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## Research Assurance and Accountability return 2025-26

Please submit this return to [researchfunding@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:researchfunding@sfc.ac.uk) by 31 October 2025.

This document contains outlines of guidance and the steps required to complete a Research Assurance and Accountability (RAA) return for Academic Year 2025-26. **The deadline for submission is 31 October 2025.**

Full Guidance may be found at [Research Assurance and Accountability Guidance 2025-26 - Scottish Funding Council](#)

### **Name of the submitting institution:**

Please **confirm** that this return has been signed off by the **Principal or Head of institution** on behalf of the Governing Body.

### **Contact details for people we should approach with queries**

Name:

Job title:

Email address:

Name:

Job title:

Email address:

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## Research Excellence Grant

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In AY 2025-26 SFC will allocate £264.4m to Scottish institutions through REG.

### Governance and assurance

- a) This document contains the guidance and space for your return to completed for this year's Research Assurance and Accountability (RAA) return for Academic Year 2025-26. **The deadline for submission is 31 October 2025.** Full guidance can be found at [Research Assurance and Accountability Guidance 2025-26 - Scottish Funding Council](#)
- b) The Research Assurance and Accountability process is the key element for monitoring the Research Excellence expectation within the SFC Outcomes Framework ([SFC/AN/11/2024](#)). There is no duplication between the Outcomes Framework (OF) and Assurance Model (AM) and this RAA process.

In this section we are looking for high-level information on how institutions approve how REG is used and provide themselves with assurance that funding is being spent appropriately.

1. What are the governance arrangements in place to approve the use of REG within your institution? This should include details of:
  - (a) where responsibility lies for internal distribution of your institution's REG allocation.
  - (b) how decisions are taken; and
  - (c) the assurance mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate use of REG funding.

(Max 300 words)

If appropriate, please note instead “No change from previous return”.

This space may also be used to record:

- Clarifications made to SFC following the previous return;
- reasons for any change in approach.

### Q1 Governance Arrangements for REG (Max 300 words)

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2. **NEW OPTIONAL QUESTION:** We are aware that risks relating to research and its funding may be featured on institutional risk registers. Are there risks you have identified that you would like to highlight to SFC? This may particularly include those where the risk rating is increasing. You may also wish to comment on how you are dealing with these risks. Recognising the potential for commercial and other sensitivities, responses to these questions will **NOT** be shared in an identifiable manner. This will help us better understand and represent the sector. (Max 300 words)

**Q2 Institutional Risk Register (Max 300 words)**

**Uses and value of REG**

Here we are looking for information on how REG is allocated within institutions, what (at a high level) the allocation achieves, and how it underpins central institutional functions and strategic initiatives as a long-term source of funding. Our focus is on what REG does for you; we are not requesting any form of financial reporting on use of the allocation.

3. Has your approach to internal distribution of REG changed since the statement made for last year's RAA return?

**Q3 Internal Changes of Distribution of REG – yes/no – if no, go to Q5**

4. How, in broad terms, do you distribute REG internally?
- Allocate fully to schools based on REF results.
  - Allocate mainly (i.e., the largest defined category) to schools (based on REF) but take or receive an allocation for central activity (e.g., cross-institution strategic initiatives and central services).
  - Hold mainly centrally and use for strategic initiatives and/or for central services.
  - Funds are held and managed centrally for all purposes (NEW CATEGORY, REFLECTING 2024 RESPONSES)
  - Other.

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**Q4 How REG is Distributed – select one of the above.**

**Q4b How REG is Distributed – If selecting ‘other’ please describe briefly (max 50 words)**

5. Have the three areas REG funding mainly supports within your institution changed since the statement made for last year’s RAA return?

**Q5 Changes to the three areas supported by REG – yes/no – if no, go to Q7**

6. What types of activity does REG support within your institution? Please **choose the three areas that REG funding mainly supports** within your institution. We are aware that decisions may be made at a local level where REG is allocated to Schools; please give an estimation/general answer at an aggregate level.

- Enabling staff employment.
- Maintaining and/or renewing infrastructure.
- Supporting postgraduate research students.
- Underpinning direct research costs.
- Pump-priming and capacity building.
- Providing funding (including match-funding) for strategic initiatives.
- Supporting centralised research services and/or professional support services.
- Research culture/environment.
- Other.

Please also use the ‘Other’ text box if you wish to provide further contextual information.

**Q6 Three main activities supported by REG**

**Q6a Other**

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**Q6b Main activities supported by REG – definition of “other” and/or further contextual information (max 300 words)**

**Q6b Other**

### Investment examples

Here we are looking for examples of REG being used for long-term/multi-year, or cross-institutional strategic, *investments*, whereas the case studies requested below are looking for examples of where a long-term investment has resulted in *impact/returns*. This may include activities referenced in the previous ‘Uses and value of REG’ section. Examples of good or novel practice, and particularly examples where activity would not be possible without REG are also welcome. This is not intended to be exhaustive list, nor as detailed as a case study, rather a couple of sentences demonstrating examples of the activities REG supports.

We will use answers to this question (and the REG case studies) to develop our evidence base on the importance of REG as a stable and continuous funding source for research in Scotland.

7. **MERGED QUESTION:** Highlight any ways in which REG supports cross-institution strategic objectives or long-term/multiyear activity, either centrally or at school level. (Max 500 words)

**Q7 How REG supports cross-institution strategic objectives or long-term/multiyear activity. (Max 500 words)**

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## Research environment and culture(s)

In this section we are looking for information on institutions' plans to develop and support positive research environments and cultures, and the role played by REG in their development.

### Challenges and progress relating to last year, aims for this year

8. **NEW QUESTION:** Please comment on progress towards meeting the aims and plans for your research environment and research culture(s) set out in last year's RAA return, as well as any challenges you have experienced. (Max 300 words)

**Q8 Progress on plans for research environment and research culture(s) (Max 300 words)**

9. How is your institution continuing to create an excellent research environment and positive research culture(s)? Please provide a high-level description of your institution's aims and plans for this AY, indicating priorities, key highlights and how REG supports this development. We envisage that this may include, but not be limited to, areas such as; promoting open research; valuing a broad range of research outputs, including civic and public engagement; promoting reproducibility; and supporting and empowering research-enabling staff. (Please provide max 300 words on overall plans for the next AY and up to 250 words on a specific example).

**Q9 Describe your Institution's aims and plans for research environment and research culture(s) (Max 300 words on overall plans for next AY and 250 words on specific examples)**

### Concordats

Concordats have a role in assurance and implementing best practice within the sector. We expect that institutions receiving SFC funding meet the requirements of the revised [Research Integrity Concordat](#) and the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#).

To minimise burden and duplication we ask that institutions provide links to annual reports already provided for these concordats, rather than replicating detail here.

### Research Integrity Concordat

10. Please provide a link to your institution's most recent annual statement on research integrity on your institution's website.

**Q10 Link to Institutional Annual Statement on Research Integrity**

### Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

11. If your institution is a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, please provide a link to your institution's latest annual report.
12. If your institution is not a signatory, please provide a short overview of how the principles of the Concordat are being addressed. (Max 300 words)

**Q11 Is your Institution a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers? Yes/no**

**If not, please provide details on how principles of Concordat are being addressed (Max 300 words)**

### Other

SFC is in the process of formalising its position in relation to the *Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practices* and the *Technician Commitment*. We do not require institutions to become signatories to these; however we expect institutions to be familiar with their principles.

13. **NEW QUESTION:** Please comment briefly on your institution's current or planned position on association with (a) the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practices and (b) the Technician Commitment. (Max 200 words)

**Q12 (max 200 words) Institutional position on:**

**a) Environmental Sustainability & Research & Innovation Practices**

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## **b) Technician Commitment**

### Research Excellence Grant (REG) Case Studies

The impact case studies provided in this section will contribute to our evidence base on the importance of undirected core funding to support research in Scotland. We will also draw on these to demonstrate the value and impact of research in Scotland.

To help build a balanced database of case studies, in some years we will suggest a focus for these. For example, one year we may particularly seek case studies on pump priming, the next on research careers and institutional level activities, the following on AHSS and/or an explicit area of SG priority. This will help us to fill gaps in our evidence base with some regularity and provide clarity on the kind of evidence we are seeking.

14. Please provide two, or more, case studies of up to 500 words each on the use which has been made of REG at your institution. These should be suitable for a non-specialist audience, avoiding jargon or excessive acronym use.
15. Please ensure that case studies directly reference the contribution of REG.
16. SFC may wish to use case studies for a variety of purposes and audiences so institutions should clearly identify any case studies which should be treated as confidential.
17. We acknowledge that for smaller institutions developing novel case studies for every year may be a challenge and updated or refreshed case studies used in previous years are acceptable.
18. We are looking for **case studies in two categories**:
  - 1) **AS IN 2024: Delivering research impact** – case studies which demonstrate where past use of your institution’s REG has resulted in research impact.
  - 2) **NEW CATEGORY: Building the foundations**: case studies which demonstrate how REG contributes to maintaining and developing Scotland’s research capability and supports positive research cultures.
19. Where possible, we ask that institutions submit at least one case study from each category.



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## Delivering research impact

20. Case studies should highlight where past use of your institution's REG has resulted in research impact, broadly understood. There is no specified time period for these case studies but examples that show the long-term nature of research investment and impact are particularly valuable.
21. We understand that institutional approaches to use and distribution of REG funding can make it difficult to track impact and capacity back exactly to these sources. Broad uses, for example as core funding for a School or research centre, are acceptable and specificity, where possible, is ideal, for example if it is possible to highlight the level (even approximate) of REG invested. Where possible please also include why REG investment made more sense than another funding source (for example due to the flexibility/agility of REG, its ability to top up the full costs of research projects, its long-term stable nature etc).
22. Impact from research contributes to many national and international challenges and priorities, research by its nature seeks to improve and contribute to the world around us. Case studies should demonstrate how REG has contributed to research impact and, where possible, this should be linked to Scottish Government priorities such as those outlined in the National Performance Framework and the Programme for Government.

## Building the foundations

23. Case studies in this category should highlight where past or current use of REG is contributing to maintaining and developing Scotland's research capability. For example this could include evidence of how REG is enabling or contributing to: supporting excellent research cultures; developing a world-leading inclusive workforce; driving entrepreneurship and university-industry collaboration; supporting the central services which support and enable the research environment; building partnerships and collaborations; leveraging investment; developing and maintaining world-class infrastructure; building the teams and infrastructure for addressing multidisciplinary national and global challenges; or supporting agility and responsiveness.
24. Again, it would be helpful to be specific as possible, for example by highlighting the level (even approximate) of REG invested and whether this activity would have been possible without REG investment. Reference to how the nature of REG makes this investment possible will be useful (for example due to the flexibility/agility of REG, its ability to top up the full costs of research projects, its long-term stable nature etc).

### Q13 Case Study 1

**AS IN 2024: Delivering research impact – case studies which demonstrate where past use of your institution's REG has resulted in research impact.**

**Title:**

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**Weblinks:**

**2-4 keywords:**

**Should any information in this case study be treated as confidential? Yes/no**

**Narrative (max 500 words):**

### **Q13 Case Study 2**

**NEW CATEGORY: Building the foundations: case studies which demonstrate how REG contributes to maintaining and developing Scotland's research capability and supports positive research cultures.**

**Title:**

**Weblinks:**

**2-4 keywords:**

**Should any information in this case study be treated as confidential? Yes/no**

**Narrative (max 500 words):**

### **Q13 Additional Case Study**

**CATEGORY:**

**Title:**

**Weblinks:**

**2-4 keywords:**

**Should any information in this case study be treated as confidential? Yes/no**

**Narrative (max 500 words):**

### **Q13 Additional Case Study**

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**CATEGORY:**

**Title:**

**Weblinks:**

**2-4 keywords:**

**Should any information in this case study be treated as confidential? Yes/no**

**Narrative (max 500 words):**

25. Please copy and paste the cell above for any further case studies.
26. We would welcome suitable images directly related to your case studies, for use on the SFC's website and publications. If you provide these, please include as a separate attachment.
27. Images should have a [resolution of at least 1920x1080pixels](#) and have one of the [following formats: .jpg, .jpeg, .png or .tiff](#).
28. Could you also please confirm the following:
- [Your IP agreement with the photographer permits third party usage of the image;](#)
  - [The subjects' consent agreement covers reproduction by a third party.](#)

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## Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG)

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29. The general information provided within the return is for internal use and will not be shared more widely in an identifiable format without prior consent. However, SFC may wish to use case studies for a variety of purposes and audiences and institutions should clearly identify any case studies which should be treated as confidential.

### RPG return

#### Retrospective overview

Here we are looking for information on progress, or changes in approach, against outcomes set in previous years and any new outcomes you have identified.

30. Institutions should include in their returns a brief, high-level and summative overview of how they have made use of RPG funding, and the progress they have made towards achieving the outcomes set by their institution.
31. **NEW QUESTION:** Please describe progress against your RPG outcomes set in 2024 and note whether these outcomes are continuing for 2025-26 (or beyond), complete or superseded. (Max 600 words. Suggested max per outcome 150 words)

**Q14 Progress against 2024 RPG Outcomes – (Max 600 words - suggested 150 per outcome)**

**Continuing /  
Complete /  
Superseded?**

Outcome 1:

Outcome 2:

Please add extra rows for progress against further 2024 outcomes.

#### Outcomes

32. Institutions should record a **minimum** of two high-level outcomes demonstrating what they intend to achieve in the next year using RPG funding. Institutions receiving £500k of RPG or more per year are encouraged to set a larger number of outcomes. Please note whether these outcomes are continuing or new. (Max 300 words)
33. Institutions may choose to set individual outcomes, shared outcomes with one or more

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other institutions, or a combination of both. Multi-year outcomes would be welcomed.

34. Some uses of RPG funding will be for business-as-usual costs, and the outcomes may reflect this. Where appropriate, outcomes may persist from year to year.
35. We recognise the wide variety of achievements which individual institutions might want to address in setting their outcomes. Input from those in the institution doing PGR development work will help focus the choice.

**Q15 Min 2 High level outcomes (Max 300 words)**

**Continuing /  
new**

Outcome 1:

Outcome 2:

Please add extra rows for further 2025 outcomes.

## Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) Case Studies

36. Each institution is also asked to provide one, or more, case studies of up to 500 words demonstrating the past or current use of RPG funding in your institution. Case studies should be suitable for a non-specialist audience, avoiding jargon or excessive acronym use. They should demonstrate how the institution has used RPG to support the purposes of the Grant.
37. SFC may wish to use case studies for a variety of purposes and audiences and institutions should clearly identify any case studies which should be treated as confidential.

**Q16 RPG Case Study (Up to 500 words)**

**Title:**

**Weblinks:**

**2-4 key words:**

**Should any information in this case study be treated as confidential? Yes/no**

**Narrative (max 500 words):**

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**Q16 Additional RPG Case Study (Up to 500 words)**

**Title:**

**Weblinks:**

**2-4 keywords:**

**Should any information in this case study be treated as confidential? Yes/no**

**Narrative (max 500 words):**

38. Please copy and paste the cell above for any further case studies.
39. We would welcome suitable images directly related to your case studies, for use on the SFC's website and publications. If providing these, please include as a separate attachment.
40. Images should have a resolution of at least 1920x1080pixels and have one of the following formats: .jpg, .jpeg, .png or .tiff.
41. Could you also please confirm the following:
- Your IP agreement with the photographer permits third party usage of the image;
  - The subjects' consent agreement covers reproduction by a third party.