Research engagement and impact will be assessed in terms of their reach and significance.

- “Reach” refers to how widespread the impact is; the extent, spread, breadth, and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact. It will not be assessed in purely geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries.
- “Significance” refers to how important or valuable the impact is to each beneficiary, the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance of policies, practices, products, services, culture, understanding, awareness or well-being of the beneficiaries.

Each case study will be rated according to the following criteria:

4*	•outstanding engagement and impact in terms of reach and significance
3*	•considerable engagement and impact in terms of reach and significance
2*	•some engagement and impact in terms of reach and significance
1*	•limited engagement and impact in terms of reach and significance
0 Unclassified	•no engagement and impact in terms of reach and significance; or the engagement and impact were not eligible; or the engagement and impact were not underpinned by research produced by the submitting unit

### (3) Research Culture and Environment

Research culture encompasses the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of the researchers in the submission unit and the higher education institution concerned as a whole. It influences researchers’ career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated.

Research environment refers to the environment for supporting research and enabling impact within the unit of assessment as well as the higher education institution.

The assessment of culture and environment should reflect (i) the research priorities of the units of assessment, the higher education institution concerned and the national agenda, and (ii) the mission and vision of the higher education institution.



The submission unit and the higher education institution may refer to some of the criteria of the Vietnamese Government DECREE 99/2019 (Article 10), where appropriate, to support their assessment of research culture and environment, although this is not mandatory. However, the REV does not replace the requirement of research-oriented higher education institutions to meet the expectations of the DECREE.

Each higher education institution will submit (1) an institutional-level culture and environment overview statement (b) and for each submission unit, and a collection of evidence using a defined, questionnaire-style template. The use of a template will create greater consistency across submissions and reduce the associated burden. For example, evidence may include staffing strategy, early career staff development, PhD completions, research strategies employed, grant incomes, infrastructure and facilities, collaborations and esteem. Details of the assessment will be determined after this high-level guideline has been developed.

Research culture and environment will be assessed in terms of vitality and sustainability.

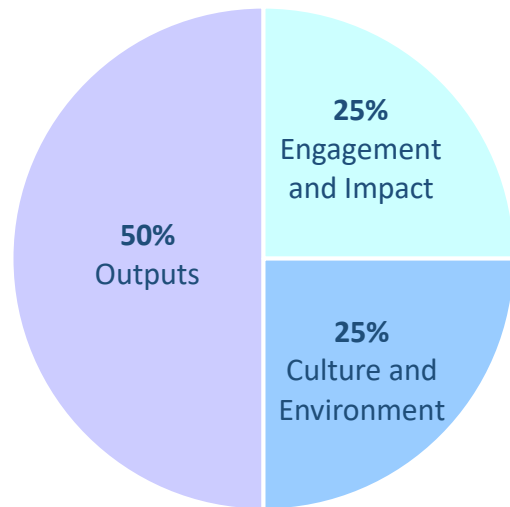
- “Vitality” refers to the extent to which the higher education institution and a submission unit support a thriving and inclusive research culture and environment for all staff and research students, the extent of their engagement with the local and international research and user communities, and their ability to attract excellent postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers.
- “Sustainability” refers to the extent to which the research environment ensures the future health, diversity, wellbeing and wider contribution of the higher education institution and submission unit, including investment in people and infrastructure.

Each submission unit will be rated according to the following criteria:

4*	•culture and environment that are conducive to producing research of world-leading quality, in terms of their vitality and sustainability
3*	•culture and environment that are conducive to producing research of internationally excellent quality, in terms of their vitality and sustainability
2*	•culture and environment that are conducive to producing research of internationally recognised quality, in terms of their vitality and sustainability
1*	•culture and environment that are conducive to producing research of nationally recognised quality, in terms of their vitality and sustainability
0 Unclassified	•culture environment that are not conducive to producing research of 1-star quality.

## Assessment Results

The primary purpose of REV is to assess the research performance of the submission units of the higher education institutions in Vietnam. It is not intended to assess individual staff members. Assessment panels will produce the rating profiles of the three elements of assessment for each submission unit. An overall quality rating of a submission unit will be aggregated according to the percentage weighting of the three elements shown in the chart, reflecting the relative importance of each element.



## Recommendations

The project team and its expert panel would like to recommend the following for the implementation of the assessment framework.

- (1) An “Advisory Group” should be established to work out the full details of the assessment framework. This should expand on the current expert panel of this project and comprise senior Vietnamese and international academics, representatives from the Ministries and key stakeholders.
- (2) The assessment framework should be pilot tested in six universities with the support of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).
- (3) Training of Vietnamese academics and administrators should be carried out to provide a workforce with the required expertise. Considerations should also be given to how reliable research data and metrics could be effectively collected and retrieved for assessment purpose. MOET should ensure the higher education institutions are engaged in these processes.
- (4) Further funding support should be provided by the relevant Ministries and stakeholders to support the above activities (1)-(3).
- (5) The outcomes of the assessment will be made public. The panel should not rank the higher education institutions in the assessment, although it is recognised that other bodies or organisations may employ the publicly available data to produce ranking or league tables.