

# Durham University REF2021 Code of Practice

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## Part 1: Introduction

### 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Durham University sees the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF) as a snapshot of institutional research activity. In much the same way that other returns such as the Teaching Excellence Framework and Higher Education Business Community Interaction survey do not capture the work of all staff, the University appreciates that this is the case for the REF. Non-eligibility, relative distribution of outputs between eligible staff, not leading an impact case study or not being named in the environment statement will not, in isolation, be a metric that impacts on other processes outside of REF, including progression, funding, role allocation or performance management.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to lay down clearly, in the context of the principles of equality and diversity, the decision framework and rationale for Durham's REF 2021 submission, specifically in the areas of determining research independence, selection of outputs and disclosure of staff circumstances. This guidance will be applied consistently across all submitting UoAs in the institution, and compliance monitored as part of the submission development process. The Code of Practice aims throughout to put in place processes that are fair, transparent and robust, and which support the institution's legal and regulatory obligations.
- 1.3 The document also outlines the consultation process that the Code of Practice has been through, the means and frequency of communication, and the training that will be put in place to ensure all relevant staff are aware of their roles and competent to deliver them.
- 1.4 In its aim to support the University submission process this document is also supported by the additional guidance available on the University's REF website. Where relevant, links have been made to provide contextual information for staff, although the document is designed to stand alone.
- 1.5 As well as providing internal guidance, this document will be provided to Research England as part of the REF submission process and will be published in advance of the submission date.
- 1.6 Equality Impact Assessments are being undertaken at various stages throughout the REF process. A specific EIA of the Code of Practice is being developed alongside the Code of Practice to ensure that all procedures outlined within it are fair, equitable and have no adverse impact on any individual or group protected under the 2010 Equality Act.

### 2. Code of Practice development and University policy framework

- 2.1 The University is a diverse community that recognises that a commitment to promoting equality and diversity for all staff and students is essential to maintaining a positive working environment, attracting world class staff and students, and to its longer-term success as well as, in itself, being a worthy process. Promoting equality and diversity is one of Durham's eight core values and forms part of the University's Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 University guidance has been developed in full compliance with the public sector equality duty, which states that the Higher Education Funding Bodies and Higher Education Institutes in England, Scotland and Wales in carrying out their functions must have due regard for the need to:
- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
  - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.3 Durham University is committed to embracing diversity and is actively working to implement the requirements of the Equality Act. We have a strong history of promoting and maintaining an inclusive work and study environment which enables all members of our University community to achieve their full potential. Amongst many initiatives, our excellent Disability Service, clear HR policies and effective team working across the University have seen steady progress with reference to the institution's key diversity objectives and moves towards embedding culture change.

2.4 Since REF 2014 the University has made significant progress in EDI support. There has been development of new processes, policies (see below), training programs and embedding of initiatives into the broader culture of the University. All academic departments have EDI Champions and have achieved or are working towards an Athena Swan Bronze Award. It is standard practice to undertake Equality Impact Assessments at key points during the lifecycle of all key policies and initiatives.

2.4.1 The REF2014 EIA identified that we have gaps in the data we hold on protected characteristics. We are currently implementing a new HR system that will allow us to record this information in the future to improve the available datasets for future analyses.

### **3. University framework**

3.1 The University has an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Unit responsible for the development and support of relevant initiatives and policies in the University. This is reflected within the University strategy (2017 – 2027) and measured against a related set of key performance indicators and core objectives.

3.1.1 Objectives:

- a) Increase awareness of Equality & Diversity challenges and duties
- b) Improve gender balance across the University
- c) Improve understanding and support of disability across the University population
- d) Increase numbers of BME staff and students

3.1.2 Key performance indicators:

- a) Proportion of international (non-UK) students – 35% by 2027
- b) Percentage of Faculty members who are female - Top third of the Russell Group by 2027
- c) Percentage of academic staff who declare their ethnicity as BME and percentage of staff who declare a disability - Russell Group median by 2026

3.2 There are five key policies relating to EDI.

- a) Equality and Diversity Policy
- b) Respect at Study Policy
- c) Respect at Work Policy
- d) Gender Identity Policy
- e) Trans and Intersex Inclusion Policy

3.3 A range of ancillary further policies is available on the [webpages](#).

### **4. Demonstrating Fairness: Transparency, Consistency, Accountability and Inclusivity**

4.1 **Transparency.** All processes for determining research independence, selecting outputs for inclusion in REF, and staff circumstances have been clearly outlined within this Code of Practice. The Code of Practice has been subject to a thorough consultation, which involved wide dissemination across a variety of forums and gave all staff the opportunity to provide feedback.

4.2 **Consistency.** The principles governing the processes covered by Codes of Practice are consistent across the institution. The guidance contained within this Code of Practice is sufficiently detailed to enable the Units of Assessment to make decisions in a consistent and comparable manner. The governance structures outlined also ensure that common approaches and practices are taken and that any significant deviation can be identified and

rectified. Finally, the appeals process ensures that there is sufficient recourse should there be a contested decision.

4.3 **Accountability:** This Code of Practice details the governance structures and accountable bodies / roles of those involved in decision-making for the REF. Also included are details on their suitability and information about the training and guidance provided to those involved.

4.4 **Inclusivity:** The Code of Practice and related processes are designed to promote an inclusive environment. Various checks will take place throughout the Code of Practice development and operation to ensure it is supporting its goals of demonstrating fairness.

## 5. Code of Practice development and consultation

5.1 The University has developed its processes in light of the published REF Guidance on Submissions and Panel Criteria & Working Methods and other key communications from HEFCE / Research England.

5.2 The processes for identifying research independent staff, fair selection of outputs and staff circumstances have been developed within this Code of Practice in consultation with the academic and broader University community. The approach is as follows:

### 5.3 Timetable for development

Action	Date
Initial draft Code of Practice considered by REF Strategy Committee, released for soft consultation to Heads of Department, Directors of Research and to broader academic community.	28 November 2018
The Guidance on Submission and Panel Criteria and Working Methods are circulated to key departmental staff; Head of Department, Directors of Research, Impact Officers etc.	31 January 2019
The Code of Practice, including the process for identifying research independent staff is updated by the Research Policy team in consultation with REF Management Group and REF Technical Group.	1 February – 13 February 2019
Initial feedback and sign-off for broader circulation sought from REF Strategy Committee. There will be a parallel consultation with University College Union via JCNG.	13 February 2019
Updated version circulated to key departmental staff (Heads of Department and Directors of Research) for comment and discussion at Faculty Research Committees (where scheduling permits). Consultation with Union via the HR Policy Review Board.	25 February 2019
Open consultation with staff body, advertised on REF internal webpages and in online staff magazine.	1 March 2019

Deadline for comments. Feedback reviewed and factored into an updated version.	18 March 2019
Amended version (following consultation feedback) presented to University Research Committee.	21 March 2019
Processes tested, as appropriate within the 2019 Mock REF exercise.	18 April 2019
The final version is entered into the University approval process (amendments are implemented as required).	Research Committee – 21 March 2019, REF Strategy Committee – 01 April 2019, Executive Committee – 09 April 2019, Senate - 07 May 2019, Council – 21 May 2019
Code of Practice submitted to Research England.	07 June 2019
Final approved version circulated to all departments and published on the REF webpages. The communications process will also run for the final Research England approved version.	01 December 2019

## 6. Communications

6.1 General communications will take place on both the submitted and approved versions of the Code of Practice.

6.2 Key direct communication points.

Avenue	Constituents	Date
Initial draft of Code of Practice published in internal REF website. Version for consultation.	All University staff	17 December 2018
Final version (unapproved).		22 February 2019
Final version (approved).		01 April 2019
		01 December 2019
Link to most current version of Code of Practice emailed.	Heads of Department, Directors of Research, Professional Support Services REF leads, Union	17 December 2018, 25 February 2019, 01 April 2019, 01 December 2019

Faculty of Science Research Committee	Faculty Deputy Executive Deans for Research & Departmental Directors of Research	25 February 2019, 23 April 2019, 10 June 2019
Science Faculty Board	Heads of Department, Faculty Executive Deans and Faculty officers	24 January 2019, 7 March 2019, 2 May 2019
Social Science & Health (inclusive of the Faculty of Business Faculty Board	Heads of Department, Faculty PVC and Faculty officers	17 January 2019
Social Sciences & Health Faculty Research Committee	Faculty Deputy Executive Dean for Research & Departmental Directors of Research	28 February 2019, 23 May 2019
Arts & Humanities Faculty Research Committee	Faculty Deputy Executive Dean for Research & Departmental Directors of Research	06 February 2019, 14 May 2019
Arts & Humanities Faculty Board	Heads of Department, Faculty Executive Dean and Faculty officers	04 February 2019, 29 April 2019, 24 June 2019
University College Union	UCU Representative	07 February 2019, 17 April 2019

### 6.3 Other

- a) Integration into internal REF preparation guidance – 17 December 2018.
- b) Inclusion on the internal REF Webpages and in relevant communications – 31 January 2019.
- c) New staff: Information will be included within the induction process throughout the remainder of the REF period.
- d) All staff: communications will be sent out via the staff magazine (Dialogue), Message of the Day, weekly updates, emails from the REF team and the Vice Provost Research.
- e) Heads of Department are expected to communicate REF updates to staff in their UoA who are on leave of absence.

## **Part 2: Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research**

Durham is including 100% of Category A eligible staff based on eligible HESA categorisation in the REF submission.

## Part 3: Determining research independence

### 7. Determining research independence-staff in post on the census date (31 July 2020)

This section covers the policies and procedures for determining research independence. Research independence can be defined as the requirement for staff to undertake their own research projects. Research independent staff will be eligible for inclusion in the REF as Category A staff. Inclusion / non-inclusion is based on the criteria outlined in the REF Guidance. There is no negative implication associated with non-inclusion and nor is there any differential valuation of included staff i.e. between research only or teaching and research staff, fixed term / open ended contract staff or between part time and full time staff. All staff employed on the census date who meet the eligibility criteria will be included in the submission.

**7.1 Key evidence and approach:** The two key items of evidence for research independence are:

- a) contract of employment
- b) job description

Those staff with an eligible contract and job description will be noted as being 'Automatically eligible'. Those staff where evidence is insufficient for automatic eligibility will be assessed for non-automatic eligibility based on other evidence.

A flowchart has been developed to help assist with the categorisation and has been included as Appendix one.

**7.2 Determining research independence: automatic.** The following cases are straight forward, where all the criteria are met then there will not be a need for further deliberation.

**7.2.1 Automatic eligibility – non research fellows:** Included in REF when the member of staff is:

- a) On a minimum 0.2 FTE contract (on census date) and
- b) On a 'Teaching and Research' or 'Research Only' contract and is NOT a Research Assistant and
- c) Where they have significant responsibility for research included within their job description
- d) Where they have a substantive connection with the submitting unit.

**7.2.2 Automatic eligibility – Research Fellows:** Included in the REF when the member of staff is:

- a) On a minimum 0.2 FTE contract (on the census date) and
- b) On a 'Teaching and Research' or 'Research Only' contract and is NOT a Research Assistant and
- c) Where the Fellowship is externally funded and on the REF list of Independent Research Fellowships OR the Fellowship is competitively won and requires that the Fellows design their own research project; indicative examples include: Addison Wheeler or COFUND
- d) Where they have a substantive connection with the submitting unit.

Included for outputs - Independent Researchers (Category A - eligible)	Not included for outputs– non-research independent
<b>HESA Category</b> HESA: Academic – Teaching and Research HESA: Academic – Research Only <i>and not</i> flagged as RA (RESAST field)	<b>HESA Category</b> HESA: Academic – Teaching Only HESA: Academic – Research Only <i>and</i> flagged as RA (RESAST field) HESA: Non-research – Management, Technical, Administrative etc.
<b>Durham employment track</b> Grade 7 & 8 – Assistant Professor / Assistant Professor (Research)	<b>Durham employment track</b> Grade 7 & 8 - Assistant Professor (Teaching)

Grade 9 - Associate Professor / Associate Professor (Research)	Grade 9 - Associate Professor (Teaching)
Grade 10 – Professor / Professor (Research)	Grade 10 - Professor (Teaching)
Job description includes responsibility to carry out independent research	Teaching Fellows
Research Fellows, externally funded, competitively won (as featured on <a href="#">REF list of Independent research fellowships</a> )	Grade 7 & 8 - Post-Doctoral Research Associates and Research Fellows (non-independent)
Research Fellows, competitively won (e.g. Addison Wheeler, COFUND etc.) where they are carrying out their own research project(s)	Marie Curie Early Career Fellows who are working towards their PhD

**7.3 Determining research independence - Non-automatic.** In some cases we expect that the case will not be clear cut and will require further review. For example, where a job description is outdated, contract inappropriate, Fellowship not listed, or where other indicative criteria for research independence (such as being Principal Investigator on an externally funded research grant) are met. A more comprehensive list of criteria can be found in Appendix one.

**7.3.1 Non automatic eligibility - process:** Departmental REF leaders e.g. the Head of Department / Director of Research are responsible for assessing available evidence, and seeking support from the Research Policy team and Human Resources as required. Final decisions on inclusion will be made by REF Strategy Committee on the recommendation of the relevant Head of Department.

**7.3.2 Non automatic eligibility – evidence:** An indicative list of potential evidence is referenced in the flowchart in Appendix one and more exhaustively in the REF Guidance on Submissions and Panel Working Criteria. Wherever possible evidence should be codified and verified in order to provide a robust audit trail.

**7.3.3 Non automatic eligibility – requirement to correct the version of record:** Where someone is identified as research independent, their job description and contract should be updated to reflect this.

**7.4 Notification of eligibility:** The initial assessment will take place as part of the 2019 REF preparation exercise and then as required for any future hires or changes to appointments. Following the initial check, all staff on an academic contract will receive feedback and notification of their status (either to confirm eligibility or non-eligibility) for submission by the 30 June 2019. Information about the appeals process around eligibility decisions will be communicated as part of this. Notification for new hires / appointment changes will normally be within 20 working days.

**7.5 Right of appeal:** Staff who wish to appeal their research independent status will be offered the opportunity to do so. The appeals procedure is designed to be fair and transparent and entirely independent of the decision making process. Details are given in the appeals section below (see section 14).

## **8. Determining research independence-staff not in post on the census date (31 July 2020)**

**8.1** The process outlined here need only be followed where outputs are being included from

former staff as part of the REF 2 submission. If outputs are not being included, there is no requirement to ascertain research independence.

8.2 The steps outlined between 7.1 and 7.3 must be followed. However the criteria apply not to the status of the staff on the census date but rather to their status on the date the output first became publicly available.

## 9. Training

9.1 **Durham REF specific training:** All staff with significant responsibility for REF advice and decision-making will be provided with bespoke training on the REF guidance, unconscious bias, and related processes for the inclusion of staff and the appeals process. Attendance at all sessions will be recorded.

Staff group	Training
<p><i>MANDATORY</i></p> <p><b>Members of key decision making bodies and departmental management:</b> REF Strategy Committee, Heads of Department, Directors of Research, Members of Research Committee</p>	<p>REF specific training including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REF 2021 rules and approaches</li> <li>- Code of Practice process training</li> <li>- Unconscious bias</li> </ul> <p>The training will focus initially on the REF guidance and then unconscious bias with REF specific examples. Initial run to be completed in 2018/19 with mop up sessions for those in new roles ongoing.</p>
<p><i>STRONGLY ENCOURAGED</i></p> <p><b>Those involved in supporting REF processes and in providing recommendations:</b> Departmental Managers, Departmental Peer Review Groups, REF Technical group, Members of Professional Support Services</p>	<p>REF specific training including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REF 2021 rules and approaches</li> <li>- Code of Practice process training</li> <li>- Unconscious bias</li> </ul> <p>The training will focus initially on the REF guidance and then unconscious bias with REF specific examples. Initial run to be completed in 2018/19 with mop up sessions for those in new roles ongoing.</p>
<p><i>OPTIONAL</i></p> <p><b>All other staff</b></p>	<p>REF specific training including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- REF 2021 rules and approaches</li> <li>- Code of Practice process training</li> <li>- Unconscious bias</li> </ul> <p>The training will focus initially on the REF guidance and then unconscious bias with REF specific examples. Initial run to be</p>

	completed in 2018/19 with mop up sessions for those in new roles ongoing.
<i>MANDATORY</i> <b>Members of key decision making bodies in relation to staff circumstances.</b> Circumstance Panel and Appeals Panel	Training will include overview of REF processes focussing on appeals and circumstances processes.
<i>MANDATORY</i> <b>REF Database training.</b> All staff are required to receive this training as a condition of access.	This course will teach staff how to populate the REF database by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updating staff information and requesting changes to data</li> <li>• Selecting outputs for submission and adding additional information</li> <li>• Viewing and requesting changes to research degrees data</li> <li>• Viewing and requesting changes to research income data</li> </ul>
<i>OPTIONAL</i> <b>REF Town Hall / Vice Provost Research sessions.</b> Open sessions available to all staff	The sessions will summarise the REF guidance, highlight the institutional approach and preparation and give an opportunity to ask questions.

## 9.2 Other materials / training

9.2.1 **Internal:** As well as REF specific sessions, all staff are able to attend general sessions on: Equality and Diversity, unconscious bias, coaching, mentoring and development and data protection amongst others.

9.2.2 **External:** Relevant briefings, external sessions and webinars (including specifically those on Equality and Diversity) will be publicised via Durham's REF site and made available to all staff.

## 10. Consultation and communication process

10.1 The consultation process is outlined in **5. Code of Practice development and consultation.**

10.2 The communication of the process is outlined in **6 Communications.**

### **Part 3 (B): Staff, Committees and training.**

## **11. Governance and Committee Structure: Roles, responsibilities and decision making:**

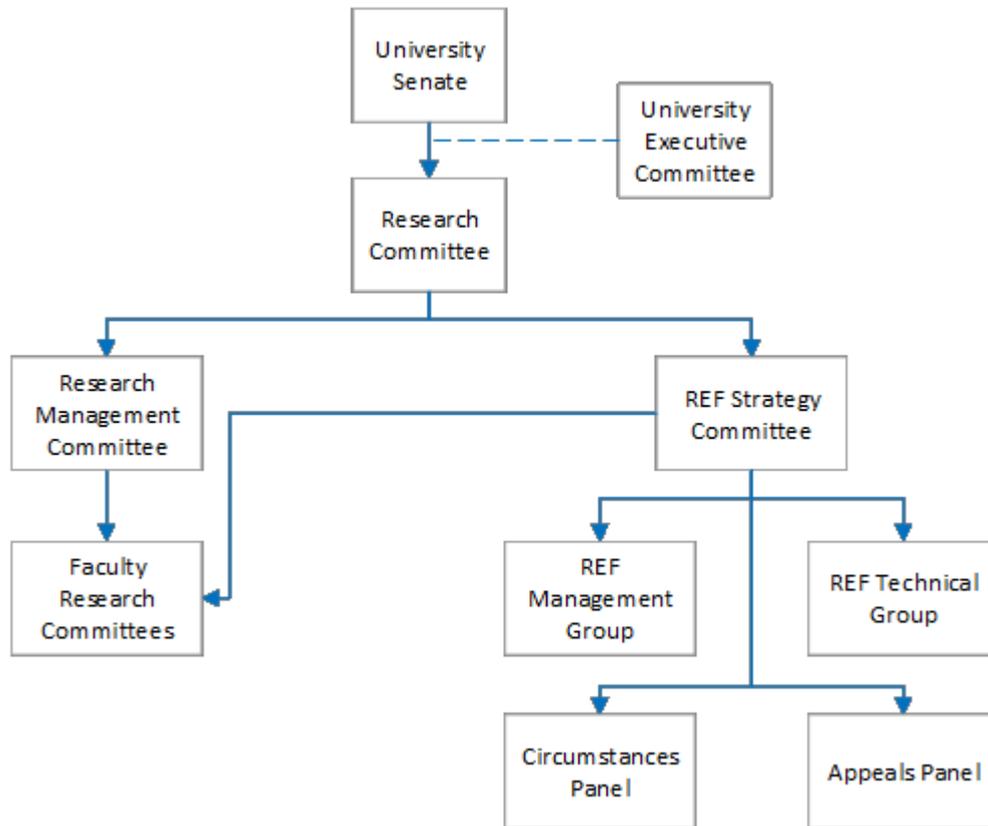
11.1 **Overall governance:** REF is an academic process led by academics. Overall responsibility lies with the Vice Provost Research supported by REF Strategy Committee which provides strategic leadership and governance. Its sub-committees and groups provide operational guidance, and Professional Support Services provide support as required.

11.2 **Role definitions**

There are four distinct roles recognised in the REF preparation processes. These are:

- a) those who are advising (e.g. Directors of Research and other senior staff)
- b) those who are making recommendations (e.g. REF Management Group, Heads of Departments, Faculty Executive Deans, Faculty Deputy Executive Deans for Research)
- c) those who are making decisions on the submission (e.g. REF Strategy Committee)
- d) The University's Research Policy team, based in Research and Innovation Services, is responsible for project management supported by REF Technical group.

### 11.3 Committees – Decision Making / Recommendations



11.3.1 Roles and responsibilities are included in the following appendices:

- Appendix two: Research Committee - Terms of Reference and membership
- Appendix three: REF Strategy Committee - Terms of Reference and membership
- Appendix four: REF Management Group - Terms of Reference and membership
- Appendix five: REF Technical Group - Terms of Reference and membership
- Appendix six: Appeals panel – Procedure and membership
- Appendix seven: Circumstances panel – Procedure and membership

11.3.2 Committee membership

- University Executive Committee (UEC) comprises the University's Senior management and members are all ex officio. In specific relation to REF, UEC steers university business, monitors performance against objectives and manages risk.
- The membership of Research Committee (a long-standing University Committee with members approved by Senate) is a blend of ex-officio members based on their role and other appointed members who are put forward or can self-nominate. As detailed in the terms of reference, there are representatives from researchers at different stages of their career and across disciplines.

- REF Strategy Committee was formed in November 2016 and is made up of ex-officio members based on their role and appointed senior academics who either have REF Panel or other relevant experience. Gender balance and discipline coverage were factors when appointing people to the committee.
- REF Management and Technical Group members are all ex-officio.
- The appeals and circumstances panels will be specially convened at the relevant stages in the REF cycle. The chairs of those committees will be ex-officio. Other members will be senior academics who are independent from other REF decisions.

#### 11.4 Department Leadership / Management

11.4.1 **Departmental responsibilities:** Departments/UoAs are recognised as the disciplinary experts and will be advising on all aspects of REF to those making recommendations and decisions on the submission. They will:

- a) Lead the development of the UoA submission for staff, outputs, impact and environment
- b) Support staff appropriately to develop high quality outputs and impact case studies
- c) Apply Equality and Diversity considerations throughout
- d) Identify all REF-eligible staff (see Appendix 1)
- e) Accept the need to assess individuals from other departments/UoAs without prejudice
- f) Liaise with relevant Committees on REF submission preparations
- g) Communicate REF updates to staff in their UoA who are on leave of absence

11.4.2 **Responsible officers:** Each Department / UoA submission is normally led by the Head of Department and Director of Research supported by the Impact Officer and a REF Group, with representation across the whole department.

11.4.3 **Decision making responsibility:** The Head of Department is ultimately responsible for the recommendations made by the UoA.

#### 11.5 Faculty Role

11.5.1 **Responsibilities of Faculty Deputy Executive Deans for Research:** Deputy Heads of Faculty have primary responsibility for REF in the Faculty. They report to Faculty PVCs and work closely with departments/UoAs to support the REF submission. They are members of REF Strategy Committee and REF Management Group.

11.5.2 **Expectations on Faculty Deputy Executive Deans for Research:** Deputy Heads of Faculty are expected to keep abreast of developments and announcements on REF and have an in-depth understanding of the published REF guidance.

### 12. Record retention

#### 12.1 Committees

Committee	Records kept	Availability
Research Committee	Minutes, Action log	Open internal
REF Strategy Committee	Minutes, Action log	Restricted internal
Research Management Committee	Minutes, Action log	Open internal
Faculty Research Committee	Minutes, Action log	Open internal

Circumstances panel	Minutes, Action log	Restricted internal
Appeals panel	Minutes, Action log	Restricted internal
REF Technical Group	Action log	Restricted internal
REF Management Group	Action log	Restricted internal

Where minutes and action logs are restricted, this is due to the personal / sensitive nature of the discussions and outcomes.

**Other decisions: UoA level.** The UoA is responsible for making recommendations on staff eligibility based on the published REF guidance (consulting with HR and REF team where necessary). Any other recommendations from UoAs eg output and case study selection should be recorded in the REF database and raised as part of any Mock REF exercises.

### 13. Training

See training outlined in **section 9**.

### 14. Appeals

14.1 **Scope.** The appeals panel will cover :

**Determining research independence:** Staff in post on the 18 April 2019 will have their REF status confirmed in June 2019 (see section 7.4). The decision and appeal route will be communicated in writing, regardless of inclusion or exclusion. As part of the Code of Practice consultation, it will be highlighted that a change of contract may affect REF eligibility. New starters or staff who change contract following the 18 April 2019 date, will have their REF status assessed and communicated to them (as above) within four weeks of contract start.

In the interests of fairness, efficiency and consistency, two panels will be convened – one to consider appeals on research independence and one to consider staff circumstances. Members of these panels will be people who have not been involved in making decisions on eligibility in any other capacity.

If an appeal is not upheld, this is not a positive or negative reflection on the individual. Appeals will be assessed against the rules laid out in the Guidance on Submissions.

#### 14.2 **Determining research independence: Appeals**

14.2.1 **Scope:** The appeals process documented here relates to the identification of staff with significant responsibility for research and therefore their eligibility for inclusion in REF2021. Decisions on the University's submission will be made by the REF Strategy Committee on the recommendation of the REF Management Group / Director of Research. Appeal is against the decision of REF Strategy Committee.

14.2.2 **Limitations:** The following will not be considered:

- a) There will be no appeal against the academic assessment of outputs given that these will be via peer review (all outputs will be internally peer reviewed and many will also have been externally reviewed).
- b) In line with the REF assessment criteria, academic and academic-related duties which may be reasonably expected of the post holder, including teaching and administrative duties, will not be regarded as sufficient grounds for appeal.

14.2.3 **Grounds for appeal:** Appeals can be made on the grounds of:

- a) Failure to follow process: The appropriate procedures as set out in this Code of Practice or REF guidance not being followed.
- b) Failure to assess all evidence: The recommendation being made without all the relevant information being taken into account.

#### 14.2.4 Appeals procedure

- a) **Application to appeal:** The individual must write to the Head of the Research Policy ([ref.support@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ref.support@durham.ac.uk)) clearly stating their reasons (normally) within two weeks of being informed of the decision.
- b) **Panel composition:** The panel will be composed of the Provost and two other senior members of academic staff not involved with departmental REF preparations appointed by the Provost.
- c) **Review process:** This request will be referred to the panel following a prima facie review by the institutional REF team. The panel will normally meet within 30 working days. It is expected that most matters will be considered by written representation, although an appeal can be heard in person if preferred. Should a panel need to meet an individual, the individual may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.
- d) **Outcomes:** The Panel will either:
  - uphold the original decision or
  - refer the request for review back to the REF Strategy Committee for their reconsideration, with any additional relevant information.
- e) **Notification timescales:** The outcome of the Appeals Panel will be relayed to the individual within five working days of decision. There will be no further right of appeal under this REF2021 Appeals procedure.

See appendix six for Terms of Reference and membership.

#### 15. Equality impact assessment

15.1 **Approach:** The processes outlined in this Code of Practice in relation to identifying staff with significant responsibility for research have been designed to be fair, transparent and non-prejudicial. Care is being taken to ensure that no staff groups are unfairly disadvantaged e.g. due to their protected characteristics or on other basis such as fixed term contracts. The comprehensive consultation process also asked specifically for respondents to identify any potential biases or procedural weaknesses and these were addressed as part of the iterative development. A full equality and impact analysis also accompanies this document, see 15.3 and appendix nine.

15.2 **Review and audit.** Nevertheless the institution remains aware that issues may arise and appropriate remedial actions will be taken as needed. Following the Mock REF exercise in 2019, characteristics and status of staff with significant responsibility for research will be compared against a broader cohort of all staff with an academic contract. Should any issues or significant anomalies be identified then the processes will be assessed to ascertain again whether they are in any way discriminatory and, if so, amended. If however the processes are found to be robust and the issue stems instead from the broader environment then a recommendation will be forwarded to Research Committee suggesting potential remedial action.

**15.3 Equality Impact Assessments.** Four distinct Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken:

- a) A Code of Practice specific EIA which will accompany the submission to Research England.
- b) An (interim) EIA related to the selection of outputs which will accompany each preparation exercise and final submission.
- c) An (interim) EIA related to the identification of staff with significant responsibility for research to be undertaken following the 2019 Mock REF exercise where the processes are first tested.
- d) An overall REF EIA which will be a live document that will continue to be updated throughout the REF cycle.

## Part 4: Selection of outputs

### 16. Institutional approach

16.1 **Impacts of output inclusion outside REF:** The University recognises that there are many reasons why productivity may vary across individuals / UoAs and therefore does not necessarily expect a perfectly proportionate submission. It is clear that relative distribution of outputs between staff will not, in isolation, be a metric that impacts on other processes outside of REF, including progression, contractual status, or performance management.

16.2 **Overall approach:** Durham University's aim is to optimise the institutional submission to REF 2021 to maximise the long-term benefit to the University and maintain the vitality and sustainability of the research environment. Its approach is therefore to:

- a) Submit the highest quality REF eligible output for each individual and then the best of the rest to make up the required number.
- b) All forms of research output will be treated equitably, irrespective of the output type (as identified in the output glossary in Annex K of the Guidance on Submissions) or venue of publication.
- c) The University recognises that there may be an opportunity to make the output pool more representative without any impact on the overall quality profile. Therefore as secondary considerations, unit-pool representativeness (particularly around protected characteristics), research environment and departmental researcher areas can be considered.
- d) While mechanisms will vary across different UoAs, each UoA is expected to follow a consistent approach to the scoring of outputs for individuals within the UoA via internal and external peer review (as appropriate) by following the recommendations outlined below to ensure fairness.
- e) The contract status of an individual (teaching and research/research only, fixed term/open ended contracts and part time/full time) will not have any positive or negative implications when selecting the final output pool.

16.3 **Number of required outputs:** The total pool of outputs required will be 2.5 x FTE of staff in post on the census date (unless circumstances apply). Units of Assessment will decide upon the balance of outputs between and across Category A and Category B staff (within the constraints outlined below) and include this in their submission recommendation to REF Strategy Committee.

### 17. Procedure for identifying outputs: Category A (current /eligible) in post on the census date

17.1 **Suggestion of outputs:** Staff may suggest up to seven outputs for consideration for submission to the REF. If they wish to do so, departments may suggest alternative outputs alongside these. It is accepted that list may be fluid given new publications through the REF period. The expectation is that the 'suggested pool' becomes more final as the submission deadline nears and an individual/DoR's ability to suggest new outputs within the REF database directly will be curtailed from September 2020.

**17.2 Departmental scoring:** Departments assess and score all suggested outputs using internal and external peer review. This scoring will reflect the REF scoring used by the panels, i.e. 1\* to 4\*. Within this scoring matrix, departments are encouraged to provide granular scores to enable effective disaggregation across the output pool. Peer review should be the primary tool for assessment. Should UoAs wish to look at citations or other metrics to support peer-review judgements, they should follow the institutional metrics guidance, which has been published on the Library web pages.

**17.3 Feedback:** Feedback, although not necessarily the scores, will be provided to the academic authors. It is appreciated that local mechanisms will vary by department.

**17.4 External peer review:** Outputs which are potentially submittable and which will compete with other potentially submittable outputs for submission will normally be sent for external peer review and scoring after internal evaluation. Scoring will be as 17.2. Potential examples include:

- a) All outputs which will be submitted as an individual's only output
- b) All outputs which are likely to be submitted i.e. because they are 3\* / 4\* quality, or on the boundary between 2\* and 3\*
- c) Any outputs where there is insufficient local expertise to assess accurately
- d) Any outputs where there is significant disparity in local scores.

Departments should choose outputs for external review on this basis, but the reason for the review should not be disclosed to reviewers.

**17.5 Score normalization:** Following external assessment, external and internal scores will be normalized / validated and a final score applied. Where there are significant disparities between internal and external grades, this should be noted along with the rationale for the final grading.

## **18. Procedure for identifying outputs: Category B (former staff) not in post on the census date**

**18.1 Outputs suggested by staff:** Where staff suggested outputs prior to their departure the process will follow that outlined in 17.

**18.2 Outputs not suggested by staff whilst in post:** Where additional potential outputs are identified then the Director of Research / Departmental REF group may suggest the outputs for potential submission. All other processes follow those outlined in 17.2 to 17.5.

**18.3 Outputs of staff who have been made redundant:** Outputs of staff who left the University involuntarily (i.e. through dismissal or compulsory redundancy from an ongoing contract) and who did not nominate outputs on or after departure will not be entered.

**18.4 Other criteria:**

**18.4.1 Double weighting:** Double weighting of outputs is permitted within the constraints outlined in the Guidance on Submissions and Panel Criteria and Working Methods. Double weighted outputs should be accompanied by a reserve.

**18.5 Late publication:** It is the University's approach that any outputs expected to be published after the submission date will not normally be included in the REF submission.

**18.6 Post selection assessment:** Following each selection exercise, including the final

submission, a full equality and diversity analysis of outputs will be undertaken including; Gender, BAME, disability and career stage balance (ECR / non-ECR). This will be monitored against the Code of Practice principles. Output distribution and match to environment will also be assessed.

## **19. Staff, committees and training**

19.1 **See Part 3 (B): Staff, Committees and training** Durham REF specific training: All staff with significant responsibility for REF advice and decision-making will be provided with bespoke training on the REF guidance, unconscious bias, and related processes for the inclusion of staff and the appeals process.

## **20. Disclosure of staff circumstances**

### **20.1 Principles:**

- a) The individual staff member is best placed to consider whether equality-related circumstances have affected their productivity over the REF cycle. The application for the consideration of staff circumstances will therefore come from the individual (paragraph 166 of the Guidance on Submissions).
- b) Staff will be invited to disclose circumstances for both individual staff circumstances (reduction to zero) and unit circumstances (reduction to overall unit output pool) at the same time.
- c) All staff will receive a written notification and summary of the staff circumstance process from the University REF Team. Units may highlight these to all staff once sent, but should avoid singling out staff and sending unsolicited personal communications lest this be seen as coercion to apply.
- d) Staff circumstances applications will be handled centrally and units only notified if an application is successful or if the applicant otherwise elects to share information with their unit. The UoA will be notified of the outcome as opposed to the full details of the request.
- e) There are no negative stigma or consequences around applying for staff circumstances.
- f) Any information disclosed will not be used for any other purpose than assessing individual circumstances unless specific permission is given by the staff member concerned.

20.2 **Indicative list of qualifying circumstances:** The following circumstances or combination thereof have been identified as possibly adversely affecting a member of staff's ability to produce an output within the REF period:

- a) Qualifying as an early career researcher
- b) Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- c) Qualifying periods of family related leave
- d) Other circumstances that apply in UoA 1-6, outlined in paragraphs 161 – 163 of the Guidance on Submissions: part time working when appointed late in the assessment period, or where the academics are still completing their clinical training.
- e) Circumstances with an equivalent effect on absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:
  - i. Disability, defined in the Guidance of Codes of Practice, table one (as below in vi) – Disability.
  - ii. Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
  - iii. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of - or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to - other allowances set out in Annex L in the Guidance on Submissions.
  - iv. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member)
  - v. Gender reassignment

- vi. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed in the Guidance on Codes of Practice, Table 1, or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.
- vii. A combination of clear cut circumstances e.g. parental leave, ECR status, career break and absence.

20.3 **Timescales:** Both the unit and individual staff circumstances process will run in parallel.

20.4 **Procedure for applying for a staff circumstance reduction**

20.4.1 **Exclusion:** It will not be possible for an individual staff circumstances reduction where the person has an eligible output (as defined in paragraph 205 of the Guidance on Submissions)

20.4.2 **Self-Identification:** At risk individuals will self-identify following the 2019 REF preparation exercise in summer 2019 or during recruitment. It will be possible for subsequent applications to be submitted should circumstances change. There is no compulsion for staff to declare circumstances and there will be no pressure to do so from the University or the UoA.

20.4.3 **Form & initial timescales:** The process is expected to open from 01 July 2019. Staff wishing to apply, should complete the 'Staff Disclosure Form' with all relevant supporting information and send to [ref.support@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ref.support@durham.ac.uk) by the deadline of 31 August 2019. The rationale will need to be as strong as possible to mitigate the risk of it not being accepted in part or in full by the relevant REF Sub-Panel. (New starters will be notified of the circumstances procedure as part of induction and the panel will meet exceptionally as required).

20.4.4 **Additional information:** Ordinarily the panel does not expect to require additional information from other parties e.g. HR, but it may, in exceptional circumstances and with the permission of the staff member, do so. This will be for the purpose of assessing the request and building a required body of evidence in the case of audit only.

20.4.5 **Anonymisation:** The Research Policy team will anonymise the forms for review.

20.4.6 **Review panel:** Review will be via the Staff Circumstances Panel (membership and Terms of Reference in Appendix seven).

20.4.7 **Individual staff circumstances - Grounds for assessment:** The panel will be guided by the indicative 46 month or more absence from work, two or more periods of qualifying family leave or similar (outlined in paragraph 179 of the Guidance on Submissions).

20.4.8 **Unit circumstances - Grounds for assessment:** The panel will be guided by the REF Guidance on Submissions and suggested tariff reductions for things such as: qualification as an ECR after 01 August 2016, qualifying periods of parental leave or periods of ill health. In addition to the circumstances themselves the panel will also consider whether the staff circumstances have had a substantive impact upon the overall research productivity and resulting output pool of the unit. If they have not then the unit circumstances reduction will not be applied. Following the collation of all circumstance applications units will be notified of the potential impact and asked:

- a) Whether the potential reduction will have a material effect on the output pool and if so to
- b) Provide a supporting statement (max 300 words) outlining the rationale for requesting the unit reduction in accordance with this code of practice.

20.4.9 **Outcomes:** Individuals will be notified of the Circumstance Panel's decision within 10 working days of the meeting. Confirmation or otherwise of the outcome is expected from

Research England in September 2020. Decisions will be communicated to staff within ten working days of notification to the institution. In the case of unit circumstances, units will be notified at the earliest possible junction following the internal panel meeting. Should Research England not uphold the institution's initial decision then staff and units will be advised of the revised outcome.

#### 20.4.10 **Application of reductions**

- a) **Reduction to zero.** Where an eligible member of staff is found to have valid circumstances (see 20.2 and 20.4.7) and does not have an eligible output (see 20.4.1) then their requirement to submit a minimum of one output will be removed. They will be submitted to the exercise as a full Category A staff member with zero outputs.
- b) **Reduction in overall unit output pool.** Where individual staff circumstances are found to have a substantive impact upon the overall research productivity and resulting output pool of the unit, such that the output pool is eligible for overall reduction, then the output pool will continue to be selected as defined in 16.2. This is in line with the decoupling of outputs from individuals and Durham's approach (consistent with the REF guidance) that there is no expectation beyond the minimum of one output / maximum of five outputs per person. Where a staff member has consented on their circumstance declaration form to share information, an informal meeting will be offered with the Head of Department (supported by the relevant HR business partner if desired by the staff member) to discuss the circumstances disclosed and the potential ongoing support that can be made available.

#### 20.4.11 **Record retention and usage individual staff circumstances:** Completed Staff

Disclosure Forms will be used internally and information provided will be returned to Research England in line with the Guidance on submission in September 2019. Completion of the form will be taken as permission to use the information for REF purposes. Information collected will include:

- a) Staff identifier so that Research England can identify the individual and apply the reduction in the REF submission system.
- b) Details about which circumstance applies, as outlined in 27.2
- c) A brief statement (max 200 words) describing how the circumstances have affected the staff member's ability to produce an eligible output in the period.

Details of individual staff circumstances will be stored securely, will be treated as confidential and only disclosed within Durham University (e.g. to Occupational Health) with the permission of the individual concerned.

#### 20.4.12 **Record retention and usage unit circumstances:** Completed Unit Reduction

forms will be used internally and information provided will be returned as part of the REF Submission. Information will be provided to Research England on:

- a) Details about the number of staff in the unit with each of the defined circumstances and information that will enable the REF team to identify these staff within the submission.
- b) For each member of staff with circumstances requiring a judgment, information to enable the REF team to identify the staff member within the submission, a brief outline (max 200 words) of the nature of the circumstances and how the HEI determined the appropriate reduction, and the reduction proposed.
- c) A supporting statement (max 300 words) outlining the rationale for requesting the unit reduction in accordance with this code of practice. It is accepted that there may be significant disciplinary and unit differences depending on publication norms and unit size.

#### 20.4.13 **Submission to Research England:** Circumstance requests will be submitted to

Research England REF team prior to the deadline in March 2020 and notification of outcome will be prior to the census date. UoAs will be notified of the outcome at the earliest possible juncture.

20.5 **Non qualifying circumstances:** Where it is the case that a staff member has no eligible outputs and no qualifying circumstances, a nil return will be made to the REF for that staff member. This will be recorded by REF as if a single unclassified output had been submitted.

## **21. Equality impact assessment**

See section 15 and appendix 9.

## **Part 5: Appendices**

Appendix 1: Research Independence Decision Tree

Appendix 2: Research Committee - Terms of Reference and membership

Appendix 3: REF Strategy Committee - Terms of Reference and membership

Appendix 4: REF Management Group - Terms of Reference and membership

Appendix 5: REF Technical Group - Terms of Reference and membership

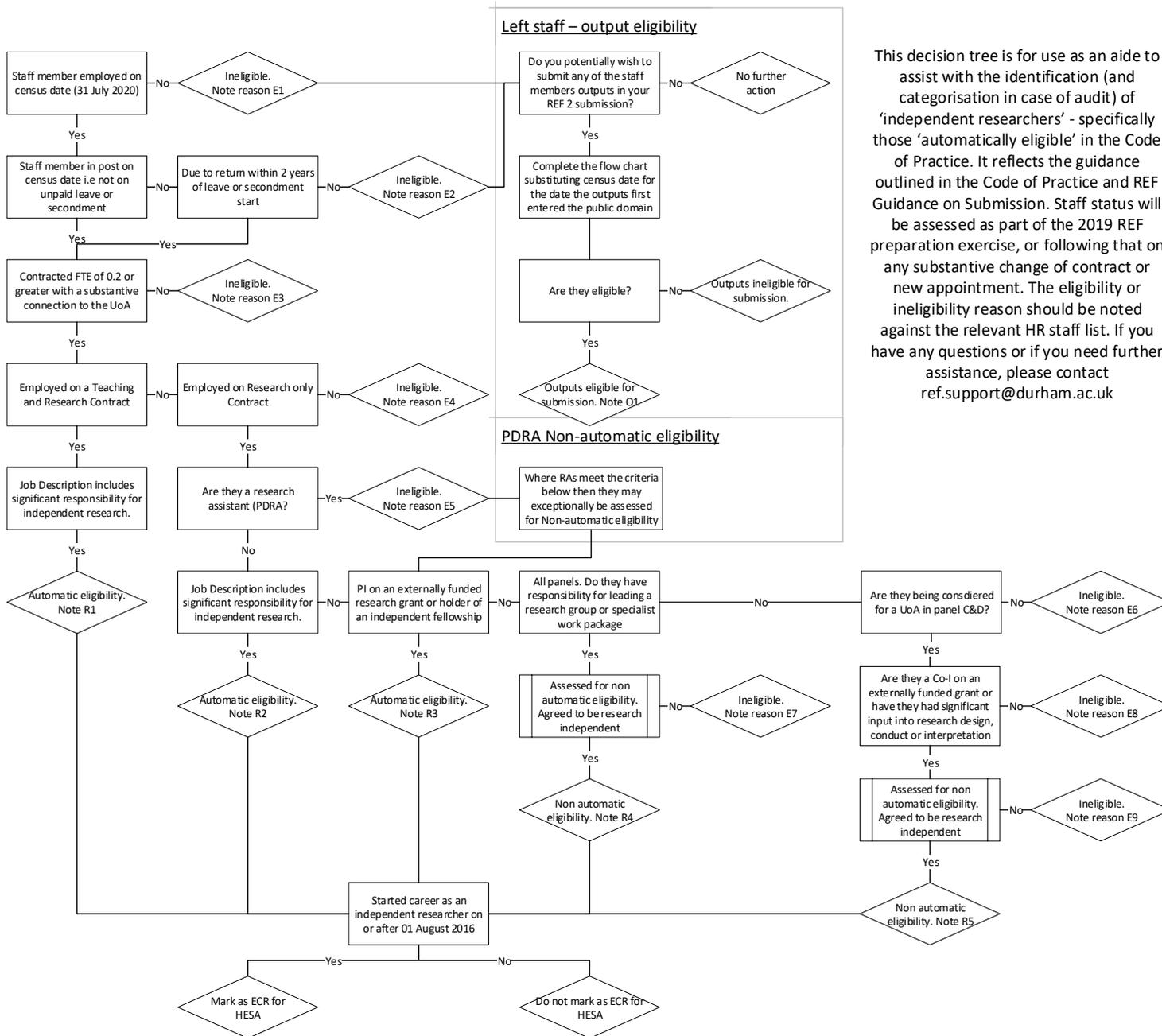
Appendix 6: Appeals panel – Procedure and membership

Appendix 7: Circumstances panel – Procedure and membership

Appendix 8: Staff Circumstances Decision Tree

Appendix 9: Equality Impact Assessment

## Appendix one: Research independence decision tree



This decision tree is for use as an aide to assist with the identification (and categorisation in case of audit) of 'independent researchers' - specifically those 'automatically eligible' in the Code of Practice. It reflects the guidance outlined in the Code of Practice and REF Guidance on Submission. Staff status will be assessed as part of the 2019 REF preparation exercise, or following that on any substantive change of contract or new appointment. The eligibility or ineligibility reason should be noted against the relevant HR staff list. If you have any questions or if you need further assistance, please contact [ref.support@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ref.support@durham.ac.uk)

## Appendix two: Research Committee terms of reference and membership

- Membership: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/committees/research.committee/>
- Minutes: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/local/governance/research.committee/rc/>
- Further Information: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/research.committee/>

### Standing Orders

Research Committee is a sub-committee of Senate. It supports the Vice-Provost Research with the implementation of the Research Strategy, the development and maintenance of a best in sector research environment and for the management of a robust sustainable portfolio of world leading research. It is supported in this by Research Management Committee and REF Strategy Committee.

These Standing Orders should be read in conjunction with the [Joint Standing Orders of Senate and Council](#).

### Membership

Title	Role
–Vice-Provost Research - Chair	Ex officio
Deputy to the Vice-Provost	Ex Officio
Industrial Strategy Lead	Ex officio
Deputy Heads of Faculty Research x4	Ex officio
Director of RIS	Ex officio
ECR	Appointed 3 year term
URI Director	Appointed 3 year term
Postdoctoral Researcher	Appointed 3 year term
DSU PGR Representative	Appointed 1 year term
Faculty Disciplinary Representatives x4	Appointed 3 year term
Head of Research Development	Ex officio
Head of Research Policy (Secretariat)	Ex officio

### Meetings

Frequency: The Committee will normally meet 6 times a year

Quorum: As per University statute 41c the Committee shall be quorate when attended by ten members or not less than one-third of the current membership (whichever is the lower figure).

### Terms of Reference

#### Purpose

To work with the Vice-Provost Research to secure the implementation of the University's Research Strategy.

To assist the Vice-Provost Research in the development of such new research policies as may become necessary from time to time for reasons internal and external to Durham University: the development of such policies ordinarily being undertaken by Task and Finish Groups with membership drawn from Research Committee and beyond, as appropriate. To scrutinise as necessary new policies for research.

To maintain, support and develop a best in sector research environment. This includes promoting the appropriate adoption of innovations in research delivery, design, impact, external communications, management and support, particularly in relation to process, technologies, equipment, partnership and the dissemination of good practice.

To promote and monitor strategic links between the University and research funders, research users, and research partners, thereby maximising the impact of its research nationally and globally, in the context of the University's research strengths and priorities.

To provide assurance to UEC, Senate and Council of the management of the University's research portfolio; particularly its research grant income performance. To support and co-ordinate relevant responses to external consultations and returns.

To oversee the development of a changing portfolio of high quality research programmes and institutes.

To support and promote equality and diversity in all its activities.

### **Scope**

Research Committee is directly responsible for all staff research, funded research and for the broader research environment for student research.

Quality and standards: to advise UEC, Senate and Council on the University's compliance with regulatory requirements and on its performance, *inter alia*, against relevant concordats and the Research Excellence Framework.

Research degrees: to monitor the environment, experience and outcomes of research students not reserved to Education Committee.

### **Effectiveness**

To review on an annual basis the effectiveness of the Committee against its Terms of Reference. Any changes will be proposed in a report delivered to Senate at the end of the academic year.

### **Further Information**

Contact [research.policy@durham.ac.uk](mailto:research.policy@durham.ac.uk) for further information.

## Appendix three: Research Excellence Framework (REF) Strategy Committee

- Membership: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/committees/research/ref/>
- Minutes: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/local/governance/research.committee/rsc/>
- Further Information: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/local/governance/research.committee/rsc/>

### Standing Orders

REF Strategy Committee is a sub-committee of University Research Committee, itself a sub-committee of Senate. It is responsible for overseeing Durham University's strategy for, and submission to, the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF). These Standing Orders should be read in conjunction with the [Joint Standing Orders of Senate and Council](#).

### Membership

Title	Role
Vice-Provost Research (Chair)	<i>ex officio</i>
Academic Representatives (x9) across all faculties	<i>Appointed (until Spring 2022)</i>
REF Panel Members (criteria setting phase)	<i>Appointed (until Spring 2022)</i>
Director of Research and Innovation Services	<i>ex officio</i>
Deputy Executive Deans (Research) (x4)	<i>ex officio</i>
Head of Research Policy	<i>ex officio</i>
REF Strategy and Policy Officer	<i>secretariat</i>

### Meetings

Frequency: The Committee will normally meet 6 times a year.

Quorum: As per University statute 41c the Committee shall be quorate when attended by ten members or not less than one-third of the current membership (whichever is the lower figure).

### Terms of Reference

- a) Maximise the benefit of the REF to the University
- b) Make recommendations on financial decisions for targeted assistance (e.g. extension of sabbatical leave/teaching assistance) or providing assistance for external reviews of research outputs.
- c) Make strategic decisions concerning the entry of members of staff to particular units of assessment and on staff inclusion in the REF, consistent with Research England's equal opportunities guidance.
- d) Ensure that information relevant to decisions about REF strategy is disseminated to academic/research staff.
- e) Request information that will identify strengths and weaknesses in the submission and having identified weaknesses and ensure that appropriate solutions are put in place.
- f) Seek guidance from relevant individuals/institutions to ensure that the committee remains informed, to the best of its ability, of REF guidance, criteria and initiatives.

- g) Comply with all equal opportunities legislation in REF submission preparations and decision-making and develop a Code of Practice as required by the REF guidance.
- h) Report on its responsibilities to Research Committee and other senior bodies.

**Further Information**

Contact [ref.support@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ref.support@durham.ac.uk) for further information.

## Appendix four: REF Management Group terms of reference

### Core Membership

Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) (Chair)  
Deputy Executive Dean for Research (Arts and Humanities)  
Deputy Executive Dean for Research (Social Sciences & Health)  
Deputy Executive Dean for Research (Science)  
Deputy Executive Dean for Research (Business)  
Director of Research and Innovation Services

### Extended membership

Faculty Executive Deans  
Other Senior Officers (*as appropriate*)

### Secretarial and Administrative support:

REF Team, Research and Innovation Services

### Terms of Reference:

REF Management Group is a task and finish group that will support the REF Strategy Committee and work in parallel with REF Technical Group.

The core members of the REF Management Group are also members of Research Committee and REF Strategy Committee. In addition, the extended membership enables the involvement of other Senior Officers of the University, including Faculty Executive Deans.

The Management Group's role is to work with and support Departments in developing their REF submissions (and to support the REF Strategy Committee, in line with the University's submission strategy). The REF Management Group will seek advice and support from other committees and support departments as needed to fulfil its role.

The Management Group will meet at regular intervals and will report to REF Strategy Committee.

The REF Management Group will include Faculty Executive Deans and Senior Officers (*as appropriate*) in order to meet its responsibilities and carry out its role, as set out in the REF2014 Management Structure, and to support the REF Steering Group in discharging its responsibilities.

During the period December 2017 to January 2021, the REF Management Group will:

1. Oversee and manage the detailed preparations for the REF2021 submission
2. Provide advice and information to REF Strategy Committee to underpin decisions on all aspects of the REF and internal preparations including the Units of Assessment (UoAs) the University submits to
3. Disburse the REF budget to departments based on the stated needs of each Unit of Assessment
4. Provide advice and guidance to REF Strategy Committee on the content of the submission for each UoA and for each element of the submission i.e. outputs, impact and environment and any UoA-specific requirements detailed in the public guidance
5. Review draft submissions and provide advice, guidance and feedback to departments, with appropriate support from the REF Advisory Group (REF sub-panel members), for each element of the submission i.e. outputs, impact and environment
6. Advise REF Strategy Committee on other mechanisms and resources required to support submission preparation to allow REF Strategy Committee to take appropriate action

7. Advise on other decisions regarding the submission, dependent on the relevant guidance and criteria including requests for information from UKRI, code of practice, equality and diversity, etc.
8. Advise REF Strategy Committee on any aspects of REF in the immediate post-submission period.

The REF Management Group will re-convene later in 2021 to oversee receipt and dissemination of the REF results subject to the arrangements made by UKRI. These arrangements will be made known later in the REF cycle.

## **Appendix five: REF Technical Group terms of reference**

### Membership

Director of Research & Innovation Services (Chair)

Research & Innovation Services: Head of Research Policy, REF Strategy and Policy Officer

CIS: IT Business Partner for Research IS Specialist (Web Services)

Finance: Head of Financial Reporting

Human Resources & Organisation Development: Senior HR Business Partner, Workforce Planning Analyst and others as required

Representative from the Equality and Diversity Unit

Marketing & Communications: Research Communications Manager

Strategic Planning: Assistant Director of Strategic Planning

Student Registry: Student Statistics Officer

University Library: Academic Liaison Librarian (Researcher Support), Repository Manager

### Secretarial and Administrative support:

Member of Research & Innovation Services

### Terms of Reference:

The REF Technical Group's role is to ensure that the University's internal communications, management information and IT systems support the planning and preparation of our REF submission. Given the critical nature of this element the Task and Finish Group will report to the REF Strategy Committee. The Group will meet after each REF Strategy Committee. The REF Technical Group will:

- Oversee the development of management information, data, systems and processes as necessary throughout the period in line with university policies
- Have responsibility for provision of accurate and complete supporting data for REF2021 submission
- Implement the internal communications and training plans for REF2021
- Oversee and drive the development and population of the outputs database and environment metrics
- Oversee the interface with the national submission systems
- Oversee the development of other necessary IT systems support

## Appendix six: Appeals panel membership & terms of reference

### Membership

This will be convened if the need arises and will comprise: Provost (Chair), two other senior members of academic staff from across the University who have not been involved in other REF2021 preparations or decisions. Secretarial support and advice will be provided by the Research Policy team in R&IS.

### Appeals procedure: research independence

- a) An individual who wishes to have their eligibility for REF reviewed must write to the Research Policy team ([ref.support@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ref.support@durham.ac.uk)) clearly stating their reasons (normally) within two weeks of being informed of the decision.
- b) This request will be referred to a specially convened Panel (membership outlined above).
- c) It is expected that most matters will be considered by written representation, although an appeal can be heard in person if preferred by the Panel.
- d) Should a Panel need to meet an individual, the individual may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative.
- e) The Panel can either uphold the original decision or can refer the request for review back to the REF Steering Group for their reconsideration, with any additional relevant information. The outcome of the Appeals Panel will be relayed to the individual within five days of decision.
- f) There will be no further right of appeal under this REF2021 Appeals Procedure against the decision taken by the Appeals Panel nor, if a case is referred back to a REF Steering Group, against its final decision.
- g) For any matters not resolved by the process outlined above, normal University procedures for raising and resolving issues are available.

## **Appendix seven: Staff circumstances review panel membership & procedures**

### **Membership**

This will be convened if the need arises and will comprise: Chaired by the Vice Provost Research and including two other senior members of academic staff from across the University who have not been involved in other REF2021 preparations or decisions. Secretarial support and advice will be provided by the Research Policy team in R&IS.

### **Individual staff circumstances procedures**

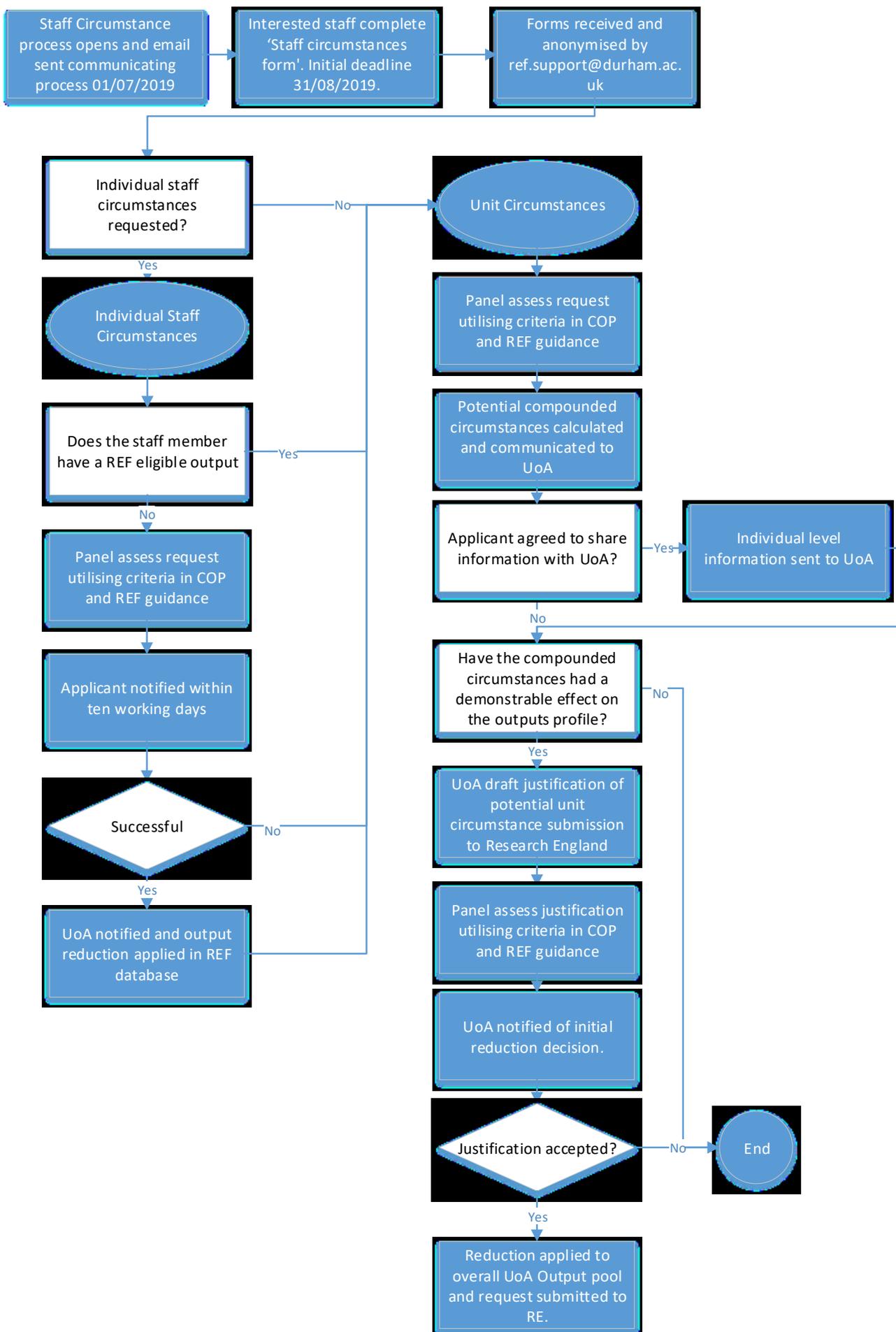
- a) All Category A eligible individuals will be invited to declare staff circumstances, whether or not this would entitle them to a reduction in required outputs. The initial process will open on the 1 July 2019, deadline 31 August 2019. Subsequent requests can be made by existing staff where circumstances change or by staff joining the university between 1 September 2019 and 31 July 2020.
- b) Request will be referred to a specially convened Panel (membership outlined above)
- c) The Panel will assess the staff circumstances request in relation to the criteria set out in the REF Guidance on submissions (paragraphs 160 and 179), using the indicative 46 month or more absence from work to decide upon a reduction in required outputs from one to zero outputs.
- d) Where a circumstance has been declared but there is insufficient impact to warrant a reduction from one to zero (i.e. due to time affected or the presence of an eligible output) then the panel will, utilising the REF guidance, assess eligibility for a reduction to the required unit output pool.
- e) Individuals will be notified of the panel's decision within ten working days. NB. The decision is subject to final confirmation by Research England.
- f) After each round of panel meetings, information on staff circumstances will be provided to the units where either the individual has given consent for information to be shared or where there is a reduction from one to zero for an individual. UoAs will be given the total number of individual reductions from 1-0 so they can factor this into their REF preparations (subject to final confirmation by Research England).

### **Unit staff circumstances procedures**

- g) In December 2019 (initially) UoAs will be provided with an aggregated potential reduction to the unit pool based on the collective staff circumstances submitted.
- h) Units will be asked to assess whether the aggregated circumstances have had a material effect on the output pool. If so they will be asked to provide a 300 word statement explaining this.
- i) The panel will review the requests and either approve and submit to Research England, or reject. It is expected that these will be submitted by the end of February 2020.
- j) Once a decision has been received from Research England (prior to the census date), UoAs will be notified and the required output pool amended within 10 working days.

Further detail is provided in the decision tree in the following appendix.

## Appendix eight: Staff circumstances decision tree



## Appendix nine: Equality Impact Assessment

SECTION A: Proposal Details	
<b>Name of proposal being assessed</b>	REF 2021 Code of Practice
<b>Proposal owner</b> This should be the name of the person/group with strategic responsibility for the implementation of the proposal.	Andrew Jackson
<b>College/Service/Department</b>	Research and Innovation Services
<b>Reason for EIA (check as appropriate)</b> <i>Please check the appropriate box depending on whether it is a new proposal, a change to an existing proposal or a review of an existing proposal.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Change to an existing proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Review of existing proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Niall O'Loughlin.
<b>Review date</b>	September 2019

Version control	
<b>Version</b>	2.1
<b>Date</b>	June 2019
<b>Replaces version</b>	

## SECTION B: Proposal Outline & Screening

### 1. What is the purpose of the proposal?

Please provide a summary outline of the proposal and what it is trying to achieve.

#### Background

As part of the REF process, HEIs are required to produce a Code of Practice which demonstrates their processes for:

- the fair and transparent identification of staff with significant responsibility for research
- determining who is an independent researcher
- the selection of outputs.

The purpose of this EIA is to ensure that there is no differential impact in Durham's processes for identifying staff, determining research independence and output selection for the REF for any group or individual with protected characteristics.

This EIA is a living document and will be reviewed at key stages such as the decisions around eligibility of staff and the selection of outputs for submission and when considering appeals for staff who don't have significant research responsibility / or are not independent researchers.

The EIA will also consider where the Code of Practice establishes positive impact and how this can be used and / or demonstrated in the REF submission. Where positive impact can be demonstrated for submissions to a panel or individual UoA, consideration will be given to how this can be extrapolated to other panels/UoAs.

#### REF 2014 EIA

An EIA was conducted as part of the REF 2014 submission process, and will be used as a reference point for the analysis of the 2021 Code of Practice. The 2014 EIA found that there was no direct discrimination in the selection process of staff and outputs, and that submissions were made in accordance with the agreed code of practice. It was identified, however, that a lower proportion of eligible women than men were submitted. An action plan was agreed outlining measures to:

- Improve Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data sets across the institution to improve monitoring of submissions for the 2021 REF
- More in depth data analysis will be conducted around submission patterns regarding the protected characteristics ethnicity and gender to prevent explicit or implicit discrimination in the 2021 REF submission

This EIA for the Code of Practice will form part of a wider impact assessment for the 2021 submission. The REF submission process has changed since 2014 and as Durham intends to submit all eligible staff, the focus of the first identified action will be to ensure that there is no bias in the selection of UoA outputs.

The university has implemented a number of measures to improve its equality data monitoring, and as part of this EIA, analysis is being undertaken for the 2019 Mock REF exercise to identify any patterns of output selection which may negatively impact any member of staff with a protected characteristic. These measures include the establishment of an independent Equality, Diversity and Inclusion unit, updated data monitoring systems across HR, workforce planning, Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and the EDI team; as well as a major systems development project to implement a single Enterprise Resource Planning Tool to replace fractured systems across a number of departments including HR. This EIA will be updated following the analysis of output submissions for the mock REF during May 2019 and will be amended, where appropriate, to implement mitigating actions for any identified direct or indirect discrimination.

**2. Who does the proposal affect?**

Include here a description of any staff, student or stakeholder groups who may be impacted by the proposal.

The proposal directly affects all university staff with significant responsibility for research and who are independent researchers. The proposal will have significantly wider impact on all research, administrative and teaching functions of the university as REF scores will determine funding and recruitment at staff and student levels across the institution.

**3. Do you have any legislative, regulatory or other legal requirements?**

HE Funding bodies expect all HEIs to comply with the 2010 Equalities Act, as well as the relevant legislation for institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The funding bodies require all HEIs to conduct EIAs on their policies for selecting staff for the REF. A detailed summary of the legislation is included in Table 1 of the REF Guidance on codes of practice.

**4. Is there potential for differential impact (negative or positive) or of discriminating (directly or indirectly) against any people from any protected characteristics? (if Yes, identify how the impact would affect the specific group)**

There is potential for both positive and negative impact for people with protected characteristics. The EIA for the previous REF identified lower submission rates for female and BAME staff. The Code of Practice will aim to ensure that it addresses any bias against protected characteristics throughout the processes of selecting outputs, determining research independence or assessing individual circumstances.

**5. Could there be an effect on relations between certain groups?**

N/A

**6. Does the proposal explicitly involve, or focus on a particular equalities group, i.e. because they have particular needs?**

Potential for research staff who are on research or maternity/paternity leave to require targeted communication or support to ensure they are able to submit outputs.

If the answers are 'no' to questions 4-6 then there is no need to proceed to a full impact assessment and this form should then be signed off as appropriate.

If 'yes' to any of the questions, then a full impact assessment must be completed.

## 7. What evidence has informed this proposal?

<p><b>Information source</b> What data has been used to evaluate positive / adverse impact on protected characteristics</p>	<p>The primary data sources to support the processes outlined in the code of practice will be an in depth analysis of output selection for the 2019 Mock REF, baselined against demographic population profiles for each department. To date, analysis has been conducted at an institutional level to compare staff profiles against output selection profiles for protected characteristics. The data shows that there is no variation between the profile for Category A staff and the profile of protected characteristic for output selection for gender and disability, and the statistical significance for the variation in gender is low at 2.3%.</p>																																										
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" rowspan="2">Characteristic</th> <th colspan="2">Mock REF</th> <th rowspan="2">% variation between profile and selection</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Cat A profile</th> <th>Selection profile</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2"><b>Gender</b></td> <td>Male</td> <td><b>68.5%</b></td> <td><b>70.8%</b></td> <td>2.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td><b>31.5%</b></td> <td><b>29.2%</b></td> <td>-2.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3"><b>Disability</b></td> <td>Yes</td> <td><b>2.0%</b></td> <td><b>1.5%</b></td> <td>-0.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td><b>96.8%</b></td> <td><b>97.1%</b></td> <td>0.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not declared</td> <td><b>1.2%</b></td> <td><b>1.4%</b></td> <td>0.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3"><b>Ethnicity</b></td> <td>BME</td> <td><b>13.2%</b></td> <td><b>13.0%</b></td> <td>-0.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White</td> <td><b>85.9%</b></td> <td><b>86%</b></td> <td>0.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer not to say</td> <td><b>0.9%</b></td> <td><b>1.0%</b></td> <td>0.1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Characteristic		Mock REF		% variation between profile and selection	Cat A profile	Selection profile	<b>Gender</b>	Male	<b>68.5%</b>	<b>70.8%</b>	2.3%	Female	<b>31.5%</b>	<b>29.2%</b>	-2.3%	<b>Disability</b>	Yes	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	-0.5%	No	<b>96.8%</b>	<b>97.1%</b>	0.3%	Not declared	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	0.2%	<b>Ethnicity</b>	BME	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>13.0%</b>	-0.2%	White	<b>85.9%</b>	<b>86%</b>	0.1%	Prefer not to say	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	0.1%
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<p><b>Gaps in evidence</b> Please identify any gaps in evidence which prevented a proper assessment of the proposal</p>	<p>Further analysis will now be conducted at a UoA level to assess whether there are variations in output selection for staff with protected characteristics at a departmental level. Initial analysis indicates that there is a variation in output selection compared to staff profile by gender across various departments. Analysis will consider the reasons behind this differentiation at departmental level and look at mechanisms which can be put in place to mitigate this for REF 2021.</p>																																										

## 8. Who have you engaged with about this proposal?

<b>Date(s)</b>	07/02/2019 07/03/2019
<b>Who</b>	<p>As part of the development of the Code of Practice, an Equality Impact Assessment Working Group has been established to consult with staff representatives from Research and Innovation Services, the Equality and Diversity Unit, Human Resources, Trade Unions and Academic Staff. The following consultation was undertaken and fed back into the working group where the Code of Practice was updated in accordingly.</p> <p>28 November 2018: Initial draft Code of Practice considered by REF Strategy Committee, released for soft consultation to Heads of Department, Directors of Research and to broader academic community.</p> <p>31 January 2019: The Guidance on Submission and Panel Criteria and Working Methods are circulated to key departmental staff including Heads of Department, Directors of Research, Impact Officers.</p> <p>1 February – 13 February 2019: The Code of Practice, including the process for identifying research independent staff is updated by the Research Policy team in consultation with REF Management Group and REF Technical Group.</p>

	<p>13 February 2019: Initial feedback and sign-off for broader circulation sought from REF Strategy Committee. There will be a parallel consultation with University College Union via JCNG.</p> <p>14 February 2019: Updated version circulated to key departmental staff (Heads of Department and Directors of Research) for comment and discussed at Faculty Research Committees. Consultation with union via the HR Policy Review Board.</p> <p>21 February 2019: Open consultation with staff body, advertised on REF internal webpages and in online staff magazine.</p> <p>18 March 2019: Deadline for comments. Feedback reviewed and factored into an updated version.</p>
<b>Main issues raised</b>	<p>Feedback on the Code of Practice to date has been broadly positive. There has been mixed opinion on the introductory statement clarifying that selection of outputs for the REF is not linked to performance management in isolation, however, this again has been primarily positive.</p> <p>It has been clarified that not all outputs will receive both internal and external peer review. External peer review will take place where appropriate.</p> <p>In accordance with the Code of Practice guidance, it was decided at REF Strategy Committee on 01/04/2019 that there would not be an appeals process for individual circumstances. It is felt that the eligibility criteria for individual circumstances is sufficiently clear that an appeals panel is not required. This was also the process adopted for the 2014 REF Code of Practice.</p> <p>To this stage, no negative impact has been identified on the grounds of protected characteristics for selection of outputs or application for individual circumstances. For REF 2014, there was a lower submission rate for female and BAME staff, however, for REF 2021 all eligible staff will be submitted, therefore analysis of the outcome of the mock REF will focus on selection of outputs and will inform the development of the action plan in section 10 accordingly.</p>
<b>Date(s)</b>	04/04/2019
<b>Who</b>	REF EDI Data Analysis meeting with RIS, Workforce Planning and EDI Unit.
<b>Main issues raised</b>	It was agreed that Strategic Planning Office would develop a modelling tool with data provided by workforce planning to provide a demographic profile of UoA populations and that of their outputs selected for the mock REF. Durham University has Strategic Performance Indicators within its 10 year strategy to 2027 to improve the diversity of its staff and student base across gender, disability and ethnicity. These three characteristics, along with age, will be considered requirements for the analysis, however, all protected characteristics will be included where declared.
<b>Date(s)</b>	Research Committee – 21 March 2019, REF Strategy Committee – 01 April 2019, Executive Committee – 29 April 2019, Senate - 07 May 2019, Council – 21 May 2019
<b>Who</b>	The final version is entered into the University approval process (amendments are implemented as required): Research Committee, REF Strategy Committee, University Executive Committee, University Senate, and University Council.
	The Code of Practice has been approved for submission by all of the above committees.
<b>Date(s)</b>	07 June 2019
<b>Who</b>	Code of Practice submitted to Research England.
<b>Date(s)</b>	01 December 2019
<b>Who</b>	Final approved version circulated to all departments and published on the REF webpages. The communications process will also run for the final Research England approved version.

## 9. Who will implement/deliver the proposal?

Please tell us who you will communicate with about the proposal and how you plan to engage with them.

The table below outlines the communications and delivery plan for the Code of Practice.

<b>Avenue</b>	<b>Constituents</b>	<b>Date</b>
Initial draft of Code of Practice published in internal REF website.	All University staff	17 December 2018
Version for consultation.		14 February 2019
Final version (unapproved).		01 April 2019
Final version (approved).		01 December 2019
Link to most current version of Code of Practice emailed.	Heads of Department, Directors of Research, Professional Support Services REF leads, Union	17 December 2018, 14 February 2019, 01 April 2019, 01 December 2019
Faculty of Science - Research Committee.	Deputy Head of Faculty Research & Departmental Directors of Research	25 February 2019, 23 April 2019, 10 June 2019
Faculty of Science - Faculty Board.	Heads of Department, Faculty PVC and Faculty officers	24 January 2019, 7 March 2019, 2 May 2019
Social Sciences and Health Faculty Board.	Heads of Department, Faculty PVC and Faculty officers.	17 January 2019
Social Sciences and Health Faculty Research Committee.	Deputy Head of Faculty Research & Departmental Directors of Research	28 February 2019, 23 May 2019
Arts and Humanities Faculty Research Committee.	Deputy Head of Faculty Research & Departmental Directors of Research	6 February 2019, 14 May 2019
Arts and Humanities Faculty Board.	Heads of Department, Faculty PVC and Faculty officers.	4 February 2019, 29 April 2019 24 June 2019
Cross Faculty Impact Officers meeting.	Departmental Impact Officers	20 February 2019
University College Union	UCU Representative	07 February, 17 April 2019
Mock REF Feedback session	Heads of Department and Directors of Research	24 June 2019

**10. What are the potential/actual impacts of the proposal on the following characteristics?**

**EIA ACTION PLAN**

<b>Reviewed characteristic</b>	<b>Positive impact</b> <i>A positive impact is one in which a person or people will experience an advantage or benefit.</i>	<b>Negative impact</b> <i>A negative impact is one in which a person or people will experience a disadvantage.</i>	<b>Detail of impact</b> <i>If there is no impact – you do not need to fill in this section</i>	<b>How will you mitigate or remove any identified negative impacts and/or promote any positive impacts?</b>  <b>Can any identified impact be justified for business reasons? If yes, please explain why.</b>	<b>Owner of action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Both ethnicity and gender were identified as having low submission rates for the 2014 REF. This EIA will analyse the relevant data when available to ensure mitigating actions are implemented where required.  Initial analysis indicates that there is variation by gender in output selection by department.	Further analysis is being undertaken at a departmental level to understand output selection by protected characteristic. Once the analysis is complete, where negative impact is identified, mitigating actions will be discussed at a Departmental level with Heads of Departments and at a Faculty Level with Executive Deans.		
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Both ethnicity and gender were identified as having low submission rates for the 2014 REF. This EIA will analyse the relevant data when available to ensure mitigating actions are implemented where required			

Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Socio-economic background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Applies to all characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	EIA action plan to be updated following the results of the 2019 REF exercise.			

### SECTION D: Proposal Outcome

Please select one of the outcomes below for how the proposal will be progressed:

No impact identified at this time.

*There have been no equality issues identified as a result of your assessment which disproportionately impact people with reviewed characteristics.*

Continue the proposal making adjustments where required.

*Select this option where there has been an identified impact and you are able take mitigating action to lessen this.*

Continue the proposal without adjustments for adverse impact.

*Select this option where potential/actual adverse impact has been identified, however, the proposal meets critical business need or the benefits of the proposal outweigh the adverse impact.*

Stop the proposal because adverse impacts cannot be mitigated or prevented.

*When the potential/actual adverse impact is considerable, can not be mitigated and there are no justifiable business reasons it may be necessary to stop the proposal.*

### SECTION E: Proposal Approval

**Signed by proposal owner**

Signature: Andrew Jackson

Date: 04/06/19

**Signed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit**

Signature: Mark Callaghan

Date: 04/06/19