

**University of Sunderland**

**Code of Practice for the Identification of Staff with a  
Significant Responsibility for Research and the  
Selection of Outputs - REF2021**

## 1. Introduction

This document is the Code of Practice for the University of Sunderland's submission process to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), required as a prerequisite for institutional submissions. Each institution making a submission is required to develop, document and apply a code of practice on the fair and transparent selection of outputs for their REF submissions. The Code of Practice details two distinct processes the University will use in finalising the submission to REF 2021. These relate to:

- Institutional processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for and actively engaged in independent research
- Institution's processes for ensuring a fair approach to selecting outputs.

This document and the policies and practices herein have been developed in accordance with guidance to UK higher education institutions about submitting codes of practice in REF 2021 (REF 2019/03) and the 'Guidance on submissions' (REF 2019/01) and the University's own commitments to equality and diversity in the workplace. The Code of Practice supports the key principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity. Particular focus is given to the processes for the identification of staff with a significant responsibility for research, defining independent research and the selection of outputs for submission to ensure that they are inclusive, equitable, fair, transparent and legal.

This Code of Practice (hereafter referred to as the Code) addresses the principles to be applied within the different stages of the process.

## 2. University Principles of Inclusiveness

The University of Sunderland is proud to promote a culture of inclusiveness and dignity and respect. Our Equality and Diversity statement sets this out and is owned by our university community:

*'The University of Sunderland values and celebrates the diversity of all of its students and staff*

*We are committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation, where members of our community are treated with respect and dignity. We aim to create a culture of diversity and inclusivity within our community, providing a dynamic working and learning environment where all members are valued for their contribution and individuality.*

*Through our policies and practices we work to ensure that all students and staff are welcome in our community and do not face discrimination with regard to any aspect of their identity, such as age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity), ethnicity (including race, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including non-belief) or sexual orientation.'*

## 3. Principles for REF 2021

Our approach to the identification of staff with a significant responsibility for research, defining independent research and selection of outputs for the institutional submission to REF 2021 will be underpinned by the key principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity, each of which is discussed below.

- **Transparency** - We will be transparent, and open, within our decision-making process, so that at any point any individual member of staff will understand their own situation with respect to the REF.
- **Consistency** - We will apply consistent approaches, systems and decision-making processes within our REF planning. These will be applied consistently across the University, and within each Faculty and Unit of Assessment, as outlined within the Code.
- **Inclusivity** - Our approach will be inclusive at all times. We will strive to use as many possible modes of communication to inform and involve staff in the REF decision-making process. Decision-making groups and panels will be gender inclusive.

**Accountability** - We have established a structure for the management of the REF process, with clear accountability and responsibilities, as outlined within the Code. Responsibilities are defined within the Code, including operating criteria and terms of reference. These have been made available to all individuals. All individuals involved in the process have been trained in the operation of the Code, and in best practice equality and diversity practices and principles.

The Code supports and is underpinned by our corporate value of inclusiveness, which recognises the diverse nature of our academic community through a proactive approach to equality and diversity, embracing a culture of mutual respect.

#### **4. Identifying Staff with a Significant Responsibility for Research**

The institutional process is predicated on the definition for staff with significant responsibility for research published in the Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01)

*'Staff with significant responsibility for research are those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role'.*

The process seeks to identify all those who meet the published eligibility criteria for staff through an agreed set of compliance indicators. (Figure 1)

#### **Explicit Time and Resource for Research**

The University of Sunderland's strategic vision includes a commitment to nurture, recognise and support researchers and research leaders and it is further committed to creating a dynamic environment and pervasive research culture that encourages all academic staff to undertake ambitious, rigorous research and innovation activities.

A central proposal of the Research and Innovation Strategy 2016-21 is to support and develop our research-active staff through the implementation of an institutional-wide planning process. A pilot exercise undertaken in 2017 invited all Category A staff to submit an Individual Research Plan (IRP) for the 2017/18 academic year. The aim was to establish a planning framework designed to ensure fairness and transparency in the allocation of research time and support to staff through the implementation of a central university process. The planning process was intended to inform annual investment in research support and ensure that resources were managed effectively. The development and implementation of the pilot was informed through consultation with a number of staff groups and dialogue with representatives from the UCU.

**Fig. 1 Process for identifying ‘Staff with Significant Responsibility for Research’**

**REF 2021 Eligibility Criteria**

Category A eligible

**Compliance indicators**

*Appointed on min 0.2 FTE ‘Teaching and Research’ or ‘Research Only’ contract and have substantive connection to the University*



In receipt of ‘explicit time and resource’ to actively engage in research on 31 July 2020

*Professor (Research)/Associate Professor (Research).  
Category A staff allocated additional time and resource through 2019/20 Individual Research Plan (IRP) process.  
Staff acting as Principal Investigator for an externally funded project*



It is an expectation of role

*As indicated in Professorial and Associate Professorial (Research) Job Descriptions.  
Agreed outcome of 2019/20 IRP award*



Engaged in independent research

*Excludes: Staff employed on ‘research only’ contracts to exclusively support project delivery  
Excludes: Staff undertaking a research degree on the census date (unless mode of study is by existing published work)\**



**University Staff with Significant Responsibility for and Actively Engaged in Independent Research**

\*Exceptions applied (See Section 5)

The process invited all academic members of staff, including Professors and Associate Professors, to outline their research objectives for the year ahead through the submission of an IRP. Engagement in the pilot was not mandatory and recognised that the University's standard academic contract does not place a direct requirement on staff to undertake research. Assurances were given that the value and status of staff would remain unaffected by their engagement in the pilot or future research activity. The IRP pilot and subsequent process remains independent of the annual performance review and planning framework for academic staff.

Following a positive response to the 2017/18 pilot the IRP framework was fully adopted at the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year as the central institutional mechanism through which staff may request and be awarded additional time and resources to undertake research. Awards are made on a competitive basis against the following criteria:

- Is the request clearly defined, realistic and appropriate?
- Could the request be completed within existing time/resource allocations?
- Are the outputs clearly defined and achievable?
- To what extent do the proposed outputs demonstrate a return on investment?
- To what extent is the proposed activity aligned to current Faculty research priorities?
- To what extent is the proposal rigorous, original, significant and impactful?

For the purpose of the institutional submission to REF 2021 only staff in receipt of additional time and/or resources for research awarded through the IRP process on the 31 July 2020 will satisfy the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research' unless obligated to undertake research as part of their contract of employment. This will include those in Professorial and Associate Professorial roles for Research.

Category A staff joining the University after the 2019/20 IRP submission deadline and before the 30 June 2020 will be invited to submit an IRP for consideration to be recognised within the REF.

## **5. Determining Whether Staff Meet the Definition of an Independent Researcher.**

**Staff employed on Category A contracts** – All staff employed on an academic contract are deemed to be independent researchers for the purpose of eligibility for submission to REF 2021, with the exception of staff undertaking a research degree.

As part of the University's commitment to nurture and support its researchers, academic staff can request support to undertake a research degree. This process has been embedded within the IRP framework and currently supports around 60 staff in their PhD and Professional Doctorate studies. Staff supported in their doctoral studies on the census date will only be deemed to be engaged in independent research by exception. Exceptions would include evidence of one or more of the following:

- The member of staff is undertaking a PhD by existing published work
- Evidence of a demonstrable contribution to published work independent of their thesis
- They are a named Principal Investigator on an externally funded project

**Staff employed on 'research only' contracts** - The University employs staff on 3 categories of 'research only' contracts:

- Research Fellows
- Research Associates
- Research Assistants

Staff employed on 'research only' contracts will only satisfy the independence eligibility criteria if their contract of employment specifies an allocation of time to conduct independent, i.e. self-directed, research. The research outputs of staff employed on these contracts are therefore not used as the sole basis for determining research independence.

## **6. The Fair and Transparent Selection of Outputs**

The REF remains an assessment of research excellence in the UK's higher education sector. To this end the University will prioritise the highest quality outputs available in making its submission to REF 2021. The process for identifying those outputs will be aligned to the principles outlined in Section 2 of this document. All decisions relating to the selection of outputs will be made solely based on quality.

All staff with a significant responsibility for research, as defined above, will be invited to identify which of their eligible outputs they wish to be considered for submission. The University Research Office will independently check all outputs against REF 2021 eligibility criteria. A complete list of eligible outputs will then be submitted to a Quality Review Panel for consideration. This will include eligible outputs of staff no longer at the University.

*The University will carefully consider the inclusion of any outputs of staff made redundant during the assessment period. The Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic) will consider a confidential report on the circumstances of staff redundancy before any final decision on the inclusion of an output is made. It will be the responsibility of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to determine whether including an output is compatible with the intentions of the policy of non-portability.*

A Quality Review Panel will be established for each of the four Main REF Assessment Panels. The Terms of Reference and Membership of the Quality Review Panels are set out in Appendix 5 of the Code. The primary role of the Quality Review Panels will be to validate the assessment of outputs graded through the annual audit process and within the context of the University's Quality Review Framework. Panels will review outputs on a Unit of Assessment basis. The REF Working Group will consider the recommendations of the Quality Review Panels. The final decision on the submission of outputs will reside with the Chair of the REF Working Group the Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic).

*The Guidance on Submissions (paragraph 203) notes that:*

*"There are many reasons why an excellent researcher may have fewer or more outputs attributable to them in an assessment period. It is therefore not expected that all staff members would be returned with the same number of outputs attributed to them in the submission."*

The University has not set expectations of individuals in respect to their contribution to the output pool (beyond the minima and maxima specified), therefore the University does not need procedures to adjust expectations on the basis of individual circumstances.

The University will endeavour to notify individual staff which of their outputs have been selected for submission prior to deadline of 31 March 2021.

## **7. Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances**

The University will make provision to consider individual circumstances in determining its submission to REF 2021. We will ensure institutional policies and procedures are in place to enable staff to voluntarily declare any information that may have impacted on their potential contribution to the REF and to do so in a safe and supportive environment. Where the cumulative effect of individual

circumstances has disproportionately affected a Unit of Assessment's submission, the University may consider submitting a request for a reduction in the total number of outputs required for a submission. This will be considered on an individual Unit of Assessment basis.

The University will also support measures to remove the minimum requirement of one eligible output for a member of staff where individual circumstances have had an exceptional effect on their ability to work productively throughout the assessment period.

Summary of applicable circumstances:

- Qualifying as an ECR
- Absence from work due to secondments and career breaks outside of HE
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Absences related to:
  - I. Disability
  - II. Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
  - III. Additional restraints related to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare
  - IV. Other caring responsibilities
  - V. Gender reassignment
  - VI. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics identified in this document

An Individual Circumstances Panel, consisting of appropriate University staff, will manage consideration of individual circumstances centrally. The Terms of Reference and membership of the group are detailed in Appendix 3 of this document.

A list of applicable circumstances, the adjustments to which they may be applied, the process and timescales for declarations and reviews will be clearly communicated to all Category A staff. All information submitted to the panel will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Communication of the outcomes of the review process will be limited to the individual, the relevant Unit of Assessment leader and Chair of the REF Working Group.

## **8. Feedback and Appeals**

### **Feedback**

The University expects to confirm by February 2020 all decisions related to the inclusion of staff to the REF. This will include decisions on the status of individual as having a significant responsibility for research, their capacity to undertake independent research and the outcome of any consideration of individual circumstances.

The procedure for providing feedback will be managed by the University Research Office. All staff may request individual feedback on the rationale and circumstances of decisions relating to their status. This will include the opportunity for a private meeting with the Chair of the REF Working Group. These will be available to staff February to March 2020.

Every attempt will be made to reach an informal resolution of any disagreements. However, if, following discussion, individuals wish to appeal a decision they may do so through the appeals process.

## Appeals

A member of staff may only appeal against the decisions of the REF Working Group on the following grounds:

- There is evidence of procedural irregularities in the decision-making process likely to affect the outcome.
- There is evidence of bias or unlawful discrimination

All appeals should be submitted to the University Research Office no later than 30 April 2020. The Head of the University Research Office will consider whether there are grounds for an appeal no later than the 31 May 2020. Where grounds for an appeal exist, the matter will be referred to the REF Appeals Panel. The REF Appeals Panel (see Appendix 4) will consider all formal appeals and complaints that cannot be resolved informally.

The REF Appeals Panel will be convened by the Deputy Vice-chancellor (Commercial) acting as Chair, and consist of the University Secretary and Director of Human Resources, together with two academic members of the Equality, Diversity and Social Responsibility Group and a UCU representative from the Academic Staff Negotiating Panel. The academic staff members of the panel will be appointed by the Chair and have no involvement in the REF Working Group. The REF Appeals Panel will decide if there is sufficient evidence to warrant reconsideration of the decision to include the member of the staff in the institutional REF submission. The Chair will inform appellants in writing on the decision of the panel by 30 June 2020. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

Details of the appeals process will be communicated to all staff together with details of the submission deadlines and review period.

### 9. Exceptions for Submission of Small Units

The University may seek an exception from submission for a Unit of Assessment where the combined Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of staff employed with significant responsibility for research is lower than five. In these circumstances, affected staff will be notified of the University intention to seek a submission exception no later than October 2019.

Upon approval, every effort will be made to submit affected staff into other appropriate Units of Assessment. In some academically distinct units, the opportunity to match staff may be limited. In such circumstance, the University reserves the right not to submit affected members of staff.

### 10. Staff, Committees and Training

The responsibility for making key decisions is held by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) with the advice and support of the REF Working Group. The Terms of Reference and membership of the REF Working Group are set out in Appendix 2 of the Code.

The University Executive, supported by the Head of the University Research Office, has overall responsibility for upholding the Code. The Academic Deans are responsible for ensuring that faculty staff comply with the Code, and meet the defined timescales and requirements set out by the REF Working Group.

The staff involved in decision-making processes for the REF will receive Equality and Diversity training prior to the implementation of the Code.



The DVC (Academic) will be the final arbiter in terms of the inclusion of staff and selection of outputs and will afford final approval on all elements of the University submission.

### **11. The Role of the REF Working Group**

The REF Working Group consists of the DVC (Academic) as Chair, Head of University Research Office, and Unit of Assessment Leaders nominated by the Academic Deans as well representatives from Human Resources, the Library Service and the Press Office. The Terms of Reference and membership of the REF Working Group are set out in Appendix 2.

The REF Working Group has received Equality and Diversity training from the Human Resources department and the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Group,

The role of the REF Working Group is to provide advice and support to the Chair, who will be the final arbiter for decisions for the University REF submission, including the final selection of staff and outputs for inclusion.

Main panel and faculty subgroups will be encouraged to support the planning process (other than those where the small size of the possible cohort makes this impractical).

### **12. Units of Assessments**

Faculties will form their own subgroups with respect to the Units of Assessment to which staff members will be submitted. Subgroups must comply with the Code and report to the University's REF Working Group. In some areas a single subgroup may be formed to co-ordinate the returns for two or more closely related Units of Assessment. It is required that each Unit of Assessment have a nominated leader, who will be a senior member of staff. Normally this would be the chair of the Unit of Assessment subgroup.

Each Unit of Assessment will be required to demonstrate adherence to the Code in the identification of staff and selection of outputs. The REF Working Group will ensure that all Unit of Assessment decisions are in line with the Code and the University's REF submission strategy.

### **13. Consultation Process**

The University has undertaken a full consultation process in drafting the Code. The University invited the Pro-vice Chancellor (International) to lead the consultation with key staff groups and report any feedback to the Chair of the REF Working Group. The Head of the University Research Office and members of the REF Working Group also supported the review process and meetings with staff groups.

The consultation process communicated the underpinning principles and processes for identifying staff with a significant responsibility for research and the selection of outputs.

A draft version of the Code was published on the internal staff portal on the 24th April 2019 and all staff were invited via email and the University splash page to submit any comments and feedback. Unit of Assessment Leaders engaged staff in school and departmental discussions and a number of open consultation events were conducted in May 2019, to which all staff were invited to attend and share any views. A range of University staff groups were also consulted during the process, including:

Equality, Diversity and Social Responsibility Group  
Senior Leadership Board  
Academic Board  
Academic Staff Negotiating Panel (UCU)  
Research and Innovation Group  
University Professoriate  
Faculty Research Groups and Committees

All feedback in the drafting of the final version of the Code.

#### **14. Confirmation of Staff Agreement**

The following staff representative groups approved the Code of Practice:

Academic Board  
Senior Leadership Board  
Equality, Diversity and Social Responsibility Group  
Academic Staff Negotiating Panel (UCU)  
Research and Innovation Group  
University Professoriate

Membership of the staff representative groups detailed in Annex 1.

#### **15. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

The University undertook an early stage EIA on the draft Code prior to submission. EIAs will be undertaken throughout the submission process, providing a thorough and systematic analysis of the impact of implementing the Code on particular groups with reference to one or more protected characteristic(s).

The Director of Human Resources and Chair of Equality and Diversity group will have responsibility for undertaking and reporting the EIAs on the Code. Assessments will be undertaken at key stages of the REF planning process to identify any necessary changes required to prevent discrimination and promote equality prior to the submission deadline.

This will involve:

- An EIA of relevant data from the annual audit process of all protected characteristics, comparing the profiles of staff identified as having a significant responsibility for research with the profiles of those submitting an IRP and the whole academic staff population. This analysis will identify significant variations in profiles.
- Discussion of the Code, its communication, and implementation with the University Equality and Diversity Committee.
- An EIA of the Annual Audit process and Research Quality Assessment framework, by focus group discussion with a selection of external experts prior to the final selection of outputs for submission.
- Reference to the EDAP guidance on the Code of Practice and conducting EIAs.
- An EIA of the final REF submission and report to Research England. This will include final analysis of data comparing the characteristics of staff with significant responsibility for research, with the characteristics of all eligible staff (where applicable); the final analysis of data comparing the characteristics of those determined to be independent researchers, with

an appropriate comparator pool; and an examination of the distribution of outputs across staff in the unit.

## **16. Status of individuals**

The submission of staff to the REF 2021 will not in any way affect their status in the University. Non-submission to the REF 2021 will not in itself be deemed an indicator of research inactivity. The non-submission of an individual in the REF will not be used as an indicator in any future University processes.

## **17. Communication**

The University will use as many means and modes of communication as possible to ensure that all eligible staff are aware of their own and the University's current situation as regards the REF, and to ensure inclusivity and transparency. This will involve:

- Direct email communication with all staff coordinated through the University Research Office
- Individual communication with staff as detailed in this document, including ensuring that staff absent from the university are informed of key decision and deadlines.
- Through a dedicated REF sections on the main University website and MySunderland
- Open consultation and briefing events across University campuses
- Staff briefings at Unit of Assessment level, and between team leaders and individual staff members

## 18. Timetable

January 2019	Draft Code of Practice submitted for consultation
February-May 2019	Consultation period on draft Code of Practice
March – May 2019	2019 REF Audit
May 2019	Revised Code of Practice submitted for Executive approval
May 2019	Equality Impact Assessment of REF Audit data against draft Code of Practice
June 2019	Final Code of Practice submitted to Research England
September 2019	Submit exceptions request to Research England for small units
November 2019	Process to consider individual circumstances of staff with significant responsibility for research opens
December 2019	Survey of Submission Intention (HEFCE). Publication of approved Codes of Practice
February 2020	Final decisions on individual staff circumstance reported to staff and REF Working Group
February 2020	Confirmation of staff identified as having a significant responsibility for research through the 2019/2020 IRP process
February 2020	Appeals period opens - in relation to inclusion to the REF.
March 2020	Reduction request for individual staff circumstances submitted to Research England
May 2020	<i>Outcome of the appeals panel communicated to staff</i>
May 2020	Production of final list of staff to be included in submission
30 June 2020	REF Appeals Panel Chair to inform appellants in writing on the decision
31 July 2020	Census date for submissions
31 March 2021	Deadline for submissions
April 2021	Equality Impact Assessment of REF submission

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Membership Details of Staff Representative Groups**

#### **Senior Leadership Board**

Vice-chancellor and Chief Executive  
Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic)  
Deputy Vice-chancellor (Commercial)  
Chief Operating Officer  
University Secretary and Director of Human Resources  
Pro Vice-chancellor (Learning and Teaching)  
Pro Vice-chancellor (Connections and Place)  
Pro Vice-chancellor (International)  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Education and Society  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Technology  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism  
Academic Registrar  
Director of Finance  
Director of Student Journey  
Director of Technical Services  
Director of Marketing and Recruitment  
Director of Estates and Facilities  
Director of Enterprise and Innovation  
Director of University of Sunderland in London

#### **Academic Board**

Vice-chancellor and Chief Executive  
Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic)  
Deputy Vice-chancellor (Commercial)  
Pro Vice-chancellor (Learning and Teaching)  
Pro Vice-chancellor (International)  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Education and Society  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Technology  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism  
Director of University of Sunderland in London  
Director of University of Sunderland in Hong Kong  
Academic Registrar  
Director of Student Journey  
Academic representative – Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing  
Academic representative – Faculty of Education and Society  
Academic representative – Faculty of Technology  
Academic representative – Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries  
Academic representative – Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism  
Elected member with expertise in research  
Elected member with expertise in learning and teaching

Elected member with expertise in enterprise and innovation  
Sabbatical officer from the Student Union  
School Representative Co-ordinator  
Board of Governors representative  
Officer to the Academic Board

### **Equality, Diversity and Social Responsibility Group**

Deputy Vice-chancellor (Commercial)  
University Secretary and Director of Human Resources  
Senior Lecturer – Faculty of Education and Society  
Head of Disability Services  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Technology  
Senior Lecturer – Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries  
University Chaplain  
Professor of Tourism  
Deputy CEO - Students Union  
Credit Control Assistant – Finance  
Head of Arts – National Glass Centre  
Athena Swan Manager  
Executive Support Assistant – Human Resources  
Head of HR Business Partnerships - Human Resources  
Chief Executive – Students Union  
Head of School of Psychology  
Administrator - Human Resources  
Head of University Research Office  
Head of Business and Operations – National Glass Centre  
Estates Project Manager  
Accountant – Finance  
Access to Higher Education and Scholarships Manager  
Senior Lecturer – Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism

### **Academic Staff Negotiating Panel**

Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic)  
University Secretary and Director of Human Resources  
Deputy Director of Human Resources  
Head of HR Management Systems  
Academic Dean – Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism  
UCU Representative  
UCU Representative  
UCU Representative

## **Research and Innovation Group**

Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic)  
Deputy Vice-chancellor (Commercial)  
Director of Postgraduate Research and Chair of University Ethics Group  
Director of Enterprise and Innovation  
Head of University Research Office  
Head of the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching  
Corporate Communications Manager  
Nominated representative - Faculty of Technology  
Nominated representative - Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing  
Nominated representative - Faculty of Education and Society  
Nominated representative - Faculty of Business and Law  
Nominated representative - Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries  
University Impact Officer  
Assistant Head of Academic Operations - London Campus  
Nominated Early Career Researcher  
Nominated Early Career Researcher  
Nominated Postgraduate Degree Research Student  
Nominated Postgraduate Degree Research Student  
Nominated member of the Students' Union

## **Appendix 2**

### **Terms of Reference and Membership of REF Working Group**

#### **Terms of Reference**

The REF Working Group is responsible for overseeing the University's preparations for and submission to the Research Excellence Framework. The Group will:

- Support the implementation of the University strategy for REF in line with the Code
- Inform decisions on the composition of the institutional REF submission
- Support activity to identify and support high quality outputs to be included in the submission
- Make decisions about the inclusion of members of staff in submissions to ensure that all decisions relating to staff inclusion are consistent with the Code
- Act on the recommendations of the Individual Circumstances Panel in considering the application of output reductions on a Unit of Assessment basis.
- Receive recommendations from the REF Appeals Panel to reconsider decisions made with regard to the inclusion of staff and outputs.

#### **Membership**

Chair - DVC (Academic)

Head of University Research Office

REF Coordinator

REF Impact Officer

Institutional Repository Coordinator

Human Resources Representative

Press Office Representative

Nominated Unit of Assessment Leader(s):

- Public Health, Health Services & Primary Care
- Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing & Pharmacy
- Psychology, Psychiatry & Neuroscience
- Computer Science & Informatics
- Engineering
- Business & Management Studies
- Law
- Social Work & Social Policy
- Education
- Sport & Exercise Sciences, Leisure & Tourism
- English Language & Literature
- History
- Art & Design: History, Practice & Theory
- Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library & Information Management



## **Appendix 3**

### **Terms of Reference and Membership of Individual Circumstances Panel**

#### **Terms of Reference**

The Individual Circumstances panel will review and consider all information from staff that may have influenced their ability to contribute to the 2021 REF submission. The panel will examine mitigating evidence to determine whether an output reduction will be sought on behalf of the Unit of Assessment or the individual against the following:

- Qualify as an Early Career Researcher (ECR)
- Absence from work due to secondments and careers breaks outside of HE
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Absences related to:
  - VII. Disability
  - VIII. Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
  - IX. Additional restraints related to pregnancy, maternity, adoption or childcare
  - X. Other caring responsibilities
  - XI. Gender reassignment
  - XII. Other characteristics relating to the protected characteristics identified in this document

Individuals will have full opportunity to present any evidence supporting their submission to the panel in a safe and supportive environment. This may include examination of circumstance not previously known to the university. All individual circumstance submissions will be considered and a resolution reached before the deadline for reduction requests in March 2020.

The individual circumstances panel will make one of two recommendations:

- Sufficient evidence is available to consider a reduction in outputs for the individual or Unit of Assessment.
- There is insufficient evidence to mitigate a request for a reduction in outputs.

Individuals will receive written confirmation of panel decisions.

#### **Membership**

Deputy Director – Human Resources Chair

Head of University Research Office

Two members of the Equality and Diversity Committee (not connected to the REF Working Group)

## **Appendix 4**

### **Terms of Reference and Membership of REF Appeals Panel**

#### **Terms of Reference**

The REF Appeals Group will consider all appeals from staff in relation to inclusion to the REF.

Individuals dissatisfied with a decision on their inclusion in the REF submission should first discuss this with the relevant Unit of Assessment leader. If after informal discussion, the individual remains dissatisfied they may lodge a formal appeal, setting out the grounds for the appeal.

The following are grounds for appeal:

- Perceived unfair discrimination,
- Procedural irregularity, in particular, that the processes set out in the Code have not been followed,
- Evidence that may have affected the decision of non-submission has recently emerged.

Disagreement with decisions relating to the quality of outputs alone is not sufficient grounds for appeal.

The REF Appeals Panel will consider all appeals brought on the grounds above. The individual will have full opportunity to present any evidence relating to their appeal to the Panel. Sufficient time and opportunity for staff to raise a formal appeal has been built into the University's submission process. Resolution of appeals will be reached before the final date for submission within the REF.

The REF Appeals Panel may make one of two recommendations:

- The Appeal is successful and the relevant Unit of Assessment leader will be required to reconsider the case for inclusion of that member of staff
- The selection decision is upheld and the status of the member of staff in relation to selection for the REF is unchanged.

Individuals will receive written confirmation of panel decisions.

#### **Membership**

Deputy-vice Chancellor – Commercial (Chair)

Director – Human Resources

Senior Academic Members of Staff (not member of the REF Working Group)

Senior Academic Members of Staff (not member of the REF Working Group)

UCU Representative of Academic Staff Negotiating Panel

## **Appendix 5**

### **Terms of Reference and Membership of Quality Review Panels**

#### **Terms of Reference**

The Quality Review Panels will be responsible for assessing the quality of proposed outputs for the 2021 REF Submission. A Quality Review Panel will be established for each of the main REF Panels and related Units of Assessment.

Each Quality Review Panel will:

- Independently review all proposed outputs against published panel guidance and selection criteria on a Unit of Assessment basis.
- Establish an indicative rating for each output against institutional quality thresholds
- Make recommendations against Unit of Assessment output requirements to the REF Working Group
- Communicate output ratings to individual academics

#### **Membership**

Academic Dean(s) – Chair

Head of University Research Office

Relevant Unit of Assessment leaders

A minimum of 2 externally appointed, independent reviewers

## Appendix 6.

### Scoring Criteria IRP Panels

Panel members are required to score each of the criteria **0-3** on the information provided in the IRP documentation.

- a) **Is the request clearly defined, realistic and appropriate?** Requests for additional research time should identify which elements of an existing workload will require cover. This should include details of the percentage of Category 1, 2 and 3 time involved. Requests for additional resource should include a detailed breakdown of itemised costs. **It is important that requests for additional financial support be accurately costed.** There should be a clear correlation between the request and the proposed Part B output. Requests should satisfy all of the above to score a 3
- b) **Could the request be completed within existing time/resource allocations?** A clear rationale for the requested additional resource is required, including demonstrating why the resource is essential to achieving the proposed outputs detailed in Part B. It is important that a distinction be drawn between the objectives proposed in Part A and outputs in Part B. All of the above should be satisfied to score a 3.
- c) **Are the outputs clearly defined and achievable?** A detailed description of the proposed output should be provided (title, journal/publisher, name of conference, funding organisation and thematic call, impact beneficiary, etc.) before it can be scored a 3
- d) **To what extent do the proposed outputs demonstrate a return on investment?** The value of the intended outputs should be explicit and proportionate to the additional resources requested. Requests for additional time and resource can only be scored a 3 if the applicant identifies additional and clearly defined outputs over and above those identified in Part A
- e) **To what extent is the proposed activity aligned to current Faculty research priorities?** Requests should demonstrate clear alignment with one or more of the following KPIs to generate a score of 3:
  - Research outputs likely to generate 3\*/4\* outcome in REF 2021 submission
  - The development of an impact case study for the REF 2021 submission
  - An application for external research income
  - Other (this provides faculties with the flexibility to support a particular individual based their own priorities)
- f) **To what extent is the proposal rigorous, original, significant and impactful?** A description of the intended output should demonstrate how it will contribute to the REF 2021 submission, the proposed Unit of Assessment and target outcome rating (for example 3\*/4\*). Only REF eligible, clearly defined outputs likely to generate 3\*/4\* outcomes should be awarded a 3. Potential 2\* outputs should be marked no higher than a 2.

## Appendix 7.

### Framework for the Evaluation of Research Output Quality

University preparations for REF 2021 require an on-going assessment of eligible research outputs generated from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020. Evaluating the quality of research outputs, on an ongoing basis, helps improve output quality across the University, by ensuring that researchers at all career stages have a clear understanding of how gradings could apply to their actual and intended outputs.

Additional benefits are that:

- staff are encouraged to produce high quality outputs rather than focus on volume; and
- outputs can be assessed at various stages in the writing process (e.g. pre-submission review), providing opportunities for increasing the quality (and potentially originality and significance) of the final work; and
- a robust and ongoing process of evaluating output quality will be important in providing a transparent and rigorous process for the grading and selection of outputs for the institutional submission to REF 2021.

### Publication of assessment criteria – REF 2021

#### Criteria and level definitions

This section provides a descriptive account of how the sub-panels will interpret and apply the generic criteria for assessing outputs and the starred quality levels. This descriptive account expands on and complements the generic criteria and definitions in Annex A of ‘Guidance on submissions’, but does not replace them.

**Originality** is the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. Research outputs that demonstrate originality may do one or more of the following: produce new empirical findings or material; engage with new and/or complex problems; develop innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques; show imaginative scope; provide new arguments, formal innovations, interpretations and/or insights; collect and engage with novel types of data; and/or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice, and new forms of expression.

**Significance** is the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.

**Rigour** is the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, theories and methodologies.

The generic definitions of the starred quality levels in the overall quality profile in each of the three sub-profiles – outputs, impact and environment – are at Annex A of ‘Guidance on submissions’. The main panels have set out below a descriptive account of the starred level definitions for outputs, as they apply in each main panel. These inform their subject communities about how the panels will apply the definitions in making their judgements. These descriptive accounts should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions.

## Main Panel A supplementary criteria – level definitions

In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of the quality of the output in terms of its originality, significance and rigour, and will apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels.

The sub-panels will look for evidence of some of the following types of characteristics of quality, as appropriate to each of the starred quality levels:

- scientific rigour and excellence, with regard to design, method, execution and analysis
- significant addition to knowledge and to the conceptual framework of the field
- potential and actual significance of the research
- the scale, challenge and logistical difficulty posed by the research
- the logical coherence of argument
- contribution to theory-building
- significance of work to advance knowledge, skills, understanding and scholarship in theory, practice, education, management and/or policy
- applicability and significance to the relevant service users and research users
- potential applicability for policy in, for example health, healthcare, public health, animal health or welfare.

Unless there is sufficient evidence of at least one of the above, or the output does not meet definition of research used for the REF, the work will be graded as ‘unclassified’.

The sub-panels welcome research practice that supports reproducible science and the application of best practice in relation to use of animals in research. Examples include registered reports, pre-registration, publication of datasets, experimental materials, analytic code, and use of reporting checklists for publication purposes. These contribute to the evaluation of rigour for submitted outputs. Replication studies may be submitted as outputs and will be evaluated on the extent to which they contribute significant new knowledge, improved methods, or advance theory or practice.

The sub-panels will use citation information, where available, as part of the indication of academic significance to inform their assessment of output quality.

## Main Panel B supplementary criteria – level definitions

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

a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:

- agenda-setting
- research that is leading or at the forefront of the research area
- great novelty in developing new thinking, new techniques or novel results
- major influence on a research theme or field
- developing new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research
- major changes in policy or practice
- major influence on processes, production and management
- major influence on user engagement.

b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:

- makes important contributions to the field at an international standard
- contributes important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence, but are not necessarily leading to fundamental new concepts
- significant changes to policies or practices
- significant influence on processes, production and management
- significant influence on user engagement.

c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:

- provides useful knowledge and influences the field
- involves incremental advances, which might include new knowledge which conforms with existing ideas and paradigms, or model calculations using established techniques or approaches
- influence on policy or practice
- influence on processes, production and management
- influence on user engagement.

d. In assessing work as being one star (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:

- useful but unlikely to have more than a minor influence in the field
- minor influence on policy or practice
- minor influence on processes, production and management
- minor influence on user engagement.

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

### **Main Panel C supplementary criteria – level definitions**

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

a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:

- outstandingly novel in developing concepts, paradigms, techniques or outcomes
- a primary or essential point of reference
- a formative influence on the intellectual agenda
- application of exceptionally rigorous research design and techniques of investigation and analysis
- generation of an exceptionally significant data set or research resource.

b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:

- novel in developing concepts, paradigms, techniques or outcomes
- an important point of reference
- contributing very important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence on the intellectual agenda
- application of robust and appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis
- generation of a substantial data set or research resource.

c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:

- providing important knowledge and the application of such knowledge
- contributing to incremental and cumulative advances in knowledge
- thorough and professional application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.

d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:

- providing useful knowledge, but unlikely to have more than a minor influence
- an identifiable contribution to understanding, but largely framed by existing paradigms or traditions of enquiry
- competent application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.

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

## Main Panel D supplementary criteria – level definitions

### Interpretation of generic level definitions

The terms 'world-leading', 'international' and 'national' will be taken as quality benchmarks within the generic definitions of the quality levels. They will relate to the actual, likely or deserved influence of the work. There will be no assumption of any necessary international exposure in terms of publication or reception, or any necessary research content in terms of topic or approach. Nor will there be an assumption that work published in a language other than English or Welsh is necessarily of a quality that is or is not internationally benchmarked.

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

a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:

- a primary or essential point of reference
- of profound influence
- instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
- a major expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
- outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative.



b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:

- an important point of reference
- of considerable influence
- a catalyst for, or important contribution to, new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
- a significant expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
- significantly novel or innovative or creative.

c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:

- a recognised point of reference
- of some influence
- an incremental and cumulative advance on thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
- a useful contribution to the range or depth of research and its application.

d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of the following characteristics within its area/field:

- based on existing traditions of thinking, methodology and/or creative practice
- a useful contribution of minor influence.

e. A research output will be graded '**unclassified**' if it is either:

- below the quality threshold for one star; or
- does not meet the definition of research used for the REF.

## Citation Data

The main panels set out below which of the sub-panels will use citation data. Where subpanels use citation data, the following criteria apply:

- a) Where available and appropriate, citation data will be considered as an indicator of the academic significance of the research output. This will only be one element to inform peer-review judgements about the quality of the output, and will not be used as a primary tool in the assessment.
- b) The absence of citation data for an output will not be taken to mean an absence of academic significance.
- c) The sub-panels recognise that the citation count is sometimes, but not always, a reliable indicator. They are also aware that such data may not always be available, and the level of citations can vary across disciplines and across UOAs. Sub-panels will be mindful that citation data may be an unreliable indicator for some forms of output (for example, relating to applied research), and the limitations of such data for outputs in languages other than English and for recent outputs.
- d) Sub-panels will use citation data only where provided by the REF team, and will not refer

to any additional sources of bibliometric analysis, including in particular journal impact factors and other journal rankings.

Those panels using citation data will do so within the framework set out in 'Guidance on submissions' (paragraphs 281 to 286). Panels will continue to rely on expert review as the primary means of assessing outputs, in order to reach rounded judgements about the full range of assessment criteria ('originality, significance and rigour'). They will also recognise the significance of outputs beyond academia wherever appropriate, and will assess all outputs on an equal basis, regardless of whether or not citation data is available for them.

### **Main Panel A supplementary criteria – citation data**

All sub-panels in Main Panel A will use citation data, where available, and appropriate, as a potential indicator of academic significance to inform the assessment of output quality

### **Main Panel B supplementary criteria – citation data**

Sub-panels 7, 8, 9 and 11 acknowledge that citation data are widely used and consider that they are well understood in the disciplines covered in their UOAs. These sub-panels will receive citation data, where available, and may make use of the data as part of the indication of academic significance to inform their assessment of output quality.

Sub-panels 10 and 12 believe that citation data in their disciplines cannot be used to provide sufficient added value to inform the assessment of output quality. They therefore will not receive nor make use of citation data.

### **Main Panel C supplementary criteria – citation data**

Sub-panel 16 (Economics and Econometrics) will receive citation data, where available, and will make use of the data supplied by the REF team where it is considered appropriate as an additional piece of supplementary evidence to support the initial assessment of outputs, not as a determining factor. Sub-panel 16 will take account of the well-known limitations of citations, including equality, diversity and inclusion issues. The remaining sub-panels within Main Panel C will neither receive nor make use of citation data

### **Main Panel D supplementary criteria – citation data**

The sub-panels in Main Panel D will not use citation data as part of the evaluation of outputs

## **Review Process**

### **Internal Processes**

1. Initial training in output grading will be offered to UoA leaders as part of the University's planning for the REF 2021 submission.
2. All research-active staff will have access to the guidance framework and be encouraged to self-evaluate their work to gain experience and develop an understanding of the assessment criteria.
3. A UoA subgroup will evaluate research outputs by reading and grading them, following a process similar to that used for REF. Outputs can be reviewed at pre- or post-submission stage, but final grades will be based on published versions.
4. A 12 point scale is proposed and outlined in the Grading Template (Figure 2) below.

5. Subgroups must submit evaluation reports to the REF Coordinator and ensure that internal and external grades are accurately recorded.
6. Reviewing will take place on an ongoing basis, with each UoA reporting on an annual basis.
7. Open access publishing is of increasing importance both for REF and research funders. As well as reporting on output quality, the annual report should provide information on the proportion of published items available via open access (generally peer-reviewed conference proceedings and journal articles, but also some books and chapters), and hence eligible for REF and meeting research funder requirements.
8. Staff should submit all new outputs for evaluation.

### **External Review**

- a) A critical element of internal grading is that its robustness and accuracy is ensured through ongoing external calibration. External calibration is also required to counter the inevitable internal pressures to inflate grades.
- b) External grading should be sought on a mix of outputs selected by Unit of Assessment leaders.
- c) External reviews will be funded through the REF Development Fund, using nominated and approved reviewers. All potential REF outputs should be externally graded, with focus primarily on 4\* and 3\*/4\* outputs.
- d) All external reviewers should have demonstrable expertise and experience to undertake the task.
- e) Where there is significant disagreement about grades – either from internal review or across internal and external review – items may be sent to more than one external reviewer.

### **Understanding the value of Journal Impact Factors in Assessing the Quality of Outputs**

The impact factor (IF) of a journal is commonly used as an indicator of its relative importance within an academic discipline or field. This has led to many in the sector using the IF as an indicator of the quality of articles published within that journal. The IF of a journal is not related to either the quality of the peer review process or the quality of content published. It is explicitly a measure that reflects the average number of times articles are referenced in other published media following publication and therefore should be seen as a 'citation' measure. IF therefore is used to evaluate the relative importance of a journal within its field based on the frequency in which an "average article" has been cited over a particular time period.

There is a common perception that the IF of a journal reflects its ability to attract higher volumes of potential papers and this in turn provides greater scope to select higher quality of work for publication. To some extent this may be true but is an unintended use of the system and is an unreliable measure of the quality of individual papers published within each issue.

A journal's IF can only be calculated after it has been in publication for a minimum of 3 years. The journal with the highest IF is that which has published the most commonly cited articles over a 2-year period. The IF only applies to the journal and not to individual articles it publishes. In a given year, the IF of a journal is calculated through the average number of citations received per article it published during the preceding 2 year period.

For example, if a journal has an IF of 3 in 2018, then its articles published in 2016 and 2017 received three citations each on average in 2018. The 2018 IF will actually be published in 2019 as it cannot be calculated until all of the 2018 publications have been processed by an indexing agency.

It should be evident therefore that using the IF of a journal to assess the quality of an individual output is of limited value. The system involves historical data that does not recognise potential wide variations in the level of originality, significance and rigour of individual papers published in the journal over a 2 year period. The IF is merely an indicator of the average 'citation impact' of all of the articles published over a limited time period. The availability of citation data for individual work is therefore a more reliable indicator of its potential importance and quality.

This is reflected in the proposed panel criteria and working methods for REF2021, which are explicit in their assertion that panels, **will not use impact factors or journal hierarchs in their assessment of outputs**. However, the sub-panels will use citation information, where available, as an indication of academic significance to inform their assessment of output quality. The use of citation data will be limited to submission in main panel A, a selected number of Units of Assessment in main panel B and Economics in main panel C.

Fig.2 - Output Grading Template

Authors:	
Output title and category (e.g. book, journal article etc.):	
<b>Indicate all those that apply:</b>	
<b>Originality</b>	research is leading or at the forefront of the research area (indicative of 4*)
	great novelty in developing new thinking, new techniques or novel results (indicative of 4*)
	develops new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research (indicative of 4*)
	makes important contributions to the field at an international standard (indicative of 3*)
	involves incremental advances, which might include new knowledge which conforms with existing ideas and paradigms, or model calculations using established techniques or approaches (indicative of 2*)
<b>Overall score for originality (4 maximum)</b>	
<b>Significance</b>	agenda-setting (indicative of 4*)
	major influence on a research theme or field (indicative of 4*)
	contributes important knowledge/ideas/techniques, likely to have a lasting influence in field, but not necessarily leading to fundamental new concepts (indicative of 3*)
	provides useful knowledge and influences the field (indicative of 2*)
	useful but unlikely to have more than a minor influence in the field (indicative of 1*)
<i>changes in policy or practice (may not be applicable)</i>	Major (indicative of 4*)
	Significant (indicative of 3*)
	Some (indicative of 2*)
	Minor (indicative of 1*)
<i>influence on processes, production and management (may not be applicable)</i>	Major (indicative of 4*)
	Significant (indicative of 3*)
	Some (indicative of 2*)
	Minor (indicative of 1*)
<i>influence on user engagement (may not be applicable)</i>	Major (indicative of 4*)
	Significant (indicative of 3*)
	Some (indicative of 2*)
	Minor (indicative of 1*)
<b>Overall score for significance (4 maximum)</b>	
<b>Rigour</b>	<i>The purpose of the work is</i> articulated
	articulated reasonably well
	ambiguous/unclear
<i>Has the purpose been achieved?</i>	evidence presented
	some evidence
	unclear if achieved, or purpose not achieved
<i>Methodologies</i>	appropriate and rigorous
	lacks rigour
<b>Overall score for rigour (4 maximum)</b>	
<i>Additional brief comments to justify grade</i>	<b>Overall Grade total maximum = 12:</b> 4 for originality 4 for significance 4 for rigour
Reviewer name:	UoA leader:



## **Research Excellence Framework 2021**

### **Initial Equality Impact Assessment Code of Practice**

## 1. Background information

<b>Assessment owner</b>	Andrea Walters	
<b>Job title</b>	University Secretary and Director of Human Resources	
<b>E-mail address</b>	andrea.walters@sunderland.ac.uk	
<b>Who else is involved in undertaking this EIA?</b> (Please add additional lines as needed)	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Job title:</b>
	Pamela Flynn	Deputy Director of Human Resources
	Julie Scanlon	Athena SWAN Manager
	Natalie Bell	Head of Organisation and Staff Development
	Martin Finlayson	Head of Research
	Iain Clark	Head of HR Management Systems
<b>Rationale:</b>	In preparation for the REF 2021 submission, all institutions are required to submit a Code of Practice detailing processes for:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is being considered?</li> <li>• What need is being addressed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identifying staff with significant responsibility for research</li> <li>- the selection of outputs</li> </ul>	
<b>Aim:</b>	The Code of Practice confirms the University's commitment to the key principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity. Particular focus has been given to the processes for the identification of staff who meet the REF definition of significant responsibility for research, defining independent research, the selection of outputs for submission to ensure that they are inclusive, equitable, fair, transparent and legal.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the intended outcome of the proposal?</li> </ul>		
<b>Method:</b>	The Code of Practice will be submitted to the national REF team by 7 <sup>th</sup> June 12pm by Martin Finlayson, Head of Research.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the proposal be delivered?</li> <li>• By whom?</li> <li>• By when?</li> </ul>		
<b>Stakeholders:</b>	Academic staff are the key staff in scope of the CoP. Staff consultation was lead by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) who is Chair of the REF Code of Practice Working Group. The draft CoP was available for review on our internal staff portal and academic staff were	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the people likely to be affected by this proposal?</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How have you consulted with; or, how will you consult with the people who are likely to be affected</li> </ul>	<p>emailed to invite feedback via a dedicated email inbox. Additionally, three open consultation events were held in May 2019, to which all staff were invited. The University's Equality, Diversity and Social Responsibility Group, chaired by the University Secretary and Director of Human Resources, was consulted on the CoP as were the REF group and the Professoriate.</p>
<p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will you know you have achieved your aims?</li> <li>What are your measures / indicators of success?</li> </ul>	<p>The protected characteristics of academic staff identified as having significant responsibility for research will be in proportion to those of the academic staff base overall.</p> <p>The protected characteristics of academic staff with outputs selected for REF submission will be in proportion to those of the academic staff base overall.</p>
<p><b>Is the proposal related to, or influenced by other policies or decisions (internal or external)?</b> E.g. HEFCE; National policies, staff or student policies</p>	<p><i>External:</i> REF 2021 guidelines on the Code of Practice</p> <p><i>Internal:</i> Individual Research Plan (IRP) documentation and process (for requesting research support) Framework for Academic Workloading Single Equality Scheme</p>

## 2. Screening tool

Protected Characteristic under the Equality Act 2010	Potential impact		Please detail here, for each characteristic listed on the left, the reasons behind your assessment of potential impact.
	Nature of impact (this may be + and -)	Scale of impact	
	Positive (+) Negative (-) Neutral (N) No impact / not applicable (n/a)	High (H) Medium (M) Low (L) No impact / not applicable (n/a)	



Age	Positive	L	<p>The purpose of the CoP is to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. While older staff have generally been favoured in previous RAE/REF exercises nationally, commensurate with their research career stage, the CoP is unlikely to have a positive or negative impact on this. In REF 2021 nationally, staff with significant responsibility for research may be returned with zero outputs, potentially supporting younger staff. The Individual Circumstances Panel may take into account any impacts of negative or prejudicial behaviour upon an individual in terms of any protected characteristic, including age.</p> <p>As the Individual Research Plan (IRP) 2020 will be crucial to the decision-making process re: REF 2021, an analysis of the demographic profiles of the IRP 2019 was undertaken in order that we might take steps to redress any inequalities for 2020 in identifying staff with significant responsibility for research. While some decisions are still pending as at 5/2019 (to be complete by end 6/2019), staff in the 30-39 age bracket are very slightly overrepresented in the proportion of successful applications, comprising 22% (n.26) applicants and 26% (n.18) successes. Staff in the 20-29 age bracket showed 100% success rate in applications, though actual numbers only constituted 2 staff. There were no other notable differences in proportions. This is deemed to be no cause for concern and will be monitored when all IRP data is collated and for IRP 2020. No data on output selection is available as yet.</p>
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Sex	Positive	L	<p>Typically women have been underrepresented in RAE/REF exercises nationally. The CoP is likely to benefit women in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. Men are unlikely to be impacted positively or negatively as a result of the CoP; they are traditionally well-represented in RAE/REF exercises. In IRP 2019, there is a disproportionate representation of women in the 'decisions pending' category at 5/2019 (F:67%, n.10). Therefore, the slight underrepresentation of women in successes (F:44%, n.31) to applications (48%, n. 57) needs to be assessed when all IRP decisions are confirmed.</p> <p>All staff involved in decision-making for the REF are in the process of completing online equality and diversity training (currently 50% completion) and are receiving face-to-face unconscious bias training from 5/2019.</p>
Disability	Positive	M	<p>Typically staff with disabilities have been underrepresented in RAE/REF exercises nationally. The CoP is likely to benefit staff with disabilities in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. Furthermore, the Individual Circumstances Panel will assess the impact of any staff circumstances that staff wish to</p>

			<p>declare, including disability. Declared circumstances are kept confidential to the panel and therefore likely to foster disclosures where appropriate. This may lead to a positive impact of the CoP on staff with disabilities and provides the rationale for grading this 'M'. The IRP 2019 demographic data shows proportionate representation in terms of this characteristic.</p>
Race / Ethnicity	<b>Positive</b>	<b>L</b>	<p>Typically staff from BME backgrounds have been underrepresented in RAE/REF exercises nationally. The CoP is likely to benefit BME staff in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. Staff from White backgrounds are generally well represented in RAE/REF exercises and will not be impacted positively or negatively by the CoP. In IRP 2019, 89% of BME applications were successful, a positive statistic giving no cause for concern.</p>

Religion / Belief	<b>Positive</b>	<b>L</b>	<p>While there is no comparative data specifically on religion/belief and RAE/REF inclusion, in wider society people from specific religious groups or with specific beliefs are underrepresented in various fora. The CoP is likely to benefit these staff in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs.</p> <p>In the IRP 2019 data, while some decisions are pending, a slightly higher proportion of staff declaring 'no religion' requested research support. Furthermore, staff declaring 'no religion' are proportionally overrepresented in successful applications (applications: 47%, n.55; successful: 53%, n. 37) than those declaring a religion (applications: 30%, n.35; successful: 27%, n.19) or those that 'prefer not to say'/unknowns (24%, n.28; successful: 20%, n.14). Further examination of the data will be undertaken once all decisions are made and any relevant actions agreed on the basis of the final data. Options include specific training for decision-makers and consultation with affected groups.</p>
Sexual orientation	<b>Positive</b>	<b>L</b>	<p>While there is no comparative data specifically on sexual orientation and RAE/REF inclusion, in wider society people from minority orientations are underrepresented in various fora. The CoP is likely to benefit these staff in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing</p>

			<p>significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs.</p> <p>IRP 2019 data shows proportionate representation in rates of application and success.</p>
Gender reassignment	<b>Positive</b>	<b>M</b>	<p>There is no comparative data specifically on gender reassignment and RAE/REF inclusion, yet in wider society staff undergoing/having undergone gender reassignment are underrepresented in various fora. The CoP is likely to benefit staff for whom this is relevant, in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. Furthermore, the Individual Circumstances Panel will assess the impact of any staff circumstances that staff wish to declare, including gender reassignment. Declared circumstances are kept confidential to the panel and therefore likely to foster disclosures where appropriate. This may lead to a positive impact of the CoP on staff undergoing/having undergone gender reassignment and provides the rationale for grading this 'M'. Our IRP data shows no staff currently possessing this protected characteristic.</p>

Pregnancy and Maternity	<b>Positive</b>	<b>M</b>	<p>There is no comparative data specifically on pregnancy and maternity and RAE/REF inclusion but this may be a factor in the underrepresentation of women in past RAE/REFs. The CoP is likely to benefit staff for whom this is relevant, in its aim to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency. There is a consistent approach in using staff Independent Research Plans as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. Furthermore, the Individual Circumstances Panel will assess the impact of any staff circumstances that staff wish to declare, including pregnancy/maternity-related issues. Declared circumstances are kept confidential to the panel and therefore likely to foster disclosures where appropriate. This may lead to a positive impact of the CoP on staff for whom pregnancy/maternity is relevant and provides the rationale for grading this 'M'. IRP 2019 data shows proportionate representation in rates of application and success.</p>
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<b>Positive</b>	<b>L</b>	<p>There is no comparative data specifically on marriage and civil partnership and RAE/REF inclusion. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. The Individual Circumstances Panel may take into account any impacts of negative or prejudicial behaviour upon an individual in terms of any protected characteristic, including marriage and civil partnership.</p>

<b>Additional personal characteristics to be considered:</b>			
Carers / Caring responsibilities	<b>Positive</b>	<b>L</b>	<p>There is no comparative data specifically on carers/caring responsibilities and RAE/REF inclusion. However the general tendency for caring responsibilities to fall to women could be informing the underrepresentation of women in RAE/REF assessments nationally. There is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs. The Individual Circumstances Panel may take into account any impacts of caring responsibilities. Declared circumstances are kept confidential to the panel and therefore likely to foster disclosures where appropriate. This may lead to a positive impact of the CoP on staff for whom caring responsibilities are relevant.</p> <p>We do not hold comprehensive data on this with regard to IRPs.</p>
<b>Other factors to be considered:</b>			
Part-time/full-time staff	<b>Positive</b>	<b>L</b>	<p>There could be potential for part-time staff to be disadvantaged in terms of research progress. However, there is a consistent approach in using staff IRPs as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research and a consistent approach to selecting outputs.</p> <p>IRP 2019 data shows proportionate representation of part-time and full-time staff in applications and success rates.</p>

Where you have identified a positive impact (+) in the Screening Tool, please outline this briefly using bullet points:

- The purpose of the CoP is to ensure equality of treatment, fairness and transparency.
- There is a consistent approach in using staff Individual Research Plans, completed by staff themselves with guidance from their research lead, as the basis for assessing significant responsibility for research.
- There is a consistent approach to selecting outputs.
- The Individual Circumstances Panel (trained in both Equality and Diversity and in Unconscious Bias) may take into account, confidentially, any impacts upon an individual, including circumstances related to any protected characteristic.
- This EIA is iterative and will be reviewed at relevant points – notably as the 2019/2020 IRP process is underway and as outputs are selected

If your proposal will not have any impact on ‘people’ please outline why this is the case:

N/A

If you have not identified any potential negative impacts associated with your proposal, you have completed your assessment.

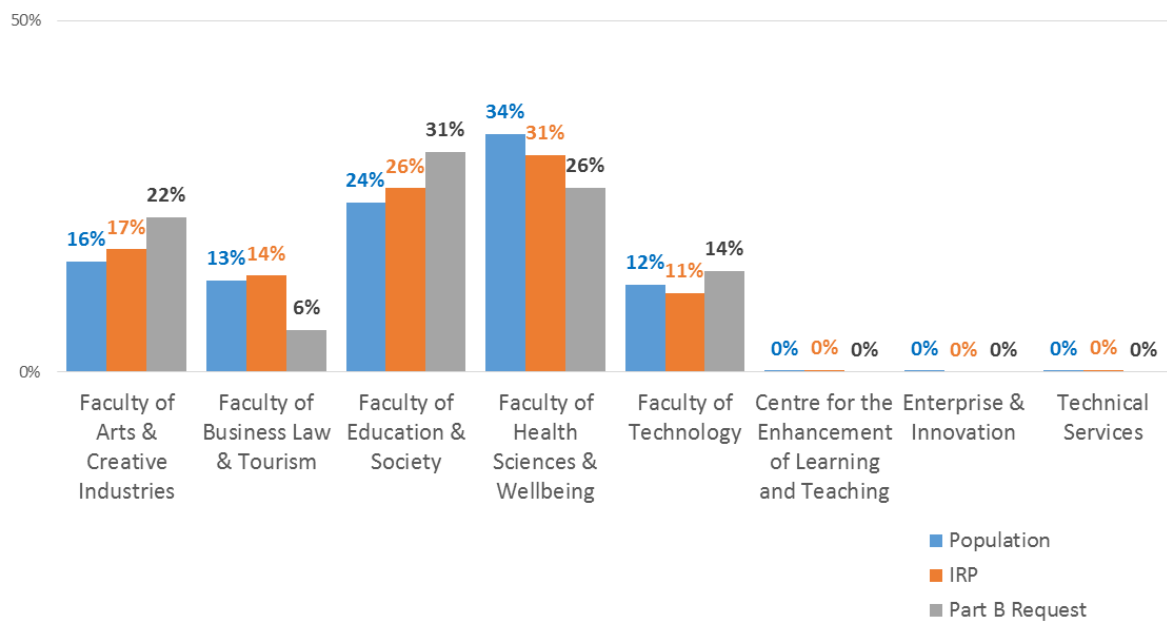
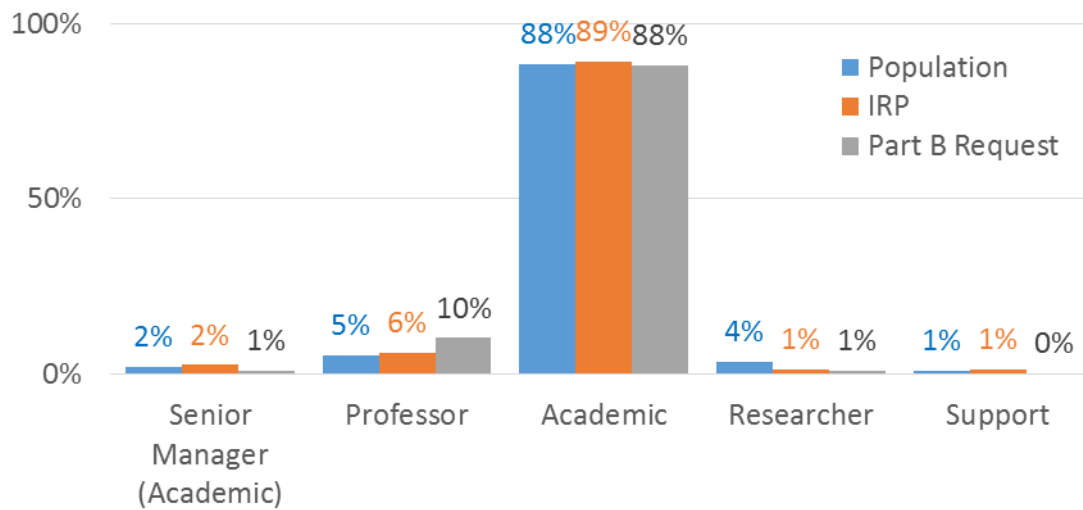
## REF Equality Impact Assessment (Data – April 2019)

### Definitions

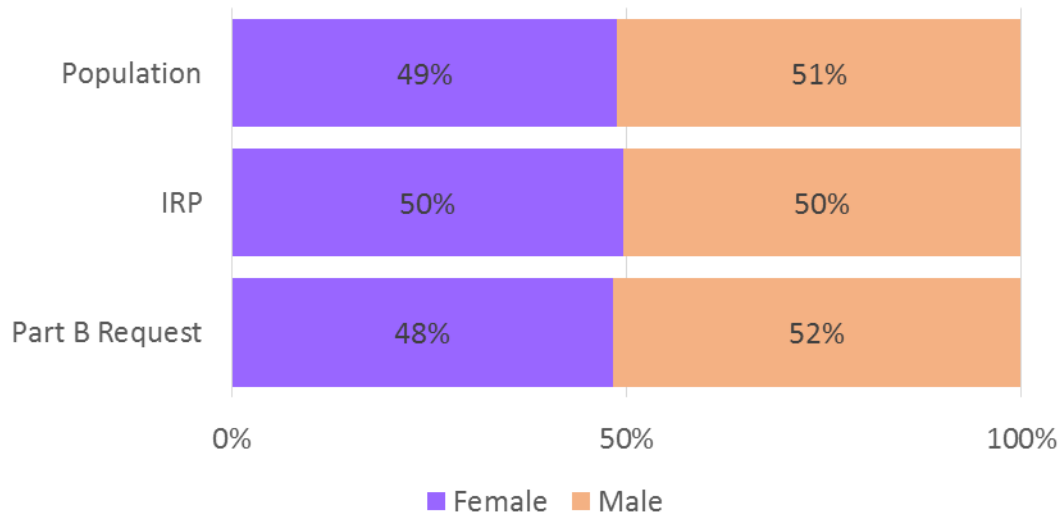
Category	Definition
<b>Population</b>	All Academic, Professorial and Research staff (excluding Research Assistants) plus any Senior Manager, Support or AT staff who submitted an IRP. Excludes teaching only Academic Tutors.
<b>IRP</b>	The subset of the overall population that submitted an IRP
<b>Part B Request</b>	The subset of the IRP population that submitted a Part B request which was eligible for the REF. <i>(Excludes staff who did not qualify for independent research because of PhD study.)</i>

### Staffing breakdown – proportions by Job Family and Faculty/Service

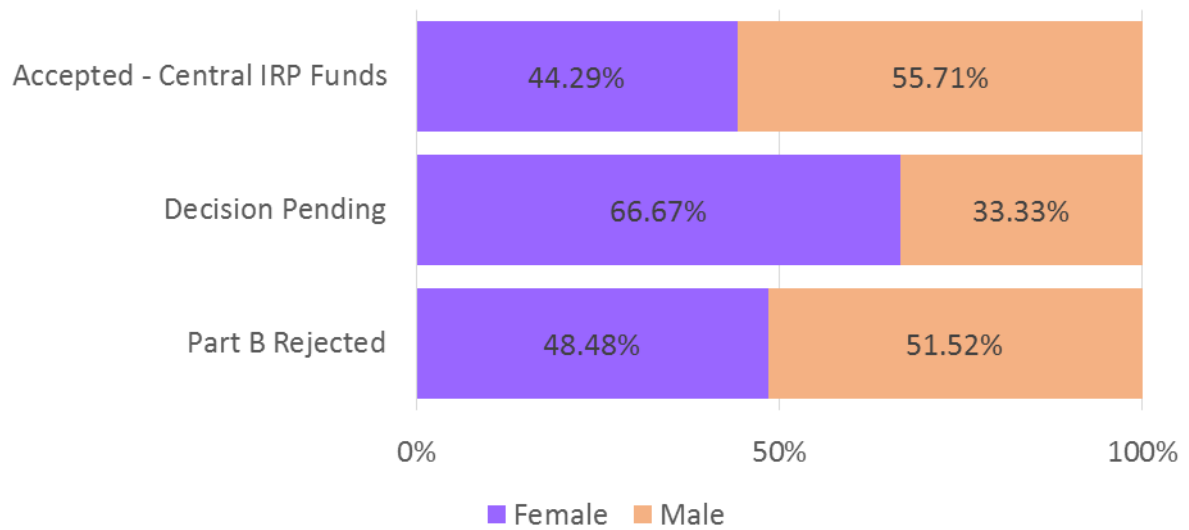




## Gender



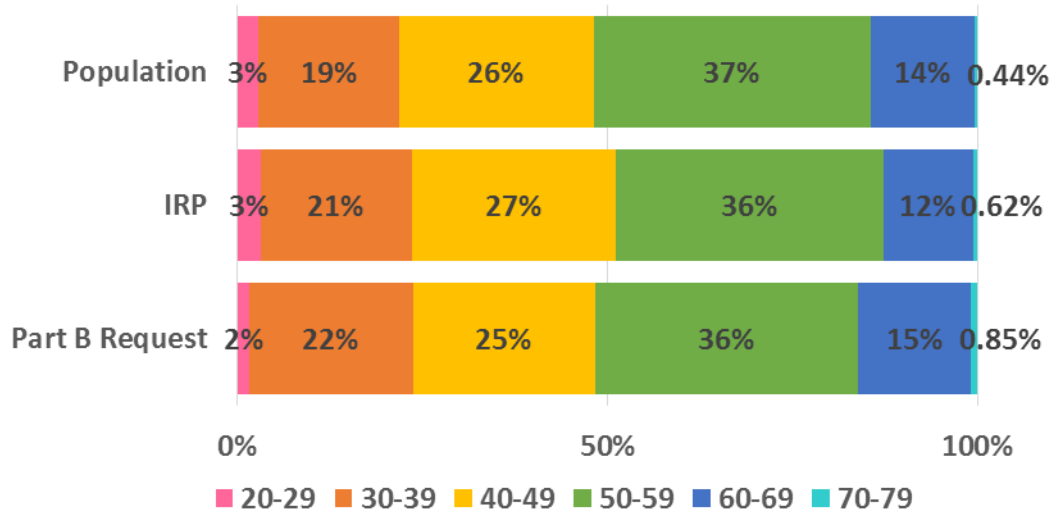
## Outcome of Part B Request



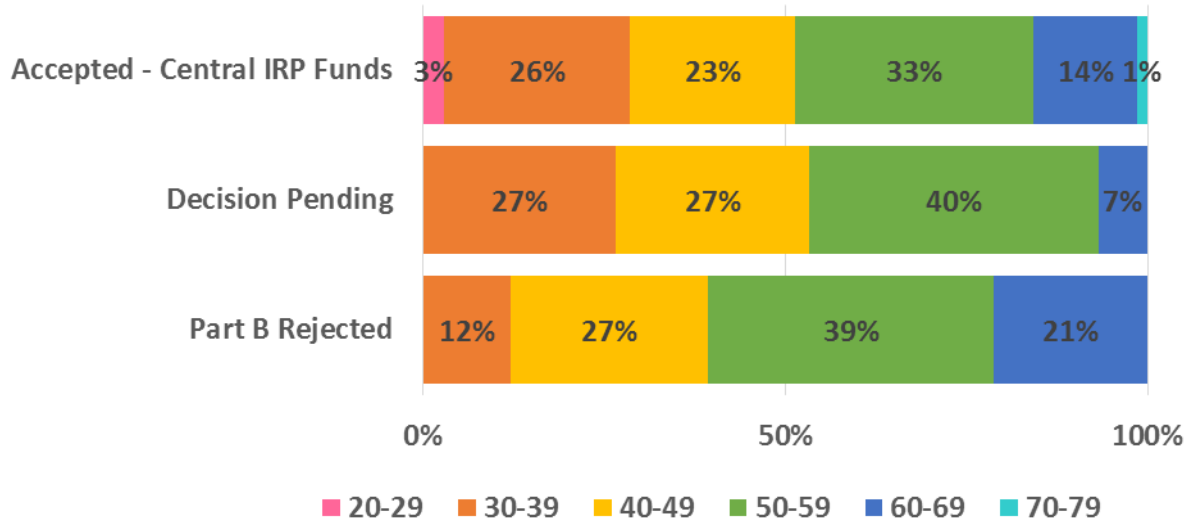
## Age

The percentage of staff aged 50 or over is:

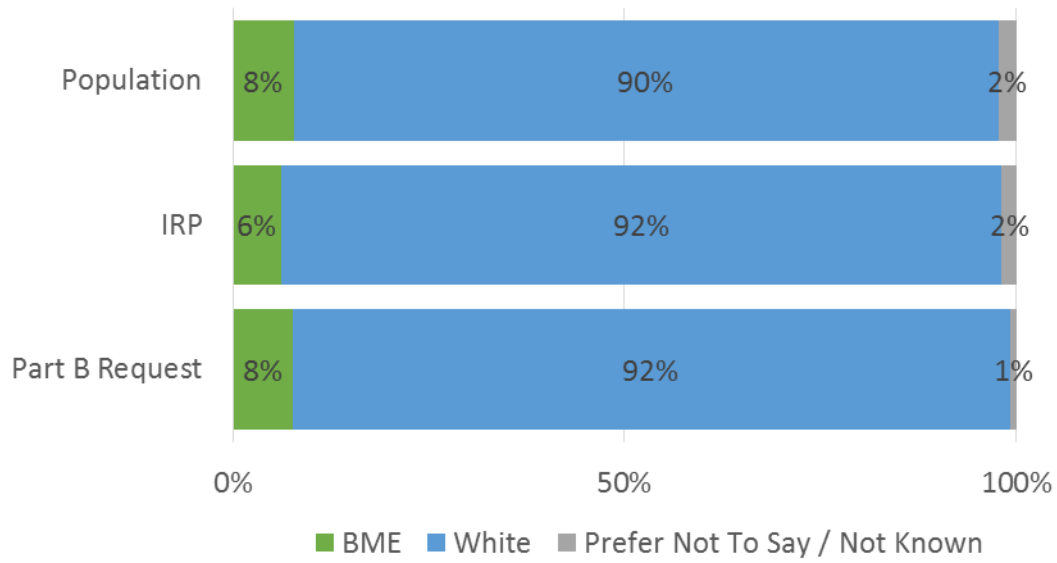
- Population 52%
- IRP 49%
- Part B Request 52%



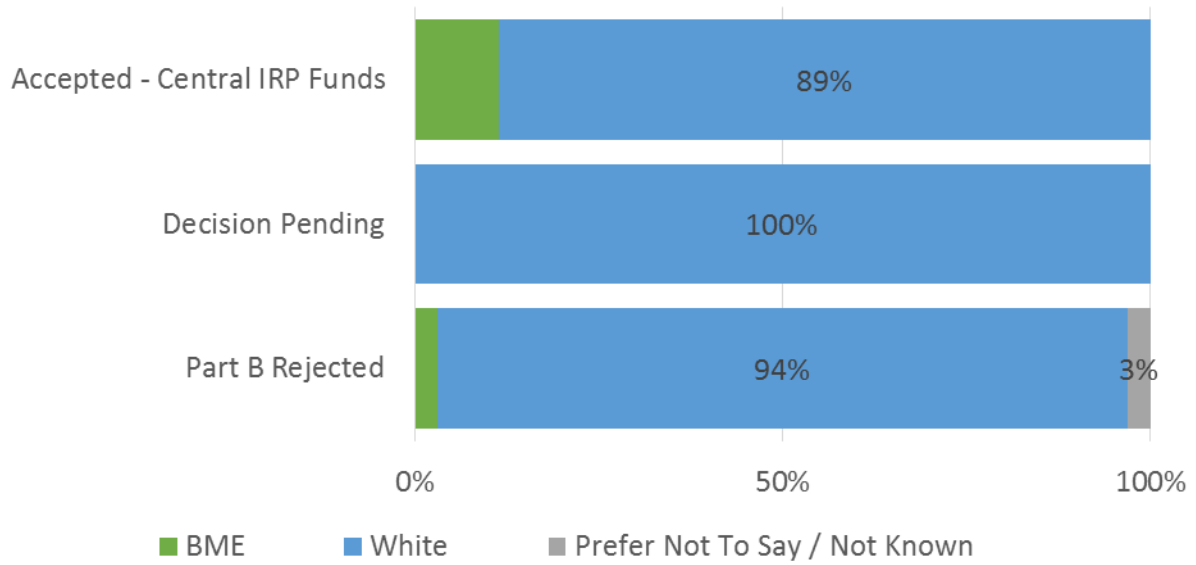
## Outcome of Part B Request



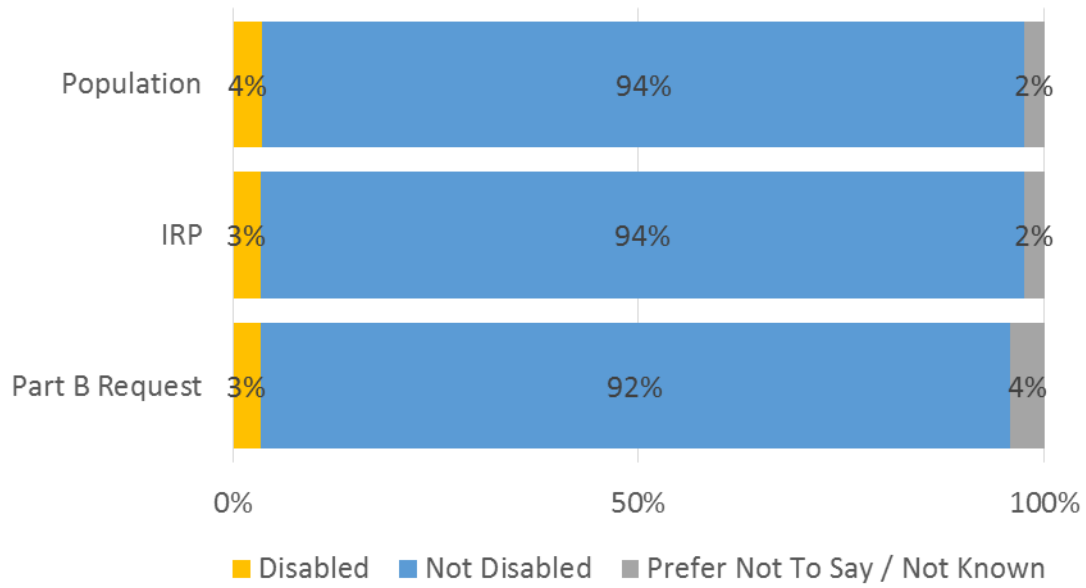
## Ethnicity



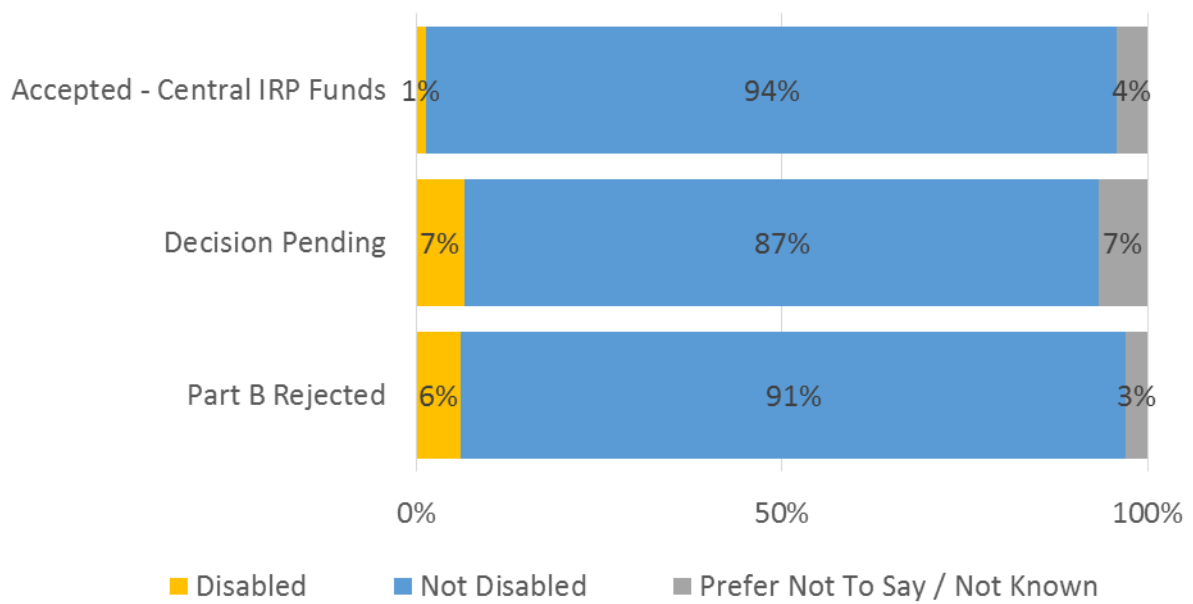
## Outcome of Part B Request



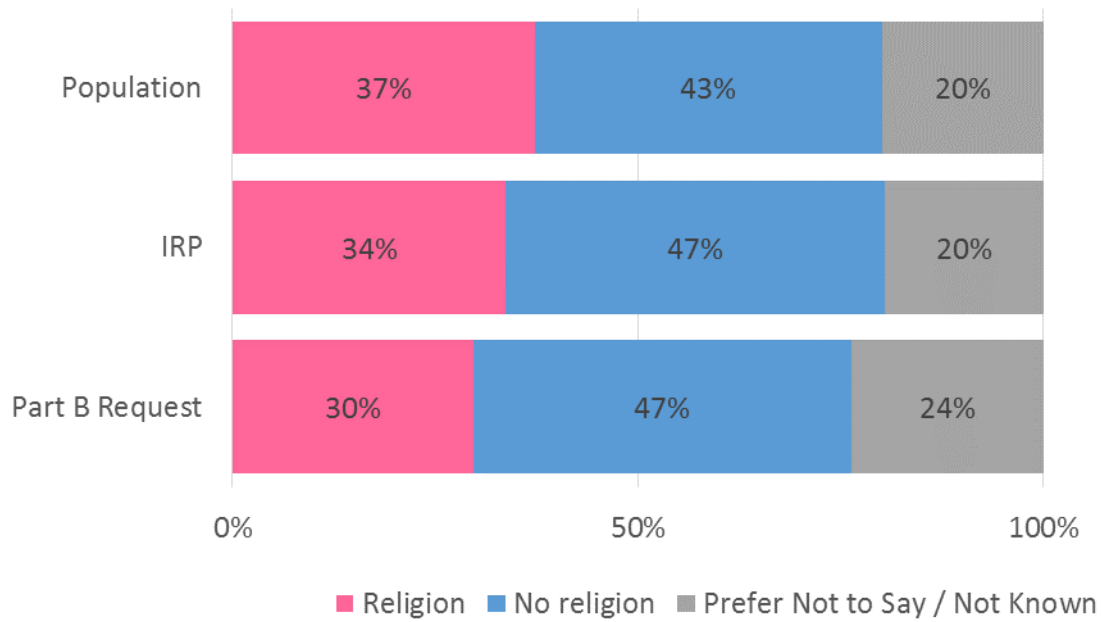
## Disability



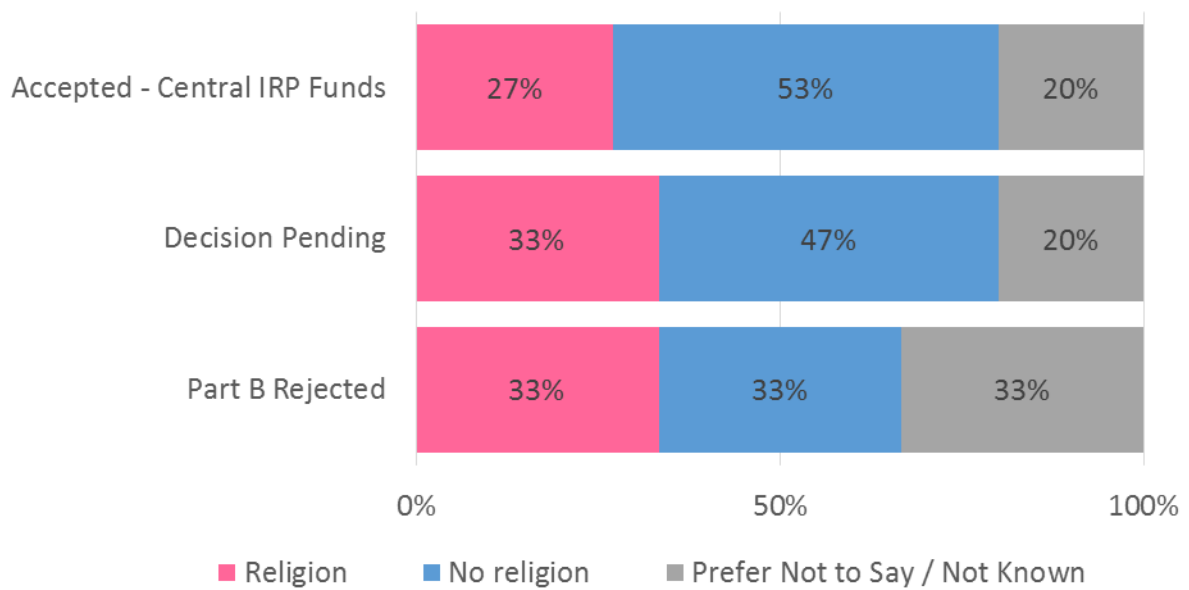
## Outcome of Part B Request



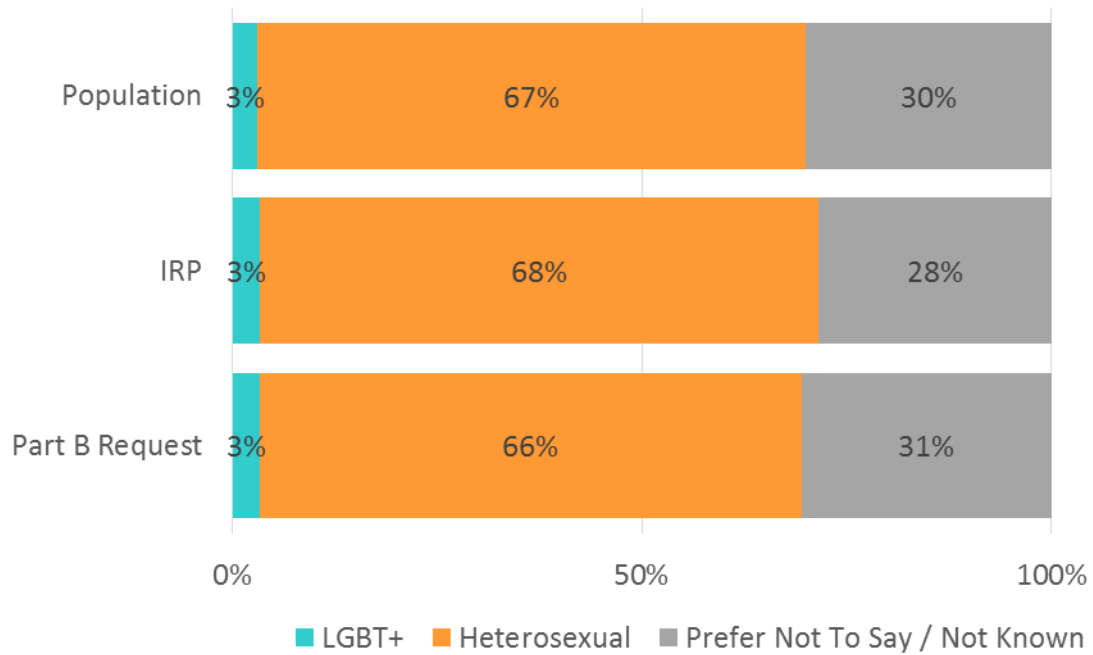
## Religion



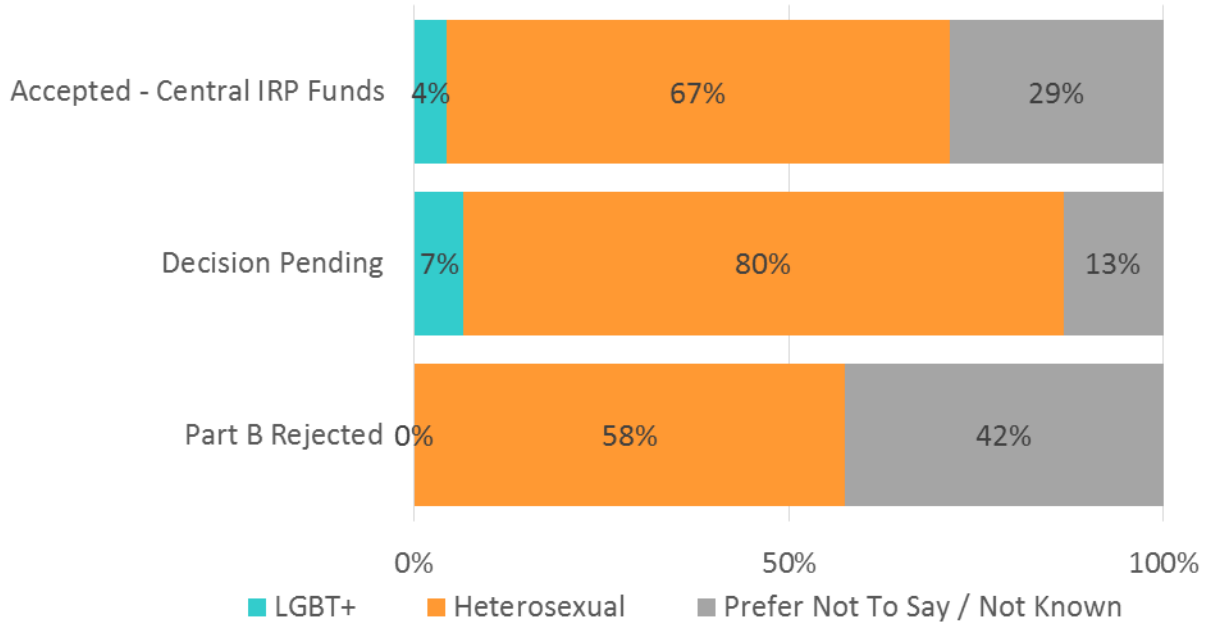
## Outcome of Part B Request



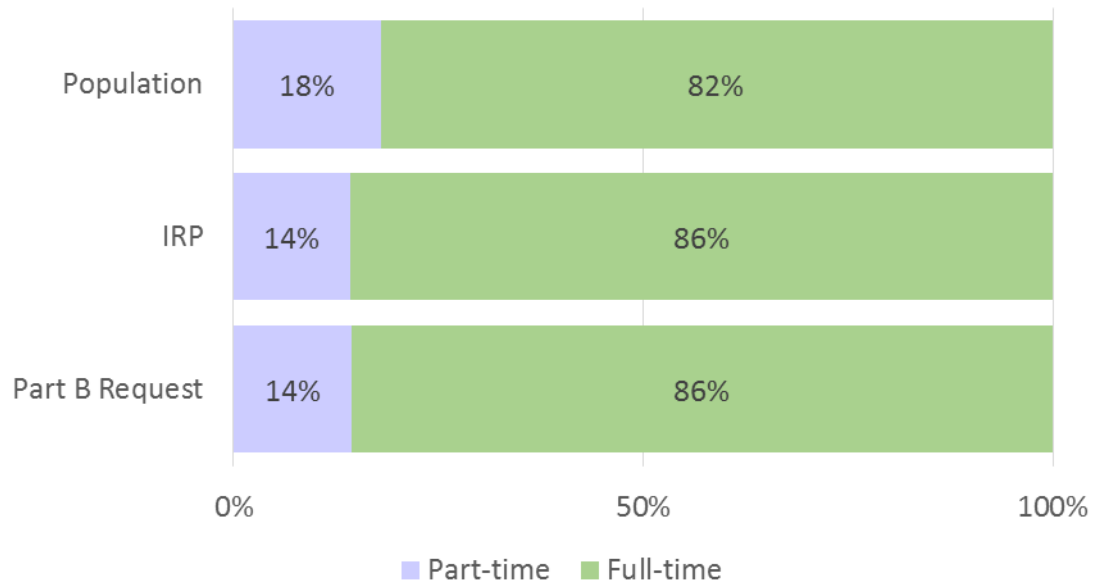
### Sexual Orientation



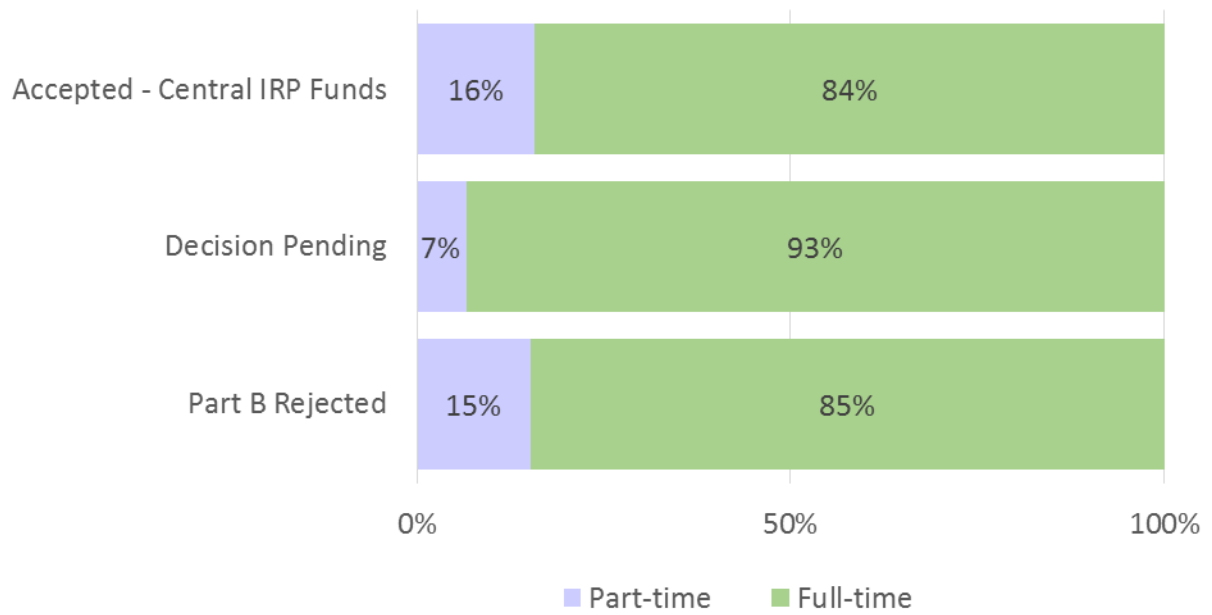
### Outcome of Part B Request



### Part-time / Full-time Role

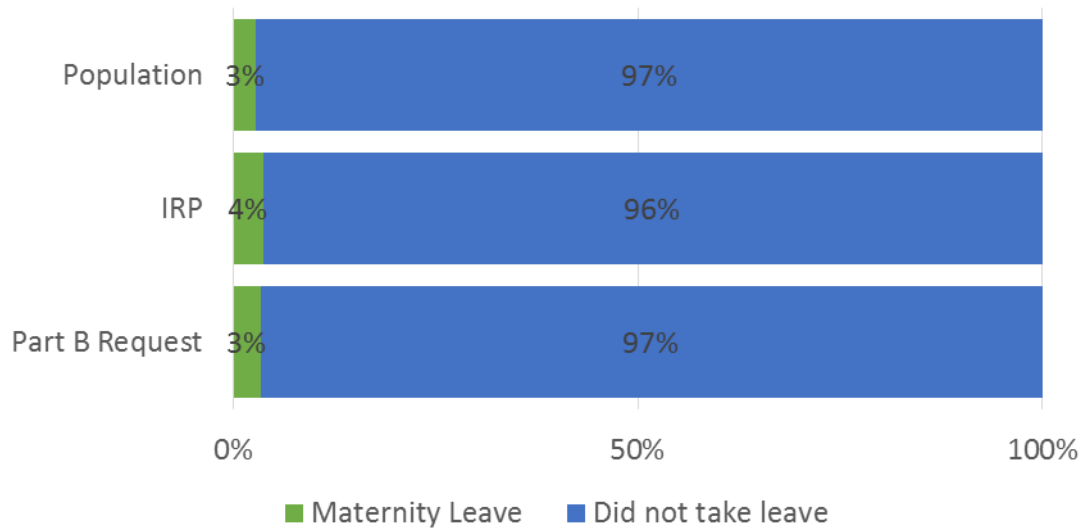


### Outcome of Part B Request





### Maternity Leave (leave ending 2014/15 onwards)



### Outcome of Part B Request

