

# Webinar on staff circumstances and output reduction requests in REF 2021

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# REF 2021

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# Introduction and overview

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- Background
- How to make reduction requests
- EDAP's review of reduction requests
- Outcomes of reduction requests
- Applying reductions at the submission deadline
- Further guidance
- Further worked examples

# Equality and diversity in REF 2021

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- Funding bodies are committed to supporting and promoting equality and diversity in research careers.
- There are many reasons why an excellent researcher may have fewer or more outputs attributable to them in an assessment period.
- It is **not** expected that all staff members would be returned with the same number of outputs.
- We expect that the flexibility offered by decoupling will be reflected in institutions' expectations of individual researchers.
- Funding bodies have put in place processes to recognise the effect that an individual's circumstances may have on their productivity.

# Staff circumstances mechanisms

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- Greater focus on HEIs' responsibility to support individuals with circumstances
  - Safe and supportive structures to enable voluntary declaration
  - Adjust expectations of an individual's contribution to the output pool
- Unit reductions as separate – optional – step where the cumulative effect of staff circumstances has disproportionately affected the output pool
- Request for removal of the requirement of minimum one output where the nature of the individual's circumstances have had an exceptional effect on their ability to work productively, such that they have not been able to produce the minimum of one output

# Applicable circumstances

<b>Early career researchers</b>	Cat A eligible staff who started their careers as independent researchers <b>on or after 1 August 2016</b>
<b>Secondments or career breaks outside HE</b>	At least 12 months
<b>Family-related leave</b>	<p>Statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020, regardless of the length of the leave.</p> <p>Additional paternity or adoption leave, or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more, taken substantially between 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020.</p>
<b>Junior clinical academics</b>	clinically qualified academics still completing clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or equivalent prior to 31 July 2020

# Applicable circumstances

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<b>Circumstances equivalent to absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disability: defined in the 'Guidance on codes of practice', Table 1.</li><li>• Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions.</li><li>• Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of – or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to – the allowances set out in Annex L.</li><li>• Other caring responsibilities (e.g. caring for an elderly or disabled family member).</li><li>• Gender reassignment.</li><li>• Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed in the 'Guidance on codes of practice', Table 1, or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.</li></ul>

# Removing the requirement of min. one output:

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- Where an individual has not been able to produce an eligible output
- AND**
- Any of the following circumstances apply within the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020:
    - overall period of min. 46 months absence from research due to one or more of the applicable circumstances
    - circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research, where circumstances set out in paragraph 160 apply (such as mental health issues, caring responsibility, long-term health conditions) or
    - two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.

# Unit reductions

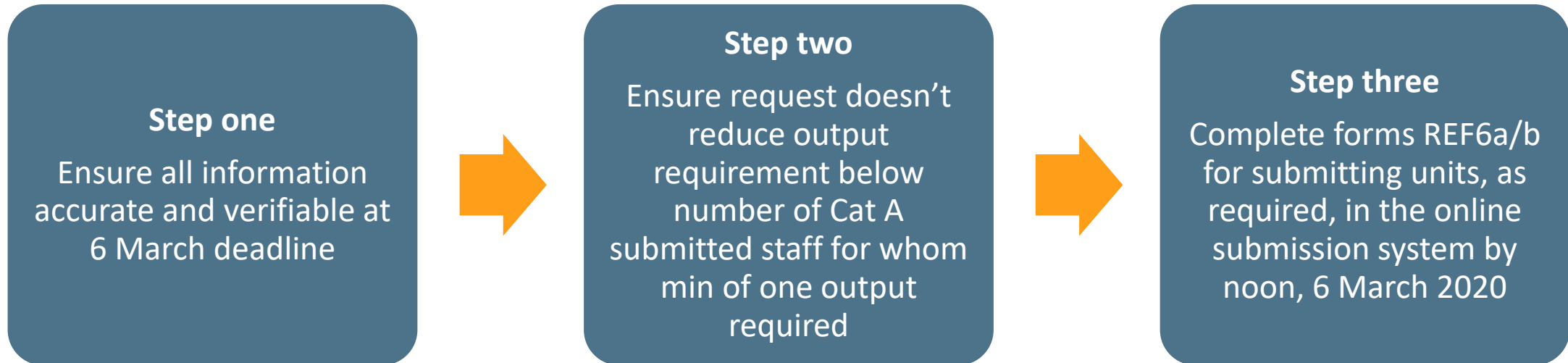
REF2021

- Where the unit has been disproportionately affected by equality-related circumstances to the extent that flexibility of decoupling is not effective solution
- For example:
  - Small unit with high proportion of staff with circumstances
  - Disciplines where fewer outputs are traditionally published (e.g. those where monograph is the disciplinary norm)
- Would not expect to see, for example, large unit with >100 staff seeking reduction of only 2 outputs (unless linked to min. one removal request)



# How to make reduction requests

Following declaration process and decisions on where unit requests will be made:



# Information requirements: REF6a

- Complete one form for each member of staff in a submitted unit for whom a request to remove the minimum of one is being made

Provide the HESA staff ID (for system validation and verification purposes)

Flag applicable circumstances (all that apply)

Set out:

- Details of circs and time period
- Which circs cases set out in GOS apply (or whether comparable circs apply)
- How circs affected ability to produce eligible output

# Information requirements: REF6b

- 1. Add circumstances for each member of staff with circumstances included in the unit reduction request

The screenshot displays the 'Add circumstance' dialog box in the REF2021 Submission System. The dialog is titled 'Add circumstance' and features a dropdown menu for 'Circumstance type:'. The dropdown is open, showing five options: 'Early career researcher', 'Early career researcher', 'Secondment/Career break' (which is highlighted in blue), 'Family-related leave', and 'Requiring judgement'. Below the dialog, the main form area shows a 'HESA staff identifier:' field that is currently empty and has a red border, with a red error message below it: 'Save error: HESA staff identifier is required.' To the right of the field is a red 'x' icon. Below the field, there is a text prompt 'Click **Add** to add a circumstance.' and an 'Add' button. At the bottom left of the form are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons. On the right side of the form, it says 'Total proposed reduction: 0.0'. The background of the page shows the 'Output reduction requests (REF6b)' page with a 'Help me with this page' link. The top of the page shows 'F2021 Research Excellence Framework Submission System' and 'Logged on as Policy Team' with 'Help' and 'Logout' buttons. The footer contains 'Version 0.1 | April 2019' and 'Contact REF | Privacy Notice | Copyright © 2019 UKRI'.

Provide the HESA staff ID (for system validation and verification purposes)

Add applicable circs (all that apply – in accordance with guidance on combining circs)

Where applicable, add tariff band in accordance with circs

For those requiring judgement, outline circs and time period, describe effect and how HEI determined reduction

- 2. Provide a rationale statement for the unit reduction, including information on unit context, why the HEI considered the effect to be disproportionate and how it determined this, in accordance with the HEI's code of practice and the REF guidance

# Combining circumstances

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- Where multiple applicable circumstances have affected research during the period, these may be combined when applying reductions (up to the max of 1.5)
- Must ensure only one circumstance is taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously
- Accumulate defined reductions for applicable circumstances
  - Apply Table L2 where ECR is combined with secondment / career break
  - Where there are further circumstances for junior clinical academics, include as circumstances requiring judgement
- For defined circumstances in combination with any others, include as requiring judgement

# Illustrative example

- Example unit A as at 6 March 2020:
  - 20 staff, 18 FTE, 45 outputs required
  - 13 staff with declared circumstances as follows

	Circumstances	Requested output reduction
1 staff member	Request to remove minimum of one	1
	Circumstances requiring judgement	1.5
2 staff members	ECR (since 17/18)	(2*1) 2
3 staff members	ECR (since 18/19)	(3*1.5) 4.5
2 staff members	Family-related leave (1 x period)	(2*0.5) 1
2 staff members	Family-related leave (2 x periods)	(2*1) 2
2 staff members	Family-related leave (3+ x periods)	(2*1.5) 3
1 staff member	Secondment (46+ months)	1.5
		Total: 16.5

Complete REF6a for this member of staff

Add circs for all 13 staff in REF6b

Complete rationale for unit reduction

# EDAP review

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- EDAP will review all forms submitted by noon, 6 March on consistent basis
- The panel may take advice on discipline-related issues from the Main Panel Chairs
- It may seek further information from HEIs (via the REF team)
  - not for verification purposes, but to ensure sufficient information on effect of circumstances
- EDAP membership available on the REF website

# Outcomes

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- EDAP will make advance recommendations on submitted requests – may include adjustments to reductions proposed
- Decisions will be in relation to unrounded reductions – rounding applied in submission system
- Feedback provided to HEIs by 29 May 2020 – through submission system
- Where any requests not accepted (in full or in part), will include written explanation
- HEIs may appeal recommendations by 15 June 2020 on grounds of process or incorrect application of the guidance

# Applying reductions at the submission deadline

- Reductions recommended for approval in advance are optional to apply, and can be added to, amended or removed before submission in November 2020
- The submitting HEI must ensure reductions applied in its submissions accurately reflect the circumstances pertaining to submitted staff, and must be capable of verification
  - Amendments **must** be made where staff have since left, or where a lower reduction would apply than initially sought
- New or additional circumstances may be applied in REF6a/b, which will be considered during the assessment year
- Approved requests to remove minimum of one can move with staff



# Applying reductions at the submission deadline

- Forms can be edited again after 31 July 2020
- Advance requests that are recommended for approval by EDAP will be retained in forms REF6a/b in the submission system
- These details may be amended or removed
- New staff members may be added
- The system will show which reductions have been recommended for approval in the advance review process

# Illustrative example

- Example unit A as at 6 March 2020:
  - 20 staff, 18 FTE, 45 outputs required
  - 13 staff with declared circumstances as follows

	Circumstances	Requested output reduction
1 staff member	Request to remove minimum of one	1
	Circumstances requiring judgement	1.5
2 staff members	ECR (since 17/18)	(2*1) 2
3 staff members	ECR (since 18/19)	(3*1.5) 4.5
2 staff members	Family-related leave (1 x period)	(2*0.5) 1
2 staff members	Family-related leave (2 x periods)	(2*1) 2
2 staff members	Family-related leave (3+ x periods)	(2*1.5) 3
1 staff member	Secondment (46+ months)	1.5
		Total: 16.5

# Illustrative example

- Example unit A as at 31 July 2020:
  - 19 staff, 17.4 FTE, 44 outputs required
  - 12 staff with declared circumstances as follows

	Circumstances	Requested output reduction	New (for EDAP review)	Advance recmdn for approval
<del>1 staff member</del>	<del>Request to remove minimum of one</del>	<del>1</del>		
	<del>Circumstances requiring judgement</del>	<del>1.5</del>		
2 staff members	ECR (since 17/18)	(2*1) 2	0	2
2 staff members	ECR (since 18/19)	(2*1.5) 3	0	3
2 staff members	Family-related leave (1 x period)	(2*0.5) 1	0	1
3 staff members	Family-related leave (2 x periods)	(3*1) 3	1	2
2 staff members	Family-related leave (3+ x periods)	(2*1.5) 3	0	3
1 staff member	Secondment (46+ months)	1.5	0	1.5
		Total: 13.5	1	12.5

# Further examples

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- *Member of staff whose circumstances expected to continue beyond March, but did not*
- *Member of staff who had additional circumstances arising after March*
- *Very small unit with new staff joining, leading to disproportionate effect*
- *New joiner, who had previously had min. of one exception applied*
- *New ECR joins without min. of one*
- *Staff member for whom a min. of one exception requested now has an output*

# Further guidance

REF2021

- Guidance on submissions
- Invitation to submit reduction requests
- Worked examples
  - Illustrating application of the tariffs and the level of information required
- Forthcoming FAQs
  - Will respond to areas that may require further clarity
- Queries via institutional contacts: [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk)