

# University of Essex REF 2021 Code of Practice

## Part 1: Introduction

### Introduction and Background

1. The University is required by Research England to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice on the fair and transparent processes for determining who is an independent researcher and for the selection of outputs, including approaches to supporting staff with circumstances. The University is required to submit 100 per cent of Category A-eligible staff<sup>1</sup> in the REF 2021. Category A-eligible staff are identified through the employment contract which they hold so the University will not require a separate process for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research. The purpose of the Code of Practice is 'to aid institutions in their responsibilities in respect of promoting equality and diversity, complying with legislation and avoiding discrimination, when preparing submissions to the REF'.<sup>2</sup>

This Code of Practice has been discussed by the University Steering Group (USG)<sup>3</sup>, the Research Committee<sup>4</sup> and the REF2021 Advisory Group (RAG)<sup>5</sup>. In addition, University staff have been consulted through the University and College Union (UCU). It was approved by the USG and Research Committee in May 2019 and approved by Senate on 3 July 2019.

On making our submission, the Vice-Chancellor will confirm adherence to this Code of Practice.

### Institutional Policies and Strategies

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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 submitting institution 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 (*REF 2021: Guidance on submissions* (Ref REF 2019/01), January 2019, p. 29, para. 117). Category A-eligible staff at the University of Essex are staff employed on an ASER contract and staff employed on an ASR contract who are identified as an independent researcher (see Part 3 below).

<sup>2</sup> *REF 2021: Guidance on codes of practice* (Ref REF 2019/03), January 2019, p. 2, para. 11.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B for membership and terms of reference of USG

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C for membership and terms of reference of Research Committee

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix D for membership and terms of reference of RAG

2. On behalf of Senate, Research Committee has responsibility for preparing the University's submission to the Research Excellence Framework, through oversight of the processes and procedures used for arriving at quality assessments of publications and for ensuring a consistency of approach across departments. As Chair of Research Committee, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (PVC (R)) is the institutional lead in the preparation of the University's REF submission. On behalf of Senate and Council, and in line with expectations from the four UK higher education funding bodies as the bodies responsible for organising the REF, overall responsibility for making the REF submission lies with the Vice-Chancellor. Departments are responsible for assessing the quality of outputs produced by their Category A-eligible staff members and for ranking these according to whether they meet a 4/3/2\* REF quality threshold, in accordance with the University's agreed processes and procedures. Departments are further responsible for producing documentation relevant to the unit of assessment, including descriptions of the research environment within the unit and appropriate impact case studies to support the submission, following the University's agreed policies and procedures. The PVC (R) is responsible for making final decisions on quality following internal and if needed, external assessment of items.

3. This Code of Practice sets out the approach the University is taking to ensure our REF 2021 procedures are fair and transparent and uphold our institutional values and statutory obligations<sup>6</sup>. It is based on the University's REF 2014 Code of Practice which has been developed to take account of both new and amended institutional policies and strategies and changes to the Research Excellence Framework since REF 2014.

Our REF 2021 procedures are consistent with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, our People Supporting Strategy, our institutional Strategic Plan and our institutional Research Strategy. All our people-related policies and strategies reflect our values of inclusion, partnership and community and put people at the centre of everything we do.

We are clear that we expect judgement and decision-making to be based on our institutional values and our REF 2021 procedures are designed to help colleagues connect their judgements, decisions, behaviours and actions with our values.

#### **Actions taken by the University since REF 2014**

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for a summary of equality legislation.

4. Our Equality Impact Assessment of REF 2014 revealed no significant differences between the proportion of eligible men (82.9%) and eligible women (81.8%) submitted and no significant differences based on age. However, the proportion of eligible white staff submitted (83.5%) was 4.7% higher than the proportion of staff from other ethnic backgrounds (78.8%) and the proportion of staff with a declared disability submitted (70.6%) was 12.2% lower than the proportion of staff with no declared disability (82.8%), although only 17 eligible staff disclosed a disability.
5. Since REF 2014 we have invested in supporting **all staff** to develop and apply their skills, professional knowledge and expertise to realise their full potential as researchers.
6. In May 2014, the University's Council approved our Research Strategy 2013-19, the first objective of which was:
  - Establish a norm that all staff who are eligible for submission to the REF are on a regular publication cycle in the highest status outlets, with a minimum of two REF-submissible items published or accepted for publication by June 2016, and four items by June 2018, and put in place appropriate support and monitoring mechanisms to achieve this objective.

Subsequently, the Interim REF deadline of June 2016 was extended to 1 July 2017. The Research Strategy deadline of June 2018 was also extended to 31 July 2020 and the requirement for a minimum of four REF-submissible items published or accepted for publication was reduced to three REF-submissible items published. The extensions to the deadlines were as a result of the postponement of the REF2020 until 2021. The reduction to the number of published REF-submissible items was as a result of the announcement by HEFCE in November 2017 that the average number of outputs required for submission per FTE would be 2.5.

For both the Interim REF deadline and the Research Strategy deadline, there would be an opportunity for staff to declare individual staff circumstances that might reduce the number of research outputs they would need to meet the requirements. All Category A-eligible staff were informed that, given the University's commitment to equality and diversity and the ambition to maximise the proportion of eligible staff returned to REF 2020, it would be important in assessing progress against the norms the University had set that full account be taken of any individual staff circumstances that might reduce the number of outputs individual members of staff would be required to have produced. Across all categories, appropriate allowance would therefore be made for individual staff circumstances. Judgements about individual staff circumstances would be made on the criteria for output reductions that HEFCE made in the REF 2014, which take full account of equality and diversity issues. So, for example, a single period of maternity leave in the period since January 2014 would lead to a reduction of one output. Equivalent reductions for staff with clearly-defined circumstances

such as having early career status or holding part-time contracts were calculated and included in the communication. However, any staff on probationary contracts and subject to probationary agreements would not be required to meet the requirements in terms of numbers of research outputs published of either the Interim REF deadline or the Research Strategy deadline because their probationary agreements would take precedence.

The University has well-established procedures for supporting independent researchers in furthering their research interests. These include a procedure for assessing the putative REF outputs of all Category A-eligible staff<sup>7</sup> who are required to submit an 'Annual Research Plans and Outcomes' monitoring form each January in which each staff member sets out their research ambitions and indicates their putative REF 2021 outputs.

The setting of targets and deadlines in the Research Strategy has meant that all academic staff are aware of expectations. It has also enabled the University through the annual research monitoring exercise to identify staff who may require support at an early stage.

The University has in place a range of departmental support mechanisms for supporting colleagues who encounter difficulties in publishing sufficient outputs for REF-submissibility. These include:

- Mentoring by a more experienced colleague or colleagues
- Advice on where and when to submit manuscripts for publication
- Opportunities for research leave that maximise the chances of achieving sufficient REF publications for the University's requirements

In addition to existing departmental support, following the Interim REF deadline, institutional support was provided which included:

- Funding for teaching and administration relief;
- Funding for research assistance;
- Customised support for improving written English, as appropriate to the subject, through the University's Organisational Development team.

The institutional support was tailored to the specific needs to each individual which were assessed through discussions between the individual, their Head of Department and departmental Director of Research. In addition to those identified through the annual research monitoring exercise, this support was available to anybody who felt they needed additional help.

7. Other actions that have been taken include:

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<sup>7</sup> See Part 4, paras 1-2, pp 12-14

- Introducing standardised academic recruitment templates for every grade of post across our three academic career pathways: Academic Staff with education and research responsibilities (ASER); Academic Staff primarily with education responsibilities (ASE); and Academic Staff primarily with research responsibilities (ASR). Consistent language and terminology articulates more clearly the responsibilities for education, research and leadership/ citizenship associated with each role. This helps new colleagues to understand the University values from the moment they engage either as an applicant or new colleague, and help them to understand the future career pathways available to them as they become more established in their role.
- Although the role of departmental Director of Research (DoR) had existed for some time before the REF2014 submission, a standard role description was not introduced until shortly before the submission in 2013. The role description ensures consistency across all departments in the University. The role supports the strategic development of the department's research activity, in order to achieve research excellence in relation to research quality, intensity and impact. Responsibilities of the DoR include developing and implementing effective mechanisms, processes and structures within the department to: provide research mentoring and peer support that assist colleagues in achieving excellence in research; provide support for colleagues in developing and preparing grant applications; disseminate information on research development and opportunities. Since the REF2014 submission, a termly meeting of departmental DoRs, chaired by PVC (R), has been established. This enables information to be communicated consistently to all DoRs and for them to raise any concerns directly with the PVC (R). It is also an opportunity to share best practice in relation to mechanisms, processes and structures within departments and at an institutional level.
- A role of Faculty Deputy Dean (Research) (DDR) was established in each of the University's three faculties during the academic year 2016/17 with appointments being made by January 2018. The purpose of the posts is to provide research leadership within the Faculty and between Faculties in the University to support meeting the strategic research goals of the University. To this end the DDRs work closely with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (PVC (R)). The DDRs can be called upon to provide additional support for academic staff from outside their own department.
- Joining the Race Equality Charter (May 2017) – this provides us with the framework to identify and address the institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of minority ethnic staff and students.
- Requiring all departments to work towards an Athena SWAN award in order to create an environment in which people of all genders are able

to succeed.

- Establishing 'Newcomers' – a network for Early Career Researchers at Essex. Newcomers brings together researchers interested in different aspects of the research lifecycle and aims to stimulate collaboration and opportunities for shared learning and interdisciplinary work. The network also provides training and resources to support researchers across the lifecycle.
- Establishing a Professors' network to support networking, collaboration and the development of a community that are strong role models across the University.
- The University has been taking long-term action to improve pay equality and over the last 5 years our gender pay gap has fallen by 7.2% from 24.8% in 2013 to 17.6% in 2018. In October 2016, female professors received a one-off uplift in their salary in order to eradicate the pay gap at this specific pay grade and this has contributed to the overall fall. There is a strategy in place to reduce further the gap and progress is reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year.

### **The Basic Principles**

8. We will address the four principles of REF 2021 as follows:

- a) *Transparency*: Our Code of Practice clearly explains the processes related to the selection of research outputs for inclusion in our REF submissions, including how processes have been developed and the rationale for adopting the approach. The Code also explains the procedures developed to take account of circumstances that have affected the ability of individual members of staff to research productively throughout the REF period. The Code will be circulated to all academic and research staff, including those absent from work, and made available on the University's REF2021 website. It can also be provided in an alternative format, for example in large print by contacting Sarah Manning-Press (Tel: +44 1206 873561; email: [sarahm@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sarahm@essex.ac.uk)). Staff will also be made aware of the Code via: articles published in *Essex Weekly* (our staff newsletter) and *Research@Essex* (our Research and Enterprise Office newsletter) when the Code has been approved and when relevant deadlines (e.g. declaration of individual staff circumstances) are approaching; departmental meetings in the Summer and Autumn terms 2019; circulation to Heads of Department, departmental Directors of Research and REF 2021 Unit of Assessment Group leads.
- b) *Consistency*: The four principles will be applied to all aspects of our REF decision-making processes across all Units of Assessment (UoA). The Research Committee, on behalf of Senate, has responsibility for preparing the University's submission to the REF2021. The REF Advisory Group (RAG) was established in June 2017 to maintain close

oversight, on behalf of the Research Committee, of the University's progress in preparing for the REF and to advise the PVC (R) on appropriate policies and procedures to meet the requirements of REF 2021 so that recommendations can be made to the USG and Research Committee, as appropriate, for approval. The remit of RAG includes advising the PVC (R) on the development of equality and diversity policies and procedures that may be required by Research England and ensuring that our approach is consistent with our values and is transparent, consistent, inclusive and accountable.

- c) *Accountability*: Research Committee is responsible to Senate for ensuring adherence to our REF 2021 Code of Practice. Research Committee is supported in this by the RAG and the REF2021 UoA Group leads. Individual members of staff involved in reviewing and scoring outputs have personal responsibility for their own decision-making and adherence with this Code.
- d) *Inclusivity*: All academic staff appointed on an ASER contract or an ASR contract at Grade 9 or above are, by definition, independent researchers and will be part of the University's REF 2021 submission. The University is aiming for the highest quality submission that it can produce. Having calculated the number of outputs which will be required for each UoA submission, an anonymous profile of assessments of outputs for each UoA will be produced and the required number of highest scoring outputs will be selected for submission whilst ensuring the minimum of one and maximum of five outputs for each individual are observed and the submission is balanced and reflects the research environment of the UoA<sup>8</sup>.

### **Communication**

- 9. During the Spring and Summer terms 2019 the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) held a series of meetings with all departments at which she explained the University's plans for the development of the REF 2021 submission including the process and timetable for the development of the our REF 2021 Code of Practice, the purpose of the Code and the process for declaring individual staff circumstances. She will encourage staff to consider whether they have had individual staff circumstances during the REF 2021 cycle to disclose and explain that it would always be in the University's interests to view such disclosures sympathetically.

Following the meeting of Senate on 3 July 2019 at which the Code of Practice will be considered for approval, an invitation will be sent, both electronically and in hardcopy to departmental addresses, to all Category A-eligible staff asking them to complete a 'Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances' form about their individual circumstances. In addition, all

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<sup>8</sup> The full process for the section of outputs is described in Part 4 of this Code of Practice (pp 12-15)

eligible staff on leave of absence, maternity leave, research leave or sick leave will be sent a copy of the invitation to their home address.

At the review meetings with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the relevant Faculty Executive Deans and Deputy Deans (Research) to be held in the Autumn term 2019 and early Spring term 2020, Heads of Department and departmental Directors of Research will be asked to remind colleagues when they feed back the results of the review about the Code of Practice and the invitation to declare individual staff circumstances.

As stated above, staff will also be made aware of the Code of Practice via: articles published in *Essex Weekly* (our staff newsletter) and *Research@Essex* (our Research and Enterprise Office newsletter) when the Code has been approved and when relevant deadlines (e.g. declaration of individual staff circumstances) are approaching; circulation to Heads of Department, departmental Directors of Research and UoA REF 2021 Group leads; and in departmental meetings.



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

N/A – we will be submitting 100% of Category A-eligible staff.

## Part 3: Determining research independence

### Policies and procedures

1. Staff employed on 'research only' contracts must be independent researchers to meet the definition of Category A eligible<sup>9</sup>. Determining research independence is part of our recruitment and promotion processes.  
  
All Academic Staff primarily with research responsibilities (ASR) who are Grade 9 and above meet the definition of an independent researcher<sup>10</sup>.
2. The University of Essex has standard job description and person specification templates across the institution. Grade 9 ASR job descriptions include the following main duty: 'To develop a research agenda which pursues individual and/or collaborative research objectives and proposals of high quality that will, as a minimum, meet the University's expectations for future REF exercises. Grade 9 ASR person specifications also include the following essential criteria 'The ability to conduct and develop independent, high-quality research'. Therefore, all ASR staff on Grade 9 and above meet the definition of independent researcher.
3. Staff appointed on an ASR contract can be appointed below Grade 9. A Grade 8 ASR job description includes the following main duty: 'To develop research objectives and proposals for own or joint research under the direction of, or with the assistance of, a Principal Investigator/Supervisor'. A Grade 8 ASR person specification includes the following essential criteria 'The ability and willingness to complement and enhance the research project/department/school's education and research strengths and planned areas of development. Therefore, Grade 8 ASR staff do not meet the definition of independent researcher.
4. Staff on ASR contracts below Grade 9 are eligible to apply for promotion through the University's Annual Review Procedures for Academic Staff. The Grade 9 Grade descriptor states 'A research-focused academic (normally post-doctoral) working independently on research and raising research funding' and an indicator of performance at this level is 'Independently develops research objectives, projects and proposals'.

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<sup>9</sup> REF 2021: *Guidance on submissions* (Ref REF 2019/01), January 2019, p. 32, para. 128

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix G for the University of Essex academic staff grades and comparable HESA levels.

5. Staff recruited to Grade 9 ASR posts will be aware of their status as independent researchers from the standard job description and person specification. Staff on ASR contracts who are promoted to Grade 9 will be aware of their status as independent researchers from the Probation and Promotion Criteria for Academic Staff which they will use in developing their application for promotion.

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

6. Recruitment selection panels for ASR posts are determined according to University guidance on the academic recruitment process<sup>11</sup>. The chair of all selection panels has a responsibility to ensure there is an appropriate diversity mix to minimise the impact of unconscious bias in selection decisions. Chair's guidance states that 'Diversity does not simply mean having a mix of people with protected characteristics. It also means considering having people with a mix of backgrounds, knowledge and specialisms relevant to the role being advertised. The panel should always include a gender mix'.
7. For all academic vacancies, the shortlist must be approved by the Faculty Executive Dean and may also be referred to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) in exceptional circumstances.
8. Heads of Department are responsible for the proper delivery of the recruitment and selection process for all posts within their department in accordance with the University's Resourcing Guidance. The Human Resources Section is responsible for recruitment-related administration.
9. Staff on ASR contracts applying for promotion to Grade 9 do so through University's Annual Review Procedures. Academic Staffing Committee (ASC)<sup>12</sup> is the sole locus for decisions on academic staff promotion. ASC is a committee of our Senate.
10. Under our Essential Training Policy all staff within the University must complete Equality and Diversity Essentials and Unconscious Bias training. In addition, all members of selection panels must have completed the University's online recruitment and selection training. Completion of Essential Training is monitored through the probation agreements of individual staff members and through termly reminders to staff and managers. The Head of Department confirms that all members of a selection panel have completed the required training at the point the panel is established.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix H for the selection panel composition for ASR posts

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix F for membership and terms of reference of Academic Staffing Committee

## Appeals

11. There is no appeals process in place for decisions made by recruitment selection panels.
12. Our Annual Review Procedures for Academic Staff contain the following appeals process which is used by staff on ASR contracts to appeal against a decision not to grant promotion from Grade 8 to Grade 9:
  - a) If the member of academic staff wishes to appeal against a decision not to grant permanency or promotion, they must submit their appeal in writing to the Director of Human Resources within 14 calendar days of the date of the outcome letter. An appeal is not a re-hearing of the case and can only be made on one or more of the following grounds:
    - A procedural fault that may have influenced ASC's original decision;
    - A significant error of material fact that may have influenced ASC's original decision.
  - b) A written management response will also be sought from the Head of Department and Executive Dean in response to the appeal, which should explicitly correct any mistakes or inaccuracies contained within the application or written appeal.
  - c) A senior member of academic staff at Professorial level appointed by the Chair of ASC will act as Chair of the appeals panel. The Chair will establish whether a prima facie case exists and where such a case is established an appeals panel will be constituted to meet from the beginning of the following term.
  - d) No member of the panel should have been involved in making the original decision or be a member of the appellant's Department. The panel will also consist of one Professor nominated by the appellant (and usually in consultation with UCU), and one Professor within the relevant Faculty appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. For appeals against a decision not to grant permanency, the panel will also include a member of Council.
  - e) The member of staff will have an opportunity to present their case in person and may be accompanied by a colleague or Trades Union Representative. The relevant Head of Department/Executive Dean will present the case for management. The panel will consider only data and evidence received up to the time of the appropriate ASC meeting and decision, including any previous feedback letters from ASC to the appellant. It will then decide whether:
    - The case should be referred back to Academic Staffing Committee due to a procedural error or significant error of material fact. In this instance the appeals panel will provide a full report to the committee of their findings, and ASC will re-consider the case in the light of the report and come to a final decision.

- The appeal is dismissed and therefore the original decision still stands. Or, for permanency cases only:
  - To uphold the appeal, in which case the applicant will be re-instated
- f) In circumstances where there is no consensus on a decision among the panel, the Chair will have the casting vote.
- g) The Executive Dean from the relevant Faculty and the Chair (or appointee) of Academic Staffing Committee may also be asked to appear before the hearing.
13. The ASC timetable in 2019/20 for considering applications for promotion from Grade 8 to Grade 9 is:
- Deadline for application to committee secretary: 28 February 2020  
 ASC meeting to consider applications: 18 March 2020  
 Decisions to be sent to applicants: week beginning 23 March 2020  
 Deadline for applicants to lodge an appeal: 6 April 2020  
 Deadline for appeals to be heard and outcomes given to ASC secretary: 31 May 2020  
 ASC meeting to cases remitted back following appeal: 11 June 2020
- The appeals process will be concluded prior to the REF2021 census date of 31 July 2020 enabling any applicant who has successfully appealed against the decision not to promote them from Grade 8 to Grade 9 to be included in the University's submission as an independent researcher.

**Equality impact assessment**

14. The REF Equality Impact Assessments are one of the activities that enable the University to understand where differences across protected characteristics exist and to put in place appropriate support.
15. At key stages of the selection process, the University will produce a profile in terms of age, disability, sex, race and employment status of all staff who have been identified as independent researchers through the Annual Review Procedures
- If significant differences across protected characteristics are identified, the University will take action to change the relevant part of its REF procedures. A significant difference is defined as a difference of 5% or more or a consistent pattern of lesser differences (3% or more).
16. The key stages are:
- In July 2015 following the conclusion of the Annual Review of Academic Staff for 2014/15.
  - In July 2016 following the conclusion of the Annual Review of Academic Staff for 2015/16.
  - In July 2017 following the conclusion of the Annual Review of

Academic Staff for 2016/17.

- In July 2018 following the conclusion of the Annual Review of Academic Staff for 2017/18.
- In July 2019 following the conclusion of the Annual Review of Academic Staff for 2018/19.
- In July 2020 following the conclusion of the Annual Review of Academic Staff for 2019/20.

17. If a prima facie imbalance is found relative to the total potential, the University will provide an account for it and seek to take steps to address this, where appropriate.

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

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

1. The University has well-established procedures for supporting independent researchers in further their research interests. These include a procedure for assessing the putative REF outputs of all Category A-eligible staff who are required to submit an 'Annual Research Plans and Outcomes' monitoring form each January in which each staff member sets out their research ambitions and indicates their putative REF 2021 outputs.
2. The University adopted the following procedure for assessing putative REF outputs in January 2016 following approval by Research Committee:
  - Individuals are asked to nominate up to six putative REF research outputs in their online Annual Research Plans and Outcomes monitoring form.
  - A process for assessing putative REF outputs was approved by Research Committee and adopted in January 2016. The broad principles are that:
    - Each output should be assessed by at least two reviewers and, if there is a disagreement in the assigned score, then there should be a third assessment which could be by an external reviewer.
    - Assessment of outputs should be made using the published REF 2021 criteria of originality, rigour and significance against the star quality levels taking account of disciplinary norms and the nature of the research output<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix I for the Criteria for Assessing Outputs and Starred Quality Level Definitions

- The process of assessing publications should not rely solely on outputs being read but could include a cross-check with relevant metrics such as citations and other external data sources (journal impact factors for example) for disciplines where these are commonly used. When cross-checking with relevant metrics, reviewers need to bear in mind the approach adopted by the University in relation to the responsible use of metrics<sup>14</sup>.
- It is recognised that scoring necessarily involves the exercise of judgement but this needs to be an evidence-based judgement set against the published criteria in the REF2021 guidelines.
- Reviewers are asked to input their assessment of nominated REF2021 items online. Their reviews will not be visible to other reviewers at departmental level or to the individuals themselves and will only become visible at an institutional level once the assessment has been submitted. Reviewers assign a score on a 0-4 scale corresponding to the starring system used in the REF. The definitions for scores used in the REF have been provided in the system as guidance. In addition, for outputs scored between 2\* and 4\*, they are asked to provide greater granularity in scoring. This granularity in scoring is used to indicate the level of confidence that a reviewer has in the score. For example, a score of 2.8\* would be understood to indicate that a reviewer has less confidence that an output would achieve 3\* than a score of 3.2\* would indicate. It is also used when it comes to the selection of the outputs for submission. Reviewers can provide additional explanatory text which is helpful for clarification of scoring decisions and in cases of appeal.
- Departments present these scores at a specially constituted meeting of the PVC (R), Executive Dean, DDR, Head of Department, Departmental Director of Research, and the Research Governance and Planning Manager, where individual results and the overall pattern across the department are discussed and (where appropriate) confirmed.
- Departments inform colleagues of the scores that have been assigned as a result of this process and provide support to colleagues as necessary.
- The PVC (R) is prepared to solicit external views on the merits an output should the individual concerned make such a request. The external review process is as follows:

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix J, The Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University of Essex

- Either the department or the individual concerned requests that the output be externally assessed.
- The individual can nominate two suggested assessors for possible external review. The department is also asked to nominate two external assessors.
- The PVC (R) solicits and evaluates external reviews in exactly the way that an editor of an academic journal would do so. The output is reviewed anonymously and the reviewers remain anonymous.
- The PVC (R) makes a judgement about the scoring of the output in exactly the same way that the editor of a journal makes a decision whether or not to accept a paper for publication
- The PVC (R)'s judgement is final.
- The University's Research Committee formally reviews the process and confirms the scores on an annual basis and immediately prior to the University's REF submission.

3. The University is aiming for the highest quality submission that it can produce.

Having calculated the number of outputs which will be required for each UoA submission, an anonymous profile of assessments of outputs made during the Annual Research Planning and Outcomes monitoring exercise for each UoA will be produced and the required number of highest scoring outputs will be selected. Three checks will then take place:

- The selected outputs include a research output produced by all Category A staff in the submission who are required to submit one.
- None of the selected outputs are duplications.
- A maximum of five outputs are included for any staff member.

The information produced will be provided to the UoA REF Group to consider whether it is representative of the UoA and provides a balanced submission. Any adjustment will be agreed through the UoA REF Group and confirmed by the RAG.

The rationale for this approach is that, as far as possible, it provides for the decoupling of outputs from staff and the anonymous selection of outputs.

Outputs of former staff members which have been assessed and have achieved a score higher than the GPA of the UoA submission will be included in the profile but a decision as to whether or not they should be submitted will be made at UoA level. This will depend on whether they are representative of the continuing activity of the UoA. There are no plans to include outputs of staff who have been made redundant in the submission.

4. Decisions about which research outputs will be submitted to each UoA will be finalised in October 2020 and will be confirmed by RAG and Research Committee at specially convened meetings in November 2020. Decisions will be communicated in writing to members of staff by the PVC (R) following the REF 2021 submission on 27 November 2020.
5. It should be noted that selection of research outputs is an institutional level, strategic decision taken to meet the objective of producing the highest quality submission possible. Since submissions must include a set number of research outputs, equal to 2.5 times the combined FTE of Category A submitted staff included in the submission<sup>15</sup>, it is not possible for an equal number of research outputs to be submitted for each individual included in the submission. In addition, in order to create a balanced submission, and meet the required number of outputs for the UoA it is recognised that it will not be possible to submit all high quality research outputs. As a result, although the number of outputs that an individual has produced which could be submitted in the REF may be taken into account when considering an application for promotion, the number of outputs selected for submission in the REF will not be.

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

6. In addition to those involved in institutional recruitment and promotion decision-making processes/committees whose essential training requirements are outlined in Part 3, paragraph 10 above, the following committees have been established to support the fair selection of outputs:
  - REF 2021 Advisory Group (RAG)
  - Unit of Assessment (UoA) REF Groups
  - Individual Staff Circumstances Committee
7. In June 2017, USG approved the establishment of the RAG. Members were selected based on their role. The RAG has met once every six weeks from June 2017 to September 2019 and will meet once every four weeks from September 2019 to November 2020. Minutes of the meetings are taken by the RAG Secretary and reports are made to Research Committee.
8. In February 2018 the RAG discussed a proposal to establish UoA REF Groups to manage the REF 2021 submission at UoA level. RAG endorsed the overall management structure for UoA REF Groups for approval by Research Committee, with the additional requirement that consideration was given to having a diverse membership in terms of protected characteristics, career stage and contractual status i.e. full-time/ part-time.  
  
In March 2018 the establishment of UoA REF Groups and their management structure was approved by Research Committee. UoAs are responsible for

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<sup>15</sup> See *REF 2021: Guidance on submissions* (Ref REF 2019/01), January 2019, p. 48, para. 205



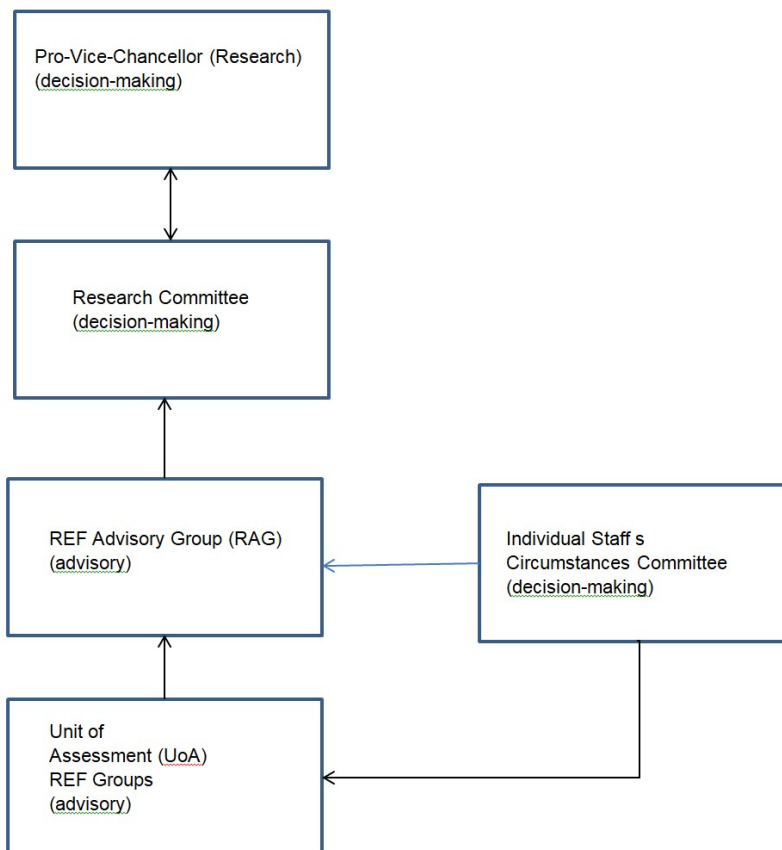
assessing and identifying high quality research outputs and impact case studies and for drafting the documentation for submission in 2020.

The lead for each UoA is normally the departmental Director of Research (DoR), supported by the Director of Impact, and for UoAs with more than one contributing department, the DoR of the main contributing department. In the case of UoA with more than one contributing department, the DoRs all all departments will be involved as members of the UoA REF Group. Other members were selected by the Group lead, contributing Heads of Department and DoRs, identified on the basis of their experience, e.g. being a member of a departmental Research Committee, or role, e.g. being a Deputy Director of Research. All Heads of Department are part of the UoA REF Group(s) to which their department contributes. The membership of all UoAs REF Groups must be approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) in consultation with the relevant Executive Dean(s).

9. The establishment of the Individual Staff Circumstances Committee<sup>16</sup> will be confirmed by Research Committee in June 2019. Members will be selected on the basis of their role and experience.

10.

**REF 2021 Institutional Management Structure**



<sup>16</sup> See Appendix E for membership and terms of reference of Individual Staff Circumstances Committee

11. Members of all UoA REF Groups, the REF Advisory Group, Research Committee and the Individual Staff Circumstances Committee will be required to complete Unconscious Bias in the REF training in addition to the mandatory Equality and Diversity Essentials and Unconscious Bias training.

The 'Unconscious Bias in the REF' online training was developed in-house between August 2018 and May 2019. It is an extension to our existing unconscious bias training course, which focuses on how our brains make quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, and requires participants to consider specifically how bias might come into play when judging academic publications and what individuals can do to mitigate against that. It includes sections on:

- Journal bias
- Publication bias
- Institutional bias
- Prestige and affiliation bias
- Academic in-group bias
- Language bias
- Expert bias

12. Those who are already members of the UoA REF Groups, the REF Advisory Group, Research Committee and the Individual Staff Circumstances Committee will be required to complete the REF Equality and Diversity and Unconscious Bias training between 1 June 2019 and 30 September 2019. Staff who are appointed to any of the groups and committees from 1 June 2019 onwards, will be required to undertake the training within four weeks of appointment and must not be involved in any decision-making activities until training has been completed. Anybody who fails to complete training within the required timeframe will be removed from any decision-making body.

Monitoring of completion of training will be the responsibility of the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion who will report to the RAG and Research Committee.

### Staff circumstances

13. All Category A-eligible staff will be invited to complete a 'Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances form about any individual circumstances which have affected their ability to research productively throughout the period<sup>17</sup>. These will be reviewed by the REF Individual Staff Circumstances Committee to ascertain whether there is evidence to support a case for:
- a reduction in the total number of research outputs required for submission by a UoA;
  - the removal of the requirement for a minimum of one research output for the individual; and
  - a reduction in the minimum of three REF-submissible items published by 31 July 2020, the University's Research Strategy deadline.

It should be noted that it is always in the University's interests to view sympathetically requests for individual staff circumstances to be considered.

14. In deciding whether or not an individual should receive a reduction in the required number of research outputs, consideration will be given to the following circumstances and the extent to which they have significantly constrained the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs of suitable quality in the assessment period, as guided by the published panel criteria.

*Clearly defined circumstances:*

- Status as an early career researcher (ECR). These are individuals of any age who meet the definition of Category A-eligible on the census date (31 July 2020) **and** who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.
- Absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave.
- Part-time working or other flexible working arrangements. Reductions in relation to the outputs required for the REF 2021 will only be made in exceptional circumstance as part-time working is taken account of within the calculation for the overall number of outputs required for the unit. However, reductions in relation to the outputs required for the University's Research Strategy deadline for those working part-time will be made.

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix K

*Complex circumstances:*

- Disability<sup>18</sup>;
- Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions;
- Constraints related to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside, for example a clearly defined period of maternity leave;
- Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member);
- Gender reassignment;
- Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

15. For clearly defined circumstances, there is a clearly defined reduction in the number of outputs that may be submitted. Where an individual has had a combination of circumstances with clearly defined reductions in outputs, these may be accumulated.

For more complex circumstances, the University will make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs to be submitted. The University will provide a rationale for its judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs which will be submitted in confidence to the Research England REF Team.

16. As part of its commitment to equal opportunities, the University has developed policies to support all staff, including those on fixed-term contracts and those who work part-time. In particular, the Organisational Development team provides advice, information, training and support for contract research staff to assist them in pursuing a career both within academia and outside the sector. The University's People Supporting Strategy details our commitment to the development of all staff and all staff have the opportunity to engage in both personal and professional development.

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix A

### **Equality impact assessment**

17. The REF Equality Impact Assessments are one of the activities that enable the University to understand where differences across protected characteristics exist and to put in place appropriate support.
18. At key stages of the selection process, the University will produce a profile in terms of age, disability, sex, race and employment status:
  - of all staff who have been identified as independent researchers; and
  - of the distribution of selected research outputs across staff, in the context of the characteristics of the submitted staff pool.

If significant differences across protected characteristics are identified, the University will take action to change the relevant part of its REF procedures. A significant difference is defined as a difference of 5% or more or a consistent pattern of lesser differences (3% or more).

19. The key stages are:
  - In July 2019 following the conclusion of the annual research monitoring exercise.
  - In July 2020 following the conclusion of the annual research monitoring exercise and prior to final selection of outputs. At this stage, both a University-wide EIA and breakdowns by department, will be undertaken. This will enable the University to investigate any areas where there is a differential impact on a particular group before the submission date.
  - October 2020 when preparing the final submission.
  - When considering any appeals.
20. In addition, the University will provide a website profile, in terms of age, disability, sex, race and employment status, of the distribution of selected research outputs across staff, in the context of the characteristics of the submitted staff pool. If a prima facie imbalance is found relative to the total potential, the University will provide an account for it and seek to take steps to address this, where appropriate.

<b>Part 5: Appendices</b>

## Relevant Legislation and Definitions

### The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced the majority of previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics'.

The protected characteristics under the Act are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

### Types of Discrimination

There are four types of discrimination: direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; harassment; and victimisation. All of these are illegal and are defined under the Act as follows:

#### Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person **because of** a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (**discrimination by perception**), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (**discrimination by association**). Under the Act, disabled people are protected from **discrimination 'arising from disability'** which occurs when someone has been treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability as opposed to 'because of' the disability itself.

#### Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule, policy or practice is neutral on the face of it but its impact particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic.

## Harassment

Harassment is defined as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

Under the Act staff can complain of behaviour they find offensive even if the behaviour is not directed at them.

## Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated detrimentally because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence relating to such a complaint or because they are suspected of doing so.

## Summary of equality legislation, including guidance from the REF 2021 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP)

Age	<p>All employees within the higher education sector are protected from unlawful age discrimination in employment under the Equality Act 2010. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or if they are associated with a person of a particular age group.</p> <p>Age discrimination can occur when people of a particular age group are treated less favourably than people in other age groups. An age group could be, for example, people of the same age, the under 30s or people aged 45-50. A person can belong to a number of different age groups.</p> <p>Age discrimination will not be unlawful if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. However, in the context of REF 2021, the view of the funding bodies is that if a researcher produces excellent research an HEI will not be able to justify not selecting their outputs because of their age group.</p> <p>Early career researchers (ECRs) are likely to come from a range of age groups. The definition of ECR used in REF 2021 is not limited to young people.</p> <p>Note: the default retirement age was abolished in the UK from 1 October 2011.</p>
Disability	<p>The Equality Act 2010 prevents unlawful discrimination relating to disability. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to have a disability or if they are associated with a person who is disabled. For example, if they are responsible for caring for a family member with a disability.</p> <p>A person is considered to be disabled if they have or have had a physical and/or mental impairment which has 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Long-term impairments include those that last or are likely to last for at least 12 months.</p>



	<p>Cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis and progressive/degenerative conditions are disabilities too, even if they do not currently have an adverse effect on the carrying out of day-to-day activities. An impairment which is managed by medication or medical treatment, but which would have had a substantial and long-term adverse effect if not so managed, is also a disability.</p> <p>‘Normal day-to-day activities’ are taken to mean activities that people generally, not a specific individual, carry out on a daily or frequent basis.</p> <p>While there is no definitive list of what is considered a disability, it covers a wide range of impairments including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ sensory impairments</li> <li>▪ impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis, depression and epilepsy</li> <li>▪ progressive impairments, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, HIV and cancer</li> <li>▪ organ-specific impairments, including respiratory conditions and cardiovascular diseases</li> <li>▪ developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia</li> <li>▪ mental health conditions such as depression and eating disorders</li> <li>▪ impairments caused by injury to the body or brain.</li> </ul> <p>People who have had a past disability are also protected from discrimination because of disability.</p> <p>Equality law requires HEIs to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and make reasonable adjustments for them. Failure to make a reasonable adjustment constitutes discrimination. If a researcher’s impairment has affected the quantity of their research outputs, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of outputs.</p>
<p>Trans (Legal term: gender reassignment)</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 protects people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change their gender identity, from discrimination. Staff do not have to be under medical supervision to be protected and are also protected if they are perceived to be undergoing transition. Protection also extends to staff associated with someone who has proposed, is undergoing or has taken steps to change their gender identity.</p> <p>The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gave enhanced privacy rights to trans people who have surgery to change their body so it matches their gender identity. A person acting in an official capacity who acquires information about a person’s status as trans may commit a criminal offence if they pass the information to a third party without</p>

	<p>consent. Consequently, staff with responsibility for REF 2021 submissions must ensure that information they may receive about trans staff is kept confidential.</p> <p>If a trans member of staff has had their ability to work productively throughout the REF 2021 assessment period constrained due to being trans, the unit may return a reduced number of research outputs.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 individuals are protected from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership status. The protection from discrimination is to ensure that people who are married or in a civil partnership receive the same benefits and treatment in employment. The protection from discrimination does not apply to single people.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes do not inadvertently discriminate against staff who are married or in civil partnerships.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 women are protected from unlawful discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>Consequently, where researchers have taken time out of work, or their ability to work productively throughout the assessment period has been affected because of pregnancy and/or maternity the submitting unit may return a reduced number of outputs.</p> <p>In addition, HEIs should ensure that female researchers who are pregnant or on maternity leave are kept informed about, and included in, their submissions process.</p> <p>Primary adopters have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave.</p>
Race	<p>The Equality Act 2010 protects HEI staff from unlawful discrimination connected to race. The definition of race includes colour, ethnic or national origins or nationality. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular race.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their race or assumed race (for example based on their name).</p>
Religion and belief including non-belief	<p>The Equality Act 2010 protects HEI staff from unlawful discrimination related to religion or belief. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular religion or belief.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their actual or perceived religion or belief, including non-belief. 'Belief' includes any structured philosophical belief with clear values that has an effect on how its adherents conduct their lives.</p>

<p>Sex (including breastfeeding and additional paternity and adoption leave)</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 protects HEI staff from unlawful discrimination related to sex. Employees are also protected because of their perceived sex or because of their association with someone of a particular sex.</p> <p>The sex discrimination provisions of the Equality Act explicitly protect women from less favourable treatment because they are breastfeeding. Consequently the impact of breastfeeding on a women's ability to work productively will be taken into account.</p> <p>If a mother who meets the continuity of employment test wishes to return to work early or shorten her maternity leave/pay, she will be entitled to shared parental leave with the father or her partner within the first year of the baby's birth. Partners may also be eligible for shared parental leave or pay. Fathers/partners who take additional paternity or adoption leave will have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave and barriers that exist to taking the leave, or as a result of having taken it, could constitute unlawful sex discrimination. Consequently where researchers have taken additional paternity and adoption leave, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of outputs</p> <p>HEIs need to be wary of implementing procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 that would be easier for men to comply with than women would and vice versa.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 protects HEI staff from unlawful discrimination related to sexual orientation. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with someone who is of a particular sexual orientation.</p> <p>HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation.</p>

## **University Steering Group (USG) Membership and Terms of Reference**

### Ex Officio Members

The Vice-Chancellor: Professor Anthony Forster (Chair)  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Professor Jules Pretty  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (designate): Professor Lorna Fox O'Mahony  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research): Professor Christine Raines  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education): Professor Madeline Eacott  
Executive Dean (Humanities): Professor Andrew Le Sueur  
Executive Dean (Social Sciences) Professor Moya Lloyd  
Executive Dean (Science and Health): Professor Graham Underwood  
Registrar and Secretary: Bryn Morris  
Director of Finance: Andrew Keeble  
Chief of Staff: Monica Illsley

### Terms of Reference

- (a) To prepare and recommend annually to the Resources Committee of the Council five year financial forecasts and a Capital Investment Plan, incorporating an annual revenue and capital budget for the University, and to monitor the implementation of these;
- (b) to review and monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the University, its Strategies, Sub-Strategies and Supporting Strategies (as developed from time-to-time), their associated action plans and performance against their key performance indicators and to report to Resources Committee, Council and other committees as appropriate;
- (c) to keep the allocation and deployment of University resources under regular scrutiny and review, including allocations to Faculties and Professional Services, to ensure that resources are being used to support the institutional interest and the objectives in the Strategic Plan;
- (d) to approve the provision of staff posts, and to monitor appointments made, delegating authority for individual appointments in accordance with the University's Ordinances and recruitment policies as follows:
- (i) to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, authority to approve staffing replacements and new requests of academic staff within budget within academic Departments/Schools;
  - (ii) to the Registrar and Secretary authority to approve staffing replacements and new requests within budget of professional services staff in central sections, faculties and schools/departments;
- (e) to approve non-recurrent non-staff additions to the revenue budget up to the value of £250,000 (net expenditure);
- (f) to review and monitor the annual budget allocations to faculties and professional services;

(g) under delegation from Council, to mandate new projects and their funding, enabling them to be added to the Capital Investment Plan, up to the value of £2,000,000 (gross expenditure) and to approve cost increases to existing projects up to £400,000, provided the Capital Investment Plan is supported by appropriate financing, e.g. loans, capital receipts;

(h) to approve tuition fees on behalf of Council and to report all such approvals to Council;

(i) to monitor key institutional risks, including compliance with statutory obligations, reporting to Audit and Risk Management Committee, Resources Committee and Council as appropriate;

(j) to establish advisory groups to undertake detailed work to support USG in discharging its responsibilities more effectively, including delegation of authority for specific decisions where this is considered appropriate.

## **Research Committee Membership and Terms of Reference**

### Ex Officio Members

The Vice-Chancellor: Professor Anthony Forster  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research): Professor Christine Raines (Chair)  
Director, Research and Enterprise Office: Vanessa Cuthill  
Executive Dean (Humanities): Professor Andrew Le Sueur  
Executive Dean (Social Sciences) Professor Moya Lloyd  
Executive Dean (Science and Health): Professor Graham Underwood  
Deputy Dean (Research) Humanities: Dr Tracey Loughran  
Deputy Dean (Research) Social Sciences: Professor John Preston  
Deputy Dean (Research) Science and Health: Professor Alan St Clair Gibson  
Dean of Partnerships: Professor Dominic Micklewright  
Dean of Postgraduate Research and Education: Professor Sanja Bahun  
Students' Union Vice President (Education): Edmund Walker

### Appointed Members

Faculty of Humanities: Professor Alison Rowlands  
Faculty of Social Sciences: Professor Kristian Gleditsch  
Faculty of Science and Health: Professor Leonard Schalkwyk

### Terms of Reference

The Committee will:

- (a) Have oversight of research strategy at University and department levels;
- (b) on behalf of Senate, monitor and review progress and development of the University's research performance with a view to sustainability and improvement;
- (c) on behalf of Senate, prepare the University's submission to the Research Excellence Framework;
- (d) establish and promote models of good practice for the management of research at departmental level, and to ensure that all departments have suitable structures in place;
- (e) advise departments on the strategic use of the centrally-provided research funds available to them, and receive annual reports from departments on their strategic research investments and the outcomes;
- (f) have due regard of issues of equality and diversity in its work and report to each meeting of Senate on relevant aspects of the Committee's areas of responsibilities.

## **REF 2021 Advisory Group (RAG) Membership and Terms of Reference**

### Ex Officio Members

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research): Professor Christine Raines (Chair)  
Deputy Dean (Research) Humanities: Dr Tracey Loughran  
Deputy Dean (Research) Social Sciences: Professor John Preston  
Deputy Dean (Research) Science and Health: Professor Alan St Clair Gibson  
Director, Research and Enterprise Office: Vanessa Cuthill  
Research Governance and Planning Manager: Sarah Manning-Press  
Head of Research Development and Impact: Sue Hanshaw  
Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Karen Bush  
Assistant Human Resources Director: Sara Limerick

### Terms of Reference

- (a) To assess the implications of any rule changes that may arise as a result of the HEFCE REF 2021 consultation and make recommendations to Research Committee
- (b) To advise the PVC (Research) and Research Committee on appropriate policies and procedures to meet the requirements of REF 2021 so that recommendations can be made to USG and Senate for approval
- (c) To advise the PVC (Research) on the establishment of a secure system for managing our REF submission information and data through the Research and Enterprise Office
- (d) To advise the PVC (Research) on the development of equality and diversity policies and procedures that may be required by Research England and ensure our approach is consistent with our values and is transparent, consistent, inclusive and accountable
- (e) To advise the PVC (Research) on the development of policies and procedures for Individual Staff Circumstances that meet Research England requirements and ensure our approach is transparent, consistent, inclusive and accountable

## **Individual Staff Circumstances Committee Membership and Terms of Reference**

### Ex Officio Members

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research): Professor Christine Raines (Chair)  
Research Governance and Planning Manager: Sarah Manning-Press  
Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Karen Bush

### Appointed Member

A member of academic staff who is not involved in the selection of research outputs

### Terms of Reference

(a) To review declarations of individual staff circumstances to ascertain whether there is evidence to support a reduction in the number of research outputs required for both the REF 2021 submission and the University's Research Strategy deadline.

(b) To produce the REF staff circumstances report as required by the REF 2021 Guidance on Codes of Practice for Research Committee.



## **Academic Staffing Committee Membership and Terms of Reference**

### Ex Officio Members

The Vice-Chancellor: Professor Anthony Forster

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Professor Jules Pretty (Chair)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Designate): Professor Lorna Fox O'Mahony

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research): Professor Christine Raines

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education): Professor Madeline Eacott

Executive Dean (Humanities): Professor Andrew Le Sueur

Executive Dean (Science and Health): Professor Graham Underwood

Executive Dean (Social Sciences) Professor Moya Lloyd

### Appointed Members

Faculty of Humanities: Professor Lucy Noakes, Dr Susan Oliver,  
Professor Jeffrey Geiger

Faculty of Social Sciences: Professor Neil Kellard, Professor Florence Myles,  
Dr Svetlana Warhurst

Faculty of Science and Health: Dr Marie Juanchich, two vacancies (to be confirmed)

### Terms of Reference

In the following terms of reference 'staff' means all academic and research staff:

- (a) To report to the Senate on the terms and conditions of appointment of staff or of sections of the staff;
- (b) to keep under review and advise the Senate on procedure for the appointment of staff;
- (c) to conduct the annual review of staff and to determine and report to the Senate on:
  - (i) extensions of probationary periods;
  - (ii) confirmation of appointments as permanent;
  - (iii) promotion to Lecturer/Senior Research Officer (Grade 8), Lecturer/Research Fellow (Grade 9), Senior Lecturer/Senior Research Fellow (Grade 10), Reader (Grade 10) and Professor (Grade 11);
- (d) to monitor matters relating to equality and diversity within its overall consideration and report to the Senate at any time on any matter relating to the staff, including such matters as may be referred to it by the Senate.

**University of Essex academic staff grades and comparable HESA levels**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>UCEA/Xpert HR level</b>
Grade 7, Lecturer/Research Officer	ASE, ASR	Level L
Grade 8, Lecturer/Senior Research Officer	ASE, ASR	Level K
Grade 9, Lecturer/Research Fellow	ASE, ASER, ASR	Level J
Grade 10, Senior Lecturer/Senior Research Fellow	ASE, ASER, ASR	Level I
Grade 10, Reader	ASER, ASR	Level I
Grade 11, Professor	ASE, ASER, ASR	Level 5A

### **Selection Panel Composition for ASR posts**

The following principles should also be applied when establishing a selection panel for ASR posts:

- The current post holder should not be included in any part of the interview/selection process.
- Although interviews may vary slightly in duration due to the length of responses given by candidates, it is important that a consistent approach is taken with all interviewees. This is to ensure all candidates have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the post. As a guide it is recommended that all interviews are scheduled for no more than 45 minutes.
- Additional time may be added if a presentation is to be included.

If a member of staff involved in the recruitment process is involved in a potential conflict of interest with a candidate, this should be declared to the Chair of the panel and to the Resourcing Team as soon as they are aware of the candidate's application, and they should remove themselves from the selection process.

***ASR posts are not covered by the University Ordinances in terms of selection panel composition. The recommended selection panel composition is given below:***

#### ASR posts Grade 7 - 8

- A minimum of three colleagues to sit on the panel to include the following:
  - Director of Research or Head of Research Group or a senior member of staff (ASR/ASER) from the department
  - The Principal Investigator/Line Manager
  - A further colleague that can be either internal or external to the department
  - The Chair can be the Principal Investigator or Line Manager if the post is grant funded and fixed-term
  - The Chair should be the HoD or delegated by the HoD if the post is permanent
  - A diversity mix including a gender mix, where possible
  - The selection panel composition should be approved by the Director of Research in the department.

#### ASR posts Grade 9 – 10

In addition to the above:

- The panel should also include the Head of Department and be Chaired by either the Executive Dean or Deputy Dean (Research)
- The Executive Dean should approve the selection panel

#### ASR posts Grade 11

In addition to the above:

- The Vice-Chancellor, or their delegate, will Chair and approve the selection panel.

**ASR posts at Grade 9 and above:**

- The shortlist should be approved by the Executive Dean

## Criteria for Assessing Outputs and Starred Quality Level Definitions

REF assessment criteria and the definitions of the starred levels for the outputs sub-profile<sup>19</sup>.

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

The four main panels have explained in more detail, within their statements on the panel criteria and working methods, how their group of sub-panels will apply the assessment criteria and interpret the level of definitions in developing the sub-profiles<sup>20</sup>

### Criteria and level definitions

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

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

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<sup>19</sup> REF 2021: *Guidance on submissions* (Ref REF 2019/01), January 2019, p. 84, Table A2

<sup>20</sup> REF 2021: *Panel criteria and working methods* (Ref REF 2019/02), January 2019, Section 3, pp. 34-41 and 44-46

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

193. **Rigour** will be understood as the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies.

194. The generic definitions of the starred quality levels in the overall quality profile in each of the three sub-profiles – outputs, impact and environment – are in Annex A of ‘Guidance on submissions’. The panels would like to emphasise that ‘world-leading’, ‘internationally’ and ‘nationally’ in this context refer to quality standards. They do not refer to the nature or geographical scope of particular subjects, nor to the locus of research, nor its place of dissemination.

195. The main panels have set out below a descriptive account of the starred level definitions for outputs, as they apply in each main panel. These are provided to inform their subject communities about how the panels will apply the definitions in making their judgements. Variations in terminology reflect disciplinary norms but do not indicate a difference in the quality standards themselves. These descriptive accounts should be read alongside, but do not replace, the generic definitions.

#### Interdisciplinary research

196. Interdisciplinary outputs will be assessed against the generic criteria of originality, significance and rigour. In assessing interdisciplinary outputs, the sub-panels will make use of guidance provided by the Interdisciplinary Research Advisory Panel (IDAP) that originality and significance can be identified in one, some or all of the constituent parts brought together in the work, or in their integration; they do not need to be demonstrated across all contributing areas/fields. This guidance will work in parallel with – rather than replace – the generic criteria of originality, significance and rigour.

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

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

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

- scientific rigour and excellence, with regard to design, method, execution and analysis
- significant addition to knowledge and to the conceptual framework of the field
- actual significance of the research
- the scale, challenge and logistical difficulty posed by the research
- the logical coherence of argument
- contribution to theory-building
- significance of work to advance knowledge, skills, understanding and scholarship in theory, practice, education, management and/or policy

- applicability and significance to the relevant service users and research users
- potential applicability for policy in, for example, health, healthcare, public health, food security, animal health or welfare.

199. Unless there is sufficient evidence of at least one of the above, or the definition of research used for the REF is not met, research outputs will be graded as 'unclassified'.

200. The sub-panels welcome research practice that supports reproducible science and the application of best practice. Examples include registered reports, pre-registration, publication of data sets, experimental materials, analytic code, and use of reporting checklists for publication purposes and those relating to the use of animals in research. These contribute to the evaluation of rigour for submitted outputs. Replication studies may be submitted as outputs and will be evaluated on the extent to which they contribute significant new knowledge, improved methods, or advance theory or practice<sup>21</sup>.

201. The sub-panels will use citation information, where appropriate and available, as part of the indication of academic significance to inform their assessment of output quality. Further details on the use of citation data are provided in paragraphs 274 to 276.

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

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

- a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:
  - agenda-setting
  - research that is leading or at the forefront of the research area
  - great novelty in developing new thinking, new techniques or novel results
  - major influence on a research theme or field
  - developing new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research
  - major changes in policy or practice
  - major influence on processes, production and management

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<sup>21</sup> Institutions may find it useful to refer to international guidelines such as the following:

ARRIVE	<a href="https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines">https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines</a>
CONSORT	<a href="http://www.consort-statement.org/">http://www.consort-statement.org/</a>
PRISMA	<a href="http://www.prisma-statement.org/">http://www.prisma-statement.org/</a>
COPE	<a href="http://publicationethics.org/">http://publicationethics.org/</a>
ICMJE	<a href="http://www.icmje.org/">http://www.icmje.org/</a>
ITHENTICATE	<a href="http://www.ithenticate.com/">http://www.ithenticate.com/</a>

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

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

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



- a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- outstandingly novel in developing concepts, paradigms, techniques or outcomes
  - a primary or essential point of reference
  - a formative influence on the intellectual agenda
  - application of exceptionally rigorous research design and techniques of investigation and analysis
  - generation of an exceptionally significant data set or research resource.
- b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- novel in developing concepts, paradigms, techniques or outcomes
  - an important point of reference
  - contributing very important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence on the intellectual agenda
  - application of robust and appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis
  - generation of a substantial data set or research resource.
- c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- providing important knowledge and the application of such knowledge
  - contributing to incremental and cumulative advances in knowledge
  - thorough and professional application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.
- d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see some of the following characteristics:
- providing useful knowledge, but unlikely to have more than a minor influence
  - an identifiable contribution to understanding, but largely framed by existing paradigms or traditions of enquiry
  - competent application of appropriate research design and techniques of investigation and analysis.
- e. Research will be graded as '**unclassified**' if it falls below the quality levels described above or does not meet the definition of research used for the

**Main Panel D supplementary criteria – level definitions****Interpretation of generic level definitions**

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

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

- a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:
  - a primary or essential point of reference
  - of profound influence
  - instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
  - a major expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
  - outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative.
- b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:
  - an important point of reference
  - of considerable influence
  - a catalyst for, or important contribution to, new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
  - a significant expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
  - significantly novel or innovative or creative.
- c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised

internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:

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

## Output types

206. The main panels welcome all forms of research output that fulfil the eligibility criteria for the REF (set out in Part 3, Section 2 of 'Guidance on submissions'). All forms of output, in any language, will be considered equitably, with no distinction being made between the type of research or form of output submitted. The sub-panels will neither advantage nor disadvantage any type of research or form of output. The main panels encourage submitting institutions to refer to the glossary of output types for information on the categories under which outputs may be submitted for assessment (see 'Guidance on submissions', Annex K).

207. No sub-panel will use journal impact factors or any hierarchy of journals in their assessment of outputs. No output will be privileged or disadvantaged on the basis of the publisher, where it is published or the medium of its publication.

208. Reviews, textbooks and edited works (including editions of texts) and translations may be included if they embody research as defined in 'Guidance on submissions', Annex C. Editorships of journals and other activities associated with the dissemination of research findings should not be listed as an output on REF2.

209. Each submitted output needs to have a single classification selected from the list of eligible output types (see 'Guidance on submissions', Annex K). The purpose of the classification is to assist in the management of the collection and distribution of

outputs, the allocation of outputs to expert reviewers, and a post-submission analysis of types of outputs submitted. The sub-panel will assess the research content of the material submitted regardless of the classification.

#### **Main Panel D supplementary criteria – output types**

210. It is not unusual for an output submitted to the sub-panels in Main Panel D to encompass a number of different output types, such as a ‘design’ output which includes a journal article and a patent application; or an ‘artefact’ or prototype that has been the subject of an exhibition; or a data set or database which includes critical insight or analysis; or a ‘composition’ that has also been a performance or recording; or an exhibition where the research may be curatorial (or involve or support co-curation) and/or evident in the development of the interpretative strategy, exhibition text/narrative or catalogue. Submitting institutions should select a single output type, and the panel will judge the research content of the material submitted regardless of the classification.

211. An additional classification of ‘Translation’ has been added to the list of output types, for the submission of works of translation of literary or scholarly texts or other cultural documents that constitute original, significant and rigorous research. Translations that meet the definition of research will often exhibit a deep insight into the source material, while drawing on and reflecting specialist knowledge of its historical, political, social and cultural contexts, and will also rely on a detailed engagement with style in both the source and target languages. Research may, as a result, be reflected in the critical apparatus associated with a translated text but will also be inherent in the translation process itself. Such outputs will often contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines. They may demonstrate research practice that is critical and/or creative, and may also serve as substantial interventions in intellectual and cultural life in their own right.

212. It is also anticipated that commentaries will be submitted, if they embody research as defined for the purposes of REF. Like some translations, commentaries often include research that encompasses work with original manuscripts, textual criticism, the historical, political, social and cultural context of a text, its history of reception and influence, and issues in its contemporary interpretation. Commentaries should be submitted under the “output type” (listed in ‘Guidance on submissions’, Annex K) which fits their form of publication, most commonly “authored book”.

213. For indicative guidance on what material to include in the submission, please refer to the table of output types in Annex C and the summary of ‘Additional Information’ in Annex B.

## **Double-weighted outputs**

237. The main and sub-panels recognise that there will be cases where the scale of academic investment in the research activity and/or the intellectual scope of the research output is considerable. The main and sub-panels want to recognise and double-weight such outputs in the assessment, so that they will count as two outputs both in a submission and in the calculation of the outputs sub-profile. The main panels have set out below their expectations in relation to receiving requests for double-weighting.

241. Sub-panels will assess the claim for double-weighting separately from assessing the quality of the output, and there is no presumption that double-weighted outputs will be assessed at higher-quality grades. When assessing claims for double-weighting, the sub-panel will not privilege or disadvantage any particular form of research or type of output.

### **Main Panels A and B supplementary criteria – double-weighting**

242. The sub-panels anticipate that they will double-weight outputs only where they derive from substantial academic endeavour by the member of staff against whom the output is listed in the submission. Such endeavour might be understood in terms of (but is not limited to) the ambition of the project.

243. Considering the patterns of publication across Main Panel A and B's areas of activity, the sub-panels expect that such requests will occur only exceptionally. In particular, the sub-panels anticipate that outputs published as journal articles and conference papers will not normally embody work of this nature, and they therefore do not normally expect to receive requests for double-weighting these types of outputs.

### **Main Panels C and D supplementary criteria – double-weighting**

244. The sub-panels strongly encourage submission of outputs of extended scale and scope for consideration as double-weighted outputs.

245. The submission of a statement to evidence the claim for double-weighting is required and should briefly outline the reasons for the request, addressing the characteristics below.

246. The sub-panels in Main Panels C and D have identified the following characteristics which might apply (individually or in combination) to the research effort associated with a double-weighted output:

- the production of a longer-form output (e.g. book, long-duration creative work or multi-component output) demonstrating sustained research effort

- the generation of an extended or complex piece of research
- the collection and analysis of a large body of material
- the use of primary sources which were extended, complex or difficult to access
- the presentation of a critical insight or argument which was dependent upon the completion of a lengthy period of data collection or investigation of materials
- the undertaking of a complex, extended and/or multi-layered process of creative investigation (individual or collective)
- the investigation of a given theme in considerable depth, from different perspectives, and/or in relation to different contexts.

It is recognised that in some instances the characteristics listed in paragraph 246 may apply to short-form outputs such as journal articles, book chapters and short-duration creative work and justify the double-weighting of such items.

247. It is expected that most books, monographs, novels or longer-form outputs warrant double-weighting, although claims will not automatically be accepted.

## The Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University of Essex

### Research Metrics

1. The use of metrics has been expanding and publication and citation metrics are widely used as an indicator of research quality by league tables, funders, and increasingly employers.
2. These metrics are likely to grow in presence, use and exposure. It is therefore important to understand the range of indicators that are available, and their strengths and weaknesses. Metrics can refer to research outputs in journals (e.g. impact factor of journal), to groups of researchers (e.g. citations for a department or the university as a whole), or directly to research performance by individuals (e.g. h-index, numbers of citations). Available metrics could thus be used in evaluations of the performance of individuals or groups.
3. A number of important international and national initiatives have sought to define principles and fair practice around the responsible use of metrics by research organisations. These include:
  - i. The Leiden Manifesto (2015)<sup>22</sup>;
  - ii. The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) (2013)<sup>23</sup>;
  - iii. The UK Metric Tide report (2015)<sup>24</sup>;
  - iv. The establishment of the UK Forum for the Responsible Research Metrics, and recent progress report (2018)<sup>25</sup>;
4. The UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics (FFRRM) was established in September 2016 as a partnership between HEFCE, Research Councils UK, the Wellcome Trust, Universities UK and Jisc. Under the umbrella now of UUK, it focuses on four activities:
  - i. Advice to the higher education funding bodies on quantitative indicators in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021;
  - ii. Advice on, and work to improve, the data infrastructure that underpins metric use;
  - iii. Advocacy and leadership on the use of research metrics responsibly;
  - iv. International engagement on the use of metrics in research and researcher assessment.
5. Five principles on responsible use of metrics have been highlighted:
  - i. **Robustness**: basing metrics on the best possible data in terms of accuracy and scope;

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<sup>22</sup> Leiden Manifesto: <http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>; also Dicks D et al. 2015. The Leiden manifesto for research metrics. *Nature* 520, 429-31

<sup>23</sup> Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA): <http://www.ascb.org/dora/>

<sup>24</sup> The Metric Tide: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/metrictide/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/research-policy/open-science/Pages/forum-for-responsible-research-metrics.aspx>

- ii. *Humility*: recognising that quantitative evaluation should support, but not supplant, qualitative, expert assessment;
- iii. *Transparency*: that those being evaluated can test and verify the results;
- iv. *Diversity*: accounting for variation by research field, and using a range of indicators to reflect and support a plurality of research and researcher career paths across the system;
- v. *Reflexivity*: recognising and anticipating the systemic and potential effects of indicators, and updating them in response.

### **The University of Essex Context**

- 6. As research metric indicators become more widely available, it will be important for the University to provide clarity over their use in evaluating internal performance, particularly for the annual reviews of performance that contribute to decisions on awarding permanency and promotion, for annual performance rewards (increments and bonuses), and at the point of recruitment of new academic staff.
- 7. Research metrics are an option to be used in a variety of internal contexts:
  - a. During academic staff recruitment;
  - b. In allocation of workloads and resource funds;
  - c. In selecting partnerships;
  - d. In staff performance reviews;
  - e. During assessment of cases for permanency and promotion;
  - f. In departmental reviews;
  - g. In strategic planning;
  - h. During REF preparation and/or submission;
  - i. As key performance indicators;
  - j. In benchmarking against comparator institutions.
- 8. We should recognise that that metric and citation indicators are both influenced and biased by several factors external to the quality of the research output:
  - *Length of time since publication*: citations take time to accrue, and vary across disciplines. As citations can accrue over time, the census date of any citation metric will influence the score;
  - *Research output*: review papers in certain disciplines generally attract more citations than non-review papers;
  - *Discipline*: subject normalisation helps benchmark against similar disciplines elsewhere, but does not work perfectly (there are also significant differences within disciplines);
  - *Gender*: evidence shows that women accrue fewer citations than men<sup>26</sup>;
  - *Career stage*: the Matthew effect of accumulated advantage shows that the more citations an individual has, the more they will accrue;
  - *Research type*: in some disciplines, applied research attracts fewer citations than pure research, in others more;

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<sup>26</sup> See Symonds et al. (2006). Gender differences in publication output: towards an unbiased metric of research performance. *PLoS ONE* 1(1) 1–5



- *Data source*: an h-index calculated in Google Scholar is usually higher than one calculated using Web of Science, SciVal or Mendeley because of the wider range of outputs measured by Google Scholar (such as books and reports), and depending on whether the outputs is open access or not.
9. We are committed to using metric indicators responsibly and sensibly. We have used the ten principles of the Leiden Manifesto to guide to produce eight principles

### **Eight Statements to Guide the Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University of Essex**

*i. Quantitative evaluation should support existing expert assessment processes*

Although we recognise the value of indicators to support qualitative, expert peer review and that these are used in a variety of processes, including recruitment, probation, reward, promotion, development appraisal and performance review, we will not base judgements solely on metric indicators. These indicators will be used in conjunction with expert assessment of both research outputs and the context in which they sit.

*ii. Measure performance against the research missions of the institution, group or researcher*

We are committed to deliver research of the highest quality and the visibility of our research is critical to maximising its impact. To this end, publicly-available indicators around the quality of the outlet (journal or conference), collaboration levels and citations of outputs are helpful in monitoring progress against these strategy themes. But we will not depend solely on these metrics to make judgements on individuals.

*iii. Keep data collection and analytical processes open, transparent and simple*

Good practice suggests that departments or schools should select the indicators used to support evaluation of their publication performance at the individual and collective levels. Indicators selected would then be used consistently across all areas of research performance monitoring and would reflect differences between disciplines.

*iv. Allow those evaluated to verify data and analysis*

The publication and citation tools used to collect and monitor research publication data will continue to be made openly available. Academics will be able to see the data relating to themselves, and to make corrections and comment on where necessary. Staff managing publication systems will also endeavour to ensure that data are as accurate and robust as possible and that the quality of the input has been verified.

*v. Account for variation by field in publication and citation practices*

It is recognised that research practices in disciplines vary widely and bibliometric indicators serve some disciplines better than others. In line with best practice, indicators will be normalized wherever appropriate and based on percentiles rather than averages where a single outlier can skew the numbers. The availability or otherwise of bibliometric data will not drive our decision making about research activities and priorities, either individually or collectively.

*vi. Protect excellence in locally relevant research*

It is recognised that most citation counting tools are inherently biased towards English-language publications. It is important that academics producing work

in languages other than English are not penalised for this, as well as those with a focus on local or regional research within countries.

vii. ***Base assessment of individual researchers on a qualitative judgement of their portfolio***

Indicators are affected by career stage, gender and discipline and we will ensure that we take these factors into account to avoid bias in our judgements when interpreting metrics. It is also recognised that academics undertake a wide range of research communication activities, not all of which can be easily measured or benchmarked. When assessing the performance of individuals, consideration will be given to as wide a view of their expertise, experience, activities and influence as possible.

Where possible, we will commit to using multiple indicators to provide a more robust and wide-ranging picture. Indicators will avoid false precision; for example, metrics could be published to several decimal places but, given the limitations of citation counts, it makes no sense to distinguish between entities on the basis of such small differences.

viii. ***Recognize the systemic effects of assessment and indicators and scrutinise regularly***

As the research activity in the university and in the external environment develops, the research indicators we use should be revisited and revised where appropriate.

10. Senate approved the guidelines and the proposal to sign The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) (2013).

**Approved by Senate on 1 May 2019**

## Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances template

This document is being sent to all Category A staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see '[Guidance on submissions](#)', paragraphs 117-122). As part of the University's commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, we have put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020), and particularly their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as staff not affected by circumstances. The purpose of collecting this information is threefold:

- To 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 absence from research due to equality-related circumstances
  - two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
- 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. For the University of Essex, this will be both for the REF 2021 and for the University's own Research Strategy deadline requirements. This is to avoid inviting staff to submit a declaration twice.
- To establish whether there are any Units of Assessment where the proportion of declared circumstances is sufficiently high to warrant a request to the higher education funding bodies for a reduced required number of outputs to be submitted.

### Applicable circumstances

- Qualifying as an ECR (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016)
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Disability (including chronic conditions)
- Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of the standard allowances
- Caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the following circumstances, you are requested to complete the attached form. Further information can be found paragraph 160 of the [Guidance on Submissions \(REF 2019/01\)](#). Completion and return of the form is voluntary, and individuals who do not choose to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information if they do not wish to do so. This form is the only

means by which the University will be gathering this information; we will not be consulting HR records, contract start dates, etc. You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the associated information.

### **Ensuring Confidentiality**

Within the institution, the information that you provide will be seen by the REF 2021 Individual Staff Circumstances Committee, the membership of which is Professor Christine Raines, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), TBA, an independent academic member, Sarah Manning-Press, Research Governance and Planning Manager, and Karen Bush, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

If the University decides to apply to the funding bodies for either form of reduction of outputs (removal of 'minimum of one' requirement or unit circumstances), we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the '[Guidance on submissions](#)' document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted.

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

### **Notification of outcome of declaration**

The acknowledgement of receipt of any declarations will include the date on which it will be reviewed by the Individual Staff Circumstances Committee. Notification of the outcome of any declaration will be sent to the individual making the declaration within 10 working days of the review meeting.

### **Changes in circumstances**

The University recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the census date (31 July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should contact Sarah Manning-Press ([sarahm@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sarahm@essex.ac.uk)) to provide the updated information.

To submit this form you should send it as an e-mail attachment to [sarahm@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sarahm@essex.ac.uk) by xx October 2019.

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

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

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

Yes

No

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

Circumstance	Time period affected
<p><b>Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).</b></p> <p><i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter a date.</p>
<p><b>Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.</b></p> <p>Dates and durations in months.</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 maternity leave</li> <li>• statutory adoption leave</li> <li>• Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more.</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>Disability (including chronic conditions)</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>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>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>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<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>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<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>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

**Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement.**

*To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.*

Click here to enter text.

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

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

I agree

**Name:** Print name here

**Signed:** Sign or initial here

**Date:** Insert date here

I give my permission for a member of the HR Employee Relations Team to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements in relation to this declaration.

I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to the relevant contact within my department. (Please note, if you do not give permission your department may be unable to adjust expectations and put in place appropriate support for you).

I would like to be contacted by:

Email  Insert email address

Phone  Insert contact telephone number