

University of Kent

REF2021

Code of Practice

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Part 1: Introduction

1. This Code of Practice (COP) for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 submission is aligned with the University commitment to the creation and support of a balanced, inclusive and diverse academic community. To this end, the University of Kent will be submitting 100% of its eligible staff. Eligible staff are currently defined as all staff members employed on Teaching and Research Contracts (T&R) and a subset of staff members on Research Only contracts who have met the criteria for Research Independence as outlined in this COP.
2. The REF submission is developed by the University exclusively for the purpose of reporting our research to the relevant funding bodies and REF data will not be used in any career development or promotion procedures. The University will ensure that individual staff members' career development and promotion outcomes is not affected by their levels of inclusion in the submission.
3. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy in combination with all other relevant policies and procedures of the University, seeks to ensure that people are not privileged or subject to less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, age, disability, race, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, national origin, trades union membership or type of contract (whether full time, part time or fixed term).

“Our university is based on equality, diversity, respect and we value each other.”
University of Kent Strategy 2025

4. The University has always been a university that equally values education and research, believing that one enhances the other, working as a community, based on collegiality. Freedom of speech within the law and freedom of inquiry are fundamental. The University is outward looking, embraces change and is willing to do things differently and see things differently. The University values excellence and supports potential wherever it may be found.
5. Equality and Diversity is a main cornerstone of the University and is widely supported and implemented through the Equality and Diversity Network, The Disability Staff Network, the LGBT + Staff Network and The Women's Network. EDI activities are driven by the Learning and Organisational Development team within HR, providing support across all areas and ensuring that the University continues to support an environment of equality and inclusivity.

Equality Impact Assessment

6. Equality Impact Assessment and EDI monitoring have been implemented to identify balanced representation on committees and working groups for the decision-making process as well as EDI monitoring for research outputs to be submitted to the REF. Internal monitoring has taken place for all committees involved in the selection and decision-making processes and efforts have been made to ensure the broadest possible representation where possible to avoid disproportionate negative impacts on any group. This has been achieved by requesting all members of the committee to complete an Equality Monitoring Form and assessing outcomes against available HR data held by the University through individual staff declarations.

An update of actions taken since REF 2014

7. The University has retained the good practice outlined in the Equality Impact Assessment REF 2014 which reflected an above average inclusion rate of staff and a strong response to Individual Staff Circumstances. It has retained its HR Excellence in Research Award (first received in 2013) and has continued to implement the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The University first achieved the Athena Bronze Award in 2014 and this has been renewed in 2018. The University has now increased its proportion of female academic and research staff on substantive contracts by an overall 0.9% since 2013.
8. Kent achieved Level 1 of the Disability Confident Scheme and is accredited as 'Disability Confident Committed'.
9. The Kent EDI Network was selected by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) as an example of sector-leading and innovative practice and was published as a case study by HEFCE in April 2017.
10. The REF COP 2014 stated that the University wished "to include the excellent work of all its eligible researchers in the submission" and has chosen to continue in REF 2021 by submitting 100% of eligible staff.

How we address areas of Transparency, Consistency, Accountability and Inclusivity

Transparency

11. All processes for the selection of outputs for the REF and defining independent researchers are documented in this COP to ensure transparency and promote equality and diversity. The COP will be communicated to all members of academic staff, including those absent from work and it will be published in a variety of formats for accessibility. The COP has been made available to all staff at the University for consultation prior to publication and individual processes have been written in consultation with staff groups such as the Joint Staff Negotiating and Consultation Committee (JSNCC) and the Staff Policy Committee (SPC). The JSNCC is the main forum for consultation between the University and staff on all matters of a mutual interest. JSNCC provides detailed consideration and recommendations (where required) on staff policies and includes

union representation. The SPC is an internal management committee reporting to the Executive Group. It gives approval, on behalf of Council, of human resource policies, taking into consideration best practice and strategies to create a positive working environment whilst ensuring compliance with all legal requirements.

12. Communication of this COP will be through a programme of activity including Forums at academic school level and other relevant meetings, publishing on the University Website and individual mailings to all staff members. We have ensured that those who are not currently on site have been individually notified with the content of the COP.

Consistency

13. The COP will be applied uniformly in all schools across the University, and implemented consistently. The REF Steering Group will guarantee this uniformity and consistency by monitoring the University's progress in preparing its REF submission at all stages in the process.

Accountability

14. The University decision-making structures for the REF are designed to support and assure a robust process following the guidelines set out in this document. Specialist committees and working groups will feed into main University structures for final decision-making and are listed in [Annex 2](#) of this document.
15. In order to ensure that the principles of this COP are understood and upheld, the University is providing supplementary specialised Equality and Diversity Training with a REF focus. This training has been provided to all members of staff involved in the selection of outputs and the identification of Research Independence. This includes REF Coordinators, REF Working Group Members, REF Steering Group, Research Innovation Board, Executive Group Members, and selected Professional Services Staff. The training has been tailored to the University and delivered by Advance HE who bring expertise of the REF and in depth knowledge of Equality and Diversity challenges faced by academic institutions. The training also covers the provision and implementation of this COP in detail. In addition, the University is requiring all groups to complete the institutional unconscious bias training.

Inclusivity

16. The University wishes to include the excellent work of all its eligible researchers in its submission and this COP defines how selection decisions will be made in a fair and non-discriminatory manner reflecting the principles which underpin the University and REF EDI policy in all matters. The University will be submitting all staff on Teaching and Research Contracts (Category A) at the census date and a process has been defined for identifying Research Independence in paragraphs (14-22).

Part 2: Determining research independence

Policies and procedures

17. The University has developed a procedure for identifying Research Independence for staff on Research Only contracts and will use the criteria as set out in the REF Guidance on Submissions to determine eligibility.

This process is to be used exclusively for REF purposes to determine eligibility for submission and will not be applied for any other purpose (i.e. promotions or appraisal) at the University.

Definitions of Research Independence

18. The REF definition for Research Independence is as follows:

An independent researcher is defined in paragraphs 131-133 of the 'Guidance on Submissions' as **“an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual’s research programme”**.

19. Recognising the diverse roles held by Research Only staff at the University, the approach will be that staff who fulfil any of the REF criteria as outlined below will be considered for Research Independence:

- Leading or acting as principal investigator/co-investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project which has enabled a member of staff to undertake a substantial piece of independent (i.e. self-directed) academic research (This will be determined by records held by Research Services on externally funded projects).
- 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 the funding bodies and can be found in [\(Annex 5\)](#).
- Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package in a research project.

Research Assistants or Postdoctoral Research Associates

20. As per paragraph 129 of the guidance on submissions, Research Assistants (sometimes also described as Postdoctoral Research Assistants, Research Associates or Assistant Researchers) are not eligible to be returned to the REF unless they meet the above research independence criteria. Research Assistants are defined as academic staff whose primary employment function is 'Research Only', and they are employed to carry out another individual’s research programme rather than as independent researchers in their own right. They are usually funded from research grants but can also be funded by the university.

How we determine Research Independence

21. The application will be reviewed and verified at Unit of Assessment (UOA) level by the UOA Coordinator who will make a recommendation to the REF Steering Group.

Fixed-Term Employees

22. Determination of research independence will be made irrespective of an individual's contractual status. Under the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, a fixed-term employee has the right not to be treated by their employer less favourably than the employer treats a comparable permanent employee.

Criteria for Research Independence

Grade 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PI or Co-I on Externally Funded Project• Independent Fellowship• Lead Research Group or specialised work package
Grade 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PI or Co-I on Externally Funded Project• Independent Fellowship• Lead Research Group or specialised work package
>Grade 7 (exceptional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent Fellowship• Lead Research Group or specialised work package

23. The Process

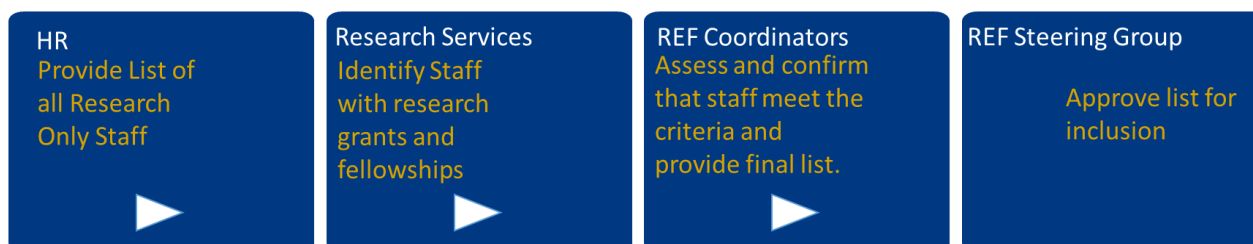
- a) Research Services: Verify staff on research only contracts who are / have been principle investigators, co-investigators on externally funded projects or hold Independent Research Fellowships during the REF period.
- b) Research Services will provide a list of all Research Only Staff to the REF Coordinators with indicators of eligibility according to the guidelines defined in paragraphs 16-21.
- c) The REF Coordinators will evaluate and confirm eligibility, and Research Services will then inform those individual staff members who have met the criteria. Staff who have not met the criteria during the assessment phase will be invited to apply to be considered for Research Independence, if they feel they have sufficient evidence to meet the criteria.
- d) REF Coordinators: Review applications and forward recommendations to the REF Steering Group.
- e) Validation of Independent Researchers by REF Steering Group.
- f) Individual staff will be notified of the decisions within one month of the deadline to apply.
- g) Research Services to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment.
- h) Those judged to be non-independent will be invited to a meeting with their REF Coordinator or REF Manager to ensure sufficient information has been made available for evaluation.
- i) Appeals on Decisions (**paragraph 27 – 28**).

24. Timeline

1 June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of exercise
1 September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission deadline • Start of the verification process (including recommendations to REF Steering Group)
2 – 29 September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REF Steering Group to validate decisions • Equality Impact Assessment
30 September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifications
1 - 29 October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals process
15 November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals outcome deadline

Staff, committees and training

25. The Governing Committee for this area is the REF Steering Group ([Annex 2](#)) who will ensure that correct checks have been made in accordance with the criteria set out in **Paragraph 17**.



- **REF Coordinators** ([Annex 2](#)) will be responsible for assessing research independence where judgement on research output is required. They will record all processes and keep accurate confidential records of each request.
- **Research Services** will be responsible for providing information on research grants and fellowships.
- **HR** will furnish the staff data required to identify staff on Research Only Contracts.

26. The REF Steering Group, REF Coordinators, and REF Manager have undergone EDI training for the REF to support this process.

Appeals Panel

27. An impartial panel comprised of senior academic and appropriate professional services representatives ([Annex 2](#)) will receive and consider all appeals on the basis of the appeals criteria set out below.

Appeals

28. As the University is submitting 100% of eligible staff, appeals can only be based on the following two areas:
- The determination of Research Independence for inclusion in the REF.
 - Failure to adhere to the REF COP in the determination of Research Independence.

The Appeals Process

29. This process applies to all staff employed on Research Only contracts by the University. All staff on Research Only contracts will be notified in writing of their status in terms of research independence following the completion of the process outlined in **paragraph 23**. They will be given full information on how to appeal the decision and will subsequently have four weeks to lodge their appeal with the Appeals Panel.
30. The panel will consider their appeal and will either support or decline the appeal within three weeks of the closing date. If the appeal is supported, the staff member will be reconsidered on the basis of the criteria outlined in **paragraph 19**. If declined, the panel will provide a full response detailing the reasons for the decision.

Decisions of the panel will be final.

Part 3: Selection of outputs

Policies and procedures

31. Each UOA will be required to submit 2.5 outputs per FTE within the unit. The FTE will be based on the content of the HESA staff return for the census date 31st July 2020.
32. In line with the outcomes of the Stern review recommendation for the disassociation of staff from outputs, the total number of outputs (FTEx2.5) required for each unit will constitute an output pool which will consist of a minimum of 1 output per individual staff member up to a maximum of 5 per individual. This means that all eligible staff will have at least one output submitted to the REF, unless they are entered with zero outputs due to individual staff circumstances.
33. For REF 2021, submissions can also include outputs from staff who have left the University during the REF period as long as they were published within the timeframe in which they were employed here.

Individual Output Selection

34. The University's approach is to attain the highest quality submission and will focus on delivering the strongest outputs from each UOA. The REF defines research quality as:

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

35. With the aim of achieving the highest quality profile, output selection will be prioritised by including as many 4* and 3* outputs as possible. Outputs below the 3* threshold will be included in the submission where there is no stronger output available for that staff member. This selection process is not intended to diminish the individual contributions of staff but to bolster the potential of success for the entire unit.

Output Review Process

36. The output review process is devolved to the REF Coordinators for each UOA and their constituent Working Groups ([Annex 2](#)).
37. Since 2014, and on an annual basis, staff have been requested to upload their qualifying outputs to the University Institutional Repository (Kent Academic Repository KAR). These have been attributed to the appropriate UOA for review. Authorship must adhere to the criteria outlined in the REF '**Panel Criteria and Working Methods**' **Paragraphs 216-236**.
38. Outputs are reviewed by at least two peer reviewers. Peer Review can be either internal or external or a combination of both.
39. In most cases all eligible outputs from current staff within a unit will be subject to the peer review process. Exceptionally, where the number of eligible outputs for an individual exceeds six, the individual may be requested to self-select their top outputs for review. This will also be the case with exceptionally large UOA's where assessment of all outputs would not be feasible.

Staff who have left the University

40. The UOA Coordinators are provided with a list of eligible outputs from staff who have left the University for inclusion. Anybody who has left during the REF period for any reason, including those who have been made redundant, will be eligible.

Use of Metrics

41. Outputs should be read and reviewed on the basis of content, however, metrics can be used in units where it is expressly indicated in the REF Panel Criteria and Working Methods that they will be provided to REF panel members.
42. The University is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and therefore aims to exclude the use of journal impact factor in the assessment process.

Scoring of Outputs

43. Scoring of outputs will follow the specific criteria laid out in the REF Panel Criteria and Working Methods Document and UOA level definitions outlined therein.
44. Due to the volume of outputs, during the final review process, the University will allow for the use of a more granular scale. In addition to the standard 1-4*, REF Coordinators will be allowed to use either a scale of 0-12 (0=Unclassified) or a different enhanced fractional scale of the 1-4* ratings.

Example of 1-12 scale:

REF Classification	U	1*			2*			3*			4*		
Review Scoring Scale	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

45. The UOA Coordinators are provided with a list of eligible outputs from staff who have left the University. These eligible outputs will be considered for inclusion. Where outputs have been included for those members of staff, UOA Coordinators will be asked to provide a supporting statement in line with the REF Guidelines.

Selection of External Peer Reviewers

46. External peer reviewers are selected through a process of application from the REF Coordinators to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation for approval.

47. **Final selection of outputs** will be during the course of 2019-20 with a full draft submission prepared in June 2020. The draft submission should also include forthcoming outputs due to be published up to 31st December 2020.

48. Selection of Outputs Stage 1: UOA Coordinators will attribute the best output for each individual staff member according to the criteria set out in **paragraph 34** to meet the minimum requirement of 1 output.

49. Selection of Outputs Stage 2: UOA Coordinators will attribute outputs according to the criteria set out in **paragraph 34**. Where choices are made between equally rated outputs decisions will be made to ensure a balanced distribution across the unit.

50. Timeline

November 2016	First Pilot Review of Outputs
November 2017	Second Progress Review
November 2019	Final Progress Review and staff feedback
September 2020	Final Selection of Outputs
- January February 2020	Staff informed of outputs included in the submission and can submit a request for feedback on their submitted outputs.

Feedback

51. The process for the grading and selection of outputs is confidential; however, staff can request grading outcomes for their own outputs only from their UOA Coordinators at any point in the timeline. To maintain a consistent approach, feedback should only be delivered by UOA Coordinators and focus solely on the individual's outputs and peer review outcomes. UOA Coordinators should also maintain the University's position that the grading of outputs and selection for the REF does not feed in to any other existing performance mechanisms and will have no effect on their career development at the University.

Equality Impact Assessment of Research Outputs

52. The University is applying a staged process of Equality Impact Assessment on our research outputs and has been doing so annually since 2016 during our annual output reviews. REF Coordinators are made aware of the results and are required to examine reasons as to why there may be specific areas of concern in terms of underrepresentation within their UOA.
53. EIAs, for each UOA will be used to inform the final output selection and justifications for underrepresentation will be sought where identified.

Selection of Impact Case Studies

54. Each UOA will be required to submit a minimum of 2 Impact Case Studies which will increase in number depending on the size of the Unit. The table below illustrates the number of case studies required in relation to the number of FTE (REF Guidance on Submissions paragraph 301).

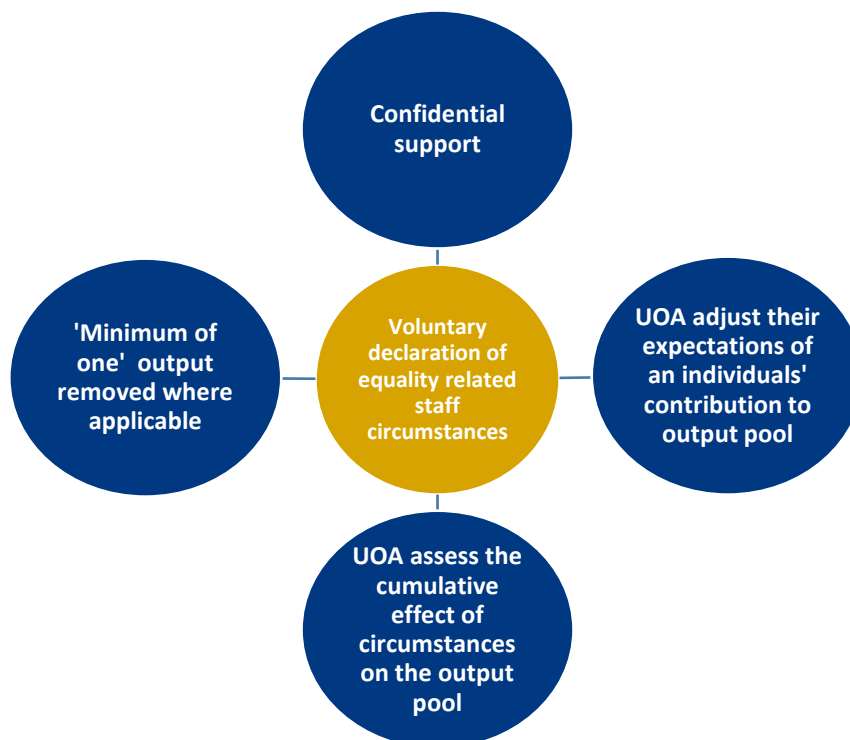
Number of Category A submitted staff submitted (FTE)	Required number of case studies
Up to 19.99	2
20 to 34.99	3
35 to 49.99	4
50 to 64.99	5
65 to 79.99	6
80 to 94.99	7
95 to 109.99	8
110 to 159.99	9
160 or more	10 plus one further case study per additional 50 FTE

Assessment of Impact

55. Impact will be assessed on the basis of 'Reach and Significance' regardless of the geographic location in which they occurred, whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally (paragraph 301 of the Guidance on Submissions). Impact Case Studies will be subject to the same double peer review process as outlined for Outputs in **Paragraph 38**. They will be graded on the scale (1*-4*) and criteria as outlined in **Paragraph 34**.
56. Impact Case Studies will be selected on the basis of quality prioritising 4*. Where there are a number of potential case studies of equivalent quality, UOA Coordinators will prioritise those which best represent the UOA in terms of; content, underpinning research, and balanced staff representation.

Supporting staff with equality-related circumstances

57. The University of Kent strongly agrees with the funding bodies' and Equality and Diversity Advisory Panels' (EDAP) clear commitment to supporting and promoting equality and diversity in research careers. Such commitment has culminated in a series of significant measures to acknowledge the effect individual circumstances may have on research productivity during the assessment period (1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020).
58. The decoupling of staff from outputs for REF2021 provides increased flexibility in building the portfolio of outputs. However, there are many reasons why an excellent researcher may have fewer outputs attributable to them and therefore the University does not expect that all eligible staff will be returned with the same number.
59. The aims of the measures in place are to acknowledge the effect individual circumstances have on a staff member's ability to contribute to the output pool at the same rate as others and provide appropriate support for those affected:
- Provide confidential support to those with individual circumstances that have affected their research productivity.
 - Manage the expectations put upon those who have been affected by their individual circumstances.
 - Enable those with exceptional circumstances to be returned in the REF2021 without an output if those circumstances mean no output has been produced during the assessment period.
 - Allow a UOA to request a reduction in the total number of outputs required for submission where the cumulative effect of equality-related circumstances has had a disproportionate effect on the available output pool.



Eligible Circumstances

60. The funding bodies, advised by EDAP, have identified the following equality related circumstances that, in isolation or together, may significantly constrain the ability of eligible staff to produce outputs, or work productively throughout the assessment period.

Circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs	Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher (ECR)	Category A eligible staff who started their research careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.
	Part Time Workers	Only in exceptional circumstances where FTE on census date does not reflect average FTE over the assessment period
	Secondments or career breaks	Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector that lasted at least 12 months.
	Family-related leave	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. Additional paternity or adoption leave, or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more, taken substantially between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020.
	Junior Clinical Academics	Clinically qualified academics still completing clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or equivalent prior to 31 July 2020.
Complex circumstances that require a judgement on the appropriate reduction in outputs	<p>Circumstances equivalent to absence (<i>an individual may be in work, but due to their circumstances, unable to research productively</i>)</p>	<p>Usually require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability • Ill health, injury or mental health conditions. • Additional constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare • Other caring responsibilities: such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member. • Gender reassignment • Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics covered in the Equality Act 2010 • Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic <p>See Annex ISC1 for full details on protected characteristics</p>

Reductions for staff circumstances

- 61.** Given the reduced output requirement for REF2021, 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 sufficient selection of research output from each submitted unit upon which to base judgements about the quality of that UOA's outputs. Annex [ISC2](#) is an extract from the REF Guidance on Submissions detailing the permitted output reduction tariffs.
- 62.** Following a period of consultation, the final REF 'Guidance on Submissions' was published outlining the measures in place to recognise the effect an individual's equality-related circumstances may have on their research productivity:

a) Removing the requirement of a 'minimum of one' output

All 'Category A Submitted' staff must be returned with a 'minimum of one' output attributed to them in the submission, including staff with equality-related circumstances. However, a staff member may be returned without the required 'minimum of one' output, where circumstances have had an exceptional effect on productivity, meaning they have not been able to produce an eligible output.

This is predominantly for those who have had 46 or more months absence from research (such as an ECR or due to ill health), or where they have had two or more periods of family-related leave. Note that the individual concerned must NOT have produced any eligible outputs at all during the REF period for this to be applicable. Where a request is accepted, an individual may be returned with no outputs attributed to them in the submission, and the total outputs required by the relevant UOA will be reduced by one.

This is intended to minimise any potential negative impact on the careers of particular groups of researchers who have not been able to produce an output in the period due to their equality-related circumstances.

b) Unit reductions

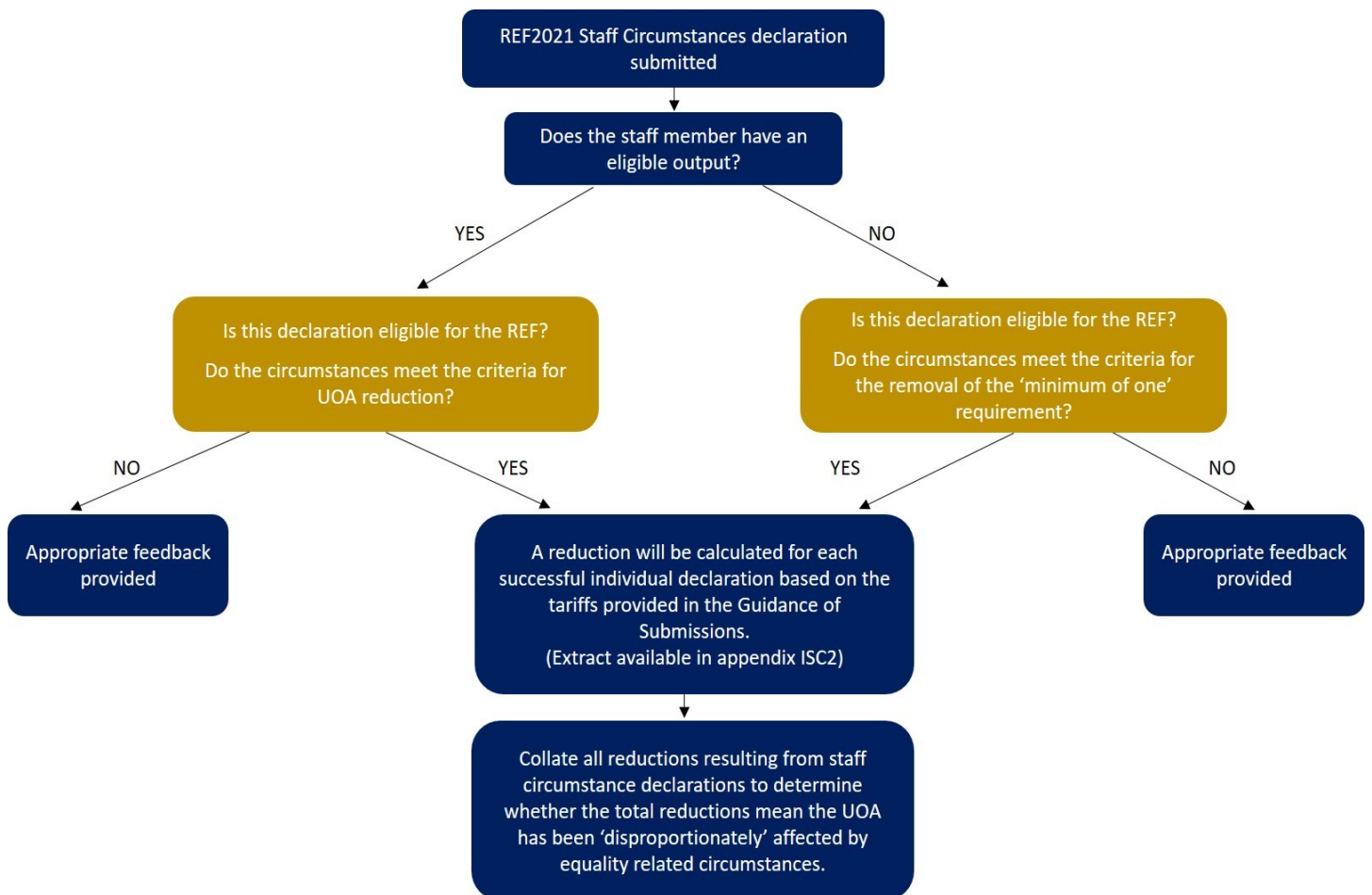
A UOA may have fewer outputs overall to select from if they have higher proportions of staff with individual circumstances. Individual circumstances can affect a researcher's productivity and therefore their ability to contribute to the pool of outputs.

It may be determined that there has been a detrimental effect on a UOA output pool with a high proportion of staff who have not been able to research productively throughout the period due to equality-related circumstances, even though they meet the 'minimum of one' output requirement. If so, there is the option to consider a request for a reduction in the overall number of outputs required from a submitting UOA.

63. Extract taken from REF Guidance webinar slides:

Staff Circumstances - reductions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 1.5 output reduction per staff member More simplified approach to submitting information – requests at unit, not individual level 	
Reduction in unit's required no. of outputs	Removal of minimum of one output
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional reduction in output requirement where staff have not been able to research productively due to individual circumstances. Defined reductions for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early career researchers Secondments/career breaks Family-related leave Clinical lectureships Plus circumstances equivalent to absence that require a judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceptional circumstances where the individual has not been able to produce an output Individual may be returned without min. of one output Unit's output requirement will be further reduced by one

Defining the type of reduction for which a member of staff may be eligible:



Process for declaring and reviewing equality related circumstances

64. The University of Kent will take account of the circumstances of individual researchers in its output selection process - offering appropriate support and adjusting our expectations of the individual's contribution to the output pool. To facilitate this, a confidential, safe and robust process has been designed to invite 'Category A Submitted' staff to voluntarily declare their individual circumstances.

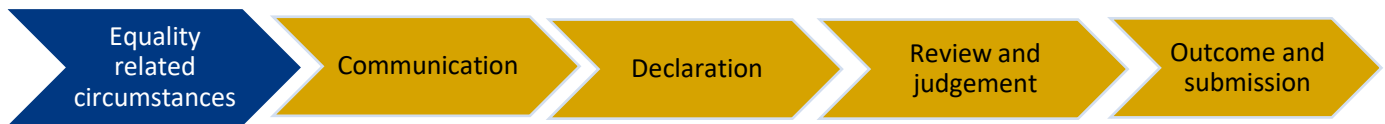
65. In line with REF guidance, the staff circumstances declaration process at the University of Kent will be managed centrally by the HR REF Liaison Team. Declarations will be submitted by individuals through the secure University of Kent Staff Self Service Portal (Staff Connect). The centralised approach will ensure that decisions are consistent with the guidelines, whilst enabling individuals to declare circumstances in confidence. The process has been developed to meet the key points below (taken from the REF Guidance on Submissions):

- *“Voluntary declaration is used consistently for all types of circumstances to ensure that every individual has the same opportunity to make the decision whether or not to declare their circumstances and have them taken into account by their institution.”*
- *“...the individual staff member is best placed to consider whether equality-related circumstances have affected their productivity over the REF assessment period and that they should not feel under pressure to declare their circumstances where they do not wish to do so.”*
- *“...submitting institutions should not take account in the REF submission process of any individual circumstances other than those that staff have consented to declare voluntarily.”*

66. With dedicated HR support, a safe and supportive process has been designed to have a positive effect on researchers at the University of Kent whilst ensuring it is:

- Confidential
- Voluntary
- Inclusive and accessible
- Easy to use
- Consistent across all UOA's.

67. The University is clear that this must be a voluntary declaration. Whilst all 'Category A Submitted' staff will be invited to make a declaration, it is essential that they make their own decision whether or not to declare any circumstances. A communications plan will ensure staff are invited to declare their equality-related circumstances and are aware of the process. However, if we do not receive a declaration we will assume that no individual circumstances affected that individual's research productivity over the assessment period.



Communication

68. The University is taking a proactive and centralised approach by inviting all ‘Category A Submitted’ staff to declare their circumstances voluntarily. In May 2019, staff will be invited via email to complete and submit an online form to declare individual circumstances. It will be made very clear that staff are not required to provide this information where they do not wish to do so. They are best placed to decide whether equality-related circumstances have had a detrimental effect on their research productivity.
69. The key aims of the centralised communications:
- **Inform** ALL eligible staff of the process and timelines
 - **Invite** voluntary declarations
 - **Reassure** staff that the process is safe, supportive, confidential, easy to use and consistent

Declaration

70. Paragraphs 71-73 refer to the declaration of all eligible circumstances with the exception of Early Career Researchers. For further information on the separate process for the declaration of Early Career Researchers, please see paragraphs 92-94.
71. Staff will be invited to complete an online form (Annex [ISC3](#)) accessed via Staff Connect – the University of Kent’s HR System. The online form is based on the template provided by REF2021 and provides the opportunity for individuals to declare equality related circumstances which they feel have constrained their ability to work productively or produce eligible outputs through the assessment period.
72. Individuals wishing to make a declaration will be asked which equality-related circumstances apply and to provide details describing how the circumstances affected their research productivity. The information provided should be based on verifiable evidence (although, for the avoidance of doubt, the REF and the University will accept individuals’ self-descriptions of their circumstances).
73. To ensure the processes are applied equally, only declarations made via Staff Connect will be considered. We will not accept any other data or information provided on behalf of an individual. We will not use any information from HR records to make a declaration. (If a researcher has been on maternity leave or taken a career break, for example, even though this information is on file due to their absence, the University will still need a declaration.) HR records will only be consulted to verify, where possible, information provided on the declaration.

74. Individuals who wish to discuss their declaration can contact The HR REF Liaison Team (HR REF Liaison Officer and HR Administrator). Contact information will be provided on the online form within Staff Connect.

Review and Judgement

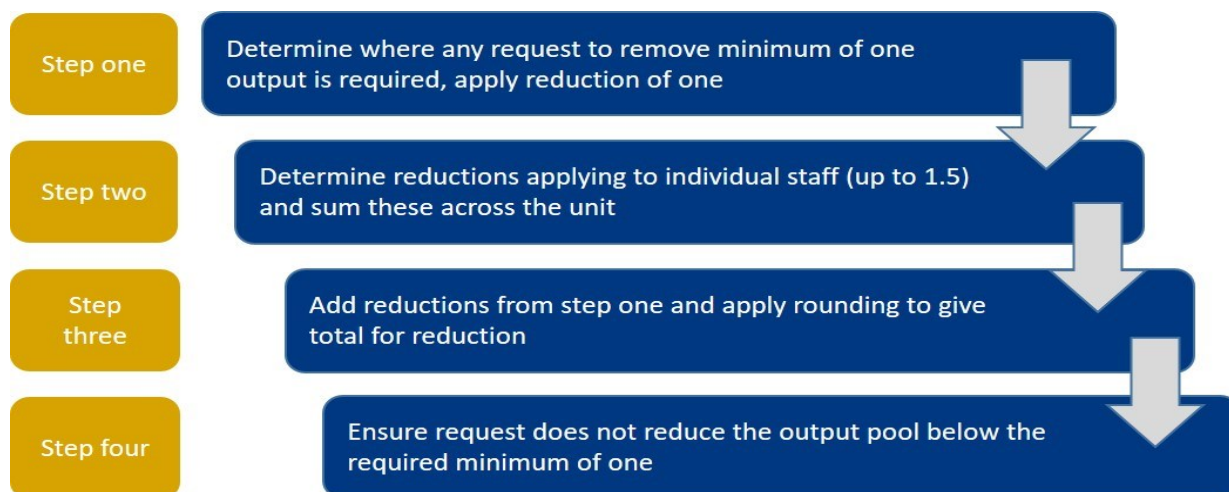
75. The HR REF Liaison Team will receive all declarations for Staff Circumstances. These will initially be reviewed and categorised into those that are defined and do not require a judgement (ECR, career breaks, family-related leave) and those that require a judgement to be made. They will also categorise the declarations to identify whether they could result in a request to remove the 'minimum of one' requirement or a UOA reduction.
76. The Individual Staff Circumstances (ISC) Group will review the declarations and make a judgement on those requiring such. In all cases, the appropriate reductions will be determined using the tariffs in Annex L of the [Guidance on Submissions](#).
77. The membership and terms of Reference for the ISC Group are in Annex [ISC4](#).
78. Members of the group will be trained in accordance with the recommendations of REF2021. At the University of Kent, this includes unconscious bias training and REF specific EDI training.

Outcome and Submission

79. The process of supporting staff will be consistent across all UOAs. The University will take a consultative and personal approach to managing expectations of those with circumstances and agree realistic expectations of an individual's contribution to the overall output pool. The Head of Department, Associate Dean for Research / Director of Research for Academic Division and the REF Coordinator will be informed only that expectations may need to be adjusted on the basis of equality-related circumstances. They will NOT be given further information about the circumstances.
80. Staff will be given the option to obtain additional HR advice/support to respond to the impact individual circumstances have on their working lives. Based on the REF2014 exercise, this is likely to be in the case of more complex circumstances. Although the declarations made within this process are for the purpose of the REF2021 submission only, individuals may raise issues or concerns that have a wider impact on their role.
81. Staff will be informed in writing of the outcome and an appeal process will be available. Following communication of the decision, the staff member will have two weeks to appeal the decision. Any appeal must be on the basis of information not previously provided to the group by the applicant, or a failure to follow the process outlined in the REF2021 COP. Appeals will not be considered on the basis of disagreement with the original decision. In the event of an appeal, the individual will receive details of the outcome in writing ([Annex C7](#)).

Calculating Reductions

82. In line with the REF2021 Guidelines, the University will apply reductions as below:



- **Requesting the removal of the ‘minimum of one’ output**

83. Where the ISC Group judges that an individual’s circumstances call for the removal of the ‘minimum of one’ output requirement, a request will be made to the REF Panel using form REF6a. This request will include a description of how the circumstances have affected the staff member’s ability to produce an eligible output in the period.

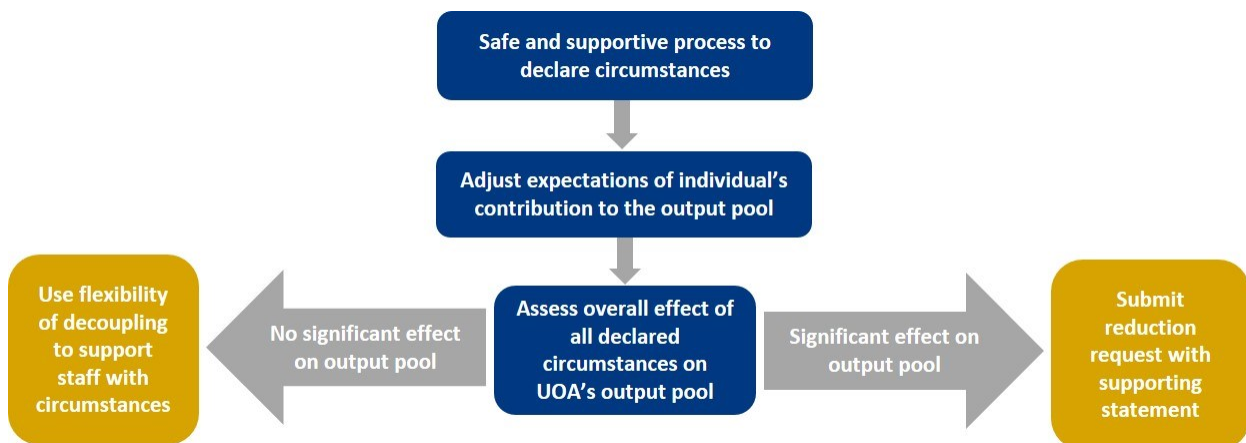
84. The individual staff member will be notified in writing that a request for the removal of the ‘minimum of one’ is going to be made, and including the text of the accompanying statement. The UOA Coordinator will be informed that the requirement has been removed on the basis of equality-related circumstances, and that this must be reflected in the output selection process. The UOA will not have access to further information about the circumstances.

- **Requesting UOA reductions**

85. A UOA may, without penalty, request a reduction in the total number of outputs required for submission where the cumulative effect of circumstances has disproportionately affected the unit’s potential output pool.

86. The HR REF Liaison Team will produce UOA level reports once all the circumstances have been collated and the potential reduction requests calculated. This report will include data in the context of the unit (size, proportion of those with declared circumstances).

87. UOA’s will then judge whether an application should be made, taking into account the size of the available output pool (from which selection will be made) and its proximity to the total number of outputs required. Has the Unit been disproportionately affected by equality related circumstances so much so that the flexibility of decoupling is not an effective solution?



88. In judging whether a reduction request should be submitted, the indicators below will be considered to determine a significant impact on the output pool:

- a. The proportion of eligible staff who declare an equality-related circumstance in each unit. Where over 20% of staff in any given UOA have declared an equality-related circumstance an application should be considered.
- b. The size of the available output pool (from which selection will be made) and its proximity to the total number of outputs required. Where this is 80% or less of the total number of outputs required an application should be considered.
- c. Where another substantial impact of individual circumstances can be identified.

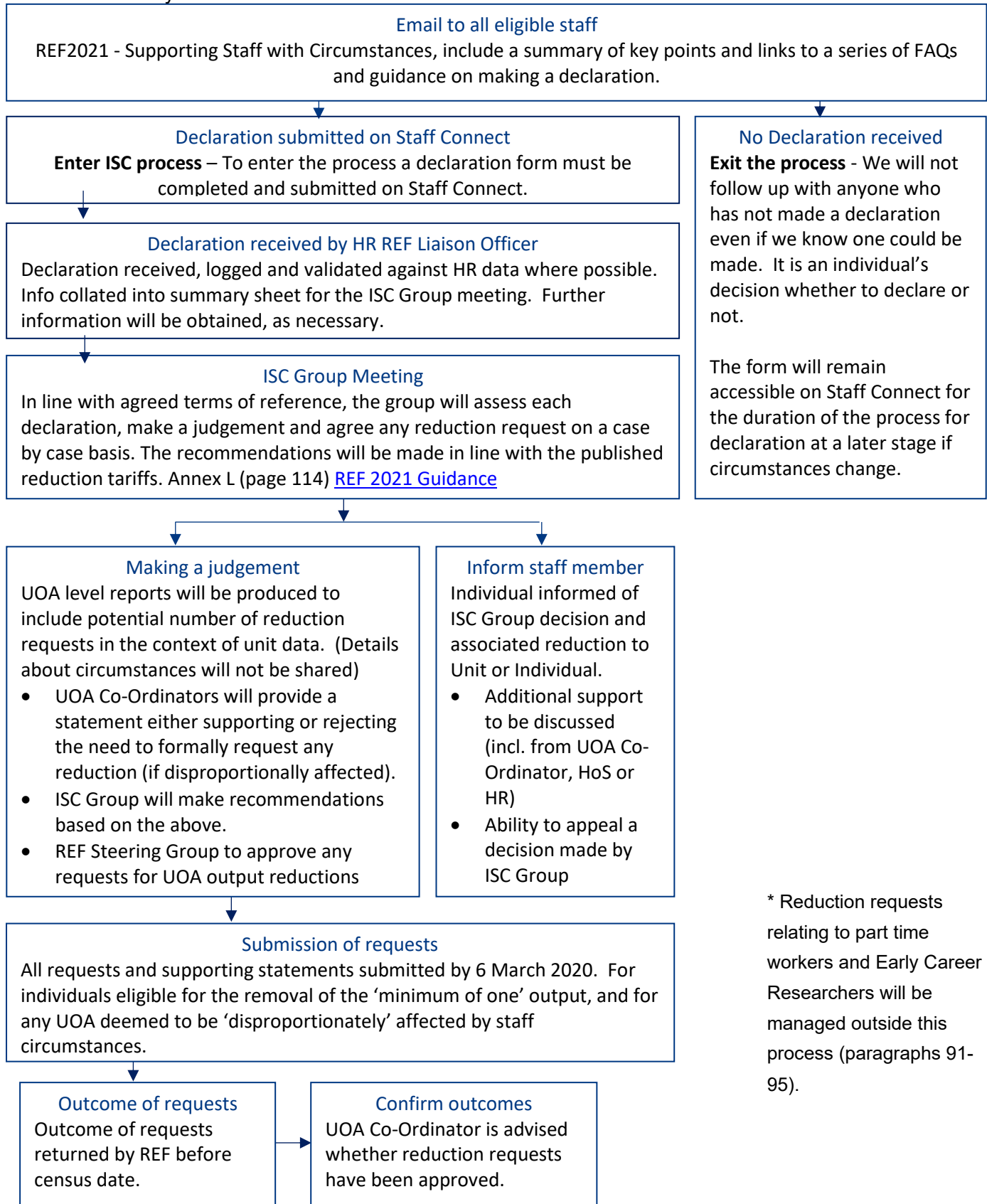
89. This will typically be in smaller units where there are high proportions of staff whose circumstances have affected their productivity over the REF2021 publication period or in disciplines where fewer outputs are traditionally published.

90. Approval of any reduction requests will follow a 3-step process:

- a. The UOA Coordinators receive their UOA level report, and are asked to provide a statement either supporting or rejecting the need to formally request a unit reduction based on the cumulative effect of staff circumstances on their unit's overall output pool. (Information declared through the staff circumstances process will be confidential. The report will contain the names of those who have declared circumstances and the cumulative reduction figure, however Coordinators will not be told what the circumstances are).
- b. The ISC group will review the UOA reports complete with UOA Coordinator statement and make recommendations based on the REF guidelines and the University of Kent's COP.
- c. The REF steering group will review recommendations and make a final decision as to whether or not to officially request a unit output reduction. Once UOA reduction requests have been agreed, the ISC Group will complete form REF6b. All requests will be accompanied by a supporting statement that includes information on the context of the unit (size, proportion of those with declared circumstances) - how the circumstances affected the unit's output pool and why this was determined to be disproportionate.

REF2021 - INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES DECLARATION PROCESS

Summary of how the declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances will be managed at the University of Kent*



* Reduction requests relating to part time workers and Early Career Researchers will be managed outside this process (paragraphs 91-95).

Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

91. ECRs are defined for the purposes of the REF as members of staff who meet the definition of an eligible researcher, and who started their careers on or after 1 August 2016. This status is categorised as a defined staff circumstances and therefore eligible for a unit level reduction in outputs.
92. The Research Excellence Team have developed a method of capturing the required information that will be managed outside the main Staff Circumstances process. The information will be used for the REF2021 submission, and in a wider sense, to ensure all ECRs receive the support, training and opportunities available to them.
93. An ECR form will be circulated to all REF eligible researchers to gather information on whether an individual meets the REF2021 definition of an ECR and if so, will allow them to declare whether they would like this to be considered as a staff circumstance. The number of potential output reductions will be calculated by UOA. The impact of ECRs on a UOA's output pool will be assessed alongside all other reduction requests resulting from the staff circumstances process.

Part Time Workers

94. For REF2021, 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). Due to this, reduction requests based on part time working hours will only be made in very exceptional circumstances and are expected to be rare. For example, if a submitting staff member's FTE on the census date does not reflect their average FTE over the assessment period as a whole.
95. The Research Excellence Team will analyse FTE data across the assessment period, to calculate every eligible member of staff's average FTE. Where the average FTE is significantly lower than that of the census date, in consultation with the individual concerned, a judgement will be made as to whether this has had a detrimental effect on research productivity. Any findings judged to be exceptional will be assessed alongside all other reduction requests resulting from the staff circumstances process.

Submission of reduction requests

96. The University of Kent have to submit UOA reduction requests and requests to remove the 'minimum of one' requirement by the deadline of 6 March 2020. All unit reduction requests will be considered by EDAP who will make recommendations about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty in the case of circumstances requiring a judgement. They will also make recommendations on accepting our requests for the removal of the 'minimum of one'.
97. The REF Guidance on Submission states that the outcome of requests will be provided before the census date (31 July 2020).

Use of data

Internal

- 98.** Information declared during the process will only be seen by members of the ISC Group who will observe confidentiality and information will be stored securely in compliance with current data protection legislation – General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable information relating to individuals' circumstances will be published by the University, and all additional information collected as part of this exercise will be destroyed on completion of the REF.
- 99.** UOA Co-ordinators and the wider REF team at the University of Kent will be made aware of any associated output reductions as a result of a declaration, but they WILL NOT be told what the circumstances are. They will need to know who has circumstances that have contributed to the reduction of UOA outputs to adjust their expectations and provide further support if required.
- 100.** Information declared will not be held on an individual's HR record unless explicitly requested otherwise – as a standard, this is for REF2021 purposes only. As a result of this process an individual may request additional support from the University and we will be able to facilitate that requirement.

External

- 101.** An individual may voluntarily disclose personal circumstances to the ISC Group, which could permit the University to submit the information to the REF to waive the 'minimum of one' requirement (without penalty), or to submit a reduced number of outputs without penalty. If (and only if) the University applies for either form of reduction of outputs, it will need to provide UKRI with data that has been disclosed about individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the 'Guidance on submissions' document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted. Submitted data will be kept confidential to the external REF team, the Equalities and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The external REF team will destroy the submitted data about individuals' circumstances on completion of the assessment phase.
- 102.** Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR, individuals have the right to see and receive a copy of any personal information that UKRI holds about them. Further information about the Act and GRPR, and guidance on making a subject access request, can be found on the RE website at <https://re.ukri.org/about-us/policies-standards/foi-data-protection/>.

Annex

Annex	Title
Annex 1	REF 2021 - Supporting Staff with Circumstances ISC1 : Summary of equality legislation ISC2 : Reductions of staff circumstances ISC3 : Copy of Staff Connect Form ISC4 : ISC Group Terms of Reference
Annex 2	Committees C1 : Research Innovation Board C2 : REF Steering Group C3 : REF Coordinators Group C4 : UOA Working Groups (Working Group) C5 : REF Technical Committee C6 : REF COP Working Group C7 : Appeals Panel
Annex 3	University of Kent REF Process Diagram
Annex 4	REF 2021: Application for Research Independence
Annex 5	Research Fellowships

ISC1: Summary of equality legislation

The Equality Act 2010 The Equality Act came into force in October 2010 to reform and harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality. It replaced the following equality legislation:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 covers the same groups that were protected by previous equality legislation and now refers to these as ‘protected characteristics’:

Extract taken from the “REF2021 Guidance on Code of Practice”

Age	<p>All employees within the HE sector are protected from unlawful age discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment under the Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or if they are associated with a person of a particular age group.</p> <p>Age discrimination can occur when people of a particular age group are treated less favourably than people in other age groups. An age group could be, for example, people of the same age, the under 30s or people aged 45-50. A person can belong to a number of different age groups.</p> <p>Age discrimination will not be unlawful if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. However, in the context of the REF, the view of the funding bodies is that if a researcher produces excellent research an HEI will not be able to justify not selecting their outputs because of their age group.</p> <p>It is important to note that early career researchers (ECRs) are likely to come from a range of age groups. The definition of ECR used in the REF (see ‘Guidance on submissions’, paragraphs 148 to 149) is not limited to young people.</p> <p>HEIs should also note that, given developments in equalities law in the UK and Europe, the default retirement age has been abolished from 1 October 2011 in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.</p>
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Disability

The Equality Act 2010, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) (Northern Ireland only) and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 prevent unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment relating to disability. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to have a disability or if they are associated with a person who has a disability (for example, if they are responsible for caring for a family member with a disability).

A person is considered to have a disability if they have or have had a physical and/or mental impairment which has 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Long-term impairments include those that last or are likely to last for at least 12 months.

Cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis and progressive/degenerative conditions are disabilities too, even if they do not currently have an adverse effect on the carrying out of day-to-day activities. An impairment which is managed by medication or medical treatment, but which would have had a substantial and long-term adverse effect if not so managed, is also a disability.

The definition of disability is different in Northern Ireland in that a list of day-to-day activities is referred to.

There is no list of day-to-day activities for England, Scotland and Wales but day-to-day activities are taken to mean activities that people generally, not a specific individual, carry out on a daily or frequent basis.

While there is no definitive list of what is considered a disability, it covers a wide range of impairments including:

- sensory impairments
- impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis, depression and epilepsy
- progressive impairments, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, HIV and cancer
- organ specific impairments, including respiratory conditions and cardiovascular diseases
- developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia
- mental health conditions such as depression and eating disorders
- impairments caused by injury to the body or brain.

It is important for HEIs to note that people who have had a past disability are also protected from discrimination, victimisation and harassment because of disability.

Equality law requires HEIs to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and make reasonable adjustments for them. Failure to make a reasonable adjustment constitutes discrimination. If a researcher's impairment has affected the quantity of their research outputs, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of outputs (see 'Guidance on submissions', Part 3, Section 1, 'Staff circumstances').

<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 protect from discrimination, harassment and victimisation of trans people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change their sex. Staff in HE do not have to be under medical supervision to be afforded protection because they are trans and staff are protected if they are perceived to be undergoing or have undergone related procedures. They are also protected if they are associated with someone who has proposed, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment.</p> <p>Trans people who undergo gender reassignment will need to take time off for appointments and, in some cases, for medical assistance. The transition process is lengthy, often taking several years, and it is likely to be a difficult period for the trans person as they seek recognition of their new gender from their family, friends, employer and society as a whole. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gave enhanced privacy rights to trans people who undergo gender reassignment. A person acting in an official capacity who acquires information about a person's status as a transsexual may commit a criminal offence if they pass the information to a third party without consent.</p> <p>Consequently, staff within HEIs with responsibility for REF submissions must ensure that the information they receive about gender reassignment is treated with particular care.</p> <p>If a staff member's ability to work productively throughout the REF assessment period has been constrained due to gender reassignment, the unit may return a reduced number of research outputs (see 'Guidance on submissions', Part 3, Section 1, 'Staff circumstances'). Information about the member of staff will be kept confidential as described in 'Guidance on submissions', paragraph 195.</p> <p>HEIs should note that the Scottish government recently consulted on, and the UK government is currently consulting on, reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which may include streamlining the procedure to legally change gender.</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 as amended, individuals are protected from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership status. The protection from discrimination is to ensure that people who are married or in a civil partnership receive the same benefits and treatment in employment. The protection from discrimination does not apply to single people.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not inadvertently discriminate against staff who are married or in civil partnerships.</p>
<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protects staff from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of political opinion.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not inadvertently discriminate against staff based on their political opinion.</p>

<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 women are protected from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>Consequently, where researchers have taken time out of work, or their ability to work productively throughout the assessment period has been affected, because of pregnancy and/or maternity, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of research outputs, as set out in 'Guidance on submissions', paragraphs 169 to 172.</p> <p>In addition, HEIs should ensure that female researchers who are pregnant or on maternity leave are kept informed about and included in their submissions process.</p> <p>For the purposes of this summary it is important to note that primary adopters have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave.</p>
<p>Race</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation connected to race. The definition of race includes colour, ethnic or national origins or nationality. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular race.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their race or assumed race (for example, based on their name).</p>
<p>Religion and belief including non-belief</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to religion or belief. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular religion or belief.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their actual or perceived religion or belief, including non-belief. 'Belief' includes any structured philosophical belief with clear values that has an effect on how its adherents conduct their lives.</p>
<p>Sex (including breastfeeding and additional paternity and adoption leave)</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to sex. Employees are also protected because of their perceived sex or because of their association with someone of a particular sex.</p> <p>The sex discrimination provisions of the Equality Act explicitly protect women from less favourable treatment because they are breastfeeding. Consequently, the impact of breastfeeding on a woman's ability to work productively will be taken into account, as set out in 'Guidance on submissions', Part 3, Section 1, 'Staff circumstances'.</p> <p>If a mother who meets the continuity of employment test wishes to return to work early or shorten her maternity leave/pay, she will be entitled to shared parental leave with the father or her partner within the first year of the baby's birth. Partners may also be eligible for shared parental leave or pay. Fathers/partners who take additional paternity or adoption leave will have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave and barriers that exist to taking the leave, or as a result of having taken it, could constitute unlawful sex discrimination. Consequently, where researchers have taken additional paternity and adoption leave, the submitting unit</p>

	<p>may return a reduced number of outputs, as set out in 'Guidance on submissions', Annex L.</p> <p>HEIs need to be wary of implementing procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 that would be easier for men to comply with than women, or vice versa. There are many cases where a requirement to work full-time (or less favourable treatment of people working part-time or flexibly) has been held to discriminate unlawfully against women.</p> <p>HEIs should note that there are now requirements under UK and Scottish legislation for public authorities (including HEIs) to report information on the percentage difference amongst employees between men and women's average hourly pay (excluding overtime).</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to sexual orientation. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person who is of a particular sexual orientation.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Welsh language</p>	<p>The Welsh Language Act 1993 places a duty on public bodies in Wales to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis. This is reinforced by the provisions of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards (No 6) Regulations 2017.</p> <p>The arrangements for the assessment of outputs in the medium of Welsh by the REF panels are set out in 'Guidance on submissions', paragraphs 284 and 285.</p>

ISC2: Reductions of staff circumstances

Extracts taken from the REF2021 Guidance on Submission

Circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs:

Early career researchers	
Permitted reduction in outputs Table L1 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs, without penalty, in the assessment that HEIs may request for ECRs who meet the REF definition.	
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

Part Time workers
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.

Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks	
Permitted reduction in outputs 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. 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.	
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

Qualifying periods of family-related leave

The approach to reductions for qualifying periods of family-related leave was 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.

The total output pool may be reduced by **0.5** for each discrete period of:

- 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.**
- Additional paternity or adoption leave¹, or shared parental leave² lasting for **four months or more**, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020.

Any period of maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave that qualifies for the reduction of an output under the provisions 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.

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:

- 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.
- By combining the number of months for shorter periods of such leave in combination with other circumstances, according to Table L2.

¹ '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'.

² '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.

Junior clinical academics

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.

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 and has had significant additional circumstances for any of the other reasons set out in the 'Guidance on submissions' – the institution can make a case for further reductions in the unit reduction request.

Complex circumstances that require a judgement on the appropriate reduction in outputs:

Circumstances equivalent to absence <i>(an individual may be in work, but due to their circumstances, unable to research productively)</i>	
<p>Where staff have had other circumstances during the period, 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. This judgement will be made, in terms of the equivalent period of time absent, by the Individual Staff Circumstances Committee. Reductions will be applied as set out in Table L2.</p> <p>Eligible Circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability • Ill health, injury or mental health conditions. • Additional constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare • Other caring responsibilities: such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member. • Gender reassignment • Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics covered in the Equality Act 2010 • Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic 	
Total months equivalent to absence between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020 due to the effect of a staff member's complex circumstances	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

Combining circumstances

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.

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.

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

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 will be calculated according to the tariffs above.

ISC3: Copy of Staff Connect Form

REF2021 - Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances

Questions marked with an * are mandatory questions

The University of Kent strongly agrees with the funding bodies' and Equality and Diversity Advisory Panels' (EDAP) clear commitment to supporting and promoting equality and diversity in research careers. Such commitment has culminated in a series of significant measures to acknowledge the effect individual circumstances may have on research activity during the assessment period (1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020)

We will take account of the circumstances of individual researchers during the output selection process - offering appropriate support and adjusting our expectations of an individual's contribution to the output pool. To facilitate this, a confidential, safe and robust process has been designed to invite REF eligible 'Category A Submitted' staff to voluntarily declare their individual circumstances.

If you are a REF eligible member of staff, who feels your equality related circumstances have constrained your ability to undertake research during the assessment period, you are invited to complete and submit this declaration form.

This is a confidential process; access to the information contained in this declaration will be restricted to the Individual Staff Circumstances Group (ISC). It will NOT be shared with your manager or School. Please visit our dedicated REF2021 web pages for full information: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/researchservices/local/refpilot/ref-isg.html>

Output Submission

Do you have a REF eligible output published between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020?

I confirm I can meet the minimum requirement of one output for the REF2021 submission. Therefore, any reduction approved as a result of this declaration will be applied to the overall requirement for my Unit of Assessment (UOA)

I confirm that due to exceptional circumstances, I have not been able to produce an eligible output during the assessment period. I therefore request consideration that I should be returned without the minimum of one output.

Individual Circumstances

If your ability to undertake research during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the following circumstances, please provide the requested information in the relevant box(es).

	Circumstance
A	<p>Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the nature of the absence, and provide the dates and duration in months
B	<p>Family-related leave: statutory maternity or adoption leave, additional paternity, adoption or shared parental leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each period of leave state which type of leave was taken and provide the dates and duration in months
C	<p>Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) by 31 July 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evidence that clinical training is in progress
D	<p>Disability (including chronic conditions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief description of the nature / name of condition • How long have these circumstances affected you? Please provide dates for the periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively, including an overall total duration in months.
E	<p>Mental health conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief description of the nature / name of condition • How long have these circumstances affected you? Please provide dates for the periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively, including an overall total duration in months.
F	<p>Ill health or injury</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief description of the nature / name of condition • How long have these circumstances affected you? Please provide dates for the periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively, including an overall total duration in months. • Include details and any dates of any phased return to work adjustments such as reduced working hours.
G	<p>Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance (relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare in addition to the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief description of the additional constraints and the type of leave taken • How long have these circumstances affected you? Please provide dates for the periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively, including an overall total duration in months.
H	<p>Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled family member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief description of the nature of your responsibilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long have these circumstances affected you? Please provide dates for the periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively, including an overall total duration in months.
I	<p>Gender reassignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long have these circumstances affected you? Please provide dates for the periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively, including an overall total duration in months.
J	<p>Other exceptional and relevant reasons related to the protected characteristics or relating to activities protected by employment legislation (e.g. bereavement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a brief description of the nature of the circumstances. Explain the impact on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Estimate of how long the circumstances affected you for (include dates if possible)

HR Support

Please select only one option

I give permission for the HR REF Liaison Officer to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements relating to these.

I do not wish to be contacted by the HR REF Liaison Officer (Where permission is not provided, Kent will be limited in the action it can take).

Confirmation*

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

- The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below
- I realise that the above information will be used for REF purposes only and will be seen by the Individual Staff Circumstances Group
- I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the National REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss your declaration, please email Angela Clark, HR REF Liaison Officer: refiscg@kent.ac.uk

ISC4: Individual Staff Circumstances (ISC) Group Terms of Reference

Terms of reference

- Oversee the decision making process for any output reduction requests that may result from the REF2021 staff circumstances process.
- Ensure the group meets the aims of the ISC process in providing a confidential, consistent and equitable assessment of individual staff circumstances – the effect on the individual and the resulting impact on the UOA.
- Provide an understanding and supportive assessment of each declaration, with a view to making a judgement on the extent to which an individual's circumstances have affected their research productivity.
- Make consistent and transparent recommendations on reductions at individual and unit level based on ISC information declared.
- Maintain absolute confidentiality within the ISC Group.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Inviting the voluntary declaration of individual staff circumstances:**
The ISC Group will operate the process of inviting all 'Category A submitted' staff to disclose their personal circumstances, gathering information and evidence to support the declaration. This process will be managed centrally by a dedicated HR resource, the HR REF Liaison Officer (Special Circumstances).
- **Making a judgement on each individual staff circumstances declaration:**
All declarations will be assessed by the ISC Group on a case by case basis and a judgement will be made on whether each declaration meets the criteria for potential output reductions. If so, in line with the reduction tariffs, a judgement will be made on the extent of the reduction.
- **Assessing whether a unit has been 'disproportionately' affected by Staff Circumstances**
The ISC Group will review the extent to which the declared circumstances affected the unit's output pool and whether a UOA has been disproportionately affected by equality related circumstances so much so that the flexibility of decoupling is not an effective solution. The ISC Group will make recommendations; the REF Steering Group will make a final decision on whether or not to officially request a unit output reduction.

Membership

- Dean for Internationalisation
- Head of Research and Innovation Operations
- Head of Film (Professor of Film, Media and Culture)
- Athena SWAN Project Manager (EDI representative)
- HR REF Liaison Officer

All members of the group must have successfully completed both the Equality and Diversity, and Unconscious Bias training modules.

Annex 2 Committees

C1: Research and Innovation Board

(Updated September 2020)

Terms of Reference

1. To act as a champion and advocate for research and innovation within the University.
2. To use the Institutional Plan as a basis to develop a positive strategy for research and staff at all levels of changes, and to be proactive in adapting both strategy, policy and internal structures to ensure that the University benefits from the changes. .
3. To recommend beneficial and achievable targets for research and innovation activity across the university based on this strategy.
4. To monitor and encourage the Divisions in the fulfilment of these targets.
5. To engage with the external policy environment and advise both senior managers and staff at all levels of changes, and to be proactive in adapting both strategy, policy and internal structures to ensure that the University benefits from the changes.
6. To respond on behalf of the University to external consultations on the current and future research and innovation landscape, such as the development of the European Framework Programme.
7. To advise Senate on matters relating to research and innovation, to report annually on its activity relating to its delegated responsibilities, and to report back from Senate on decisions made that affect policy within its remit.
8. To lead the University's preparations for external assessment of research and innovation activity, including (but not limited to) the Research Excellence Framework and the Knowledge Exchange Framework.

Chair: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation

Secretary: TBD

Core Membership

- Lay member from outside the University
- Dean of the Graduate Researcher College
- A member from outside the University with research experience nominated by the Vice-Chancellor
- Directors of Research for the Divisions
- The Associate Deans (Research) for each faculty (**appointed until the REF Submission.**)
- Head of Research Policy and Support
- Head of Knowledge Exchange and Innovation
- Head of Research & Innovation Services Operations
- Representative of the ASPP Committee (Academic Strategy, Planning and Performance)

C2: REF Steering Group

Terms of Reference

The REF Steering Group will report to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research-& Innovation and will:

- monitor the development of the REF by HEFCE and consider the strategic implications for the University
- gather information; advise on criteria and their application that are likely to yield the best outcome
- oversee the University's preparations for the REF including the operation of a REF Pilot Exercise
- approve UOA Statements of Intent
- approve recommendations as to which individuals, outputs and impact case studies are to be included in the submission
- approve the final submission

Membership

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation (Chair)
- Head of Research Policy and Support
- Dean of each Faculty
- Dean of the Graduate School
- Associate Dean of Research of each Faculty
- Directors of Research for Academic Divisions
- Senior academic representatives of each Faculty
- ECR Representative
- Research Excellence Manager
- REF Support Officer (Secretary)

C3: REF Coordinators Group

Terms of Reference

The REF Coordinators Group will meet regularly to review progress on all aspects of the preparation of the submission. In addition, it will:

- Review UOA Strategies prior to submission to REF Steering Group
- Approve administrative processes to support the development of the overall submission
- Share best practice across the university
- Identify and make recommendations as to interdisciplinary aspects of the submission
- Make recommendations as to the allocation of staff to different UOAs

Membership

- Chair (TBD)
- Director of Research Services
- REF Coordinator from each UOA
- Research Excellence Manager
- Secretary (REF Support Officer)

C4: UOA Working Groups (Working Group)

Terms of reference

A UOA Working Group will be established for each of the UOAs to which the University may make a submission. Working Groups will be led by the REF UOA Coordinator, and will:

- prepare the UOA Strategy
- work closely together to develop, populate with data and write the submission to their UOA
- make recommendations to the REF Steering Group as to which individuals, outputs and impact case studies are to be included in the submission

Membership

- REF UOA Coordinator (Chair)
- Head of School
- Director of Research (if not also the REF UOA Coordinator)
- Up to 5 academics (to be determined by the Chair)
- Administrative officer with secretariat responsibility

REF UOA Coordinators*

The schools, in consultation with the faculty, will appoint a REF UOA Coordinator for each UOA to which it intends to make a submission. Each REF UOA Coordinator will chair the UOA Working Group and be responsible for the drafting of all elements of the UOA submission. The REF UOA Coordinator will be the primary point of liaison in the coordination of the overall submission.

External assessors

External assessors will be appointed as part of the Pilot Exercise. They may be asked for feedback on any aspect of the submission within their field of expertise. External assessors will have no role in the decision-making process, but will provide written feedback that will be considered by the Working Groups when making decisions about the selection of staff and outputs to be submitted, and other elements of the submission. External assessors will be asked to comment on the quality of outputs rather than individuals.

External assessors will be senior academic staff in their fields, usually at another UK HEI. External assessors will be nominated by REF UOA Coordinators following consultation within the school.

External assessors will receive a copy of the COP and receive a verbal briefing on its application from the REF UOA Coordinator seeking their input.

C5: REF Technical Committee

Terms of reference

- To oversee the processes for data for inclusion in the University's REF 2014 submissions in respect of staff data, research income and student data.
- To maintain the quality and integrity of data held on the University's databases likely to contribute to REF returns (including the Student Data System, the HR system, the finance system, and the Kent Academic Repository).

- The REF Technical Committee reports to the REF Steering Group.

Membership

- Research Excellence Manager (Chair)
- Research Systems and Data Manager
- HR Data Manager
- Head of Planning and Business Information
- Research Accounts Manager
- Head of Office for Scholarly Communication
- REF Support Officer (Secretary)

C6: REF COP Working Group

Terms of reference

The COP Working Group will:

- Develop the COP for the University
- Manage the Equality Impact Assessment when required
- Oversee Equality and Diversity Training and implementation
- Monitor processes across the University to ensure they adhere to the COP
- Oversee and advise on the appeals process.

Membership

- Director of Research Services (Chair)
- Director of Human Resources
- Dean of Graduate School
- Equality and Employment Representative
- Arts Faculty Associate Dean for Research
- Sciences Faculty Associate Dean for Research
- Social Sciences Faculty Associate Dean for Research
- One Early Career Researcher
- Academic Member of the Staff Policy Committee
- A member from the JSNCC (Joint Staff Negotiating and Consultation Committee)
- One senior member of academic staff from Medway Campus
- Research Excellence Manager

C7: Appeals Panel

Terms of reference

To hear an appeal against any decision made by the following:

- Individual Staff Circumstances Group (ISC)
- REF Steering Group in decisions regarding research independence.

Membership

- Chair (To be appointed)
- 3 x Academics (T&R Staff)
- Research Excellence Manager
- HR Representative

Grounds for appeal

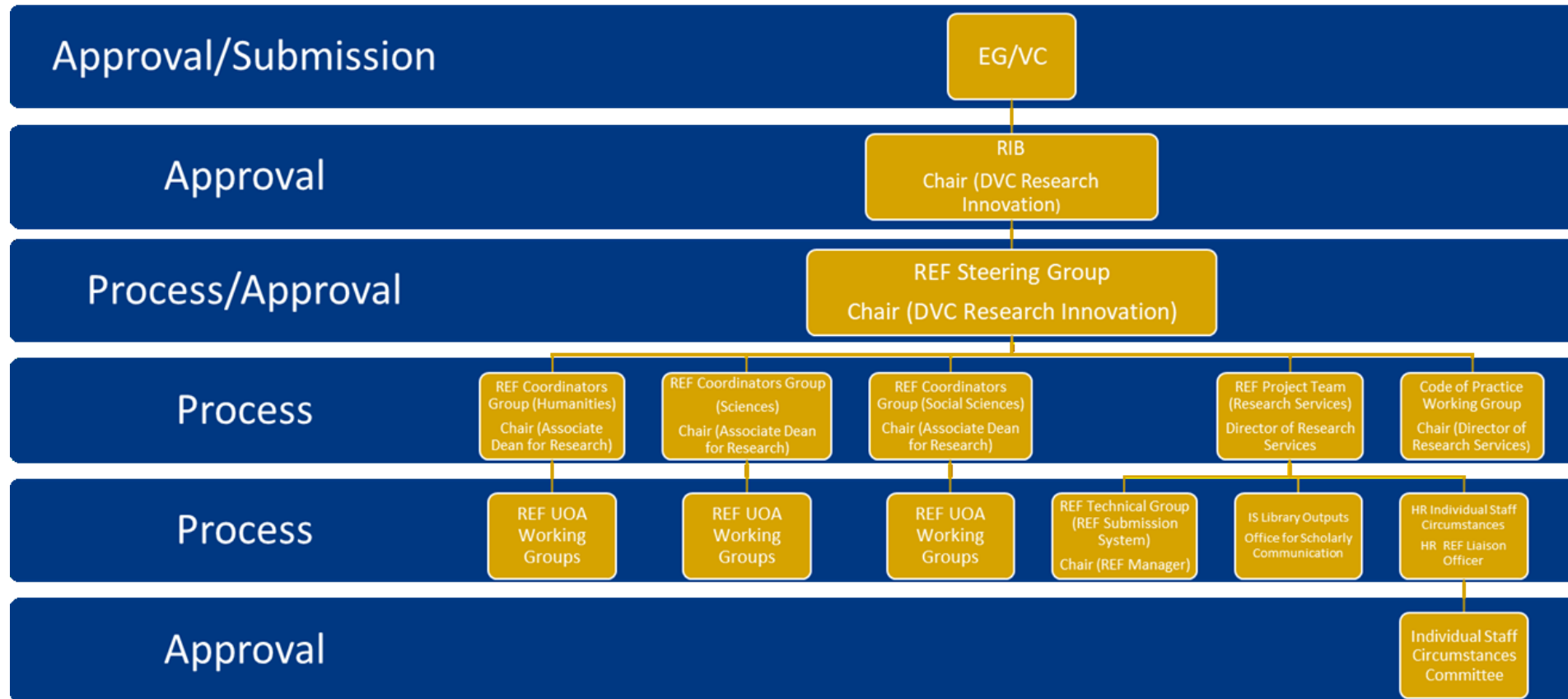
- Any appeal must be based on either: Information not previously provided to the group by the applicant, or A failure to follow the process outlined in the REF2021 COP.
- For the avoidance of doubt, appeals will not be considered on the basis of disagreement with the original decision.

The appeal process

- All appeal applications must be made in writing and must set out clearly the candidate's grounds for appeal. Colleagues should note that it is essential that they confine the written argument to the grounds for appeal.
- Appeals against decisions must be lodged within **two weeks** of receiving feedback regarding the group decision.
- The chair and members of the panel will have had no previous involvement in the group decision.
- Providing the appeals panel agree that there are grounds for appeal, they will review the written submission, if sufficient information has been provided a final decision will be made.
- If the Panel believe they need further information before reaching a final decision, the individual concerned will be offered the opportunity to present his/her case in person.
- The outcome of the appeal will be given in writing at the latest seven working days following the closure of the procedure. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final there are no further stages of appeal within the University.

Annex 3 University of Kent REF Process Diagram

(The following diagram shows the committees and groups and where they sit in the overall process to submission)



Annex 4 REF 2021: Application for Research Independence

This form should be used to submit a claim to be considered as an Independent Researcher for eligibility in the University of Kent Research Excellence Framework Submission 2021. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

Name:
Position:
School:
FTE:
Is this your First Academic/Research Post?

Justification

I am applying for Research Independence on the following basis: (Please tick those that apply)

Leading or acting as principal investigator/co-investigator or equivalent on a substantial externally funded research project where the candidate can prove that they have made a contribution based on independent (self-directed) research. (This will be determined by records held by Research Services on externally funded projects)

Details:

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 the funding bodies and can be found in (Annex 6).

Details:

Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package in a research project

Details:

Annex 5 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*
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	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

¹Those 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.

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
<p>*Under additional REF Guidance- www.ref.ac.uk</p>	