

Codes of Practice in REF 2021

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February 2019



Research
England



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
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REF 2021

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Overview

- Requirements
- HEIs' legal responsibilities
- Assessment process and timetable
- Appeals
- Audit/complaints process

Requirements

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- Each institution making a submission is required to develop and submit a Code of Practice that frames their decision-making processes for REF2021
- Key purpose is to aid institutions in fulfilling their responsibilities in respect of promoting E&D, complying with legislation, and avoiding discrimination, when preparing their submissions
- Deadline for submission: Noon, 7 June, 2019

HEI legal responsibilities

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- Need to ensure that their REF processes do not discriminate unlawfully against, or otherwise have the effect of harassing or victimising individuals because of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or because they are pregnant or have recently given birth
- Fixed-term and part-time staff have right not to be treated any less favourably than comparable employees on open contracts or working full-time
- Need to consider and understand effect of their REF policies on equality

Assessment process

- EDAP will examine codes and advise Funding Bodies on their adherence to guidance
- Each COP will be read by at least 2 members of EDAP, plus the EDAP Chair
- Each funding body, rather than the REF team, will liaise with its institutions directly
- If an institution's code of practice does not meet the REF published requirements after two attempts by the funding bodies to help it to do so, they reserve the right to inform the institution that it is ineligible to enter the REF 2021.

Timetable

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What?	When?
Institution submits code of practice to REF team	By noon, 7 June
Funding bodies notify institutions that code of practice meets REF requirements; or requests resubmission of the code of practice	By 16 August
Institution resubmits code of practice to funding bodies	By 20 September
Funding bodies notify institutions that code of practice meets REF requirements; or requests a second resubmission of the code of practice	By 8 November
Institution resubmits code of practice to funding bodies	By 15 November
Funding body notifies institution whether or not code of practice meets REF requirements	By 29 November

Appeals

REF2021

- Funding Bodies expect all HEIs to have appropriate appeals mechanism, which:
 - Allows staff to appeal after they have received feedback (on SRR and / or research independence eligibility) and for appeal to be considered before final submission
 - Ensures that individuals who handle appeals are independent of the decision making relating to SRR and research independence, and have received REF-specific training
 - Includes clear and transparent criteria on justifiable grounds for appeal, and clear timelines

Audit/complaints process

REF2021

- Audit requirements will be published in summer 2019
- Any aspect of COP can be audited
- Audit may be triggered by:
 - Random sample
 - Targeted audits
 - Panel-instigated queries (e.g. based on environment statement)
 - Complaints from individuals
- Complaints process being put in place to enable individuals to make formal complaint where it is believed that processes set out in code are not being followed (where not satisfactorily resolved within HEI)

What happens to the COPs?

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- Approved codes published before submission deadline
- Post-exercise analysis of codes, including examples of good practice
- EDAP may refer to HEI's code of practice when providing advice to sub-panels on their assessment of People section of environment template, and may use this as a basis for audit where necessary

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Professor Dianne Berry, Chair of EDAP
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Overview

REF2021

- Principles
- Main sections
 - Introduction, Significant responsibility for research, Researcher independence, Output selection (including individual staff circumstances)
- EIAs

Principles

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- Transparency
 - All REF processes should be transparent
 - Made available in easily accessible format and publicised across institution - must set out programme of communication
- Consistency
 - Principles governing processes should be consistent across institution
- Accountability
 - Responsibilities should be clearly defined, and individuals and committees involved in all relevant processes should be identified
- Inclusivity
 - Should promote an inclusive environment



Top Tip

- Best codes from REF2014 provided good articulation of ways in which adherence to principles was reflected in REF structures and processes, and was deeply embedded in wider institutional support for equality and diversity
- Principles referred to, where relevant, throughout Code

Main sections

REF2021

- Introduction
- Policy and procedures for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (*only* necessary for HEIs with units that do not submit 100% of Category A staff)
- Policy and procedures for determining whether staff meet definition of an independent researcher
- Policy and procedures for fair and transparent selection of outputs, including staff circumstances
- Any referenced appendices

- All relevant information should be provided in the Code itself
- Links to related documents (e.g. institutional policies) should not be included in the text
- Should use the template provided in the Guidance
- In sections that set out processes, might be helpful to include diagrams, schematics and timelines in order to improve clarity

- Wider context, including other institutional E&D policies
- Update on any relevant actions / advancements to supporting and promoting E&D taken since REF2014 (*with reference to 2014 EIA where appropriate*)
- How code is communicated to staff across the institution, including those on leave / based in units outside of UK



Top Tip

REF2021

- Best codes from 2014 set out clear programmes of communication, including intended audiences and channels of communication used for each
- Best codes were very readable, addressing readers directly in a meaningful and engaging way, rather than reading more like technical manuals

Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research

REF2021

- Only required for institutions which have units that do not include 100% of Category A eligible staff. If have more than one process (e.g. where employment practices vary) should be reflected in code
- Criteria and processes
- Staff (by role) / Committees (with ToR) involved, and whether they have advisory or decision making responsibilities
- REF-related training provided
- How process been communicated and consulted on and AGREED with key staff groups
- Appeals process
- EIA, to consider implications of potential decisions

Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (2)

- In exceptional circumstances, where not been possible to gain staff agreement before 7 June deadline, HEI may submit code pending agreement from staff
- Must demonstrate how they have engaged, and continue to engage, with staff through appropriate mechanisms, and must set out reasons why agreement not been possible
- Must inform relevant funding body once required agreement has been attained

Research independence

REF2021

- Criteria and processes for determining research independence, in accordance with REF guidance
- Staff (by role) / Committees (with ToR) involved, and whether they have advisory or decision making responsibilities*
- REF-related training provided*
- Appeals process*
- EIA, to consider implications of potential decisions

**Where staff / committees, training, processes are the same as for previous section, can cross-reference, rather than duplicate text*

Selection of outputs

REF2021

- Criteria and processes for fair and transparent selection of outputs, including those by former staff
- Staff (by role) / Committees (with ToR) involved, and whether they have advisory or decision making responsibilities*
- REF-related training provided*

**Again, where staff / committees, training are same as for previous sections, can cross-reference, rather than duplicate text*

- Approaches to supporting staff with circumstances
- EIA, to consider implications of potential decisions



Top Tip

REF2021

- Best Codes from 2014 set out clear rationale for individuals / committees involved in REF processes / decision making
- Best codes included clear training plans, outlining their content and timescale for delivery, and made it clear which staff were required to undertake training

Individual staff circumstances

REF2021

- Structures in place to support voluntary declaration of circumstances
- Processes for adjusting expectations of an affected individual's contribution to unit's output pool
- Approach to determining whether a reduction should be sought to total number of outputs required for submitting units
- Should involve a description of HEI's policies, procedures and personnel involved in managing and making decisions, and list of circumstances that will be taken into account – must be standard across all units

Equality Impact Assessments

REF2021

- Interim EIAs should be used to assess potential effects of policies and procedures, particularly in relation to SRR, research independence, and output selection.
- HEIs submitting 100% of eligible staff should still conduct EIAs on determining research independence and output selection.
- Need to show how HEIs used (will use) EIAs and reflected on outcomes
- IF include any completed EIAs in annex, provide clear interpretation and other relevant contextual information alongside any data
- Should also set out how the final EIA on the spread of outputs across staff (in relation to their protected characteristics) will be used to inform the final selection of outputs to be submitted

Carrying out an EIA

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AdvanceHE offers guidance on how to carry out an EIA through these steps:

1. Consider relevant evidence relating to people who share a protected characteristic
2. Assess the impact of applying a decision of a new or revised policy or practice
3. Act on the results of the assessment
4. Publish the results of the assessment
5. Monitor and review the decision/ application of the policy or procedure

<https://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/building-capacity-for-equality-impact-assessment-in-colleges-handbook-for-trainers/>

What data should be considered?

REF2021

EIAs should be informed by an analysis of data in respect of all the protected characteristics for which data are available, including:

- data on the characteristics of staff considered to meet the criteria for having significant responsibility for research in the context of all staff who are eligible for submission, and all academic staff.
- data on the characteristics of staff who meet the definition of an independent researcher, in the context of an appropriate comparator pool for junior academic staff (as appropriate to the institution's context).
- data on the distribution of selected outputs across staff, by protected characteristic, in the context of the characteristics of the submitted staff pool.

Table discussions

- How is your institution developing criteria to identify staff with SRR?
 - Using workload models
 - Issues around senior staff
- How is your institution consulting with staff and ensuring that it engages with as many staff as possible?
- How is your institution ensuring the fair and transparent selection of outputs?
 - Former staff
 - Taking staff circumstances into account
- What challenges are you facing?