

Aston University REF 2021 Code of Practice:

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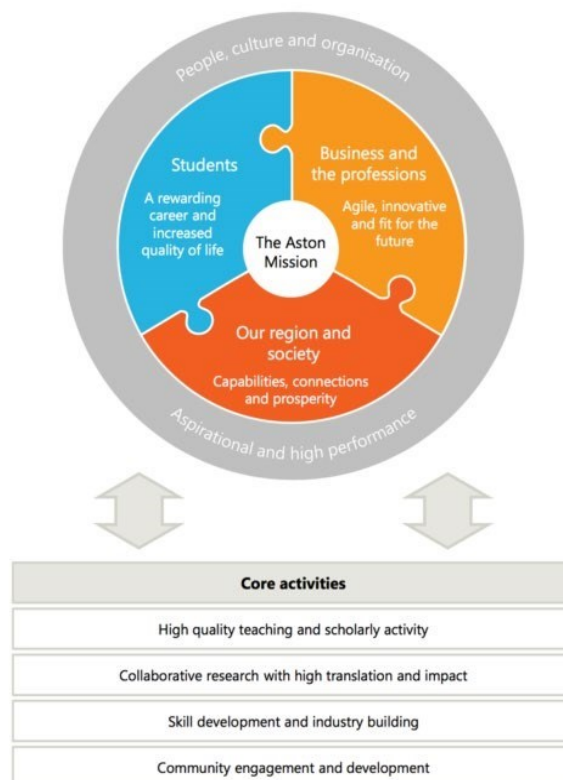
Aston University REF 2021 Code of Practice

A. Introduction

1. Aston University

This Code of Practice is underpinned by the Aston Strategy 2018-2023, as well as the Aston University Research Strategy 2018-2023; Inclusive Aston (Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2026) and the HR/People Strategy. Aston’s Strategy sets out its six key values, which include ‘ethical and inclusive’: *‘The University recognises its responsibility to be an exemplar of behaviour and conduct in all that it does. It will leverage the diversity of its staff and student body to achieve outcomes for its beneficiaries and provide opportunities for education and professional development to all’*¹. Our Research Strategy explicitly recognises our staff (academics, post docs and professional services) and post-graduate students as primary drivers of our research and knowledge exchange. Our ongoing work to prioritise the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda focuses on three areas of work; culture change and opportunity; data and benchmarking; external recognition and awards. Aston was awarded Athena SWAN Institutional Silver in 2018, with the Schools of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Languages and Social Sciences, Aston Business School, and Life and Health Sciences all either holding awards, or having confirmed their intention to submit by April 2019. The new Aston Medical School will confirm their intention to submit within three years of establishment.

Figure One: The Aston Mission



¹ Aston University Strategy, page 5. <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/about/strategy>

Collaborative research with high translation and impact is one of four core activities that underpin the Aston Mission to deliver over the short, medium and long-term for our beneficiaries. Our heritage and focus on beneficiaries means that impact is embedded in our research, with a focus on providing innovative solutions to real world problems. This approach enables us to add value to each of our three groups of beneficiaries:

- Students (through research-led teaching and projects, as well as training the next generation of scholars; the unity of teaching and research is a common theme to all our schools);
- Business, Professions and Public Sector (through translating our research into practical outcomes);
- Region and Society (through informing policy, enriching public debate and increasing the knowledge

Our Code of Practice provides a framework for all REF decision making, and sets out the processes that will be used to develop Aston's REF submission; it applies to all members of staff who have an advisory or decision making role involved in the preparation of the University's REF 2021 return. The Code has been drawn up to ensure that we fulfil our responsibilities and complete the REF process in compliance with the law, and in line with our broader ethical objectives. The Code was submitted to Research England for approval by 7 June 2019, and approved on 8 November 2019.

Following the period during which the REF exercise was put on hold, revisions to the REF timetable were published in July 2020. The '[Guidance on Revisions to REF 2021](#) (REF 2020/02)' acts as an addendum to, and where applicable supersedes, the [Guidance on Submissions](#) (REF2019/01) and [Panel Criteria and Working Methods](#) (REF2019/02). REF 2020/02 sets out the revised deadline of 31 March 2021, plus changes and additions in relation to each element of the submission. In September 2020, we submitted further minor changes to our Code of Practice based on this guidance. Any questions may be addressed to the [Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact](#).

2. The REF Process

The Research Excellence Framework is a process of expert review, undertaken under a framework of four Main Panels², with 34 Units of Assessment. Aston University will submit a return to a selected number of Units of Assessment and in common with all other institutions, Aston's REF return will include the following information:

- Staff in post and eligible to be included in the REF return on the census date (31 July 2020)
- Publications and assessable outputs that have been produced between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020. Provision has been made to submit outputs delayed by COVID-19, where the output was expected to be produced by 31 December 2020.
- Case studies describing specific examples of impacts achieved during the period 1 August 2013 to 31 December 2020 and underpinned by research performed between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2020. Provision has been made for listing delayed outputs as underpinning research, and inclusion of an optional statement, where contextual

² Main Panel A: Medicine, Health and Life Sciences; Main Panel B: Physical Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics; Main Panel C: Social Sciences; Main Panel D: Arts and Humanities.

information is required for the panel to understand any impacts that COVID-19 had on the submitted case study.

- Research doctoral degrees awarded, research income and income-in-kind related to the period 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020.
- An institutional research environment statement, and an environment statement for each Unit of Assessment, describing the ways in which research and impact have been enabled during the period 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020. A COVID-19 annex to the institutional environment statement may be submitted to describe the particular changes affecting the institution's research and impact environment as a result of COVID-19
- Information on staff circumstances, where there has been a unit reduction or removal of the requirement of the minimum of one outputs from each staff member is being requested.

The revised deadline for submissions is 31 March 2021, with all submissions being assessed by REF panels during 2021. Results are expected in April 2022, with the outcomes informing the allocation of Quality-Related Research funding from academic year 2022-23.

The University will prepare its REF submission using the REF module of PURE, Aston's Current Research Information System. All staff who are eligible to be returned to REF will have records created within the REF module in PURE. This online system will be used to record all REF-related decisions, information and data, and will be used by those with reviewing and decision-making responsibility across the University. There will be regular updates to the module leading up to the REF submission period to ensure that it is fit for purpose and submission for REF runs smoothly. Research managers/administrators and Associate Deans of Research will work closely with all REF eligible staff to ensure that they understand the revised timelines (Appendix 1) that relate to REF submission, particularly with respect to outputs and that all relevant information is catalogued in the REF module.

3. The Legislative Context

All of Aston University's REF policies take into account our obligations as an employer under the Equality Act 2010. Appendix 2 provides a summary of this legislation, which is also available at pages 7-12 of the [Guidance on codes of practice \(2019/03\)](#). In particular, we are mindful that the way decisions are made must mitigate against direct or indirect discrimination.

Aston University undertakes to promote equality and diversity within the University community in all aspects of its work. Aston is an equal opportunities employer that treats its staff based upon their merits, abilities and potential, with no regard for gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, socioeconomic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, Trade Union membership, family circumstance, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction. We are committed to evaluating and reflecting on our position with regard to equality, and find the ECU Equality Charters to be a useful framework for this. We have a long history of commitment to the Athena SWAN Charter and are aiming to submit a Race Charter application in 2020. We are also engaged with the Disability Confident Scheme and are actively reviewing and improving our LGBT+ policies and practices. Over the past few months we have created staff and student databases for equality and diversity data, which means that we are able to take a truly intersectional approach to our work in this area. We also have a dedicated Equality and Diversity Data Officer to support us in making evidence-based decisions with respect to policy and practice. The Aston University Equality and Diversity Policy Statement is included at Appendix 3.

In addition, the University's policies and practices ensure that part-time and fixed-term employees have equal access to opportunities, including to academic promotion as full-time and permanent staff. This is in line with The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. The University's paid leave entitlement for parental leave, paternity leave, adoption leave and maternity leave are all more generous than the statutory requirements.

4. Actions taken since REF 2014

The University has experienced a significant change in its senior management structure and governance since REF 2014. This includes the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive (autumn 2016) and new Pro-Vice Chancellor Research (summer 2018). During the REF period, the University's research and business support function, was re-structured and re-named Research and Knowledge Exchange.

Our University Strategy has been refreshed and a new Research Strategy adopted; new strategies for Aston Graduate School, HR/People, Diversity and Inclusion are currently under development. Aston's Research Strategy emphasises impact, excellence, sustainability and collaboration as the four principle ways in which we will deliver for our beneficiaries. These characteristics are being used to assess our current research and knowledge exchange activities, and to provide a framework within which to prioritise investments. We have embedded structures and good practice that will take us beyond the current REF cycle.

The University is structured around five Schools, each led by an Executive Dean, and with the Associate Dean Research (ADR), Associate Dean Enterprise (ADE) and Impact Champion leading preparations for REF at Unit of Assessment level. The REF team in Research and Knowledge Exchange (including the Dean of the Graduate School; Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact; REF Impact Manager, Research Data Manager) are working with these School-based teams to support the PVC Research in the management of REF preparation and submission. The Aston governance structure for REF 2021 is included at Appendix 4, with the membership and terms of reference for REF-related Committees and Groups at Appendix 5 and the roles of key decision makers set out in section C4 (below).

Aston University's procedures for managing the preparation for REF2021 reflect the changes introduced since REF2014, in particular regarding the return of staff and outputs. Aston will be submitting a 100% return of eligible staff to REF2021. Clear processes have been set out to determine the independence of researchers, to select outputs and for staff to declare with individual circumstances.

5. Equality Impact Assessment

An **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)** is a thorough and systematic analysis designed to ensure that a policy, project or scheme does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable people. The REF Equality Impact Assessment that was conducted following the submission of the return to REF 2014, showed that out of all staff eligible for return, those who were female, BME, disabled, under 31 or over 61 years of age, were less likely to be submitted than their counterparts. The outcomes

of this EIA have informed our decision to submit 100% of eligible staff in REF 2021³. In addition, the outcomes of the EIA have informed our institutional policies and practices, including: establishing an ECR forum; lowering teaching loads for ECRs during their first three years; the introduction of a structured mentoring scheme including the completion of a career development plan and a training needs analysis; a programme of short courses tailored to ECRs; development of a publication strategy to support colleagues at all stages of their careers. In addition, the University now holds an Athena SWAN Institutional Silver Award, with the Schools of Life and Health Sciences, and Engineering and Applied Sciences also holding Silver awards. Additional examples of work undertaken to improve the progression of female colleagues includes the introduction of the Aston Women's Leadership Programme (54% of female academic and research staff completing the programme have since been promoted).

Aston will also conduct EIAs on our mock REF exercises in preparation for REF 2021, and will use the outcomes of these exercises to make any necessary changes to address any trends which appear to negatively impact a particular group with one or more protected characteristics in advance of final decisions being made.

Equality data will be prepared by the HR Systems Team using existing templates adapted for REF purposes, with the subsequent EIA undertaken by the Equality Impact Group (a sub-set of the REF Management Group). The Equality Impact Group (EIG) will be a diverse group including staff with experience and responsibility for research outputs, research strategy, equality, data production and analysis. The selection of members to this group is based on their ability to analyse qualitative and quantitative data, knowledge of equalities legislation and its local application, knowledge of research outputs and research context. Members will all be appropriately trained in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion specifically in relation to the REF and will be made aware of the sensitivity of the data which it handles. Where appropriate, advice will also be sought from the Athena SWAN Project Management Group, the LGBT+ Working Group and the Disability Working group.

The equality analysis will consider age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and belief, contractual status e.g. fixed term, part time and will clearly indicate staff submitted as part of the REF. Where a particular group appears to be disadvantaged in the mock exercises, the EIG will consult with staff, union representatives and equality groups to seek advice on removing or reducing any negative impact. Recommendations for improvements will be made to the REF Management Group, which will reflect on the outcomes, investigate any areas where there appears to be an imbalance and adjust policies and procedures accordingly if they have been found to be discriminatory, or if they have been found to promote equality. The results of these equality impact assessments will be published on the staff intranet, alongside the Code of Practice.

6. General Principles

The Aston University REF preparations will be undertaken in accordance with the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity:

- **Transparency:** the code will be easily accessible to all eligible staff, including those who are absent from work. The Communication Plan for the Code of Practice is set out at section A7 below. During the consultation, the relevant trade union (UCU) will be consulted; the Code will be published on the staff intranet; colleagues will be emailed inviting them to participate

³ It is important to note that REF 2014 was conducted under a different framework, and that Aston University submitted a selective return (39.62% of eligible staff were not submitted).

in the consultation process; those absent from work will be written to at their home address. Comments submitted during the consultation will be considered by the REF Management Group, and any relevant changes to the Code will be made. Following consultation, the final version will be submitted to Research England and will be published on the Aston University website.

- **Consistency:** the principles governing the processes set out in this Code will be applied in the same way across all Schools and Units of Assessment at each stage of the process.
- **Accountability:** the Code sets out the decision-making responsibilities of the senior REF officers within Aston University, particularly with respect to determining research independence and selecting outputs for REF submission (see section C1 below). The code sets out the training that all those in decision making positions have received (see section C5 below). The governance arrangements for the REF process are set out at section C3 below, and in Appendices 4 and 5.
- **Inclusivity:** The inclusive approach of Aston University is reflected in its 100% return, and the clear processes set out to determine independent researchers and the excellent research outputs produced by staff across all protected groups (see section D2 below and Appendix 6). We have also set out clear measures to support staff with individual circumstances (see section D4 below).

7. Aston REF Engagement Strategy

Aston University is committed to an open and transparent approach to REF, including colleagues on leave of absence, research leave and interested stakeholders. The Code of Practice will be made available to all stakeholders, including all relevant staff groups, who will be invited to provide feedback prior to finalisation and submission. The University’s UCU representative will be consulted in drafting the Code of Practice and regarding subsequent proposed amendments.

The timetable for development and consultation of the Code of Practice is set out below:

Figure 2: Aston Code of Practice Timetable

Action	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Date
CoP Draft one prepared following draft Guidance on Submissions	RKE ⁴	PVC Research	HR; REF Management Group; UCU representative	University Research Committee	January 2019
Revisions made to the CoP based on the final Guidance on Submissions	RKE	PVC Research	HR; REF Management Group; UCU representative; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum; Executive Academic Group (EAG)	University Research Committee	February/ March 2019

⁴ Research and Knowledge Exchange (Central Professional Services Department responsible for supporting the REF)

Consultation plan prepared	RKE and HR	PVC Research	REF Management Group; UCU Representative; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum; University Research Committee	EAG	February/ March 2019
REF Specific EDI training put in place	HR	PVC Research	REF Management Group; UCU Representative; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum	EAG	February/ March 2019
Delivery of EDI training to all staff with decision making and reviewing responsibility	HR	PVC Research		Executive Committee	All relevant staff to have completed training by 31 July 2019
Sign-off draft CoP prior to consultation	RKE	PVC Research	REF Management Group; Research Committee; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum; EAG; Senate	Executive Committee	10 April meeting of Research Committee
Consultation with REF Eligible Staff	HR; Executive Deans	PVC Research	All REF Eligible Staff	University Research Committee; Executive Committee	May 2019
REF COP Town Hall	RKE	PVC Research	REF Management Group; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum; EAG; Research Committee; Senate.	REF Management Group, Research Committee, EAG, Executive Committee, Senate	1 May 2019; 13 May 2019
Review and revision of CoP following response to consultation	RKE and HR	PVC Research	REF Management Group; Research Committee; EAG; Senate	Executive Committee	Last 2 weeks in May 2019
CoP signed off	RKE	PVC Research	REF Management Group	Executive Committee	EAG (late May 2019); Senate 29 May 2019
Feedback on Consultation to staff	HR	PVC Research		University Research Committee; Executive Committee	End of May 2019

CoP submitted to Research England	RKE	PVC Research		REF Management Group, EAG, Executive Committee	7 June 2019
CoP re-submitted to RE with minor revisions made to the timeline for appeals mechanisms.	RKE	PVC Research	Senate	REF Management Group, EAG, Executive Committee	20 September 2019
CoP re-submitted to RE with minor revisions that reflect changes set out in 'Guidance on Revisions to REF 2021 (REF 2020/02)'	RKE	PVC Research	REF Management Group	EAG, Executive Committee, Senate.	9 October 2020

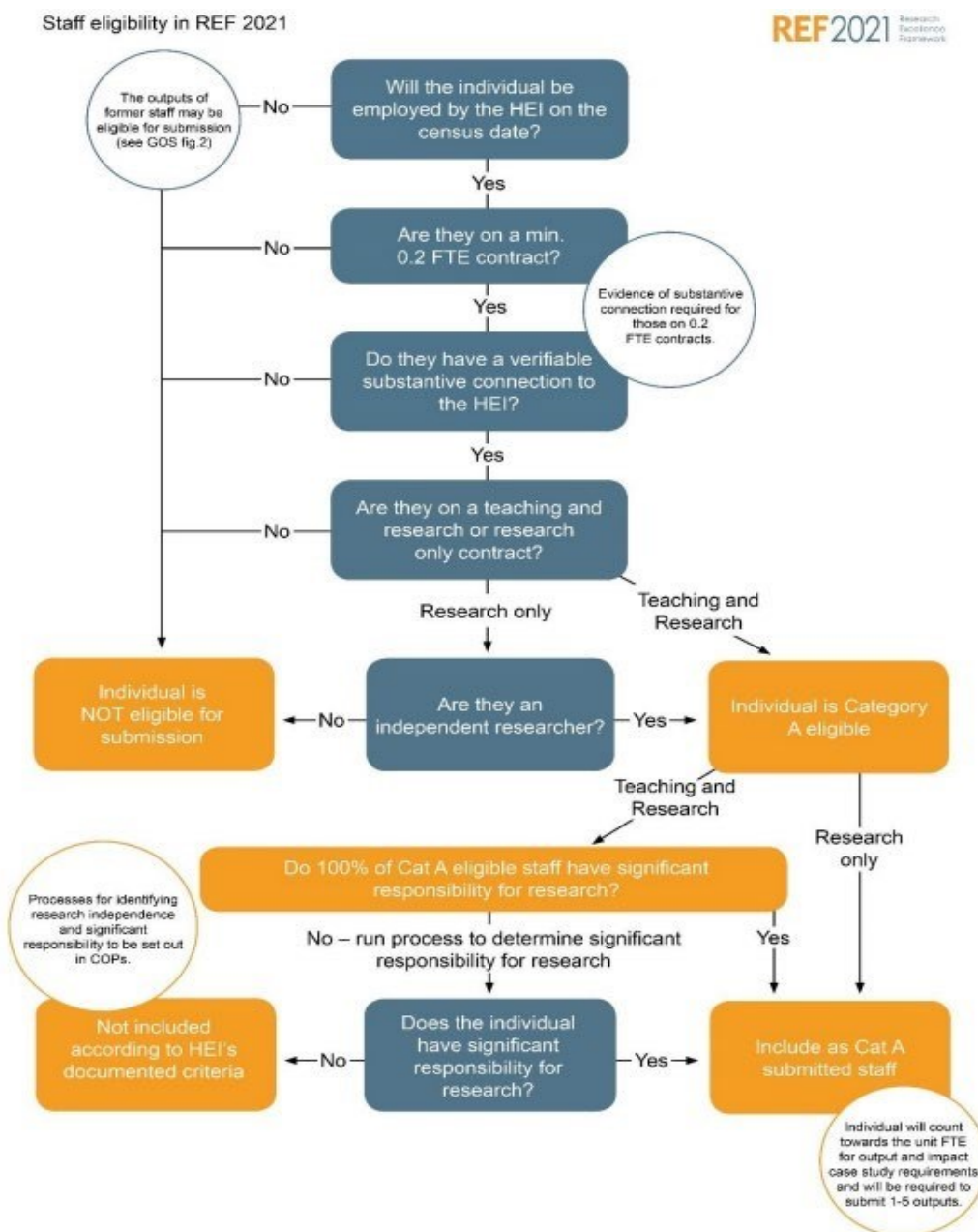
Aston's REF Communication Strategy also includes:

- The PVC Research has recorded a video setting out key REF issues and the University's REF strategy, which has been circulated to all REF eligible staff and will be posted on the staff intranet.
- REF Code of Practice Town Hall meetings held on 1 and 13 May (all academic and research staff invited to attend)
- The Code of Practice will be made available on the staff intranet, with the consultation being highlighted via the staff newsletter (Aston Angle), by email and by mail to those staff currently on extended leave.
- The revised version of the Code of Practice (including COVID-related revisions) will be published on the University website and will be circulated to all Category A staff.
- The [Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact](#) is the University's dedicated contact point for REF.

B. Identifying staff with Significant Responsibility for Research

Aston will be submitting 100% of Category A eligible staff and therefore there is no requirement from Research England to identify staff with Significant Responsibility for Research, or for further information to be presented in this section. Figure 3 provides a summary of the staff who will be eligible to be returned to REF 2021. Further information about processes to determine research independence are set out in section C (below).

Figure 3: Staff eligibility in REF 2021 (page 36-47 Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01))



C. Determining staff independence (paragraphs 128-134 Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01))

Aston’s 100% submission of Category A staff will include all independent researchers, defined as an individual ‘who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual’s research programme’⁵.

⁵ REF 2019/01 REF Guidance on Submissions, paragraph 131

1. Criteria for determining research independence

The following criteria will be used to determine 'research only' staff for inclusion in the REF return:

- Grade 10 researchers (the Aston role profile for grade 10 research only staff includes the criteria to 'carry out independent research and act as principal investigator and project leader').

In addition:

In line with all REF Main Panels, the following indicators will be used to determine research independence:

- 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. An illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of independent fellowships has been provided by Research England (Appendix 9).
- Leading a research group or a substantial and specialised work package.

In addition:

In line with Main Panel C (Social Sciences, Units of Assessment 13-24) and Main Panel D (Arts and Humanities, Units of Assessment 25-34) we also consider that the following attributes may generally indicate research independence in their disciplines:

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

2. Process for determining research independence:

- The relevant Associate Dean Research will use the criteria above to determine on the status of each individual researcher. This process may include:
 - reviewing contractual status of individuals;
 - consulting with the HR Business Partner;
 - gathering evidence from the individual's line manager to determine the nature of the work that they are undertaking and to clarify whether this aligns with the criteria above.
- When a decision about the independence of an individual researcher cannot be agreed upon at this level, the case will be escalated to the relevant Executive Dean.
- Any unresolved issues will be brought to the REF Management Group for decision and ratification.
- Once decisions have been ratified:
 - The individuals concerned will be notified by email and will have the opportunity for a face to face meeting with the relevant Associate Dean Research, supported by the HR Business Partner;
 - This communication will include information on the criteria for decision making; the rationale for the decision; contact details for any questions; details of the appeals process;
 - Administrative staff in the School and in the central REF Team will be notified and Unit of Assessment (UoA) records will be updated on PURE.

- Appeals process:
 - Research-only staff who have not been determined as ‘research independent’ will have the right of appeal on the grounds that the procedure outlined in Section C1 and C2 of this Code of Practice was applied incorrectly, the decision was taken without full availability of information, or there has been non-compliance with any other item covered by this Code of Practice. Research-only staff are not eligible to be returned to REF 2021 as Category A staff purely on the basis that they are named authors on one or more research outputs; this is not a grounds for appeal⁶.
 - The employee will set out in writing the full grounds of their request for an appeal hearing to the [Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact](#) as Secretary to the Appeals Panel.
 - Appeals against decisions regarding research independence will be heard by the Appeals Panel (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Director of Student and Academic Services, Executive Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact (Secretary)). Appellants may be accompanied by their union representative, or by a fellow member of staff.
 - A written response will be provided by the Chair of the Appeals Panel within five working days of the meeting or the receipt of any additional information that is required. There is no further right to appeal.
 - Administrative staff in the Unit of Assessment and in the central REF Team will be notified of the decision, and UoA records will be updated on PURE.

Timeline for Determining Research Independence	
For research-only staff in post on 31 July 2019	
Communicate decisions to individuals	By 16 October 2019
Request for an appeal hearing	By 11 November 2019
Appeal hearings heard	By 22 November 2019
Communication of final decision to the appellant, and to ADR and administrative staff in the relevant UoA to update PURE	By 29 November 2019
For research-only staff joining Aston, or whose status changes, between 1 August 2019 and 31 December 2019	
Communicate decisions to individuals	By 16 January 2020
Request for an appeal hearing	By 31 January 2020
Appeal hearings heard	By 14 February 2020
Communication of final decision to the appellant, and to ADR and administrative staff in the relevant UoA to update PURE	By 21 February 2020
For research-only staff joining Aston, or whose status changes, between 1 January 2020 and 31 July 2020	
Communicate decisions to individuals	By 30 September 2020
Request for an appeal hearing	By 14 October 2020
Appeal hearings heard	By 28 October 2020
Communication of final decision to the appellant, and to ADR and administrative staff in the relevant UoA to update PURE	By 2 November 2020

⁶ REF 2019/01 Guidance on Submissions, paragraph 133

3. Moves between UoAs

The process for UoA configuration allows staff and outputs linked to them to be returned to alternative UoAs other than that which is primarily linked with their home School. The process for moving staff and linked outputs between UOAs is as follows:

- Movement of a small number of individuals between UoAs should, in the first instance, be discussed at UoA level to ensure optimum configuration for the University, and should include re-review of the relevant output(s) by the alternative Unit of Assessment. The individual(s) concerned should be included in these discussions.
- Where decisions about movement between UoAs cannot be resolved at School level, the relevant Associate Deans Research should bring forward a case on the unresolved issues to the REF Management Group for resolution.
- All decisions about the movement of staff and the associated outputs, impact case studies and environment should be endorsed by the REF Management Group.
- Following the approval of movement of staff and associated outputs by the REF Management Group are approved, the changes in data will be made in PURE by the Research Data Manager.
- Any change should have no impact on the University's 100 percent submission.

4. Staff and Committees

4.1. Staff with responsibility for decisions on the REF submissions are:

- Vice-Chancellor:
 - Appointed by a joint committee of Senate and Council
 - Overall responsibility for final decisions relating to Aston's REF submissions; Chair of Senate and University Executive.
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research:
 - Appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, subject to confirmation by Council and Senate
 - Lead responsibility for Aston's research strategy and overseeing Aston's REF submissions; Chair of Research Committee and the REF Management Group.
- Executive Deans:
 - Appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, subject to the approval of the Council
 - Over-arching responsibility for development of REF submissions and inclusion of Category A staff; Chair of School Management Committee. The Executive Deans have responsibility to work closely with Associate Deans Research and other relevant staff within their Schools, to plan and develop REF submissions and bring forward regular reports and recommendations to the REF Management Group. They will sign-off and authorise the final submission for relevant UoAs.
- Associate Deans for Research:
 - Appointed by Executive Deans
 - Responsibility for development of all aspects of the REF submissions, namely inclusion of all Category A staff, selection of outputs, including those by staff who have left; Impact Case

Studies and Environment Statements. In the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the ADR will work with the REF Lead on the development of the REF return in UoA 11 (Computer Science and Informatics) and UoA 12 (Engineering).

4.2. Staff with advisory roles in the development of the REF submission are:

- School-based;
 - Associate Deans for Enterprise and REF Impact Champions: Key responsibility for the development of REF Impact Case Studies, as specified by the Associate Dean Research.
 - Other senior academic staff as appointed by Executive Deans or Associate Deans Research: including School-level output panels and impact case study panels; those providing specialist advice on the development of REF submissions; including determining independent researchers, environment statements, or on any other part of the REF submission.
 - Research support staff.

- Central Research and Knowledge Exchange Department
 - Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact; Director of Information Resources and Research Services; Research Data Manager; REF Impact Manager, Dean of Aston Graduate School.

4.3. Staff Committees

The University's governance arrangements for the REF are set out at Appendices 4 and 5.

The REF Management Group was established by University Executive Committee to steer and shape the University's REF Submissions. It is a time-limited sub-committee of Research Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and is responsible for providing strategic direction, authorisation and approvals, development of policies and procedures. The REF Management Group:

- Takes advice from and reports to Research Committee on overall REF activities, and submits reports to Senate and to University Executive on a regular basis.
- Receives recommendations from School Management Teams, and will validate and verify these recommendations, before seeking approval from the Vice-Chancellor.
- Is responsible for the timeline for preparation of the REF return. The work of the REF Management Group and the five School Research Committees are underpinned by a series of working groups at School level.
- Has responsibility for ensuring that all staff with REF decision-making responsibility have participated in REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training (see section C5).
- Has no decision-making role in relation to individual decisions (regarding the inclusion of outputs, impact case studies, or individual circumstances).

School-based Research Committees and REF working groups are responsible for the preparation of School submissions, under the direction of the Associate Dean for Research or other nominated subject leads. School-based REF working groups make their recommendations to School Management Teams.

School Management Committees, chaired by the School's Executive Dean, have responsibility for the approval of School REF submissions and for their recommendation to the REF Management Group.

The REF Operations Group provides a University-level forum for School-based Research Managers and Administrators, and colleagues from Professional Services (Libraries, HR, RKE and Finance) to share best practice, specialist knowledge and expertise, and to address common REF-related issues. The focus of the Group is the operational detail that underpins the three main elements of Aston's REF return (Outputs, Impact and Environment). The REF Operations Group reports to the REF Management Group and to the School Research Committees.

The REF Individual Circumstances Group is a time-limited group which will assess all individual disclosures of individual circumstances, and will make recommendations to the relevant School Management Group regarding the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty. The Individual Circumstances Group will ensure that there is a consistent and fair assessment of all circumstances and will record the decisions appropriately. Members of the ICG will observe rules of confidentiality and decisions will be recorded separately from the applicant's HR file. The outcome of each case will be reported to the School Management Group, with no further detail provided. The group will comprise:

- Dean of Aston Graduate School (Chair)
- HR Business Partner
- Equality and Diversity Lead
- Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact, offering specialist REF advice on an anonymous basis where required

University Research Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, acts as an advisory group to the Schools and oversees the development of REF submissions. It monitors progress towards objectives in School research strategies and ensures consistency of approach while taking account of any specific requirements for each unit of assessment. The Research Committee has no decision-making role in relation to the REF.

The University's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive (Chair of Senate and of University Executive) has overall responsibility for the REF process. This responsibility is delivered through the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange (Chair of the REF Management Group and University Research Committee) and the Executive Deans of the five Academic Schools (Chairs of the five School Management Committees).

5. Training

In line with the requirements of Research England, all staff with REF advisory and decision-making responsibility will participate in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training, which has been delivered by Advance HE EDI policy staff. Half-day sessions were run at Aston on 14 and 20 May 2019. As this is a mandatory requirement of the REF, a log of all those required to attend is being maintained. This includes the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, all Executive Deans, members of the REF Management Group, the Equality Impact Group, the REF Individual Circumstances Group and the REF Appeals Panel, plus members of School Management Committees and School Research Committees who have REF decision making responsibility.

The workshops included group discussion and interactive activities that gave participants the opportunity to develop their understanding of unconscious bias in the context of REF. The training has equipped decision makers in the REF process with the knowledge and tools to review and assess

locally managed processes, and to intervene in circumstances where there is an opportunity for unconscious bias to result in decisions that negatively impact outcomes for protected characteristic groups. The specific learning objectives of this training are to enable participants to:

- Understand the legislative and policy drivers and context for embedding consideration of equality and diversity in REF2021
- Understand the potential for direct or indirect discrimination to play out in decision-making around determining research independence and selection of outputs in REF 2021
- Understand the process for the disclosure of individual circumstances
- Begin to develop individual and institutional actions and strategies to minimise the potential for bias in REF decision-making

Additional training sessions will be run locally, using Advance HE material, for any staff taking up new REF related responsibilities and for the small number of colleagues who were unable to participate in workshops run by Advance HE.

In terms of the specific responsibilities of the Equality Impact Assessment Group and the Individual Circumstances Group (considering the disclosure of individual circumstances), additional guidance and support will be provided. Members of these Groups have been selected taking into account existing roles, responsibilities, experience and expertise with respect to EDI. The process for the disclosure of individual circumstances is set out in section D below above, including how disclosed information will be handled and assessed, as well as its' purpose. In addition, HR Business Partners will support staff who are disclosing individual circumstances including:

- to discuss individual circumstances disclosures confidentially;
- to help their understanding of how individual circumstances interact with the REF process;
- to provide follow up support to the member of staff where appropriate e.g. where adjustments to working pattern or environment are indicated as part of the individual circumstances disclosed.

In addition to the specific requirements of the REF, we see the benefits of this training having a wider institutional benefit in terms of raising awareness of unconscious bias in decision-making, and as such this is in line with our institutional approach, which includes mandatory Equality and Diversity training for all staff.

6. Appeals

Appeals will be heard based on individual circumstances (see section D7 below) and on determining research independence (section C1 and C2 above). All appeals will be heard in person, and staff may be accompanied either by a union representative, or by a colleague. Selection of outputs and impact case studies is based on academic judgement and there will be no right to appeal.

The Appeals Panel will comprise the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Executive Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, and the Director of Student and Academic Services.

D. Selection of outputs

1. Selection of Outputs Process

For each Unit of Assessment, the total number of outputs to be returned is set out in the [REF Guidance on Submissions \(REF 2019/01\)](#) and must be equal to 2.5 times the combined FTE of Category A submitted staff included in the submission (rounded up to the nearest whole FTE). A minimum of one output and maximum of five outputs will be required for each Category A submitted staff member. There is no minimum requirement for submitting the outputs of former staff, but the maximum of five still applies (see Figure 4 below).

Decision-making on outputs selection will be undertaken at UoA and School levels. Aston's peer review and output selection processes have been developed in consultation with School Associate Deans Research, Executive Academic Group and with University Senate to ensure the fair and transparent review and selection of outputs for REF 2021 and beyond. The review and subsequent selection of outputs is undertaken as follows:

- Academics self-select their outputs for consideration (by 30 April annually⁷). This requirement applies to all academic staff and independent researchers as defined by the REF 2021 Code of Practice. All outputs must be in PURE and must be Open Access compliant.
- The Associate Dean Research (or REF Leads in UoA 11 and 12) with responsibility for the UoA supplements that process by drawing in outputs of members of staff who are no longer in post, and others that they identify as eligible for the UoA.
- The peer-review process for outputs is set out in detail at Appendix 6. In summary:
 - The outputs are reviewed by two separate reviewers at the level of Department/Research Group (by 31 July annually). The names of reviewers for each UoA will be made available, but reviewers for individual outputs will remain anonymous. Each will allocate a score on the twelve-point scale used for REF outputs. Each should also provide a brief commentary on the originality, significance and rigour of the output.
 - A School-level panel will moderate output scores, review scores at the equivalent of 4* as well as at 2*/3* boundary, and resolve individual scores as required under the scores entered under the 12-point scale (by 30 September annually). This will provide assurance that the assessments are robust. The panel will pay particular attention to confirmation bias in the scores.
 - The moderated scores will be subject to an annual Equality Impact Assessment. This, together with the score profiles, will be considered both by School and University Research Committees during each autumn
 - In 2020, the deadline for the final selection of outputs will be 30 September, with review to be completed by 31 October and moderation to be completed by 15 November.
 - Provision has been made to submit outputs delayed by COVID-19, where the output was expected to be produced by 31 December 2020.

⁷ Outputs that are published between 1 May 2020 and 31 December 2020 will be reviewed on an incremental basis.

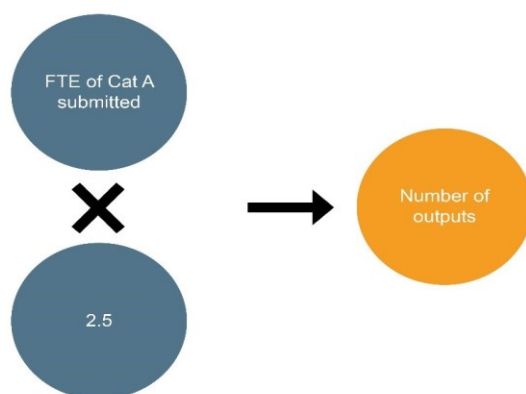
- The Associate Dean Research will construct an optimum outputs submission for their UoA(s) taking into account: the internal quality ratings; external quality ratings (where relevant); the REF requirements for minimum and maximum outputs submission per FTE; any special and individual circumstances (see section C); outputs of authors who have left. Aston University will not normally include the outputs of former members of staff who have been made compulsorily redundant. Any other relevant advice may also be taken into account.

Figure 4

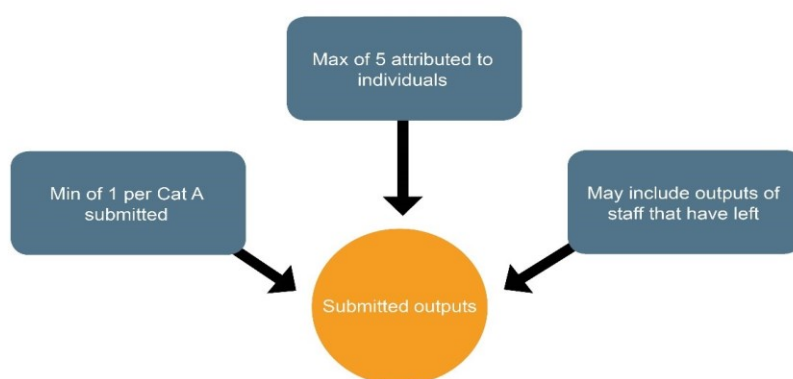
Determining the output pool in REF 2021

REF2021 Research Excellence Framework

How many outputs will the unit require?



What is the output pool?



2. Individual Circumstances⁸

Unlike previous RAE/REF exercises, the decoupling of staff and outputs in REF2021 gives institutions increased flexibility to build the portfolio of outputs for submission. It is not expected that all staff members will be returned with the same number of outputs attributed to them in the submission. Aston University will apply fair and transparent processes for the selection of outputs; this selection

⁸ Guidance on Submissions REF 2019/01 (paragraph 151- 201) and Annex L

process will take into account equality and diversity considerations, and any equality-related circumstances affecting staff's ability to research productively during the period.

REF 2021 recognises that there may be a number of individual circumstances which make it appropriate for individuals to return fewer than an average of 2.5 outputs. Aston University has put in place a process to allow individual employees to voluntarily declare any such relevant individual circumstances and the impact these circumstances have had on the volume of outputs they have been able to generate within the assessment period. Any such declarations will remain confidential. A reduction in the total number of outputs submitted in that UoA (up to 1.5) may be requested.

The following applicable circumstances are set out in paragraphs 160-163 of REF 2019/01 REF Guidance on Submissions, and in Guidance on Revisions to REF 2021 (2020/20). In isolation or together, they may have significantly constrained the ability of the submitted staff to produce outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period:

- Qualifying as an early career researcher
- Qualifying as a junior clinical academic who has not gained Certification of completion of training by 31 July 2020
- Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Circumstances equivalent to absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:
 - Disability.
 - Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions.
 - Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to family related leave.
 - Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
 - Gender reassignment.
 - Any other exceptional reasons (e.g. bereavement).
 - Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed in REF 2018/03, Table 1, or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

3. Removing the 'minimum of 1' requirement

In addition to D2 (above), structures have been put in place to enable eligible staff to declare voluntarily any individual circumstances that have had an exceptional impact on their ability to work such that they have not be able to produce an eligible output during the REF period. In these cases a request can be made for the 'minimum of 1' to be removed, and the total outputs pool be reduced further by 1. This will be in addition to any reduction made (up to 1.5) due to the reduction applicable due to individual circumstances (above).

For individuals who have not been able to produce a single eligible output in the REF period, removing the 'minimum of 1' requirement can be applied when between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020:

- An individual has had an overall period of absence of 46 months or more due to:
 - Qualifying as an ECR

- Qualifying as a junior clinical academic who has not gained Certification of completion of training by 31 July 2020
- Secondment or career break outside of the HE sector
- Qualifying period of family-related leave
- The following circumstances have led to 46 months or more absence from research:
 - Disability
 - Ill health, injury, mental health conditions
 - Constraints relating to family-related leave that falls outside statutory or additional leave
 - Other caring responsibilities
 - Gender reassignment
 - Other exceptional reasons (e.g. bereavement)
 - Other protected characteristics or activities related to employment legislation
- Two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave
- COVID-19 related circumstances (REF6a only)⁹

When an individual has a combination of circumstances that do not individually meet the threshold set out above, they may make a Declaration based on this combination of circumstances when they have had an overall period of absence of 46 months or more. In these cases, all individual circumstances must be set out in the individual's Declaration Form (Appendix 7).

Apart from requests for the removal of the minimum of one, Research England are only expecting to see requests to reduce the total number of outputs submitted in small units of assessment where there are a sizeable number of individuals with individual circumstances, such that they input on the total size of the output pool.

4. Individual Circumstance process

At Aston, the decision to declare any equality-related individual circumstances that have affected productivity rests with individual members of staff. All REF eligible staff will be invited to complete a Declaration of Individual Circumstances Form (Appendix 7) setting out any individual circumstances that they wish to declare. In line with REF guidelines, Aston University will not take into account any individual circumstances other than those that staff have declared voluntarily. There is no requirement to declare individual circumstances should individuals not wish to do so and there will be no detriment to staff if they wish to declare an individual circumstance.

The process for supporting staff with circumstances will be managed by the Individual Circumstances Group, and careful consideration will be given to the nature and timing of support offered. As part of the process to declare individual circumstances, individual members of staff will be asked to indicate if they would like to be contacted by an HR Business partner to discuss their circumstances, and their requirements in relation to these.

⁹ As well as effects due to applicable circumstances (such as ill health, caring responsibilities), this includes other personal circumstances related to COVID-19 (such as furloughed staff, health-related or clinical staff diverted to frontline services, staff resource diverted to other priority areas within the HEI in response to COVID-19); and/or external factors related to COVID-19 (for example, restricted access to research facilities).

The individual circumstances process will be operated consistently across the institution, and will be managed through the central RKE office. It will respect the funding bodies' requirement that undue pressure will not be placed on staff to declare circumstances. The University is also aware of the balance to be achieved between treating individuals with circumstances fairly without overly burdening other staff in the same UoA.

Should individuals wish to discuss their options for making a Declaration, they should contact RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.ac.uk in the first instance.

5. Individual Circumstances Group

Aston University has established an Individual Circumstances Group (ICG) to assess and implement the Individual Circumstances review process for complex circumstances. The ICG will be chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School and a membership including the HR Business Partner (Aston Business School), the Equality and Diversity Lead, Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact. The ICG will meet regularly between June 2019 and October 2020. The ICG will be responsible for:

- Receiving applications for reductions.
- Collecting and requesting evidence for further information regarding individual applications
- Ensuring a consistent and fair assessment of all complex circumstances
- Recording the rationale for individual decisions
- Communicating the outcome of individual cases to the applicant
- Ensuring that any agreed reductions are uploaded directly to the REF system (not onto PURE).
- Communicating the appeals process to the applicant.
- Treating all applications for reductions as strictly confidential, ensuring:
 - Any such applications are processed outside the University's core infrastructure, including, but not limited to upload to the Core HR system;
 - Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) ("GDPR") and the Data Protection Act 2018;
 - Staff making REF Personal Circumstances declarations will be required to provide consent by means of the privacy notice (Appendix 7)
- Ensuring that all records of ICG business are kept separately from individual HR records.

The process for the managing Individual Circumstances is as follows:

- All staff will be invited to complete a Declaration of Individual Circumstances Form, declaring any circumstance(s) they wish to be taken into account
- Declaration forms will be returned to RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.ac.uk, with all information stored securely online and in hard copy.
- Any adjustments in expectations will be made in consultation with the individual affected and will be in line with the tariffs set out in Annex L of REF 2019/01 Guidance on Submissions (Appendix 8).
- The Individual Circumstances Group (ICG) will consider all applications for output reduction. They will be provided with the following personal data for approval: UoA, nature of circumstance and recommended reduction.

- Where the circumstances are clear, the reduction will be determined based on the guidance presented in Annex L, and will be communicated to the Individual Circumstances Group.
- Where circumstances are more complex (and where the individual who has made the declaration has indicated that they can be contacted by an HR representative), an HR Business Partner will work with the individual to clarify all the relevant information to make an informed decision. Decisions will be made at a meeting of the ICG.
- The decisions of the Individual Circumstances Group will be communicated to the applicant within 10 days of the meeting of the ICG (copied to the Associate Deans Research, Heads of Department and Executive Dean). This information will only include the name of the individual and the output reduction to be applied; not the nature of the circumstance.
- Details of the appeals process (section C7) will also be included in the letter.
- Decisions regarding Individual Circumstances will not be uploaded to PURE to ensure that confidentiality is retained. The Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact will input information directly into the REF6 section of the REF submission system.

6. Absent Staff

The Individual Circumstances process also applies to employees who are on an authorised leave of absence (sickness, family leave, study leave, secondment, career break or special leave) at the point at which the Code of Practice is published, and the Individual Circumstances process is implemented. This group of employees will be contacted in writing at their home address (as maintained and updated by the individual via the staff portal) to inform them of the existence of the Code and the Individual Circumstances process. They will be provided with the Code of Practice, the application form and examples.

7. Individual Circumstances Appeals Process

REF eligible staff who have their application for individual circumstances turned down will have the right of appeal on the grounds that the procedure outlined in this Code of Practice was applied incorrectly; the decision was taken without full availability of information; there was non-compliance with any other item covered by this Code of Practice.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who will chair the Appeals Panel. Appeals should state the grounds of appeal, and be made no later than ten working days after written notification of the decision on reduction of outputs has been received.

All appeals will be considered within four weeks of the appeal being made. The outcome and rationale for the decision will be given in full in writing and in confidence to the applicant. The Provost will be responsible for excusing themselves from any cases where they have had prior involvement in the case, in which case an alternative member of University Executive will be appointed. The final date for appeals to be submitted will be 9 November 2020. The appeals process will be concluded by 27 November 2020.

Timeline for Declaration of Individual Circumstances						
	Invitation to declare individual	Declarations to be submitted by	Decisions communicated by	Request for an appeal hearing	Appeals heard by	Decisions communicated by

	circumstance by			submitted by		
First round	21 October 2019	4 November 2019	15 November 2019	25 November 2019	9 December 2019	11 December 2019
Second round	3 January 2020	13 January 2020	24 January 2020	3 February 2020	17 February 2020	20 February 2020
Research England Deadline	6 March 2020: Deadline to submit requests for reductions for staff circumstances					
Final round (new staff only)	30 September 2020	12 October 2020	26 October 2020	9 November 2020	23 November 2020	27 November 2020

8. Support for employees

The University provides access to a range of training and development, mentoring and coaching via the Organisational Development team within the HR Department and bespoke training by external providers where relevant. Part time and fixed term staff are encouraged to access these opportunities on the same basis as full time and permanent staff. All members of Aston University's staff benefit from performance review through 'My Development Conversation', which was introduced in 2018. Work priorities are set through this process, regular reviews are held and development opportunities are agreed.

In the event of individual circumstances impacting on an employee's ability to carry out their responsibilities, the University has an Employee Assistance Programme which provides free of charge confidential access to support and advice on having a family, moving house, retirement, work life balance, returning to work after absence, illness etc. The University has a Policy on applying for Flexible Working and Job Share to assist those with external commitments to adjust their work/life balance where needed. Where individuals are affected by ill health, the University refers employees to occupational health for advice on adjustments to ease a return to work or to provide options for supporting a member of staff with a disability on an ongoing basis. There is support for mental health issues via counselling provision through the Employee Assistance programme and through a network of trained Mental Health First Aiders throughout the University.

All those who submit a Declaration of Individual Circumstances Form will be asked to indicate if they would like to be contacted by an HR Business partner to discuss their circumstances, and their requirements in relation to these.

8.1. Part time Employees

All part time REF Eligible Staff will have their output requirements reduced pro-rata¹⁰. Through the Consultation on the Code of Practice, part time employees will be made aware of the reduction in outputs available to them by virtue of their contractual status. Aston University is mindful of its

¹⁰ Guidance on Submissions, REF 2019/1, paragraph 161

responsibility not to treat part-time employees any less favourably than comparable employees on open contracts, or full-time contracts.

8.2. Fixed-term Employees

As part of its commitment to equal opportunities, Aston University has developed policies to support fixed term staff. Information on opportunities for career development and support is available to all research staff. The short course programme run through HR is open to all staff regardless of contract type. The University's Professional Development Advisor provides tailored support to researchers to ensure that the University adheres to the principles of the Concordat for Research Staff. Outputs authored by fixed-term employees will be reviewed, and considered for selection, on the same basis as permanent members of staff. Outputs first made publicly available while a former category A member of staff was employed at Aston will be considered for inclusion.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

The University will produce data at both Unit of Assessment and University-wide level on all of the protected characteristics. This data will be used to compare the whole of the eligible population (all staff on T&R contracts and those determined as independent researchers) with those outputs selected for inclusion.

The Equality Impact Assessment Group will analyse the data produced and identify any differences in the equality characteristics of those staff whose outputs are selected against those of the whole pool. This exercise will be applied to mock REF exercises so that the results can be used to revise or develop the process to review and select outputs for the final REF return. Where a potential disadvantage is identified for one or more protected characteristics, further input will be sought from relevant equality groups on the possible actions that could be implemented to remove that disadvantage. This may lead to recommendations for revisions to policy and practice elsewhere in the University in addition to adjustments to the operation of the REF process itself. The Chair of the EIA Group will take forward any recommendations to the Executive Academic Group in these circumstances.

Aston REF 2021 Code of Practice: Appendices

Appendix 1: Timetable REF 2021

Date	Action
September 2017	Publication of 'Initial decisions on the Research Excellence Framework' by the funding bodies, following consultation on implementation of the Stern review recommendations (REF 2017/01)
October 2017	Publication of 'Roles and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 2017/03)
November 2017	Publication of 'Decisions on staff and outputs' (2017/04)
March 2018	Panel membership for criteria phase announced
End of July 2018	Publication of draft 'Guidance on submissions' and 'Panel criteria' for consultation
15 October 2018	Close of consultation on draft 'Guidance on submissions' and 'Panel criteria'
January 2019	Publication of final 'Guidance on submissions', 'Panel criteria', and 'Guidance on codes of practice'; appointment of additional EDAP members
Spring/summer 2019	Institutions intending to make submissions to the REF submit their codes of practice; invitation to request multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units

	(staggered deadlines in May, September and December 2019); beta versions of the submission system will be available in both test and live environments for institutions to use
Autumn 2019	Pilot of the REF submission system; survey of submissions intentions opens; proposed date for inviting reduction requests for staff circumstances
December 2019	Survey of submissions intentions complete; final deadline for requests for multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units; publication of approved codes of practice
Early 2020	Formal release of the submission systems and accompanying technical guidance; invitation to HEIs to make submissions; invitation to nominate panel members and assessors for the assessment phase; deadline for staff circumstances requests
Mid 2020	Appointment of additional members and assessors to panels
31 July 2020	Census date for staff; end of assessment period (for research impacts, the research environment, and data about research income and research doctoral degrees awarded)
w/c 14 September 2020	Outcomes of REF6a/b requests submitted in March 2020 provided to institutions
9 October 2020	Re-submit revised Code of Practice following publication of REF 2020/02 'Guidance on revisions to REF 2021

Autumn 2020	Appointment of additional members and assessors to panels
2 November 2020	Deadline for submission of requests for an output reduction in a unit affected by major unforeseen events
By 6 November	Funding bodies' review of contingency arrangements
31 December 2020	End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies); end of impact assessment period
31 March 2021	Closing date for submissions
April 2021	Anticipated window for delivering physical outputs to the REF team
1 June 2021	Deadline for providing redacted versions of REF3 and REF5A/B templates and corroborating evidence held for impact case studies
30 July 2021	Deadline for submission of staff circumstances report, equalities impact assessment, and final codes of practice.
May 2021-March 2022	Panels assess submissions

April 2022	Publication of outcomes
Summer 2022	Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles

Appendix 2: The Legislative Context

Equality Act 2010

The Act makes it unlawful to directly or indirectly discriminate on the grounds of a person's:

Age;
Disability;
Gender;
Gender re-assignment;
Marriage/Civil partnership;
Pregnancy and maternity;
Race (meaning colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin);
Religious belief;
Sexual orientation.

The University is also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. All those in REF decision making roles are subject to the Equality Duty and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are referred to as the 'three aims' or 'three arms' of the General Equality Duty. The Act sets out that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

The new Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status. This means that the first arm of the Duty applies to this characteristic, but that the other arms (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.

Fixed-Term Employees (prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2002

These regulations make it unlawful to treat a fixed-term employee less favourably than a permanent employee on the grounds that they are a fixed-term employee unless it can be

objectively justified. The regulations limit the successive use of fixed-term contracts to four years unless the further use can be objectively justified. Only service accumulated from 10 July 2002 will count towards the four year limit.

Part-Time Workers (prevention of less favourable treatment) Regulations 2000 (amended 2002)

These regulations make it unlawful to treat a part-time employee less favourably than a full-time employee on the grounds that they are a part-time employee unless it can be objectively justified. The regulations state that part-time employees must receive (pro-rata where appropriate) the same treatment as comparable to a full-time employee regarding; rates of pay, access to pension schemes and pension scheme benefits, access to training and development, holiday pay, entitlement to career break schemes, contractual sick pay, contractual maternity and paternity pay and treatment in the selection criteria for promotion and transfer and for redundancy.

Additional Resources

The Equality Briefing for REF Panels is available at: https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1017/equality-briefing-for-panels-ref-2018_05.pdf

Appendix 3: Aston University Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

<http://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies/equality/ed-policies/index>

1. Commitment to Equality and Diversity

1.1 The Equality Act (2010) supersedes all previous acts on equality, and commits everyone to standards concerning people, the workplace, and society. Within the Act, there are nine protected characteristics which are upheld, and the grounds on which equality is protected by law.

1.2 The nine protected characteristics are

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1.3 The University is committed to ensuring that the Equality Act is upheld and adhered to across all levels of the university, and in relation to all individuals whom have any engagements with the University, be it staff, students, visitors or others.

1.4 Aston University undertakes to promote equality and diversity within the University Community in all aspects of its work. Further, it aims to ensure through its admissions policies for students and its recruitment and selection processes for staff that it encourages applications from all groups represented in the wider community at a local, national and international level. The University will endeavour not to discriminate unfairly or illegally, directly or indirectly, against students or potential students, staff or potential staff, or visitors. This commitment applies to all functions of the University and to all stages of an individual's time at Aston.

What is Discrimination?

1.5 The law defines four behaviours which constitute unlawful discrimination:

Direct Discrimination - treating someone less favourably on the basis of a protected characteristic.

Indirect Discrimination - the application of a provision, criterion or practice which is applied equally to persons of all groups but which puts a person of a particular group at a disadvantage or which cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim and that there is no less discriminatory alternative.

Associative Discrimination - when an individual is treated less favourably because they are associated with an individual of a particular age group.

Perceptive Discrimination - when an individual is treated less favourably because they are perceived, correctly or incorrectly, to belong to a particular age group.

Victimisation - treating someone less favourably or retaliating against someone because they have made a complaint or allegation of discrimination.

Harassment - defined as unwanted conduct (including unwanted conduct of a sexual nature) related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment.

What else does the Law say?

1.6 There is no hierarchy of protected characteristics.

1.7 No individual can refuse to deliver a service to another of a particular characteristic on the basis of their privately held beliefs. There are some exceptions to this for faith schools or colleges but not to individuals.

1.8 It is irrelevant for the purposes of determining whether unlawful discrimination has taken place that the discriminator shares the victim's protected characteristic.

1.9 As a public sector body, there are both general and specific duties on the University to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Consider how different people will be affected by proposed activities
- Deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective, that are accessible to all and meet different people's needs
- Foster good relations between different groups
- Publish data to show compliance with the duty annually ☑ Set equality objectives at least every 4 years.

2 Scope

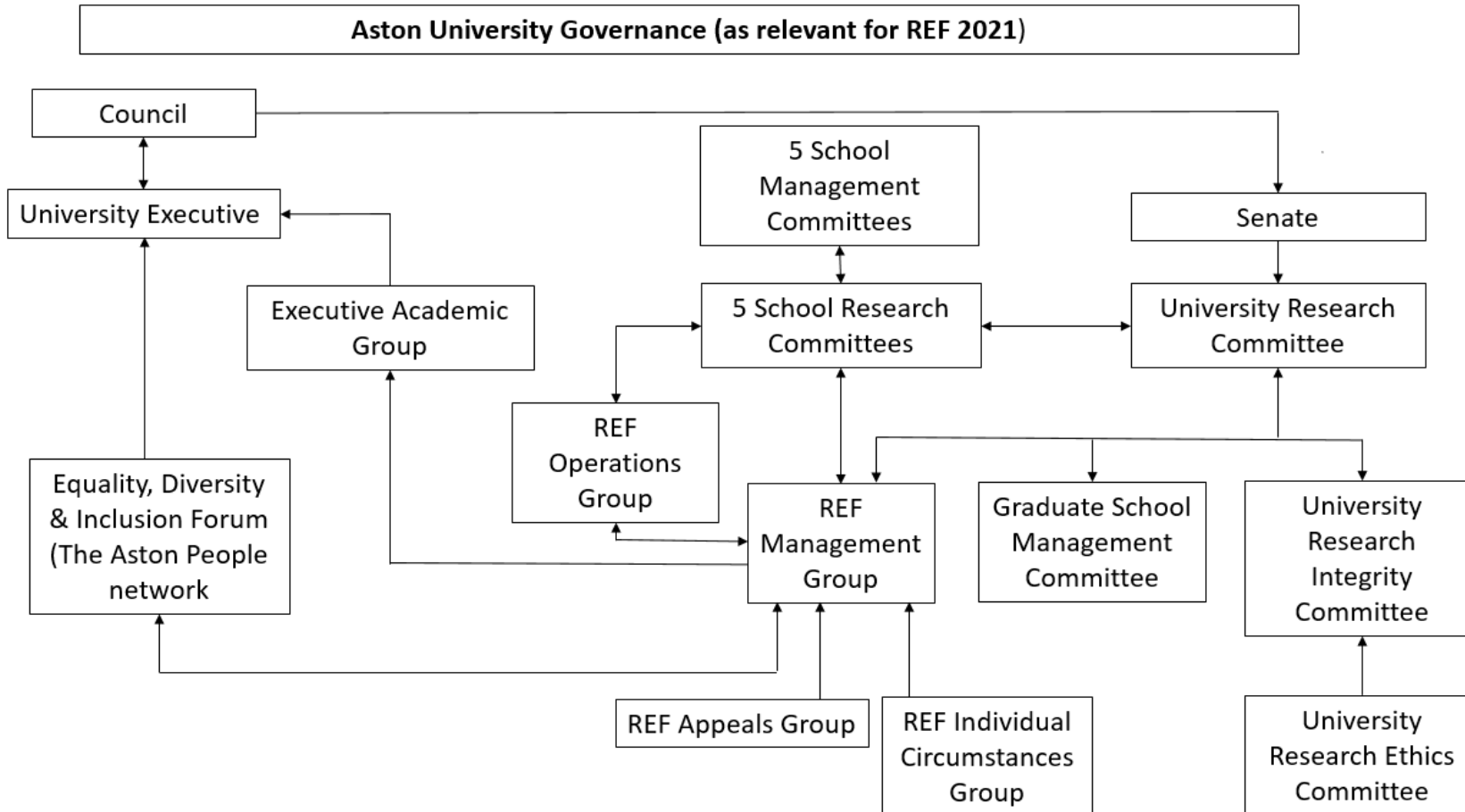
2.1 In undertaking this commitment the University acknowledges responsibilities under the following legislation:

- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, 1974
- The Education (No. 2) Act, 1986
- The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- The Human Rights Act, 2000
- The Equality Act, 2010
- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015

2.2 While senior members of the University Community have particular responsibilities for the implementation of legislation and policy, it is the responsibility of each member of the University Community to ensure that they adhere to both relevant legislation and University Policy in their treatment of other members or affiliates of, or visitors; to the University.

2.3 The University is committed to ensuring that this policy is fully effective and staff and students who fail to act in accordance with it may be subject to disciplinary action.

Appendix 4



Appendix 5: Terms of Reference and Membership of Committees and Groups.

Aston University Senate	
Membership	The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive; The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors; The Executive Deans; Representatives of the Professors from each School; Representatives of the non-professorial teaching and research staff from each School; One member for each seventy-five members of the Academic Assembly; Such other members of the University as the Senate may from time to time determine, provided that their numbers shall not exceed one-eighth of the other membership of the Senate, and provided also that there shall be represented the persons charged with the welfare of students; The Executive Officers; Five students (the President, the Vice-President Education and the Vice-President Welfare of the Students' Union, and one postgraduate student and one undergraduate student elected by the students of the University); One representative of the professional support staff.
Selection Process	Members are appointed to the University Senate ex officio, or are elected by the body that they represent. Executive Officers as may be approved by Council on the recommendation of the Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive from time to time. All role holders are appointed through open advertisement, in line with the University's Recruitment policies and in compliance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.
Responsibilities in direct relation to REF 2021	The Senate shall keep under regular review, in consultation with the Schools, all academic aspects of the University Strategy relating to learning and teaching, research, engagement with the community, industry and commerce, and the experience and well-being of its staff and students, and shall make such recommendations to the Council, as the Senate may from time to time consider necessary, for the Strategy's implementation.

Aston University School Research Committees	
Membership	Ex Officio members: Associate Dean Research; Executive Dean; Head of Departments; Research Directors; Director of Research Degree Programmes; Impact Champion(s); Associate Dean External Relations; Chair of Research Ethics Committee; Early Career Researcher representative; Student Representative; Co-opted members invited for specific agenda items: Strategic Funding Manager; Head of Research Finance; Assistant Registrar (Graduate School); co-opted members of academic staff.
Selection Process	Members are appointed to the School Research Committees ex officio, or are co-opted because of their operational roles, or their expertise. All role holders are appointed through open advertisement, in line with the University's Recruitment policies and in compliance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.
Responsibilities in direct relation to REF 2021	Overseeing and directing the School's preparations for the Research Excellence Framework. Ensuring that all aspects of the University's REF preparation respect the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity.

Aston University Research Committee	
Membership	<p>Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research (Chair); Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact (Secretary); Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Graduate School; Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Integrity; Associate Dean for Research (Aston Business School); Associate Dean for Research (Aston Medical School); Associate Dean for Research (Engineering and Applied Sciences); Associate Dean for Research (Life and Health Sciences); Associate Dean for Research (Languages and Social Sciences); Chair of the University Ethics Committee; Director of Information Resources (Library Services); Director of Industrial Research Partnerships; Director of Innovation; Student representative (nominated via Dean of Graduate School and Aston postgraduate Research Student Society); Representative of the ECR Forum</p> <p>Other members may be co-opted from time to time. In case a School Associate Dean Research is unable to attend, s/he may designate the respective Impact Champion, Associate Dean for Enterprise or the School Director of PGR programmes to deputise</p>
Selection Process	<p>Members are appointed to the University Research Committees ex officio, or are co-opted because of their operational roles, or their expertise. All role holders are appointed through open advertisement, in line with the University's Recruitment policies and in compliance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.</p>
Responsibilities in direct relation to REF 2021	<p>Overseeing and directing the University's preparations for the Research Excellence Framework.</p> <p>Ensuring that all aspects of the University's REF preparation respect the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity.</p>

Aston University REF Management Group	
Membership	<p>PVC Research (Chair); Associate Dean Research (Aston Business School; Aston Medical School; Engineering and Applied Sciences; Life and Health Sciences, Languages and Social Sciences); Associate Dean Enterprise (Aston Business School; Engineering and Applied Sciences; Life and Health Sciences, Languages and Social Sciences); REF Lead Engineering; REF Lead Computer Science; Dean of the Graduate School; Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact; Research Data Manager; REF Impact Manager; Associate Director of HR; Head of Research Finance; Director of Information Resources and Research Services</p>
Selection Process	<p>Members are appointed to the REF Management Group ex officio. All role holders are appointed through open advertisement, in line with the University's Recruitment policies and in compliance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.</p>
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	<p>Providing strategic direction for the preparation of the University's REF return;</p> <p>Assisting in the development of robust, workable and efficient policies and systems for REF;</p> <p>Ownership of the REF Project Plan;</p> <p>Preparation of the University's REF Code of Practice;</p>

	<p>Ensuring that all aspects of the University’s REF preparation respect the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity; Setting institutional level processes for all aspects of the University’s REF preparation; Commissioning bi-annual Equality Impact Assessments; Providing a University-level forum to share best practice, specialist knowledge and expertise; Receiving regular reports from School Research Committees and the REF Operations Group; Reporting to the University’s Research Committee, Senate, Executive Academic Group and University Executive.</p>
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Aston University REF Operations Group	
Membership	<p>Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact (Chair); REF Impact Manager; Research Data Manager; Senior Research Manager (Aston Business School); Senior Research Administrator (Life and Health Sciences); Research and Department Support Manager (Languages and Social Sciences); Research Project Administrator (Engineering and Applied Sciences); Research Administration Officer (Engineering and Applied Sciences); Associate Director HR; Director of Information Resources and Research Services; Head of Research Finance; Research Development Advisor, RKE.</p>
Selection Process	<p>Members are appointed to the REF Operations Group ex officio. All role holders are appointed through open advertisement, in line with the University’s Recruitment policies and in compliance with the University’s Equality and Diversity Policy.</p>
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	<p>Focusing on the operational detail that underpins the outputs, impact and environment elements of the REF Return; Providing a University-level forum to share best practice, specialist knowledge and expertise; Providing feedback to the REF Management Group and to the School Research Committees regarding the REF Project plan, and in particular to flag risks regarding the delivery of agreed actions and their dependencies Ensuring that all aspects of the University’s REF preparation respect the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity.</p>

Aston University REF Individual Circumstances Group	
Membership	Dean of the Graduate School (Chair), HR Business Partner; Equality and Diversity Lead, Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact.
Selection Process	Members have been appointed because of their expertise or their operational roles.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	<p>Receiving applications for reductions;</p> <p>Collecting and requesting evidence for further information regarding individual applications;</p> <p>Ensuring a consistent and fair assessment of all complex circumstances;</p> <p>Recording the rationale for individual decisions;</p> <p>Communicating the outcome of individual cases to the applicant;</p> <p>Ensuring that any agreed reductions are uploaded directly to the REF system (not onto PURE);</p> <p>Communicating the appeals process to the applicant;</p> <p>Treating all applications for reductions as strictly confidential, ensuring:</p> <p>any such applications are processed outside the University's core infrastructure, including but not limited to upload to the Core HR system;</p> <p>compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) ("GDPR") and the Data Protection Act 2018; Staff making REF Personal Circumstances submissions will be required to provide consent by means of the privacy notice (Appendix 8).</p> <p>Ensuring that all records of ICG business are kept separately from individual HR records.</p>

Aston University REF Appeals Group	
Membership	Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Director of Student and Academic Services, Executive Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact
Selection Process	Members have been appointed because of their expertise or their operational roles. Members are independent of the REF process.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2021	<p>To consider appeals against decisions in respect of determining research independence and individual circumstances.</p> <p>To communicate decisions to the applicant and to the Associate Dean Research/REF Lead with responsibility for the relevant Unit of Assessment.</p>

Appendix 6: Peer-review processes for outputs for REF 2021 and beyond.

As part of our Code of Practice for REF 2021, we are required to set out Aston’s standard principles and processes for the review and selection of outputs for submission. These principles and processes are applicable beyond the REF framework and will remain in place beyond REF 2021, to be embedded as part of standard practice within the institution.

1. The generic REF criteria for assessing outputs are originality, significance and rigour¹¹:
 - 1.1. **Originality** will be understood as the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. Research outputs that demonstrate originality may do one or more of the following: produce and interpret new empirical findings or new material; engage with new and/or complex problems; develop innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques; show imaginative and creative scope; provide new arguments and/or new forms of expression, formal innovations, interpretations and/or insights; collect and engage with novel types of data; and/or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice, and new forms of expression.
 - 1.2. **Significance** will be understood as the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.
 - 1.3. **Rigour** will be understood as the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies.

The assessment criteria and the definitions of the four starred quality levels¹² are 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 as 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 the REF assessment

¹¹ Page 42 REF 2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods (January 2019)

¹² Page 84 REF 2021 REF Guidance on Submissions (January 2019)

At Aston we have added a further level of granularity to our review process. We are working to a 12-point scale in order to ensure that we have the best possible understanding of the rank order of the quality of papers for selection for the REF.

The REF Main Panels¹³ have also set out descriptive accounts of the starred level definitions for outputs. These descriptions do not replace the generic definitions above, they inform subject communities about how the panels will apply the definitions in making their judgements (see Appendix A). At Aston we will use these descriptors as part of our ongoing process to review the quality of outputs.

2. Peer-review of outputs is conducted on an annual cycle to cover new outputs by existing staff since the last review as well as eligible outputs by new staff who have joined since the last review. The review process involves a four-stage process:
 - 2.1. Academics self-select their outputs for consideration (by 30 April annually). This requirement applies to all academic staff and independent researchers as defined by the REF 2021 Code of Practice. All outputs must be in PURE and must be Open Access compliant.
 - 2.2. The outputs are reviewed by at least two separate reviewers at the level of Department / Research Group (by 31 July annually). Each should allocate a score on the twelve-point scale used for REF outputs (See Appendix B). Each should also provide a brief commentary on how the output fared against the REF criteria of originality, significance and rigour
 - 2.3. A School-level panel will moderate output scores, review scores at the equivalent of 4* as well as at 2*/3* boundary, and resolve individual scores as required under the scores entered under the 12-point scale (by 30 September annually). This will provide assurance that the assessments are robust. The panel will pay particular attention to confirmation bias in the scores
 - 2.4. The moderated scores will be subject to an annual Equality Impact Assessment. This, together with the score profiles, will be considered both by School and University Research Committees during each autumn.
3. The following principles should be observed:
 - 3.1. For any given output, two reviewers should be identified by Research Directors, paying due attention to considerations of diversity
 - 3.2. Reviewing should be single-blind, i.e. the reviewers are anonymous but the output itself is not anonymised
 - 3.3. The peer review assessment must consider the originality, significance and rigour of the output. In disciplines where it is appropriate to do so, research indicators or metrics may be used to inform that assessment further, while also adhering to the principles set out in the Metric Tide report¹⁴ and the principles of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#)¹⁵, to which the University is a signatory.
 - 3.4. The School level panel will consist of at least three senior academics at Professorial level with significant expertise of peer-review. It too must be constituted with due regard to the considerations of diversity and the breadth of the discipline.

¹³ Main Panel A: Medicine, Health and Life Sciences; Main Panel B: Physical Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics; Main Panel C: Social Sciences; Main Panel D: Arts and Humanities.

¹⁴ https://responsiblemetrics.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2015_metrictide.pdf

¹⁵ <https://sfdora.org/read/>

- 3.5. The author of the output will have the opportunity for feedback from the Research Director, to include the score, as well as reviewers' comments on the originality, significance and rigour of the output
- 3.6. There is no appeal under academic judgement; appeals on process should be lodged with the Associate Dean (Research) by 31 October annually
4. All peer-reviewers will undertake the Aston University Equality and Diversity training, awareness training for data users and will in addition receive calibration training. Only academics who have undertaken the training may conduct peer review. The training should be refreshed triennially (unless otherwise advised).
5. The process outlined here will be used to select the outputs for REF 2021 as specified in the University's Code of Practice. It will also be applied to the outputs of colleagues who have left Aston during the REF period, which are also eligible for submission to REF 2021.
6. The legal basis for processing the personal data of REF eligible staff in respect of the selection and peer review of outputs for REF 2021 and beyond is necessary on the grounds of the University's legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)).

Professor Simon Green
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)
3 April 2019

Appendix 6a: REF Main Panel Supplementary Criteria (level definitions)¹⁶

Main Panel A supplementary criteria – level definitions

1. In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of the quality of the output in terms of its originality, significance and rigour, and will apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels.
2. The sub-panels will look for evidence of some of the following types of characteristics of quality, as appropriate to each of the starred quality levels:
 - scientific rigour and excellence, with regard to design, method, execution and analysis
 - significant addition to knowledge and to the conceptual framework of the field
 - actual significance of the research
 - the scale, challenge and logistical difficulty posed by the research
 - the logical coherence of argument
 - contribution to theory-building
 - significance of work to advance knowledge, skills, understanding and scholarship in theory, practice, education, management and/or policy
 - applicability and significance to the relevant service users and research users
 - potential applicability for policy in, for example, health, healthcare, public health, food security, animal health or welfare.
3. Unless there is sufficient evidence of at least one of the above, or the definition of research used for the REF is not met, research outputs will be graded as ‘unclassified’.
4. The sub-panels welcome research practice that supports reproducible science and the application of best practice. Examples include registered reports, pre-registration, publication of data sets, experimental materials, analytic code, and use of reporting checklists for publication purposes and those relating to the use of animals in research. These contribute to the evaluation of rigour for submitted outputs. Replication studies may be submitted as outputs and will be evaluated on the extent to which they contribute significant new knowledge, improved methods, or advance theory or practice¹⁷.

¹⁶ Pages 43-50 REF 2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods (January 2019)

¹⁷ Institutions may find it useful to refer to international guidelines such as the following:

ARRIVE	https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines
CONSORT	http://www.consort-statement.org/
PRISMA	http://www.prisma-statement.org/

5. The sub-panels will use citation information, where appropriate and available, as part of the indication of academic significance to inform their assessment of output quality. Further details on the use of citation data are provided in paragraphs **Error! Reference source not found.** to **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Main Panel B supplementary criteria – level definitions

6. In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of originality, significance and rigour and apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels as follows:

- a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:
- agenda-setting
 - research that is leading or at the forefront of the research area
 - great novelty in developing new thinking, new techniques or novel results
 - major influence on a research theme or field
 - developing new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research
 - major changes in policy or practice
 - major influence on processes, production and management
 - major influence on user engagement.
- b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:
- makes important contributions to the field at an international standard
 - contributes important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence, but are not necessarily leading to fundamental new concepts
 - significant changes to policies or practices

- significant influence on processes, production and management
 - significant influence on user engagement.
- c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:
- provides useful knowledge and influences the field
 - involves incremental advances, which might include new knowledge which conforms with existing ideas and paradigms, or model calculations using established techniques or approaches
 - influence on policy or practice
 - influence on processes, production and management
 - influence on user engagement.
- d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:
- useful but unlikely to have more than a minor influence in the field
 - minor influence on policy or practice
 - minor influence on processes, production and management
 - minor influence on user engagement.
- e. Research will be graded as '**unclassified**' if it falls below the quality levels described above or does not meet the definition of research used for the REF.

Main Panel C supplementary criteria – level definitions

7. In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of originality, significance and rigour, and apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels as follows:
- a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- outstandingly novel in developing concepts, paradigms, techniques or outcomes

- a primary or essential point of reference
 - a formative influence on the intellectual agenda
 - application of exceptionally rigorous research design and techniques of investigation and analysis
 - generation of an exceptionally significant data set or research resource.
- b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- novel in developing concepts, paradigms, techniques or outcomes
 - an important point of reference
 - contributing very important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence on the intellectual agenda
 - application of robust and appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis
 - generation of a substantial data set or research resource.
- c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- providing important knowledge and the application of such knowledge
 - contributing to incremental and cumulative advances in knowledge
 - thorough and professional application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.
- d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- providing useful knowledge, but unlikely to have more than a minor influence
 - an identifiable contribution to understanding, but largely framed by existing paradigms or traditions of enquiry
 - competent application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.

- e. Research will be graded as '**unclassified**' if it falls below the quality levels described above or does not meet the definition of research used for the REF.

Main Panel D supplementary criteria – level definitions

Interpretation of generic level definitions

8. The terms 'world-leading', 'international' and 'national' will be taken as quality benchmarks within the generic definitions of the quality levels. They will relate to the actual, likely or deserved influence of the work, whether in the UK, a particular country or region outside the UK, or on international audiences more broadly. There will be no assumption of any necessary international exposure in terms of publication or reception, or any necessary research content in terms of topic or approach. Nor will there be an assumption that work published in a language other than English or Welsh is necessarily of a quality that is or is not internationally benchmarked.
9. In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of originality, significance and rigour and apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels as follows:
- a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:
- a primary or essential point of reference
 - of profound influence
 - instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
 - a major expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
 - outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative.
- b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:
- an important point of reference
 - of considerable influence

- a catalyst for, or important contribution to, new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
 - a significant expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
 - significantly novel or innovative or creative.
- c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:
- a recognised point of reference
 - of some influence
 - an incremental and cumulative advance on thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
 - a useful contribution to the range or depth of research and its application.
- d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of the following characteristics within its area/field:
- an identifiable contribution to understanding without advancing existing paradigms of enquiry or practice
 - of minor influence.
- e. A research output will be graded '**unclassified**' if it is either:
- below the quality threshold for one star; **or**
 - does not meet the definition of research used for the REF. (See 'Guidance on submissions', Annex C).

Appendix 6b: 12 Point Scale for Outputs Review

Quality level	Score
4+	12
4	11
4-	10
3+	9
3	8
3-	7
2+	6
2	5
2-	4
1+	3
1	2
1-	1
U	0

Assessor 1	4+	12	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	4*	4*	4*	4*	4*
	4	11	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	4*	4*	4*	4*
	4-	10	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	3*	D	D	4*	4*	4*
	3+	9	D	D	D	D	D	3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	D	4*	4*
	3	8	D	D	D	D	D	D	3*	3*	3*	3*	D	D	4*
	3-	7	D	D	D	D	2*	D	D	3*	3*	3*	3*	D	D
	2+	6	D	D	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	D	3*	3*	D	D	D
	2	5	D	D	D	2*	2*	2*	2*	D	D	3*	D	D	D
	2-	4	D	1*	D	D	2*	2*	2*	2*	D	D	D	D	D
	1+	3	D	1*	1*	1*	D	2*	2*	D	D	D	D	D	D
	1	2	D	1*	1*	1*	D	D	2*	D	D	D	D	D	D
	1-	1	D	1*	1*	1*	1*	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
	U	0	U	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
		U	1-	1	1+	2-	2	2+	3-	3	3+	4-	4	4+	
		Assessor 2													

Appendix 7: Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form and Privacy Notice

This document is being 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 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 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 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
- COVID-19 related circumstances (REF6a only)¹⁸

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.

¹⁸ As well as effects due to applicable circumstances (such as ill health, caring responsibilities), this includes other personal circumstances related to COVID-19 (such as furloughed staff, health-related or clinical staff diverted to frontline services, staff resource diverted to other priority areas within the HEI in response to COVID-19); and/or external factors related to COVID-19 (for example, restricted access to research facilities).

Further information can be found at 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. You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the associated information. Submitted data will be held separately from individual's HR folders. All Staff who submit an Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form will be offered a consultation with their HR Business Partner, so that they have an opportunity to discuss the issues that they have declared. Individuals are not obliged to meet or discuss the matters disclosed with their HR Business Partner.

Ensuring Confidentiality

Staff will submit their Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form a specific email address (RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.ac.uk). Forms will then be saved in a password protected Box folder, with each individual form also being encrypted. Hard copies will be kept in a locked cupboard within the Research and Knowledge Exchange Department.

Submitted forms will only be seen by the four members of the REF Individual Circumstances Group (ICG). The ICG will review individual disclosures and will make recommendations to the relevant School Management Group regarding the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty. The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the review by email from RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.ac.uk. The outcome of each case will be reported to the School Management Group, with no further detail provided.

The Individual Circumstances Group will ensure that there is a consistent and fair assessment of all circumstances and will record the decisions appropriately. Members of the ICG will observe rules of confidentiality and decisions will be recorded separately from the applicant's HR file. 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. Detail about reductions and about what information will be submitted, is provided at paragraphs 151-201 of the '[Guidance on submissions](#)' document.

Within the Research England REF team, 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. All submitted data that is held at Aston University (email, box and hard copy) will also be destroyed on completion of the assessment phase.

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 provide the updated information to RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.ac.uk.

Aston University: Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form

Please submit this form using the following email address: RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.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?

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).

Circumstance	Time period affected
<p>Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).</p> <p><i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter a date.</p>
<p>Junior clinical academic who has not gained Certificate of completion of Training by 31 July 2020.</p>	<p>Tick here <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.</p> <p><i>Dates and durations in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter dates and durations.</p>
<p>Family-related leave;</p> <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. 	<p>Click here to enter dates and durations.</p>

<p><i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i></p>	
<p>Disability (including chronic conditions)</p> <p><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></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Mental health condition</p> <p><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></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Ill health or injury</p> <p><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></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance</p> <p><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></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Caring responsibilities</p> <p><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></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</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>	
<p>COVID-19 (Applicable only where requests are being made for the removal of the minimum of one requirement)</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> <p><i>The overall impact of the COVID-19 effects should be considered in combination with other applicable circumstances affecting the staff member's ability to research productively throughout the period.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text</p>
<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>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

Data Collection, Privacy Notice and Consent

Aston University (“the University”) processes personal data as a “Data Controller” as defined in the Data Protection Act 2018 (“the DPA”) and the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) (“the GDPR”). This notice relates to information about you which will be collected by the University and processed as described below. This notice may be updated at any time. The most up to date version can be found at www.aston.ac.uk/dataprotection. Your personal data will be processed at all times in compliance with the DPA and the GDPR.

What we collect

Any information submitted to RKE_REF_Circumstances@aston.ac.uk will be used solely for the purposes of the REF Individual Staff Circumstances process. All information will be held securely and separately to other records until the completion of the REF2021 process, after which time all applications will be destroyed. Specifically, declarations of Individual Staff Circumstances will not be stored with your main HR file. We acknowledge that these submissions will be personal in nature and may contain information which is classed as “Sensitive Personal Data” under the DPA, and “Special Categories of Data” under the GDPR.

The Aston University Individual Circumstances Group (ICG) has a duty:

- to keep such information secure;
- to allow access to it only on a ‘need to know’ basis; and
- to require explicit consent for sensitive personal data to be released to another party.

Your rights

Under the DPA and the GDPR you have certain rights over how your data is processed, including the right to know what information is processed about you and how it is processed. You have the right of access to your personal information. You also have additional rights i.e. the right to rectify inaccurate information; restrict processing; and object to processing. These rights are limited in certain circumstances by the GDPR, and may be limited further by future UK legislation where data is only processed for research or statistical purposes.

How we process your data

The University will process your personal data for the following purposes:

Purpose 1 – REF2021 Individual Staff Circumstances process

You consent to the information submitted on the Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form (Appendix 7) (“the Form”) being used by the University to assess the appropriate number of outputs to be allocated to you in the REF2021 return. The information submitted in the Form will only be used for the purposes of the REF2021 submission.

Members of the ICG will be made aware of these conditions, and will be required to maintain strict confidentiality. The Form will only be shared beyond the ICG if you appeal their decision, in which case the Form will be shared solely with the appeal panel.

We will process Special Categories of Data (e.g. information relating to health or disability) for this purpose on the basis of your consent (GDPR Article 9(2)(a)). Please confirm your consent by completing the declaration below.

If you do not provide your consent, the University will be unable to consider your completed Form as this would be unlawful.

Please indicate your consent by completing the Consent to Personal Data Processing section at the end of this form.

Purpose 2 – Entry of REF2021 Personal Circumstances information onto the REF submission system

Research England requires that a summary of any grounds for reduction is included in the REF2021 return. A short summary of the grounds for the reduction will therefore be entered direct onto the REF submission system.

We will process your personal data for Purpose 2 on the grounds of the University’s legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)).

Purpose 3 – Entry of reductions onto PURE

Information on the reduction in the number of outputs will be recorded on PURE. REF Coordinators will use the information on PURE to see whether the number of required outputs has been reduced and the number of outputs required. The grounds for reduction will not be recorded on PURE.

We will process your personal data for Purpose 3 on the grounds of the University's legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)).

Purpose 4 – Sharing of decision summaries with the Research England Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP)

The decision summaries included in the REF2021 return will be made available to the Research England Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP). All REF panel members, chairs and secretaries are required to be bound by confidentiality requirements as a condition of their appointment. All information collected, stored and processed by the Research England REF Team will be handled in accordance with the GDPR and the DPA.

We will process your personal data for Purpose 4 on the grounds of the University's legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)).

Consent to personal data processing

I consent to the personal data I have provided through the REF2021 Personal Circumstances process being used for the purpose set out above.

Yes/No

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below

Yes/No

Name: Print name here

Signed: Sign or initial here

Date: Insert date here

Appendix 8

REF 2019/01 Guidance on Submissions

Annex L: Reductions for staff circumstances

1. Given the reduced output requirement for 2021, the tariffs for the defined reductions differ from those set in REF 2014. This is to ensure that a broadly equivalent reduction is given in the context of the submitted output pool, and to ensure that panels receive a sufficient selection of research outputs from each submitted unit upon which to base judgements about the quality of that unit's outputs.

Early career researchers

2. ECRs are defined in the 'Guidance on submissions' (paragraph 148 [Guidance on Submissions](#)). Table L1 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment that HEIs may request for ECRs who meet this definition.

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

Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks

3. Table L2 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment that HEIs may request for absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

Table L2: Secondments or career breaks: 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

4. The allowances in Table L2 are based on the length of the individual's absence or time away from working in HE. They are defined in terms of total months absent from work.

5. 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.

Qualifying periods of family-related leave

6. The total output pool may be reduced by 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 leave¹⁹, or shared parental leave²⁰ lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020.

7. This approach to reductions for qualifying periods of family-related leave is based on the funding bodies' considered judgement following consultation in the previous REF exercise that the impact of such a period of leave and the arrival of a new child into a family is generally sufficiently disruptive of an individual's research work to justify the specified reduction.

8. While the above reduction of outputs due to additional paternity or adoption leave is subject to a minimum period of four months, shorter periods of such leave could be taken into account as follows:
 - a. By applying a reduction in outputs where there are additional circumstances, for example where the period of leave had an impact in combination with other factors such as ongoing childcare responsibilities.
 - b. By combining the number of months for shorter periods of such leave in combination with other circumstances, according to Table L2.

9. Any period of maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave that qualifies for the reduction of an output under the provisions in paragraph 6 above may in individual cases be associated with prolonged constraints on work that justify more than the defined reduction set out. In such cases, the circumstances should be explained in the request.

Combining circumstances

10. Where individuals have had a combination of circumstances that have a defined reduction in outputs, these may be accumulated up to a maximum reduction of 1.5 outputs. For each circumstance, the relevant reduction should be applied and added together to calculate the total maximum reduction.

11. Where Table L1 is combined with Table L2, the period of time since 1 January 2014 up until the individual met the definition of an ECR should be calculated in months, and Table L2 should be applied.

¹⁹ 'Additional paternity or adoption leave' refers to leave of up to 26 weeks which is taken to care for a child where the person's spouse, partner or civil partner was entitled to statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave, and has since returned to work. The term 'additional paternity leave' is often used to describe this type of leave although it may be taken by parents of either gender. For the purposes of the REF, we refer to this leave as 'additional paternity or adoption leave'.

²⁰ 'Shared parental leave' refers to leave of up to 50 weeks which can be shared by parents having a baby or adopting a child. This can be taken in blocks, or all in one go.

12. When combining circumstances, only one circumstance should be taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously.

13. Where an individual has a combination of circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs **and** 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. The circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs to be requested should be calculated according to the guidance above (paragraphs 2 to 10).

Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1–6

14. In UOAs 1–6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to one, without penalty in the assessment, for Category A submitted staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 July 2020.

15. This allowance is made on the basis that the staff concerned are normally significantly constrained in the time they have available to undertake research during the assessment period. Where the individual meets the criteria in paragraph 14, and has had significant additional circumstances – for any of the other reasons set out in the [‘Guidance on submissions’](#) in paragraph 160 – the institution can make a case for further reductions in the unit reduction request.

Circumstances requiring a judgement about reductions

16. Where staff have had other circumstances during the period (see paragraph 160e in the [Guidance on Submissions](#)) – including in combination with any circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs – the institution will need to make a judgement about the effect of the circumstances in terms of the equivalent period of time absent, apply the reductions as set out in Table L2 by analogy, and provide a brief rationale for this judgement.

Appendix 9: Independent Research Fellowships

1. Table 1 provides a list of competitive research fellowships, presented in alphabetical order by funder, that have been confirmed by the funder to require research independence. This list is intended to guide institutions when developing their criteria to identify independent researchers. **It should not be taken to be exhaustive** and the funding bodies recognise that many relevant fellowship schemes are not captured, including research fellowships funded by HEIs, which may require research independence.

Table 1

Funder	Fellowship scheme
AHRC	AHRC Leadership Fellowships - Early Career Researchers
AHRC	AHRC Leadership Fellowships
BBSRC	BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships
BBSRC	BBSRC Future Leader Fellowships (from 2018 known as BBSRC Discovery Fellowships)
British Academy	BA/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships
British Academy	British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowships
British Academy	JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowships
British Academy	Mid-Career Fellowships
British Academy	Newton Advanced Fellowships
British Academy	Newton International Fellowships
British Academy	Wolfson Research Professorships
British Heart Foundation	Career Re-entry Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Clinical Research Leave Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	BHF-Fulbright Commission Scholar Awards
British Heart Foundation	Intermediate Basic Science Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Intermediate Clinical Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Senior Basic Science Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Senior Clinical Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Springboard Award for Biomedical Researchers
British Heart Foundation	Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers
Cancer Research UK	Advanced Clinician Scientist Fellowship

Cancer Research UK	Career Development Fellowship
Cancer Research UK	Career Establishment Award
Cancer Research UK	Senior Cancer Research Fellowship
EPSRC	EPSRC Early Career Fellowship
EPSRC	EPSRC Established Career Fellowship

EPSRC	EPSRC Postdoctoral Fellowship* ¹
ESRC	ESRC Future Cities Catapult Fellowship
ESRC	ESRC Future Leaders Grant
ESRC	ESRC/Turing Fellowships
ESRC/URKI	Early Career Researcher Innovation Fellowships
European Research Council	ERC Advanced Grants
European Research Council	ERC Consolidator Grants
European Research Council	ERC Starting Grants
Health Education England	Integrated Clinical Academic Programme Clinical Lectureship*
Health Education England	Integrated Clinical Academic Programme Senior Clinical Lectureship
Leverhulme Trust	Early Career Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	Research Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	Emeritus Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	Major Research Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	International Academic Fellowship
MRC	MRC Career Development Awards*
MRC	MRC New Investigator Research Grants (Non-clinical)*
MRC	MRC New Investigator Research Grants (Clinical)*
MRC	MRC Clinician Scientist Fellowships*

¹ Those asterisked support the transition to independence. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to become independent and the award enables them to become so. It could be argued those at the start of an award are not 'independent' yet, but those well in the award may be.

MRC	Senior Non-Clinical Fellowships
MRC	Senior Clinical Fellowships
NC3R	David Sainsbury Fellowship
NC3R	Training fellowship
NERC	Independent Research Fellowships
NERC/UKRI	Industrial Innovation Fellowships
NERC/UKRI	Industrial Mobility Fellowships
NIHR	Advanced Fellowship*
NIHR	Career Development Fellowship
NIHR	Clinical Lectureships*
NIHR	Clinician Scientist*
NIHR	Post-Doctoral Fellowship*
NIHR	Research Professorships

NIHR	School for Primary Care Post-Doctoral Fellowships*
NIHR	Senior Research Fellowships
Royal Academy of Engineering	RAEng Engineering for Development Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	Industrial Fellowships
Royal Academy of Engineering	RAEng Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	RAEng Senior Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	UK Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoctoral Research Fellowship
Royal Society	Royal Society Wolfson Fellowship
Royal Society	Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship*
Royal Society	JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship
Royal Society	Newton Advanced Fellowship
Royal Society	Royal Society/Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship
Royal Society	University Research Fellowship*
Royal Society and Wellcome Trust	Sir Henry Dale Fellowship*

Royal Society of Edinburgh	RSE Arts & Humanities Awards (for permanent staff)
Royal Society of Edinburgh	RSE Personal Research Fellowship
Royal Society of Edinburgh	RSE Sabbatical Research Grants (for permanent staff)
Sêr Cymru	Research Chairs
Sêr Cymru	Rising Stars
Sêr Cymru	Recapturing Talent*
Sêr Cymru	Research fellowships for 3 -5 year postdocs
STFC	CERN Fellowships
STFC	Ernest Rutherford Fellowship
STFC	ESA Fellowships
STFC	Innovations Partnership Scheme Fellowships
STFC	Returner Fellowships
STFC	RSE/STFC Enterprise Fellowships
STFC	Rutherford International Fellowship Programme
UKRI	UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships
UKRI	UKRI Innovation Fellowships
Wellcome Trust	Intermediate Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical Medicine
Wellcome Trust	Principal Research Fellowships
Wellcome Trust	Research Award for Health Professionals
Wellcome Trust	Research Career Development Fellowship
Wellcome Trust	Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social Science
Wellcome Trust	Senior Research Fellowship