

## **PAC Position Statement - REF Post-2021 (in collaboration with BAM and PSA Special Interest Groups)**

### **Introduction**

The importance of public service delivery is demonstrated in its integration across a wide range of units of assessment including in A2 (Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care); C13 (Architecture); C16 (Economics and Econometrics); C17 (Business and Management Studies); C18 (Law); C19 (Politics and International Studies); C20 (Social Work and Social Policy); C21 (Sociology); C23 (Education) and D34 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management).

This breadth of coverage demonstrates the inter- and trans-disciplinary basis of our subject area and the significant impact that public services have on our society. Government spending accounts for between 35-40% of UK GDP and employment in the UK public sector (excluding private or Third Sector organisations that operate many public services) is 15-20% of the total workforce (and higher in the devolved regions). No part of society is unaffected by the role of the State and the design and delivery of public services. This means that public administration as subject must reflect the reality of public service delivery. What we bring as public administration academics is the theory-informed analysis of that practice.

### **Definition of the subject**

Public administration, in all of its forms and practices, includes (but is not limited to) public management, public leadership and public governance. It is the study of the planning, allocation, use and evaluation of public resources. In this way, public administration encompasses the institutional architecture and processes that are required to implement public policy.

The 'space' of public administration ranges from the supranational level to community-based public services. Equally, the study of public service delivery involves understanding the relationships between a complex network of actors and distributed forms of governance that include public, private and third sector organisations. Public administration provides an understanding of the management and leadership of public services, including that in education, environment, economic development, housing, public health, cultural and leisure services, healthcare and emergency services. The subject's research also encompasses pedagogic research on the teaching and development of public service leaders.

Primarily our research concerns the implementation of political decisions and the impact those decisions have on communities, including marginalised groups. In our work, we collaborate with multiple stakeholders across all sectors. The subject area draws on a wide range of theoretical approaches including sociology, economics, planning, politics, sociology, economics, geography, ethnography, critical management studies and philosophy. The methodologies adopted in exploring this subject are equally diverse including innovative, co-productive and action learning research methods.

### **The Future of Public Administration in REF 2021**

Our research indicates that 30-40% of impact case studies in C17 (Business and Management Studies) have a public administration link. As such it is important that this Unit of Assessment recognises the above definition of public administration for the purposes of providing clarity to institutions who may wish to submit to this Unit. It is equally important

that the panel members recognise this definition and that members of this sub-panel include public administration specialists to properly scrutinise submissions. Therefore, we recommend that:

- 1) The above definition be reflected in the descriptor for Unit of Assessment 17 in post-2021 REF.
- 2) That for REF post-2021, a commitment is made to ensure the criteria panel and assessment panel for Unit of Assessment 17 consists of an appropriate proportion of public administration scholars. Specifically that decisions on the criteria panel and assessment panel take into account that government spending represents 35-40% of GDP; employment in the UK public sector is 15-20% of the total workforce and an anticipated 30-40% of impact case study submissions have a public administration link.
- 3) That, as the UK Learned Society for Social Work and Public Administration, the Joint University Council will continue to work with HEFCW, Research England, Scottish Funding Council, Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE) and UK Department for the Economy in preparing for REF post-2021.

This position statement was developed at an away day in Edinburgh on 12 March 2019.

**Co-authors:**

Dr Karin Bottom, University of Birmingham – PAC Vice-Chair (Learning and Teaching)  
Professor John Connolly, University of West of Scotland – Co-convenor of Political Studies Association (PSA) Public Administration and Public Policy Specialist Group  
Dr Ian Elliott, Northumbria University – PAC Chair and JUC Vice-Chair  
Dr Russ Glennon, Nottingham Trent University – Chair of British Academy of Management (BAM) Public Management and Governance Special Interest Group  
Professor Peter Murphy, Nottingham Trent University – REF 2021 Member of Sub-panel 17: Business and Management Studies and PAC Vice-Chair (Research)