

# University of Reading

## REF 2021 Code of practice

### Part 1: Introduction

#### Foreword by Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation and Chair of the Code of Practice Group

The University has a proud history of diversity and inclusion, the most notable example being the publication by former Vice-Chancellor, Lord Wolfenden, of a report which played a key role in decriminalising homosexuality in England and Wales. Visible reminders of this and other legacies are evident across our campus and in our activities, and they symbolise a strong ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion.

I believe that no one should experience inequality as a result of who they are, and that a University should be a place where everyone fulfils their potential. I have no doubt that a culture of diversity and equality strengthens us in terms of our ambition, achievement and creativity. Developing this Code presented a valuable opportunity for us to reflect on our existing policies and initiatives, and to evaluate progress against our aims with regards to equality and diversity. I was heartened by the generous and thoughtful contribution of a large number of individuals and groups during the consultation period, which provided clear evidence that diversity and inclusion matter to us as a community. On behalf of the Code of Practice Group, I would like to thank those who contributed to making this a truly collective effort.

*Professor Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation*

The primary purpose of this Code of Practice is to set out the steps that the University of Reading will be taking to ensure that it meets its legal responsibilities with regards to equality and diversity, and that it adheres to the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity in the identification of eligible research staff and the selection of research outputs for submission to the REF. The development of this Code has provided the University with the opportunity to review current policies and procedures and identify areas where improvements can be made to further promote equality and diversity in our normal operations.

The procedures underlying these basic principles for REF purposes are as follows:

**Transparency:** to ensure input from a diversity of sources when developing the processes proposed in the Code and to ensure that the Code is available in accessible format and widely publicised to all relevant staff.

*Development of the Code:* The Code has been produced following an extensive consultative process with relevant staff groups across the University, including the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board (chaired by the Pro- Vice-Chancellor, Academic Planning & Resources), the Staffing Committee and the recognised trade union (UCU). The Code has been discussed and feedback sought from the University Senate and

the Board for Research & Innovation. A draft form of the Code has been made available to all academic staff and discussed with Unit of Assessment (UOA) Leads and academic staff through Q&A sessions. All staff were invited to provide comments through a named email address. This approach has provided staff with multiple opportunities for feedback, which informed the different iterations of the document. Approval has been confirmed by the University Executive Board and the Code will be made available to the University Council.

**Accessibility:** the Code has been written in plain, clear and unambiguous language. Links to relevant University policies are included in the Code for ease of access by staff. Simple process diagrams allow easy visualisation of processes. A summary of timelines for processes and decisions are included in the Code to ensure that colleagues understand what to expect and when. However, if any member of staff is uncertain about any of the procedures documented in the Code, they should contact REF and Research Planning Manager, Wanda Tejada (w.tejada@reading.ac.uk) in the first instance

**Communications:** to ensure that the Code is effectively publicised, we will make use of the Staff Portal, our All-Staff Briefing communications (through which the University communicates with staff on a regular basis) and individual email communication. We will also make the Code available to all staff through the REF 2021 internal webpages and provide a copy of the Code directly to all REF-eligible staff. We will make provision to send the Code to all eligible staff who are absent from the University for whatever reason and we will ensure that the Code is made available in an appropriate format for staff with special requirements (for example, a disability). To further support communications, we will facilitate discussions at departmental meetings and research committees, at all staff briefings, staff groups and Q&A sessions, making recordings of the latter sessions available to all staff through the Staff Portal and research webpages.

**Equality and impact assessment:** we will publish interim and final impact equality assessments on our REF internal webpages.

**Consistency:** to ensure that processes used in making decisions about staff eligibility and inclusion of outputs and impact case studies are implemented uniformly, and in line with the Code of Practice, across the University. This will be achieved by (i) clear criteria for research independence, agreed by the REF Planning Group and informed by consultations with key groups and committees, (ii) clear guidance relating to eligibility and inclusion of outputs and impact case studies from the REF Planning Group, (iii) regular review of UOAs by the REF Planning Group, including detailed scoping and reflection reports at specific points during the planning, (iv) a series of training and good practice events for UOA Leads, led by the REF Planning Group and (v) proactive use of the Equality Impact Assessments across all UOAs and review of these by the REF Planning Group.

**Accountability:** to ensure that staff are aware of who is responsible for decisions relating to the determination of staff eligibility and selection of outputs and impact case

studies, and that a clear appeals process is established for the research independence element of the submission. An appeals process for decisions on output reductions due to personal circumstances will also be put in place to ensure that decisions on reductions and adjustment of expectations are commensurate with the circumstances declared. The ultimate responsibility for decisions on staff eligibility and selection of outputs and impact case studies will lie with the REF Planning Group; this will be clearly communicated through all of the channels indicated above.

**Inclusivity:** to ensure that the University is supporting a submission which reflects the excellent research of a broad spectrum of researchers irrespective of their personal characteristics or circumstances. This has been, or will be, achieved through (i) consultation with the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board, UCU and the Staffing Committee in the development of the Code as indicated above, (ii) REF-specific training regarding the Equality Act 2010, unconscious and implicit bias training and guidance on responsible use of metrics for all staff involved in REF planning, including UOA Leads, Research Deans, Pro-Vice Chancellors Research & Innovation, the Diversity & Inclusion Dean and the Research Publications Advisor, (iii) establishment of an appropriate appeals procedure and (iv) production of interim and final Equality Impact Assessments, followed up by actions to ensure that any bias identified through the analysis is addressed and any good practice is disseminated as appropriate.

Diversity and inclusion play a prominent role in the University, largely supported by the creation of academic leadership roles in Diversity and Inclusion (Deans for Diversity and Inclusion- a 1FTE post currently held as a job share) in 2015, following a recommendation by the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Group. The Deans are responsible for developing and leading strategy on equality, diversity and inclusion, working with teams across the University to implement and evaluate actions and co-ordinate applications for external recognition of our diversity and inclusion work, such as Athena SWAN and the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. University Executive Board members visibly champion different areas of the diversity agenda, and all academic Schools have Diversity and Inclusion champions, supported by a very active Community of Practice. Staff surveys conducted in 2017 and 2018 indicate that staff believe that the University respects people equally regardless of their disability, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. We successfully renewed our Athena SWAN Bronze institutional award in 2016, and 6 Schools currently hold an award (Silver or Bronze), with a further 5 Schools working towards achieving one in the next two years. Over the past 3 years the University has climbed 124 places to rank 80th in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. We also joined the Race Equality Charter as members and have carried out a thorough self-assessment over 2017-18.

Through consultation following the Dean appointments, the University Executive Board agreed ambitious staff targets relating to gender, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation for 2020, and these govern and inform approaches to policy, process and practice across the University:

**Gender**

- At least 30% of either gender in all key University committees and boards, including University Executive Board.
- Maintain the current baseline of at least 45% of either gender in the overall University Leadership Group, which includes University Executive Board, Deans, Associate Deans, Heads of School and Heads of Function.
- Have a gender-balanced professoriate, with at least 40% of professors of either gender (current baseline is 30% female).
- Reduce the pay gap that exists at senior (professorial and Grade 9) levels (current baseline is 11% and there is no significant pay gap at other levels).
- Achieve a University-wide Athena SWAN Gender Charter Mark Silver recognition, with all STEM Schools holding awards and all other Schools working towards Gender Equality Charter Mark recognition.

**Race and ethnicity**

- All key University committees to match academic staff black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) representation by 2020.
- Council and its sub-committees to set targets for BAME representation on their committees consistent with national census baseline for BAME.
- A minimum of 15% in each of grades 1-5 non-academic staff and 12% in grades 6-9 non-academic staff to be BAME by 2020 (levels set by local and national census data respectively; current baseline across all staff levels is 8%).
- A minimum of 14% of academic staff in grades 7 and above to be BAME by 2020 (current baseline is 11%).
- The University to attain a Bronze Race Equality Charter Mark by 2021.

**Sexual orientation**

- More than 70% of UK-based staff to have declared their sexual orientation through Employee Self-Service by 2018 and 95% by 2020. In 2013-14, this figure was 32%.
- To improve the University's position on the Stonewall Workplace Index, aspiring to be in the top 50 by 2020 (current position is 138, a substantial improvement on our 2016 position of 204).

Progress towards these targets is actively reviewed every year by the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board, which challenges the Deans on progress and future priorities. Membership of this group comprises chairs of the 4 staff networks

(Women@Reading, Cultural Diversity Group, LGBT+ and Ally network and Staff Disability Network) and other staff and student representatives. Action plans and teams (LGBT+, Disability, Race Equality and Athena SWAN) have been formed via consultation with relevant groups of staff. All but one of the STEM Schools hold Athena SWAN awards and most other Schools are in the process of developing applications.

Underpinning many of these actions are institutional policies, including the Equal Opportunities Policy; the Code of Good Practice [Valuing Ourselves and Others]; Harassment and Bullying Policies and Procedures; Trans and Gender Identity: Supporting Information and Procedures for Staff/Students; Family Leave Procedures; and Provision of Gender Neutral Toilets. These are developed through staff network consultation.

The University has substantially revised its procedures for academic staff probation and promotion over the last five years to become more criteria and evidence based, and to ensure that all staff are considered routinely for promotion. Specific procedures for committees to consider the impact of personal circumstances were also established. Additional support for Early Career Researchers has been taken forward through the University's HR Excellence in Research Strategy and Implementation Plan, which puts into practice the principles of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. This helps to ensure that those with line management responsibilities of researchers understand their responsibilities regarding support of research staff and that research staff are aware of their development and career opportunities, including promotion. This understanding has been greatly aided by the production of comprehensive Principal Investigator and research staff handbooks available to all staff and accessed from the University's website.

The University conducted an Equality Impact Assessment of its 2014 submission, which concluded that the University of Reading's process for the selection of staff to be submitted to REF 2014 had no negative impact for any group of staff on the grounds of equality protected characteristics. Notable findings were as follows:

- At institutional level, there were no significant differences in the percentage of eligible staff submitted with respect to gender, disability, contract hours, contract type, nationality, ethnicity or age relative to the comparator group of category A eligible staff.
- The University's selection rate by gender, in particular, compared very favourably with the sector.
- There was some evidence of underrepresentation of BAME staff and female staff in some science disciplines; this is of ongoing concern, but in line with sector trends

Notwithstanding changes to the process for this REF, the University will draw on lessons learned from its REF 2014 Equality Impact Assessment, and the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel's post-REF 2014 report on equality and diversity to inform its approach to Equality Impact Assessments in REF 2021. Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted at key stages in the University's REF preparations, allowing review of the criteria for significant responsibility for research, for research independence and review and adjustment of the output selection process as appropriate. An Equality Impact Assessment on the final submission will be published on the University website following submission in November 2020. This will include data on the distribution of the selected outputs across staff, by protected characteristic, in the context of characteristics of the submitted staff output pool. It will also include relevant appeals data, a commentary on any negative impacts observed, an action plan setting out further investigations, remedial actions taken and positive impacts to enable sharing of good practice. It will also identify any recommendations for further development of University business as usual processes where equality and diversity can be enhanced. The final Equality Impact Assessment will be evaluated by relevant University committees, including the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board and the Staffing Committee.

#### **Part 2: Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research**

Part 2 need only be completed where the institution will not be submitting 100 per cent of Category A eligible staff in one or more UOA.

The University will return 100% Category A eligible staff<sup>1</sup> as defined in the REF Guidance on Submissions and Revised Guidance on Submissions documents published by the funding bodies, organised into submitting units for return into the relevant units of assessment (UOAs) using the census date for staff as at 31 July 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> *Category A eligible staff are defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll of the University on the census date, whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'. Staff should have a substantive research connection with the submitting unit. Staff on 'research only' contracts should meet the definition of an independent researcher (see Part 3 of the Code of Practice for more details of how this is defined).*

<b>Development of process(es)</b>
<b>Staff, committees and training</b>
<b>Appeals</b>
<b>Equality impact assessment</b>
<b>Part 3: Determining research independence</b>
<p><b>Policies and procedures</b></p> <p>The University is keen to include the research of all of its eligible researchers. Research staff holding a fellowship identified in the List of Independent Research Fellowships published by the funding bodies are automatically Category A eligible. For staff holding Fellowships which are NOT on this list, research independence is defined as satisfying at least 4 of the 6 criteria below, in accordance with the expectations of the discipline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job description identifies independent research as primary activity or workload indicates independent research which also fulfils the definition of significant responsibility for research.</li> <li>• Lead the development of research proposals, projects and outputs, either as self-contained items or as a substantial and/or specialised part of a broader programme.</li> <li>• Lead the research direction of projects, either as self-contained items or as a substantial and/or specialised part of a broader programme. Build networks, collaboration or partnerships which contribute to an identifiable and distinctive research profile.</li> <li>• Manage staff in the synthesis, analysis and interpretation of research data, providing expert guidance and direction. For the Arts and Humanities, develop new ways of synthesizing, analyzing and interpreting data, for example as found in a corpus of material from archives and collections.</li> <li>• Secure research funding, including funding for research innovation, impact and engagement, in accordance with the expectations of the discipline.</li> <li>• Recruit and supervise/co-supervise doctoral students.</li> </ul> <p>Information on how the criteria will be interpreted by the REF Planning Group can be found in the Addendum to the Code of Practice for Research Independence in <b>Annex D</b> and will be made available to all staff through the internal REF webpages and to those participating in the process through guidance documents. Staff</p>

employed on teaching and research contracts at all grades, and staff employed on research-intensive contracts at Grade 8 and above, are automatically eligible as research independence is a fundamental criterion within their job descriptions and as outlined in the University's promotion criteria (Personal Titles Procedure).

Staff whose employment is funded by a Research Fellowship on the List of Independent Research Fellowships published by the funding bodies are automatically considered to meet the research independence criteria.

For staff employed on:

- research contracts at Grade 7 who do not hold a Research Fellowship included on the list published by the funding bodies,
- research contracts at Grade 6 who do not hold a Research Fellowship included on the list provided by the funding bodies, but who do hold an externally funded research Fellowship

research independence will be evaluated against the criteria above by the REF Planning Group.

To ensure consistency in the evaluation against the criteria, templates will be used for individuals to provide evidence and UOA Leads to provide their recommendations. The following process will be followed:

1. All staff in the categories described above will be centrally identified
2. Staff identified to be in the categories above will be asked to provide evidence of how their current roles and activities relate to each of the six criteria. They will be asked to record this evidence in the REF Research Independence Form. Guidance and further information, including clarifications on interpretation of the criteria will be provided together with the form.
3. Line managers will be asked to comment on the accuracy of the evidence provided by the member of staff being assessed.
4. UOA Leads will review all individual Research Independence forms and provide their recommendations on whether each individual criterion has been met through a standard UOA Research Independence Assessment Summary report. Clear guidance on interpretation of criteria will be provided to ensure these are applied adequately.
5. UOA Summary reports and individual Research Independence forms will then be reviewed by the REF Planning Group. The Group will make decisions on whether the individual meets the criteria for research independence.
6. To ensure consistency in the decision making process, the REF Planning Group will make decisions at specific points ensuring that all cases available at that point are assessed simultaneously. Conclusions and details of how criteria are applied to individual cases at each session will be recorded and available to REF Planning Group members in order to support consistency across sessions.

The process will be run initially during September and October 2019, with decisions made by the REF Planning Group in November 2019. The same assessment exercise will then be repeated in the Spring of 2020 with decisions made in July 2020 to take



account of any new employees who may have joined the University and any significant organisational, contractual or workload changes affecting staff between the date of the first exercise and the census data date (31 July 2020). Taking into consideration that some staff, line managers or UOA Leads may not have been able to complete the process prior to 31 July 2020 due to the impact of COVID, an additional round of assessments will take place in September 2020.

The Chair of the REF Planning Group will write to Grade 6 Research staff holding externally funded Research Fellowships who have been identified to meet the criteria for research independence, to inform them that they will be included in the submission. Those Grade 6 Research staff holding externally funded fellowships who are identified as not being eligible for submission will be advised of the appeals process as set out in the Appeals Section of this Code.

The Chair of the REF Planning Group will write to all Grade 7 Research staff to advise them of their eligibility for submission to REF. Those Grade 7 Research staff who are identified as not meeting the research independence criteria and therefore are not eligible for submission will be advised of the appeals process as set out in Appeals section of the Code of Practice. The rationale for non-eligibility will be recorded in the relevant REF Planning Group meeting minutes.

A diagram describing this process can be found in **Annex C. The templates used to support this process can be found at Annex E**

#### *Development of processes, policies and procedures*

The REF Planning Group identified a specific working group to draft and consult on the Code of Practice element of the REF submission and to develop the process and criteria for research independence. Membership of the Code of Practice Group was drawn from the REF Planning Group and also included an HR Partner to ensure appropriate consideration of current HR policies and procedures. As part of the consultation process, a number of key University Committees were consulted with and representatives from the REF Code of Practice Group have held 3 consultation meetings with representatives from the Reading Branch of the Universities and College Union trade union (with whom the University have a collective consultation agreement). UCU is the recognised representative body for staff who are Grade 6 and above. The REF Code of Practice Group, on behalf of the University, held discussions and provided information to the Chairs of the Staff Forum, which is a separate staff representative group (primarily representing Grade 1-5 staff but which also enables information sharing and communication with staff who are Grade 6 and above who may not be members of UCU). Details of dates and minutes of the consultation meetings with UCU representatives and the Staff Forum were published on the REF webpage<sup>2</sup> on the Staff Portal and dates of meetings are listed below.

UCU: 22 February, 21 March and 7 May 2019

Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board: 11 March 2019

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/news/articles/spsn-798183.aspx>

Staffing Committee: 12 February 2019

University Board for Research & Innovation (for information only): 19 February 2019

University Senate: 6 March 2019

University Executive Board (for final approval): 3 June 2019

University Council (for information only): July 2019

In addition to these committees, the Code of Practice Group made the draft Code available to all staff and held Q&A meetings with academic staff and UOA Leads. In order to ensure that the criteria for determining research independence (described above) was fair and applicable across all disciplines, the Code of Practice Group tested the criteria within four UOAs. Feedback from these consultations informed the final criteria and the process for the evaluation of cases.

Our policies and targets with regards to equality, diversity and inclusion detailed in the introduction section of this Code, are routinely considered in all University processes, including appointments to leadership roles. These policies have informed the composition of the committees described in this section. Appointments to roles specific for the REF submission have also been made in line with these policies.

### **Staff, committees and training**

The REF Planning Group is chaired by one of the Pro Vice Chancellors for Research & Innovation (PVC R&I) and includes the following in its membership: the Chair of the Code of Practice Group (also a PVC R&I) to ensure that all internal processes are consistent with the principles of the Code of Practice, the Research Deans for each of the research themes to provide disciplinary insight, the Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies to provide input on matters relevant to postgraduate research and the environment statement, a Dean for Diversity and Inclusion to ensure that equality and diversity considerations are taken into account in all REF preparations, a member of the Research Intelligence Unit to provide information relating to data on staff and outputs, the REF Planning Manager, who is responsible for the project management of the submission and a Secretary. The REF Planning Group is responsible for all decisions regarding the University's REF submission. The Group meets monthly and reports periodically to the University Executive Board, of which both PVCs R&I are members. Terms of reference for the REF Planning Group are included in **Annex A**.

Unit of Assessment Leads have been appointed for all UOAs where the University intends to make a submission. Appointments were made through an open and transparent process with applicants assessed by an interviewing panel against published criteria based on expertise within the discipline and familiarity with the REF context. Unit of Assessment Leads play an advisory role for all aspects of the submission in their units. A role description for UOA Leads is included in **Annex B**.

UOA Leads are supported by small teams drawing expertise from within the UOA, including Research Division Leaders for the research divisions' part of the UOA, who are responsible for developing research culture in their research divisions. UOA Leads

interact with Heads of School, who have overall responsibility for workloads and performance management of staff in the research divisions in their schools.

REF-specific training is being provided to members of the REF Planning Group, UOA Leads, Research Division Leaders, Heads of School, Personal Circumstances Group and Appeals Committee. Training includes:

**REF requirements and specific requirements of this Code of Practice:** training provided to UOA Leads and Heads of School in Spring 2019.

**Equality & Diversity training, including relevant legislation:** the University has recently revised and updated its online training which is mandatory for all staff. All groups of staff identified above are required to undertake the updated online training as part of the REF preparations to ensure they are clear on their legal responsibilities with regards to the Equality Act 2010.

**Unconscious and implicit bias training:** All Groups of staff identified above will undertake specific online training which is based on the latest best practice in relation to unconscious and implicit bias. This will then be followed by tailored face-to-face “reflective” development training for each group. The reflective development training has been developed by the People Development function within HR in collaboration with the Code of Practice Group. Training material also draws on the REF guidance, supplementary guidance, and event and webinar materials made available to the sector by the funding bodies, AdvanceHE and other organisations. Training will be delivered according to the following schedule:

- REF Planning Group, UOA Leads, Research Division Leads and Heads of School: July 2019
- Personal Circumstances Group, and Appeals Committee: October 2019

**Responsible use of metrics:** training has been developed and delivered by the University Research Publications Advisor according to the following schedule:

- REF Planning Group: October 2018 (principles)
- UOA Leads: October 2018 (principles), March 2019 (applying the University statement on responsible metrics to inform output selection)
- Appeals Committee: October 2019 (principles)

**Appeals**

A standing Appeals Committee has been established for the purpose of hearing any appeals resulting from the process for determining research independence.

Appeal cases will need to be submitted to the secretary of the Appeals Committee within 14 days of receiving formal notification of independence decisions. Appeals can only be made where an individual feels that the process for determining research independence as set out in this code has not been fairly or appropriately applied.

The Appeals Committee will be chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Planning & Resource and a Teaching & Learning Dean as the other two members. None of these individuals will have had any involvement in relation to whether or not the appellants' meet the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the REF submission. A secretary to the Appeals Committee will be appointed by the University Secretary and an HR representative will also attend appeal hearings in an advisory capacity to the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee may also seek advice, as required, from the Deans for Diversity and Inclusion.

All members of the Appeals Committee will have completed the equality & diversity and unconscious bias training and will have received additional REF related training (as described in Section 3 Staff, Committees and Training) before the appeals process begins. When hearing appeals, members will receive the candidate's letter of appeal and a written statement from the Chair of the REF Planning Group outlining their reason for the decision. Appellants will be invited to attend an appeal hearing, and will have the right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, recognised Trade Union representative or Staff Forum representative.

Eligible appeals will be heard after each round of research independence assessments and the Appeals Committee will confirm their decision to Appellants in writing within 10 working days of the appeal hearing enabling outcomes to be implemented in a timely manner. The Appeal Committee's decision will be final and there will be no further right of appeal.

**Equality impact assessment**

Equality, diversity and inclusion issues have been considered throughout the development of fair and transparent procedures and processes for progression of research staff towards independent researcher. Role descriptions for grade 6 and 7 and criteria for progression have been reviewed again during 2018-19 academic year to ensure consistency with new promotion and progression processes for other members of staff (including research staff at grade 8 and 9), and to inform our methodology for determining research independence for REF purposes. Our support for research staff, and the impact on progression is also scrutinised through the self-assessment process for institutional and School level Athena SWAN applications providing additional input from research staff across the University. Workshops on

research independence and gaining progression from research grade 6 to grade 7 have been held across several Schools, and via the open programme from People Development throughout the REF period.

In order to confirm that our processes and procedures are providing equal opportunity to all and allowing researchers to progress from all backgrounds, we will utilise the following methodology:

### **Research only Grade 7 staff**

For each protected characteristic listed below, we will compare the profile of staff deemed to be independent researchers with all research only staff at this grade.

This will be undertaken at institutional level, and where the numbers are sufficient, at Panel/disciplinary/UOA level to identify any disciplinary concerns.

Where there is over/under representation, we will investigate further to identify the reasons and any issues that need to be explored, and whether these can be addressed in the remainder of the REF period. Whilst mindful of practical significance in any differences, we will also evaluate statistical significance using the most appropriate test from the Fishers' Exact test, the Chi-Squared test and the z-test for differences in two proportions, depending on the n values involved.

### **Research only Grade 6 staff**

Because of the different criteria for inclusion for Grade 6 and Grade 7 research only staff, we will undertake a separate comparison for research only Grade 6 staff. We anticipate that these will constitute small numbers, and will reflect primarily those that are holding eligible external Fellowships, the receipt of which is beyond our influence.

We will also review the characteristics of staff that have appealed decisions on independence to establish whether there are any patterns that might suggest particular groups have been affected.

### **Protected characteristics and groupings for analysis**

The following outlines the protected characteristics against which we will undertake comparison and the levels of aggregation where data are available. Following review of the data and due regard to declaration rates and data volume, greater levels of granularity may be instructive for some characteristics, or similarly further consideration of intersectionality. We may determine appropriate declaration rate thresholds before undertaking analysis or drawing conclusions.

- Sex (Male/Female)
- Disability (Not known to be disabled/Declared disabled)
- Race: Ethnicity (BAME/White, Asian/Black/Chinese/White/Other), Nationality (British/Non-British)
- Age (under 30/30-39/etc/over 60)

Analysis for other protective characteristics will be subject to sufficient available data and declaration rates.

In light of the fixed term and part-time regulations (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment Regulations 2000 and 2002 respectively), we will also review data for contract mode (FT/PT) and type (fixed term/open).

As context, we will consider the diversity of our academic staff population in comparison with the sector, including comparisons at disciplinary level (e.g. STEM, non-STEM) using HESA/ECU data.

We will reflect on the outcomes of the interim Impact Equality Assessment and make adjustments to REF processes should any issue be identified.

We will reflect on our final Impact Equality Assessment and ensure that conclusions inform future development of institutional policies and processes.

#### **Part 4: Selection of outputs**

##### **Policies and procedures**

The REF 2014 represented a turning point for the University in its management of research and outputs resulting from research. A Task Group led to the establishment of a Research Outputs Support System (ROSS) in 2015/16, which had three key aims:

- To support the research, analysis, writing, publishing and dissemination of outputs, tailored to career stage and research discipline.
- To support constructive peer review by provision of a platform for local peer-review of output quality and to provide feedback to authors based on this peer review.
- To maximise the dissemination and visibility of research outputs to academic and non-academic audiences, supporting both staff reputation and potential for impact from research.

The ROSS tool is an online platform sitting alongside the institutional repository and is used by all research divisions (which map directly onto Units of Assessment) in a broadly consistent manner. Staff are required to submit research outputs into ROSS

for peer-review as a matter of routine. Research outputs assessed in ROSS can, but need not, meet REF-eligibility criteria.

Peer-review is undertaken locally in research divisions, supported by central guidelines. There is sharing of good practice via the Research Division Leaders' Communities of Practice. The peer-review process consistently includes an initial self-assessment by the author, a wide and inclusive pool of reviewers, a minimum of two reviewers per output assessed, moderation at research division level, adherence to REF and University guidance on responsible metrics, and feedback to the author. Outputs are allocated a final score of 1\* to 4\* (the scales employed include half scores); these final scores are visible in ROSS to the author(s) and available at division level for the Research Division Lead, the appropriate Research Dean and the PVCs R&I. Peer-review takes place continuously throughout the year, but snapshots of outputs in ROSS are taken twice per year and summary data are made available to all staff through dashboards on the Planning and Strategy webpages.

The pool of eligible outputs will comprise a subset of outputs in ROSS, created through the process detailed in the section below. The pool may include outputs authored by staff who have left the University for any reason but who were employed in a REF eligible category at the time when the outputs were first made publicly available, in line with REF guidance. The inclusion of these outputs in the pool of eligible outputs and potentially in the final submission will be carefully considered, taking into account the need to demonstrate the sustainability and vitality of the UOAs returned to the REF.

**Establishing the pool of eligible outputs:** Each staff member within a UOA is asked to select as many outputs available in their ROSS profile up to a maximum of 10 outputs to be considered for inclusion in the eligible pool. UOA Leads determine whether any outputs in ROSS authored by staff no longer employed at the University, but who were employed in an eligible category at the time of publication of the output, should also be considered for inclusion in the eligible pool.

The set of eligible outputs in ROSS selected by staff, together with outputs authored by staff who have left the University as selected by the UOA Lead, comprise the pool of eligible outputs for the UOA.

ROSS data and the selection process is undertaken 2-3 times a year. At each iteration of the process, UOA Leads validate the UOA pool for eligibility against the REF definitions and staff members update their selections.

Once the pool of eligible outputs available at each iteration is determined, UOA Leads reflect on the pool and determine whether additional information is required for outputs in the set. This may comprise:

- Additional internal peer review: used where ROSS assessments do not provide sufficient granularity to allow for differentiation. Additional internal peer review is coordinated by the UOA Lead following similar principles to those used for ROSS evaluation. Any changes to ROSS assessment as a result of this additional internal peer review are communicated to authors and the ROSS data is updated.



- External peer review: external reviews may be used for a sub-set of eligible outputs and for either of the two following purposes: i) to support calibration of the output pool, or ii) where internal expertise in a specific field is confined to such a small number of staff that meaningful internal peer-review is not feasible. External reviews are coordinated centrally and will include at least two reviewers. UOA Leads are required to make a case to the REF Planning Group explaining the rationale for external reviews. External peer review will not directly lead to changes in ROSS assessment.
- Additional bibliometric information, where relevant to the discipline, will be used to inform differentiation between outputs assessed at similar quality levels. Metrics are used in line with the University's statement on the responsible use of metrics.

**Modelling:** UOA Leads will be asked to model the submission on the basis of optimisation for quality, being mindful of inclusiveness, taking into account that researchers will be at different career stages, and have specific circumstances that might impact on their contribution to the output pool. As part of Equality Impact Assessments, *inter alia* a comparison of the selection will be made against the **pool of eligible outputs to identify any imbalances** in representativeness from an equality and diversity perspective, and explain reasons for the difference, for example that there are more senior experienced researchers from a particular sex in a UOA, and thereby higher volume/quality of outputs might be expected.

The REF Planning Group receives summary data after each validation cycle and uses this information to direct appropriate action, for example to address situations where there are gaps in the profile for a Unit of Assessment which has potentially eligible outputs in the institutional repository, but which have not been assessed through the ROSS and are therefore not available for inclusion in the modelling and selection process. The REF Planning Group also recommends appropriate action to address any concerns relating to diversity and inclusion.

This process is undertaken in an iterative manner through the REF Planning period, with 2 to 3 validation and modelling exercises per year.

**Scoping & Reflection exercise and mock submission:** A scoping and reflection exercise took place between September and December 2018, during which UOA Leads submitted a written report describing the preliminary shape and quality of the portfolio at that time, and identified key issues which needed to be addressed, additional information required, any equality and diversity issues and priorities for the next phase. The scoping and reflection stage also included a meeting with the relevant Research Dean and PVC R&I and feedback to the UOA Lead on both the written report and the meeting.

A full mock submission will be undertaken in 2020, during which UOA Leads will make recommendations on the output pool based on the process described above.

**Final selection of outputs for submission:** Final decisions on outputs for submission will be made by the REF Planning Group in 2020, based on the information gathered



throughout the processes described above. The REF Planning Group will seek to compile a portfolio that reflects the vitality and sustainability of each UOA, the quality of research of the UOA. The process of selection will give due regard to diversity and inclusion considerations. Information on the outputs selected for submission will be shared with colleagues in the UOAs as soon as possible after the submission. The University's statement on responsible metrics and current policies and processes for recruitment, performance and development reviews, probationary reviews, promotion and remuneration reviews clearly indicate individual performance is not determined by ROSS scores or bibliometric indicators but through assessment of an individual's portfolio. In line with these policies, the number of outputs included in the final submission authored or co-authored by any individual staff cannot be used to determine judgements of the performance of that individual. Staff responsible for undertaking reviews, promotion and remuneration committees will be instructed to discourage citation of the number of outputs included in the REF submission by individuals in applications, and will be reminded not to take these into consideration when making recommendations or decisions.

Information on the final submission will be made published internally (including details of the outputs submitted) as soon as possible after the submission.

A diagram describing the process outlined in this section is enclosed in **Annex F**

### **Staff, committees and training**

Membership of the REF Planning Group is described in Part 3 – Staff, committees and training. The role of the REF Planning Group is to periodically review summary information and determine any necessary actions to guide the preparation of the submission. However, members of the REF Planning Group work closely with both the Research Division Leads and the Unit of Assessment Leads within their area/discipline of responsibility.

Research Division Leads have primary responsibility for ROSS. Workshops on ROSS and its use for peer review and preparation for the REF were held in 2017/18 for Research Division Leads, who subsequently ran workshops for staff in their divisions. Training on the responsible use of metrics was provided to UOA Leads in October 2018 and March 2019 (see Part 3 – Staff, committees and training)

UOA Leads were appointed by inviting expressions of interest and a selection interview. Interview panels consisted of at least one PVC R&I, at least one relevant Research Dean, the Dean for Postgraduate Studies and the REF Planning Manager. In September 2018, a REF Planning Day for UOA Leads provided information and training on all aspects of REF, including the use of ROSS to select and model eligible outputs. In practice, UOA Leads work closely with and take advice from Research Division Leads; both roles have an advisory capacity.

After each validation and modelling, the REF Planning Group receive validated data, summary information for each UOA, and data analysis. The REF Planning Group will determine any necessary course of action to ensure that the principles for output

selection are adhered to. The REF Planning Group has ultimate responsibility for decision-making.

### **Staff circumstances**

The University has developed a process to enable eligible staff to make a voluntary declaration about personal circumstances which may have significantly impacted their research productivity during the qualifying period.

The process for submitting declarations of personal circumstances (as defined by the Guidance on Submissions sections 160 – 163 and the Revised Guidance of submissions sections 20-27) is set out in the declaration form and accompanying guidance, which will be made available to all staff.

The University's guidance identifies that it is entirely **voluntary** to declare any personal circumstances and that information shared will be treated confidentially. It also explains why the information is needed, how it will be used, and who will have access to it (both within the University and, if included, in the submission documentation). It is made clear that the information will be used in relation to the REF submission process only, unless staff confirm that they would like to be contacted by a member of HR staff to discuss any requirements for reasonable adjustments relating to a disability and/or any other ongoing support that may be required. The University will not take into account any individual circumstances other than those that staff have consented to declare voluntarily. UOA Leads and all staff who are involved in decision making relating to the REF submission have been advised of this point.

The REF Planning Group will ask all potentially eligible staff to voluntarily declare any personal circumstances using the designated declaration form by 31 October 2019. Following the final evaluation of eligible staff in May 2020, there will be an opportunity for any newly appointed staff (post 31 October 2019), and for staff whose circumstances have changed or have decided that they do wish to voluntarily declare personal circumstances to declare any personal circumstances which may have significantly impacted their research productivity during the qualifying period. To take account of the effects of COVID on staff members' ability to research productively and produce an eligible output, and to provide a further opportunity to voluntarily declare or update personal circumstances we will open a further window for declarations during August and September 2020. The declaration form and guidance will be updated to incorporate the provisions in the REF Revised Guidance on Submissions. Updates and guidance will be provided to all staff via individual emails and through the University's internal REF pages.

A Personal Circumstances Group (PCG) will be formed comprising of the Diversity & Inclusion Dean not involved in the REF preparations, the Athena Swan lead from the School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy, and the Athena Swan Lead from the School of Law. The Group will be supported by a nominated HR Partner in an advisory capacity.

To ensure confidentiality, the completed declaration forms will be submitted to a named central mailbox. The Head of Planning & Reporting will be responsible for

identifying those completed forms where declarations have been provided and will be responsible for anonymising those declarations. This will be done in such a manner that it is not possible to identify an individual or their organisational unit or UOA. Each anonymised declaration will be given a unique number.

The anonymised information will then be shared with the Personal Circumstances Group (PCG). The PCG are responsible for reviewing each case and preparing a summary statement of the personal circumstances and their impact and the PCG's recommendation regarding the proposed reduction in outputs in accordance with the REF submission guidance on Reductions for Staff Circumstances, as outlined in Annex L (p.114 – 116) of the REF Guidance on submissions document and the REF Revised Guidance on Submissions.

The Head of Planning and Reporting will arrange for the summary statement to be shared with the individual declaring the personal circumstances.

Where an individual feels that their personal circumstances have not been fully taken into account, in accordance with the REF Guidance on submissions document, the individual will be given the opportunity to informally discuss their case with the designated HR Partner supporting the PCG and if deemed appropriate, will be able to provide additional information to their declaration so that their case can be re-considered by the PCG.

The PCG will provide the REF Planning Group with a summary of the total reductions for each Unit of Assessment. The Head of Planning and Reporting will provide the REF Planning Group with the names of those staff for whom the PCG has agreed a reduction to zero outputs.

The Head of Planning and Reporting will provide the Chair of the REF Planning Group with a list of staff who have declared personal circumstances and any reduction agreed by the PCG. The Chair of the REF Planning Group will write to all staff who have declared personal circumstances, formally confirming the adjustments that have been agreed, in recognition of their declared circumstances and their impact on their ability to research productively. This may include a decision to remove the minimum requirement of one output. The Chair of the REF Planning Group will also write to all staff who have declared personal circumstances where no adjustments have been agreed, outlining the reasons for why this is the case.

Where individual staff feel that the decisions made through the process described above have not taken their personal circumstances fully into account, in accordance with the REF guidance on submission document, they can submit an appeal. Appeals will be heard by a standing Appeals Committee established for the purpose of hearing any appeals resulting from the processes of determining reductions in outputs due to voluntary declared personal circumstances. The composition of the Committee will be identical to that described in Part 3 and will follow the same procedure and timescales, although the permissible grounds for appeal will differ and as outlined above. Appeal cases will need to be submitted to the University Secretary within 14 days of receiving formal notification of decisions on any agreed adjustments relating to voluntary declared personal circumstances. It should be noted that the appeals process, whilst remaining confidential, will not be able to remain anonymous as the Appeals

Committee will require the name of the individual who has declared personal circumstances to be known to the Appeals Committee and for them to also be aware of the personal circumstances outlined on the declaration form and any additional information provided to the PCG by the individual as part of the informal review process outlined above. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be final and there will be no further right of appeal.

Eligible appeals will be heard in late December 2019, August and November 2020, and the Appeals Committee will confirm their decision to Appellants in writing within 10 working days of the appeal hearing enabling outcomes to be implemented in a timely manner. The Appeal Committee's decision will be final and there will be no further right of appeal.

The REF Planning Group will provide UOA Leads with the names of staff for whom a removal of the minimum of one output has been agreed and the total number of potential reductions to the output pool for their UOA. UOA Leads will not receive any information about the nature of the declared personal circumstances leading to those agreed reductions.

Following consideration of individual reductions, the REF Planning Group will, consider whether there is a need for the University to make a formal request for a reduction to the total number of outputs for a submission where the cumulative effect of individual personal circumstances has disproportionately affected a UOA's output pool. The process detailed in Annex G will be used to determine when a request for Unit reductions is made.

The University of Reading has not established a specific requirement for staff in relation to their expected contribution to the outputs pool, given that there are many good reasons why staff may have fewer or more outputs. Heads of School will receive information on agreed individual reductions for those members of staff who have agreed to sharing this information with the head of the relevant School. For these cases, Heads of School will ensure that the impacts of declared circumstances are recognized. Heads of School will not receive any information on the nature of the circumstances leading to reductions.

HR Partners will receive information on those staff who have confirmed that they would like to be contacted by a member of HR to discuss workplace adjustments and any ongoing support for personal circumstances they may have disclosed as part of the REF process.

All data collected through the processes and steps described above will be held securely in confidence and in line with our requirements under data protection laws.

A diagram of this process can be found in **Annex H. The revised declaration template can be found in Annex I**

**Equality impact assessment**

The section above describes the ROSS tool, and how it is being used as part of the REF submission; a fundamental principle is that researchers from all groups and backgrounds are able to access and participate. Equality, diversity and inclusion have therefore been considered throughout the development of the ROSS tool.

Selection of outputs for the REF is made on the basis of quality. However, UOA Leads will be mindful of inclusiveness, taking into account that researchers will be at different career stages, and have specific **combinations of circumstances** that might impact on their contribution to the output pool. UoA Leads have all received training regarding responsible use of metrics and the challenges that metrics raise for some specific groups of researchers. This is emphasised in the REF specific unconscious and implicit bias training that all those involved in decision making regarding outputs will receive.

In order to reassure ourselves and our researchers that our processes and procedures for selecting outputs are fair, transparent and robust, the following comparisons will be made against each protected characteristic with particular focus on characteristics with higher potential for unconscious selection bias: sex, career stage/age (notably Early Career Researcher) and race. Where appropriate, there will be consideration of intersection, for example career stage and protected gender.

Where there is over/under representation or other issues raised, we will investigate further to identify the reasons, and whether any underlying policies/processes should be reviewed in the remainder of the REF period, for example further consideration of the robustness of the internal quality assessments from an equality and diversity perspective. We will give due regard to the fact that outputs have been selected on the basis of quality; researchers will progress at different rates depending on background and circumstances; and that therefore differences in representativeness may be explicable for these reasons. In drawing any conclusions, we will be mindful of practical significance, but consider appropriate tests of statistical significance.

## Part 5: Appendices

Annex A: REF Planning Group Terms of Reference and membership

Annex B: UOA Lead role description

Annex C: Diagram of process for determining Research Independence

Annex D: Addendum for interpretation of Research Independence Criteria

Annex E: Research Independence process templates and Guidance

Annex F: Diagram of process for determining the pool of eligible outputs and for outputs selection

Annex G: Addendum on process for determining output reductions requests

Annex H: Diagram of process for individual personal circumstances and outputs reductions

Annex I: Updated Personal Circumstances Declaration form

Annex J: Code of Practice Implementation timeline

*Published: May 2019*  
*Revised: September 2020*

# REF PLANNING GROUP: GOVERNANCE AND WAYS OF WORKING

## Membership

The PVC Research & Innovation, Professor Dominik Zaum [Chair]

The PVC Research & Innovation, Professor Parveen Yaqoob

The Research Deans, Professor Adrian Williams, Dr Phil Newton, Professor Richard Bennett, Professor Roberta Gilchrist, Professor Adrian Bell

The Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies Professor Dianne Berry

The Dean for Diversity & Inclusion, Dr Allan Laville

The Research Planning & REF Manager, Ms Wanda Tejada

The Head of Planning & Reporting, Dr Nathan Helsby

Secretary, Planning Officer (Research Intelligence Unit)

At various stages of the project, it might be necessary to invite representatives from other areas of the University.

## Terms of reference

The REF Planning Group will act as the project board for the REF 2021 submission project. The REF Planning Group will have responsibility over all aspects of the submission as follows:

- *Approve plans and processes developed to support the delivery of the University's submission to the REF 2021.*
- *Oversee the implementation of plans and processes, monitoring progress and making decisions on required changes to these plans.*
- *Identify and monitor the project risks and ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce identified risks.*
- *Make final recommendations to the University Executive Board on:*
  - *the Units of Assessment where the University will make a submission*
  - *the approach to determining staff in scope*
  - *the outputs to be included in the submission*
  - *the impact case studies to be included in the submission*
- *Approve Environment and Impact case study templates to be submitted*
- *Oversee the development of the University's Code of Practice for the REF 2021, ensuring the code is widely disseminated and that it is applied across the University.*
- *Review Equality Impact Assessments against the protected characteristics at appropriate stages of the submission preparations, and determine what action, if any, needs to be taken, should any noticeable imbalances be observed in the output and staff submission profile.*
- *Keep abreast of developments in national REF policy and criteria, and take any necessary action arising from implications of these developments.*
- *Provide regular updates to the wider University on policies, processes and the status of the University's preparations for REF 2021.*

## Ways of working

The Group will meet monthly to monitor developments and agree necessary actions. The Group will delegate specific tasks and responsibilities to members as necessary. This might include members of the group taking on specific based on an area of expertise or role.



Code of Practice - Annex B

# Role Description

**Role Title:** Unit of Assessment Lead

**Faculty/Department:**

**Reports to:** Head of School/Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

**Responsible for:** N/A

## Purpose

The University needs to appoint a lead academic for each Unit of Assessment (UOA) in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) to support the University's preparations and ensure the University makes as strong a submission as possible.

## Main duties and responsibilities

The UOA Lead will lead the preparations for the UOA submission to the REF 2021 and make recommendations on submission to the REF Planning Group.

The UOA Lead may establish a support team to undertake the tasks below, where appropriate and approved by the REF Planning Group. It is expected that this will primarily be the case for UOAs that draw on activity in Research Divisions from different Schools. In these cases, the Unit of Assessment Lead will maintain overall responsibility for the preparations for the Unit of Assessment, in consultation with the relevant Heads of School, and be the primary point of contact.

## Tasks

*Working with the REF & Research Planning Manager, the Research Intelligence Unit and other professional services as relevant:*

**Staff:**

- To identify staff on Teaching & Research and Research Only contracts who need consideration by the REF Planning Group as to whether they do/do not meet the funding bodies' eligibility criteria for inclusion in the REF.

### ***Outputs:***

- To establish the pool of outputs eligible for submission in accordance with definitions and guidance from the Funding Bodies.
- To regularly review the potential quality profile of the pool of outputs and determine the need for further quality assessment of outputs included in this pool.
- To identify potential configurations of outputs to return to the REF in accordance to the Funding Bodies definitions and guidance and the University's Code of Practice for REF 2021.
- To make recommendations on the optimal selection of outputs for inclusion in the submission.
- To ensure all outputs to be included in the submission are available on CentAUR with the necessary data required for each output

### ***Impact***

- Working with the Impact Lead and Impact Team, to review and amend the pool of impact case studies considered for submission.
- To ensure that evidence supporting impact case studies is robust, accessible and appropriate for auditing, ensuring it meets all funding bodies' requirements.
- To plan and oversee the development of impact case study templates, ensuring that these are produced in a timely manner and to a high standard.
- To make recommendations on the final selection of impact case studies to be included in the UOA submission.

### ***Environment***

- In consultation with others, to develop the content of the UOA specific sections of the Environment template.

### ***General***

- To contribute to the University's responses to REF consultations
- To work within the requirements of the overall University submission plans, ensuring that deadlines are met and milestones achieved.
- To provide regular written progress reports to the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation
- To attend relevant training, including Equality & Diversity specific training.
- To apply the University's Code of Practice across all elements of the submission
- To utilise systems and tools designed to support the submission
- To participate in the Unit of Assessment Leads Group discussions
- To assist in the process of data validation, identifying issues that require escalation to the REF Planning Group.

### **Supervision received**

This role will be undertaken in conjunction with regular academic activities and so overall line-management remains with the Head of School. However, for this particular task, they will be reporting to the PVC (R&I) in his/her role as Chair of the REF Planning Group.

The Unit of Assessment Lead will work with, and be supported by, the PVC Research and Innovation and the Research Dean/s relevant to the Unit of Assessment.

### **Supervision given**

This role does not include staff supervision.

### **Contact**

Academic staff in the areas relevant to the Unit of Assessment

Research Division Leads for Divisions relevant to the Unit of Assessment

Head of Schools for schools relevant to the Unit of Assessment

Impact Leads relevant to the Unit of Assessment

REF & Research Planning Manager

Research Intelligence Unit

Professional Support Services as relevant

### **Terms and conditions**

The role requires a minimum of 0.2 FTE commitment, with potential for significant increase in the year of submission (2020). The role is fixed term from 1 May 2018 to 31 December 2020.

This is a leadership role to be undertaken in conjunction with regular academic activities. A set honorarium is not attached to the role.

This document outlines the duties required of the post as currently envisaged. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list and the PVC (R&I) may vary duties from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.

**Date assessed: December 2017**

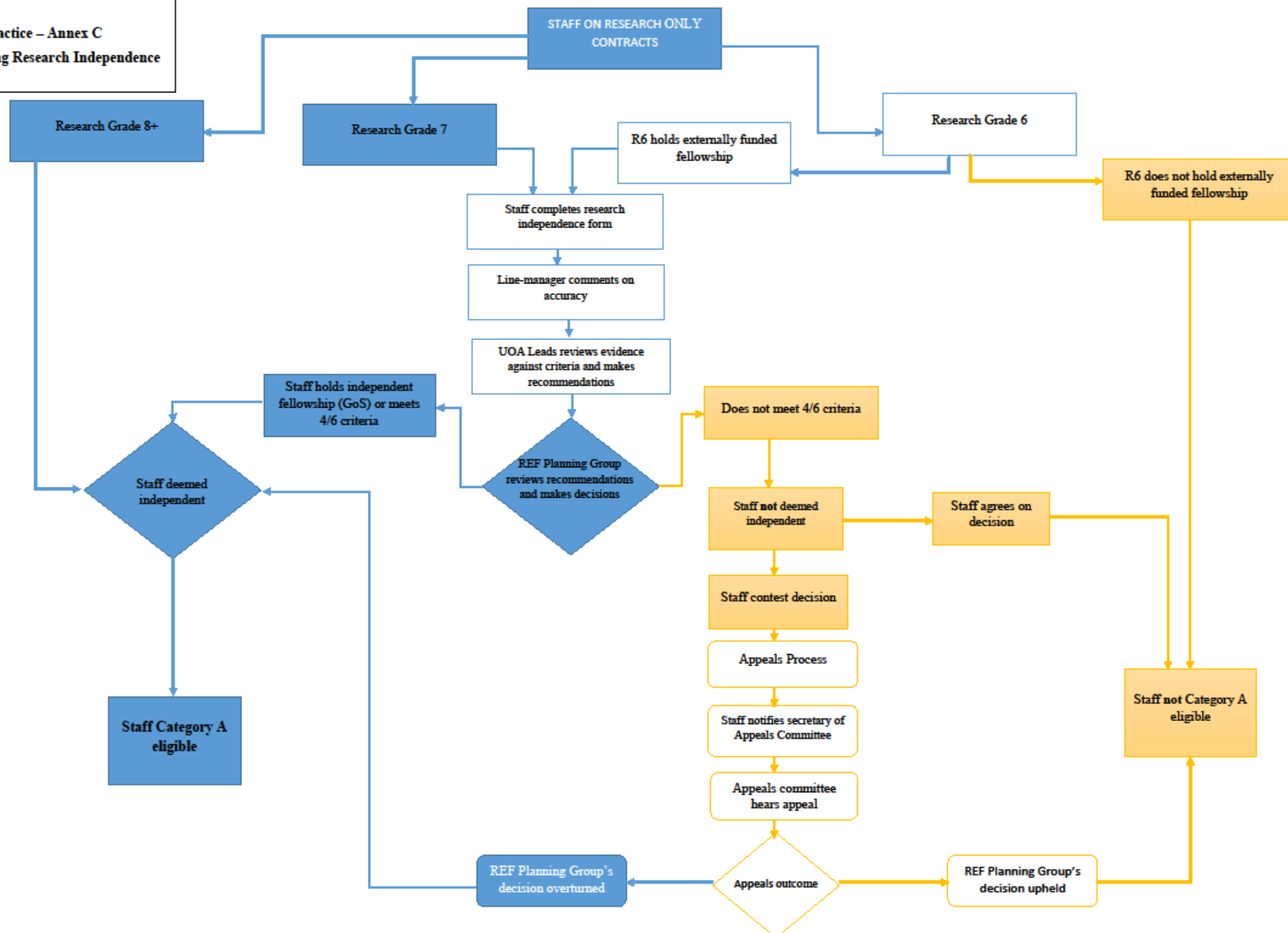
# Person Specification

**Role Title: Unit of Assessment Lead**

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
<b>Skills Required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to lead research management activities</li> <li>• Ability to identify potential issues and solutions seeking consensus with interested parties</li> <li>• Ability to negotiate and influence</li> <li>• Ability to balance local and University priorities and to communicate these effectively</li> <li>• Ability to make recommendations based on sound evaluations and assessment</li> <li>• Ability to manage difficult situations in an effective and considerate manner</li> </ul>	
<b>Attainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised record of research excellence</li> </ul>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of disciplinary landscapes within the breath of the Unit of Assessment</li> <li>• Knowledge of University research management processes</li> <li>• Understanding of REF general rules as well as those specific to the elements of the assessment (staff, outputs, impact and environment)</li> <li>• Understanding of REF quality standards</li> <li>• Broad understanding of REF working methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of interdisciplinary landscape related to the disciplines within the Unit of Assessment</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of policies related to Equality &amp; Diversity in research</li> </ul>	
<b>Relevant Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in conducting or leading research in the fields relevant to the Unit of Assessment</li> <li>• Experience of peer review and research assessment within the fields relevant to the Unit of Assessment;</li> <li>• Experience in management at project, local or University level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in research assessment for external bodies</li> <li>• Experience in management of research</li> </ul>
<b>Disposition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be willing to put the interests of the wider Unit and University above those of their particular School/Department/Research Division</li> <li>• To be open to different approaches that might lead to an optimum outcome in the REF exercise</li> <li>• To be willing to receive necessary training and apply it consistently throughout the project</li> <li>• To be willing to work as part of a team both with colleagues within the Unit of Assessment and across the University</li> <li>• To be fully committed to the University Values and Behaviours</li> </ul>	
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role will require working closely with the Head of School and Research Deans.</li> </ul>	
<div> <div>Completed by:</div> <div>Date:</div> </div>		

REF 2021  
Code of Practice – Annex C  
Determining Research Independence  
*Updated*



## **University of Reading**

### **REF 2021 – Code of Practice: Addendum (January 2020)**

#### **Part 3: Determining Research Independence**

- 1) The REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions requires that staff returned to the exercise are deemed to be research independent on the census date for staff (31 July 2020). At the University of Reading, in line with our Code of Practice, we are assessing research independent in advance of the census date. Those who are considered to meet the criteria for research independence when assessed will be considered to be independent on the census date, in that they are individuals who undertake self-directed research.
- 2) The REF Planning Group makes assessments based on the evidence provided by individual staff with regards to their current role.

With regards to the first criterion, the REF Planning Group interprets that a job description identifies independent research as a primary activity when this is explicitly indicated in the job description, or when this is implicit in the responsibilities described in the job description, with these being commensurate to those of an independent researcher.

With regards to the remaining criteria (second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth), the REF Planning Group interpret that these should have been met over the REF period (1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020).

Examples of this interpretation would include (but are not limited to):

- Staff who have led the development of proposals over the REF period but are not currently working on a specific proposal
- Staff who have secured research funding over the REF period, but currently do not hold a live grant.
- Staff who have supervised doctoral students during the REF period but are not currently engaged in doctoral supervision.

# DETERMINING RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE FOR REF

## INFORMATION & GUIDANCE

You are receiving this document together with the REF Research Independence form because you are either:

- **Employed by the University on a Research Only contract at Grade 7,**
- **Employed by the University on a Research Only contract at Grade 6 AND you hold an externally funded fellowship**

This document provides you with information about the process for determining research independence for REF purposes. It also provides you with guidance necessary to complete the REF Research Independence form. **You are required to complete the form and return it to [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) by [DATE].** If you envisage any difficulty in submitting the form by this deadline, please contact [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) as soon as possible.

**Please ensure that you read the guidance carefully before completing the form.**

### ***Guidance***

You are receiving this document because the University needs to determine your status in relation to research independence for REF, and therefore your eligibility for inclusion in our return.

The rules of the REF 2021 specify that all staff who have significant responsibility for research, are contracted for 0.20 FTE or more, and who meet the REF definition of independent researcher, are eligible for submission and must be included in the University's REF return. An independent researcher is identified as "an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme."<sup>3</sup> The REF 2021 guidance proposes a number of indicators that can be used to determine research independence for REF purposes. We have used those indicators to develop the University's criteria for this process.

This document provides you with guidance on the University's process for determining research independence for REF. It also includes a REF Research Independence Form where you can provide information about your current role and responsibilities in relation to the REF independence criteria. This information will be used by the University to determine your REF eligibility. It is essential that you provide accurate information; the national REF Team and REF Panels may request this information through audit queries. The details you provide in this form will be used as supporting evidence when answering audit queries.

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<sup>3</sup> [REF 2021 Guidance on submissions](#), paragraph 131.



It is important to note that the definitions and criteria used in these documents relate purely and exclusively to the REF 2021 and do not relate to any internal evaluations of your performance or status. The information you provide will therefore only be used to determine research independence and eligibility for REF. It cannot be used as evidence in any assessment of performance, for example, cases for promotion.

## **Process & Criteria**

The University has put in place a Code of Practice setting out the principles that guide our REF 2021 submission. The Code sets out the following mechanisms to determine research independence for REF:

If you hold a Research Fellowship included on the List of Independent Research Fellowships<sup>4</sup> published by the funding bodies, **and** your fellowship is **not asterisked**<sup>5</sup> on that list, then you are automatically considered to meet the REF definition of research independence. This list was compiled by the funding bodies and includes fellowships where funders have confirmed that research independence is an essential criterion for the award.

If you are

- a researcher on a research only contract at Grade 7, and you do not hold a Research Fellowship included on the list published by the funding bodies, **OR**
- a researcher on a research only contract at Grade 6, and you do not hold a Research Fellowship included on the list provided by the funding bodies, but you do hold an externally funded research Fellowship

**you are required** to provide information on how your current role relates to the criteria set out in the Code of Practice. This information will be used to assess whether you meet the definition of independent researcher for REF. Evidence that you meet at least 4 of the 6 criteria is required to demonstrate that you satisfy the definition of research independence for REF.

Criteria and guidance on the type of evidence that can be included in your declaration can be found in the Research Independence for REF form. You may also find it useful to look at the Code of Practice, the COP Addendum for Research Independence and the Research Independence process chart appended to the Code, which shows the path for assessing research independence for REF for the different groups for which this process applies.

## **What next?**

**Step 1:** The first step is for you to complete the REF Research Independence Form, including information and examples of how your current role and activities relate to each criterion. When doing this, please refer to the criteria as noted in the form **as well as the Code of Practice Addendum on Research Independence**. If you have any question about this, please contact [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk)

**You should complete each section of the form and send it to [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) no later than [INSERT DEADLINE].**

**Step 2:** Your reporting manager (or your Head of School, should your manager be unavailable) will be asked to review the evidence included in the form, and make comments with regards to its accuracy and verifiability, taking into consideration that information will be subject to audit by the national REF Team and REF Panels.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://ref.ac.uk/media/1030/c-users-daislha-desktop-list-of-research-fellowships-updated-22032019.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Asterisked fellowships included in the list are those which support the transition to independence, where applicants have to specify how the award enables them to become so. Therefore, in these cases, independence might/might not have been reached by the fellow, depending on the stage of the fellowship.

Reporting managers should not provide judgements on whether a criterion has been met, or provide comments related to an individual's performance.

Reporting managers will receive completed forms as soon as received by [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) and no later than [INSERT DEADLINE]. **They should complete the relevant sections and return it to [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) as soon as possible and no later than [INSERT DEADLINE].**

**Step 3:** UOA Leads will review each form relevant to the UOA, and make a recommendation to the REF Planning Group on whether individual colleagues should be considered to have met individual criteria and the definition of independent researcher for REF.

A list of [UOA Leads](#) is available on the internal [REF web pages](#).

**Step 4:** The REF Planning Group will review all forms and UOA Lead recommendations. Based on the evidence and the UOA Leads recommendations, the REF Planning Group will then make a decision on whether an individual has met the definition of research independence for REF.

The [membership and terms of reference of the REF Planning Group](#) can be found in the [REF internal web pages](#).

**Step 5:** The Chair of the REF Planning Group will formally communicate the decision to all colleagues who have submitted a completed form.

## ***Appeals***

If the REF Planning Group determines that you do not meet the definition of research independence for REF and you feel that the process as set out in the Code of Practice has not been fairly or appropriately applied, you will be able to appeal that decision.

To start the process, you will need to submit an appeal to the secretary of the Appeals Committee within 14 days of receiving the decision from the Chair of the REF Planning Group. Contact details for the Appeals Committee secretary will be provided to you by the Chair of the REF Planning Group once a decision on individual cases has been made.

If your appeal is eligible (i.e. your appeal is based on procedural issues, and not on the judgement made on research independence), you will be invited to an appeals hearing. You will be able to attend the appeal hearing accompanied by a work colleague, trade union representative or staff forum representative. An independent Appeals Committee will hear your case and make a decision on whether to uphold or reject the appeal. Decisions of the Appeals committee will be communicated to you within 10 working days of the appeals hearing and will be final.

You can find the membership of the Appeals Committee in the [Code of Practice](#).

## **Timetable**

Timescales for the [TIME] run of the Research Independence process are as follows:

No later than	Action
[DATE]	Research Independence Form available to research staff
[DATE]	<b>Researchers</b> submit form to <a href="mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk">REF.admin@reading.ac.uk</a>
[DATE]	Reporting managers submit completed forms to <a href="mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk">REF.admin@reading.ac.uk</a>
[DATE]	UOA Leads submit recommendations for the REF Planning Group

[DATE]	REF Planning Group makes decisions on research independence Chair of the REF Planning Group notifies staff of decisions made
[DATE]	All appeals logged
[DATE]	Appeals Committee hearings & final decisions
[DATE]	Appeals outcomes communicated to appellants

# REF RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE FORM

*The evidence collected through this form reflects how your current role and activities relate to the REF research independence criteria. The information provided in this form will be used solely and exclusively for this purpose and not for any other purpose, such as assessments of your performance or status.*

## Section 1: Your details

Name	Click here to enter text.
Employee number	Click here to enter text.
Job Title	

## Section 2: Externally Funded Fellowships published by funding bodies.

This section applies only if you hold an externally funded fellowship included in the list of Independent Fellowships published by the funding bodies.

Please select your fellowship from the drop down list	Choose an item.
Start and end date of your fellowship	

If you have completed this section **AND** your fellowship **IS** an asterisked one, please continue to **Section 3**.

If you have completed this section, **AND** your fellowship is **NOT** an asterisked, please continue to **Section 4**.

## Section 3: Research Independence

**Researchers:** This section applies to you **ONLY** if you do not hold a fellowship included in the List of Independent Fellowships as listed in Section 2, or if your fellowship is asterisked in the list. For ALL criteria, please provide information on how your current role and activities relate to them. If your current role and activities do not meet one or more criteria, please simply state this. There is no requirement for you to meet a specific number of the criteria; this is simply an exercise to record your existing role and activities. For further details on the criteria and interpretation please see the [Code of Practice Addendum on Research Independence](#). If you have questions, please

contact [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) Details and examples should be verifiable since they may be subject to an audit enquiry from the REF 2021 team and REF panels.

**Reporting Managers:** please provide factual comments on the accuracy of the information provided. Please ensure that details and examples are verifiable. Evidence used for determining research independence for REF is subject to audit by the REF Team and the REF panels. In your comments, you should not include views on whether the criteria has/has not been met, nor any comments or judgements related to the researcher's performance.

### 3.1 Job description identifies independent research as primary activity.

#### RESEARCHER EVIDENCE

If your job description identifies independent research as a primary activity, please indicate so below **AND** provide a copy of your job description.

#### REPORTING MANAGER COMMENT

Please confirm that the job description is current

### 3.2 Lead the development of research proposals, projects and outputs, either as self-contained items or as a substantial and/or specialised part of a broader programme.

#### RESEARCHER EVIDENCE

Please describe and provide information about the activities you are undertaking as part of your role which relate to this criterion, if any. As applicable, please include:

Development of Research Proposals: title of the proposal, identified funder if any, funds applied for, date of application (or expected date, if not yet applied for), your role in the proposals (PI, Co-I, other). If your role is leading a part of a broader programme, please include information on the context in which the part you are leading on sits and how it is substantial/specialised within the project.

Development of Research Projects: project name, funder (external or internal), finance project code, PI and your role in the development of the project. If your role is leading the development of a part of a broader programme, please include information on the context in which the part you are leading on sits and how it is substantial/specialised within the project.

Development of Research Outputs: title of the output, CentAUR ID if in the public domain, targeted outlet (publisher/journal etc.) if not yet published; your role in the development of the output (lead author, or details of your role as Co-author)

#### REPORTING MANAGER COMMENT

Please comment on the accuracy of the information provided by the researcher. For finance/publication details, please confirm that project codes and publication IDs are correct. For proposals and work in progress, please confirm the nature of these activities and the role of the researcher. Please confirm that, should it be required, additional evidence could be obtained for work which has not yet resulted in a recorded outcome (awarded funding, output published).

### **3.3 Lead the research direction of projects, either as self-contained items or as a substantial and/or specialised part of a broader programme. Build networks, collaboration or partnerships which contribute to an identifiable and distinctive research profile.**

#### RESEARCHER EVIDENCE

Please briefly describe and provide examples of activities you are undertaking as part of your role which relate this criterion, if any. As applicable, please include:

Research Projects: project name, funder (external or internal), finance project code, PI and evidence that you have led the direction of the project. If your role is leading the direction of a part of a broader programme, please also include information on the context in which the part you are leading on sits and how it is substantial/specialised within the project.

Building networks, collaborations and partnerships: brief description of the network/collaboration/partnerships you are building, with indication of field and organisations you are working with and the role that you play in the network or partnership. If these networks, collaborations and partnerships have been formalised, please indicate so (for instance, if there are agreements, current or future projects in place, or other structures under which joint activities are planned).

#### REPORTING MANAGER COMMENT

Please comment on the accuracy of the information provided by the researcher including the researcher's role in the activities described. For networks, collaborations and partnerships, please comment on the accuracy of the information provided and on their formality or otherwise. Please confirm that, should it be required, evidence of these partnerships can be obtained.

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**3.4 Manage staff in the synthesis, analysis and interpretation of research data, providing expert guidance and direction. For the Arts and Humanities, develop new ways of synthesizing, analysing and interpreting data, for example as found in a corpus of material from archives and collections**

**RESEARCHER EVIDENCE**

Please describe and provide examples of activities you are undertaking as part of your role which relate this criterion, if any. As applicable, please include:

Manage staff in the synthesis, analysis and interpretation of research data, providing expert guidance and direction: indication of the staff/group being managed, the associated project/activity and brief description of the responsibilities undertaken in managing those staff.

Develop new ways of synthesizing, analysing and interpreting data, for example as found in a corpus of material from archives and collections: brief description of how the approaches have been developed independently, and indication of materials, archives or collections used.

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**REPORTING MANAGER COMMENT**

Please comment on the accuracy of the information provided by the researcher, including the researcher's role in the activities described.

--

**3.5 Secure research funding, including funding for research innovation, impact and engagement, in accordance with the expectations of the discipline.**

**RESEARCHER EVIDENCE**

Please provide details of external funding awarded to you for research related activities. This can include research grants, innovation, impact or engagement activities from Research Councils, trusts, charities, commercial organisations, museums or other cultural organisations. For each award listed, please provide finance project code, funder, project title and your status within the project (PI/Co-I)

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**REPORTING MANAGER COMMENT**

Please confirm that the information provided by the researcher is factually correct.

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### 3.6 Recruit and supervise/co-supervise doctoral students.

#### RESEARCHER EVIDENCE

Please list the doctoral students you are/have supervised either as main or co-supervisor.  
Only include supervision where you are/have been formally named on the University's student record system (RISIS).

--

#### REPORTING MANAGER COMMENT

Please comment on the accuracy of the details provided by the researcher and their role as supervisor/co-supervisor.

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## Section 4: Signatures

#### RESEARCHER

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**Researchers: Once signed (electronically), please send your form to REF.admin@reading.ac.uk no later than [INSERT DEADLINE].**

#### REPORTING MANAGER

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**Reporting Managers:** once you have completed the Reporting Manager sections, please return it to [REF.admin@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REF.admin@reading.ac.uk) no later than [INSERT DEADLINE].

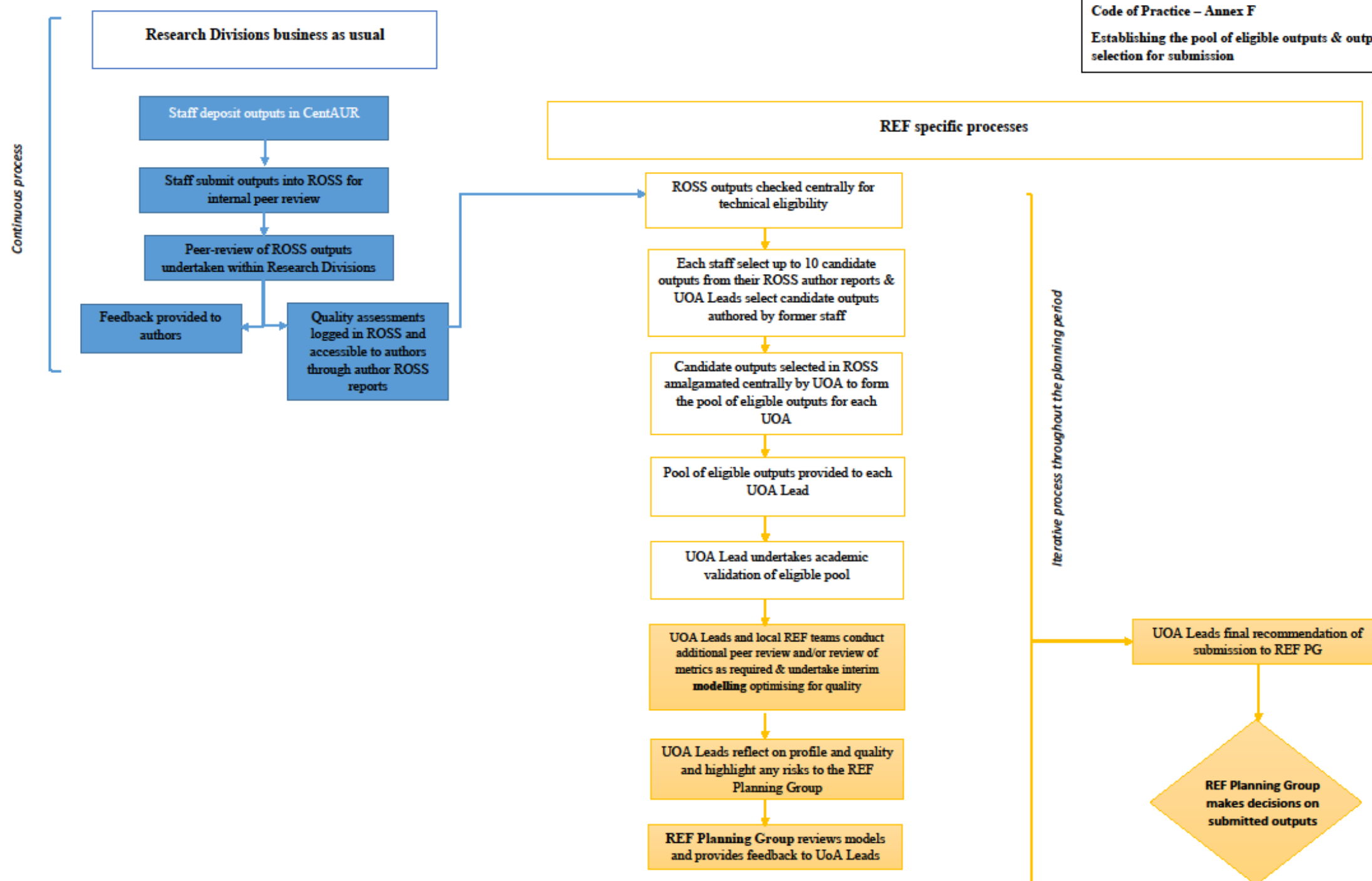
## REF RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE

UOA Summary & Recommendations - [DATE] RUN

UOA

UOA LEAD

						COMPLETE THESE SECTIONS IF NO GoS QUALIFYING FELLOWSHIP OR IF GoS ASTERISKED FELLOWSHIP													
No	Researcher Surname	Researcher Name	Position	Reporting Unit	GoS Qualifying Fellowship (Fellowship name or N)	Total No. Criterion met (if no GoS allowed fellowship)	Criterion 1		Criterion 2		Criterion 3		Criterion 4		Criterion 5		Criterion 6		
							Met Y/N	Justification	Met Y/N	Justification	Met Y/N	Justification	Met Y/N	Justification	Met Y/N	Justification	Met Y/N	Justification	



## REF 2021 – Code of Practice

### Addendum

#### Part 4: Selection of Outputs – Personal Circumstances

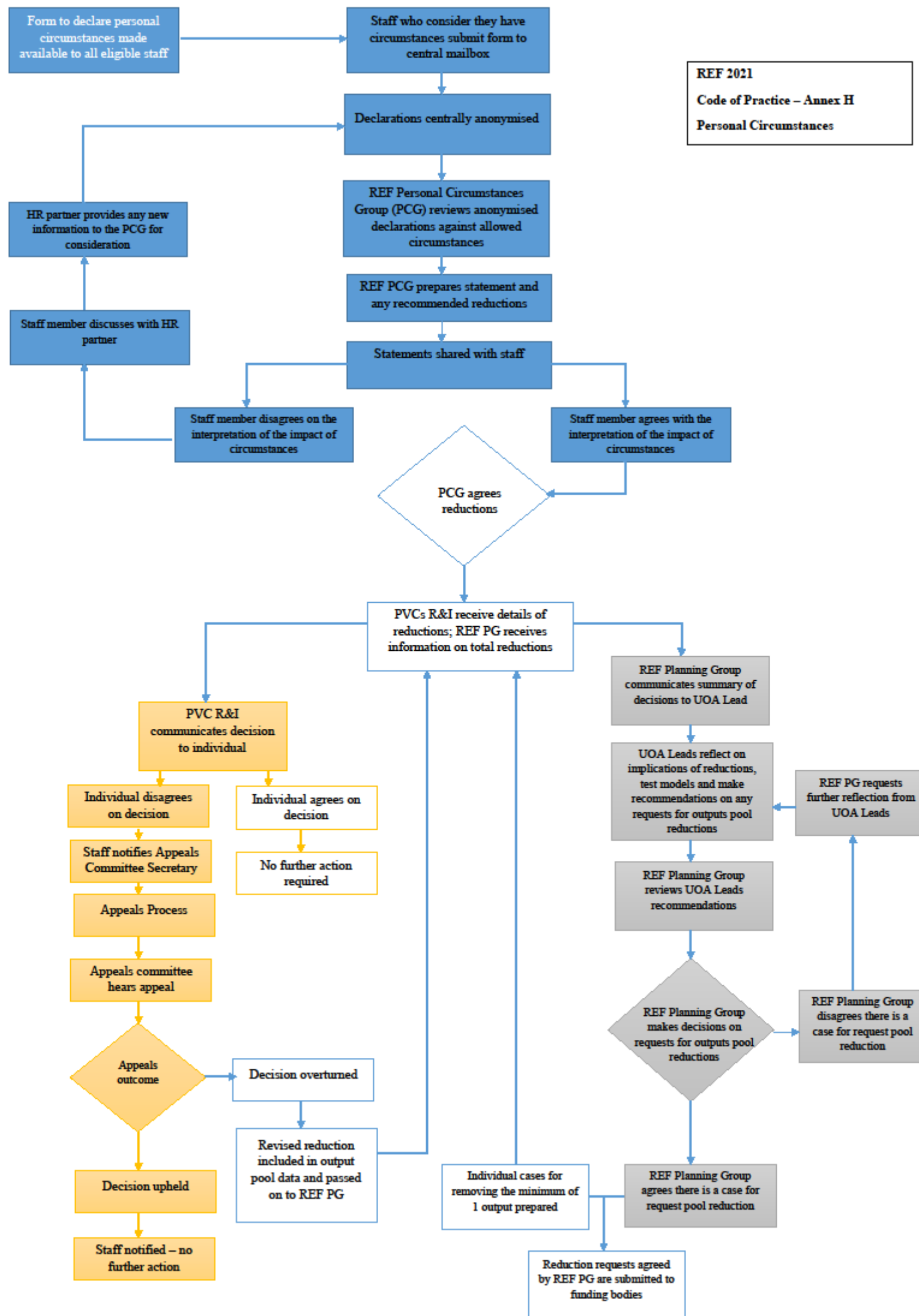
*This addendum provides further detail of the mechanism for decision making with regards to Unit outputs reductions. This is in line and complements the information in the Code of Practice.*

*The REF Planning Group will receive from the Personal Circumstances Group information on the total number of declarations and aggregated agreed outputs reduction for each UOA. The REF Planning Group will use the following criteria in order to determine whether Unit reductions will be requested from the funding bodies:*

- 1) Units where the percentage of Category A staff declaring eligible circumstances is 25% of the Unit's total Category A staff, or higher: reductions will be requested on the basis of the large proportion of staff affected by personal circumstances which affects the productivity of the unit through a) impact on a large number of individuals, and b) impact on research time available to other staff in the unit as a consequence of increased workloads in terms of leadership, teaching, administration and other activities.
- 2) Units where the percentage of Category A staff declaring eligible circumstances is between 10% and 25% of the total Category A staff in the unit: the impact of circumstances, and therefore decisions on reductions requests, will be assessed taking into consideration:
  - a. The reduction in outputs as a proportion of the total output requirement of the Unit, where this reduction represents at least 5% of the requirement
  - b. The number and type of circumstances declared
  - c. The size of the unit
  - d. Disciplinary norms, such as publication practices
  - e. The discipline-specific impacts of aggregate declared circumstances on research time available to other staff in the unit as a consequence of increased workloads in terms of leadership, teaching, and administration and other activities
- 3) Units where the percentage of staff declaring eligible circumstances is lower than 10%: no reduction will be considered.

The REF Planning Group will inform UOA Leads of the decision to make a request for Unit reductions. UOA Leads will be able to provide additional information in relation to the impact of circumstances in the Unit and the disciplinary context. The REF Planning Group will consider whether any revision to its initial decision should be made on the basis of this additional information.

*January 2020*



## REF CODE OF PRACTICE – ANNEX I

### **University of Reading declaration of individual personal circumstances form**

This document is being sent to all eligible staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see '[Guidance on submissions](#)', paragraphs 117-122).

As part of the University's commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, we have put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020), and particularly their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as staff not affected by circumstances. The purpose of collecting this information is threefold:

1. To enable staff who have not been able to produce a REF-eligible output during the assessment period to be submitted to REF without the minimum requirement of one output where they have;
  - circumstances that have resulted in an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to equality-related circumstances (see below)
  - circumstances *equivalent* to 46 months or more where staff may have been at work but have had time away from research due to equality-related circumstances
  - two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
  - circumstances so exceptional that their impact has been extremely significant during the REF period even if the period of the circumstance does not equate to 46 months
  - COVID related circumstances, ONLY where these have affected outputs in the process of being produced AND, where combined with other applicable circumstances, their impact is equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research
2. To recognise the effect that equality-related circumstances can have on an individual's ability to research productively, and to adjust expectations in terms of expected workload / production of research outputs.
3. To establish whether there are any Units of Assessment where the proportion of declared circumstances is sufficiently high to warrant a request to the higher education funding bodies for a reduction in the required number of outputs to be submitted for that Unit of Assessment.

#### **Applicable circumstances**

- Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher (defined as being members of staff who are eligible for submission on the census date and who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016 – see [section 148](#) of the REF Submission guidance document for more details)
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave (maternity, paternity and/or shared parental leave)
- Disability (e.g. a physical or mental impairment which has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Also, from the day an individual is diagnosed with HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis you will automatically meet the disability definition under the Equality Act 2010).
- Ill health, injury or mental health conditions (e.g. depression)
- Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of the standard allowances
- Caring responsibilities (e.g. for elderly parents or children who may have a disability where you are the primary carer)
- Gender reassignment
- COVID-19 specific related circumstances, applicable only for cases of removal of the minimum requirement of one output

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the above circumstances, you are requested to complete the attached form.

Further information can be found at paragraph 160 of the Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01) and paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Guidance on Revisions (REF 2020/02)

Completion and return of the form is **voluntary**, and individuals who do not choose to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information if they do not wish to do so.

This form is the only means by which the University will be gathering this information; we will not be consulting HR records, contracts of employment, etc. so please ensure you include all relevant information on the declaration form. You do not need to provide supporting evidence (e.g. medical certificate or family leave confirmation letters). What we need is a clear summary of your case, circumstances and timings and the impact the circumstances (individually or collectively) have had on your ability to research effectively and/or produce a REF eligible output during the assessment period. There are some [example cases](#) on the REF Personal Circumstances page for your information. These give an indication of the level of detail we would expect you to provide on the form.

You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you wish them to be taken into consideration as part of the REF 2021 process and if you are willing to provide the associated information.

### **Ensuring Confidentiality**

The Research Intelligence Unit (RIU) team, on receipt of completed forms, will anonymise the data and provide this to the Personal Circumstances Group (as described on page 18 of the [Code of Practice](#)). The Personal Circumstances Group will then consider each case against the criteria and confirm the proposed reduction (if appropriate) for each individual.

This information will be passed back to the RIU team who will then provide the REF Planning Group with the recommended reduction along with the name and Unit of Assessment.

The REF Planning Group Chair will confirm the decision relating to any proposed reduction to individuals who have submitted a Personal Circumstances form. The REF Planning Group Chair will then, where there has been agreement that the minimum requirement of 1 eligible output will be removed for an individual, confirm their name and that a reduction to zero has been agreed to the relevant UoA Lead and Head of School for their information. No details of the reason for the removal of the minimum requirement will be shared with the UoA Lead or Head of School.

The REF Planning Group Chair will also confirm the overall reductions agreed in total for each UoA to the UoA Lead and Head of School. No details of the persons for who reductions have been applied or the reasons for the agreed reductions will be shared with the UoA Lead or Head of School.

If the institution decides to apply to the funding bodies for either form of reduction of outputs (removal of 'minimum of one' requirement and where applicable, an overall Unit of Assessment reduction), 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.

Submitted information will be kept confidential to the funding bodies REF team and the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The funding bodies REF team will destroy the submitted information about individuals' circumstances on completion of the assessment phase, as will the University.

To submit this form you should email the completed form to the following mailbox: [REFcircumstances@reading.ac.uk](mailto:REFcircumstances@reading.ac.uk). You should submit the completed form no later than **30 September 2020**

**Name:** Click here to insert text.

**Department:** Click here to insert text.

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstance (see above) which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es).

Circumstance	Time period affected
<p><b>Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).</b></p> <p><i>Details of the date you became an early career researcher, context and justification are needed. Please see Annex 1 which provides details about the information you need to provide in relation to context and justification</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter a date.</p> <p>Use this box to provide information justifying your ECR status</p>
<p><b>Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.</b></p> <p><i>Dates and durations in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter dates and durations.</p>
<p><b>Family-related leave;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory/occupational maternity leave</li> <li>• Statutory/occupational adoption leave</li> <li>• paternity leave lasting for four months or more</li> <li>• shared parental leave lasting for four months or more.</li> <li>• </li> </ul> <p><i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter dates and durations.</p>
<p><b>Mental health condition</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Other Ill health or injury</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>



<p><b>Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance</b></p> <p><i>To include: Type of leave taken and brief description of additional constraints, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.
<p><b>Caring responsibilities</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p> <p><i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.
<p><b>COVID-19 (Applicable only where requests are being made for the <u>removal of the minimum of one requirement</u>)</b></p> <p><i>To include period of impact of COVID (in months), detail of the output/s affected and nature of the impact of COVID on their production such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>i) Applicable circumstances: including ill health, caring responsibilities, part-time working, etc.</i></li> <li><i>ii) Other COVID related personal circumstances, such as furlough, diversion to frontline health services, diversion to other areas in the University as a consequence of our response to COVID, etc.</i></li> <li><i>iii) Other COVID related external factors, including restricted access to research facilities, constraints on research travel, cancellation of events related to practice-based outputs, etc.</i></li> </ul> <p>•</p> <p><i>The overall impact of the COVID-19 effects should be considered in combination with other applicable circumstances affecting the staff member's ability to research productively throughout the period.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.
<p><b>Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement, suspension from work</b></p> <p><i>To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	Click here to enter text.

I confirm that (you must check one of the two boxes, as relevant to you):

- a) Despite the personal circumstances outlined above, I have **been able to** publish a REF eligible output during the REF 2021 assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020).

☐

**OR**

- b) Due to the personal circumstances outlined above, I have **not been able to** publish a REF eligible output during the REF 2021 assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020).

☐

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided below, that:

- This information has been declared voluntarily
- The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below
- I realise that the above information will be used for REF purposes only and will be seen by Head of Planning and Reporting and other named staff responsible for processing the information and, in anonymised form, the Personal Circumstances Group (as detailed in the University's Code of Practice)
- I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the Funding bodies' REF team and the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel.

I agree ☐

**Name:** Print name here

**Date:** Insert date here

☐ I would like an HR Partner to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements in relation to these (for example, reasonable adjustments to work environment and/or workload due to a disability).

☐ I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to my Head of School/Head of Department and HR Partner. (Please note, if you do not give permission your department may be unable to make any necessary reasonable adjustments to the work environment and/or workload and put in place appropriate support for you).

I would like to be contacted by:

Email ☐ Insert email address

Phone ☐ Insert contact telephone number

## **Annex 1: Early Career Researcher definition and guidance**

For the purposes of REF 2021, an Early Career Researcher is defined as a member of staff who meet the definition of Category A eligible staff on the census date (31 July 2020), and who started their careers as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016.

Main examples could include the following:

- A member of staff who began their first academic appointment on or after 1 August 2016 in a post for which independent research is a contractual expectation (for example a Teaching and Research lecturer). This could be at another institution or organisation
- A research fellow who first met the definition of an independent criteria on or after 1 August 2016, for example through being awarded an externally funded fellowship, or the point at which they met the University's criteria. This could be at another institution or organisation, for example a Research Council institute or a company

You would not meet the definition of an Early Career Researcher, if you acted as an independent researcher at another HEI or organisation prior to 1 August 2016.

Please provide the date and brief prior career history. Example text could be:

- "This is the date of my appointment as a probationary lecturer at the University of Reading. Prior to this point, I was completing my PhD at the University of Sussex"
- "This is the date when I was awarded a Leverhulme independent Fellowship. Prior to this date, I was a research assistant at the University of Durham working on Project X"
- "I was appointed as a Probationary Lecturer at the University on 1 August 2018. I first became an independent researcher when I took up a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Max Planck Institute on 1 January 2017. Prior to this appointment, I was completing my PhD at the University of Vienna"
- "I became a lecturer at the University on 1 September 2018. Prior to this appointment, I was a lead investigator on a collaborative research project with an HEI in the R&D department of GlaxoSmithKline. The project start date of 1 March 2017, is the date at which I became an independent researcher. Prior to this role, I was in the Sales team of GSK."

It might also be helpful to attach a CV with your form.

**Code of Practice Timeline**

Date	Communications
July 2019	Submitted Code of Practice communicated
September 2019	Final Code of Practice Communicated  Process for determining research independence starts
October 2019	Process for declaration of circumstances starts
November 2019	Decisions on Research Independent (REF PG) and communication of decisions to staff (PVC R&I)  Decisions on circumstances (PCG) and communication with staff who declared circumstances (PVC R&I)
December 2019	Decisions on Research Independent (REF PG) and communication of decisions to staff (PVC R&I)  Appeals process (research independence and circumstances)
January 2020	Appeals process (research independence and circumstances round 1)  Mock exercise starts
February 2020	Mock exercise ends  Decisions on Unit output reductions
March 2020	Mock exercise outcomes (preliminary decisions on outputs and impact case studies by REF PG)  Unit output reductions requests

April 2020	Interim EIA  Process for determining research independence (2 <sup>nd</sup> round) starts
May 2020	Process for declaration of circumstances (2 <sup>nd</sup> round) starts
June 2020	Decisions on reductions due to personal circumstances made (CPG)
July 2020	Decisions on Research Independence (2 <sup>nd</sup> Round) made (REF PG)  <b>Staff Census Date</b>
August 2020	Process for declaration of personal circumstances start (round 3) Process for determining research independence (3 <sup>rd</sup> round) starts  Appeals (research independence and circumstances round 2)
September	Decisions on Research Independence (round 3)
October	Decisions on reductions due to personal circumstances round 3 (PCG)  Appeals (research independence round 3)
November 2020	Appeals (personal circumstances round 3)
December 2020	<b>Outputs Census Date</b>
January / February 2021	Decisions on outputs pool made (REF PG)
March 2021	<b>REF Submission</b>
Spring 2021	Communication to all staff on submission, including outputs pool submitted Publication of the final EIA