Aberystwyth University

Code of Practice for REF2021

August 2020
Post-REF exercise re-start: 31 July 2020

Contents

Introduction

1. REF2021 is the latest in a series of UK-wide assessments of research quality. It is informed by a major review conducted under Lord Stern following REF2014. The current REF differs in a number of respects from previous assessment exercises – most notably in the selection of outputs and the requirement for all staff with significant responsibility for research to be submitted – but repeats previous exercises' emphasis on peer review. Assessments consider quality in three areas:
    - Research outputs
    - Impact
    - Environment

    It will award grades based on a 5 point scale (4*-U).

2. This Code of Practice (COP) details our principles, procedures and processes for:

    - Identifying staff on 'research only' contracts who are *independent researchers* and therefore eligible for submission to REF2021.
    - Selecting outputs for submission to REF2021.
    - Supporting staff with individual circumstances that may have affected their ability to undertake research for part or all of the output assessment period (January 2014-December 2020).
    - Appealing against decisions made.
    - Equality Impact Assessments and ensuring ED&I.
    - How we engaged with staff in the development of the COP.
    - How staff making decisions were trained.

3. This COP has been informed both by our experience of developing a COP for REF2014, and the equality impact assessments (EIAs) we undertook following REF2014. This included meetings with individual Departments where equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) concerns had been identified through EIAs, as well as introducing new procedures such as mentoring for staff who had not been submitted to REF2014, and annual Personal Research Plans for all research contracted staff. It is also informed by the requirements of the four funding councils who run the REF. It will be submitted to the REF2021 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) for approval.

4. Many of the procedures and processes outlined here involve committees. We detail their membership, and how these colleagues were selected, in an appendix to this document. We also detail their terms of reference where appropriate.

5. Finally, the COP is informed by our University-wide commitment to ED&I, and to treating colleagues with dignity and respect[1]. ED&I is more than a statement of how the University will meet the statutory requirements. We strive to ensure that students and staff embrace equality and diversity as an essential part of how we operate, and to

[1] Aberystwyth University Dignity and Respect at Work Policy: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/policy-and-procedure/dignity/; Transgender Equality Policy Statement for Staff and Students: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/humanresources/Trans-statement-04-2017-final.pdf

embed this way of working in everything we do[2]. ED&I training is mandatory for all university staff and we have also rolled out unconscious bias training to all those involved with REF decision making processes.

Process of Engagement and Communication

6. The COP was drafted in consultation both with academic staff representatives and with Human Resources (HR) staff who are expert in ED&I issues, before undertaking wider consultation with the academic body, protected groups, groups working strategically on ED&I issues, and Union representatives.

7. Initial ideas were presented in 2018 by the Director of Research Excellence and Impact in three Town Hall meetings, and a draft document prepared by him was presented to the University Executive (through the SIP Board), Research Committee and to Senate. Informal discussions with Union representatives were also held and these helped to shape the emerging ideas.

8. At the end of January 2019, the final *Guidance on the Code of Practice* was published by the Funding Councils, including a template for COPs.

9. A thoroughly revised draft was presented to the COP Drafting Committee (consisting of Faculty representatives from Senate)[3] at two meetings in March, leading to subsequent revisions. This was then presented to the REF Submission Group (RSG)[4] on 5 April 2019, and a draft for wider consultation approved.

10. An intensive period of engagement and consultation followed, consisting of:

    - Two Town Hall meetings, introduced by the Director of Research Excellence and Impact. The second of these was recorded using Panopto and made available to staff.
    - Three meetings between protected groups and the Director of Research Excellence and Impact and the REF & Research Monitoring Manager.
    - Meeting between the Women in Research Network and the Director of Research Excellence and Impact and the REF & Research Monitoring Manager.
    - An anonymised online feedback form.
    - An email to all research active staff containing a copy of the draft COP, an explanation of its purpose and the consultative mechanism, and a link to the anonymised feedback form.

11. This period of consultation led to further revisions to the COP and a final draft was presented to a special meeting of Senate on 20 May 2019.

[2] Aberystwyth University Annual Equality Reports: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/equality/equality-reports/
[3] Membership of the COP Drafting Committee is detailed in Appendix 1.
[4] Membership and Terms of Reference for the RSG are detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.

12. Following approval of Senate, departmental research leads were briefed on the final version of the COP, which was also made available to all staff on the University's website.

13. The final approved version was then submitted to the Funding Councils by the deadline of 7 June 2019.

Principles

14. Our COP is underpinned by five key principles:

    a) Fairness: research is judged on merit and assessors have received training in ED&I, unconscious bias and in reading for the REF.

    b) Transparency: assessments of research will be shared with individual staff, procedures will be circulated to all staff in an accessible manner, and the University's Director of Research Excellence and Impact will brief all staff as well as meet with protected groups.

    c) Consistency: the same procedures will apply to all staff and to all departments.

    d) Accountability: decision makers will be clearly identified and appeals will be possible on grounds of process.

    e) Inclusivity: Our principle of inclusivity means that we will assume all staff who are eligible for REF2021 will be submitted i.e. 100% staff submission. All staff on Research-only contracts with independent responsibility for research will be submitted to the REF.

Identifying Independent Researchers

15. This section only applies to those colleagues whose **contracts are 'research only'**, even if they are required (for various reasons) to teach or undertake other, non-research related activities by their Head of Department (HoD).

16. REF2021 requires us to decide when colleagues are sufficiently independent in the design and conduct of their research to be eligible for submission. This requirement usually concerns those colleagues who are working under the close direction of a research leader, often as part of a research team.

17. REF2021 suggests the following criteria to help in making this judgment. These are:

    - Leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project.

- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement.
- Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.

18. However, we recognize that judgments on the independence of staff on research only contracts may be subject to context, and that disciplinary differences and individual circumstance may play a significant role. Our procedure therefore, is to adopt a default position of using academic contracts and role profiles as a starting point, not least because these explicitly engage in the question of independence required for a role. We will then nuance this on an individual basis by reference to the REF's suggested criteria.

19. Our procedure is outlined in Figure 1.

20. Preliminary decisions will be made by the Research Monitoring Group (RMG)[5], using advice from the individual's department and from HR over contractual status. These will be made by the end of July 2019 and will be communicated to individual colleagues by email.

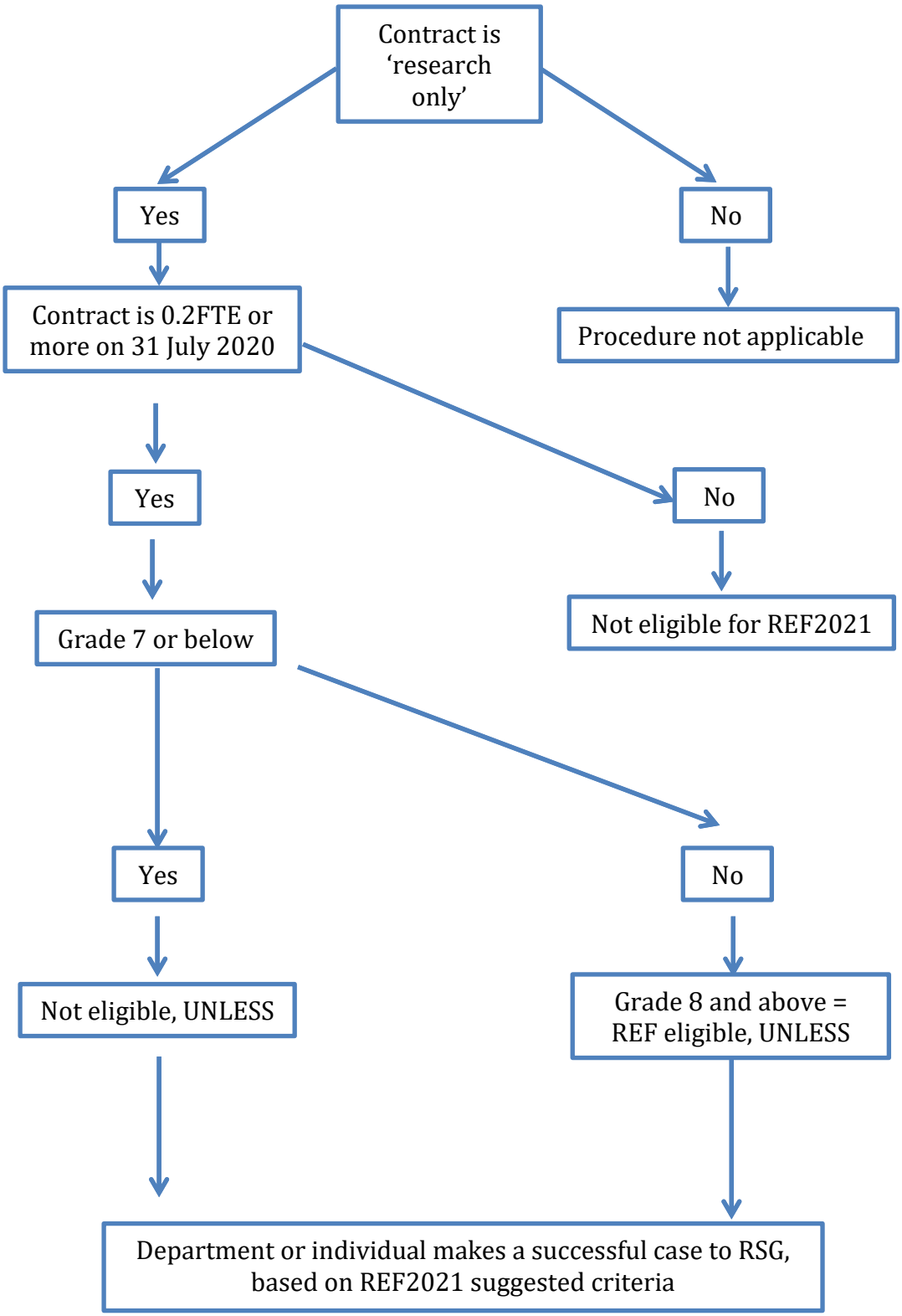
21. An individual colleague may contest this decision by making an evidenced case, utilizing the criteria above i.e. that they are, or are not, an independent researcher if identified as otherwise. Applications must be received **by 13 September 2019** via research@aber.ac.uk to enable the RSG to make a judgement on whether or not to submit a colleague to REF 2021 by the end of September 2019.

22. If a colleague disagrees with the RSG decision, they may appeal through the process identified in paragraphs 75-78.

23. Any staff appointed after the end of July 2019 will be considered on an individual basis, using the same criteria as others, and with a decision being confirmed within two months of their start date. Any appeals should be made within a further month, and will be considered as soon as practical.

[5] Membership of the RMG is detailed in Appendix 1.

Figure 1: Decision making tree for identifying independent researchers



Selecting outputs for submission to REF2021

24. REF2021 is fundamentally different to REF2014 and previous RAEs. Whereas previous exercises were based on individuals being submitted with up to four items, REF2021 is based on a *submitting unit* (usually department) submitting a number of outputs determined by their size – 2.5 x number of REF submitted FTEs. Individual staff must have a minimum of 1, and a maximum of 5, outputs allocated to them within the submitting unit's 'output pool'. This will mean decisions will need to be made over which outputs to submit.

25. We must therefore decide on the *best* items produced in each department for submission to REF2021. We will *not* be submitting on a pro rata basis – that is, 2.5 items per staff member. That would defeat the object of REF2021, which is to judge a submitting unit's performance.

26. The process for allocating outputs for submission is outlined in Figure 3.

27. A draft REF submission will be available to the RSG after the Autumn Research Monitoring round and individual staff will be informed of their outputs which are likely to be used by the end of 2019. However, since some items may not be publicly available until later in 2020, colleagues should be aware that the 2019 version is a draft and a later version will be circulated in 2020.

28. The number of items from an individual, submitted by a unit, will have no influence on other decision making processes within the University related to that individual's career or contract. For example, promotion, or the granting of research leave.

29. The underpinning principle is one of quality – that we will submit the best items available from within the submitting unit. To ensure that we do this to the best of our ability, each department has a team of readers who make up the submitting unit's REF Reading Committee (RRC)[6]. These readers are experienced in making judgments on academic quality, have been trained in reading for the REF, in ED&I and in unconscious bias. Where practicable, the composition of the RRC will reflect the variety of disciplinary sub-fields and diversity within a department. Any outputs proposed for submission will be assessed for quality by the submitting unit's RRC. The Membership and Terms of Reference for each RRC will be approved by the RSG.

30. Welsh language and English Language outputs will be assessed for inclusion on an equal basis. It will be the quality of an output which will deem its inclusion within the REF2021 submission. In respect of the Welsh Language Act 1993, specific provision for the assessment of outputs in the Welsh language will be made by the REF2021 Panels.

31. Outputs from former members of staff which are eligible for submission will be treated in an identical manner to other outputs, with the exception that when there is a choice between outputs from a former and current colleague priority will be given to the latter.

[6] Purpose and composition described in Figure 3.

32. Eligible outputs from staff on fixed term or partial contracts will be treated in an identical manner to other outputs.

33. We have carefully considered the issue of eligible outputs from staff who have been made redundant during this REF cycle, and in particular the concerns raised by UCU. We recognize and understand these concerns, but not to consider such outputs for submission also raises a series of concerns. We have therefore decided that these outputs should be considered for inclusion.

34. Individuals or departments may request that items which fall outside their discipline but within another's be cross-referred for reading and assessment. Applications should be made to the Director of Research Excellence and Impact (research@aber.ac.uk).

35. For departments who will be submitted jointly with another to the same REF sub-panel, the relevant Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) will convene a joint meeting of RRCs to propose the output pool.

36. To ensure consistency, departments will keep a record of individual readers' scores and generate comparative data. This will be monitored by the Chair of each RRC and passed on in anonymised form to the RSG.

37. Final output allocations and submission profile decisions will be made by the RSG, on advice from the RMG following their meetings with departments. Both the RMG and RSG have been trained in ED&I and in unconscious bias.

38. Appeals may be made using the procedure outlined in paragraphs 75-78.

Figure 2: Process for Allocating Outputs for REF2021.

(i) Colleagues submit outputs to PURE once accepted for publication/ public distribution, and use PURE to propose up to six outputs for REF submission. Preliminary decisions on an output's eligibility for REF[7] will be determined by the submitting unit's RRC and confirmed by the RMG.

(ii) Submitting units will establish a RRC with sufficient membership to enable an informed judgment on the quality of outputs across the sub-fields within the unit and reflecting where possible the diversity of the unit. The membership of, methodology for selecting readers, and terms of reference (ToRs) for each RRC must be approved by the RSG, which has the right to suggest additional or alternate membership. Template RRC ToRs are available in Appendix 4.

[7] That is, whether it meets the definition of 'research' as given within the Guidance on Submissions (Appendix 3), as well as meeting the criteria for eligible outputs identified by REF2021. This might for example include decisions over whether an output is eligible because of the date when it was made publicly available.

(iii) The membership of, methodology for selection, and ToRs of the RRC will be communicated to all colleagues in a Department by the Head of Department or designate (e.g. research lead).

(iv) Each RRC will also contain one additional, non-reading member from a cognate RRC appointed by the Faculty PVC to provide external scrutiny of proceedings.

(v) The RSG will monitor the composition of RRCs to ensure diversity appropriate to the department. It may recommend additional members be added to an RRC for ED&I purposes.

(vi) Any individual concerns over membership may be expressed in confidence to the PVC for Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (Colin McInnes, cjm@aber.ac.uk).

(vii) The RRC will read each output submitted, sufficient to make an informed decision against the REF2021 criteria. At least two members of the RRC will read each item. The RRC will consider each item and award it a grade based on a 13 point scale, derived from the REF criteria and starred levels (4*+, 4*, 4*-….. U). This should provide sufficient granularity to produce an output pool based on quality (see Figure 4). Submitting Units will also hold calibration meetings to ensure that judgments are internally consistent within the RRC. Outputs from former staff will be treated on an equal basis to those from current staff, but when two outputs are given the same starred level, priority will be given to items from current staff.

(viii) In those cases where language or technical issues (particularly the use of highly specialized methodologies or knowledge) mean that an RRC feels it does not have sufficient competence to grade an output, they may consider either cross referring to another RRC, or requesting a suitably qualified external reader. Authorization (that is, agreement to use an external) and approval (that is, agreement on who the external should be) requires the agreement of the RMG and will only be on language or technical grounds.

(ix) Proceedings of RRCs will be minuted and made available to the RSG on request.

(x) Grades for outputs will be available to individual(s) via PURE, and the number of outputs they are associated with within the submission (including items where they are co-author but which have not been allocated to them) will be communicated to them via e-mail (see Figure 4). This should be done after each round of biannual meetings with the RMG.

(xi) Departments will send the evolving output pools to the RMG for discussion in the biannual Research Monitoring meetings. These meetings will agree on a proposed output pool to be sent to the RSG, which will make the final decision prior to submission.

(xii) After each Research Monitoring round, the RMG will produce an equality impact assessment (EIA), in conjunction with HR, which will be shared with the RSG and each department. Concerns will be flagged and discussions held over how to address any issues raised.

(xiii) Departments and/or individual colleagues may also flag outputs as:

- inter-disciplinary,
- requiring cross referral, or
- worthy of consideration for double weighting.

The case for each should be made on PURE and supported by the submitting unit through its reading of the output concerned.

Figure 3: Sample Output Pool and Individual Grades for Notional Submitting Unit of 4 FTEs (2.5 x 4FTEs = 10 outputs required)

Output number (used to ensure anonymity)	**Ranking List**	**RRC Grade**
22	1	4*+
14	2	4*
3	3	4*
1	4	4*-
16	5	4*-
11	6	4*-
9	7	3*+
7	8	3*+
6	9	3*
2	10	3*

Table is made public in department. Individual colleague is informed of the output number allocated to each of their outputs on the proposed output pool, and to the scores for outputs not included in the output pool.

Supporting Staff with Individual Circumstances

39. We recognize that staff may encounter individual circumstances during the REF cycle, which affect their ability to undertake research. Some of these are explicitly addressed or acknowledged in the documents produced by the Funding Councils for REF2021. These include family related leave and Early Career Researchers (ECRs).[8] But many circumstances may be unique to an individual – such as illness, or being a primary carer.

40. This COP is intended to help support those staff with individual circumstances undertaking research. Sometimes this may be through introducing new or improved procedures – for example, following REF2014 we introduced a mentoring programme for colleagues returning from extended periods of absence (such as maternity leave). For others, the support may be more bespoke.

41. In REF2014, individual circumstances led to a reduction in the number of outputs required from that colleague (for example, a period of maternity leave automatically led to a reduction in the number of outputs required from 4 to 3). REF2021 is different. The voluntary declaration of circumstances is, in the first instance, for internally **managing expectations** of how many outputs individuals contribute to the output pool.

42. A reduction in outputs **for a submitting unit** (i.e. not an individual) can only be claimed in **exceptional** circumstances, and specifically, the following two situations:
    1. Where individuals can claim the removal of the minimum of one output due to **both** the equivalent of 46 month's absence from research (or two or more periods of maternity, or extended parental leave) **and** where there have been no research outputs produced in the period since 1 January 2014.
    2. Where the cumulative effect of individual circumstances within a submitting unit can be seen to have had a disproportionate effect on the availability of outputs for the submitting unit's output pool.

43. The REF guidelines provide flexibility for individual institutions to decide at what point the number of individual circumstances in a submitting unit has a 'cumulative effect' – that is, has an impact on the unit as well as the individual. We therefore propose that a threshold of 10% be used- that is, once the number of individual output reductions meets 10% of the output pool, then output reductions will be applied to the output pool overall.

Allowable circumstances

44. We recognize that staff may encounter individual circumstances during the REF cycle, which affect their ability to undertake research. Such circumstances can include but are not limited to:

[8] REF eligible staff who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.

- Qualifying as an early career researcher (ECR): members of staff who started their careers as independent researchers 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, including periods of extended paternity leave (4 months or more).
- Circumstances with an equivalent effect to absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:
  i. Disability.
  ii. Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions.
  iii. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare.
  iv. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
  v. Gender reassignment.
  vi. Other circumstances relating to protected characteristics, or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

45. As part-time working is taken account of within the calculation for the overall number of outputs required for the unit (which is determined by multiplying the unit's FTE by 2.5) reduction requests on the basis of part-time working hours should only be made exceptionally. For example, where the FTE of a staff member late in the assessment period does not reflect their average FTE over the period as a whole.

Process for declaring circumstances

46. Colleagues are invited to voluntarily declare any individual circumstances via the following web form https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/research/excellence/ref-individual-circs/, by 30 October 2019.

47. Data about individual circumstances voluntarily disclosed via this webform will be considered by an Independent Circumstances Panel (ICP)[9] consisting of:
    - Professor Michael Woods (Chair);
    - the REF and Research Monitoring Manager;
    - the HR Communications and Equalities Officer;

    The membership balances expertise in ED&I and in the REF.

48. Named responses will only be accessible to the HR Communications and Equalities Officer. An anonymised report will be presented to the other members of the ICP for consideration.

49. The ICP will treat all material in strict confidence, unless requested not to by individuals. The ICP will meet, when needed, to consider applications and the HR Communications and Equalities Officer may engage in discussion with colleagues

[9] Membership of the ICP is detailed in Appendix 1.

making an application to clarify issues or seek additional information. The ICP will present an anonymised and abbreviated application to the RSG for approval.

50. The ICP will also produce an EIA prior to each discussion of individual circumstances at the RSG and a final EIA after submission to REF2021. It will also provide recommendations during the REF submission process and at its conclusion.

51. The process for the evaluation of individual circumstances is outlined in Figure 5. Please note that this process is deliberately independent of the department to ensure confidentiality.

52. The evaluation of any circumstances declared will be conducted by the end of December 2019, and individuals will be informed of the decision made by the beginning of 2020. If a colleague disagrees with the decision made, they may appeal through the process identified in paragraphs 75-78 of the COP.

53. Where a case for the removal of the minimum of one output to be submitted by an individual, or an output pool reduction due to cumulative effect, is agreed by the RSG, details of the individual circumstances will then be forwarded for consideration by the REF2021 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) for their initial deadline of 6 March 2020.

54. The declaration of any new circumstances, such as for any staff appointed after October 2019, will be considered on an individual basis, using the same criteria as others and with a decision being confirmed within two months of submission. Any appeals should be made within a further month and will be considered as soon as practical prior to final submission.

Managing expectations of an individual's output contribution

55. Where an individual circumstances case is confirmed, the mechanism for offering and deciding on support will be the Effective Contribution Scheme (ECS) and in particular the meetings between a colleague and their HoD (or nominated alternate). The ECS process will be used to discuss a colleague's expected contribution to REF2021 and how this might be changed because of individual circumstances. Colleagues and/or HoDs (or nominated alternates) may also refer to HR for advice if necessary or desired.

56. Throughout, we will respect colleagues' confidentiality and we will only pass on information to a HoD (or nominated alternate) with the explicit agreement of the colleague concerned. However, given the role of the HoD (or nominated alternate) as line manager, their ability to support a colleague may be compromised if they are unaware of an individual's circumstances.

Output reductions

57. The reductions are set out in full in Annex L to the REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions (www.ref.ac.uk/media/1092/ref-2019_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf). Tables L1 and L2 below are reproduced from Annex L. They set out the 'tariffs' for calculating reductions for ECRs and for those who have taken a career break/secondment. Table L2 should also be used 'by analogy' for calculating the reductions for circumstances 'equivalent to absence'.

Table L1: Early career researchers: permitted reduction in outputs

Date at which the individual first met the REF definition of an ECR:	**Output pool may be reduced by up to:**
On or before 31 July 2016	0
Between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017 inclusive	0.5
Between 1 August 2017 and 31 July 2018 inclusive	1
On or after 1 August 2018	1.5

Table L2: Secondments or career breaks and circumstances with an 'equivalent effect to absence': permitted reduction in outputs

Total months absent between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020 due to a staff member's secondment or career break:	**Output pool may be reduced by up to:**
Fewer than 12 calendar months	0
At least 12 calendar months but less than 28	0.5
At least 28 calendar months but less than 46	1
46 calendar months or more	1.5

58. In addition to the reductions outlined above for ECRs, secondments, career breaks and circumstances with an equivalent effect to absence the following reductions can be applied:

i. A reduction to the output pool of 0.5 for each discrete period of:

   a. 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.
   b. Additional paternity or adoption leave, or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020.

ii. A reduction to the output pool of up to 1.5 where individuals have had a combination of circumstances that have a defined reduction in outputs. If an individual has additional circumstances that require a judgement, the institution

should explain this in the reduction request so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances.

Removing 'the minimum of one' requirement for individuals

59. Where an individual has **not** been able to produce an eligible output during the assessment period, and any of the circumstances below apply, the individual can apply for the removal of the requirement to submit a minimum of one output and be returned with zero outputs without penalty.
    a. Two periods of qualifying family related leave
    b. Overall period of absence of 46 months or more during the assessment period
    c. Circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence.

60. The maximum output reduction a UoA can apply for is 1.5 outputs per eligible staff member. Apart from those staff who have had the minimum requirement of 1 output submission removed. These individuals could lead to a reduction of up to 2.5 outputs.

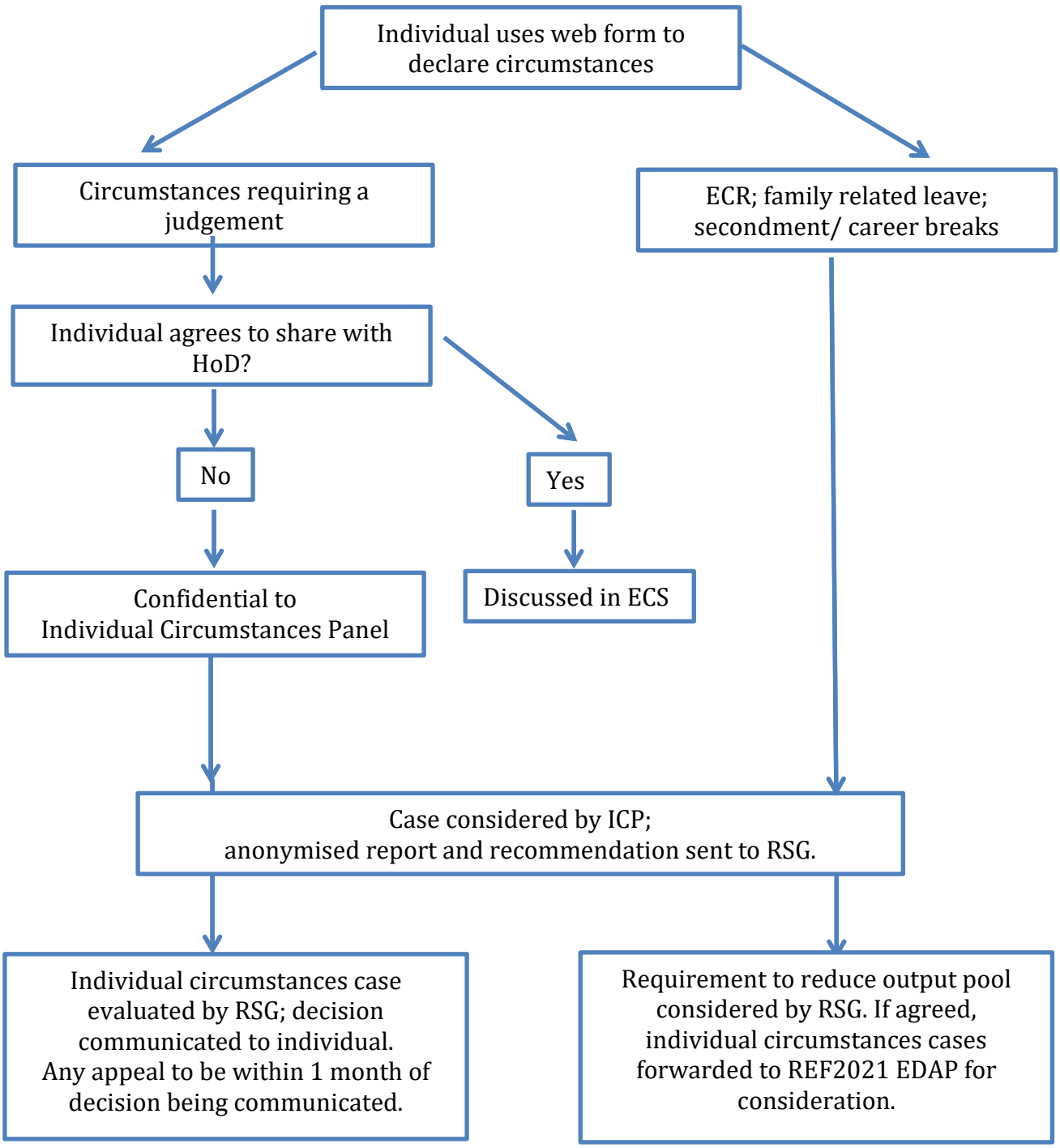
Unit-level reductions

61. Where a cumulative effect of individual circumstances within a submitting unit can be seen to have occurred i.e. the number of individual output reductions meets 10% of the output pool, then an application for output reductions to the output pool overall will be submitted to the Research England REF Team.

62. When the REF 2021 results are published, information on the attribution of outputs to individual staff members will not be made available. Therefore, it will not be directly possible to identify for which colleagues individual circumstances may have had an effect.

63. It should be noted however, that in light of the decoupling of staff and outputs in REF 2021, any agreed output reductions may not be allocated to the colleague for which the individual circumstances apply. This could mean that although a colleague could be returned with less than the 2.5 output average for the submitting unit, the output reduction may effectively be applied to another colleague, where their outputs were deemed to have been assessed as of a lower quality within the available output pool.

Figure 4: Process for deciding on individual circumstances



Appeals Process

64. Appeals may be made either by an individual or a submitting unit in relation to any of the following decisions:

    - Which sub-panel an individual's work should be submitted to.
    - Staff not considered as having independence in, or significant responsibility for, research.
    - Subsequent output reduction due to Individual Circumstances applying either to an individual or a submitting unit.

65. Appeals will be heard by a panel consisting of:

    - Two academic representatives from an Expert Advisory Group[10] (at least one from a cognate discipline)
    - The Director of Human Resources

66. Appeals may be made on the grounds of:
    - Evidence that processes as stated within the COP were not followed.
    - Evidence of prejudice, or of bias, or of inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the RRC, RMG or RSG, or evidence of prejudice or bias on part of the person(s) administering the departmental research monitoring return to RMG.
    - Evidence that information upon which a decision has been made is factually inaccurate.
    - Availability of new/ additional corroborative evidence that was not previously submitted for consideration at the time of the initial RSG decision.

67. Appeals may be made in writing to the Chair of the Appeals Panel (Nicholas Rogers, Director of Human Resources, nir24@aber.ac.uk). The Chair will decide which additional two academic representatives from the Expert Advisory Group should be on each panel to ensure both disciplinary and gender representation. Minutes will be kept of meetings held, and decisions only communicated to the RSG when an appeal is successful. If the panel finds in the appellants favour it will refer the case back to the RSG for re-consideration, stating whether or how the RSG has breached the COP or ED&I Policy. The results of any appeal will be communicated back within six weeks of its receipt.

Equality Impact Assessments and ensuring Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

68. During bi-annual Research Monitoring meetings with Departments, a designated HR representative will be present to monitor and advise on ED&I issues.

69. After each round of Research Monitoring, we will conduct an EIA. This will be undertaken by HR and the results shared with the RSG for REF purposes, Research

[10] Membership of the Expert Advisory Group is detailed in Appendix 1.

Committee for University research planning purposes, and individual departments for their own planning purposes.

70. We are aware of our special responsibilities to Wales and to the Welsh language. We are also aware of specific legislative requirements relating to the Welsh language. To this end, a Welsh language impact assessment has been conducted on this COP (available in Appendix 5).

71. HR will monitor actions undertaken in response to the EIA, and report to Research Committee and Executive.

Training

72. Training has been designed to cover three aspects pertaining to the REF: general ED&I matters, unconscious bias, and how to select REF outputs. Initial training began in 2017 and was supplemented by bespoke training for individual departments on request. Further training was undertaken in 2019.

73. All AU academic and related staff are trained in ED&I issues as a matter of AU policy, with regular updates. From 2019, all those involved in REF assessments have also been provided with training in unconscious bias. This included both a face-to-face session with a member of HR and a bespoke online training package available with Welsh subtitles. The online training includes a test to ensure that the training module has been fully understood. In addition to this, during the course of 2019 Department and Faculty research leaders, together with members of the RSG and the Expert Advisory Group, received face-to-face training in unconscious bias from Advance HE.

74. To enable staff to select items for submission to the REF, two training sessions have been held. These were organized on a REF Panel basis (that is, all departments to be submitted to Panel A were trained simultaneously, etc.). The first, in 2017, involved an external trainer who had been involved (usually as a sub-panel Chair or Vice Chair) in REF2014. A plenary session was followed by a more bespoke department-level calibration session with advice from the externals. Because of the specific demands of practice-led research, an additional session was held on this. The second, in 2019, was similarly held on a Panel basis but was led internally and involved detailed discussions of the REF2021 Guidelines published in January 2019.

75. In addition, supplementary training has been held with individual departments, either in the form of more focused briefings or sample calibration exercises with a participant observer from outside the department. This has been at the request of a department.

Appendices

Appendix One: Membership of REF2021 University Committees

a) COP Drafting Committee

Who	Why, and how appointed	Training received by members
Professor Colin McInnes	*At time of drafting:* University Director of Research Excellence and Impact, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	Mandatory institutional E&D training completed.
Dr Gordon Allison	Academic representative of Senate, Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences (internally elected position).	
Dr Olaoluwa Olusanya	Academic representative of Senate, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (internally elected position).	
Dr Maria Plotnikova	Academic representative of Senate, Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences (internally elected position).	
Hannah Payne	REF and Research Monitoring Manager, ex officio (publicly advertised appointment).	
Ruth Fowler	HR Communications and Equalities Officer, ex officio (publicly advertised appointment).	
Joy Arkley	HR Business Partner, ex officio (publicly advertised appointment).	

b) REF Submission Group

Who	Why, and how appointed	Training received by members
Professor Elizabeth Treasure (Chair)	Vice Chancellor, ex officio (publicly advertised appointment).	Mandatory institutional E&D training completed.
Professor Colin McInnes	PVC Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	Unconscious Bias and REF training received from Advanced HE (sessions ran on site 5 February and 3 June 2019).
Professor Neil Glasser	PVC Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	
Dr Anwen Jones	PVC Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	
Professor Qiang Shen	PVC Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	
Professor Helen Roberts	University Director of Research Excellence and Impact, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	
Hannah Payne	REF and Research Monitoring Manager, ex officio (publicly advertised appointment).	
Ruth Fowler	HR Communications and Equalities Officer, ex officio (publicly advertised appointment).	

c) Research Monitoring Group

Who	Why, and how appointed	Training received by members
Professor Colin McInnes (Chair)	PVC Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, ex officio (internally advertised appointment).	Mandatory institutional E&D training completed. Unconscious Bias and REF training received from Advanced HE (sessions ran on site 5 February and 3 June 2019).
Professor Helen Roberts	University Director of Research Excellence and Impact (internally advertised appointment).	
Hannah Payne	REF and Research Monitoring Manager, (publicly advertised appointment).	
Ruth Fowler	HR Communications and Equalities Officer (publicly advertised appointment).	

d) Independent Circumstances Panel

Who	Why, and how appointed	Training received by members
Professor Michael Woods (Chair)	Expert Advisory Group member: academic representative for Panels C and D (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	Mandatory institutional E&D training completed. Unconscious Bias and REF training received from Advanced HE (sessions ran on site 5 February and 3 June 2019).
Hannah Payne	REF and Research Monitoring Manager, (publicly advertised appointment).	
Ruth Fowler	HR Communications and Equalities Officer (publicly advertised appointment).	

e) Expert Advisory Group

Who	Why, and how appointed	Training received by members
Professor Michael Christie	Academic representative for Panels A and C (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	Mandatory institutional E&D training completed. Unconscious Bias and REF training received from Advanced HE (sessions ran on site 5 February and 3 June 2019). *Appointed after Advanced HE training. University online unconscious bias training completed.
Dr Amanda Clare*	Academic representative for Panel B (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	
Professor John Gough	Academic representative for Panel B (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	
Dr Andrea Hammel	Academic representative for Panel D (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	
Dr Gareth Norris	Academic representative for Panels A and C (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	
Professor Michael Woods	Academic representative for Panels C and D (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	
Professor Björn Weiler	Academic representative for Panel D (internally advertised position; Expression of Interest ratified by RMG).	

Appendix Two: Terms of Reference of REF Submission Group

This group forms part of the University's REF Code of Practice. Its role is:

- To approve the University's REF submission, subject to any successful appeals.
- To receive recommendations from the Research Monitoring Group (RMG)[11] on which outputs and departments to include in a REF submission, and which sub-panel their work should be submitted to.
- To receive recommendations from the RMG on which staff should be considered as having significant responsibility for research.
- To discuss and approve the institutional elements of the submission.
- To receive reports from the RMG on the environment template and proposed impact case studies of any submitting unit, and make recommendations as appropriate.
- To review any cases for Special Circumstances applying either to an individual or a submitting unit.

A REF submission phase will be held by the RSG following each round of research monitoring.

The Group may establish and disestablish sub-groups and working groups to consider matters related to its terms of reference, and may determine their membership, which is not restricted to persons who are members of the Group. This includes matters where confidential individual circumstances are under consideration.

Quorate

An RSG meeting is quorate with:

- The VC or PVC Research
- Two of the Faculty PVCs
- Either the Director of Research Excellence and Impact or REF and Research Monitoring Manager
- The Equalities representation from the Human Resources department

Appeals to decisions made by the RSG

Appeals may be made either by an individual or a submitting unit in relation to any of the following decisions:

- Which outputs and departments to include in a REF submission, and which sub-panel their work should be submitted to.
- Staff not considered as having significant responsibility for research.
- Subsequent output reduction due to Individual Circumstances applying either to an individual or a submitting unit.

[11] The Research Monitoring Group, membership detailed in Appendix 1, shall meet at least biannually with each REF returnable unit to review their proposed submissions, and more frequently as required when the REF submission deadline nears.

Appeals will be heard by a panel consisting of:

- Two academic representatives from an Expert Advisory Group (at least one from a cognate discipline)
- Director of Human Resources

Appeals may be made on the grounds of:

- Evidence that processes as stated within the Code of Practice were not followed.
- Evidence of prejudice, or of bias, or of inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the RMG or RSG, or evidence of prejudice or bias on part of the person(s) administering the departmental research monitoring return to RMG.
- Evidence that information upon which a decision has been made is factually inaccurate.
- Availability of new/ additional corroborative evidence that was not previously submitted for consideration at the time of the initial RSG decision.

Appendix Three: Definition of research for the REF

1. For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.
2. It includes work of direct relevance 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.
3. 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.

Appendix Four: Template for terms of reference for Submitting Unit REF Reading Committees

1. **Membership.** The REF Reading Committee (RRC) is appointed by the relevant Head of Department (or nominated alternate) and approved by the REF Submission Group (RSG). Sufficient members are appointed to enable the RRC to make an informed judgment on the quality of outputs across the sub-fields within the unit. Membership should also reflect diversity within the unit.
2. **Use of external readers.** Where the unit does not have the linguistic or – exceptionally – the technical competence to judge an item, then a suitably qualified external reader may be used. Authorization (that is, agreement to use an external) and approval (that is, agreement on who the external should be) requires the agreement of the Research Monitoring Group (RMG).
3. **Combined submissions.** When two or more units are to be submitted to the same sub-panel (e.g. Welsh and Modern Languages), the meeting to decide the proposed output pool will be chaired by the Faculty PVC.
4. **Purpose.** The RRC's sole purpose is to propose the unit's output pool for REF2021, using expert judgment based on peer review. When a REF sub-panel has indicated that it will use metrics, then the RRC may do likewise but solely to *inform* and not to *replace* peer judgment.
5. **Training.** All members of the RRC will be trained in reading for the REF, in E&D and in unconscious bias.
6. **Process.** The RRC will follow the process outlined in the University's Code of Practice. In particular, each output will be read by at least two members of the RRC and discussions in the RRC will be minuted. The proposed output pool will be discussed with the RMG before submission to the RSG. Final decisions will be made in the RSG. Individuals will be informed of the grades their proposed outputs have been awarded.
7. **Appeals.** The appeals process is detailed in the University's Code of Practice.

Appendix Five: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

This Language Impact Assessment (LIA) tool enables the University to consider the principles and requirements of the Welsh Language Standards to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Measure 2011.

1. PROPOSAL DETAILS: (Policy/Change Objective/Budget saving)	
Proposal Title	REF2021 Code of Practice

Department	RBI	Head of Department	Prof Chris Thomas		

Name of Officer completing the LIA	Hannah Payne	E-mail	hep	Phone no	8490

Please give a brief description of the purpose of the proposal
COP for the fair, and transparent identification of staff with significant responsibility for research; determining who is an independent researcher; and the selection of outputs, including approaches to supporting staff with circumstances.
Who will be directly affected by this proposal? (e.g. Students, the general public, staff)
Research contracted members of staff

Does the proposal have a potential impact on another department / service / activity?
RBI; Human Resources; Vice Chancellor's Office

VERSION CONTROL: The LIA should be used at the earliest stages of decision making, and then honed and refined throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please consult with the Centre for Welsh Language Services for any advice.

Author	Decision making stage	Version number	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
Hannah Payne		1.0	09/05/2019	

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: Please show how the proposal addresses the core objectives listed under the 'Welsh language and culture' section of Aberystwyth University Strategic Plan 2018-2023.	
Promote the development of Welsh medium academic provision including the discipline of Welsh	Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh language speakers in REF Reading Committees.
Ensure an environment that enables students to choose to live and learn through the medium of Welsh	N/A
Ensure Welsh language opportunities in areas such as employment placements and industrial years	N/A
Encourage staff to use Welsh in the workplace and to have opportunities to learn and improve their Welsh	COP will be made available in both Welsh and English. Functionality available to make comments in either Welsh or English during consultation period. Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh language speakers in REF Reading Committees.
Encourage new staff and students to take up Welsh language learning opportunities and to appreciate the socio-economic and cultural context of Wales	N/A
Act as a catalyst for cultural awareness, understanding, activity and integration	Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh language speakers in REF Reading Committees. After each Research Monitoring round, the Research Monitoring Group (RMG) will produce an equality impact assessment (EIA), in conjunction with HR, which will be shared with the REF Submission Group (RSG) and each department. Concerns will be flagged and discussions held over how to address any issues raised.

NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for **evidence to support your views**. When you formulate a new policy, or review or revise an existing policy, you must consider what effects, if any (whether positive or adverse), the policy decision would have on (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. The tool should allow you to identify whether any changes resulting from the implementation of the recommendation will have a positive or negative effect on the Welsh language. Data sources include for example:

- *Welsh Language Standards requirements for the department / service*
- *Welsh Language skills data for staff*
- *Welsh Language skills data for students*
- *Welsh medium recruitment*
- *Welsh medium academic provision*
- *Welsh medium administrative provision*

2. Welsh Language Impact Assessment *In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language Measure 2011.*				Describe why it will have a positive/negative or negligible impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Will the proposal be delivered bilingually (Welsh & English)? e.g. *Will the proposal increase or decrease the opportunities for people to receive information or access information in Welsh?*	Yes	No		Outputs in the Welsh language will be assessed for inclusion on an equal basis as those in the English Language. It will be the quality of an output which will deem its inclusion within the REF2021 submission.	COP will be made available in both Welsh and English. Functionality available to make comments in either Welsh or English during consultation period. Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh	
	Yes					

					language speakers in REF Reading Committees.	
Will the proposal have an effect on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language? e.g. *Will the proposal alter the linguistic nature of the department?* *What opportunities does the proposal provide to develop Welsh language skills within the department?*	Yes	No	No impact/ Negligible	Outputs in the Welsh language will be assessed for inclusion on an equal basis as those in the English Language. It will be the quality of an output which will deem its inclusion within the REF2021 submission.	COP will be made available in both Welsh and English. Functionality available to make comments in either Welsh or English during consultation period. Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh language speakers in REF Reading Committees.	
	Yes					
Will the proposal increase or reduce the department's ability to deliver services through the medium of Welsh? e.g. *Will the proposal ensure that people can access services in their preferred language, Welsh or English?*	Increase	Reduce	No impact/ Negligible	Outputs in the Welsh language will be assessed for inclusion on an equal basis as those in the English Language. It will be the quality of an output which will deem its inclusion within the REF2021 submission.	Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh language speakers in REF Reading Committees.	After each Research Monitoring round, the RMG will produce an equality impact assessment (EIA), in conjunction with HR, which will be shared with the RSG and each department. Concerns will be flagged and discussions held over how to address any issues raised.
	Yes					

Will the proposal increase or reduce the opportunity for persons to use the Welsh language within the workplace? *Will the proposal impact on the number of Welsh speaking staff within the service?* *Will the proposal increase or reduce the opportunity for staff to improve their Welsh language skills or access training via the medium of Welsh?*						
Will the proposal treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language? e.g. *How will the proposal ensure that Welsh speakers receive services to the same standard as those who access the same services through the medium of English?*	Yes No	No No	No impact/ Negligible	Outputs in the Welsh language will be assessed for inclusion on an equal basis as those in the English Language. It will be the quality of an output which will deem its inclusion within the REF2021 submission.	COP will be made available in both Welsh and English. Functionality available to make comments in either Welsh or English during consultation period. Directly addresses the submission of outputs in the Welsh language. Specific consideration of Welsh language speakers in	After each Research Monitoring round, the RMG will produce an equality impact assessment (EIA), in conjunction with HR, which will be shared with the RSG and each department. Concerns will be flagged and discussions held over how to address any issues raised.

					REF Reading Committees.	

3. STRENGTHENING THE PROPOSAL: In view of any mitigating actions listed above, what practical changes/actions could help reduce or remove any negative impacts on the Welsh Language?			
3.1 Actions.			
What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?	Progress
3.2. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing. *How will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?*			
After each Research Monitoring round, the RMG will produce an equality impact assessment (EIA), in conjunction with HR, which will be shared with the RSG and each department. Concerns will be flagged and discussions held over how to address any issues raised.			

4. SIGN OFF			
Position	Name	Signature	Date
Head of Department	Prof Chris Thomas		13/05/2019
Officer completing the LIA	Hannah Payne		10/05/2019
PVC / CWLS	Gwenno Piette		13/05/2019