



The Evolution of the REF in the UK

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15:00 – 16:15

Room 408-410, Meng Wah Complex, HKU

Abstract:

As a policy instrument the REF might best be described as an inducement. Such instruments assume that policy targets - academics, Faculties and Universities - will react to small rewards to produce a greater quantity of desirable goods, high quality research outputs, because they already possess the capacity to respond positively. The inducements include direct fiscal payments, termed quality related (QR) income, and positions in league tables. The latter are seen as sending messages to potential students about the quality of a particular Faculty and therefore its attractiveness as a place to pay fees to study. Such a system is open to 'game playing', for example by only entering a small fraction of a Faculty's academics into the Research Assessment process in order to boost the Faculty's position in the league tables at the cost of reducing their QR income. This workshop will explain how the Research Assessment process has evolved over time in the UK to counter such 'game playing'. In addition, I will also examine how the inclusion of the impact component of the REF is an attempt to strengthen the Theory of Action of the REF policy. This will then lead into a description of how the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge has adapted its strategy for the upcoming 2021 REF exercise.

About the speaker:



Geoff Hayward is Professor of Education at the Faculty of Education of the University of Cambridge. He was Head of the School of Education at the University of Leeds before joining the University of Cambridge. Professor Hayward started his academic career as a research biologist at the Universities of Oxford and Liverpool. He taught in the Further Education sector for five years and has been involved in the training and education of teachers across both Primary and Secondary phases at the Liverpool Institute of Higher Education, Universities of Oxford and Leeds. His research interests include vocational education and training policy and practice; social disadvantage and education; transitions into Higher Education and the labour market; and learning transfer.

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