THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

The GSA Practice Research Template: a guide

The GSA, like other HEIs submitting to REF Panel D (and particularly to Sub-Panel 32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory), uses a Practice Research Template to articulate practice research for the purposes of the assessment. While REF2021 has not completely ruled out the submission of artefacts and physical material, electronic submissions are expected in most cases and are strongly favoured. The following extract from the *REF2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods* document clarifies the rationale for using PDF-based templates to communicate the research elements of bodies of practice research:

Main Panel D – output types & submission guidance

1. Sub-panels in Main Panel D receive the widest diversity of output types across the exercise. Each submitted output needs to have a single classification selected from this list. The purpose of the classification is to assist in the management of the collection and distribution of outputs, the allocation of outputs to reviewers and a post-submission analysis of types of outputs submitted. The sub-panel will assess the research content of the material submitted regardless of the classification.

2. The format for the presentation of outputs (irrespective of their classification) is flexible, within the requirement to limit the format **either** *to an electronic submission which is submitted via the REF submission system either as a URL, DOI, or by uploading a PDF;* **or** *as physical material which is sent to the REF team, and which may include digital/electronic material on a media storage device e.g. USB. An individual output cannot be submitted both electronically via the REF submission system and as a physical output.*

The REF2021 output classifications

The REF2021 output classifications are:

1. Artefact (with the proviso that 'the panel does not normally expect to receive physical artefacts').	12. Journal Article
2. Authored Books	13. Patent/Published Patent
3. Chapter in Book	14. Performance
4. Composition	15. Research Data Sets and Databases
5. Conference Contribution (specifically: published proceedings, not presentations)	16. Research Report
6. Confidential Report	17. Scholarly Edition
7. Design	18. Software
8. Devices & Products	19. Translation
9. Digital or Visual Media	20. Working Paper
10. Exhibition	21. Other
11. Edited Book	

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The GSA will submit a diverse range of output types to REF2021. The majority of our creative practice research will be presented as practice research articulations that summarise bodies of work variously classified as 'artefact,' 'design,' 'digital or visual media,' 'exhibition,' or 'other.'
A REF Guidance note on output allocation for Panel 34 (not our panel, but relevant nonetheless) advises :

Only one option should be selected per output, as most appropriately describes the primary focus of the research underpinning the output. Where 'other' is chosen, please briefly provide information on the research area.

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The GSA has developed a new Practice Research Template for REF2021, which improves upon 2014's version. The template should be used by staff to prepare practice outputs for REF2021.

The GSA's Practice Research Template is a PowerPoint presentation file that includes a number of formatted slide options under each of its various section headings, and therefore permits a relatively bespoke approach to articulations of a single item or a multi-component practice research output. In addition, there is a range of 'image only' slides that you can insert anywhere you like, to further articulate your research within each section. The full list of section headings is:

- Title slide
- Project details
- Research question
- Research output
- Aims and Objectives
- Context
- Methods
- Contribution to the field
- Dissemination
- Evidence
- Acknowledgements

Practice research template

Before you start…

It can help to have a conversation with a Senior Researcher, a member of the REF Planning Group, your research mentor (if you have one) or another senior colleague around these two questions before you get started:

1. What is the research?
2. What is the output?

Please bear in mind that a single research enquiry cannot be submitted twice (if it is, one of the two outputs will be deemed 'unclassified'), so bundling outputs that relate to one research enquiry is advisable. The *REF2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods* document states:

> **Outputs with significant material in common**
> *214. As stated in 'Guidance on submissions' (paragraph 220), where two or more research outputs within a submission include significant material in common, the sub-panels will assess each output taking account of the common material only once. Where a sub-panel judges that they do not contain sufficiently distinct material and should be treated as a single output, an unclassified score would be given to the 'missing' output.*

For instance, two exhibitions of the same body of work do not constitute two separate outputs. Rather, the exhibitions represent two dissemination points of one research output. Similarly, a short journal article by a practice researcher that attempts to contextualise an aspect of their research should most likely be presented with that body of practice in a Practice Research Template, rather than as a separate, discrete output. Through discussion with a senior colleague from the REF Planning Group you can start to shape your research into one or more outputs, in line with REF2021 guidance.

Practice research template

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To download a blank practice research template go to: https://radar.gsa.ac.uk/5649/

The file will open with one blank slide, in order to start building your portfolio you should click on the slide layout you would like for each of the sections. To do this, click on the '**Insert**' tab in the PowerPoint ribbon and click on the downward arrow on the 'new slide' button, shown in the screenshot below:

Practice research template
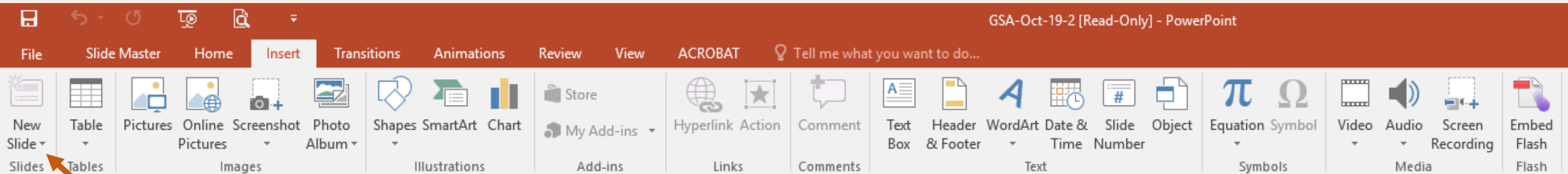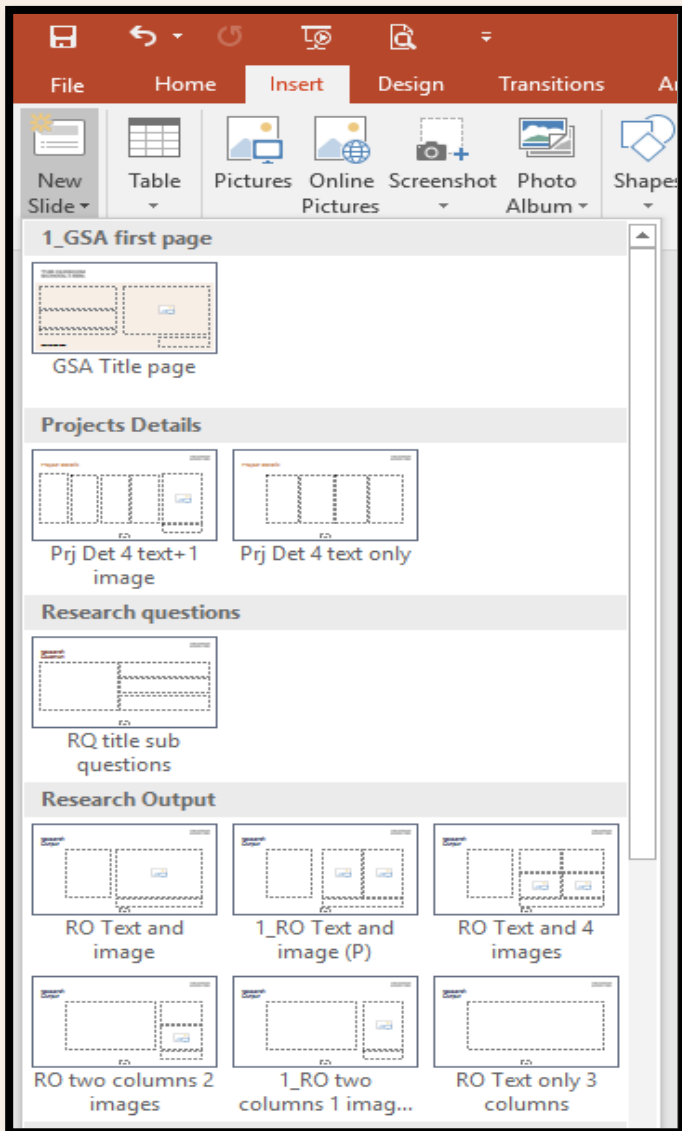
Once you click on the 'new slide' tab it will display a variety of formatted slides under each of the portfolio section headings for you to choose from.
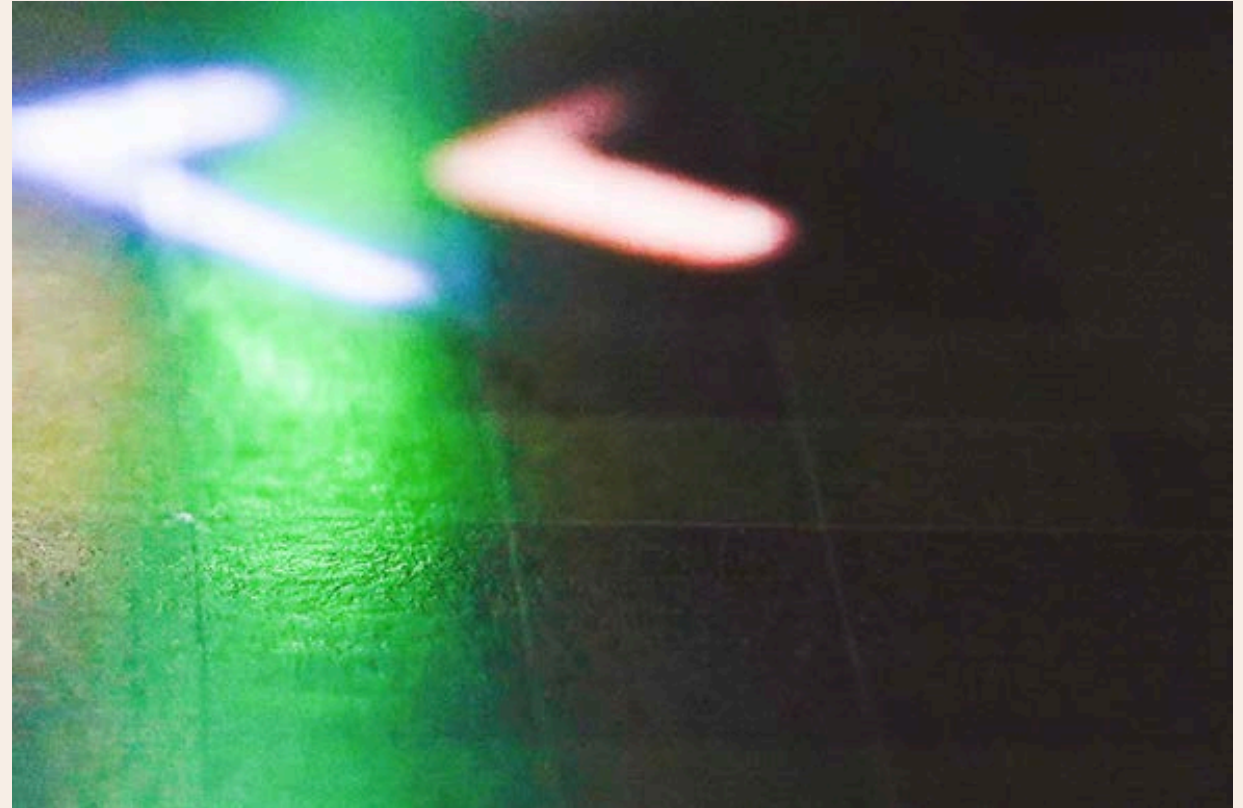
The following pages of this guide will walk you through the portfolio sections, and provide guidance on the information required in each of the sections.

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This is the title page. You will add the title of your research portfolio here.

You should include a very brief description of your research output here.

Insert your name here.

You should provide information on the image you have selected here. Please use an image that is relevant to your output or showing the output itself.

Practice research template

Project Details

There are two formatted slide options for the project details section. This is just one example.

Here you should provide details of any funders of this research or collaborators you have worked with on this output or the project to which it relates. This can include in-kind support from organisations and individuals.

Where there are no collaborators or funders, you may choose to omit a 'Project Details' slide.

Insert names of collaborators or funders here

Insert names of collaborators or funders here

Insert names of collaborators or funders here
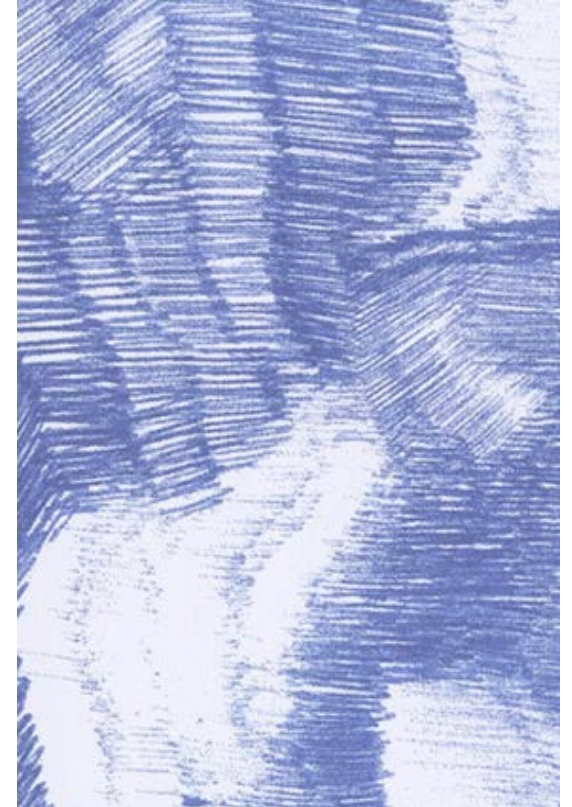
Research Question

The main research question is asked here, e.g. :

'To what extent can practice research be advanced through the use of a central research question?'

Include one 'Research Question' slide. We are looking for all the practice research outputs to be distilled down to one main research question. We understand that the speculative nature of practice research makes this difficult. But research is about asking questions — what are you asking through your work? Include sub-questions only if absolutely necessary to the articulation of your enquiry.

The research question should be interesting, relevant to your field, challenging, appropriate and testable. What is it that your work seeks to investigate or explore?

Sub question can be added here.

Research
Output

On this slide you should provide a description of your research output.

The aim of the research output section is to describe and show the output itself. If the output is a body of work, you can take several slides to illustrate this.

This slide is one of six template options for Research Output. This one gives space for some text and one image. Others provide spaces for multiple images.

These are selected from the 'New slide' options on the PowerPoint menu. If you would like to include image-only slides, you can select the 'image' slide options from the same menu. This gives you the choice of single or multiple image slides.

Image of the output, images showing the body of work etc.

More images from the body of work, or showing the output. Image only slides can be found in the 'new slide' options under the 'images only slide options' section.

Aims and Objectives

Enter AIMS text here

Enter OBJECTIVES text here

Enter OBJECTIVES text here

There are two formatted slide options for the aims and objectives section. This is just one example.

Aims should be broad and long-term and set out what the project or body of research sets out to achieve.

Objectives may be shorter-term, should be more defined and, potentially, measurable.

Context

As with the 'Research Output' section, there are slide options provided for 'Context' too, allowing for more or less images and text. You can include as many 'Context' slides as you like.

This section should give an idea of the context for your research output. By this we mean two things:

- **Firstly, and most importantly,** provide the reader with an idea of where you locate your work amongst your academic peers and your subject area: you might think about who are the major thinkers, practitioners, researchers in this area; what went before your work, what and who influences your work; what and who are you challenging in your work?

- **Secondly,** you might also give the reader an idea of the context of your own work - what trajectory has your work followed and how does this output fit into that picture?

Please note: this section is primarily asking you to situate your research within a field and to demonstrate your knowledge of that field and the particular relevance of your work to its advancement.

Use images that help the reader contextualise the work

Methods

This section is asking you to provide information on how you carried out your research. What research methods did you use to address your research questions? How did you undertake the work? You can use images as well as text to describe this. Try to use methods that are accepted in your discipline or, if you are testing out new methods or borrowing methods from another discipline, explain what you did and how these methods are more appropriate or applicable than an established one.

As with other slides, there is a choice of three lay-outs, which support text and images.

Image showing an aspect of the research method

Contribution to the field

Having undertaken the research, the research question will often not be fully resolved but you should have some new insight, evidence or contribution resulting from your work.

Again, you have a choice of describing this through the use of text and images and you can use as many of these slides as you like to show:

- What you found through your research.

- What new insight, knowledge and interest has been generated from your work.

- How the field moved forward as a result of your work.

- What else happened as a result of your work.

- What worked and what didn't work.

Image showing findings or contribution

Dissemination

Dissemination is about the **public** sharing your work with the appropriate audiences – academic and other. If you have carried out some important or interesting work, how do other researchers, relevant audiences and potential beneficiaries know? What channels have been used to share the new knowledge and insight or learning that you have generated through your research?

Dissemination can refer to exhibitions, online galleries, publications, talks, conferences, films.

Again, you have a choice of layout options for this section and can use as many slides as you like. There's a choice of four different text and image lay-outs.
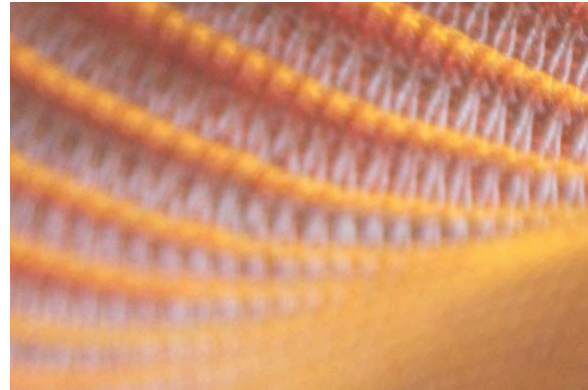
Images showing how the work was disseminated

Evidence

There are three formatted slide options for the Evidence section. This is just one example.

This section provides supporting evidence for your output but is distinct from its dissemination (i.e. the making public of the research). It provides information of **secondary sources** about the work, which may include links to gallery, museum, architectural or design practice, local government or other organisational websites that include supporting evidence of this output e.g. an exhibition press release; a magazine article; a review; a festival programme; a radio or TV show; prototype plans; public consultation documents etc..

Acknowledgements