

# Research Excellence Framework 2021

## Code of Practice

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## **BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY**

### **Note on this document**

This Code of Practice is an updated version of the Interim Code of Practice which was approved by Queen Mary University of London's Senate in December 2018, following a period of consultation with staff. The changes included in this updated version reflect the finalised guidance for the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF 2021) available on the REF website. Sections 1-5 of this Code align with the template provided by the UK REF team.<sup>1</sup> The updated Code of Practice was considered by the University's Equality and Diversity Steering Group, REF Equality and Diversity Group, and REF Strategy Group prior to approval by Senate on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Following the announcement of the delay to the REF 2021 submission deadline as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the timetable at the end of this document was updated in August 2020 in line with the new Guidance on Revisions to REF 2021.

This Code of Practice, alongside other REF information for staff, will be available at the VP Research intranet site and will be circulated to all staff.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this Code of Practice are to:

- provide staff with clear information about how Queen Mary University of London (Queen Mary, the University) is managing its REF 2021 preparations and submission;
- describe how Queen Mary is discharging its responsibilities in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and relevant employment legislation;
- ensure consistency of practice across Queen Mary in relation to the identification of REF eligible staff;
- ensure that the identification of eligible staff for REF 2021 is made on transparent and defensible grounds relating only to the expectations for and assessment of the roles undertaken by staff within the University;
- recognise the right of the Principal and President and the REF Strategy Group to select all elements of the final submission in order to best represent the University's research and seek to optimise its assessment;
- ensure that all staff are aware of the mechanisms that are in place to ensure they are able to disclose in confidence any personal circumstances that may have prevented the production of appropriate research outputs in any part of the

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<sup>1</sup> The term "UK REF team" is used for brevity in this Code - the REF is undertaken jointly by the four UK higher education funding bodies: Research England, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.

- assessment period and how those circumstances will be assessed, and decisions made;
- ensure that all staff are aware of the mechanisms that are in place to make decisions on the research independence of REF eligible staff on research-only contracts;
  - provide an effective communication plan that informs staff of the criteria and process for the selection of all elements of the overall submission;
  - provide a summary of the framework regarding any appeals against decisions made.

## Summary of key points

- It is recognised that individual members of academic staff contribute to the University and to its research mission in many ways, not all of which are necessarily captured by a REF submission. Our REF submission is intended to represent our research overall in the best way possible, within the framework of the REF regulations.
- Queen Mary will be submitting 100% of its category A REF eligible staff in all its UoAs. Category A REF eligible staff are those as defined by the UK REF team as academic staff “with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date”, whose primary employment function is to undertake ‘teaching and research’ or ‘research only’. Eligible staff will be identified by reference to their role and contract documentation. All staff on Queen Mary Teaching and Research roles are eligible by this definition. Staff with ‘research only’ roles will be eligible if they qualify as an “independent researcher” according to the REF Guidance on Submissions – see section 3 below.
- This Code aims to cover our preparations for, and submission to REF 2021. This is a restricted purview that touches on but does not seek to directly address wider issues to do with Equality and Diversity in terms of how the University seeks to foster research. It is expected that the equality and diversity reports that are described in this Code will both inform and improve our continuing REF preparations as well as more general initiatives to improve practice via the Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Steering Group.
- Responsibility for the final REF 2021 submission rests with the Principal and President and the REF Strategy Group following the recommendations of the REF Co-ordination Group (see Appendix B for a list of Queen Mary REF committees and their membership and responsibilities). Faculty Deans for Research, Heads of School/Institute and the Unit of Assessment (UoA) Coordinators will be responsible for overseeing the preparation of draft submissions for each UoA in which Queen Mary intends to make a return. Where there is a submission that goes across internal Queen Mary structures the appointed UoA Coordinator and the Faculty Dean for Research will oversee the co-ordination of submissions, but responsibility for the drafting of submissions will rest with the relevant Schools/Institutes working in close collaboration.
- Individuals will be asked whether they wish to declare any ‘individual circumstances’ (see Section 4 below) that may have prevented them from

undertaking research during the assessment period. This material will be anonymised and considered in confidence by the REF Equality and Diversity Group, who will make recommendations to the REF Strategy Group in relation to output reductions, by application of the REF Guidance on Submissions.

- All elements of Dry Run submissions from 2019 on will be assessed by reference to the REF Guidance on Submissions and Panel Criteria and Working Methods documentation.
- The selection of outputs and impact case studies will be made based on internal and external assessments, with the overall aim of optimising the University submission as a whole; this may not necessarily optimise all individual UoA submissions.
- The selection of outputs for submission will in the first instance be based on optimising the expected final assessment, for example with respect to overall Grade Point Average (GPA).
- REF UoA boundaries do not in general align with Queen Mary School and Institute structures, and the research outputs or impact cases of some individuals may be suitable for submission in different or multiple UoAs in accordance with REF rules; in such cases the choice of UoA will be made by the REF Strategy Group on the basis of seeking to optimise the overall University submission, bearing in mind assessments of quality as well as the coherence of submissions.
- All Queen Mary staff involved in REF selection and decision-making processes will be expected to undertake appropriate equality and diversity training (see Appendix B, Point 3), and the equality profile of all persons/groups involved in the process will be monitored and published.
- Queen Mary will undertake Equality Impact Assessments at key points in the process. This will include the Dry Runs of 2018, 2019 and 2020 and the submission in March 2021.
- Where the numbers of staff are small enough to enable individuals to be identified, these data will not be published in accordance with the provisions of Data Protection legislation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **Broader Context**

This Code of Practice has been developed by Queen Mary in the context of the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF 2021). It reflects our ambitions to meet the highest standards of research in a broad range of subject areas, as judged by international comparators, and our commitments to the ideal of a university as a mutually supportive community of scholars, and to equality, diversity and inclusion within all our work. The University is noted for the diversity of its students and staff; it is highly international and encompasses people from many backgrounds.

This Code of Practice identifies the mechanisms by which Queen Mary will exercise these commitments in managing its assessments of the quality and value of the research of its academic staff through REF dry run exercises, leading up to the final submission in March 2021. It forms part of the University's development of its equality, diversity and inclusion objectives, and is supported by a programme of activities and support for staff delivered at University, Faculty and Institute/School/professional services Directorate level.

Our policies and practice with regard to REF 2021 are embedded within those of the University as a whole, through researcher support and development at all career stages, and the fostering of a research environment that brings out the best in all our staff, whether they undertake or support our research. The formulation and application of this Code will be overseen by the University's REF Equality and Diversity Group, which will receive Equality Impact Assessments and review progress and which reports to the University's Equality and Diversity Steering Group and REF Strategy Group.

Close attention will be paid to promoting equality and diversity during all stages of our REF preparations and final submission. The REF Equality and Diversity Group provides advice and recommendations, on the basis of regular Equality Impact Assessments as well as more generally. This group will also make decisions on individual staff circumstances, output reductions and make recommendations on overall UoA circumstances.

## **Supporting Staff**

Developmental support can be provided for individual research staff where an appropriate intervention has been agreed. This will be in conjunction with the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation and/or the relevant Faculty Vice-Principal, and/or Faculty Dean for Research or a combination of these. Queen Mary upholds the tenets of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and our efforts have been independently recognised through the HR Excellence in Research Award, which we have held since 2012. Our action plans since gaining the award can be found on the Queen Mary University of London Academic Development website describing such activity as training programmes and mentoring schemes for researchers, support of research staff

associations, and mechanisms facilitating research staff input into institutional decision-making processes. Queen Mary has also developed a number of equality-focused mentoring initiatives to ensure all staff can fulfil their potential; for example, partnering with other leading London institutions to set up B-MEntor, a mentoring scheme where senior academics from four London institutions mentor Black and Ethnic Minorities (BME) research and early-career academic staff. Queen Mary is currently the holder of 11 nationally-recognised inclusion and diversity awards and charter marks; this includes being a Stonewall Diversity Champion and holding an institutional Athena SWAN Silver Award. More information about Queen Mary equality objectives for University staff is available at the following link:

[hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/governance/equalityobjectives/](http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/governance/equalityobjectives/).

### **Actions Taken Since REF2014**

After the 2014 REF submission, and publication of our equality impact analysis which showed that there was no statistically significant variation between the inclusion of staff with protected characteristics compared to the total REF-eligible staff population, a full consultation was launched across the University, seeking feedback on the policies, processes and actions taken to prepare and make the REF2014 submission. The consultation received many submissions, from individuals and groups, and more formal summary submissions from Schools, Institutes and Faculties.

Much was learned from this feedback and it was used extensively to design our processes for REF 2021. Numerous actions were taken, including:

- the early formulation of a detailed plan for the entire REF period, which was consulted upon widely with staff and subsequently modified and agreed;
- the early circulation of a clear official University statement (Appendix A) that the dry run assessments are intended purely to inform decisions around the selection of outputs and impact case studies for submission to REF 2021 and the scores will not be used as a measure of staff research performance or for appraisal purposes;
- a re-design of Dry Run processes, incorporating internal advice more fully, with initial internal-only REF Status Reviews, followed by annual Dry Runs incorporating external input, following advice from Schools and Institutes on best practice within their disciplines;
- the provision of increased professional services support, particularly for impact;
- the instigation and completion of a programme to improve significantly the quality of data provided for Dry Runs, in order to reduce workload and improve confidence.

In addition, the University's commitment to equality and diversity objectives has been further enhanced by the establishment in 2018 of University-wide and Faculty academic leads in this area and new governance arrangements to provide oversight of our progress.

### **Transparency, Consistency, Accountability, and Inclusivity**

This Code is based on these principles as follows:

**Transparency:** This Code is designed to make it clear to staff how decisions are taken, by whom, and when. It makes it clear how any decisions about individual contributions to the REF submission will be reported to and discussed with staff. It will be circulated to all Queen Mary academic staff and made available in accessible formats on our website. During development, the Code of Practice has been widely consulted on with staff and discussed by the Queen Mary REF Equality and Diversity Group, Equality and Diversity Steering Group, the REF Strategy Group, and the Queen Mary Senior Executive. The Code has also been discussed and formally approved by Queen Mary Senate.

**Consistency:** The Code applies uniformly across the University and to all Units of Assessment (UoAs) that we are submitting to. Any variations in detail are purely on the basis of disciplinary differences and have been agreed after consultation.

**Accountability:** All groups involved with decision-making with respect to our REF 2021 submission are described in this Code, along with terms of reference, responsibility, membership, expertise and training undertaken (Appendix B).

**Inclusivity:** Care has been taken to take account of all REF-eligible staff who have significant responsibility for research, to identify and fully assess research that they have done and support their development.

## **Communication**

The Code is being disseminated in such a way as to reach all relevant audiences: it will be made available in accessible formats and circulated by email in all-staff messages, highlighted in Vice-Principal (VP) Research and Innovation briefings, cited in all-staff newsletters, available alongside other REF material in a dedicated webpage linked to the VP Research and Innovation intranet. Staff absent from work due to secondments, career breaks or parental or other leave will be made aware of the Code through individual contacts provided by Human Resources. The Code has been discussed in meetings concerning research at all levels – School/Institute research committees, Faculty Dean Research Advisory Group meetings, Vice-Principal Research Advisory Group meetings, and Senior Executive Team meetings, as well as through the University's equality and diversity committee structures.

## **2. IDENTIFYING STAFF WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESEARCH**

Queen Mary will be submitting 100% of its Category A REF eligible staff in all its UoA submissions.

### 3. DETERMINING RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE

#### Policies and Procedure

Research staff who are not members of academic staff on Teaching and Research roles may still be eligible for submission to the REF if they meet the criteria for REF eligibility and research independence - for example if they hold an appropriate Fellowship and are employed in a Research only role. Expectations of research independence will normally be established at the point of contract, based upon whether the researcher has been employed in a capacity to undertake self-directed research, or to carry out another individual's research programme.

Queen Mary's approach to determining research independence follows that set out in the UK REF Guidance on Submissions. We define a REF eligible member of staff as research independent when they undertake self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme (see UK REF Guidance on Submissions, para. 131). The following indicators of research independence (reflecting the Guidance on Submissions) may constitute primary characteristics for those employed on REF eligible contracts and roles:

- Members of staff leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded, substantial research project;
- Members of staff holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement. We will utilise the list of independent fellowships which can be found at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk), under Guidance, and funder guidance in relation to particular schemes, where available;
- Members of staff who are leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.

Reflecting the UK REF Panel Criteria and Working Methods we also recognise that for UoAs in Main Panels C and D two additional criteria may be relevant:

- Being named as a Co-I on an externally-funded research grant/award
- Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.

In order to ensure that we are fairly and consistently capturing relevant information on staff in research only roles, including those in roles transitioning to independence, annual Dry Run meetings with Schools and Institutes will review lists of such staff within their units. Their research will be assessed along with other REF eligible staff, except for staff members who will clearly be REF ineligible on the census date (eg research assistants whose contracts will terminate before then). In addition, all staff on research only contracts will be requested to make a claim to research independence if they meet the criteria for REF eligibility, which will be considered via the mechanisms set out below.



## **Staff, Committees and Training**

The final proposed identification of staff on research only contracts who are independent researchers, and those deemed ineligible for REF through not meeting the independence criteria, will be made in early 2020 by the REF Co-ordination Group (appendix B), and subsequently to reflect any later changes in staff employment up until the final submission. This set of recommendations, and the evidence they are based on, will then be considered by the REF Equality and Diversity Group and included in equality impact analyses (taking into account where possible the protected characteristics of the research independent group vis-à-vis the wider 'research only' staff population). The REF Equality and Diversity Group will make decisions on the REF eligibility of the individuals listed, as well as considering any individual circumstances that may have limited the production of research outputs for eligible staff during the census period. These decisions will be communicated by the Chair to the individuals concerned at an appropriate time. As set out in Appendix B, point 3, all Queen Mary staff involved in the selection and decision-making processes are expected to have undertaken appropriate REF-specific equal opportunities training.

## **Appeals**

Any researcher who wishes to appeal against the decision of the REF Equality and Diversity Group on eligibility may do so, with an appeal panel formed as described in Appendix C, which will assess the evidence provided with regard to eligibility in relation to the REF Guidance on Submissions and form a final decision.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

The above process for determining research independence and outcomes will be monitored alongside other groups as described in this Code (see EIA sub-section in section 4).

# **4. SELECTION OF OUTPUTS**

## **Policies and Procedure**

All selection processes (eg of eligible and submitted outputs, or impact case studies) will involve a fair and equal judgement of all relevant material that is available as the product of the research of REF eligible staff. This will be coordinated centrally by the President and Principal, assisted by the REF Strategy Group. The final decisions about the REF submission will be taken by the REF Strategy Group and the President and Principal, upon recommendations from the REF Co-ordination Group. This ensures that the same processes and procedures have been and will be applied equitably to all staff in all UoAs at all points in the process. Queen Mary will judge research outputs (and impact case studies) by the same standards for all staff eligible for submission in a given UoA, and the standards applied will be based on the criteria announced by the UoA sub-panels. The same criteria will apply to Queen Mary's annual Dry Runs from 2019 as will apply to the final REF submission in 2021.

Queen Mary conducted internal REF Status Reviews in 2016 and 2017 and then held Dry Runs in 2018 and 2019, which included some advice from external assessors. A similar process was held in 2020 to agree the final submission. A range of potential external assessors were recommended by Schools/Institutes and from these a group was selected by the Faculties. Previous experience on a REF Panel was considered an advantage. The assessors remained anonymous, except in a minority of cases where they explicitly waived anonymity; see Appendix A for a statement issued to staff in August 2018 on the use of external assessments. The profile of assessors is being considered (where possible) as part of the EIAs on Dry Runs following that of 2018, and will inform further decisions on external assessor selection, keeping in mind the constraints on the willingness and availability of external assessors to undertake this work for Queen Mary.

Through these preparatory processes, staff have identified their published or publicly available research outputs, and those amongst them that they consider the strongest. REF eligible staff employed on fixed-term and part-time contracts are treated in the same way as staff employed on open-ended contracts in terms of the consideration of research outputs.

Outputs of staff who have left the University have been included in these processes, as research which was generated whilst employed at Queen Mary and where it is recognised that high quality research outputs may have been produced during such a period. Outputs from staff made redundant during the REF period will not normally be considered for submission, except where co-authored with, and assigned to, an eligible member of staff. We also reserve the right to submit outputs produced in specific circumstances, eg when produced by independent research staff funded via external fellowships who have been made redundant at the conclusion of their fellowship<sup>2</sup>.

As part of the Dry Runs, all outputs were assessed internally and there was some variation between UoAs in the number of outputs sent for external assessment, based on a range of factors including advice from Schools/Institutes and the availability and expertise of assessors. Schools and Institutes also reviewed all scores for each output and agreed a “consolidated score” on a thirteen-point scale (Unclassified, and then Lower, Medium and Upper qualifiers for 1\*, 2\*, 3\* and 4\* ratings). The consistency of the scoring was reviewed in annual REF meetings and in some cases modified on the basis of these discussions – for example, where there appeared to be an unjustified mismatch between the scores given by assessors and the consolidated score. Individual staff members were made aware of the consolidated score for outputs of theirs that had been assessed.

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<sup>2</sup> Non-renewal of a fixed-term contract constitutes a redundancy in law.

As part of each Dry Run process, Schools and Institutes were asked to prepare a statement on how they ensured consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion issues in their internal processes, and an appropriate balance of membership of local REF committees. Analysis of this information is feeding into on-going EIA analysis and will inform decisions going forward to the final submission.

For the Dry Runs, consolidated output scores are entered into an optimization programme that selects a set of outputs in order to gain the highest overall sum of individual scores and hence GPA. This programme was developed by Queen Mary staff to allow anonymized modelling scenarios for the final submission. It is purely algorithmic and only based on output labels and scores. The optimal selection is not in general unique. The optimization programme allows for a more even balance of the selection of outputs across all eligible staff, whilst also ensuring the optimization of the overall outcome for the University and for UoAs. The final selection process in 2020 will bring together all information about outputs from the Dry Runs, assigning a score to each output based on the consolidated scores assigned in the Dry Runs. This will then be used as input to the optimization programme, and EIA results will inform the final output selection choices, and opportunities for balancing the output distribution, whilst ensuring the overall optimization of the output profile for each UoA.

## **Staff, Committees and Training**

The relevant details of staff, committees and training involved in the selection of outputs are given in Appendix B.

## **Staff Circumstances**

Queen Mary recognises the importance of equality-related staff circumstances and how these can impact upon research productivity over REF cycles. The approach taken by Queen Mary in relation to staff circumstances is designed to ensure that there are safe and robust processes for the disclosure of, consideration of, and appropriate action on equality-related circumstances, in the context of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions.

The process of disclosing equality-related staff circumstances will be confidential, will protect the anonymity of the staff involved, and will be separate from the other REF deliberations of the University. The process will be integrated via the University's equality and diversity structures, through the REF Equality and Diversity Group, with an independent appeal option available, and clarity in communications and clear timelines for all decisions. All REF-eligible staff (including those on open-ended, fixed-term and part-time contracts) will be asked to voluntarily declare any such circumstances that meet the situations set out in the REF Guidance on Submissions.

All REF-eligible staff will be asked to provide a confidential personal declaration which allows them to (a) declare circumstances relating to the REF Guidance on research productivity that they wish to have considered with the opportunity to document these (which will be treated anonymously and confidentially (as set out below)), or (b) state that they do not wish to declare circumstances to be considered. The process for confidentially

collecting the requested information relating to staff circumstances will be coordinated centrally by the REF Manager, will be made on a dedicated form which will be shared only with the Chair and Secretary of the REF Equality and Diversity Group (REDG), and the relevant Faculty Strategic HR Partner (supported by a HR project coordinator). They will produce a summary of any cases for declared circumstances which will protect the anonymity of the applicant and will detail how the application fits with the published REF criteria (Annex L of UK REF Guidance on Submissions). This anonymised information will be presented to the REDG, who will decide on the case for any output reduction by application of the published criteria in the REF Guidance on Submissions. Supported cases and the relevant anonymised documentation will be submitted by the Secretary of the REDG to the UK REF team as per the published procedure. The Chair of the REDG will communicate the outcome to each applicant. Appeals against the decisions of the REDG can be made on the basis of the process set out in Appendix C. The REDG will also submit anonymised reports on its work to the University's Equality and Diversity Steering Group. Summary output reduction decisions at UoA level will be considered by the REF Co-ordination Group to ensure consideration of any adjustment of expectations about staff contributions to the output pool for individual UoAs. Further details of the process are given below and in Appendix B.

### **Adjusting Expectations of Staff Contribution to the Output Pool**

Queen Mary does not have formal expectations concerning how many outputs each member of REF eligible staff contributes to their respective UoA output pool. As detailed above, output selection processes are designed to be fair and transparent in order to maximise the overall Unit of Assessment output GPA. It is therefore expected that staff will contribute a varying amount of outputs to the output pool (between 1 and 5 per member of REF eligible staff). Queen Mary does however recognise that equality-related staff circumstances may impact on the ability of an individual member of staff to produce the same number of high quality outputs as a member of staff with no such circumstances. Staff who have circumstances declarations approved by the Queen Mary REF Equality and Diversity Group will be supported by their School/Institute in order to account for the impact of the circumstances. This will normally be taken forward through a discussion between the member of staff and their line manager. The circumstances will not be disclosed to line management in order to maintain confidentiality.

### **The Impact of Staff Circumstances on the Output Pool**

Queen Mary considers that the impact of staff circumstances reflected in output reductions documented in Annex L of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions may constitute a “**cumulative effect** on the ... overall output pool” (para 173 UK REF Guidance on Submissions) for a UoA. Following decisions of the Queen Mary REF EDG on output reductions, as set out above, the REF Co-ordination Group will consider at UoA level when such a cumulative and disproportionate effect may have occurred from members of REF eligible staff in any UoA having had their research productivity impacted by such circumstances. The REF Co-ordination Group (or relevant Faculty sub-committees of that group) will make recommendations to the REF Strategy Group for approval for submission to the UK REF team by the March 2020 deadline. The REF Co-ordination Group will use the guidance set out in paragraphs 186-201 of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions.

## **Removing the Minimum of One Output Requirement**

The approach to staff circumstances leading to requests to remove the minimum requirement of one output will follow the UK REF Guidance on Submissions (para 178-183) to ensure that requests are made where the following circumstances apply within the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020:

- a. an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to one of more of the circumstances set out in paragraphs 160 to 163 of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions (such as an ECR who has only been employed as an eligible staff member for part of the assessment period)
- b. circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research, where circumstances set out in paragraph 160 of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions apply (such as mental health issues, caring responsibility, long-term health conditions) or
- c. two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave, as defined in Annex L of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions.

Where a staff member's individual circumstances are deemed to have resulted in a similar impact (including where there are a combination of circumstances that would not, when taken separately, meet the thresholds set out above), a request for removing the minimum requirement of one output will be made to the UK REF team/EDAP and Queen Mary will clarify this within the request form. Where an individual has a combination of circumstances, all the applicable circumstances will be cited in the request and information provided about the effect of the combined circumstances on the researcher's ability to produce an eligible output in the period.

Following decisions of the Queen Mary REDG on output reductions and staff circumstances, as set out above, the REF Co-ordination Group (or relevant Faculty sub-committees of that group) will utilize the anonymized outcomes of the REDG process to make recommendations to the REF Strategy Group for approval for submission to the UK REF team/EDAP by the March 2020 deadline, and any further deadlines set out prior to the final REF submission date. The REF Co-ordination Group will use the guidance set out in paragraphs 186-201 of the UK REF Guidance on Submissions to determine such requests.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

Queen Mary is conducting and will continue to conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on our REF processes for determining research independence and output selection to determine if they may have a differential impact on particular groups by reference to one or more protected characteristic(s). All Schools and Institutes in the 2018 Dry Run were asked to provide a summary statement on the detail of the processes that they used to select and assess outputs, the selection of assessors, and the membership of all relevant committees involved in decision-making. These summaries are being brought together as part of an EIA of the Dry Run, conducted under the aegis of the REF Equality

and Diversity Group. The EIA will review the summaries, and evaluate the output selection process, including a review of the scoring and outcomes of the optimization programme.

The REF Equality and Diversity Group will commission EIAs to monitor anonymised versions of the recommended optimal submission in each Dry Run (where sufficient data are available) and the final submission and compare it with the equality profile of eligible staff in Queen Mary. Where the numbers of staff are small enough to enable individuals to be identified, this data will not be published in accordance with the provisions of Data Protection legislation.

These EIAs will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. assessment of the modeled and final selection of outputs in terms of the distribution amongst different protected groups where practicable,
- b. a review of the selection of impact case studies,
- c. a discussion of the draft and final environment statements, assessing how different groups have been described and represented, as well as the presentation and discussion of relevant policies and their implementation and impact,
- d. assessment of the policy, procedures and outcomes relating to the identification of independent researchers and the characteristics of these staff,
- e. a summary and review of the Equality and Diversity reports provided by Schools and Institutes as part of each Dry Run.

Recommendations that address any key issues arising from the EIAs will be used to inform forthcoming Dry Runs or submissions, as well as to practices more generally. These EIAs will be reported to the REF Strategy Group and Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

## 5. APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Use of Dry Run assessments**

In March 2017 the Queen Mary Senior Executive (QMSE)<sup>3</sup> agreed the following statement with regard to REF preparations, which was circulated to all staff:

*The collection of internal and external dry run assessments and scoring of outputs, impact or environment statements is intended purely to inform decisions around the selection of outputs and impact cases for eventual submission to the next REF. These scores will not be used as a measure of staff research performance or for appraisal purposes. Individual staff will be made aware of the dry run assessments of their work as part of the REF process. The dry run assessments for staff will be shared only with those directly involved in the REF planning processes - i.e. those attending formal central REF planning meetings – and will not be shared more widely. Central REF Planning groups are those approved by QMSE for oversight of the REF planning process; members are academic and professional services staff with senior leadership roles.*

The following further statement on external Dry Run assessments was circulated to Schools/Institutes and Professional Services Directorates on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2018:

*Our preparations for the 2020 REF submission have used advice from REF assessors who have been asked for written comments on individual outputs, impact case studies and environment drafts. Their comments will be used by senior staff working on our REF preparations to assist them in making an optimal REF submission for the University. The comments have not and will not be used as part of individual research performance reviews or processes connected with these. We have advised REF assessors that their comments will be treated in confidence by senior staff working on our REF preparations (in some cases assessors have indicated that they were happy to have comments shared with authors). We feel that this approach increases the likelihood that the University is able to recruit suitable assessors in all areas.*

### **Appendix B: Individuals, groups and committees involved in REF 2021**

Roles and responsibilities in the selection and decision-making process

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<sup>3</sup> Former name for the Senior Executive Team (SET)

1. The REF 2021 preparations and submission are overseen by the Principal and President, supported by the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) and the Deputy Vice-Principal (Research Excellence). Responsibility for the final REF 2021 submission rests with the President and Principal and the REF Strategy Group, following recommendations from the REF Co-ordination Group.
2. The REF 2021 Equality and Diversity Group (REDG) examines submissions for individual staff circumstances, reviewing the material in anonymised format. The REDG will make decisions on which individual cases to submit to the UK EDAP for approval, and it will present summary, anonymised reports on its work to the Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Steering Group. The REF Co-ordination Group will make recommendations to the REF Strategy Group on which UoA output pool reduction requests to submit to the UK REF team for approval, based on the anonymized decisions of the REDG applying the UK REF Guidance on Submissions.
3. All Queen Mary staff involved in the selection and decision-making processes are expected to have undertaken appropriate equal opportunities training that (as a minimum) involves fair selection training and the Equality Act. REF specific equality and diversity training is being provided to all those involved in decision-making on UoA submissions on a rolling basis.
4. All Queen Mary staff involved in the REF will be provided with copies of this Code of Practice and any relevant guidance issued by the UK REF team.
5. The list below gives details of the individuals, groups and committees involved in the selection and decision-making processes for REF 2021, and of the process followed for their selection to undertake the stated role(s) in relation to Queen Mary's REF preparations.

As part of its Equality Impact Assessment, Queen Mary will monitor and publish the composition of the body of people in the roles listed to ensure they are representative of the overall equality profile of senior staff within Queen Mary.

#### Queen Mary REF decision-making groups

REF Strategy Group (RSG)	
Membership	The RSG is a sub-committee of the Queen Mary Senior Executive Team (SET). It includes the  President and Principal (Chair); VP Research and Innovation; the three Faculty VPs; the Deputy VP (Research Excellence); the Deputy VP Research (Impact), Faculty Deans for Research, Director of Research Services, EO Research, and REF Manager
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and



	Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed to the RSG because of their Queen Mary role.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	Undertakes Queen Mary-wide planning for REF and determines the final submission; commissions and reviews external assessments of research; ensures that systems for recording and uploading REF documentation are robust and effective; determines criteria for selection for staff submission; reports on progress to SET; submits the final Queen Mary submission; the President and Principal approves external assessors for each UoA from nominations made by the Faculty VP/Deans for Research via delegation to the VP Research and Innovation and the RSG.
<b>REF Equality and Diversity Group (REDG)</b>	
Membership	Chair (VP Policy and Strategic Partnerships), Senior Faculty representatives, Faculty Strategic HR partners, Queen Mary E&D Academic Lead, Deputy VP (Research Excellence), REF Manager.
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	<p>This committee is independent from all other Queen Mary REF groups. It considers and makes decisions on all (anonymised) applications for consideration of staff circumstances as described in Section 4 above and associated output reductions; staff research independence and the determination of early-career researcher status; the committee also commissions, receives and comments on REF Equality Impact Assessments.</p> <p>This group will report into the Queen Mary E&amp;D Steering Group and the REF Strategy Group.</p>
<b>REF Co-ordination Group (RCG)</b>	
Membership	VP Research and Innovation (Chair), Deputy VP (Research Excellence) (Deputy Chair), Deputy VP (Impact), Faculty Deans for Research, Deputy Deans for Research Impact, EO Research, Research Impact Manager, Faculty Research Managers/Deanery Officer, and the REF Manager.
	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and

Selection Process	Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. They are appointed to this committee because of their operational roles.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	This group considers all the operational issues involved in preparing for REF 2021, and is the core group for the planning of institutional preparations, and makes recommendations to the RSG.
<b>REF Data Group</b>	
Membership	EO Research (Chair), Deputy Director of Strategic Planning, REF Manager, HR Head of Enabling Services, ITS Head of Development Services, Library Services Research Support Manager, Finance Partner Research Grants, Assistant Academic Registrar (Research Degrees), Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Research Impact Manager, Faculty Research Manager (HSS), Faculty Research Manager and Deputy FOO (S&E), Research Deanery Officer (SMD)  Executive Assistant to VP Research (Secretary).
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. They are appointed to this committee because of their operational roles.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	This group considers all the data-related issues involved in preparing for REF 2021 and makes recommendations to the REF Co-ordination Group.
<b>UoA Panels</b>	
Membership	VP Research and Innovation (Chair), relevant Faculty VPs, Deputy VP (Research Excellence) (deputy Chair), Deputy VP (Impact), relevant Faculty Deans for Research, UoA leads/Directors of Research, Heads of Schools/Directors of Institutes (where relevant), relevant Faculty Research Managers. The precise membership will vary by each UoA.
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes at UoA level.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	These groups will consider all aspects of the shape and profile of each UoA and consider the optimization modelling. The groups will decide on – following advice from UoA leads – consolidated output scores, make recommendations to

	REF Co-ordination Group and REF Strategy Group on all aspects of the UoA profile.
<b>External Assessors for Dry Runs</b>	
Membership	Recognised academic experts, from outside Queen Mary, of international standing in the relevant UoA. This is not a fixed body of people and may vary for different Dry Runs.
Selection Process	Approved by the President and Principal, delegated as appropriate to Faculty VPs, and chosen following consultation within relevant Schools/Institutes.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	To provide, on a confidential basis, expert academic feedback to the President and Principal and VP Research on draft submissions. External Assessors will not be involved in any decisions regarding the possible overall form of any UoA or University submission, although they may be asked for academic advice as to the suitability of submission of individual outputs or impact case studies for particular UoAs.
<b>Internal Assessors for Dry Runs</b>	
Membership	Senior members of School/Institute staff with research expertise, typically Heads, Directors and Deputy Directors of Research or Impact, experienced Professors.
Selection Process	As proposed by Schools/Institutes, recommended by Heads/Directors and approved by Faculties.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	To provide expert academic feedback on draft submissions for consideration by the UoA Panels. UoA Leads will receive the advice from external and internal assessors, balancing this to form recommendations for modeling and further discussions at the UoA meetings.

## Appendix C. Staff Circumstances

1. The various cases of staff circumstances described in the REF Guidance on Submissions are designed to cover situations which may have prevented an individual from undertaking research during part of the assessment period. The procedures for bringing such cases to the attention of the University, the assessment of them and the appeal process for decisions made is as described in this Code (section 4).
2. All REF eligible staff will be asked whether they wish to draw attention or not to any circumstances potentially affecting their research in the assessment period which may apply in the context of the UK REF rules. Individuals who do wish to draw attention to any personal staff circumstances that may fall within those

covered by the UK REF guidance will be asked to provide a confidential personal statement in writing on a dedicated form, to be sent to the Chair of the REF Equality and Diversity Group, and to give their written consent for this to be considered, on an anonymised, confidential basis, by the REF Equality and Diversity Group.

2. The personal statement should include as much information as the individual feels is relevant and appropriate but will need to include sufficient detail to enable a judgement on whether the application falls within the relevant guidelines. It will be guided by the Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances template provided on the REF website.
3. This statement will be seen only by the Chair and Secretary of the REF Equality and Diversity Group and the relevant Faculty Strategic HR Partner (supported by a HR project coordinator). They may seek further information from the applicant if this is needed to make a proper assessment. They will produce a summary of the case which protects the anonymity of the applicant and details how the application may fit with the published REF criteria. This will be presented to the REF Equality and Diversity Group, who will review this and make a decision. Individuals will be informed of this decision in confidence by the Chair of the REF Equality and Diversity Group. The decision will be whether or not to submit the case for a reduction in outputs, based on the given staff circumstances, to the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) set up by the UK REF team, by the established deadlines. The REF EDAP will make final decisions on all such applications and inform the University of the outcomes. The Chair of the Queen Mary REF Equality and Diversity Group will communicate this outcome to the applicant. Submissions to the REF EDAP will be subject to their policies on decisions as described in the official REF documentation when available.
4. An individual may appeal against the decision by the Queen Mary REF Equality and Diversity group as described in this Code.
5. Queen Mary staff on fixed-term and part-time contracts will be treated equitably with staff on permanent contracts and all Queen Mary policies/procedures will be applied equitably to all staff regardless of their contractual status (unless there are objectively justified reasons why this should not be the case).
6. The Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Steering Group will receive anonymised notice of appeal decisions from the Director of HR and will monitor these on a monthly basis.

## Appeals

1. Appeals may be made on the grounds that the REDG has not properly applied the REF regulations and/or has not abided by this Code of Practice in making a decision.
2. The employee will set out in writing to the Director of HR the full grounds of their request for an appeal hearing within 15 working days from the date of dispatch of the email letter notifying them of the REF Equality and Diversity Group's decision.

The Director of HR may reject any such request that is received out of time without due cause. The Director of HR will determine whether there is a *prima facie* case and will reject any appeal that does not meet the criteria above.

3. The Director of HR will set up an Appeal Panel constituted as follows:
  - a. Up to three members of senior academic staff involved in REF processes, none of whom shall be from the same School/Institute as the employee, nor have been previously otherwise involved in the case;
  - b. The identities of the panel members shall be made known to the employee who shall have the right of objection to a nominee only on the above grounds in 3a;
  - c. The Director of HR will appoint one of the three members as Chair;
  - d. A member of the HR team to provide advice and guidance to the panel;
  - e. A member of the HR team shall act as Secretary to the panel.
  
4. The employee is entitled to:
  - a. reasonable written notice (normally at least five working days, but less by mutual agreement) of the date of the appeal hearing;
  - b. the opportunity to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague for the purpose of presenting their case;
  - c. postpone the meeting to another reasonable time within five working days of the original date, if their representative will not be available at the time proposed;
  - d. to call witnesses (and is obligated to notify the panel of any witnesses five working days in advance of the date of the appeal hearing);
  - e. have access to all material available to the REDG;
  - f. present their perspective of the issues under consideration;
  - g. be given the decision in writing.
  
5. The panel hearing the case will:
  - a. have access to all material available to the REF Equality and Diversity Group;
  - b. conduct the meeting to establish the relevant facts, ensuring good order and natural justice;
  - c. allow all parties to:
    - i. put their side of the matter,
    - ii. hear the case of the other side,
    - iii. ask questions, and present evidence,
    - iv. consider valid grounds of appeal;
  - d. make one of the following decisions:
    - i. uphold part or all of the employee's case and determine that a reduction can be made (or altered) in accordance with the relevant REF guidance for the type of circumstances.
    - or
    - ii. dismiss the employee's case;
  - e. confirm the panel's decision and the reasons for it, in writing to the individual and the Chair of the REF Equality and Diversity Group and the EDSG, within five working days of the hearing.

There is no other or further right of appeal.

## **Appendix D. Data Protection and Confidentiality**

Queen Mary seeks at all times to protect data on individuals in relation to REF selection and individual circumstances and to ensure confidentiality as far as it is appropriate.

### General Statement of Data Collection

All data collected for the purposes of REF 2021 will be stored securely and only accessible to selected members of Queen Mary staff with specific responsibility for the REF. Full details on the collection and use of data for the REF can be found on the Queen Mary REF intranet pages (*Staff Data Collection Statement for the REF2021*).

### Individual Circumstances Declarations

Information collected on individual circumstances will be treated as strictly private and confidential and stored securely in password protected files in permissioned folders. Only the Chair and Secretary of the REF Equality and Diversity Group and the Faculty Strategic HR Partners (supported by a HR project coordinator) on this group will have access to non-anonymised data with regard to the details of any individual staff circumstances. The names of any individuals with an approved reduction in the minimum number of outputs to zero will be known to members of the REF Strategy Group and REF Co-ordination Group for decision-making purposes, but no details of the circumstances will be shared with them. Queen Mary will be required to share some data with external organisations involved in the REF (eg EDAP) when they pertain to reductions of outputs arising from the results of an individual circumstances declaration. Any such sharing of data will be subject to strict rules on confidentiality, following protocols established for REF 2021 - further details on this and the use of data for REF 2021 can be found on the Queen Mary REF intranet pages (*Staff Data Collection Statement for the REF2021*).

Data on individual circumstances declarations will be destroyed after the UK REF team's audit procedures for REF 2021 have been completed.

Instances will occur where Heads of School/Directors of Institute/UoA leads are required to make judgements relating to the likelihood of a given output qualifying for submission by being publicly available within the assessment period. Academics are required, if requested, to share correspondence with editors that would assist in judging the nuances of their views on whether an output is ready for publication and if so, how soon.

Correspondence with publishers is not private, as it is a task implicit within paid research activities and as such, access to it may not be denied by Queen Mary employees citing the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **Appendix E: Timetable**

The elements involved in the process are the annual dry runs and internal and external assessments within these, annual REF meetings with Schools/Institutes, plus relevant meetings of the REF Co-ordination Group and REF Strategy Group.

The key events are the Annual Dry Run exercises, 2018-2020 and the final submission in March 2021.

The objective of the Dry Runs is to form a view as to the overall quality and quantity of outputs and impact case studies, as well as the environment element of the submission, as indicated by the appropriate UoA panel, and to allow Queen Mary to plan for and formulate its final submission to the REF to maximum effect.

Data, as specified for REF 2021, and communicated separately by the Head of School/Director of Institute, will be collected and verified for the annual Dry Runs.

External assessors will be appointed for each UoA in which Queen Mary expects to be, or is considering, making a submission. As appropriate, they will be sent copies of individual outputs, impact case study drafts and environment statement drafts. They will not be sent any other information about individuals. This Code of Practice, plus any equality and diversity briefings provided by the UK REF team will be drawn to the attention of external assessors. In 2018 external assessors have been asked to judge the outputs and overall research activity in accordance with the draft criteria published by the Panels; in 2019 and 2020 they will use the final criteria and working methods documentation. External assessors are asked to provide reports back to the REF Manager and Analyst (Academic Performance) for processing.

Information received from external assessors, including comments on individual outputs, will be passed to Heads of Schools/Directors of Institutes and Directors for Research/UoA leads and to the VP (Research and Innovation), DVP (Research Excellence), Executive Officer (EO) (Research), and REF Manager. The annual REF meetings with Schools and Institutes will review all Dry Run assessments and summarise conclusions to the REF Strategy Group about the optimal shape at that point in time of each UoA submission. After the final Dry Run, the REF Strategy Group will make decisions on the details of the final submission.

Timelines for Queen Mary Processes:

Queen Mary's annual Dry Runs are mainly conducted in winter and spring each year, although further information may be sought over a longer period in order to address any

missing information deemed necessary to gain a full understanding of each UoA's progress towards submission.

Dry Run submissions for each UoA are normally sent to external assessors early in each calendar year, with a request to return their comments within two months wherever possible.

From 2018 individuals will be provided with the consolidated scores for their research outputs and formative assessment relating to drafts of any impact case studies that they are associated to. Indications of which of their current outputs and relevant case studies appear in the modeled optimal submission/s at each stage will also be provided. These are indicative only and the final selection will not be made until shortly prior to the final submission in 2020.

Queen Mary intends to have the staff profile for the final REF 2021 submission confirmed by no later than 30th September 2020.

Any dates above and below should be regarded as indicative and may be subject to review and revision. For example, this may be necessary in light of future additional REF guidance from the UK REF team.

#### *REF 2021 critical dates*

<i>Staff census date</i>	<i>31<sup>st</sup> July 2020</i>
<i>The publication period</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2020</i>
<i>The submission date</i>	<i>31<sup>st</sup> March 2021</i>
<i>Data period for PhD awards and research income</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> August 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020</i>
<i>Period covered by environment statements</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> August 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020</i>
<i>Impact case study assessment period</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> August 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2020</i>
<i>Underpinning research period for impact case studies</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> January 2000 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020</i>
<i>Equality Impact Assessment on Final Submission</i>	<i>Following REF submission deadline, for submission on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021</i>
2018 Dry Run deadline	19 <sup>th</sup> January 2018
External assessment	31 <sup>st</sup> January 2018
External assessment deadline	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018
Feedback to Schools/Institutes	May to June 2018
Follow-up internal assessment (selected UoAs)	31 <sup>st</sup> September 2018



Follow-up feedback to Schools/Institutes	October to November 2018
Feedback to individual researchers	Completed by December 2018
Equality Impact Assessment on 2018 Dry Run	April 2019
2019 Dry Run deadline	11 <sup>th</sup> January – 8 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2019 (deadline by Faculty)
External assessment	January - Feb 2019
External assessment deadline	15 <sup>th</sup> March -19 <sup>th</sup> April 2019 (by Faculty)
Feedback to Schools/Institutes	April to July 2019
Feedback to individual researchers	Completed by November 2019
Equality Impact Assessment on 2019 Dry Run	Late 2019
2020 Dry Run Deadlines	02 December 2019
External assessment deadlines	27 <sup>th</sup> January – 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Submission of unit reduction and individual reduction to zero requests to REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Feedback to Schools/Institutes	March to May 2020
Confirmation of REF 2021 submission staff profile	30th September 2020