

## TEN TOP TIPS FOR MAXIMISING OUTPUT QUALITY FOR REF

1. There is no magic formula other than making the output the best it can be.
2. Type of output: check with sub-panel feedback for REF2014. In some sub-panels, books were twice as likely as journal articles to be 4\*, edited books and chapters fared much worse. In many of the sciences, journal articles were the clear gold standard. In other words, there are clear disciplinary differences, but also equally clear patterns whereby certain types of publications are likely to score more highly on a given (sub-) panel.<sup>1</sup>
3. Location of output: high impact factor journals/top publishers *tended* to do better not least because of higher refereeing standards. Feedback from these journals with revise and resubmits helps – sometimes dramatically – to improve pieces. But note: *quality outputs seek quality outlets rather than quality outlets making outputs high quality.*
4. Be self-critical: where is the significance, originality and rigour in your piece? Can they be improved? How?
5. Be ambitious rather than incrementalist
6. Locate your work in a wider debate, thereby establishing *why* it is significant. Do this early on and *not* in the conclusion where it might appear merely an afterthought. Make this contribution to the wider debate integral to the piece, even if the focus is on a niche area.
7. Advance knowledge rather than fill in gaps – and make it clear that this is what you are doing and how you are doing it.
8. Be explicit about the methodology used.
9. Use best available sources – don't use secondary when primary are available. Quantity has a quality of its own.
10. Be explicit about what you are trying to do early on, not just in terms of structure/focus of piece, but with reference to originality, significance and rigour

---

<sup>1</sup> REF 2014 guidelines made it clear that there was no prior expectation of certain types of outputs being weighted more heavily, therefore the inference here is that certain types of outputs more readily reflect REF criteria, and that quality research also seeks these same outlets.