



**Code of Practice
Governing the Development of
Submissions for the
2021 Research Excellence Framework**

Approved by the University Court of The University of Stirling on 17th June 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Code of Practice (CoP) sets out the principles and procedures by which the University of Stirling will develop its submission to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021).¹ This Code and the procedures contained within it have been developed through a broad and iterative consultative process involving the Faculties and Professional Services Directorates. It was approved by University Court on 17th June 2019, following recommendations by the Combined Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (CJNCC), University Strategy and Planning Group (USPG), the Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee (JPPRC) and Academic Council.
- 1.2 The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK Government's system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. Its key purposes are to inform the selective allocation of funding for research, provide accountability for public investment in research and provide benchmarking information. Conducted jointly by the four UK higher education funding bodies, the first REF took place in 2014 (covering the assessment period January 2008 to 31 December 2013). The REF replaced the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) which was last conducted in 2008.
- 1.3 The funding bodies invite Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to make submissions for assessment in any of the 34 Units of assessment (UoAs) covered by REF2021. It is for HEIs to decide:
- to which UoAs they make submissions;
 - which of their staff are eligible for inclusion in the submissions;
 - which outputs are eligible for the pool of outputs from which the HEI will make the final selection;
 - which impact case studies are eligible from which the HEI will make the final selection.
- 1.4 Each HEI making a submission is required to develop, document and apply a CoP on the fair and transparent selection process for their REF submissions.
- 1.5 The funding bodies have published detailed guidance on the conduct of REF2021 and this is available online at www.ref.ac.uk. The University's arrangements for managing the preparation of submissions for REF2021 are supported by Research and Innovation Services (RIS), working with other University Professional Services. As part of this support, RIS provide guidance and advice, available to all University staff, on the regulations and requirements of the REF2021 process and on the University's procedures and arrangements for taking part in the exercise. This includes:
- an email helpline: ref@stir.ac.uk
 - webpages with guidance, resources and frequently asked questions: <https://www.stir.ac.uk/internal-staff/research/researcher-support/ref/>

¹ This Code has been informed by various documents, including the report on good practice by the Equality and Diversity Panel (EDAP), *Research Excellence Framework: Codes of Practice on the selection of staff* (Oct. 2012) and the Guidance on codes of practice REF 2019/03 (Jan 2019).



<https://www.stir.ac.uk/internal-staff/research/researcher-support/ref/realising-research-impact/>

- Telephone and/or in person discussions via extensions: 6440 and 6719.

1.6 Institutional Changes to processes since REF2014

For REF2014 it was noted that the institutional data held by Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD) only enabled monitoring of sex, with insufficiently comprehensive data on other protected characteristics. As part of the Equality Impact Assessment following REF2014 submission, HR&OD undertook to:

“... strengthen our efforts to encourage staff to disclose protected characteristics as part of their HR record. The opportunity to take account of these characteristics in REF decision making will provide an additional useful incentive to staff. We will review our relevant HR policies to ensure that possible REF implications are explained.

We will continue to monitor and review the actions arising from this Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) at regular intervals. We will conduct an in depth review of our institutional procedures once the timing and rules for any future Research Excellence Framework exercise begin to emerge.”

- 1.7 Since REF2014, HR&OD have put in place mechanisms to encourage staff to disclose characteristics. Staff are now able to update their personal data (including their equality profile) via the staff portal at any point in time, while HR&OD regularly use staff meetings and the internal Staff Roundup to remind and encourage staff to update their profiles.

2. Principles governing the development of a submission

- 2.1 The development of the REF 2021 submission will be in line with institutional [Equality and Diversity Policy](#), and governed by the following principles:

- **Inclusivity:** All academic staff on a Research or Teaching and Research contract of 0.2FTE or greater and who meet the definition of an “independent researcher” and are employed on the census date (31st July 2020) will be included in the submission.
- Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken throughout the preparations processes.
- **Transparency:** The procedures and criteria used to develop the submission will be fully and openly communicated to all eligible staff within the University, including those who are absent from work.
- **Fairness:** All staff will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. This includes taking due account of disciplinary differences to ensure equitable review of all areas of research.

- **Consistency:** The procedures and criteria for developing the submission will be consistent across the University, with a single decision-making process, as set out in this CoP.
- **Accountability:** The roles and responsibilities of all those involved in developing the submission are set out in this CoP.

3. Data protection

- 3.1 In accordance with Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), data protection considerations have been built into REF planning and preparation processes. Seeking to implement the required 'data protection by design and default', a preliminary review was undertaken to determine how personal data will be collected, accessed, shared, analysed, and retained. An assessment was made of the privacy risks to individuals.² The URKI REF Team have published details of how the data submitted to REF2021 will be used and this can be found in Annex A. This should be read in conjunction with the University's own Privacy [Notices](#).
- 3.2 All electronic and hard copy data relating to REF2021 (including results of internal and external reviews and declared staff circumstances) held by Academic Divisions and Faculties, Professional Services Departments and Committees will be retained for audit purposes until the assessment phase of REF2021 has been completed and the results published in April 2022. The data will then be securely destroyed and this will be completed no later than May 2022.
- 3.3 The University's secure cloud content management system (Box, Sharepoint and/or WorkTribe) should be used to store and share REF-related documentation, and all relevant folders should include a retention schedule as detailed above. Faculties will be asked to confirm that they have adhered to the schedule set out in 3.2 above.
- 3.4 For impact case studies, testimonials and supporting evidence may be held following submission to allow use for ongoing impact activities, including case studies continued which may be eligible for inclusion in a future REF exercise.

4. Application of the Code of Practice

- 4.1 The provisions of this CoP apply to all staff of the University who are eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF2021. They also apply, wherever relevant, to staff who are not eligible for inclusion but are involved in the REF preparations, including advisory and/or decision-making roles.
- 4.2 The CoP will be applied equally across all Units of Assessment.

² 'Preparing for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)', Jisc (Oct. 2017) <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/preparing-for-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr>

5. REF preparations, strategy and decision-making

- 5.1 The planning and development of a submission for REF 2021 will be guided by the seven principles of [*The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*](#) (**ANNEX B**).³
- 5.2 In accordance with the Concordat and aligned to the University's Strategic Plan and Research Strategy, a REF Strategy has been developed through a consultative process to facilitate best practice in planning and preparing for REF 2021. The University's Research Committee and the University Strategy and Policy Group approved the Strategy in autumn 2017. It is available to all staff on the University internal webpage and is reproduced as **ANNEX C**.
- 5.3 The University has been undertaking preparations for its participation in REF2021 for a number of years. These preparations have included:
- Development of a REF 2021 Strategy, consistent with the University's Research Strategy which regards REF 2021 as an important milestone against which to measure progress towards strategic research objectives, and designed to steer preparatory work;
 - Contributions to consultation exercises undertaken by the funding bodies during their development of the regulations, criteria and procedures through which REF 2021 will operate;
 - Periodic internal reviews of the developing portfolio of research outputs;
 - A university-wide Research Review, involving external assessors, focused on informing both REF 2021 preparations and ongoing research management and development (held in both 2016 and 2018);
 - Appointment of Research Impact Officer and impact champions to co-ordinate and assist with impact case study development at UoA level;
 - Development of draft impact templates, impact case studies and environment narratives for potential inclusion in submissions to REF 2021.
- 5.4 The University also undertakes a range of research planning, management, development and support activities on an ongoing basis. Supporting academic staff with research in their contracts is a key element in the University's 'Achieving Success' process. This is an annual performance development review framework which aims to enhance a culture of excellence and allow adoption of good working practices throughout the University. The process (which applies to all members of staff) offers staff an opportunity to discuss their role; identify development needs; allows for reflecting on achievements and objective setting for the coming year and how these will contribute to the overall Department/Division strategic objectives. It is widely promoted via the website, and within Divisions and Faculties. Research performance also features strongly in the University's recruitment and promotion processes, and in ongoing staff management within Academic Divisions and Faculties.

³ *The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (2011).
September 2020

5.5 To ensure fair, transparent and effective decision-making in relation to REF 2021, institutional and faculty groups have been established to oversee the REF preparations (see **ANNEX D**) and who report to the Deputy Principal (Research) on a regular basis (bi-monthly or monthly as required).

5.6 Both ongoing research management and the preparatory work outlined above are, of course, related to the University's participation in REF2021. It is important to note, however, that decisions on the selection of materials for inclusion are made only through the process and arrangements set out in this CoP.

6. Equality and Diversity

6.1 In fulfilment of the University's duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, the equality impact of policies, procedures and decisions relating to REF 2021 will be appropriately assessed.⁴ The University has implemented the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, holds a European Commission HR Excellence in Research badge, are members of the Athena Swan Charter for Women in Science and was awarded an Athena SWAN Bronze institutional award in 2016 (and renewal will be sought in November 2019). In addition, Faculties and/or Divisions are fully engaged with the Charter and making their own applications: to date the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport and Division of Biology and Environmental Sciences as of May 2019 have been awarded Athena Swan Bronze awards.

6.2 The University has a Single Equality Scheme in place, approved by the University Court in December 2011 (and revised in 2016), which is an integrated strategy and action plan designed to promote and enhance equality and diversity and which sets out how the University complies with its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. It contains specific provisions designed to embed due regard for equality and diversity into both research management processes and is publicised to staff as well as being available on the internal [website](#).

6.3 The Equality Steering Group oversees and monitors the implementation of the University's agreed strategy for equality and diversity (the Equality Outcomes) and ensures fulfilment of its statutory equality duties on behalf of Court. Each Faculty and Professional Service Department has a designated Equality Champion who leads on the equality and diversity agenda within their area. Together the Champions form the Equality Action Forum which drives forwards the equality agenda and raises awareness and promotes best practice in equality matters across the University.

6.4 Aligning with the 2016-2021 University Strategic Plan, updated Equality Outcomes were published in 2017 which represent areas that were regarded as priorities for action and accompanied the equality outcome action plan and were designed to help meet statutory duties to the Equality Action, public sector equality duty and Scotland specific equality

⁴ <http://www.stir.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/equalityimpactassessments/> [accessed 16 Oct. 2017].

duties. Progress against the outcomes is measured through biennial reporting and the reports are available on the website.

- 6.5 The University is committed to evaluating and learning from the operation of our REF 2021 decision-making process as part of our ongoing commitment to promoting equality and diversity in research careers. A post-submission report will be carried out following completion of the decision-making process, with the outcomes reported to the University Court and embedded within our Single Equality Scheme.
- 6.6 In pursuit of our strategic commitment to equality, to ensure that we meet our responsibilities under current equalities legislation, and to comply with the funding bodies' requirements for REF 2021, this CoP has been designed to ensure that all eligible staff are treated equitably and fairly throughout the selection process.
- 6.7 This will be achieved by:
- The use of a single, centrally managed, decision-making process which is applied equally to all eligible staff, including those on part-time and/or fixed-term contracts;
 - The opportunity for eligible staff, as a formal part of the decision-making process, to ensure that all outputs which fulfil the REF2021 criteria are taken into account when determining the final UoA submission
 - The opportunity for staff to disclose any individual circumstances which they wish taken into account;
 - Full adherence to the guidance set out for the REF 2021 by the higher education funding bodies on the individual circumstances which permit a reduction without penalty in the number of research outputs contributed by members of staff to the output pool (see Annex F);
 - Monitoring equality and diversity demographics at key milestones during the decision-making process;
 - Mandatory Equality and Diversity training and briefing, tailored for REF2021 purposes, for all staff involved in REF decision making;
 - An appeals process for staff who do not consider that the processes set out in this Code have been followed correctly.
- 6.8 To facilitate best practice in ensuring that equality and diversity considerations are handled sensitively, fairly and consistently, a decision-making checklist has been devised for use across the University (**ANNEX E**). This seeks to embed the recommended actions under Principle 6 of *The Concordat* into practice.
- 6.9 Staff will be able to disclose any personal circumstances in a sensitive and confidential manner via the process set out in **ANNEX F**.

7. Roles and responsibilities

- 7.1 Final decisions on the UoA submissions will be made by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University ("the Principal") who will be advised on those decisions by the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG).

- 7.2 The full list of groups and individuals involved in developing the submission are listed in **ANNEX D**. The nature of and rationale for their involvement is indicated, including whether they perform an advisory or decision-making role.
- 7.3 Individuals involved in decision-making will receive appropriate training as outlined in **ANNEX E**.
- 7.4 The Institutional Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has provided advice on equality and diversity issues, including how to arrange equality and diversity training for all those involved with REF2021 preparations and possible membership of committees to consider staff circumstance applications.
- 7.5 An Appeals Panel will be established to hear any appeals made against the recommendations from the REF Advisory Group. Further details on how this appeals process will operate can be found in Section 11 below and membership of the panel can be found in **Annex D**.

8. Description of the decision making process

- 8.1 The decision making process on the University submission will be undertaken during 2019 and 2020, with an initial deadline of Summer 2019 to consider and confirm the Units of Assessment to which a final submission is likely to be made. It is acknowledged that the range of UoAs may continue to change and develop up to the submission date (March 2021) in accordance with the University's strategic objectives, changes in staffing, ongoing research management, and other factors. Any changes to submission intentions will be evaluated in line with this CoP and notified to relevant staff.
- 8.2 The final decisions will be informed by the results of the mock exercises held in 2016 and 2018 as well as internal reviews and the recognition that sufficient, viable impact case studies are available based on current and anticipated staff FTE.
- 8.3 The steps for determining the individual elements of the UoA submission are provided in Section 9 below.
- 8.4 The REF Advisory Group will base their recommendations solely on the selection criteria, information and procedures set out in this CoP. As provided for under the equality and diversity section, The REF Advisory Group will not be involved in considering staff circumstances but will take into account any decisions on reduction in individual contribution and/or reduction in output pool.
- 8.5 In /January 2021 the REF Advisory Group will review its initial recommendations and reach a final recommendation on final Unit of Assessment configurations. These decisions will be based on input and updates from UoA Co-ordinators which will be reported monthly.

- 8.6 For staff who join the University at any point during the process, they will undergo the same selection criteria process (see Section 9 below) as existing members of staff.
- 8.7 The final recommendations from the REF Advisory Group will be presented to the Principal for decision. The Principal will take advice from USPG in arriving at his decision and the Principal's decision shall be final.

9. Selection criteria

9.1 Staff Inclusion

The University will make a 100% submission of eligible staff who have significant responsibility for research (under the definitions and criteria specified in the Guidance to Submissions, paragraph 117) to REF2021.

- 9.2 Those staff who are eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF 2021 are determined by the University in accordance with the definitions, regulations and requirements set out for the exercise by the higher education funding bodies. The funding bodies define eligible staff as:

academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE [Full Time Equivalent] or greater and on the payroll of the submitting HEI on the census date (31st July 2020), and whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'

- 9.3 HR reports will be run monthly, using the REF criteria described in 9.2 above to determine the pool of eligible staff. These lists will be circulated by the REF Manager to Unit of Assessment co-ordinators for validation and to ensure that no staff member is omitted from their processes. Any errors should be noted to the REF Manager for investigation via HR. Currently these reports have been distributed monthly, but feedback from UoA co-ordinators and professional staff involved in REF preparations have suggested that every three months is a more suitable timetable.
- 9.4 Any changes in staff levels (either new appointments or leavers) should be notified to the REF Manager so that FTE, output and impact case study requirements can be re-calculated in a timely manner.

9.5 Independent Researcher

To meet the definition of Category A eligible staff, individuals on "research only" contracts must be independent researchers who are defined (para 131 of the Guidance on Submissions) as "an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme". Appropriate indicators may include:

- Leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project
- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement
- Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.

9.6 In addition, for Main Panels C and D, the following may also be considered as research independence:

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

The REF Advisory Group will consider evidence from Unit of Assessment Co-ordinators of one, or more, of the above conditions when considering those eligible as independent researchers. Where it is not completely clear that the criteria has or have been met, further confirmation may be sought from HR records and/or the individual staff member.

9.7 Where it is unclear that staff on “Research only” contracts may be eligible on the grounds of having “significant responsibility for research”, it will be the responsibility of UoA co-ordinators to flag up such individuals (using the HR-provided reports) and work with HR, REF Manager and the individual researcher to confirm their eligibility (or otherwise) against the REF criteria.

9.8 In addition, individuals who consider they fulfil the REF definition of “independent researcher” will be able to contact their UoA Co-ordinator and provide evidence that they are eligible for consideration. Any such requests will be considered by the REF Advisory Group against the eligibility criteria.

9.9 Research Assistants are not eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF2021 unless, exceptionally, they meet the definition of an independent researcher (see above) on the census date **and** meet the definition of Category A eligible staff. Research Assistants will be included in the report provided by HR to ensure full transparency but will be considered “out of scope” for REF2021 inclusion, unless the UoA Co-ordinators deem otherwise.

9.10 The University, following the principle of inclusivity, wishes to maximise the opportunity for academic staff to be considered for inclusion in submissions to REF2021. Accordingly, throughout its preparations, it will continue to keep under review the position of Research Assistants, other staff on research only contracts, and those staff on teaching only contracts. Where any such staff can demonstrate that they have an independent portfolio of research, they will be supported to achieve a status which makes them formally eligible for inclusion in REF2021 submissions and so for assessment under the process set out in this CoP. Equally, to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all staff, no expectation will be set that any academic staff currently identified as non-REF eligible shall (or be expected to) have an independent portfolio of research (unless specifically required by their contract of employment).

9.11 Assignment of researchers to Units of Assessment

The default position for all eligible staff will be to assign them to the Unit of Assessment closest to their home Division/Department. However, where it is identified that the research profile of an individual is a better fit in another UoA, the respective UoA Co-ordinators will consider the relative merits of re-assignment, including scenario modelling, output review and the potential for any impact case study requirement adjustment by either (or both) UoAs and make recommendations to REF Advisory Group. The Principal will make the final, strategic, decision on UoA assignments, taking account of the recommendations of the REF Advisory Group and USPG.

9.12 Selection of outputs

Equal consideration will be given to all eligible outputs regardless of (a) type of output and (b) career stage, age, sex, ethnicity, nationality, or contract type of the associated researcher. All eligible staff in a Unit of Assessment will have at least 1 output (unless agreement as a result of staff circumstances allows for return with zero outputs). The remainder of the pool of outputs will be determined through results of mock exercises and/or internal peer review to maximise the submission. However, an EIA evaluation of the composition of the remaining outputs will also be undertaken and used as part of the selection process.

9.13 The number of outputs required by a Unit of Assessment will be determined by the 2.5 x the FTE of the eligible staff as validated via the HR reports (see 9.4 above) and adjusted in light of any reductions allowed under staff circumstances.

9.14 Potential outputs for inclusion were externally reviewed as part of exercises held in both 2016 and 2018, with outputs being reviewed individually by assessors (2016 and 2018) and then given a final grading following the mock panel meetings (2018 only). Any associated comments noted by assessors against individual outputs will also be taken into account, including where provided, assessor level of confidence in output rating.

9.15 For outputs either published or due to be published after August 2018, the reviews will be undertaken internally. Where it is deemed that an output requires a specialist, external review, it will be the responsibility of UoA Co-ordinators to identify such outputs and arrange the external review. No output will be included in the submission if there is no evidence of either internal or external review. All output scores will be retained as part of an audit trail and will be used to confirm final output selection.

9.16 For staff who joined the institution after the 2018 mock exercise, their outputs will be reviewed in the same way as new outputs for existing staff, unless they can provide evidence of any review undertaken at their previous institution.

9.17 The inclusion of any outputs for emeritus and/or former members of staff will depend on the size and composition of individual Units of Assessment, and will only be considered if

they were published while the researcher was employed in the University. These outputs will have to have been assessed either through a mock exercise or by internal review, and have been judged to be of suitable quality to strengthen the available pool of outputs.

- 9.18 The University commits to only including the outputs of former members of staff who left as a result of retirement, resignation or following the end of a fixed-term contract.
- 9.19 While the outputs that are included in the final submission will be chosen to maximise the submission, it is acknowledged that there may be differences in the number of outputs aligned to individual staff and there is no expectation from the University that everyone's output contribution will be the same.
- 9.20 Staff will be notified of the outputs submitted to each of the external reviews in 2016 and 2018, and the scores (and comments where applicable) given by the external assessors. For outputs published after these reviews, staff will be notified of the results of any internal reviews. However, the final decision on which outputs are submitted as part of the UoA output pool will be taken by the REF Advisory Group, based on recommendations from UoA Coordinators.
- 9.21 When considering the effect of any individual output reduction, the UoA Co-ordinator may recommend no reduction to the overall pool as there are sufficient available outputs available to provide a full complement. Alternatively, where the number of individual reductions have a material effect on the overall pool, the recommendation may be to seek a unit reduction via an application to the UKRI REF Team, or to consider whether the UoA can absorb this due to the available contribution of other staff members.
- 9.22 Selection of impact case studies
- The final case studies submitted for each Unit of Assessment will be chosen from the strongest, eligible studies, informed by the results of the 2016 and 2018 mock exercise as well as internal and cross-Faculty reviews to be held in 2019 and 2020, co-ordinated by the Research Impact Officer and the UoA Impact Champions. The Impact Sub-Group will make recommendations to the REF Advisory Group on the strongest case studies for submission.
- 9.23 The UoA Impact Champions will be responsible for identifying and notifying any case studies which were not available before the 2018 mock exercise, and these will be subject to the same review as existing, known case studies. The Research Impact Officer will oversee the development of case studies in conjunction with the UoA Impact Champions, ensuring that they conform to the data requirements in the Guidance on Submissions.
- 9.24 The number of case studies to be submitted will be determined by the individual UoA staff FTE on the census date, and in line with the Guidance on Submissions criteria.

9.25 Staff Circumstances

The funding bodies have set out a range of circumstances which may have impacted on the ability of eligible staff to undertake research during the assessment period for REF 2021. Where such circumstances apply, the number of outputs contributed by an individual to the pool of outputs may be reduced without penalty in the assessment. These measures are designed to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all eligible staff, and to support equality and diversity in research careers.

- 9.26 The University, under the provisions set out in this CoP, is committed to adhere fully to this guidance. The provisions relating to individual staff circumstances have been enhanced and extended since REF 2014. For ease of reference, they are reproduced in full (**Annex F**) from the published guidance. The University recognises the complexity of this guidance, and will pay particular attention to explaining it to staff throughout the REF2021 preparations and roadshows will be held following approval of the document. Support with this aspect of the REF guidance, as with all REF administrative matters can be sought, at any time, from the REF Manager: ref@stir.ac.uk; extension 6440.
- 9.27 From Summer 2019, subject to approval of this CoP by the REF Team on behalf of the funding bodies, eligible staff will be invited to submit any circumstances that they wish to be made known and which have impacted on their ability to undertake research at any point throughout the REF2021 period.
- 9.28 The criteria for reduction due to staff circumstances and a template form can be found at **ANNEX F**. The form will be available in both electronic and hard copy form and it should be returned to HR for verification of factual information against the employee HR record before being forwarded to the REF Manager to manage the process for consideration of reduction in output contribution.
- 9.29 The initial expectation of an individual's contribution to any UoA output pool, as a result of declaring staff circumstances, will be a minimum reduction of 0.5 outputs. However, this contribution may be reduced further in line with any tariff already determined by the UKRI REF Team and provided as Table L1 and Table L2 in Annex F. For more complex circumstances, the judgement of the sub-Committee will be made in line with the guidance provided in Annex F; for all applications any reduction would be up to a maximum reduction of 1.5 outputs. In exceptional cases, where the circumstances have prevented an individual from producing any eligible output during the assessment period, an application for removing the minimum of one requirement will be made to the UKRI REF Team.
- 9.30 In recognition of the often sensitive and confidential nature of such circumstances, and with the aim of encouraging staff to disclose relevant circumstances, cases will be considered by an independent Committee, supported by the REF Manager. It will assess the applications against the REF2021 guidance and determine any individual researcher reduction and /or whether a request needs to be made via the UKRI REF Team.

- 9.31 The timing of the meetings will be determined by the number of applications received, but will be held at least every two months, with the final meeting being scheduled for November 2020. Should any further applications be received after this date, meetings will be scheduled within 7 days to consider such applications and confirm any reductions.
- 9.32 Decisions on output reductions will be fed back to the individual staff member, in writing, by the Chair of the Sub-Committee.
- 9.33 The REF Manager will be responsible for notifying the relevant Unit of Assessment Co-ordinator of any reduction in individual researcher output contribution, as well as any impact on the output pool, but the circumstance(s) which led to the output reduction will be kept confidential.
- 9.34 The REF Manager and UoA Co-ordinators will monitor the cumulative effect of any approved reductions and compare this across the total number of available, eligible outputs for each UoA. Where output reductions have a material effect on the eligible output pool, this decision will be referred to the REF Advisory Group who will then make the appropriate request to the UKRI REF Team.
- 9.35 A circumstances report will be provided following the final submission, in accordance with paragraph 73 of the Guidance on Codes of Practice. Further information on this will be published by the UKRI REF Team later in 2019 and the process and format of the report to be used by the University will be reflected in this CoP.

10. Information for decision making

- 10.1 In arriving at recommendations which will maximise the individual Unit of Assessment configurations, the REF Advisory Group will use the following sources of information (listed in line with Part 3: data requirements and definitions of the Guidance on submissions):
- Staff data, derived from the University's HR record, covering those pieces of information required on staff by the REF Guidance on Submissions;
 - Consideration of any reductions approved through the staff circumstances appeal process;
 - Information on the number of eligible outputs from which the final selection can be made;
 - Opinions on the quality of research outputs given by Heads of Divisions and/or Unit of Assessment Co-ordinators, advised as they deem appropriate by senior colleagues (internal review);
 - Opinions on the quality of research outputs given by external assessors appointed by the University to assist with the mock exercises undertaken in 2016 and 2018;
 - Where appropriate, opinions on the quality of research outputs, impact case studies and environment statements externally assessed post-2018 mock exercise;

- Internal review (including cross-Faculty) of impact case studies (informed by assessor comments received as part of the 2016 and 2018 mock exercises);
- Impact Champions and Impact Sub-Group assessment of impact case studies;
- Assessment of environment cases (informed by assessor comments received as part of the 2016 and 2018 mock exercises);
- The academic judgement of members of the REF Advisory Group.

10.2 The REF Advisory Group may also use some or all of the following sources of information to inform its judgements:

- The statements of Criteria and Working Methods for REF2021 set out by the panels appointed by the funding bodies to conduct the assessment;
- Citation analysis on research outputs may be used to inform the final decisions;
- Opinions on the fit between research outputs of individuals and the profile of research being presented in proposed Unit of Assessment submissions, from Heads of Divisions, Heads of Faculty and/or external assessors;
- Examination of research outputs.

10.3 Minutes of all REF Advisory Group meetings will be retained by the REF Manager and destroyed after the results are published in April 2022. These will be made available as part of any appeal.

11. Appeals process

11.1 Any appeals made against the University's REF2021 submission preparations will be considered by an appeals committee. The members of this Committee will not have had any previous direct involvement with the REF preparations and/or played a part in decisions involving the individual concerned.

11.2 Appeals may be made by any member of staff not included in the submission who feels that they are eligible on the grounds that:

- They fulfil the criteria to be considered as an independent researcher; and/or
- They fulfil the criteria of having significant responsibility for research.

11.3 Appeals must be submitted in writing to the REF Manager within 10 working days of the final REF configurations being determined, stating the reason(s) for the appeal, together with any supporting information. This will be supplied to the Appeals Panel along with all information previously made available to the REF Advisory Group. All appeals must be made by December 2020 and decisions reached by February 2021.

11.4 A date for the Appeals Panel will be set in advance to allow appeals to be heard, decisions communicated to both individual researchers and the REF Advisory Group and for any remedial actions to be undertaken prior to date of final submission. No further right of appeal will be available.

12. Communication and dissemination

- 12.1 The CoP will be developed through several different ways: reflecting on the CoP developed for REF2014, and updating in line with the guidance published for REF2021. There will also be a 2-week consultation period during which the views and comments of staff committees, trade unions, Faculty committees and individuals will be sought. The document will be available electronically and via the internal website and alternative formats will be made available if required. Comments from both committees and individual staff are welcomed and should be sent to ref@stir.ac.uk for collation by the REF Manager.
- 12.2 All responses to the consultation will be read and analysed in a consistent manner. For reasons of practicality, a fair and balanced summary of responses rather than individual responses themselves will be used to inform the final document.
- 12.3 The approved CoP will be published on the staff internal webpage, and publicised to all staff through the University's Staff Roundup, internal webpages and copies will be circulated via Divisions and Faculties for wider dissemination. The Code will be sent in writing to all eligible staff absent from work (other than for short-term sickness or annual leave) at the time it is first published. This Code will be made available in alternative formats as required, on request to the Research and Innovation Office.
- 12.4 Where requested, the REF Manager will attend Faculty and/or Division meetings to provide further explanation on the CoP, either during the consultation or after publication of the final approved version. Staff can also contact the REF Manager direct if they have any concerns over any aspect of the CoP.

13. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

- 13.1 EIAs will be carried out throughout the University REF2021 preparations. These will consist of an initial equality screening form which will determine whether a policy is relevant to equality and the level of priority it should be given in terms of undergoing full EIA. Where any changes are identified as part of an EIA, an action plan will be developed, implemented, reviewed and monitored. EIAs will be undertaken in consultation with the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the results notified to all relevant parties for consideration and further action (if required).
- 13.2 An EIA will be undertaken on the CoP itself and the analysis will be used by the REF Advisory Group to inform the final policy and procedures contained within it. The EIA will consider whether or not the CoP discriminates against any of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 Scotland; advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 13.3 EIAs will be carried out on both the 2016 research review and the 2018 mock exercise, but it is acknowledged that both of these exercises were carried out without an approved

process for reviewing papers or identifying independent researchers. However, the results will be taken into account when considering the available pool of outputs for each Unit of Assessment.

13.4 Initial EIAs will be undertaken after the initial selection of outputs has been made and further EIAs will be carried out as a result of:

- Significant changes in staff (both new starts and leavers)
- contributions of individual staff due to staff circumstances
- any output reductions applicable to the Unit of Assessment where staff circumstances have had a material impact on the eligible output pool
- Significant changes in the eligible output pool and subsequent output selection

13.5 EIAs will be carried out on the membership of all Committees at the beginning of the process, and will only be updated due to any changes in membership. These can be found in **Annex G**.

13.6 A final EIA will be undertaken once final UoA configurations have been confirmed but prior to final submission. The EIA and report will include a final analysis of the results and make any necessary recommendations for further actions and improvements.

13.7 Analysis of all EIAs will be provided to REF Advisory Group and USPG, as well as UoA Co-ordinators and where necessary, action plans will be put in place to address identified issues.

13.8 The results of all EIAs undertaken as part of the REF preparations will be included in the CoP, as **Annex G**.

14. Further information

14.1 For any questions regarding this CoP, please contact the REF Manager in Research and Innovation Services on 01786 466440 (internal extension 6440) or by email to: ref@stir.ac.uk.

Timetable 1: Decision Making Preparatory Phase

NB: The changes in dates have been made due to the COVID-19 pandemic and revised REF2021 submission deadline

Date	Action
January to February 2019	Review of mock exercise results by Unit of Assessment (UoA) Co-ordinators, Heads of Divisions and Faculty Deans Feedback of output assessments to individual members of staff Create individual action plans for all staff, based on mock exercise feedback
January 2019 to March 2019	Create detailed UoA action plans and impact action plans for review and discussion with Deputy Principal (Research)
March 2019 – June 2019	Update action plans on regular basis and in advance of update meetings with Deputy Principal (Research). These will be held every two months unless significant issues are identified which necessitate greater frequency Undertake scenario modelling of staff and outputs, with minimum one output per individual. Conduct an EIA on model, identifying any imbalances, taking actions to address where possible Carry out further EIAs where output selection is materially altered as a result of staff changes and availability of new outputs
June 2019	Initial UoA configurations to be submitted to REF Advisory Group EIA to be undertaken on configurations
June 2019- October 2020	UoA Co-ordinators to monitor publication deadlines for forthcoming outputs Update staff and output configurations and conduct further EIAs where these materially change the UoA configuration Regular REF Advisory Group meetings to monitor UoA configurations and consider any identified issues
November 2020	UoA Co-ordinators to submit final UoA configuration recommendations to REF Advisory Group
January 2021	REF Advisory Group make final recommendations to USPG
January 2021	Final REF Submission to be approved by Principal, on recommendation of USPG
February/March 2021	UoA Co-ordinators to notify REF Advisory Group of any further amendments to UoA configurations as a result of changes to output selection or outcomes of any appeals

Timetable 2: Decision Making Process

NB: The changes in dates have been made due to the COVID-19 pandemic and revised REF2021 submission deadline

Date	Action
January to June 2019	Monthly REF Advisory Group meetings to discuss strategy for each UoA and consider any issues identified at individual UoA level Regular update reports to be provided to USPG
By summer 2019	Equality and Diversity training completed by all staff who have responsibility for REF preparations, either in an advisory or decision-making capacity
June 2019	Submission of draft Code of Practice for approval Initial UoA configurations to be considered by REF Advisory Group and recommendations made to USPG EIAs to be undertaken on initial configurations
Summer/Autumn 2019	Approval of Code of Practice by SFC, with final version being disseminated widely within institution, or request for amendments to be made
September/October 2019	Decision, or request for further deliberations, received from USPG on UoA configurations to be taken forward
August 2019 to November 2020	Applications open for staff to voluntarily declare any circumstances which have impacted on their ability to undertake research. Any applications received after November 2020 will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis
September 2019	Resubmission of Code of Practice
December 2019	Approved Code of Practice to be published by UKRI REF Team
January 2020 to October 2020	REF Advisory Group to provide updates for USPG on UoA configurations
March 2020	Deadline for notifying UKRI REF Team of any output reduction requests where the number and nature of circumstances received within a single UoA has had a material impact on the eligible output pool; or where a request is being made for a staff submission with zero outputs
November 2020	Deadline for consideration and decisions for staff circumstances applications
December 2020	Review of all UoA submissions by REF Advisory Group, and resolving any queries/issues with UoA Co-ordinators. Deadline for any appeals to be lodged
January 2021	Final review of UoA configurations and recommendation/endorsement from USPG to Principal
February 2021	Deadline for all appeals to be completed
March 2021	Final upload of approved submission to REF submission system, working through any validation errors. Final EIA undertaken post-submission



ANNEX A

REF DATA COLLECTION STATEMENTS

Summary

The purpose of the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF2021) is to assess the quality of UK research and to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research by the four UK higher education funding bodies. The REF is managed by the REF team, based at Research England (RE), on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies. RE is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and under this arrangement UKRI has the role of ‘data controller’ for personal data submitted by the University to the REF.

1. The information submitted by HEIs to the REF will be collected, stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. Information will be submitted to the REF via a secure website. HEIs will be able to access only their own institution’s data, except in the case of joint submissions where HEIs can grant access to other HEIs in the joint submission. Information will be processed for the purposes of conducting and evaluating the REF. Information may be shared with other organisations to facilitate this, and will be shared with panel members (comprising panel chairs, members, assessors, advisers, secretaries and observers) for the purpose of assessing submissions. Panel members are all bound by confidentiality and data security arrangements.
2. The following data will be extracted and passed to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to enable verification: for each individual submitted as research-active in Category A, their Unit of Assessment, HESA staff identifier code, and date of birth. The information from HEIs will be used to monitor the diversity of staff selected for the REF and parts of the submissions will be published on the internet following release of the results in December 2021.

Staff Data Collection

1. If you are a researcher who has been included as part of our submission to the REF 2021, in 2020 some of the information we hold about you will be sent to UKRI REF Team for the purpose of the REF2021. The information will not be in coded form and your name and details such as your date of birth, research groups, and contract dates will be provided along with details of your research. If you are submitted with individual circumstances that allow a reduction in the number of outputs submitted, without penalty, some details of your personal circumstances will be provided.
2. You can find further information about what data are being collected on the REF website, at www.ref.ac.uk in particular publication 2019/01, ‘Guidance on submissions’.

Sharing Information About Individual Researchers

UKRI may pass your data, or parts of it, to any of the following organisations that need it to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research and to carry out their statutory functions connected with funding higher education:

- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE)
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Some of your data (Unit of Assessment, HESA staff identifier code and date of birth) will also be passed to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to enable it to verify coded data returned to it as part of our HESA staff return (see www.hesa.ac.uk). Data returned to the REF will be linked to that held on the HESA staff record to allow UKRI and the organisations listed above to conduct additional analysis into the REF and fulfil their statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 (England, Wales and Scotland) or the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Northern Ireland).

UKRI and the organisations listed above will use the information to analyse and monitor the REF2021. This may result in information being released to other users including academic researchers or consultants (commissioned by the funding bodies), to carry out research or analysis, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679). Where information not previously published is released to third parties, this will be anonymised where practicable.

UKRI will require that anyone who has access to your data, held in UKRI's records, paper or electronic, will respect its confidentiality and will only process it in accordance with instructions issued for the purposes specified by UKRI.

Parts of your data will be passed to the REF expert panels and the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (whose members are independent of UKRI) for the purpose of conducting a systematic evaluation of submissions, in accordance with predetermined criteria and methods. Panels will make judgments about the material contained in submissions and will not form quality judgments about individuals. All panel members are bound by confidentiality arrangements.

Publishing information about your part in our submission

The results of the assessment exercise will be published by UKRI, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies, in December 2021. The published results will not be based on individual performance nor identify individuals.

Those parts of submissions that contain factual data and textual information about research activity will also be published by UKRI, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies, and will be made available online. Published information is likely to include **textual information including impact case studies in which you may be referenced**. Your name and job title may be included in this textual information. Other personal and contractual details, including your date

of birth and all information about individual staff circumstances will be removed prior to publication.

UKRI will also publish a list of the outputs submitted by us in each UOA. This list will not be listed by author name.

Data about personal circumstances

You may voluntarily disclose personal circumstances which could permit us to submit your information to the REF without the 'minimum of one' requirement (without penalty), or to submit a reduced number of outputs without penalty. If (and only if) we apply either form of reduction of outputs, we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the 'Guidance on submissions' document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted. The process by which the University will employ for handling staff circumstances can be found in **Annex F**.

In making the REF submission, the University will be required to notify the UKRI REF Team of any staff circumstances where we are applying either for (a) the removal of the minimum of one output from each staff member; or (b) a unit reduction. In both cases we will have to provide sufficient information to enable the UKRI REF Team to identify the staff member(s) for whom the reduction is being requested: this will include HESA Staff ID and/or internal Staff ID as well as details of the circumstance and a brief statement describing how this has affected an individual's ability to produce an eligible output (for a); and in the case of requesting a unit reduction (b) we will provide HESA Staff ID and details of each individual staff circumstances, along with a supporting statement with the rationale for a unit reduction.

Any application(s) will be made on the recommendation of the REF Advisory Group but access to the REF submission system (by which any output applications are made) will be restricted to the REF Manager who will make the application(s) on behalf of the REF Advisory Group. Where this data is held outside of the submission system, it will be kept confidential and any electronic files will have restricted access and be password protected. Once the REF2021 results have been published, this data will be deleted and this will happen no later than the end of January 2022.

Submitted data will be kept confidential to the UKRI REF team, the Equalities and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements]. The UKRI REF team will destroy the submitted data about individuals' circumstances on completion of the assessment phase.

As set out above, unless redacted, the information to be published by UKRI, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies, will include a single list of all the outputs submitted by us. The list of outputs will include standard bibliographic data (including the author name) for each output, but will not be listed by author name.

If you have any concerns about the data which the University will be submitting, you can contact the REF Manager: ext 6440 or email: ref@stir.ac.uk.

Accessing your personal data

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR, you have the right to see and receive a copy of any personal information that UKRI holds about you. Further information about the Act and GRPR, and guidance on making a subject access request, can be found on the RE web-site at <https://re.ukri.org/about-us/policies-standards/foi-data-protection/>

If you have any concerns about your information being used for these purposes, please contact:

Data Protection Officer
UK Research and Innovation
Polaris House
Swindon, SN2 1FL

Email: dataprotection@ukri.org

ANNEX B: The seven principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the higher potential to achieve excellence in research.

Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.

Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

Principle 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

ANNEX C: REF Strategy 2017-21

REF Strategy 2017-2021

Our Vision in Research

Aligned with the University's Strategic Plan 2016-2021, our vision in research is to be recognised across the world as a University that addresses the needs of society through innovative interdisciplinary research and by sharing our knowledge with the world. To achieve this we are seeking to:

- Be one of the top 25 universities in the UK
- Increase our income by £50 million
- Enhance our research profile by 100 percent.

As a driver for and indicator of success in achieving these ambitious objectives, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a strategic priority which informs our actions to connect, innovate and transform. Building on the University Research Strategy 2016-2021, this document outlines the key objectives and measurable targets for REF 2021 and details the strategic actions which will be undertaken to achieve these.

Key objectives and measurable targets

With a view to contributing to the achievement of the institutional objectives, our ambition for REF 2021 is to:

- Be one of the top 25 universities for outputs, impact and environment.
- Increase our share of mainstream quality-related (QR) research funding⁵
- Enhance our research profile by 100 percent.

Our success will be measured against the following targets:

Position

- Improve our institutional position in the REF Times Higher Education rankings, achieving an upper quartile position for 50% of our Unit of Assessment submissions.⁶
- Increase the number of research active staff towards a target of 500 and make a 100% submission to the REF.

Income

- Increase our share of the Scottish Funding Council's Research Excellence Grant (REG).⁷

Profile

⁵ Contributing to the institutional target to 'increase our income by 50 million', Strategic Plan 2016-21.

⁶ Stirling achieved an upper quartile position for four of the fifteen UoAs it submitted to REF2014 (27%) and the aim would be to achieve an upper quartile position for at least half of the UoA submissions to REF2021

⁷ For the academic year 2016/17, the University of Stirling received a Research Excellence Grant of £6,554,000. The total amount allocated by the Scottish Funding Council was £231,814,000. The full allocation for 2017/18 is £7,192,000 from a total of £231,815,000 (3.1%).

- Increase the number of Stirling academics serving on REF panels compared to 2014.⁸
- Increase international collaboration by 100 percent.⁹
- Secure a place among the world's top 200 universities for research citations per academic member of staff.¹⁰

Strategic actions

To achieve these targets, meet the strategic objectives and achieve our vision, we will:

Connect people and processes

- 1. Ensuring effective communication and collaboration across the University.**
 - REF Manager to attend Faculty/Division Research Committee and Professional Services meetings as appropriate.
 - Regular reporting to the University Research Committee (URC), Academic Council (AC), University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG) and Research Performance Improvement Group (RPIG).
 - REF Manager to attend quarterly meetings of the Institutional Athena Swan Group.
 - Establish and run a REF Advisory Group and working groups (UoA and Impact sub-groups) to support effective preparation and well-informed decision-making.
 - Ensure regular and consistent information to all researchers through various channels.
 - 2. Engaging with and contributing to external REF-related initiatives.**
 - Achieve representation on REF panels (advisory panels, main panels and sub-panels).
 - Attend regular meetings of the Scottish REF Managers' Group and relevant UK events/meetings.
 - REF Manager to co-champion new REF ARMA Special Interest Group (SIG).
 - Volunteer to participate in REF pilot processes.
 - 3. Managing the REF preparation and submission process effectively and efficiently.**
 - Ensure effective project management and iterative planning.
 - Have full submission ready 6 months prior to deadline.
- ### Be innovative in forming our submission
- 4. Translating policy into practice, learning lessons from REF 2014 and responding resourcefully to the new REF rules.**
 - Monitor and ensure open access compliance.
 - Ensure HESA submissions which are utilised for REF are accurate.
 - Develop Code of Conduct to guide the formation of our submission (including selection of outputs and impact case studies, and Unit of Assessment configuration).
 - Utilise 2016/17 internal research review analysis and run a Mock REF in 2018 to inform decision-making.

⁸ The following five Stirling academics were REF 2014 panelists: William Lauder, Alison Bowes, Phyllis Lee, John Gardner and Karen Boyle

⁹ 2014-2017: 1,258 collaborating institutions/1,064 internationally co-authored publications so target for 2018-2021 is 2128 (figures from SciVal).

¹⁰ The University of Stirling was ranked 298 in 2018 QS World University rankings for Citations per Faculty.



5. Utilising systems to enhance our research profile and streamline the submission process.

- Facilitate researcher engagement with Research Hub to ensure visibility of research and appropriate documentation of outputs and impact.
- Contribute to the development of the Worktribe REF module and utilise the system to form and submit REF submission.

6. Promoting the impact of our research on society and the economy.

- Appoint Faculty/Division Impact Champions to coordinate and monitor the development of impact case studies and statements.
- Provide tools and training to enable researchers to plan for, monitor and evaluate research impact (including the ongoing capture of corroborating evidence).
- Support development and implementation of Research Communications Strategy to ensure clear and consistent messaging through all media channels including the website.

Transform our research outputs, impact and environment

7. Building on the success of REF 2014 and expanding current levels of research activity.

- Support the development and implementation of Faculty Research Plans and Strategic Research Funding Plans to drive and enable research activity.
- Ensure the recruitment of academic staff to strengthen our research active profile.
- Develop an institutional statement on the responsible use of metrics and undertake appropriate analysis in accordance with this.

8. Developing and enhancing research leadership across all academic areas by creating an ethos that encourages personal development, interdisciplinary work and mentoring.

- Support the development and implementation of mentoring and peer review processes within and across Faculties.
- Facilitate use of SciVal and Altmetrics by Faculties, Divisions, research groups and individual researchers to inform research plans and publication strategies.

9. Nurturing a culture of success by developing our research talent and providing an environment in which all researchers (early, mid and late-career) thrive.

- Run a REF-specific Researcher Development Programme (commencing with the Researchers' Forum on 31 October 2017) to ensure that all researchers are:
 - Informed about the REF and understand what 4* research looks like.
 - Enabled to plan and implement their research effectively.
 - Supported to produce world-leading outputs, have outstanding impact and contribute to a vibrant and sustainable research environment.
- Produce a 'Writing for REF' series of brochures to researchers understand the requirements of REF and what it takes to get a 4* rating.
- Support the Institutional and Faculty/Divisional Athena Swan work and the maintenance of the HR Excellence in Research Award.

ANNEX D: REF 2021 roles and responsibilities

The Principal will sign-off the final REF submission on behalf of the University. This will be based on the recommendation of the University Strategy & Policy Group, which in turn will have been advised by the REF Advisory Group (and its sub-groups).

The membership of the relevant advisory and decision-making groups are provided below:

University Strategy & Policy Group (USPG)	
Membership	Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Senior Deputy Principal (Operational Strategy and External Affairs), Deputy Principal (Research), Deputy Principal (Education & Students), Deputy Principal (Internationalisation), University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Secretary and Executive Director of Student, Academic and Corporate Services, Executive Director of Finance, Executive Director of HR & Organisation Development, Executive Director of Communications, Marketing & Recruitment
Selection Process	All senior University officers have been appointed through open advertisement, in line with the University's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice, in compliance with the University's Equal Opportunities Statement. Members are appointed to the Group because of their University role.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	Based on the recommendations of the REF Advisory Group, USPG will be asked to consider the University submission and recommend its approval by the Principal.

REF Advisory Group (RAG)	
Membership	Deputy Principal (Research), Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, Dean of Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Dean of Stirling Management School, Dean of Faculty of Natural Sciences, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport, Dean of the Institute for Advanced Studies, Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dean of Research Impact (post vacant as at February 2019), Director of Research & Innovation Services, REF Manager, Research Impact Officer
Selection Process	Members were either appointed to their posts through open advertisement or internal advertisement, but in line with the University's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice, and complying with the University's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed to the REF Advisory Group because of their University role.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	The RAG will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - undertake University-wide REF planning; - commission and review external assessments of research; - ensure that systems for recording and uploading REF documentation are robust and effective



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - determine criteria for selection for eligible output pool and impact case studies - report on progress to USPG - submit the final University submission to USPG for consideration and approval.
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Unit of Assessment Sub-Group	
Membership	REF Manager, Unit of Assessment Co-ordinators (as of February 2019 they number 16), Faculty Research Support/Professional services staff, Chair of the University Environment Working Group, Research and Scholarly Communications Manager, Research Data Librarian, Senior Research Librarian, Public Affairs Manager, Internal Communications Officer, Research Accountant, Research Systems Officer, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development (or nominated representative)
Selection Process	The Unit of Assessment Co-ordinators were nominated and approved internally within their respective Divisions and Faculties. The research support and professional staff members were appointed due to their role within the University.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	The UoA Sub-Group reports to and advises the REF Advisory Group on operational issues in relation to REF2021. Given its size, this sub-groups operates as a virtual group (with occasional meetings as required) and submits monthly reports to REF Advisory Group.

Impact Sub-Group	
Membership	Dean of Research Impact (post vacant as at February 2019), Faculty & Division Impact Champions, Associate Deans for Impact, Public Affairs Manager, Communications Manager, Research Impact Officer, REF Manager
Selection Process	Faculty and Division Impact Champions were nominated and approved internally by their respective Divisions and Faculties. The other members of the Group were appointed due to their role within the University.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	The Impact Sub-Group reports to and advises the REF Advisory Group on the impact component of REF 2021. The group is intended to facilitate the sharing of best practice, provide a forum for discussion and support the development of high-quality impact case studies and impact templates. Meetings are held monthly and reports are provided to the REF Advisory Group.

External Assessors for Mock Exercises	
Membership	Recognised academic experts, from outside the University of Stirling, of international standing in the relevant UoA. This is not a 'fixed' body of people and may vary for different mock exercises
Selection Process	Selected by the Deputy Principal (Research) from nominations made by Faculties, following consultation with Divisions



Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	To provide expert academic feedback to the Deputy Principal (Research), Faculty Deans and Unit of Assessment Co-ordinators on draft submissions (outputs, impact case studies and environment statements). External Assessors will not make decisions regarding the configuration of individual Units of Assessment.
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Appeals Committee	
Membership	Senior Deputy Principal and Institutional Dean of Equality, Inclusion and Diversity, supported by REF Manager
Selection Process	The Committee members have been selected due to their role within the University
Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	To consider any and all appeals made by individual staff in line with section 11 of this CoP

Staff Circumstances Committee	
Proposed Membership	Deputy Principal, two Institutional Deans, one representative from HR and/or one representative from student services, supported by the REF Manager
Selection Process	Members will be selected and appointed due to their role within existing University structures and in the case of HR and Student Services, their professional experience in dealing with complex staff/student circumstances.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2021	To consider any/all staff circumstance applications, decide any application output reduction and make recommendations on any requests which need to be referred to the UKRI REF Team in accordance with the Guidance on Submissions documentation as well as the provisions of this CoP. They will also ensure a consistent approach with the University's agreed strategy for equality and diversity

ANNEX E: Training requirements for REF decision-makers (mandatory and recommended)

All members of staff within the University who have a role to play in any aspect of the REF2021 submission will be required to have participated in an Equality and Diversity training workshop which will be developed by the Deputy Principal (Research) and the REF Manager in conjunction with the Institutional Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Where changes occur in roles, new appointees will be required to undergo training.

Date of Training Sessions

Unconscious Bias for University Decision-makers Training Workshop Tuesday 25 th September 2018	Attended by staff now involved as part of the REF2021 advisory and decision-making processes
Unconscious Bias for University Decision-makers Training Workshop Wednesday 26 th September 2018	Attended by staff now involved as part of the REF2021 advisory and decision-making processes
REF Equalities and Diversity training workshop 1* Thursday 19 th September 2019 (2 sessions will be held)	Attended by members of internal Committees with decision-making responsibilities and staff with advisory roles
REF Equalities and Diversity training workshop 2* Thursday 26 th September 2019 (2 sessions will be held)	Attended by members of Committees with decision-making responsibilities as well as staff with advisory roles
REF Equalities and Diversity training workshop 2* Monday 7 th October 2019 (2 sessions will be held)	Attended by members of Committees with decision-making responsibilities as well as staff with advisory roles
REF Equalities and Diversity refresher training workshop One session will be held on each of the following: Thursday 19 th September, Thursday 26 th September and Monday 7 th October 2019	Attended by members of Committees with decision-making responsibilities as well as staff with advisory roles
Additional REF Equalities and Diversity training	Provided on a one-to-one basis for staff new to any role with responsibility for REF preparations

*Dates will be scheduled for September/October

Where staff have attended the workshops held in September 2018 they will be not be required to re-take the full training, but will need to participate in a refresher course.

Decision-making Checklist

September 2020

1. Have all eligible staff been identified?
2. Has the Unit of Assessment Co-ordinator identified and taken into account all eligible outputs?
3. Is the UoA Co-ordinator aware of any decisions regarding reduction in output contribution for any individual member of staff?
4. Is each member of staff aligned with at least one output?
5. Once the total required number of outputs have been selected, has an EIA been undertaken and are any remedial actions required as a result of this?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “No”, further consideration should be given to this/these areas.

ANNEX F: REDUCTIONS FOR STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES

The UK funding bodies are committed to supporting and promoting equality and diversity in research careers and have put in place the following measures to recognise the effect that individuals’ circumstances may have on research productivity. Unlike REF2014, any output reduction will not be against an individual as such, but against their expected contribution to the overall pool of eligible outputs.

A template has been designed which should make it easier for staff to declare any circumstances that have affected their ability to conduct research during the assessment period and this can be found at the end of the Annex. For confidentiality, these forms should be returned to HR (**not** UoA Co-ordinator or Head of Division) who will then work with the REF Manager on applicable output reductions. The template will be available online for individuals to either complete and submit or to download and complete and then return either by email or internal post.

Below is the extract from Annex L of the ‘Guidance on submissions’ document (2019/01). This Annex should not be read in isolation, but should be read in conjunction with the further detailed information provided in Part 3, Section 1 paragraphs 152 to 163.

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

Early career researchers

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

Table L1: Early career researchers: Permitted reduction in outputs

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

Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks

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

Table L2: Secondments or career breaks: Permitted reduction in outputs

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

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

Qualifying periods of family-related leave

- 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 leave¹¹, or shared parental leave¹² lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020.
- This approach to reductions for qualifying periods of family-related leave is based on the funding bodies' considered judgement following consultation in the previous REF exercise that the impact of such a period of leave and the arrival of a new child into a family is generally sufficiently disruptive of an individual's research work to justify the specified reduction.

¹¹ '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'.

¹² '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.



8. While the above reduction of outputs due to additional paternity or adoption leave is subject to a minimum period of four months, shorter periods of such leave could be taken into account as follows:
 - a. By applying a reduction in outputs where there are additional circumstances, for example where the period of leave had an impact in combination with other factors such as ongoing childcare responsibilities.
 - b. By combining the number of months for shorter periods of such leave in combination with other circumstances, according to Table L2.
9. Any period of maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave that qualifies for the reduction of an output under the provisions in paragraph 6 above may in individual cases be associated with prolonged constraints on work that justify more than the defined reduction set out. In such cases, the circumstances should be explained in the request.

Combining circumstances

10. Where individuals have had a combination of circumstances that have a defined reduction in outputs, these may be accumulated up to a maximum reduction of 1.5 outputs. For each circumstance, the relevant reduction should be applied and added together to calculate the total maximum reduction.
11. Where Table L1 is combined with Table L2, the period of time since 1 January 2014 up until the individual met the definition of an ECR should be calculated in months, and Table L2 should be applied.
12. When combining circumstances, only one circumstance should be taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously.
13. Where an individual has a combination of circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs **and** additional circumstances that require a judgement, the institution should explain this in the reduction request so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances. The circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs to be requested should be calculated according to the guidance above (paragraphs 2 to 10).

Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1–6

14. In UOAs 1–6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to one, without penalty in the assessment, for Category A submitted staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 July 2020.
15. This allowance is made on the basis that the staff concerned are normally significantly constrained in the time they have available to undertake research during the assessment period. Where the individual meets the criteria in paragraph 14, and has had significant additional circumstances – for any of the other reasons set out in the ‘Guidance on submissions’ in paragraph 160 – the institution can make a case for further reductions in the unit reduction request.



Circumstances requiring a judgement about reductions

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

Updated September 2020

Following the resumption of REF2021 on 31st July 2020, the Guidance on Revisions to REF2021 document (REF2020/02) set out updated criteria under which staff could apply for the removal of ‘minimum of one’ output requirement. The full text, taken from the Guidance, is reproduced below:

Removing the ‘minimum of one’ requirement

This section describes how and when institutions may remove the minimum of one requirement where the combination of individual staff circumstances earlier in the assessment period and the effects of COVID-19 has had an exceptional effect so that a staff member has not been able to produce an eligible output. This provision follows the existing REF6a reduction process, to ensure the equitable treatment of equality-related circumstances in allowing removal of the minimum of one requirement.

In addition to the existing guidance for REF6a reductions, the minimum of one output requirement may be removed for a Category A submitted staff member that has not been able to produce an eligible output¹, where the following circumstances apply:

- a. Output(s) in the process of being produced have been affected by COVID-19 during the assessment period (1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020). This includes effects due to applicable circumstances (such as ill health, caring responsibilities); other personal circumstances related to COVID-19 (such as furloughed staff, health-related or clinical staff diverted to frontline services, staff resource diverted to other priority areas within the HEI in response to COVID-19); and/or external factors related to COVID-19 (for example, restricted access to research facilities); **and**
- b. The overall impact of the COVID-19 effects, combined with other applicable circumstances affecting the staff member’s ability to research productively during the assessment period, is deemed similar to the impact of the circumstances cases set out at paragraph 179a. to c. of the ‘Guidance on submissions’. For example, where a staff member is an early career researcher, or has held a fractional contract for a significant proportion of the assessment period, and has experienced COVID-19 related disruption to the production of an eligible output².



**RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)
INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES DISCLOSURE FORM**

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstances which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es). [Click here](#) to access further guidance on REF submissions.

SECTION 1 – PERSONAL DETAILS	
Staff ID Number	
Name	
Faculty	
Division	
Unit of Assessment (if known)	
Do you have a REF-eligible output published between 01 January 2014 and 31 July 2020?	

SECTION 2 – INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES
I wish to make the University aware of the following circumstances which have had an impact on my ability to actively undertake research productivity between 01 January 2014 and 31 July 2020:
Circumstance & Information Required
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Career Researcher Please state the date on which you became an early career researcher (this must be on or after 01 August 2016) and provide additional relevant information.
<input type="checkbox"/> Career break or secondment outside of the Higher Education Sector Please state relevant dates/duration in months and provide additional relevant information.
<input type="checkbox"/> Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters) or shared parental leave (lasting for four months or more) For each period of leave state which type of leave was taken and the dates and duration in months.



<input type="checkbox"/> Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare in addition to the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken. Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Please state the duration in months.
<input type="checkbox"/> Other caring responsibilities (Including caring for an elderly or disable relative) Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research activities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Disability (Including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue) Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Please state the duration in months.
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health condition Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Please state the duration in months.
<input type="checkbox"/> Ill health or injury



<p>Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Please state the duration in months.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Gender Reassignment</p> <p>Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Please state the duration in months.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Other exceptional and relevant reasons, not including teaching or administrative work</p> <p>Please outline the impact this has had on your ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Effect</p> <p>This box should only be ticked if other applicable circumstances are combined with the effects of COVID-19 and you are requesting the removal of the minimum of one output requirement. You should outline how both circumstances have had an effect on your ability to research productively and produce an eligible output.</p>

SECTION 3 – SUPPORT



<input type="checkbox"/> My line manager is aware of my individual staff circumstances
<input type="checkbox"/> My line manager is not currently aware of my individual staff circumstances, but I am happy to discuss this with them
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel able to discuss my individual staff circumstances with my line manager, but would like a confidential conversation with my HR Partner
My preferred method of contact would be: By phone <input type="checkbox"/> By Email <input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 4 – DECLARATION

- In completing this form, I am seeking a reduction in contribution to the output pool due to my individual circumstances.
- I recognise that the information provided will be used for REF2021 purposes and will be seen by, but limited to, those staff making decisions on submissions to REF2021 and staff within HR & OD.
- I realise that it may be necessary to share anonymised information with the UK funding bodies; REF team, who may make the information available to REF panel chairs, members and secretaries and/or the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel.
- I confirm that the information provided is true and provides an accurate description of my circumstances.

Signature *

**Individual Staff Circumstances Disclosure forms will be submitted to HR & OD who will verify factual information and then forward on to the REF Manager*

COMPLETED FORMS SHOULD BE RETURNED TO:

HRoperations@stir.ac.uk or by internal post to Human Resources & Organisational Development, Room 4B1, Cottrell Building

ANNEX G – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Equality Impact Assessment on Code of Practice

1. Equality Impact Relevance Check

<p>Name of policy, practice, activity or proposed decision: Code of Practice for developing the University’s REF2021 submission</p>
<p>Purpose/Aim of above: The University has developed, and will implement, a Code of Practice as part of its preparations for submitting to REF2021. The purpose of this policy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the Code of Practice to all members of staff involved in the REF2021 processes • Outline the processes by which the University will determine the final submission • Demonstrate that the University is operating in a fair, transparent, inclusive and accountable manner, and within the confines of relevant equalities legislation • Promote an inclusive environment where processes established enable the University to identify all eligible staff for submission to REF2021 • Provide transparent information about the selection processes, about the appropriate committees, their operating criteria, terms of reference and composition of the membership • Ensure that the processes are coordinated in a uniform and consistent manner across the University • Provide clear information and guidance that is accessible to all eligible staff who wish to disclose their individual circumstances for REF submission and ensure that this process is clearly set out in the Code of Practice • Detail how confidentiality and sensitive issues will be processed and dealt with, including clear lines of communication • Provide guidance on what training needs to be provided and which staff will need to participate to fulfil the requirements of the REF process
<p>Faculty or Professional Services area responsible: Responsibility for the University’s Code of Practice and overall direction of the REF process sits with the Deputy Principal (Research), assisted by the REF Manager and Research Impact Officer, both of whom are based in Research and Innovation Services. Underpinning the REF2021 preparations, and supporting the Deputy Principal are various groups and committees including the REF Advisory Group, The UoA Coordinators Sub-Group, Impact Champion Sub-Group, Faculty Deans, Human Resources & Organisation Development, Communications, Library, Professional Services staff within</p>

Faculties and Divisions. All staff involved in the REF2021 preparations will be responsible for implementing the Code of Practice while undertaking their specific REF-related activities							
Could any aspect of the policy/practice /activity/proposal impact on individuals or groups with a protected characteristic (PC) or on a specified institutional strategic priority/Equality Outcome (EO)? YES							
Protected Characteristics (PC)/Equality Outcome (EO)	Is there likely to be an impact?			What is the nature of the impact on the individual or group with the pc?			
	Yes	No	Unknown	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age (PC)	X			X			
Disability (PC)/Accessibility and Inclusion	X			X			
Gender Re-assignment (PC)	X			X			
Marriage and civil partnership (PC)		X				X	
Pregnancy and Maternity (PC)	X			X			
Race (including ethnicity, nationality and skin colour) (PC)		X				X	
Religion or belief (PC)		X				X	
Sex (PC)		X				X	
Sexual orientation (PC)		X				X	
Caring responsibilities (PC)	X			X			
Mental health and wellbeing (EO)	X			X			
Experience of being in the care system (“care experienced”)		X				X	

If the answer is YES or UNKNOWN to any of the above then an Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan must be completed and you should proceed to Section 2. If the answer is NO to all the protected characteristics/equality outcomes then proceed to Section 3.

2. Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Will this policy practice/activity/proposal help the university to meet the 3 parts of the Positive Equality Duty or fulfil its strategic equality priorities/Equality Outcomes? Please expand on your reasoning in each section and summarise the evidence you have considered?

- A. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct? Consideration should be given here to the potential for discrimination relating to the full range of characteristics listed above.

The University is confident that the CoP demonstrates that is not disadvantaging or discriminating against any of the protected groups as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The University intends to make a 100% submission of all eligible staff (as defined by the REF2021 guidance on submissions and paragraphs 9.1 to 9.10 of the Code of Practice).

B. Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

The Code of Practice supports the promotion of equality and diversity and mechanisms have been put in place to allow this to be achieved through declaration of staff circumstances. Equality impact assessments will be carried out at individual UoA level to eliminate any negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics. These EIAs will be monitored and reviewed as submissions are finalised. Where appropriate, HR&OD will offer support to those individuals.

C. Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

The Code of Practice clearly sets out the procedures to be followed during the submission preparations in a way that staff can see is inclusive, transparent, fair, consistent and accountable.

D. Assist the University to achieve its published [Equality Outcomes 2017-2021](#)

e.g. enhancing mental health and wellbeing, improving gender balance across the institution, improving intercultural awareness

HR&OD currently collects data on protected characteristics for monitoring purposes, as well information on staff who have taken maternity/paternity/adoption leave, long-term sick and on staff who work part-time and fixed term. Through the REF2021 processes, HR will monitor the outcomes of the EIAs to enable them to improve the data currently collected and to address equality of opportunity in other activities of the University.

Action Plan:

Action/ Change Required	Responsibility	Timescale	Resources Required	What issue/ problem will this action address?
All staff involved with REF preparations in either an advisory or decision-making role will undergo E&D and unconscious bias training	REF Manager, HR&OD	By autumn 2019 and then ad-hoc where staff changes occur	Workshops provided by external agency	Ensure staff understand the importance of E&D in the context of REF2021 as well as broader University activities
The Code of Practice will be publicised widely to raise awareness throughout the University of the REF2021 process	REF Manager, Faculty Deans	As soon as possible after approval of Code by Scottish Funding Council	None	Ensure that staff are aware of the process and mechanisms by which the REF2021 submission will be determined
Conduct EIAs during preparations	REF Manager, REF Advisory Group, UoA Co-ordinators	Ongoing throughout preparations. Final EIA undertaken prior to submission in November 2020	None	Identify any imbalances against protected characteristics and allow for review and where appropriate, enable adjustments to be made
Encourage staff to update their Equality Profiles via the University staff profile	HR &OD	Ongoing	None	Improve statistical dataset to allow University to address any imbalances and make any necessary adjustments

3. Monitoring and Review

How and when will impact of the actions noted above be monitored? Who will be responsible for this? Where will findings of the impact be reported?

The Code of Practice will be monitored for effectiveness throughout the REF process and updated if it is found to have a negative effect on any of the protected groups; responsibility for this will lie with the REF Advisory Group. The results of all EIAs will be added as Annex G to the Code of Practice. The post-submission report will include an analysis of the final EIA results along with any recommendations for further actions and improvements which the University should consider.

Equality Impact Assessment completed by	<p>..... (Signature 1)</p> <p>..... (Signature 2)</p>	Date	
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Once the EIA has been submitted to Edna Docherty, hd2@stir.ac.uk, it will be published on the University website by Policy and Planning.