

How to write a 4* paper for REF

Outline and agenda

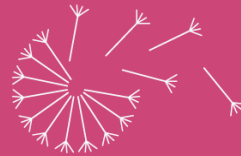
Half-day (3-hour) session:

Virtual delivery

training@fasttrackimpact.com

Fast Track Impact

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Delivered from 2025 by the Institute for Methods Innovation,
a registered non-profit organisation.

Course description

Discuss how to write a 4* paper for REF2029 with other colleagues submitting to your Unit of Assessment. Learn how to demonstrate originality, rigour and significance in different types of academic contribution, and read and discuss lower and higher scoring papers to calibrate what you have learned to your discipline. Participants receive a free electronic and audio copy of the second edition of [The Research Impact Handbook](#).

Key benefits:

- Learn about the importance of signposting REF criteria in titles, abstracts, introductions and conclusions
- See examples of 4* writing to consider how to demonstrate originality, rigour and significance in different types of academic contribution
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of higher and lower scoring papers from your discipline, to embed lessons and calibrate to your Unit of Assessment
- Discuss how you can support others in your discipline to improve your writing for REF.

At the end of the workshop:

- You receive slides and links to free resources to help you embed impact in your research
- You have the option to make a commitment to an action based on the course and receive a follow-up email from Prof Reed to check in and help as necessary after a month.
- Prof Reed continues to answer all questions from participants via email after the course, guaranteeing a response to all questions within one week.

Indicative agenda

Start: 09:30 am (20-minute break included)

Part 1: Writing for REF

- Introduction: writing 4* outputs
- Demonstrate three things
- Examples of 4* writing
- The importance of your title
- Summary
- Discussion: demonstrating originality, rigour and significance in different types of contribution

Part 2: Workshop

- Small group work: Discuss each paper, finding arguments for why each may have been given a higher or lower mark
- Which paper did you think was better?
- Why?
- What were its strengths and weaknesses?
- What were the weaknesses and redeeming features of the other paper?
- Closing discussion: how can you support each other as a group to improve your writing for REF?

Close: 12:30 pm

About Fast Track Impact

[Fast Track Impact](#) is an international training platform, delivered by the [Institute for Methods Innovation](#), a non-profit organisation. Its mission is to change the way busy researchers generate and share knowledge so that their ideas can change the world and they can get their thinking time back.

Fast Track Impact runs training for researchers from every discipline, from PhD students to Professors, from departmental away days to cross-institution training days. It has trained 15,000+ researchers from more than 200 institutions in 55 countries.

About the trainer



Professor Mark Reed

Prof Reed works with rural communities to enhance the governance of natural and agri-food systems, and his research on impact is changing the way researchers around the world generate and share knowledge so they can change the world. Mark is the Co-Director of the Thriving Natural Capital Challenge Centre and Professor of Rural Entrepreneurship at SRUC, Research Lead for the IUCN UK Peatland Programme and Co-Chair of UNEP's Global Peatland Initiative Research Working Group.

The goal of the centre he co-directs is to build and study new ecosystem markets that can significantly increase funding to meet net zero targets and reverse biodiversity decline, while supporting thriving rural communities. Prof Reed was one of the original architects of the Peatland Code and sits on its Executive Board, helping to channel private investment into peatland restoration across the UK. He is working with teams to develop ecosystem markets for soil carbon from regenerative agriculture, saltmarsh restoration and agroforestry, and he is working closely with Defra and the Scottish Government to design the policy and governance frameworks necessary to facilitate high-integrity ecosystem markets.

Prof Reed is the author of four books, including *The Research Impact Handbook* and *Impact Culture*, and has written some of the most highly-cited papers on stakeholder engagement. He uses this evidence to train researchers around the world to use their work for social good. Prof Reed has over 200 publications on environmental governance and impact with over half of these in the top 10% most-cited worldwide. He has led over 20 projects, worth more than £4.5M and contributed to over 30 other projects.