

CODE OF PRACTICE ON PREPARING THE INSTITUTIONAL SUBMISSION TO REF2021 – Revised and Updated August 2020

Part 1: Introduction

Success in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is crucial to the future strength of the University. The outcome of the REF2021 will be a major factor in determining the core research funding the University will receive from the Scottish Funding Council for a number of years, probably until 2027. It is therefore vital for the financial health of the institution. A successful outcome will also safeguard and improve the University's reputation as a research intensive institution, with many areas internationally excellent or world leading.

While preparing the institutional return to REF2021 we seek to maximize the financial and reputational return to the University. At the same time, we seek to maintain a supportive and inclusive environment that is sensitive to different disciplinary cultures and contexts and that enables all our researchers to fulfil their potential and progress their careers. The University's Equality and Diversity Policy and Code for Staff and Students expressly asserts that no employee or student will be discriminated against on the basis of any characteristic covered by equality legislation, or any other inappropriate distinction. This applies to the full employment and student life cycle.

REF2021 differs significantly from previous research assessment exercises. For RAE2008 and REF2014, institutions were invited to present work by *selected* eligible researchers to demonstrate research quality. For REF2021, we will have to select work by *all* eligible researchers and present it for assessment. The main focus of this Code of Practice is therefore on the fair and transparent selection of outputs for submission, and the institutional expectations on individual researchers.

This Code of Practice details our institutional procedures for the preparation of the institutional submission to REF2021. It describes

- How we will comply with the guidance, panel criteria and working methods for REF set out by the funding councils
- How we will establish eligibility in accordance with the REF2021 guidance, including research independence;
- How we will assign eligible staff to units of assessment;
- How we will select outputs for submission; and
- How we will assign outputs to researchers (where there is more than one eligible co-author)
- How we will manage and use the data and information around research that we collect in the course of our REF preparations

It complements a portfolio of institutional policies and processes that ensure our compliance with legal requirements such as the Equality Act 2010 and affirm our commitment to promote equality and diversity in the workplace and across the student population. Compliance with E & D requirements is the responsibility of each employee

and student of the University, overseen and monitored by Heads of School and Directors of Professional Services in the first instance. All institutional processes and policies are developed with assuring a supportive environment for all staff and students in mind. Policy development and compliance monitoring is undertaken and informed by the Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity which reports regularly to senior management and Court.

Since REF2014 we have -

- Renewed Athena SWAN Bronze Institutional membership (first awarded in 2011)
- All Schools/Research Institutes have achieved departmental Athena SWAN Bronze awards in the current assessment period and are implementing their action plans.
- Continued Disability Staff Network, LGBT Staff and PG Student Network, Senior Women's Network, established a Parent's Network and a Menopause Network and developed a British Sign Language Action Plan
- Engaged with ECU Scottish Race Equality Forum and achieved compliance with the Scottish Government Race Equality Framework (2016-30), achieved Disability Confident status; engaged with ECU project Attracting Diversity and participated in the Advance HE Equality Impact Assessment of Strategic Documents project
- With our partner institutions in the AURORA network (8 European HEIs) established a network of E&D professionals to exchange good practice
- Have retained Healthy Working Lives Silver accreditation (2017), launched Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy in 2016 and implemented a range of new support mechanisms for staff and students and raised awareness of those.

This Code of Practice (CoP) adheres to the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity as set out by the REF2021 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel.

Transparency: this CoP will be developed and agreed in consultation with the academic community and relevant committees (see below). The final CoP will be disseminated to all members of academic staff and made available to them on the institutional REF webpages. Information sessions open to all staff will be held on dates to be announced across the two University campuses, and recordings of the sessions made available to staff online. The CoP will be communicated to members of staff absent from work through maternity leave, secondment, long term leave etc by mailshot. A detailed communication strategy is attached at annex 4.

Consistency: is safeguarded by centralised decision making and monitoring through the REF Steering Group. The Deans of Research, each responsible for ensuring consistency in approach across one or more REF main panels, have an important role in ensuring that our processes have been applied across the institution.

Accountability: All decisions around REF are guided by the objective to maximise the quality of the institutional REF submission. Schools and units of assessment will be working with the institutional REF Steering Group towards recommendations around the selection of outputs and impact case studies, and to propose environment narratives that achieve that objective. Schools/units of assessment and REF Steering Group will agree final recommendations for approval by the University Management Group, supported by the REF team within Research & Innovation. All individuals, groups and committees contributing to these recommendations are guided by the principles set out in this CoP, agreed in consultation with the academic community.

Inclusivity: this Code of Practice requires the University of Aberdeen to consider research outputs and impact case studies by all staff who are eligible for submission to REF2021 in accordance with the rules set out by the REF2021 guidelines.

A detailed Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Annex 2 to this document.

Additional information on how we interpret and implement the REF guidance at institutional level has been published as 'Frequently Asked Questions'. These will be updated as further questions arise. The FAQs can be accessed on: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/research/ref-restricted/code-of-practice-faqs-8842.php> ; a copy of the current FAQs is attached as annex 1 to this document.

This Code of Practice was updated in August 2020 following revisions to the timetable for submission agreed by the funding councils.

Part 2: identifying staff with significant responsibility for research

The University of Aberdeen intends to submit 100% eligible staff.

In accordance with the REF guidance, we consider eligible staff to be those who

- Have a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater
- Are on the payroll of the University of Aberdeen on census date
- Have a primary employment function to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'
- And, in case of 'research only' meet the REF criteria of independent researchers.

Part 3: Determining research independence.

Policies and procedures

Research independence will be determined in accordance with the criteria set out above and with the REF guidance (paragraph 130ff). We expect that a minority of our research assistants and fellows will meet the REF independence criteria.

If there are any questions around eligibility for REF2021, individual researchers are invited to discuss those with their academic line manager or unit of assessment lead in the first instance or contact the REF team within Research & Innovation REF@abdn.ac.uk .

In accordance with the REF guidance, we consider the following researchers eligible for REF purposes:

- All researchers who were eligible for submission to REF2014, unless their roles have changed significantly
- All staff on academic "teaching and research" contracts: eligible
- **Senior Research Fellows, Grade 8:** eligible, as undertaking independent research is a contractual requirement. We exclude from the REF eligible population senior research fellows employed on confidential commercial work who are restricted by the terms of the contractual funding arrangements with third

parties from publishing papers or reports.

- **Research Fellows, Grade 7:** eligible if they are
 - Leading or acting as PI in a significant grant or discrete work package of a grant or research programme. We have interpreted this as grants valued at least £50k for main panels A and B (except for pure mathematics) and grants valued at least £15k for main panels C and D, and for pure mathematics research; or
 - Leading on a significant project or line of enquiry that is not externally funded, equivalent to leading or acting as PI as above. This includes the development of research projects which will make significant impact by leading to an increase in knowledge and understanding and the discovery or development of new explanations, insights, concepts or processes. A single author, or main author or joint author with equal status to their co-authors of a significant research output may be evidence for research independence, where that output represents the independent and self directed work of the submitting researcher. We have interpreted significant output to mean a longer form output such as a book, book chapter or monograph or equivalent, or, in exceptional cases a major peer reviewed journal article. Research independence in these cases will require confirmation by the academic line manager and/or unit of assessment lead and approval by the REF Steering Group; or
 - In receipt of an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship, requiring independent researcher status
- **Research Assistants, Grade 6 and below** are not normally eligible for submission unless, exceptionally, they meet the criteria set out above.

Eligibility of research assistants and fellows is tested on the basis of grant and publication information held on central institutional systems. In addition, Schools can ask for eligibility checks against the published criteria of named researchers with the central REF team. The institutional REF team also welcomes enquiries from researchers who consider that they meet the independence criteria.

Recommendations of research assistants and fellows for inclusion in the REF submission as independent researchers will be scrutinized and approved by REF Steering Group. Supporting evidence will be referenced in the REF module in Pure.

Where a researcher has been identified as meeting the independence criteria, the School Director of Research or Unit of Assessment lead will communicate the decision and invite the researcher to propose outputs for inclusion in REF2021.

Staff, committees and training

Decision making around REF preparations needs to take into consideration discipline specific factors on the one hand and REF guidance and experience on the other. This means that Schools and the REF Steering Group will have to work closely together to develop recommendations for the submission structure and selection of outputs that maximise the quality of our submission.

Schools and unit of assessment leads will be invited to make initial recommendations which will be considered and moderated by the REF Steering Group to ensure that they contribute towards achieving the highest quality return possible and they comply with the processes set out in this Code of Practice. This will be an iterative process and we expect that we will be able to achieve agreement on submission structure, output/impact case study selection and author assignment before consulting Heads of School through the University Management Group (UMG) making formal recommendations to the Senior Management Group (SMT). Final approval of the submission is a matter for SMT ~~UMG~~.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) is chaired by the Principal. Senior Vice Principal, University Secretary and all Vice Principals are members. The University Management Group is an advisory body to SMT - Heads of School and Directors of Professional Services are members.

The **Research Policy Committee (RPC)** is a joint committee of the University Court and Senate. Membership of the University's Senior Management Team, University Management Group and the Research Policy Committee is ex officio. All School Directors of Research and Directors of research related professional services are members of the Research Policy Committee.

Its remit and membership are reviewed annually and approved by Court. Papers and minutes are available to all members, Heads of School, School Administrative Officers and unit of assessment leads on an internal Sharepoint site. Additionally, they are made available to members of Court on the institutional intranet. In view of the wide circulation afforded to RPC papers, reports on REF preparations are at the level of unit of assessment or organizational unit, containing no personal detail.

Membership and remit of the **REF Steering Group** was approved by UMG and Court. In addition to the central academic REF leads (Deans of Research), membership also includes researchers invited on the basis of previous or current REF panel experience or previous institutional REF management experience. The REF Steering Group reports to both RPC and SMT, both of which in turn report to the University Court. Because of the confidential nature of some of the data that will come before the REF Steering Group for consideration (e.g. predicted scores and outcomes at individual level), papers and minutes will be available to members of the Steering Group only. Background data around specific decisions can be made available to relevant Schools where required.

Membership of School committees and REF groups varies in view of the size and disciplinary make up of the School. They are normally chaired by the School Director of Research, and members are nominated and/or approved by the Head of School.

All members of the REF Steering Group, Heads of School, School Administrative Officers, School Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads and members of the appeal panel ~~will~~ have received tailored REF Equality and Diversity Training.

Equality and Diversity training is already compulsory for all staff, as is IT security training which instructs participants on the secure storage, management and retention/destruction of sensitive data.

The remits of institutional committees involved in the REF decision making process are attached at annex 3.

Equality impact assessment

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) explores eligibility decisions taken to date and compares the representation of those with disclosed protected characteristics to that of the overall academic population, and to that of the eligible population for REF. Details are provided within the EIA. It shows that the numbers for three out of the four protected characteristics we currently monitor (age, ethnicity and disability) do not indicate any bias within the REF processes. Gender remains an issue, with fewer women overall in the eligible population. We will keep this under close review and continue to work through our overall policies aimed to attract and retain high quality researchers to improve the gender balance across our researcher population.

Part 4: Submission Structure

The REF Steering Group considered the process by which we evaluate and inform decision making on the submission structure. This includes assigning individual researchers to units of assessment. The following principles will underpin institutional strategy:

- Submission structure will be decided on the basis of appraisal of submission options.
- Individual researchers have been assigned to units of assessment on recommendations by School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment leads, taking into account the 'fit' of the work with sub-panel remits as well as critical mass and coherence of the submission
- Schools have been invited to express preferences and request appraisal of their preferred submission options
- Options have been evaluated on the basis of predicted grades, critical mass and number and expected quality of impact case studies. The REF Steering Group was guided by the published remit of the relevant sub-panels and the representation of specialist research areas by members of the sub-panel.
- The REF Steering Group made recommendations on the submission strategy which were agreed by senior management, taking into consideration the institutional interest in terms of likely impact on REF funding overall, and impact on rankings and reputation.
- Decisions on the submissions structure will be kept under review in the light of significant staffing changes or investment/disinvestment decisions, up to submission date.
- **Predicted grades** will be based on at least two peer reviews, with the final predicted grade agreed in consultation with the relevant Dean of Research (see section 5 below). Where the work of a group of researchers is assessed against an alternative panel remit, a significant sample of papers will need to be reviewed against that remit.

- **Impact case studies:** In considering the submission structure, the REF Steering Group will take into account the number and quality of impact case studies for each scenario.

Part 5: Selection of outputs and impact case studies

Policies and procedures around the selection of outputs

Outputs for submission can be identified and proposed by eligible authors or units of assessment leads/Directors of Research. Where it is considered that an output is suitable for REF submission, it should be proposed through the relevant workflow in the Pure REF module. In assessing outputs for submission, the following applies:

- All outputs have to meet all eligibility criteria for submission (publication date, open access compliance, author contribution, potential overlap with other proposed outputs)
- Each output will be reviewed in accordance with the published REF guidance (guidance provided to internal and external reviewers is here [here](#)). The main criteria for assessment are: originality, significance and rigour, as defined by the REF 2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods (paragraph 190 ff), in which the main REF panels have described how outputs will be scored against those criteria.
- Each output will normally be reviewed at least twice: either by two internal reviewers or a combination of internal and external reviewers. Reviewers are instructed to assess the quality of the output for a particular unit of assessment
- External reviews are sought for purposes of calibration; they may be afforded additional weighting in agreeing predicted grades where appropriate. For each unit of assessment, a significant proportion of outputs will be reviewed externally. Decisions around internal/external review are for Unit of Assessment leads/School Directors of Research in the first instance, final decisions rest with the Vice Principal of Research.
- Each output will be assigned a predicted grade which will form the basis for selection, using the 13 point scale¹. This will make selection of the highest quality outputs for submission easier by enabling a more robust judgement on the 2*/3* boundary.
- The predicted grade will be agreed by the UoA leads/School Director of Research and Dean for Research, or by a process determined by the School and approved by the Vice Principal Research. The final arbiter in case of disagreement is the Vice Principal for Research.
- Normally, the strongest output for each researcher will be selected, co-authorship permitting
- The strongest outputs remaining will be selected according to quality, taking into account author contribution and rules around overlap and co-authorship.

Researchers will be made aware of the grades predicted for the outputs they have

¹ The 13 point scale allows a more granular view of predicted grades:

ABDN	4*+	4*	4*-	3*+	3*	3*-	2*+	2*	2*-	1*+	1*	1*-	u/c
REF	4*			3*			2*			1*			u/c

proposed or that have been proposed on their behalf. In addition, the predicted grades will be visible to individual researchers within their personal Pure account.

Researchers will be informed of the selected outputs they are associated with. The published REF submissions will not disclose the number of outputs with which each researcher has been submitted. The published documents will include a list of staff returned and a separate list of outputs returned, without linking them.

Outputs by former members of staff

The REF Guidance on Submission confirms that outputs by former members of staff can be submitted provided their publication date falls before their date of departure.

Outputs by former members of staff have received the support of the University of Aberdeen through its research environment and will be considered for inclusion in accordance to the processes set out in this Code of Practice, alongside all other outputs. There will be no difference in the process of evaluation, selection or attribution on account of the way in which a member of staff has left the institution.

For outputs of similar quality, selection will favour outputs associated with staff in post over outputs by former members of staff

Policies and procedures around the assignment of outputs to submitting authors

REF2021 differs substantially from previous exercises. It requires the submission of all eligible staff but does not ask for fixed number of outputs to be associated with each member of staff. The expectation is that each member of staff is submitted with an average of 2.5 outputs per FTE, and that each member of staff is associated with at least one and at most 5 outputs.

Outputs will be assigned to submitting authors ensuring that we maximise the number of high quality publications within our REF submission.

We recognise that, in seeking to maximise the quality of our submission, and in view of the fact that each output can only be assigned to one submitting author, the number and quality of outputs assigned to researchers are not necessarily representative of the entire contribution that they make towards the University's research effort, particularly in research areas with a high degree of co-authorship. We also recognise that, through co-authorship, the work of any given researcher may be represented in more than one unit of assessment.

The number of outputs with which an individual member of staff is submitted will not inform any decisions made outwith REF submission planning and will not affect their opportunities to apply for promotion, pass probation or participate fully in the institutional research activities.

In research areas with a high degree of co-authorship, Schools/units of assessment will be invited to make recommendations. Outputs will be assigned to eligible authors on the basis of the overall distribution of outputs across the submitting unit of assessment with a view to maximizing the quality of the overall submission of publications.

Outputs by former members of staff

Where outputs by former members of staff have been selected for submission, co-authored outputs will be assigned to staff in post with significant contribution in preference to former members of staff with significant contributions

Policies and procedures around the selection of impact case studies

Impact case studies are under development within Schools and units of assessment. They are currently being assessed as works in progress to understand whether they are likely to meet all the REF requirements and what kind of support impact case study authors/researchers may need to complete or enhance or evidence the impact for the case study. Schools/units of assessment are invited to propose impact case studies for submission. The following will apply:

- The impact case study has to meet all REF eligibility criteria, for example, the underpinning research needs to have been undertaken at the University of Aberdeen within the relevant time frame; the research needs to meet the 2* quality threshold specified by REF; there needs to be a clear link between the underpinning research and the impact and the impact needs to be clearly articulated
- Each impact case study will be reviewed, internally and in some cases externally, and a predicted grade will be assigned, using the 13 point scale
- Selection of impact case studies will be based on the predicted grades. There is no REF requirement for the impact submission of a unit of assessment to reflect the breadth of the research activities undertaken within that unit.

Part 6: Individual Staff Circumstances

Disclosure of circumstances

The REF recognises that, within the eligible researcher community, there will be a number of individuals whose ability to undertake research within the last assessment period has been affected significantly by personal circumstances.

REF2021 requires the submission of all eligible staff, but does not ask for fixed number of outputs to be associated with each member of staff. The expectation is that each member of staff is submitted with an average of 2.5 outputs per FTE, and that each member of staff is associated with at least one and at most 5 outputs.

The REF2021 guidance therefore makes provision that takes account of personal circumstances and adjusts the number of outputs that are required for submission for each unit of assessment. No such provision is made in relation to the number of impact case studies.

For the individual circumstances listed below, the number of outputs for the entire unit of assessment can be reduced in accordance to the tariffs set out in the guidance:

- Early career status – reductions of up to 1.5 outputs apply in cases of researchers who have become independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks
- Qualifying periods of family related leave
- Other circumstances that may arise for researchers submitted to Main Panel A, including clinicians in training
- Circumstances equivalent to absence that require a judgement around the

appropriate reduction in the number of outputs:

- Disability, ill health, injury, or mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to allowances already made for qualifying periods of family related leave
- Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member)
- Any other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics
- Circumstances arising out of Covid-19 restrictions, including shielding, furlough, closure of laboratories and research facilities, caring commitments/home-schooling

The reduction is applied to the total number of outputs to be submitted by the unit. The guidance does not prescribe the application of the reduction to the researcher with whom it is associated. However, the reductions will inform the expectations of the number of outputs a researcher whose ability to undertake research has been significantly affected during the assessment period can deliver.

Please note that there are no reductions for part time working unless the FTE on census date is significantly higher than the average FTE during the census period.

Applications to reduce the overall number a unit of assessment has to submit are optional. The funding councils' expectation is that the average number of outputs required already accommodates sufficient flexibility for most units of assessment to meet the required number. Notification of individual circumstances by researchers will enable us to adjust institutional expectation on the number of outputs an individual researcher may be able to publish during the assessment period, and to assess whether any unit of assessment has significant numbers of staff circumstances that affects its ability to make a high quality submission to REF.

Reductions may be applied to the researcher(s) who originally requested a reduction, or they may be applied elsewhere in the submitting unit of assessment, depending on the number and quality of papers available for submission.

Final decisions on whether an application for the reduction of the number of outputs should be made on behalf of a unit of assessment will be for UMG, on recommendation of the REF Steering Group. In making these recommendations, the REF Steering Group will take into account the number and nature of applications for reductions, and seek views from the submitting unit of assessment leads and School Directors of Research. Applications to the REF team for unit of assessment level will include minimal personal information which will not be published. Unit of Assessment reductions are likely to be shown as follows:

Unit of assessment X

5 x ECR	Reduction sought: 2.5 outputs
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3x family related leave	Reduction sought: 1.5 outputs
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<u>2x absence requiring judgement</u>	<u>Reduction sought: 2 outputs</u>
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Total reductions for unit of assessment:	6 outputs
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In addition, the REF team will require summary information about circumstances affecting individual members of staff, and sufficient information to identify the member of staff. This will

not be made public by us or the REF team.

The REF further recognises that there may be very exceptional circumstances, or a combination of circumstances which constrained an individual's ability to undertake within the assessment period that there cannot be a reasonable expectation of meeting the minimum requirement of one output.

Requests to remove the minimum of one output may be made for individual researchers who

- Have an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research, due to one or more circumstances that do not require a judgement (e.g. early career status, secondment outwith the higher education sector)
- Have an overall period of 46 months or more absence or equivalent from research, due to one or more circumstances that require judgement (e.g. disability, ill health, mental health issues)
- Have two or more qualifying periods of family related leave as defined in the REF guidance

The removal of the minimum number of papers to be submitted will apply to the researcher who applied for it.

Reduction request process

Reductions to take account the individual staff circumstances listed above must be applied for and agreed to by the REF Steering Group. The reduction in number of outputs to be submitted by a unit of assessment or the removal of the minimum of one output can only be put in place with the explicit permission of the member(s) of staff to whom the circumstances apply. With the exception of early career status, there is no obligation or formal requirement on the part of the employee to disclose individual circumstances or seek a reduction in the number of outputs required for submission.

Where researchers are unsure whether their circumstances meet the required criteria, they are invited to discuss them on a confidential basis with their unit of assessment lead or with the institutional REF contact. The information disclosed during those conversations will remain confidential and will not be recorded until a formal application to take these circumstances into account is received. Researchers are free to withdraw their applications at any time prior to submission to REF.

Applications should be made using the application form and submitted to the central REF contact, Marlis Barraclough (m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk). Applications will be considered by the REF Steering Group which will receive pseudonymised summaries of the applications. Applications, along with the supporting evidence required by the REF rules, will be invited as part of our communications plan for this Code of Practice. All reductions further require external approval from EDAP.

We invited declaration of circumstances in the Autumn of 2019, and submitted the first tranche of applications for unit reductions to the funding councils in March 2020. We are inviting further declarations of circumstances by 16th October 2020. Any further applications for unit of assessment reductions will be submitted with the main REF submission on 31 March 2021. Clear cut personal circumstances that do not require any judgement, such as early career status and career breaks/secondment will be approved by the REF team. Personal circumstances that require a judgement will be forwarded to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP). The information transferred to EDAP

to facilitate approval of proposed reductions will be pseudonymised and evidence will only be provided to external bodies on receipt of a formal audit request. EDAP will provide a decision on each application before submission date. EDAP will provide a written explanation where a request is not accepted in full or in part. An appeals process against EDAP decision will be in place.

The form for declaring individual staff circumstances is attached at annex 6.

Equality impact assessment

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), completed in February 2020, attached as annex 2 to this document, explores whether researchers with protected characteristics have been disproportionately represented among the group for whom no REF eligible outputs have been identified to date. The EIA suggests that women were more likely than men to have no REF eligible outputs at the time of the REF mid-term review in June 2018 (45% of those without outputs compared to 35% within the eligible population).

The number of staff without outputs has been reviewed regularly and Schools have worked with individuals to enable publication of REFable outputs, and, in a small number of cases, clarify eligibility. While the number of staff without any REFable outputs has fallen by two thirds between June 2018 and January 2019, the percentage of female researchers without REFable outputs has remained almost constant at 46%.

This will be further monitored and supportive action focused on this group will be explored and put in place. We will explore whether part time working and family related leave have impacted significantly in these cases and adjust expectations of contributions towards the overall output pool in the light of this.

At the time of resumption of REF2021 activity in August 2020, all REF eligible members of staff had at least one output suitable for submission to REF.

Part 7: Appeals

We expect that we will be able to reach agreement on eligibility, output/impact case study selection by maintaining supportive dialogue between individual researchers, Schools/units of assessment and the REF Steering Group. For eligibility and research independence decisions it is recognised that circumstances can change over time and that, for example, a number of research fellows may attain research independence prior to submission date. Transparency in decision making and around the criteria are essential in encouraging individual researchers to come forward and discuss with their academic line manager or unit of assessment lead if they consider that they are eligible for submission.

For decisions around the selection of outputs and impact case studies, questions about the quality judgements of individual outputs and impact case studies should be addressed informally to unit of assessment leads in the first instance. In exceptional cases, where a resolution through discussion cannot be achieved, a formal appeal route is available.

Researchers will be able to appeal against a decision of eligibility or research independence where

- Either due process has not been followed in the decision making process
- Or where new/further relevant information has become available that was not taken into account when the original decision was made
- the body making the decision did not have the authority to do so, or did not act impartially

Researchers will be able to appeal against a selection decision for outputs or impact case studies or a recommendation on individual staff circumstances where

- where due process has not been followed in the decision making process
- where new/further relevant information has become available that was not taken into account when the original decision was made
- the body making the decision did not have the authority to do so, or did not act impartially

Appeals will be directed to a central contact address (refappeals@abdn.ac.uk) . The appeals panel will be convened by the Senior Vice Principal or Vice Principal not otherwise directly involved in REF decision making or nominated representative. The panel will have two further members drawn from current or previous senior management who are not currently involved in the REF decision making process.

Appeals will normally have to be lodged within 10 working days of an individual being notified directly, either in person or in writing, of the original decision or of them being notified that the informal resolution process has been exhausted. Appeals will normally be heard within a month of being lodged. All appeals are to be decided by 28th February 2021. The general institutional [appeals procedure](#) applies.

Where the panel finds in favour of the applicant, it can direct the REF Steering Group to reconsider the initial decision.

The appeals process has been communicated to all members of staff.

Part 8: Record keeping and data protection

All data collected in the course of our REF preparations will be held on the institutional research information system, Pure. All REF eligible researchers will be able to see their own personal REF profile, including the predicted scores for the outputs they have proposed and with which they are associated.

Beyond that, the information in the REF module in Pure can be accessed by the REF team within Research & Innovation, Heads of School, Directors of Research/Unit of assessment leads, School Administrative Officers and some IT staff with access to Pure. Among senior management, Principal and Senior Vice-Principal, Vice Principal for Research and the Director of Research & Innovation can access the data held in Pure.

Data relating to the submission structure, eligibility and predicted grades is classified as personal data and shared only for the purposes of informing REF preparations or reporting progress to senior management, and only with those who are authorised to see the data.

Data will be kept in the Pure REF module until the end of the REF audit period (December 2021). Personal information on staff circumstances will be destroyed at the end of the audit period for REF2021; other data will be archived in line with the institutional records retention schedule.

We have published a privacy notices relating to personal information collected around individual staff circumstances. We have also completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment which is attached as annex 5 to this document.

Part 9: Appendices

Annex 1: Frequently Asked Questions

Annex 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Annex 3: Remit and membership committees involved in REF2021 decision making

Annex 4: Training and Communications Plan

Annex 5: Data Protection Impact Assessment and Privacy Notices

Annex 6: Individual Staff Circumstances

Annex 1- Frequently Asked Questions



Code of Practice – Frequently Asked Questions

Does the University have someone who is the main focal point for queries about the REF2021?

Yes, Marlis Barraclough, Senior Policy Adviser within Research & Innovation is the University's REF2021 Coordinator.

How is the process of coordinating the University's submissions to REF2021 managed?

A "REF2021 Steering Group" has been constituted to deal with the planning and management of the University's submissions to REF2021. The Group reports **directly to the Principal through the Senior Management Team, and** involves the Research Policy Committee, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Partnership and Negotiation Consultative Committee, as appropriate. The REF Steering Group is chaired by the Vice Principal Research, Professor Marion Campbell. It includes the Deans of Research, and senior colleagues who are past and current REF panellists, or who were closely involved in REF preparations for REF2014.

Remit

To plan, manage and drive all aspects of the Institution's preparations and submissions to the research excellence framework

- (1) To co-ordinate Institutional responses to the national REF Team, UKRI or SFC on matters issued for consultation
- (2) To monitor internal data preparation and benchmarking comparisons
- (3) To co-ordinate the compilation of impact case studies
- (4) To oversee the preparation and implementation of the University Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF submission process
- (5) To receive reports on preparation and planning for REF including progress with data collection, electronic research management and reporting systems, internal reviews of research activity etc
- (6) To make recommendation on which Units of Assessment to submit to; informed by recommendations from Schools, to be approved by SMT
- (7) To finalise the selection of outputs and impact case studies for inclusion in the Institution's submissions; informed by recommendations from Schools and unit of assessment leads
- (8) Review and agree all final submissions prior to onward transmission to the REF Team

The Group will report to the Senior Management Team and to the Research Policy Committee.

How does the Steering Group operate?

Operationally, the Steering Group devolves much of the day-to-day management of REF2021 planning activities to the Deans of Research and School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment leads (depending on the structures put in place by individual Schools). The Group retains overall control of the management of the exercise and makes the final recommendations to Senior Management on the Units of Assessment we submit to, around eligibility of staff, taking recommendations from the respective Schools. At School level, the Directors of Research oversee REF2021 planning activities. Each School also nominates one (or more) individual(s) to act as the co-coordinating team for individual Units of Assessment.

How does the REF2021 fit in with the management of research activities across the University?

The function of planning and managing the research activities of the University exists notwithstanding the periodic assessment of quality conducted through the national assessments of research. Key senior staff have specific obligations in this regard, including, for example, the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principals for Research and the School Directors of Research. Job descriptions include planning towards national assessments of research; however this is a subset of their overall research management roles. The University's Research Policy Committee, a joint committee of Court and Senate as well as School research or REF2021 committees have remits that include preparation for national assessments of research.

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An individual's research performance and consideration of the quality of their research output is handled through confidential discussion with their Head of School, Research Director or their nominated representative and may involve annual review, probation or promotion procedures. General expectations around performance are detailed in the Framework of Academic Expectations (FAE) which sets the context within which individual performance is reviewed. Although the FAE makes reference to the number of REF-eligible outputs researchers are normally expected to deliver within a REF period, overall performance takes a much wider view of research and research-related activities that will inform probation and promotions decisions.

On what basis will the decisions on inclusion be made?

REF2021 differs from previous exercises. We are invited to present selected work by *all* our eligible members of staff. There is no longer a requirement to select researchers for submission. For REF2021, we will submit all eligible members of staff.

How will the University determine eligibility of staff?

The guidance for REF2021 allows institutions to adopt a differential approach to determining eligibility, depending on their research intensity:

- (i) Eligibility is determined on the basis of contract type and research independence and all eligible members of staff are submitted
- (ii) Where eligibility cannot be determined on the basis of contract type, submitting institutions must define criteria that identify staff with significant responsibility for research using other measures, for example workload models or job/role descriptors.

The University of Aberdeen has agreed to define eligibility on the basis of contract type. This means that all staff who

- Are on the institutional payroll on census date 31 July 2020, and
- Have an FTE value of more than 0.2 and
- Have a contract of 'academic teaching & research' or 'research only' and, in case of 'research only' additionally meet the REF criteria for research independence

- Are eligible and will be included in the institutional submission to REF2021

All eligible members of staff will be informed of their status, to which unit of assessment they have been assigned and who the unit of assessment lead is.

What if I don't have an output graded at 3* or 4*?

All eligible staff will be submitted to REF 2021 on census date. Where it has not been possible to identify an output that is likely to be graded 3* or 4*, the author will be submitted alongside his or her strongest publication(s).

How will I know whether I am eligible?

We will determine eligibility on the basis of staff contracts.

All members of staff on an academic 'teaching & research' are eligible for submission to REF2021 and will be included.

All members of staff on an academic 'research only' contract have to meet the REF criteria for research independence in order to be eligible for submission. These are set out in our Code of Practice, and in the REF2021 Guidance on Submission.

Broadly, this means that postdoctoral researchers who work under the supervision of a PI or academic lead are not eligible for submission. In practice, all Senior Research Fellows are considered independent. Research only staff grade 7 or Grade 6 are independent researchers if they meet the independence criteria (see below). Some exceptions apply, for example some researchers whose work is focused primarily on industrial contracts, may not meet the independence criteria.

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The general expectation is that research independence among postdoctoral researchers is exceptional. In previous exercises, around 15% of our postdoctoral researchers met the criteria for research independence.

We will write to all REF eligible researchers shortly and let them know to which unit of assessment they have been assigned.

What are the REF criteria for research independence?

Researchers have to meet at least one of the criteria below to be considered independent researchers for REF2021:

REF2014 eligibility – any researcher who was eligible for submission to REF2014 will automatically be eligible for submission to REF2021

Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators: research only staff who are PIs on 'significant' grants or who lead a 'significant' work package as part of a larger grant or programme are eligible for submission. We have interpreted this to mean at grant of at least £50k for Panels A and B, Life Sciences and Medicine/Physical Sciences and Engineering (except for Mathematics) and of at least £15k for Panels C and D, Social Sciences/Arts and Humanities, (including Mathematics).

Independent Fellowships: recipients of independently won, competitively awarded fellowships are considered to be independent researchers. The REF team have published an illustrative list of fellowships that mean automatic research independence [here](#).

Other evidence of independent research: this includes being single or lead author on a significant output. We have interpreted this to mean a peer reviewed journal article, or longer form output such as a book chapter or monograph, or equivalent.

We will be assessing research independence among postdoctoral researchers over the summer of 2019. If you think that you or a colleague meet these criteria please discuss with your School Director of Research or unit of assessment lead in the first instance, or contact REF@abdn.ac.uk

What will the University submit?

The REF is essentially a large data return. We are invited to submit the following:

REF1 – List of eligible staff, including eligible former members of staff

REF2 – List of selected eligible outputs – at least one for each submitted member of staff, and a maximum of 5. There is no minimum requirement for some members of staff with agreed individual circumstances (see XX below) or for former members of staff. Journal articles will typically be submitted via Digital Object Identifier (DOI). Longer form outputs can be submitted in electronic format, and some books may have to be submitted in hard copy. We are able to submit a large number of file formats, including audio and visual files to enable the submission of practice based outputs. These have to be accompanied by a short narrative descriptor.

REF3 – Selected impact case studies – at least 2 for each unit of assessment (up to 19.99 FTE) and 1 further impact case study for every 15 FTE thereafter

REF4 – Research metrics: research income for entire unit of assessment throughout the assessment period, and number of doctoral degrees awarded throughout the assessment period. The research income is that which we report to HESA, allocated by Co-investigator share to units of assessment. The doctoral degrees are counted when the examining committee has agreed to confer the degree (not submissions or graduations)

REF5 – Research environment narrative which describes how the submitting unit supports excellent research and researchers within the submitting unit, making particular reference to the vitality and sustainability of the unit, to support for equality and diversity, research integrity, governance and reproducibility, support for open access and open data, interdisciplinarity, support for postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers and early career researchers, contribution to the discipline, academic esteem, engagement with research users, support for knowledge exchange and impact activities along with an outline forward strategy for the unit.

What will the REF results look like?

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There are three elements of assessment to each REF submission: outputs (REF2 = 60% of the overall grade), impact (REF3 = 25% of overall grade) and research environment (REF4 and 5 = 15% of overall grade). The REF sub-panels will produce quality profiles showing the percentage of work that meets their 4*, 3*, 2*, 1* or unclassified criteria for each element of assessment, and an overall outcome for the unit of assessment.

How will the University decide who will be submitted where?

Institutions are invited to present research to sub-panels and units of assessment representing research areas. Each eligible researcher will be submitted to the sub-panel that best describes the nature of his or her research. In assigning researchers to units of assessment, institutions will also wish to ensure sufficient critical mass in order to describe a coherent, vital and sustainable research environment. The units of assessment defined for REF2021 are similar to those for REF2014, and it is important to note that they do not necessarily reflect our organizational structures.

In order to arrive at a submission structure that will benefit the University most in terms of reputation and REG income, the REF Steering Group considered a number of different submission scenarios which assigned groups of researchers who can answer to more than one panel remit to different sub-panels. The scenarios were tested in terms of currently available output grades and availability/likelihood of availability of impact case studies. The scenarios were evaluated in terms of GPA and funding related departmental shares. Senior management approved the recommended submission scenario.

If you are eligible and feel that your work should be presented to a different unit of assessment than the one you are currently associated with, please discuss with your Director of Research or Unit of Assessment Lead in the first instance or contact REF@abdn.ac.uk

How will the University select outputs for submission?

Decisions on which outputs to submit to the exercise are based on the key principle of the quality of the research. For the purposes of the REF2021, the funding councils define research quality as follows:

The criteria for assessing the quality of outputs are 'originality, significance and rigour'.	
Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

The University will also take due consideration of the specific guidance supplied by the national REF2021 Assessment Panels in their Criteria and Working Methods statements. The University REF2021 Steering Group makes the final recommendations on which outputs will be submitted, based on recommendations by School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment leads, for approval by the Senior Management Team.

Outputs will be selected on the basis of predicted grades. Predicted grades will normally be agreed by the School Director of Research/Unit of assessment lead(s) and the Dean of Research, based on at least two reviews. A significant proportion of outputs assessed will be reviewed externally to ensure that our judgements are in line with sector norms. The School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment leads decide which outputs should be submitted for external review taking into consideration the availability of internal reviewers within a specific disciplinary area, the outcome of previous reviews that may require further clarification and/or validation, or other factors.

How will outputs be assigned to authors for submission?

The selected outputs will be assigned to submitting researchers according to the rules set out in the REF2021 guidance. The attribution will seek to maximise the GPA in any unit of assessment whilst complying with the

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minima/maxima rules required by REF2021. We will attribute each eligible member of staff with the best available output to satisfy the minimum requirement of one output for submission, then select the best of the remaining outputs, giving due regard to individual staff circumstances. The final distribution of outputs will not be published by the institution or the REF team and will not be used to inform any management decisions.

Who assesses my work and what guidance do they use?

Researchers are invited to propose their best outputs for REF submission. Each output will be assessed at least twice before a predicted grade is assigned. The predicted grade is then used for REF planning purposes.

Schools and units of assessment have appointed internal and external reviewers. The internal reviewers are generally senior academic colleagues, and external reviewers have been recruited on the basis of previous panel membership for REF, or REF experience (e.g. as a REF lead) or because of extensive peer review experience. We have produced a guidance document for reviewers for each main panel, based on the final REF guidance, which can be accessed here [link to our Main panel A, B, C, D guidance for reviewers].

School practice varies slightly, but generally each output is reviewed for a particular panel at least twice, and a predicted grade is agreed taking into account the reviews and reviewers' comments. The predicted grade is agreed by the Unit of Assessment lead(s), School Director of Research and the Dean for the relevant research area. The Dean has oversight of the process within the panel for which he or she is responsible and ensures that scoring is consistent across the units of assessment.

Where reviewers have flagged up issues around co-authorship, need for cross referral or panel 'fit', these will be noted and taken forward by the School or REF team.

How will I know how my work was graded for REF planning purposes?

All Schools have committed to sharing predicted grades with eligible staff members. The way in which this happens may differ from School to School. Generally, the grades are likely to be shared as part of annual review interviews or research reviews.

In addition, you will be able to see the agreed predicted grades in your personal Pure profile from (date to be confirmed). Personal users are not able to access individual reviewers' grades or comments.

Who else will know my grades?

Predicted grades for the outputs associated with you are visible to you, your School Director of Research/Unit of Assessment Lead, Head of School and the central REF team in Research & Innovation.

How will the predicted grades be used?

At individual level, the predicted grades will indicate to the REF team and the School the degree to which any researcher is currently able to meet the minimum requirement for REF, and the overall contribution his or her work can make to the institutional submission to a particular unit of assessment. The expectation of high quality published work is articulated in the Framework of Academic Expectation, and the REF grades are one indicator of progress towards meeting this expectation. They indicate to the School individuals who may need additional support to achieve those expectations. A declaration of individual staff circumstances as described below will enable the School to adjust expectations in relation to an individual's ability to undertake research throughout the REF assessment period.

Predicted grades are a marker of performance among a whole range of indicators that the School will take into account for planning and performance monitoring purposes. They will not be used in isolation to judge individual performance, or to inform promotions or probation decisions.

At a unit of assessment level, the grades will be aggregated to predict REF outcomes and judge performance at group or discipline level. This may be used to inform wider strategic planning, and investment decisions.

What if I disagree with my grades?

Assigning a predicted grade is an academic judgement. The Code of Practice sets out the process by which predicted grades are agreed. This was agreed by all School Directors of Research before the first institutional

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REF review and confirmed through the approval process of the institutional Code of Practice.

In line with other processes that involve academic judgements, there is no formal appeal against a predicted grade. The Code of Practice sets out a route of appeal where due process has not been followed, or where the panel was not competent to make a judgement.

If you disagree with a predicted grade, please discuss with your School Director of Research/Unit of Assessment lead in the first instance. They will be able to clarify how the grade was arrived at, and explain in broad terms the reviewers' arguments for assigning a particular grade.

If this is not satisfactory, you may be apply to the appeals panel for a formal review on the grounds set out in the Code of Practice – please contact REFappeals@abdn.ac.uk

How will I find out how the REF panel graded my work?

The REF panels do not share with submitting institutions the grades of individual outputs or impact case studies. We will be given a quality profile which indicates the percentage of submitted work that was judged to be 4*, 3* and so on, but we will not be given a list of outcomes for individual publications or impact case studies.

What if my ability to do research was affected by personal circumstances during the assessment period?

As in previous assessment exercises, REF2021 makes allowance for researchers whose ability to undertake research has been affected by personal and other circumstances. We will be inviting all REF eligible researchers to declare circumstances later this year (2019). These include early career status, maternity leave or other family related leave, ill health or disability, gender reassignment, researchers working towards clinical qualifications or any significant absences due to secondments outside higher education or unpaid leave/career breaks and others. Declaration of individual circumstances is not compulsory, but it is a formal way to ask for an adjustment of the institutional expectations on research outcomes over the assessment period.

The way in which individual circumstances will be approved and applied to units of assessment has changed significantly from previous exercises. Institutions are expected to collect all individual circumstances that affect researchers within a unit of assessment and then make a judgement on whether the unit *overall* was significantly affected by the circumstances of the researchers in it. We will then apply to Advance HE for a reduction in the number of outputs this unit will have to submit overall. The minimum requirement of one output per submitted researcher will continue to apply, but the average of 2.5 per FTE may change depending on the overall number of reductions sought for each unit of assessment.

For example, a small unit of assessment of 8 FTE had two members of staff on maternity leave and 3 members of staff who joined the unit as ECRs within the assessment period. The overall number of outputs required for that unit would be 20. The circumstances of the individuals within that unit indicate a reduction for two 2 x maternity leave of 12 months (= reduction of 2 outputs) and 3 x ECRs who became independent researchers after 1 August 2017 (= reduction of 3 outputs), a total of 5 outputs. If agreed, the total number of outputs required for that unit would then be 15 or an average of 1.9 per FTE.

The same number of circumstances applied to a much larger unit of assessment of, for example, 115 FTE requiring 288 outputs, would probably not be considered to impact significantly on their overall ability to produce the required number of outputs for REF, and an application for reduction is unlikely to be considered favourably.

The reductions are applied to the *unit*, not individual researchers, and the usual minimum/maximum criteria apply. We will have to explain how the reductions were applied across the unit of assessment. The REF team have emphasised that they do not expect applications for reductions to the numbers of outputs required for all units of assessment.

My research was disrupted by COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions. Can I ask for a reduction?

The REF recognizes that the restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19 will have had an impact on many researchers' ability to undertake research for a variety of reasons. The guidance already recognizes most circumstances that may arise as a result of the pandemic – extended sick leave, shielding, caring

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commitments, lack of access to research facilities are all recognized under the guidance. In addition, the REF team have confirmed that being on furlough will be taken into account. We have amended our form for declaring circumstances accordingly. Researchers are invited to declare all circumstances related to COVID. Please note however, that the REF rules require absence or circumstances significantly impacting on a researcher's ability to undertake research for at least 12 months. That means that COVID-related circumstances on their own are not likely to be approved, but may be taken into account in combination with other circumstances. For example, researcher X was seconded outside academia for 10 months early in the assessment period and was unable to undertake any academic research or publish during this time. During lockdown, they were at home with caring commitments from 1 April until after census date on 31 July. The secondment alone does not represent sufficient absence to allow a reduction, but once combined with the caring commitments while working from home, the total is 14 months, and a reduction can be allowed.

We have invited further declarations of circumstances on this basis.

REF2014 allowed for reductions for part time working. Does REF2021?

REF2014 stipulated that each submitted member of staff should submit 4 outputs regardless of FTE on census date, unless individual circumstances, including part time working, applied. REF2021 asks for an average number of outputs per *FTE* on census date, not headcount, thereby already taking into account part time working.

Applications for a reduction of outputs to be submitted because of part time working can be made where the FTE value on census date differs significantly from the average FTE value throughout the assessment period. For example, a researcher who has worked at 0.5FTE for the first 6 years of the assessment period and then returned to work full time could be considered absent from the research environment for 36 months during the assessment period. The REF2021 rules allow a reduction of 1 output to the unit's overall number of outputs to be submitted. In these circumstances, a case for reduction can be made under 'reductions requiring judgement', which will then be taken into account if a reduction is made to the unit of assessment number of outputs required for submission.

What if I am eligible but have been unable to undertake *any* research over the last few years?

REF2021 makes provision for exceptional cases where individuals have been unable to undertake any independent research for a number of personal circumstances. These include early career researchers who attain independent researcher status shortly before the census date, researchers who have had two instances of maternity leave, or whose personal circumstances have required them to be absent from higher education and the research environment for more than 46 months in the assessment period or where a combination of personal circumstances have had impact equivalent to an absence of 46 months or more.

Where this is the case, researchers can apply for a removal of the minimum requirement of one output. The application will be considered, in an anonymised format, by the REF Steering Group and then forwarded to Advance HE in March 2020. Advance HE have committed to agree all reductions submitted by the March 2020 deadline prior to census date on 31 July 2020. We will have to provide a summary of the circumstance, and retain evidence for audit purposes. Where an application for the removal of the minimum of one output has been approved, the researcher can be submitted without any outputs, and the number of outputs required for his or her unit of assessment will be reduced by one output.

It is important to note that we can only make an application on behalf of researchers who have not published a single REF eligible output in the assessment period. The narrative we have to submit for approval will have to describe in 300 words the way in which personal circumstances have impacted on the ability to undertake research, and not necessarily the nature of those circumstances.

The published REF results and submissions will not disclose the outputs that were linked to any submitted member of staff, and the removal of the minimum requirement for individual researchers will therefore not enter the public domain.

Where a removal of the minimum of one output has been agreed, this will be applied to the individual regardless of whether an application for reduction of the number of outputs at unit of assessment level is made.

What if I have no reduction or only a small reduction, and do not have enough papers?

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REF2021 rules provide more flexibility around the number of outputs researchers have to submit than any of its predecessors. The average number of papers submitted to REF2014 was 3.7 for every submitted researcher, and the assumption is that institutions will be able to accommodate the reduced average of 2.5 outputs per FTE for REF2021 with ease. That said, there are a number of reasons why individuals may have fewer than the required average, or no outputs. This is why, when identifying outputs suitable for REF, Schools have been engaging with staff who do not yet meet the minimum requirements in terms of number or quality of outputs and offering support to ensure that everyone who is eligible has at least one high quality output for submission.

Where an eligible researcher is submitted without any outputs and the minimum requirement of one output has not been removed, the REF team will record an unclassified mark for the 'missing' output.

What if I don't have an output graded at 3* or 4*?

All eligible staff will be submitted to REF 2021 on census date. Where it has not been possible to identify an output that is likely to be graded 3* or 4*, the researcher will be submitted alongside his or her strongest publication(s).

Will I be asked to change contract or career track?

Contracts or career tracks can only be changed with the agreement of the member of staff. For REF purposes, researchers who have switched career track to Scholarship contracts are treated like former members of staff. They are no longer eligible for submission, and their FTE value does not contribute to the overall FTE value that is used as a multiplier in the REG funding formula. It is therefore not in our institutional interest to 'switch' contracts solely for REF purposes.

The Code of Practice sets out that REF preparations seek to maximise the quality of research that we submit and to optimise the amount of REG we can expect from the funding council. This can only be done in an environment that monitors individual performance and workloads in a supportive way, and offers assistance and intervention where it appears likely that the minimum requirement for REF2021 may not be met.

Where contracts and career tracks have changed, members of staff have agreed the change with the relevant School, taking into account a range of indicators including teaching and administrative workloads as well as research performance. The new contract adjusts the expectations set out in the FAE, and may reflect more accurately the reality of daily duties and activities. It also allows the institution to recognise the full contribution of staff whose duties are focused on teaching through the Scholarship career track.

How will the University select impact case studies for submission?

Work is currently underway to develop impact case studies for submission to REF2021. We are planning to gauge the quality of our impact case studies through internal and external review and select them on the basis of quality.

Impacts can be based on research carried out by current and former members of staff, as well as staff who are on Scholarship or research only contracts. We are not able to submit impact case studies that are based mainly or solely on the work of postgraduate research students.

Who will be able to see my data or the submissions?

Submissions will be published by the funding councils on conclusion of the exercise. For REF2021, the published documents will not show how the submitted outputs relate to the eligible members of staff. The number of outputs with which individual researchers is submitted will not be in the public domain, or given to REF panelists.

Case studies will be published in full, but without the submitted evidence and contact details for testimonials. Where a case study is sensitive for commercial or other reasons we can provide a redacted version for publication or assessment, or ask for a case study to remain confidential.

The REF team have published a [privacy notice](#) for all REF data.

What training on equal opportunities has been provided for those involved in the REF2014 selection process?

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The University will be providing training on equality and diversity issues to all those involved in the selection process, and guidance to all those who may be invited to act as internal or external reviewers to assist in our REF2021 preparations. In addition, the University will make available to all members of staff written and online information on the institutional preparations for the REF2021, and provide open information sessions which will include guidance on equality and diversity issues.

More detailed information will be given in the REF2021 Training Plan and the REF2021 Communication Plan which should be read alongside this document.

When will final decisions be taken on which outputs will be included in our submissions to the REF2021?

We are currently collecting and assessing outputs for selection in all units of assessment for REF2021 to which we plan a submission. We will continue to add to the output pool and start selecting outputs in the summer of 2019.

How will selected outputs be attributed to eligible REF authors?

Our software providers for Pure have developed an algorithm which distributes selected outputs in a unit of assessment to optimize the GPA, taking account of the minima and maxima requirement and author contributions stipulated by REF. This will provide a first pass of a distribution of outputs which we will then finalise in discussion with School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment leads, and taking into consideration equality and diversity issues.

The final attribution of outputs across the submission serves the optimization of the submission quality only. It will not be published by the institution or the REF team and will not be used in any institutional planning or decision making processes.

What happens to my information if I declare a personal circumstance?

If you have individual circumstances that should be taken into consideration, the University is required to supply the Advance HE (acting on behalf of the national REF panel) with sufficient explicit information about *how* the circumstances adversely affect your contribution although not necessarily the detail of *what* the circumstances were. If an application for the reduction of outputs is made on your behalf, we will seek your consent regarding the information that we provide. This will not be shared with REF main panels or sub-panels.

All employees of Advance HE and members of the national Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) that oversee and manage individual staff circumstances as well as UKRI employees handling the data in the submission system are bound by and accept confidentiality requirements, as a condition of their appointment to the role. No information relating to an individual's circumstances will be published by the national REF2021 Team. All data collected, stored and processed by the national REF2021 Team will be handled in accordance with GDPR.

Why does the selection of outputs have to be made so early when the submission date isn't until 31 March 2021?

Early identification of outputs for REF allows us to identify early where support may be required to enable individual members of staff to meet the minimum requirement of one output for submission and to make sure that, overall, the unit of assessment is able to meet the number of outputs required.

Early identification and preparation of draft impact case studies allows support with enhancing impacts and engagement and the collection of evidence for case studies in advance of the submission date.

The process of preparing all the material for a submission to a Unit of Assessment takes time. As well as the numerical information, narrative sections are prepared that describe, for example, the research environment, how it supports and facilitates non-academic impact, arrangements for promoting and developing research staff, the research strategy, and markers of esteem. These texts have to support the research outputs and impact case studies submitted and must correspond with the numerical information provided. Starting the process of identifying and selecting outputs for submission also allows full consideration to be made of any particular individual circumstances and will allow sufficient time to provide feedback to staff prior to the submission date.

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How has this Code of Practice been disseminated across the University?

The Code of Practice was launched in June 2019 after a process of consultation across the University. An email advising all staff of its existence was issued 12 April 2019. The Code of Practice is available to view or download [here](#) .

New staff will be provided with information about the Code through induction material.

The Code of Practice was revised and updated in August 2020 to take account of revisions to the REF timetable agreed by the funding councils in the light of the COVID-19 restrictions. Staff were informed of the revisions through internal news bulletins and a mail shot to all eligible staff.

What about work undertaken by external and internal reviewers and advisors as part of the advance planning towards REF2021?

Individuals acting as external advisors or reviewers as part of our REF2021 preparations will be made aware of the Code and be encouraged to apply its principles in their work, particularly where this involves an advisory role beyond an assessment of the quality of research outputs alone. All University staff asked to undertake a role in the assessment of material in connection with the REF2021 are required to apply the Code of Practice in their work.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

Title of Policy, Procedure or Function: Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF Submission Process	
School/Department: Research & Innovation	
Author/Position: Marlis Barraclough, Senior Policy Adviser (Research)	Date created: 26/02/2019

1. Aims and purpose of Policy, Procedure or Function:		
<p>The Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF Submission Process has been prepared to expand on the University's overarching policies on Equality and Diversity and set these in the context of the REF. It will guide the work of all those involved in the preparation of submissions and the selection of staff for inclusion. It also reaffirms our commitment to equality of opportunity and to the adoption and maintenance of best practice.</p>		
2. Stakeholders:		
<p>All academic staff Academic line managers within the University Trades Union representatives University Court REF Steering Group members School REF committee members/School research committee members</p>		
3. Consultation		
Organisation/person consulted or involved	Date, method and by whom	Location of consultation records
School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment Leads	First draft November 2018	Research & Innovation
REF Steering Group	First draft December 2018	Research & Innovation
University Management Group	First draft December 2018	Directorate of Planning
Senate	First draft January 2019	Registry
Court	First draft 28 March 2019	Directorate of Planning
Consultative meeting with campus unions	9 April 2019	Human Resources
Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity	23 April 2019	Human Resources
Consultation with academic community (for details, see Training and Communications Plan)	Launched by Vice Principal Research 1 April, comments/views sought by 26 April 2019	Research & Innovation
PNCC (includes union representation)	8 May 2019	Human Resources

Senate	15 May 2019	Registry
Court	By circulation	Directorate of Planning
Scottish Funding Council	7 June 2019	

a) Brief summary of results of consultation indicating how this has affected the Policy, Procedure or Function

Consultation

Consultation took place on the drafting of the Code of Practice between the Senior Policy Adviser (Research), the Policy Adviser (Research), the Equality and Diversity Adviser and the Senior Human Resources Manager. An early draft, based on the draft guidance on the preparation of institutional Codes of Practice was discussed with School Research Directors at REF Panel meetings, the Research Policy Committee, the REF Steering Group and Senate.

Early consultation took place before publication of the final guidance by the funding councils on 31st January 2019 and before the Equality and Diversity in REF workshops and information sessions held by the funding councils on 25 February 2019. Comments received from School Directors of Research, unit of assessment leads, members of the Research Policy Committee, REF Steering Group and Senate focused on clarifying aspects of the proposed text, and on the overall tone of the document, ensuring that it conveys a supportive and positive message to staff.

Further consultation has been undertaken with the PNCC, AGED and special interest groups representing members of staff with protected characteristics before offering the near final draft to the academic community for consultation. This consultation did not generate a significant number of comments, however, we were reminded of the need to maintain gender-neutral language and to review data related to carers and trans people. It was also noted that if trans colleagues were requesting a reduction in outputs for medical reasons that they may be 'outing' themselves and that this would require to be handled with complete confidentiality.

Colleagues also sought clarification on the way in which REF related data will be collected, processed, stored or destroyed, and whether or how it will be used by the University of Aberdeen. These issues are addressed in section 9 of this Code.

The Code of Practice has been finalised in the light of the consultation and presented to Senate and Court for final approval before submission to the Scottish Funding Council in June 2019.

Training/Communication

All members of staff will receive a copy of the Code of Practice after its approval by Court and will be invited to declare individual circumstances. We will be offering training sessions on the Code of Practice and the equality and diversity issues arising out of the selection procedure for the REF. These will be compulsory for all members of the REF Steering Group, School Directors of Research, Heads of School and other members of staff involved in the selection process and therefore uptake will be monitored. External reviewers will be given a summary of the relevant sections of the Code. We will explore on line training options along with informative content which will be drawn to the attention of all academic staff.

REF information sessions have been offered to all staff. These sessions, led by the Vice Principal for Research, provided general information about the REF and our Code of Practice and will invite members of staff to ask questions and engage with the process.

Invitations to sit on REF appeals panel will be issued once the text has been finalised. The panel chair and panellists will not be involved in REF preparations at School or institutional level in any other way and will receive REF specific E&D training.

Review of Code of Practice

The Code of Practice and this Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed regularly. We intend to undertake regular reviews of our REF preparedness and will monitor the impact of the preparations on specific protected characteristics through further EIAs. The outcome of these analyses may indicate a change in our REF processes, but more likely will inform wider management practice in the way we integrate and support members of staff with protected characteristics or at certain career stages.

Policy, Procedure or Function (delete as appropriate)	Relevance to promotion of equality of opportunity, elimination of discrimination and promotion of good relations between people of with different protected characteristics								
Equality	Race	Disability	Gender	Age	Sexual Orientation	Religion or Belief	Gender Reassignment	Pregnancy or Maternity	Marriage or Civil Partnership
1. Does the policy, procedure or function impact directly on the public or (for internal issues) students/staff regarding:	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
2. Is there any evidence or reason to believe that someone could be affected differently (either individually or as a group) on his or her race, ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or gender reassignment regarding:	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
3. Is there evidence that the above mentioned groups are being affected differently regarding:	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Is there public/political concern that the policy, procedure or function is operated in a discriminatory manner regarding:	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Policy, Procedure or Function (delete as appropriate)	Relevance to promotion of equality of opportunity, elimination of discrimination and promotion of good relations between people of with different protected characteristics								
Equality	Race	Disability	Gender	Age	Sexual Orientation	Religion or Belief	Gender Reassignment	Pregnancy or Maternity	Marriage or Civil Partnership
5. Does this policy, procedure or function involve the use or discretionary use of statutory powers or authority regarding:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Does this policy, procedure or function present opportunity to improve community relations regarding:	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
7. Does this policy, procedure or function concern equality of opportunity for students/staff regarding:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impact on <u>individual</u> equality strands i.e. Race, Religion etc.: Score - High (7-5), Medium (4-3), Low (2-1), N/A (0)	1	1	5	2	0	0	0	3	0

Note – Completion of the template requires each strand to be examined individually. The final relevance score is obtained by totalling vertically the number of equality questions that are answered yes in each strand. The highest relevance score will determine the impact of the policy, procedure or function irrespective of diversity strand.

4. Impact of policy, procedure or function on equality

High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Medium <input type="checkbox"/>	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
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5. Publication

a) Provide details of arrangements to publish initial screening:

Equality and Diversity website: [link]

6. Review Date:

REF Steering Group, Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity

Author (Name and Position): Marlis Barraclough

Authors signature:

Equality and Diversity Adviser (Name): Janine Chalmers

Equality and Diversity Adviser signature: Janine Chalmers

7. Date of submission to Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity:

Final outcome reviewed by institutional REF Steering Group, Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity and University Management Group

Approval Yes No

Annex 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment

The initial Equality Impact Assessment for REF2021 examines the representation of groups protected under equalities law in baseline and eligible population (preliminary decisions taken on draft REF2021 guidance).

The baseline population includes all members of staff on with an academic function, i.e. ‘teaching and research’, ‘research only’ and ‘teaching and research/scholarship’ contracts. The eligible population includes all those who are considered REF eligible under the criteria set out by the draft REF2021 guidance: all members of staff with an FTE of 0.2 or more on ‘teaching and research’ contracts and those among the ‘research only’ who meet the REF criteria for research independence (44.87 FTE)

Analysis was undertaken for all protected groups that are monitored by the University. We will establish early career stage for reporting to HESA in time for the annual return for 2018-19 and undertake an analysis against the baseline data for the early career population.

The tables below show how the protected characteristics are represented in the baseline and eligible population (as of January 2019) and compares the percentages to those for REF2014 (on census date, October 2013).

Disability

Disability Group	Baseline	Eligible		Baseline	Eligible	REF 2014 Eligible
Disability Disclosed	33	15		2.7%	2.1%	2%
Not Disclosed	1207	715		97.3%	97.9%	98%
	1240	730				

The analysis indicates that members of staff who have declared a disability are represented proportionally within the eligible population and is comparable to that of REF2014.

Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Baseline	Eligible		Baseline	Eligible	REF 2014 Eligible
BME0	181	97		14.6%	13.3%	9%
Information Refused/Not Known	54	34		4.4%	4.7%	5%
White	1005	599		81.0%	82.1%	86%
	1240	730				

The analysis indicates that members of staff who identify as BME0 are represented proportionately within the eligible population, at a slightly higher percentage than that for REF2014.

Age

Age Band	Baseline	Eligible		Baseline	Eligible	REF 2014 Eligible
34 or younger	241	49		19.4%	6.7%	10%
35-49	552	344		44.5%	47.1%	53%
50-65	410	307		33.1%	42.1%	34%
66 and Over	37	30		3.0%	4.1%	3%
	1240	730				

Analysis of the current eligible population by HESA age bands shows that fewer researchers aged 34 or younger are represented within the eligible population than in the baseline population. This is consistent with REF eligibility rules which state that postdoctoral researchers Grade 6 and 7, of whom many fall into this age

Annex 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

group, are eligible in exceptional cases only. Eligible postdoctoral researchers at Grade 7 represent fewer than 10% of the overall eligible population.

Representation of researchers within the 50-65 age band has increased compared to REF2014 figures, indicating a changing age profile within the eligible population.

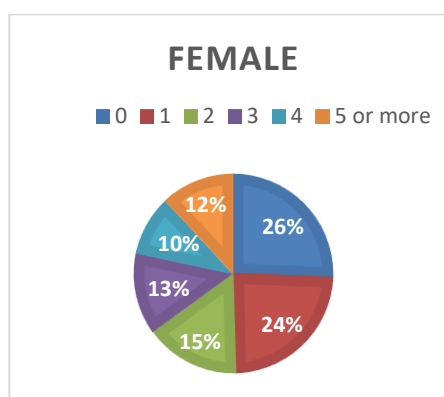
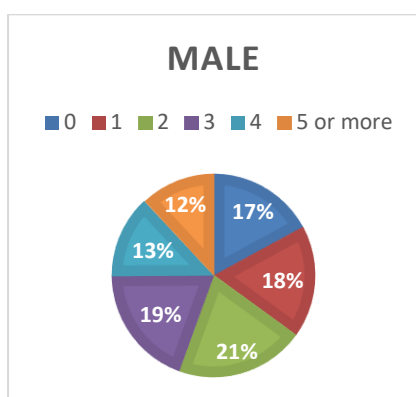
Gender

Pers Sex	Baseline	Eligible		Baseline	Eligible	REF2014 Eligible
F	565	253		45.6%	34.7%	35%
M	675	477		54.4%	65.3%	65%
	1240	730				

The gender balance within the eligible population differs from that of the baseline population indicating that there are relatively more women within the postdoctoral population or holding scholarship contracts than among REF eligible staff. The gender balance for REF2021 is similar to that for REF2014.

Distribution of outputs

Analysis of the distribution of REF eligible outputs of suitable quality was undertaken using the data of the REF mid term review which took place in June 2018. The graphs below show the distribution of outputs across the eligible population by gender. Researchers have been associated with each output that could be attributed to them. This means that an output which has been co-authored by two internal authors appears against both names.



The graphs show that the percentage of female researchers with no REF eligible outputs of suitable quality is significantly higher than that of male researchers, as is the percentage of female researchers who have one REF eligible output of suitable quality. The percentage of researchers who have five or more outputs for REF submission is similar for both genders.

Further analysis shows that female researchers working part time are less likely to have REF-able outputs. 6.8% of male REF eligible researchers work part time compared to 20.7% of female researchers. Among researchers who had no REF-able outputs during the mid term review in June 2018, 31.8% of the female researchers were working part time, and all of the male researchers were working full time.

This will need to be explored further and supportive action taken by Schools.

MB
02/2019

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making



Research Excellence Framework Steering Group

Remit

To plan, manage and drive all aspects of the Institution's preparations and submissions to the research excellence framework

- (1) To co-ordinate Institutional responses to the national REF Team, UKRI or SFC on matters issued for consultation
- (2) To monitor internal data preparation and benchmarking comparisons
- (3) To co-ordinate the compilation of impact case studies
- (4) To oversee the preparation and implementation of the University Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF submission process
- (5) To receive reports on preparation and planning for REF including progress with data collection, electronic research management and reporting systems, internal reviews of research activity etc
- (6) To make recommendation on which Units of Assessment to submit to; informed by recommendations from Schools, to be approved by SMT
- (7) To finalise the selection of outputs and impact case studies for inclusion in the Institution's submissions; informed by recommendations from Schools and unit of assessment leads
- (8) Review and agree all final submissions prior to onward transmission to the REF Team

The Group will report to the Senior Management Team and to the Research Policy Committee.

Membership

Vice Principal for Research (CONVENER)	Professor Marion Campbell
Deans of Research:	Professor Michael Brown, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Professor Mirela Delibegovic, Physical Sciences and Engineering Professor Gary Macfarlane, Life Sciences and Medicine
4 REF advisors	Senior researchers/colleagues with previous REF experience or past/current panelists: Professor Tom Greggs Professor Beth Lord Professor Alison Lumsden Professor Xavier Lambin Professor Richard Neilson Professor Euan Phimister
University Secretary	Mrs Debbie Dyker (or representative) (Director of Operations)
Director, Research & Innovation	Dr Liz Rattray
Director, People	Mrs Debbie Dyker (or representative)
Director, Finance	Mr David Beattie (or representative)
Librarian	Mr Simon Bains (or representative)
Director of Communications	Mrs Jen Phillips (or representative)
Commercialisation Manager	Dr Ann Lewendon
Senior Policy Adviser (Research)	Mrs Marlis Barraclough
Policy Advisor (Research) (CLERK)	Mrs Dawn Foster

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making



RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE 2018/19

Committee Remit and Membership

Approved by the University Court on 4 October 2016; reviewed and approved by RPC 23 September 2017 and 28 September 2018

RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE
Purpose: A Strategy and Policy committee to drive and support the University's overall Research Objectives.
Chair: Vice-Principal Research
Supported by: Senior Policy Advisor, Research & Innovation
Reports to: Senate; Operating Board via SMT; Court
Sub-Committees: Life Sciences & Medicine (Panel A) REF Committee; Physical Sciences & Engineering (Panel B) REF Committee; Social Sciences (Panel C) REF Committee; Arts & Humanities (Panel D) REF Committee; Postgraduate Research Students Committee, Ethics Committees
Interfaces with: Internationalisation Strategy Committee; School Research Committees
Papers to Senior Vice-Principal, School Administrative Officers and Business Development Officers for information
Remit: <i>(To be reviewed annually at first meeting of committee cycle)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing, and driving strategy across the University's research activities to meet institutional targets and Strategic Plan Performance Indicators • Monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the University's Research KPIs • Oversight of research risk management including assurance as to health and safety matters relating to research activities • Oversight of research ethics and governance issues; developing and reviewing institutional policy on research ethics and governance; receiving reports from Ethics Boards and Committees; undertaking ethics health checks within Schools • Providing strategic direction for the University's Impact agenda (academic and non-academic) as defined across the sector (e.g. REF and RCUK) and promotion of good practice and development of impact KPIs • Receiving reports from Panel Research Committees on significant research activities within the Schools • Monitoring and review of impact of research investment and identifying new areas for strategic investment to match institutional priorities • Monitoring success of research grant applications to external income programmes, overheads and value of research and commercialisation initiatives • Oversight of institutional outcome and, developing submission strategy and monitoring of preparations for Research Excellence Framework and other research performance exercises • Oversight of equality and diversity issues relating to research • Oversight of establishment and operation of institutional Graduate School or Doctoral College; development and review of policies relating to doctoral training • Oversight of institutional responses to external research consultations and initiatives.

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making

Convener:	Professor M Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research)
Membership:	Mr Ian Percival, Member of the University Court Dr Colette Backwell, Member of the University Court
	<p>Professor S Piertney, Director of Research, Biological Sciences Professor C Montagna, Director of Research, Business School Professor C Soulsby, Director of Research, School of Geosciences Dr Andrew Dilley, Director of Research, School of Divinity, History and Philosophy Professor D Pokrajac, Director of Research, School of Engineering Professor C Jones , Director of Research, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture Professor T Gyorfi, Director of Research, School of Law Professor A Cuesta Ciscar, Director of Research, School of Natural & Computing Sciences Professor L Phillips, Director of Research, School of Psychology Professor A Brown, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences Dr J Ravet, Director of Research, School of Education Professor I Stansfield, Director of Research, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition Professor G Macfarlane, Professor M Brown, Professor M Delibegovic, Deans of Research Professor G Nixon, Dean of Graduate School</p> <p>(or designated deputies)</p>
In attendance:	<p>Dr E Rattray, Director of Research & Innovation Mr B Henderson, Director of IT Services and Library Dr A Lewendon, Commercialisation Manager Mr S Bains, Librarian</p> <p>Conveners of Ethics Committees (3) (first meeting of session each year/as appropriate) Dr L Curtis Chair, Committee for Research, Ethics and Governance in Arts, Social Sciences and Business Professor M Kashtalyan, Chair, Physical Sciences Ethics Board Ms L King, Research Governance Manager, College of Life Sciences and Medicine Clerk: Mrs M Barraclough, Senior Policy Advisor, Research & Innovation</p>
	Quorum: 50% of formal membership
	Four meetings per session

21 August 2020

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making

Part I – Institutional Committees



1. Committee Title:

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

2. Date of Establishment

Established in 2018, the Senior Management Group formally assumed the responsibilities of the University Management Group as principal executive committee on 1 August 2019.

3. Convener and Administrative Support Area

Convener: Principal
Clerk: Principal's Office ~~University Secretary's Office~~

4. Purpose

The Senior Management Team ensures the effective leadership, co-ordination and management of the University's activities. In particular, it acts as the formal executive decision-making body of the University and ensures that all University initiatives are considered, approved, implemented and monitored in line with (i) the University's strategic, regulatory and policy framework and (ii) recognised best practice guidelines. It is fundamental in the dissemination of information to internal and external stakeholders and in supporting monitoring of the performance of Schools and Professional Services in line with the University's strategic vision as approved by the University Court.

5. Remit: (To be reviewed annually at first meeting of committee cycle)

Remit

- To ensure the implementation of activities to deliver the Aberdeen 2040 strategy and Commitments and approve business for onward consideration by Court, the Policy and Resources Committee including, where appropriate, Senate and other sub-committees of Court.
- To oversee the development, implementation and monitoring of planning activities across (i) Schools, Professional Services Directorates and (ii) external collaborative activities in line with the institutional strategic direction approved by the University Court
- To monitor and ensure the delivery of agreed institutional financial plans, targets and budgets as approved by the University Court.
- To have lead responsibility at an executive level for the University's Risk Management processes, including monitoring and reviewing the institutional Strategic Risk Register and ensuring mitigating actions are taken.
- To support the development, implementation and monitoring of the University's academic performance (education and research), making recommendations for continuing enhancement and improvements as required.

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making

- To ensure the effective oversight and monitoring of management committee activities (i.e. committees which are not sub-committees of Court or Senate), including (i) approving their establishment/abolition, (ii) approving amendments to their remits and/or compositions and (iii) receiving reports.
- To have responsibility for formal oversight of City and Regional Engagement and formally receive reports from the Regional Engagement Group.
- To consider proposals for the prioritisation of capital expenditure and oversee property transactions.
- To ensure a proactive approach to horizon scanning, both within and beyond the HE sector, and to respond effectively to policies set by the SFC and other relevant regulatory/stakeholder bodies.
- To provide a forum for information sharing amongst the team.

6. Composition and Quorum:

Convener: Principal
Ex Officiis: Senior Vice-Principal
All central Vice-Principals

Secretary to the University
Executive Director of Advancement
Note that the Director of People is currently also Acting Director of Operations

In attendance: University Officers to be invited to attend as and when required

Quorum: 50% of formal membership

7. Membership

Convener: Principal – Professor George Boyne
Ex Officiis: Professor K Leydecker
Professor M Campbell
Professor R Taylor
Professor R Wells
Professor A Speight
Mr S Cannon
Mr D Beattie
Mrs D Dyker

8. Reporting Line and Interface with Other Committees

A management committee whose business then proceeds to Committees of Senate and Court

9. Frequency and Timing of Meetings

SMT will normally meet on a weekly basis. Additional meetings may be called at the Principal's discretion if urgent business arises outwith the normal cycle.

10. Publication of Papers

Cognisance will be taken of the University's Publication Scheme.

11. Date Establishment/revision of remit of Committee approved/recorded by SMT

Assumption of remit from UMG 1 August 2019

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making

Part II – School REF Structures

All 12 Schools have executive or dedicated research committees that have been charged with School preparations for REF2021. Practice varies among Schools according to the size of the School and disciplinary practice.

All Schools have delegated responsibility for REF preparations to School or Institute Directors of Research who report to School management/executive committees and are members of the Research Policy Committee. Schools that represent more than one unit of assessment or large units of assessment have nominated REF teams consisting of School Director of Institute Director of Research and unit of assessment or discipline leads nominated by the Head of School.

A full list of School Directors of Research and Unit of Assessment leads is provided below and accessible at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/research/impact-ref-and-open-access.php>:

<u>REF UoA Leads</u>			
<u>UoA</u>	<u>School DoR</u>	<u>Overall (outputs)</u>	<u>Impact</u>
01: Clinical Medicine	Ian Stansfield	Ian Stansfield	Iain McEwan
02: Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care	Amanda Lee	Mandy Ryan, Craig Ramsay	Shaun Treweek
04: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	Louise Phillips	Ben Tatler	Ben Tatler
05: Biological Sciences	Stuart Piertney	Stuart Piertney & Pieter Van West	Stuart Piertney & Pieter Van West
07: Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences	Stuart Piertney (SBS) and Chris Soulsby (Geosciences)	Stuart Piertney (SBS) and Chris Soulsby (Geosciences)	Paul Hallett (SBS) and Clare Bond (Geosciences)
08: Chemistry	Angel Cuesta Ciscar	Abbie McLaughlin	Mamen Romano
10: Mathematical Sciences	Angel Cuesta Ciscar	Marco Thiel (Applied Maths), Assaf Libman (Pure Maths)	Mamen Romano
11: Computer Science and Informatics	Angel Cuesta Ciscar	Wamberto Vasconcelos	Mamen Romano
12: General Engineering	Dubravka Pokrajac	Dubravka Pokrajac	Ed Chadwick
15: Archaeology	Chris Soulsby	Gordon Noble and Kate Britton	Gordon Noble and Kate Britton
17: Business and Management Studies	Catia Montagna	Catia Montagna, Bryan McGregor	Catia Montagna

Annex 3 – Committees involved in REF2021 Decision Making

18: Law	Tamas Gyorfi	Abbe Brown	Abbe Brown
19: Politics and International Studies	Alison Brown	Joanne McEvoy	Andrea Teti
21: Sociology	Alison Brown	Steve Bruce	Gearoid Millar
22: Anthropology and Development Studies	Alison Brown	Johan Rasanayagam	David Anderson
23: Education	Michael Brown (Education) & Jennifer Cleland (Medical Education)	Jackie Ravet/Donald Gray & Kim Walker	Jackie Ravet/Donald Gray & Kim Walker
26: Modern Languages and Linguistics	Catherine Jones	Nadia Kiwan Aine Larkin	Patience Schell
27: English Language and Literature	Catherine Jones	Catherine Jones & Andrew Gordon (English), Robert Millar (Linguistics)	Patience Schell, Elizabeth Elliott
28: History	Andrew Dilley	Robert Frost and Helen Pierce	Andrew Dilley
30: Philosophy	Andrew Dilley	Ulrich Stegmann	Ulrich Stegmann
31: Theology and Religious Studies	Andrew Dilley	Grant Macaskill	Tom Greggs
33: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	Moray Watson	Suk-Jun Kim	Suk-Jun Kim

August 2020

Annex 4 – Training and Communications Plan



Training and Communications Plan

The institutional code of practice for the University of Aberdeen was approved through the committee structure early in 2019 and received approval by Court in May 2019.

In our code of practice we have committed to provide REF specific training to all who are involved REF decision making processes: Unit of Assessment leads, School Directors of Research, Heads of School and other members of staff nominated by the Schools. This also includes those who may be called upon as members of the appeals panel, should formal appeals against REF decisions arise.

In addition, we have run information sessions for all staff on our REF preparations, our code of practice, staff circumstances and what members of staff can expect during the REF preparation period.

We will be drawing on REF guidance, and additional guidance provided by the REF team and Advance HE to the sector through workshops, webinars, briefing documents and FAQs for training and information purposes. Examples and case studies will be taken and adapted from REF2014 materials.

The institutional timetable allows for the conclusion of any appeals by 28 February 2021. In practice, we aim to complete appeals as soon as practicable, and in advance of that date to provide certainty for the appellant and ensure timely completion of all final validation and other REF checks prior to submission.

Consultation on staff code of practice with the academic community

26 March 2019	Approval in principle by University Court, including initial Equality Impact Assessment which provided baseline data, comparisons with REF2014 and analysed the eligible population at the mid-point of the REF2021 assessment period (July/August 2018). Outcome discussed by REF SG and senior management; processes and policies amended as required
9 April 2019	Consultative meeting with campus unions
12 April 2019	Launch of consultation with all academic members of staff through e-mail communication/letter to staff currently absent from campus Consultation document, Frequently Asked Questions and Application form for individual circumstances available from institutional REF2021 webpages along with details on how to respond to the consultation Invitation to Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity to comment
19 April 2019	Follow up by e-zine entry
23 & 24 April 2019 (FH)	Consultation and information sessions hosted by Vice Principal for Research
18 & 25 April (OA)	(2x Forresterhill Health Campus and 2x Old Aberdeen Main Campus)
26 April 2019	Reminder e-zine entry and close of consultation period
8 May 2019	Final draft for discussion with Partnership & Negotiation Consultative Committee
15 May 2019	Senate to consider and approve final draft Final draft for approval to Court (by circulation)
7 June 2019	SFC deadline for submission of final codes of practice

Annex 4 – Training and Communications Plan

Training and communications plan for Code of Practice and Staff circumstances

June 2019	Communication to all eligible members of staff confirming the REF2021 unit of assessment with which they are associated and communicating final approved Code of Practice Development of online training and information tool for institutional Code of Practice
August 2019	Communication inviting them to declare individual staff circumstances Information sessions on REF2021 Individual staff circumstances Reminder after end of summer break and after end of Christmas break Commence training sessions for School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment Leads/Members of REF Steering Group (will continue over the summer) These will draw on REF guidance and use reworked examples and case studies provided for REF2014. The REF Steering Group will review training material prior to commencement of the training courses. Appoint and train members of appeals panel; communicate detailed appeals procedure
31 October 2019	Complete and communicate all eligibility decisions for staff in post. Appeals to be lodged within 4 weeks of communication of the decision Undertake further Equality Impact Assessment; adjust processes as required
31 December 2019	Deadline for applications for reductions of outputs due to staff circumstances to be decided prior to submission Regular reminders through staff e-zine
31 January 2020	All decisions on individual staff circumstances applied for by end of year deadline to be decided and communicated to members of staff
28 February 2020	Deadline for appeals against decisions on staff circumstances received by end of year deadline
6 March 2020	Submission of first tranche of unit of assessment applications for reductions to funding councils
14 September 2020	Decisions on first tranche of applications to funding councils to be communicated to submitting institutions
September 2020	Further invitation to declare equality related and COVID-19 related personal circumstances issued to eligible staff
31 December 2020	All decisions on subsequent applications for reductions due to staff circumstances to be completed and communicated
15 January 2021	Deadline for appeals against decisions on staff circumstances decided by end of August deadline
28 February 2021	Appeals against staff circumstances decisions to be completed Appeals against eligibility decisions to be completed Appeals against output selection or any other decision to be completed

Annex 4 – Training and Communications Plan

31 March 2021	Submit to REF2021 Undertake final Equality Impact Assessment
30 July 2021	Deadline for submission of staff circumstances report, equalities impact assessment and final codes of practice
April 2022	Publication of outcomes
Summer 2022	Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles
August 2020	

Data Protection Impact Assessment



This template can be used to record the DPIA process and outcome. It is based on the template designed by the Information Commissioner, and follows the process set out in the ICO [guidance](#).

You should start to fill out the template at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data, or if you are making a significant change to an existing process. The ICO [guidance](#) sets out the mandatory circumstances that require a DPIA, and provides useful examples. The final outcomes should be integrated back into your project plan.

You should involve the University Data Protection Officer at an early stage in your DPIA.

Project name	REF 2021 – Declaration of individual circumstances
Project lead	Professor Marion Campbell, Vice Principal Research
DPIA lead	Marlis Barraclough, Senior Policy Advisor

Revision History

Version	Date	Notes
1	02/04/2019	
1.1	17/04/2019	Addition of comments by DPO
1.2	10/05/2019	Amendments in light of DPO comments
1.3	13/05/2019	Further comments added by DPO
1.4	14/05/2019	Amendments in light of further comments by DPO
1.5	30/05/2019	Addition of DPO advice

Step 1: Identify the need for a DPIA

Explain broadly what project aims to achieve and what type of data processing it involves. You may find it helpful to refer or link to other documents, such as a project proposal. Summarise why you identified the need for a DPIA, referring to any relevant mandatory circumstances.

The institutional submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 will inform the institutional Research Excellence Grant (REG) awarded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) from 2022 onwards. We are currently preparing our submission to REF2021.

The REF submission is essentially a large data return. Institutions submit lists of staff associated with research areas or units of assessment, lists of publications and impact case studies, along with research metrics and narratives that describe the research environment. Much of this information is already in the public domain and personal data such as staff IDs, HESA identifiers and dates of birth are covered by the Privacy Notice that relates to general REF data.

REF2021 requires that each eligible researcher submits a minimum of one output and a maximum of five, with an overall average of 2.5 outputs per FTE. As in previous assessment exercises, REF2021 makes allowance for researchers whose ability to undertake research in the assessment period has been affected by personal and other circumstances. These are set out in the REF guidance, and our institutional Code of Practice on how we prepare for REF2021. We will be inviting all REF eligible researchers to declare personal circumstances which may lead to the reduction of the number of outputs that we will have to submit to REF.

The institutional REF team will collect all declarations and consider whether they meet the REF requirements for reductions. We will ask for evidence for audit purposes and then make an application to the funding councils for reductions.

This DPIA is concerned with the information we will collect and transmit to the funding councils and Advance HE, UKRI's contracted partner organization for equality and diversity matters within REF, on individual staff circumstances. This is information of a personal nature provided by REF eligible researchers to declare their circumstances, and the evidence we may collect for audit purposes in case the funding councils audit our reduction requests.

This information may concern employment history pertaining to early career status, previous employers, periods of secondment or unpaid leave. It may also relate to maternity/paternity or adoption leave, maternity or family related issues, medical history (including mental health history), disability, gender reassignment, caring responsibilities and any other circumstances that may affect an eligible researcher's ability to undertake research in the assessment period.

The DPIA has been undertaken for the following three reasons.

- Some of the individual circumstances information will fall into one of the special categories of personal data. Whilst processing on a large scale is not envisaged, the University recognises the sensitivity of this type of data.
- The balance of power in the relationship between the University and individual members of staff may mean they feel unable to consent freely or object to the processing of data relating to their individual circumstances for the purposes of REF.
- Some of the information supplied by staff will relate to third parties, notably their family members. The University does not intend to provide privacy information to those individuals on the assumption that they will be aware that the University is processing their data.

Considered together, these three circumstances may create a high risk for data subjects that requires

to be assessed.

Step 2: Describe the processing

Describe the nature of the processing: how will you collect, use, store and delete data? What is the source of the data? Will you be sharing data with anyone? You might find it useful to refer to a flow diagram or other way of describing data flows. What types of processing identified as likely high risk are involved?

REF rules state that the information around individual circumstances has to be provided voluntarily by eligible researchers. Institutions are not permitted to exert any pressure on staff to declare circumstances, even where those are known to the employer.

We will launch our institutional Code of Practice once it has received final approval by Court and draw it to the attention of all staff. It sets out the REF rules around the declaration of individual circumstances and how we intend to handle these at the University of Aberdeen.

We will issue an electronic form to all eligible researchers with a request to complete it and return it to either the institutional REF co-ordinator (Marlis Barraclough, Senior Policy Advisor, Research & Innovation) or the Research Governance Officer (Dawn Foster, Research & Innovation), either by e-mail in electronic format or as a hard copy. Completed forms and supporting evidence will be stored in the shared drive for Research & Innovation, in a password protected folder. The Vice Principal Research, Senior Policy Advisory and Research Governance Officer will have access to the folder. Hard copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Senior Policy Advisor's office, with access restricted to the same three members of staff.

We will not scan or make electronic copies of declarations or supporting evidence unless authorized, and will not transmit, copy or share any electronic copies without prior permission from the applicant.

We will discuss the declarations with the individuals concerned and make a judgement on whether the circumstances meet the REF requirements. If the REF requirements are likely to be met, we will then request evidence to support the declarations. We will agree with the individual researchers a form of words that describes the impact their circumstances have had on their ability to undertake research that will be used to seek approval by the REF Steering Group. The information will be presented to the REF Steering Group in pseudonymised format, such as:

Nature of circumstance: ECR

Summary: Researcher received PhD in 2015, then worked as research assistant under supervision of a PI within the University of Aberdeen, and was appointed as lecturer from 1 October 2017

Evidence: copy of doctoral degree certificate, employment history (from HR)

Recommendation: Reduction of average by 1 – applied to the unit of assessment output pool

Nature of evidence: Long term sick leave

Summary: Researcher was absent on long term sick leave for 6 months and worked part time (0.5 FTE) for 12 months after return to work.

Evidence: HR Record

Recommendation: according to REF rules, insufficient absence from research environment, no reduction recommended

Nature of circumstance: Maternity leave

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Summary: Researcher took two periods of maternity leave in the assessment period (12 months each time)

Evidence: HR Record

Recommendation: Removal of minimum requirement of 1 outputs applied to the individual

Researchers will be informed of the outcome of the REF Steering Group decisions as soon as practicable.

UKRI require submitting institutions to transmit the data, including the identities of the applicants, to the REF team. A subset of applications, i.e. those dealing with complex individual circumstances and requiring a judgement, will be processed by Advance HE. Reductions approved by the REF Steering Group will then be transmitted to the REF team and/or Advance HE for their approval. The data will be transmitted through the REF submission system.

Summary declarations will be stored in the REF module in Pure, which is the system we are planning to use to transmit data to the national REF submission system. The REF module is accessible to users with appropriate access rights only, and the personal circumstances part of the Pure REF module will only be accessible to the Vice Principal (Research), Senior Policy Advisor, Research Governance Officer and the Research Information Officer who is the systems administrator for Pure.

Researchers can withdraw their application and ask for their information to be deleted or handed back them at any time prior to finalization of our submission before 15 February 2021.

The types of high risk processing involved are the fair and secure collection, use, disclosure and storage of special category personal data of staff, and of personal data and special category data of third parties.

Describe the scope of the processing: what is the nature of the data, and does it include special category or criminal offence data? How much data will you be collecting and using? How often? How long will you keep it? How many individuals are affected? What geographical area does it cover?

The data will be provided by REF eligible researchers at the University. There are currently 606.22 FTE REF eligible researchers (1 April 2019). For REF 2014, the eligible population was 797FTE and we processed 232 applications for personal circumstances. Our working assumption is that we will be processing around 175 applications for REF2021.

A wide variety of data, including special category data, may be disclosed for REF staff circumstances, including employment histories, medical histories and information around personal circumstances relating to maternity/paternity and adoption leave and more general around family live and caring commitments. We will be asking for a minimum of data and evidence around these circumstances that is based on REF requirements.

For cases that do not proceed because they are withdrawn by the researcher, or not approved by the REF SG, evidence will either not be collected in the first instance, or handed back or destroyed once the REF SG decision has been made and no appeal against the decision has been lodged within the time period. This also applies to completed declaration forms.

For cases that proceed to the REF submission system for consideration by the funding councils or Advance HE, we will keep the declaration forms and evidence until the end of the REF audit period in 2021 and then either destroy or return the documentation.

Summary information and REF data in Pure will be kept until the end of the REF audit period. We will

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be using the aggregated data in Pure for diversity and equality monitoring purposes, and to review the efficacy of our institutional processes.

Describe the context of the processing: what is the nature of your relationship with the individuals? How much control will they have? Would they expect you to use their data in this way? Do they include children or other vulnerable groups? Are there prior concerns over this type of processing or security flaws? Is it novel in any way? What is the current state of technology in this area? Are there any current issues of public concern that you should factor in?

The use of this type of information for this purpose is not novel; nor does the processing involve issues of public concern or developing technology.

The individuals who will supply the personal data are all current employees of the University. Their representatives on Senate and the Research Policy Committee have been consulted on the procedures to prepare the University's REF, and a consultation and information sessions for all staff took place in April 2019. The institutional Code of Practice sets out our processes and, once approved, will be shared with all REF eligible researchers and with research only staff. There is a dedicated page on the staff intranet explaining the process in detail, and the staff privacy notice will be updated to reflect the addition of UKRI as a new category of recipient.

As employees of the University, the individuals involved are recognized as a vulnerable group in this situation. The University has emphasised to REF eligible academic colleagues that submission of information on individual circumstances is on a strictly voluntary basis. This is stated clearly in the institutional Code of Practice, and emphasized in the FAQs published on the staff intranet. It will be a repeated message in our communications to staff on REF preparations and the Code of Practice. Individuals will be able to exercise all relevant subject rights provided under the GDPR up to institutional submission date prior to 27 November 2020 (exact date to be confirmed).

The third parties whose personal data may be included in submissions from staff may have no direct relationship with the University. Third parties in this context may include formal or informal partners in research projects that will be described as impact case studies for submission to REF. Inclusion of any named references, and transmission, for audit purposes, of contact details of third parties will be with their permission. We will be providing guidance to impact case study authors on this issue.

Third party data may also relate to partners, family members or previous employers of researchers who have personal circumstances. Access to these data will be restricted to a very small number of individuals tasked with processing the applications for reductions as described in section 6 of the institutional Code of Practice.

Applications will be assessed on the strength of case summaries, the text of which will be agreed with the applicants. It is important to note that the strength of the applications will be assessed not the basis of the severity of the circumstances themselves but on how the circumstances have impacted on the researcher's ability to undertake research within the REF assessment period. Where a circumstance relates to a third party, for example a family member, the summary will not need to disclose the identity or identifying detail around the third party: ' Dr Y is main carer for a close family member whose long term illness required him/her to work part time for a number of months and, with agreement of the academic line manager, restricted duties to teaching and administrative tasks for x months during the assessment period.

Previous employers may be identified where the previous appointment is already in the public

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domain, i.e. as publication address on outputs published while employed elsewhere.

Where possible we will avoid disclosure and identification of third parties. Where that is not possible, we will disclose only as much information as is necessary for the internal and external panels to reach a conclusion, based on summary information, on an individual researcher's ability to undertake research in the assessment period. This will be disclosed to the REF Steering Group only, and, if approved to the REF team and, for circumstances requiring a judgement, to UKRI's equality & diversity partner, Advance HE.

Describe the purposes of the processing: what do you want to achieve? What is the intended effect on individuals? What are the benefits of the processing – for you, and more broadly?

The purpose of processing this data is to establish whether individual researchers meet the REF criteria for reducing the number of outputs required for submission either at unit of assessment level or at individual level. This allows us to adjust the academic expectations in the light of declared circumstances and to provide additional support, and it enables us to optimize the quality of our institutional submission without any penalties through REF.

Step 3: Consultation process

Consider how to consult with individuals affected by the processing: describe when and how you will seek individuals' views – or justify why it's not appropriate to do so. Who else do you need to involve within the University? Do you need to ask your processors to assist? Do you plan to consult information security experts, or any other experts?

The Code of Practice on Preparing the Institutional Submission to REF2021 sets out our institutional procedures and processes that will be used in putting together the submission to REF2021. This includes the way in which we collect, store, process and handle data, and how the data will be used to inform management decisions around our REF submission and other strategic purposes.

The Code of Practice was drawn up in accordance with guidance published by the funding councils in January 2019 and was subject to consultation through the institutional committee structure, and to a wider consultation exercise with the academic community through mail shots and open sessions. The final Code of Practice requires approval by both University Senate and Court before it can be submitted to the funding councils for approval.

Step 4: Assess necessity and proportionality

Describe compliance and proportionality measures: what is your lawful basis for processing? Does the processing actually achieve your purpose? Is there another way to achieve the same outcome? How will you prevent function creep? How will you ensure data quality and data minimisation? What information will you give individuals? How will you help to support their rights? What measures do you take to

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ensure processors comply? How do you safeguard any international transfers??

The lawful basis for processing personal data is that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the University, the Scottish Funding Council and the UKRI. Research is a core function of the University, and the data requires to be processed by the controllers in order to allocate research funding in future. This meets the lawful basis described in Article 6(1)(e) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The lawful basis for processing special category personal data is that it is in substantial public interest for the funding councils and UKRI to fulfil their statutory functions to assess and award grant funding. This meets the lawful basis provided by Article 9(2)(g) of the GDPR, and condition 6 of Schedule 1, Part 2 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

It is necessary to process information about individual circumstances in order to meet the REF criteria for eligible academic colleagues.

The process seeks to comply with the data requirements set out by REF, and ensure that the reductions and staff circumstances are tested robustly against the criteria whilst collecting only the minimum amount of personal data required, and sharing the relevant personal information with a minimum number of staff.

In addition to an update to the overarching staff privacy notice, the University has also dedicated resources on the staff intranet that cover data processing for REF2021 purposes.

There are no processors or international transfers involved in the processing arrangement.

Step 5: Identify and assess risks

Describe source of risk and nature of potential impact on individuals. Include associated compliance and corporate risks as necessary. Use the DPIA risk assessment matrix to determine the level of each identified risk.

Risk ref	Risk and impact description <i>Use one row per risk. Add additional rows if necessary.</i>	Likelihood of harm	Severity of impact	Overall risk
		Remote, Possible or Probable	Minimal, Some impact or Serious harm	Low, Medium or High
01	Disclosure of personal circumstances within the University – unauthorised access to paper files	Possible	Some impact	Medium
02	Disclosure of personal circumstances within the University – unauthorised access to e-mail traffic and/or the Pure REF module	Possible	Some impact	Medium
03	Disclosure of personal circumstances to the public – unauthorised access to paper files	Remote	Some impact	Low
04	Disclosure of personal circumstances to the public – unauthorised access to institutional e-mail traffic and/or Pure REF module	Remote	Some impact	Low
05	There is a risk that eligible staff will provide unnecessary special category personal data in their initial submission which is not required for the REF process and could breach the data minimisation principle.	Possible	Some impact	Low
06	There is a risk that the pseudonymised information to the REF Steering Group will allow individual members of staff to be identified, disclosing special category personal data or sensitive information unnecessarily.	Possible	Some impact	Low
07	There is a risk that staff feel obliged to make formal submissions about their individual circumstances to the University for the REF process, in breach of the requirement for fairness.	Possible	Some impact	Medium
08	There is a risk that an erasure or restriction request made by a data subject before the finalisation deadline may not be able to be addressed fully where copies of documents have been provided beyond the institutional REF team.	Remote	Some impact	Low

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09	There is a risk that third parties will be unaware that the University is processing their personal data, preventing them from exercising control over their data, in breach of the requirement for transparency.	Possible	Some impact	Medium
10	There is a risk that, once collected centrally by the University, personal data provided by staff for REF purposes is sought for use for other reasons, in breach of the purpose limitation principle.	Possible	Some impact	Medium
11	Special category personal data transferred to UKRI and Advance HE through the REF submission system is disclosed in breach the requirement for secure processing.	Possible	Serious harm	High

Step 6: Identify measures to reduce risk

Identify additional measures: what action could be taken or controls put in place to reduce or eliminate risks identified as medium or high level in step 5?

Risk	Options to reduce or eliminate risk	Effect on risk	Residual risk	Measure approved
		Eliminated or Reduced	Low, Medium or High	Yes/No
01	Restriction of access to paper copies of declarations and evidence submitted by staff strictly on a need to know basis. All paper copies to be held in Senior Policy Adviser's office in a locked cabinet, with keys provided to her and Research Governance Officer only.	Reduced	Low	Yes
02	E-mail traffic to dedicated e-mail address to which only Senior Policy Adviser and Research Governance Officer have access. Information to be shared with Research Excellence Steering Group to be anonymised and in summary format only, with summaries agreed by applicants.	Reduced	Low	Yes
04	Staff will be encouraged to make submissions from their University email address to reduce the risk of interception arising from use of external email.	Reduced	Low	Yes

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05, 06, 07	Awareness raising around the data and information requirements around staff circumstances for all eligible staff. REF-specific E&D Training for all those involved in REF decision making is compulsory and will cover confidentiality, data collection and handling etc.	Reduced	Low	Yes
09	Third party data relating to partner organisations and collaborators: We will be issuing detailed guidance to impact case study authors around approaching third parties for support with the case studies, and provide a standard text that sets out clearly how the data will be used (REF purposes only) and seeking explicit consent.	Reduced	Low	Yes
09	Third party data relating to individual staff circumstances: these will be collected, stored and transmitted only to the extent they are necessary to explain the impact a third party's circumstance has had on the ability to undertake research of an eligible researcher. We will assess on a case by case basis and will normally avoid transmitting to the REF Steering Group, UKRI or Advance HE information that allows the identification of the third party or any information about them that is not directly related or relevant to the applicant's ability to undertake research during the REF assessment period. Where information has been made available on audit, we will redact third party data wherever possible.	Reduced	Medium	Yes
10	The way in which REF related data can be used is set out clearly in the institutional Code of Practice which has been agreed by senior management, Senate and Court. REF data is managed centrally by with REF team within Research & Innovation, and any request for REF related data has to be sanctioned by the Vice Principal for Research and acted upon by the institutional REF co-ordinator, both of whom are signatories to the REF submission, confirming institutional compliance with the Code of Practice.	Reduced	Medium	Yes
11	The submission of data from institutional systems to the REF submission system will be managed through secure transfer via web services. We are working closely with our systems providers, Elsevier, to ensure safe transmission, and are represented on the REF Data Collection Group that is working on the detailed specification of the REF submission system including the safety of data within that system.	Accepted	Low	Yes

Step 7: Sign off and record outcomes		
Item	Name/date	Notes
Measures approved by:	Professor Marion Campbell 6 June 2019	Integrate actions back into project plan, with date and responsibility for completion
Residual risks approved by:	Professor Marion Campbell 6 June 2019	If accepting any residual high risk, consult the ICO before going ahead
DPO advice provided:	Iain Gray 30 May 2019	DPO should advise on compliance, step 6 measures and whether processing can proceed
<p>Summary of DPO advice:</p> <p>There is an adequate lawful basis for processing both personal data and special category personal data for this purpose.</p> <p>A comprehensive risk assessment has been undertaken, and the mitigation measures in step 6 are appropriate to address the identified risks. If there are further refinements to the data submission processes, I understand that the risks involved in the arrangement will be identified and assessed.</p> <p>I agree that the processing does not involve high risk processing, and can proceed without prior consultation with the Information Commissioner in accordance with the controls specified in this assessment.</p>		
DPO advice accepted or overruled by:		State whether advice is accepted or overruled. If overruled, explain the reasons
Comments:		
Consultation responses reviewed by:		If the decision departs from individuals' views, explain the reasons
Comments:		
This DPIA will kept under review by:	Marlis Barraclough – minor revisions in August 2020 following changes to REF timetable announced by funding councils	The DPO should also review ongoing compliance with DPIA

Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances

This document has been sent to all Category A staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see '[Guidance on submissions](#)', paragraphs 117-122). As part of the university's commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, we have put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020), and particularly their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as staff not affected by circumstances. The purpose of collecting this information is threefold:

- To enable staff who have not been able to produce a REF-eligible output during the assessment period to be entered into REF where they have;
 - circumstances that have resulted in an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to equality-related circumstances (see below)
 - circumstances *equivalent* to 46 months or more absence from research due to equality-related circumstances
 - two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
- To recognise the effect that equality-related circumstances can have on an individual's ability to research productively, and to adjust expectations in terms of expected workload / production of research outputs.
- To establish whether there are any Units of Assessment where the proportion of declared circumstances is sufficiently high to warrant a request to the higher education funding bodies for a reduced required number of outputs to be submitted.

Applicable circumstances

- Qualifying as an ECR (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016)
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Junior clinical academics who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of training by 31 July 2020
- Disability (including chronic conditions)
- Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of the standard allowances
- Caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- Circumstances related to COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the following circumstances, you are requested to complete the attached form. Further information can be found paragraph 160 of the Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01). Completion and return of the form is voluntary, and individuals who do not choose to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information if they do not wish to do so. This form is the only means by which the University will be gathering this information; we will not be consulting HR records, contract start dates, etc to identify those who may be eligible to apply. You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the associated information.

The REF team are inviting institutional applications for reductions on submission day 31st March 2021. We are therefore inviting declarations of circumstances of staff in post by 16 October 2021.

Ensuring Confidentiality within the University of Aberdeen

The information and evidence about personal circumstances we collect as part of our REF preparations will be

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treated confidentially, and strictly on a need-to-know basis. It will be used to determine possible reductions to the number of outputs that need to be submitted, either by the applicant (if applying for removal of the minimum of 1 output) or by the unit of assessment (all other circumstances).

The central REF team will liaise with applicants only and will not pass any detailed information or evidence to Schools or Institutes. We will tell School/Unit of Assessment teams about reductions that have been agreed but not about the detailed circumstances that led to them. We do encourage all researchers who have individual circumstances to share these with their academic line managers so that academic expectations can be adjusted accordingly and support can be provided within the School.

We will need to gather and retain evidence around each application for audit purposes. With the applicant's permission, we may seek further information from Human Resources to support the claim.

The applications will be seen by the institutional REF co-ordinator, the Research Policy & Governance Officer and the Vice Principal Research who will discuss the applications in the light of the REF guidance and any further guidance published by Advance HE. They will make a recommendation to the REF Steering Group on whether the application should be approved and what kind of reduction is appropriate. The REF Steering Group will receive anonymised case summaries that include the type of evidence available for verification to inform considerations of the applications (see examples below). Receipt of applications will be confirmed, and the outcome communicated as soon as practicable. We will agree with applicants the form of words for the summary.

Ref.	Type	Summary	Evidence	Recommendation
001	ECR	Researcher received PhD in 2015, then worked as research assistant under supervision of a PI within the University of Aberdeen, and was appointed as lecturer from 1 October 2017	Copy of doctoral degree certificate; employment history (from HR)	Reduction of average by 1 – applied to unit of assessment output pool
002	Family related leave	Researcher took two periods of maternity leave in the assessment period (12 months each time)	HR record	Removal of minimum requirement of 1 applied to individual
003	Sick leave	Researcher was absent on sick leave for 6 months and worked part time (0.5 FTE) for 12 months after return.	HR record	Reduction of average by 0.5 – applied to unit of assessment output pool
004	Secondment	Researcher was seconded out with higher education for 6 months between 1 January to 31 July 2015 and unable to publish during that period	HR record	Insufficient absence from research environment – no reduction recommended
005	Caring duties	Researcher was main carer for elderly parent between 2014 and 2018 which led to focus on teaching duties only throughout 2017, followed by part time working (0.5 FTE) during the first half of 2018 and 4 months unpaid leave. Total: 12 months' teaching only 6 months' teaching only at 0.5 FTE 4 months unpaid leave = 22 months absence/equivalent to absence	GP letter HR record ALM letter	Reduction of average by 0.5 – applied to the unit of assessment output pool.

Where the REF Steering Group has agreed the recommendation to remove the minimum requirement of one output for individual researchers, the agreed summary along with data that identifies the individual researcher, will be forwarded to the REF team for consideration, along with the main submission by 31 March 2021.

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Where the REF Steering Group has agreed the recommendation to reduce the number of outputs required for submission by a unit of assessment, a further judgement will be made at unit of assessment level on whether the combined circumstances of the researcher within that unit represent a significant reduction of the collective ability to undertake research. If this is the case, then the agreed summary along with data that identifies the individual researcher, will be forwarded to the REF team for consideration along with the main submission by 31 March 2021.

The applications and the supporting evidence will be stored securely within the central REF team and destroyed at the end of the audit period in 2021. The summaries of the applications will be stored in the Pure REF module for the same length of time. The aggregated numbers of the different types of circumstances will be used to inform institutional equality impact assessments and policy development within the University of Aberdeen.

Our Privacy Disclosure Notices can be accessed at [here](#) .

Ensuring Confidentiality outside the University of Aberdeen

If the institution decides to apply to the funding bodies for either form of reduction of outputs (removal of 'minimum of one' requirement or unit circumstances), we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the 'Guidance on submissions' document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted.

Submitted data will be kept confidential to the REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The REF team will destroy the submitted data about individuals' circumstances on completion of the assessment phase.

The UKRI REF team's Privacy Disclosure Notice can be accessed [here](#) .

Changes in circumstances

The university recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the census date (31 July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should contact the institutional REF co-ordinator, Mrs Marlis Barraclough (m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk), or the Research Policy & Governance Officer, Mrs Dawn Foster (dawn.foster@abdn.ac.uk) or their HR Partner to provide the updated information.

If you wish to discuss your circumstances in confidence, please contact the institutional REF co-ordinator, Mrs Marlis Barraclough (m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk), ext. 3787, or the Research Policy & Governance Officer, Mrs Dawn Foster (dawn.foster@abdn.ac.uk), ext. 4104 or your HR Partner in the first instance.

August 2020

Annex 6 – Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form



Disclosure of Individual Circumstances for REF2021

To submit this form: you should send a completed copy to the institutional REF co-ordinator:

Mrs Marlis Barraclough, Research & Innovation, Room 35, University Office, King's College, Old Aberdeen, AB24 3FX or

e-mail it to REFcircumstances@abdn.ac.uk

Name: [Click here to insert text.](#)

Department: [Click here to insert text.](#)

Do you have a REF-eligible output published between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020? A REF eligible output is publication or report which meets the REF definition of research:

'For the purposes of REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.

It **includes** work of direct relevant to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It **excludes** routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also **excludes** the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.

It **includes** research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports'

https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1092/ref-2019_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf, p 90, Annex C

- Yes
No

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstance (see above) which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es).

Please note that applications for the removal of the minimum requirement of one submitted outputs can only be considered if the eligible researcher was unable to produce *any* REF eligible outputs in the assessment period.

Please note that, in order to approve a reduction in the number of outputs to be submitted, REF rules require the minimum period of absence, or equivalence of absence (i.e. the period of time during which a researcher's ability to undertake research was reduced significantly), is 12 months. This may relate to any one, or a combination of circumstances listed below.

Circumstance	Time period affected
Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).	Click here to enter a date.

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<i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i>	
Junior clinical academic who has not gained Certificate of completion of Training by 31 July 2020.	Tick here <input type="checkbox"/>
Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector. <i>Dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
Family-related leave; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statutory maternity leave • statutory adoption leave • Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more. <i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
Disability (including chronic conditions) <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Mental health condition <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Ill health or injury <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance <i>To include: Type of leave taken and brief description of additional constraints, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Caring responsibilities <i>To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.

Annex 6 – Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form

<p>Gender reassignment</p> <p><i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.
<p>Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement.</p> <p><i>To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.
<p>Covid-19 related circumstances</p> <p><i>This includes: staff shielding Covid-19 related caring commitments/home schooling etc.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

- The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below
- I realise that the above information will be used for REF purposes only and will be seen by the University of Aberdeen REF co-ordinator (Marlis Barraclough) and the Research Governance Officer (Dawn Foster). Any information passed to the REF Steering Group will not identify individual researchers
- I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs.

I agree

Name: Print name here

Signed: Sign or initial here

Date: Insert date here

I give my permission for an HR partner to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements in relation this these.

I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to the relevant contact within my department/faculty/centre. (Please note, if you do not give permission your department may be unable to adjust expectations and put in place appropriate support for you).

I would like to be contacted by:

Email Insert email address

Phone Insert contact telephone number