Report from Chair of QMiP REF working party and incoming QMiP Chair

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Providing REF support for our members has been a priority area of QMiP’s work for a number of years. When REF panel membership announcements were made in March 2018, the lack of any appropriate qualitative representation on the UoA4 panel was extremely disheartening. We have voiced our concerns at every opportunity within the BPS and more widely. In January 2019, we were delighted by the announcement that a qualitative expert will be appointed to the UoA4 panel at the earliest opportunity. Whilst this is excellent news, at the time of writing the appointment has not yet been made. To restore confidence in the qualitative psychology community, the appointee will need sufficient expertise to review the full range of qualitative psychology research. We remain troubled that there has been a need to make the case for such an appointment at all (whilst there were issues faced by qualitative psychologists in REF2014 which we have described in previous editions of QMiP Bulletin, there was at least appropriate and recognised expertise in qualitative approaches on the panel).

We do of course very much appreciate the UoA4 Chair listening and responding to our concerns. We have been delighted to receive strong support from the BPS centrally and from across a number of other BPS Sections and Divisions. We will continue to work together with these colleagues to ensure qualitative work is given appropriate recognition as part of the full scope of our discipline. There are extensive debates around whether or not REF is fit for purpose, and we can personally attest to the volume of time taken up by activities relating to REF which might well have been better spent actually working on significant, original and rigorous qualitative research. Our primary concern though is to support QMiP members as best we can. Our REF working group have produced guidance for qualitative psychologists on how best to ‘write for REF’ (insert link) and we hope this is useful. Our future plans include working with the BPS to develop a membership survey so that members’ experiences throughout the REF process can be captured. Although we hope not to have these same arguments in the future, we have too often encountered scepticism about the genuine impact of REF on our members. We hope that this survey will provide us with this evidence, and better inform how we can support and advocate for our members. REF will once again be a discussion topic at QMiP conference, and we will be in touch with more information about the BPS survey plans in due course. Please do engage with it because it really will help strengthen our case and help us to help you.

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