



Professor Glyn Howatson

May 22, 2025 10:08 BST

Northumbria Professor appointed as REF sub-panel Deputy Chair

Northumbria University's [Professor Glyn Howatson](#) will be playing a key role in the next national assessment of research quality across UK universities, it has been announced today.

The outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment are

used to determine how around £2 billion of public funding is allocated – making it of key importance to higher education institutions.

With UK Universities and research institutions busy preparing submissions for REF 2029, work is already in progress to pull together a team of academic experts to lead the assessment process in each of the 34 areas of research being reviewed – known as Units of Assessment (UoA).

It was today announced that Professor Howatson will take the role of Deputy Chair of UoA 24, which covers Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism.

The announcement is a personal achievement for Professor Howatson, who only entered the world of academia later in life, following a career in the army.

With his own research focussing on exercise physiology – in particular stress, recovery and adaptation to strenuous exercise – Professor Howatson said it was a privilege to contribute to research within his discipline as Deputy Chair and a great opportunity to collaborate and learn from others appointed to the panel.

“I was a previous panel member during the last REF assessment in 2021 and found the process extremely rewarding,” he said. “This particular unit of assessment is very diverse, and working alongside people from different institutions and from a wide variety of disciplines is a stimulating, challenging, but always rewarding process. It is fair to say that all panel members have a sense of pride and a feeling of doing something of value to the wider community.

“This time I wanted to contribute even further which is why I put myself forward for a leadership role. REF is so important in setting key benchmarks in academic research, and providing accountability for the public in how research funding is spent, and I’m really looking forward to representing Northumbria and the wider discipline in the process.”

Northumbria is one of only seven modern universities with academics selected for Chair or Deputy Chair roles in REF 2029, reflecting the University’s transformation into a research-intensive institution.

During the last two REF assessments in 2014 and 2021, Northumbria had the biggest rise in research power ranking of any UK university, going from 80th in 2008 to 23rd in 2021.

[Professor Louise Bracken](#) is Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange at Northumbria University. She said: “This is fantastic recognition for Glyn and underlines his standing in his field of research. Glyn played a full and active role as a panel member in REF 2021 and it's exciting that he will step up to be the Deputy Chair for UoA 24 in REF 2029.”

The panel Chairs and Deputy Chairs announced today will lead their units of assessment through the criteria setting phase, beginning later this year, and on through to the final assessment.

They are now working to appoint their full panels, ensuring that membership reflects the full range of required expertise. These appointments will be announced in summer 2025.

Speaking about today's announcement, REF Director Rebecca Fairbairn said: "I'm delighted to welcome this outstanding group to lead the REF 2029 sub-panels. Their deep expertise and broad perspectives will be central to building an assessment process that is fair, rigorous, and trusted by the research community. We have been working in partnership with the sector throughout this process, and I'm grateful to everyone who expressed interest - your engagement is what strengthens the credibility and value of the REF across our research landscape."

[Find out more about REF 2029.](#)

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and

levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk

--- Please contact media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

Contacts



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

Head of Corporate Communications (interim)

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk