

AECC University College Code of Practice for the Identification of staff and selection of outputs for REF 2021

Version 4

4th November 2019

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and aims of the Code of Practice

The AECC University College is a small Higher Education Institution constituting three Schools and a total of 42.46 FTE academic staff. This is the first time the institution has participated in a Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise.

The institution has recently embarked on a substantial refocussing of research activity including strategies to build capacity guided by the creation and implementation of an institution wide research strategy. This strategy centres around building a strengthened research culture and includes the initiation of new research centres to act as a focus and support for emerging and established areas of research, the creation of new research pathways for categorisation and time support of research active or research aspirational academic staff and the exploration of validation by an external partner of an institutional PhD/Professional Doctorate programme.

We have developed this Code of Practice based on the guidance provided by REF 2021 'Guidance of Codes of Practice' published in January 2019. This document outlines our processes and policies underpinning the fair and transparent identification of staff with significant research responsibility, determination of independent researcher status and selection of outputs. These processes and policies ensure that as an institution we promote and respect equality and diversity, comply with relevant legislation, and avoid discrimination when preparing our submission to REF2021.

1.2. Code of Practice Principles

The AECC University College Code of Practice demonstrates fairness to academic staff, by adhering to the four principles as laid out in the *REF 2019/03 Guidance on codes of practice*:

- **Transparency** - all processes are transparent; documents are made available and communication with staff allows participation and feedback.
- **Consistency** - principles governing the process and application of the code are consistent across the institution.
- **Accountability** - clearly define responsibilities for individuals and committees/groups.
- **Inclusivity** - process promotes inclusivity in identification of staff and output.

1.3. Institutional policies and legislative context

Both as employer and as a public body, AECC University College will ensure that our REF procedures do not discriminate unlawfully against, or harass or victimise individuals because of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, because they are pregnant or have recently given birth or are employed on a full or part time contract.

All employees whether on full time, part time, permanent or fixed contracts as well as students at the institution are expected to act in accordance with the institutional

expectations of equality and diversity as laid out in the institution's Dignity, Diversity and Equality policy compliant with the Equality Act 2010 (**Appendix A**). The selection of staff for the purposes of the REF 2021 will be carried out using the same expectations and considerations in accordance with institutional policy and relevant legislation.

1.4. Development of Code of Practice

This COP has been developed by the institutional *REF Working Group* whose membership and terms of reference can be found in **Appendix B**. The *REF Working Group* first convened on the 30th April 2018 and originally consisted of the Director of Research, a Head of School the Executive Director of Academic Affairs, a lead researcher and the two initially identified Unit of Assessment Leads. A second meeting was held shortly after in June 2018.

On initial discussion, the membership was expanded to fully represent the appropriate skills and experience where possible that would underpin the institution's first REF submission. Individuals selected for the *REF Working Group* have insight and involvement with management of the institution's schools, learning and library services, executive functions and Unit of Assessment submissions. This group is responsible for the planning, writing and oversight of the institution's REF processes and policies. The final membership and Terms of Reference were agreed by this group early in 2019.

The institutional COP will be applied consistently to all academic staff on research only and research and teaching contracts as defined by returned HESA codes in 2019. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted in the development of this COP to inform processes and approaches in selection of staff and will be repeated after the implementation of this COP during selection of staff with significant research responsibility. (**Appendix C**)

To ensure accountability at an institutional level the modified final draft was submitted to the institutional Research and Staff Development Committee for approval on the 6th March 2019. Minutes from this committee were subsequently discussed and noted at the institutional Academic Board on 20th March 2019.

The AECC University College is committed to transparency throughout the development of our REF procedures and documentation. The *REF Working Group* conducted a programme of communication with academic staff, disseminating the Code of Practice, allowing for staff participation, feedback, and overall agreement over the policies and procedures. **Appendix D** provides a timeline of the communication, development, and staff agreement of the COP.

- Late in 2018 a staff presentation on selection for REF and the introduction of our COP in a Staff Development event allowed initial feedback. This was followed up with email and further opportunity for feedback.
- A description of processes outlined in the draft COP were presented in early in 2019 during two academic staff presentations convened specifically for the purposes of REF. The Director of Research disseminated ideas and consulted with academic staff on the processes regarding identifying staff with significant research responsibility, determining research independence and selection of outputs for submission as laid out in sections 2.0 and 3.0.
- All academic staff, including those absent from work or on sabbatical were sent a draft version of the COP to the correspondents e mail address.

- Academic staff were encouraged to feedback via email or directly to the Director of Research on the proposed procedures.
- A member of the REF Working Group (Director of Research) was available to field any queries and comments throughout this time period.
- The final REF approved Code of Practice will be sent out via our internal newsletter, the Parkwood Post, and published on the institutional external website through the Research pages <https://www.aecc.ac.uk/research>. The final document will be available on the institutions Staff Information drive available to all faculty and staff.

2. Identifying Staff with Significant Research Responsibility and Research Independence

2.1. Policies and procedures

2.1.1. Workload Model Research Pathways

Academic staff eligible for REF submission are employed on research only or research and teaching contracts as submitted to HESA in 2019. These are distributed between full-time or part-time and include permanent and fixed term contracts.

The AECC University College workload model allows the assigning of hours for different activities within an academic's workflow. A workload model identifies those activities normally undertaken by members of academic staff and agrees a time allocation to each activity. This allows academic staff, the schools, and AECC University College to construct a clear and comprehensive picture of academic staff tasks and roles, and how much time they are allocated for the expected tasks. It covers all members of academic staff, activities, and work-related time.

Within the AECC University College workload model, there are two broad categories of research activity, *Research Responsibility* (RR) and *Developing Research Responsibility* (DRR). The *Research Responsibility* pathway is for academic staff engaged in independent research activity, including the planning, delivery, and dissemination of research. The *Developing Research Responsibility* pathway supports staff who wish to engage in research activity, as part of our ongoing strategy to build research capacity. Both pathways include time allocation and an expectation of research productivity as defined by broad expectation criteria.

2.1.2. Criteria for decision making

We defined **Category A eligible staff** as per *REF 2019 Guidance on Submissions* as staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater on research only or teaching and research contracts. Selection of **Category A submitted** academic staff on teaching and research contracts with significant research responsibility will be made on the following basis:

- a) Research as expectation of their job
 - Presently on the named AECC University College career pathway for *Research Responsibility* at time of REF census
- b) Explicit time and resources made available
 - A time allocation of at least 0.2 FTE pro rata for research included in an individual's workload model.
- c) Active engagement in independent research
 - Independent research status

2.1.3. *Process by which decisions are made*

Staff who fulfil the **criteria (a-c) in 2.1.2** will be identified as those with significant research responsibility. For staff on research only contracts only **criteria c** will be used to identify significant research responsibility.

Between June and September 2019 before their individual appraisal dates research interested academic staff will be asked to submit applications for assignment to one of the two AECC University College research pathways in conjunction with their annual appraisal document. This application will be on a specific section of the annual appraisal documents which allows for detailed indications of research aspirations, activity and productivity to be documented by the applicant. This also allows the applicant to describe their perceived independent research status. (See **Appendix E**).

During the appraisal process appraisers, in discussion with staff and considering workload context and commitments, will determine eligibility for designation to one of the two pathways, *Research Responsibility* or *Developing Research Responsibility*. Assignment to the *Research Responsibility* pathway will include 0.2 FTE pro rata research time allocation in the institution's workload model.

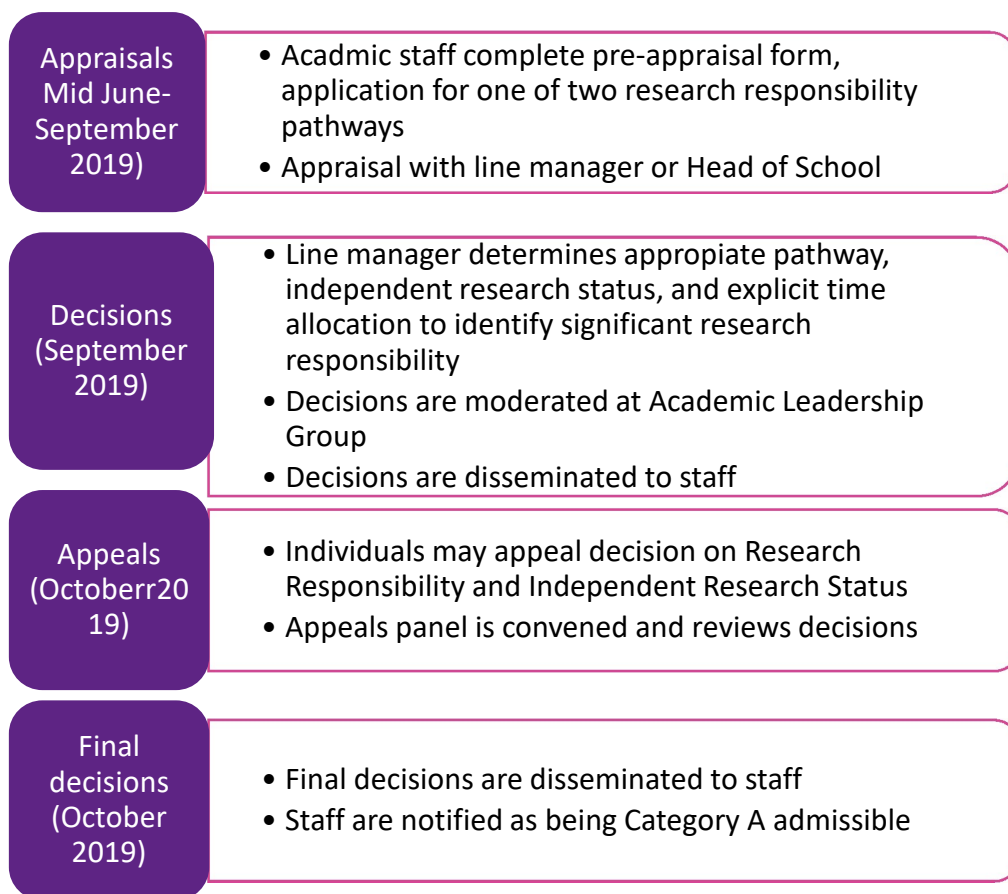
Appraisers will also discuss and determine research independence using the following broad criteria

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

To ensure consistency of application and interpretation of the above criteria, the resultant assignment of individuals on research pathways during the appraisal process will subsequently be discussed under a specific agenda item during the first Academic Leadership Group meeting following annual appraisals. This is to ensure inclusivity and consistency in the use of criteria in assignment of research pathways, time allocation, and independent researcher status.

Appeals and equality impact assessment for this process is documented under sections 2.4 and 2.5

Figure 1 – Selection of staff on teaching and research contracts



2.1.4. *Timescales for delivering decisions and feedback*

Applications for designation to research pathways will be sought from academic staff prior to their annual appraisal which takes place annually between June and September within the institution. Decisions are subject to approval by Heads of Schools at the Academic Leadership Group, at the end of the appraisal period in any academic year. Appeals against the categorisation by line managers concerning Research Responsibility pathway or research independent status can be pursued as laid out in section 2.4. Staff who are designated Category A admissible will be informed of their submission into REF and informed of how their personal data will be used (**Figure 1** and **Appendix F**).

2.2. Development of Processes

2.2.1. *General*

Historically the AECC University College has utilised an individual rather than an institution wide approach to supporting research including the provision of resources to support such activity. However, to date no formal institution wide policy for providing clear research-oriented career pathways has been developed.

Around mid-2018 and in conjunction with the development of an institutional Research Strategy a working group was convened to explore the development of research capacity in the institution how a new workload model approach should identify both existing research active staff and those that may aspire to such activity in the future. This resulted in the workload model research pathways described in 2.1.1.

2.2.2. *Staff dissemination and agreement*

The determination of significant research responsibility is intimately tied to the workload model research pathways. The AECC University College is a small institution and academic staff are not represented by a union. Therefore, the draft processes for research pathways and the method by which they are used to determine significant research responsibility were presented to academic staff in December 2018 with opportunities for feedback. In addition, all academic staff were sent the presentation as an email follow up and encouraged to provide feedback and comments. Further presentations and opportunities to feedback were initiated in early 2019 and consultation and feedback sought alongside communication of the processes laid out in the COP (see Section 1.5). Accountability and transparency were ensured through approval of the COP at the institutional Research and Staff Development Committee and thence its parent committee, the institutional Academic Board both of which include representation from academic staff. Finally, the full document including application forms and guidance were provided to academic staff in April 2019 as part of the annual appraisal process (See **Appendix D** for a timeline on the development and communication process). A letter confirming agreement on behalf of academic staff for this process at the institutional level is found in **Appendix G**.

2.3. Staff Committees and Training

2.3.1. *Training of staff involved in selection of significant research responsibility/research independence*

All staff with decision making responsibility of selecting staff for significant research responsibility and determination of research independence during the appraisal process, have a mandatory requirement to complete institutional equality and diversity training on an annual basis. They will also be required to undertake REF specific equality and diversity training. This includes all appraisers including academic line managers, Head of Schools, and some programme leaders. Additionally, staff sitting on the Researcher Responsibility Appeals Panel (see Section 2.4) will be required to undertake training.

2.3.2. *Training delivery*

A staff member who has undertaken equality and diversity training delivered by AdvanceHE, will carry out the training. The training ensures staff are aware of their role and its relationship to the AECC University College REF submission. It introduces staff to equality and diversity as it relates to REF, highlighting developments in equality law and the protected characteristics considered in the REF. The training includes unconscious bias and how this might play out in REF decisions. The training aims to embed equality and mitigate bias in REF process, including determining significant responsibility for research and independent research status. The training also aims to raise awareness of the different types of staff circumstances, how to assess personal circumstances, and creating a culture and process supportive of disclosure of personal circumstances and calculating reductions.

An overview of Training can be seen in **Appendix H**.

2.4. Appeals

All staff will be informed of the appraiser's decision based on the appraisal by October 2019. Staff applying for but not selected onto the *Research Responsibility* pathway or not determined as *Research Independent* will be able to appeal by submitting a *Research Responsibility and Independent Research Status Appeals Form* (See **Appendix I**) within 10 working days of this decision to the *Research Responsibility and Independence Appeals Panel*. Panel membership and terms of reference can be found in **Appendix J**.

Appeals will only be considered on the grounds of one of the following:

- There has been a material irregularity or significant procedural error during the appraisal process regarding designation for research responsibility/independence.
- The decision on research responsibility/independence was not conducted in accordance with guidelines as laid out in the COP.
- There is evidence of bias, or prejudice by the appraiser which affected the decision.

Appeals will be reviewed by this panel considering confidentially and in accordance with the committees Terms of Reference as laid out in **Appendix J**. The institution's human resources department will normally convene this panel within 10 working days of a request.

2.4.1. *Decisions*

Final decisions regarding appeals will be sent in writing to the individuals concerned by end of October 2019.

2.4.2. *Communication to staff*

The appeals process was previously disseminated to staff through the processes already outlined as part of the COP consultation in section 1.5. Additionally, staff will receive information regarding appeals during their application.

2.5. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

An initial EIA was carried out before implementation of the COP on those academic staff identified by Heads of Schools and Director of Research to be currently research active at this early stage in order to inform the development of the COP. This exercise assessed protected characteristics in order to identify any significant differences between Category A eligible and non-eligible academic staff.

The outcome of this exercise demonstrated there were no substantive differences between Category A eligible and potential Category A submissible staff (as identified by Heads of Schools and Director of Research) in terms of protected characteristics and resulted in fair equity (**Appendix C**). Additionally, the exercise demonstrated that a proportion of characteristics were unknown due to less than full completion of the HR survey. The institution will review where additional support can be given to increase completion rates.

Further EIA exercises will be carried out post submission and implementation of the COP in November 2019 on the final list of Cat A submissible staff, post the compilation of staff outputs in March 2020 and a fourth and final exercise in July 2020 after an external mock REF exercise reviewing all three elements of REF outputs. See Timeline in **Appendix D**.

3. Selection of Outputs

3.1. Policies and procedures

3.1.1. *Output from current academic staff*

Current academic staff identified as fulfilling the criteria for significant research responsibility outlined in Section 2 will be assessed for fit to an appropriate Unit of Assessment by the *Unit of Assessment Group* in November 2019 (**Appendix K**).

Following this, these individuals will be asked to submit up to 5 outputs generated in the period 1st Jan 2014 to 31 August 2020 to the Unit of Assessment Lead via email by the 14th November 2019. Individuals will be asked to judge their '*best*' papers on self-perceived quality based on the following broad criteria, taken from the *REF 2019 Guidance on Submissions*:

- 1* *Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.*
- 2* *Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.*
- 3* *Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.*
- 4* *Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.*

These outputs must have been available on the AECC University College *Open Access and Institutional Repository (OAIR)* (<https://libguides.aecc.ac.uk/OAIR>) from 1 April 2018 and should have been deposited as soon after the point of acceptance as possible, and no later than three months after this date. The exception to this are those published before the institutional repository was in place (pre-April 2018 ¹). Guidance on submissions and ranking can be found in **Appendix L and Appendix M**.

These submissions will be assessed by the *Unit of Assessment Group* using the same criteria as above, in conjunction with the total output for each Category A admissible staff member to determine appropriate quality and volume for each submission in accordance with perceived Unit of Assessment needs. Each individual's outputs will be independently assessed independently by four members of academic staff comprising the Unit of Assessment lead, Director of Research and 2 academic staff who have prior experience of REF submissions and quality assessment. Any substantive differences in assessment of quality will be resolved by discussion within this assessment group.

Benchmarking of this process will be carried out by an independent assessor external to the institution for the outputs generated by this process. Where there is substantive disagreement between the internal and external process the external ranking will take precedence. Feedback on submissions to Category A admissible staff will take place via the Unit of Assessment leads for Unit of Assessments submitted to ensure inclusivity and transparency.

3.1.2. *Output from former academic staff*

Members of staff leaving or made redundant between selection for significant responsibility for research and the census date will be assessed for fit to the appropriate unit of assessment by the Unit of Assessment Group. Following this the Unit of Assessment lead will identify 5 outputs for the staff member, generated in the period 1st January 2014 to 31st of August 2020. As per section 3.1.1 these outputs will be selected based on their perceived quality and must be available of the AECC University College *Open Access and Institutional Repository* (OAIR). These submissions will be assessed by the *Unit of Assessment Group* as set out in section 3.1.1 for current academic staff.

1. *Given the AECC University College only determined to enter REF in early to mid-2018 and have only had an OAIR since April 2018, staff were unable to be compliant before that date. Pre-April 2018 outputs have been added retrospectively.*

3.2. Development of processes

This process was developed by the *Unit of Assessment Group* in consultation with Staff as part of the overarching consultation process for the COP as a whole (See **Section 1.5**).

3.3. Staff Committees and training

3.3.1. *Unit of Assessment Group*

The Unit of Assessment Group will consist of the Principal, Director of Research, Unit of Assessment leads, one other Unit of Assessment representative and Head of School responsible for the Unit of Assessment selected by the institution. Ongoing detailed planning will be managed by a smaller subgroup consisting of the Director of Research and Unit of Assessment leads while more overarching decisions and guidance will envisage convening the larger membership. This group will be responsible for finalising Outputs, Environmental Statements and Impact Case Studies for the selected Unit of Assessment. Membership and Terms of Reference can be found in **Appendix K**.

3.3.2. *Unit of Assessment Group Training*

Members of the Unit of Assessment Group will receive training in Equality and Diversity as per **section 2.3.2**.

3.4. Disclosure of individual circumstances

3.4.1. *Background*

Changes from REF 2014 exercise have decoupled research output from selection of staff (*REF 2021 Guidelines on Submissions, Jan 2019*). This new process provides flexibility in the

submission of outputs for Unit of Assessments. However, there are diverse reasons why a researcher may have fewer or more outputs.

AECC University College is committed to promoting equality and diversity in research careers and recognises the effect that individual circumstances may have on research productivity. As individual staff are best placed to consider whether equality-related circumstances have affected their productivity over the REF assessment period (1st January 2014-31st August 2020), the AECC University College has developed a process to enable Category A admissible staff to voluntarily declare any individual circumstances that may have impacted research productivity and have those circumstances considered for a reduction in outputs. Any circumstances already known to the institution will not be included unless staff have voluntarily declared this for REF purposes, and staff will not be asked to declare their circumstances where they do not wish to do so.

3.4.2. *Criteria for permitted reduction in outputs*

The AECC University College recognises a number of circumstances, either in isolation or combined, that may significantly constrain staff to produce research outputs. In order to provide clarity and consistency on any reduction of outputs without penalty for REF2021, a differentiation has been made between clearly defined circumstances and complex circumstances.

Clearly defined circumstances which lead to a reduction in outputs are:

1. Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher.
2. Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.
3. Qualifying periods of family-related leave:
 - a. Statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the 1st Jan 2014 to 31 August 2020 regardless of the length of the leave.
 - b. Paternity or adoption leave lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1st Jan 2014 to 31 August 2020.

Complex circumstances with an equivalent effect to absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:

- c. Disability.
- d. Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions.
- e. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare.
- f. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
- g. Gender reassignment.

- h. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

3.4.3. *Submission of circumstances by staff*

If a member of staff feels there are individual circumstances that warrant disclosure to support a reduction to zero outputs, they will be able to do this via a *personal circumstances form* (**Appendix N**). However, if staff do not wish to disclose circumstances the AECC University College will not require this. In October 2019 staff will be asked to submit any circumstances that they deem may have affected their output over the REF assessment period. These will be considered by the *Staff Circumstances Panel* (**Appendix O**) who will make a final decision on reduction of outputs for the individual.

If an individual does disclose circumstances, staff will be supported and given the opportunity to discuss this with their line manager. Throughout such a process ongoing support for staff, duty of care, confidentiality, and sensitivity around such disclosed circumstances will be paramount.

2.33 Staff Circumstances Panel: This panel will consider submissions of staff circumstances should they arise concerning output.

The panel will examine the individual circumstance form. If an individual has been unable to produce an eligible output AND either:

- Has an overall period of minimum 46 months' absence from research (due to one or more applicable circumstance set out in Section 4.4.2); or
- Has circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research; or
- Two or more qualifying period of family-related leave.

If the researcher has not been able to produce an eligible output, a member of the staff circumstances panel will support staff to request removal of a minimum of one output.

Additionally, individual circumstances may affect researchers' ability to contribute to the unit's overall output pool. In a case of individual circumstances, the *Staff Circumstances Panel* will calculate the permitted reduction in outputs (see **Appendix P**) and inform the Unit of Assessment lead for the associated unit of the potential eligibility to apply for a reduction, without identifying staff details. Where staff circumstances have disproportionately affected the potential output pool and the Unit of Assessment is unable to meet the required 2.5 outputs per FTE, then the *Staff Circumstances Panel* will request a reduction in the total number of outputs.

3.5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

Three further EIA exercises (as per section 2.5) will be carried during preparation for REF up to submission in 2020. (See timeline in **Appendix D**). These EIA's aim to ensure that identification of staff and selection of outputs is of fair equity across the submitted staff and does not discriminate according to protected characteristics.

4. Appendices

Appendix A: Dignity, Diversity and Equality Policy – Staff and Students

1. General Statement

1.1. The AECC University College is committed to embracing Equality and Diversity throughout all its work with students, staff and the wider community as reflected within its Strategic Plan which states:

AECC University College is committed to developing and maintaining an institution where students from all backgrounds can flourish. AECC University College recognises the importance of equality of opportunity and promoting diversity. AECC University College's equalities and diversity policy covers age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, religious and political beliefs and transgender people, and in the recruitment, selection, training, appraisal, development and promotion of staff, the only consideration must be that the individual meets, or is likely to meet the requirements of the programme or course or post.

Specific objectives include:

- *To provide an admissions service commensurate with the needs of the University College's mission and current UK Government policy*
- *To recruit to our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes a range of high calibre people, in a fair and equitable manner, who would benefit from the educational programmes we offer and who would in turn make a useful contribution to their chosen field of study*
- *To be cognisant of the terms and conditions of the Equality Act 2010, and as far as is reasonably practicable, to recruit in accordance with the terms of the Act*

1.2. The University College is committed to both the elimination of unlawful discrimination and the positive promotion and celebration of Equality and Diversity throughout all aspects of its work. It will achieve this in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the tenets of the Equality Challenge Unit, and the Codes of Practice of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The intention behind the Dignity, Diversity and Equality policy is to provide a further explanation about what this means for staff, students and the wider community. The College will not tolerate unfair or unlawful treatment on the grounds of:

- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- gender, gender expression and identity
- disability
- sexual orientation, civil partnership/marital or parental status
- age
- socio-economic background

- trade union membership activity
 - political belief
- 1.3. AECC University College is committed to a working and learning environment that is free from physical, verbal and non-verbal harassment and bullying of individuals on any grounds. All men and women have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, providing a positive and satisfying learning and working environment.
- 1.4. The University College is proud to be a diverse community made up of staff and students from a wide range of backgrounds. We recognise that individual perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at work or study may vary. The University College aims to create a working and studying environment where different values and beliefs can be freely expressed and openly discussed and will do what it can to encourage open and respectful debate around Equality and Diversity issues.
- 1.5. AECC University College will develop and grow a culture of valuing Dignity, Diversity and Equality of all individuals.

AECC University College will seek to uphold the provision of equality legislation to reflect good sector practise. All staff and students have a duty to comply with this policy and so will need to be aware of their personal obligations in eliminating all forms of what the College considers to be unacceptable behaviour.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. The successful introduction and implementation of the Dignity, Diversity and Equality (DDE) policy requires clear understanding and commitment throughout the University College.
- 2.2. The Executive Director of Administration and the Academic Registrar have overall responsibility for ensuring the consistent application of the DDE policy and the promotion of good practice in relation to Dignity, Diversity and Equality matters. The post holders report back to the Senior Management Group (SMG) and the Human Resources Policy Group as well as to the Academic Planning, Policies and Resources Committee which has student representation.
- 2.3. The University College takes seriously its responsibility to take appropriate disciplinary or legal action to protect staff and students from any discriminatory action or behaviour by any individual or group. Internal allegations of discrimination will be managed under the appropriate student and staff grievance or disciplinary procedures.
- 2.4. All staff and students have a responsibility for ensuring that their conduct is in accordance with the DDE policy. It is recognised that all managers and staff with supervisory responsibilities have additional responsibilities for ensuring that the DDE policy is implemented within their particular area of work.

3. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

- 3.1. The Executive Director of Administration (staff) and Academic Registrar (students) are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the DDE policy. The policy will be reviewed annually by the HR Policy Group and a summary

of work will be reported annually to SMG, the Academic Planning, Policies and Resources Committee and to the Board of Governors through the minutes of the Academic Board.

3.2. Specific implementation and monitoring responsibilities for the DDE policy are also the responsibility of the Board of Governors, the Executive, SMG and the HR Policy Group. These include:

(i) General

- Ensuring that all AECC University College policies, practices and procedures in relation to staff and students reflect the values of Dignity, Diversity and Equality.
- Ensuring that working groups and committees reflect the requirements of the DDE policy.
- Considering and reviewing progress against the DDE policy on a regular basis.

(ii) Students

- Commitment and appropriate action to Dignity, Diversity and Equality in all matters relating to the provision of student education.
- Publication and dissemination of appropriate student data relating to Dignity, Diversity and Equality matters.

(iii) Staff

- Ensuring all Human Resources policies, practices and procedures embody the College's commitment to the principles of Dignity, Diversity and Equality.
- Monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the DDE policy on specific aspects of employment.
- Publication and dissemination of appropriate staff data relating to Dignity, Diversity and Equality.

(iv) Community

- Ensuring that all patients, visitors, contractors, agency staff and members of the public are treated respectfully and them to understand that they must also treat students and staff with respect.
- Publication and dissemination of appropriate information which underpins the University College's commitment of Dignity, Diversity and Equality

3.3. The Executive Director of Administration and the Academic Registrar will be responsible for leading on the gathering and analysing of data relating to prospective and current staff and students. They will also ensure that the University College is complying with statutory duties under existing equality legislation and relevant codes of practice.

4. Awareness and Development (Activities and Events)

- 4.1. In order to embed the principles of Dignity, Diversity and Equality and address the requirements of the DDE policy, appropriate development and support activities are available to staff via the Staff Development Programme. Student support is provided via Diversity and Equality, Student Services, the Students' Union, Chaplaincy and the Counselling Service both at the AECC University College and using the facilities provided by Bournemouth University.
- 4.2. It is also the intention that the University College participates with the Bournemouth University's annual Equality and Diversity festival and other celebratory activities which BU Schools, Professional Services and the Students' Union are expected to contribute towards.

5. Further information

- 5.1. Further information about the support for staff and students can be found on staff portal and student VLE.

6. Action planning and reporting

- 6.1. Action plans will be developed which relate to implementing policy relating to students, staff and the wider community and approval of plans and subsequent reporting will be considered by the HR Policy Group, Senior Management Group, Academic Planning, Policy and Resources, Academic Board and for an annual report to the Board of Governors.
- 6.2. There will be reporting requirements to regulatory bodies and the validating university.

Appendix B: REF Working Group

Membership:

- *Director of Research and REF Institutional Contact (Chair)*
- *Principal*
- *Human Resources Manager*
- *Head of Library and Learning Services*
- *REF Administrator*
- *Unit of Assessment Leads*
- *Heads of Schools*

Terms of Reference

1. To maintain and update institutional knowledge concerning REF2021 guidelines and implementation
2. To guide, inform and support the development of an institutional strategy for REF2021 submission
3. To implement this institutional strategy by:
 - a. Developing and implementing a process that identifies appropriate Units of Assessment and Category A eligible individuals to be included in a REF submission.
 - b. Considering and adhering to legislative expectations regarding the equality act in a transparent, consistent, inclusive and accountable fashion.
 - c. Implementation of processes and procedures for documenting past and future knowledge exchange, evidence of impact and the research environment in order to generate successful impact case studies and environmental impact submissions
 - d. Planning and overseeing an internal and external mock REF exercise.
 - e. Building on ongoing alignment of the REF exercise with the institutional Research Strategy in supporting and guiding increased embedded research capacity and culture in the institution as a whole.
4. To oversee the implementation of an institutional Code of Practice in the selection of Category A admissible staff including training of appropriate staff for these purposes
5. To oversee the maintenance and monitoring of the AECC University College Open Access institutional Repository for research outputs and impact evidence
6. To inform the institutional REF budget holder

Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Impact Assessment examined the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. A summary of the most common characteristics have been provided below. We intend to provide a full breakdown of figures in the REF submission post final identification of staff and selection of outputs.

	Category A eligible (n=57)	Potential Category A submissible staff (n=13)
Age	(28-74) mean=47	(28-74) mean=44
Disability	74% unknown, 25% none	69% unknown, 23% none
Gender reassignment	-	-
Pregnancy and maternity	4%	8%
Race	89% White	92% White
Religion and belief	42% Unknown, 26% No religion	62% Unknown, 38% No religion
Sex	51% Male, 49% Female	46% Male, 54% Female
Sexual orientation	49% Heterosexual, 27% Unknown	54% Heterosexual, 46% unknown

Appendix D: REF Preparation Schedule for AECC University College October 2018- November 2020

Updated 04/06/2019

Event	Committee/Attendees/Aims	Date
Initial REF Working Group Meeting	<i>REF Working Group</i>	30 th April 2018
REF Working Group Meeting	<i>REF Working Group</i>	19 th June 2018
REF Working Group Meeting	<i>REF Working Group</i>	3 rd October 2018
REF 2021 consultation meeting: Medical Research Council, 1 Kemble Street, London, WC2B 4AN	Director of Research (DoR) and Head of Learning Services attend.	5 th October 2018
1 st Staff Assembly	REF Presentation (DoR): All Academic Staff	10 th January 2019
REF Working Group Meeting	<i>REF Working Group</i>	22 nd January 2019
Initial UoA Meeting	<i>Unit of Assessment Group</i> REF : UoA Leads and DoR	30 th Jan 2019
2 nd UoA Meeting	<i>Unit of Assessment Group</i> REF: UoA Leads and DoR	11 th February 2019
2 nd Staff Assembly	COP Presentation (DoR): All Academic Staff	20 th February
COP Briefing by EDAP	REF Administrator	21 st February
REF Working Group Meeting	REF Working Group	25 th February 2019
COP Meeting at GuildHE Research	REF Administrator	5 th March 2019
Submit COP for discussion and feedback	<i>Institutional Research and Staff Development Committee</i>	6 th March 2019
Submit revised COP for discussion and feedback	<i>Institutional Academic Board</i>	20 th March
REF Equality and Diversity Training	REF Administrator	26 th March 2019
1 st Equality Impact Assessment (initial list)	REF Administrator and HR	May 2019
Submit COP onto REF system	DoR	7 th June 2019
Equality and Diversity Training	Director of Research, REF Administrator, HR	June/July 2019
AECC University College Appraisal Process	Criteria for <i>significant research responsibility</i> identified by appraisers	Mid June-September 2019

Academic Leadership Group discuss equity and consistency of appraisal process	<i>Academic Leadership Group</i>	Late September 2019
Appeals regarding independent research status	<i>Independent Researcher Status Panel</i>	Early October 2019
Cat A submissible staff list finalised		Mid October 2019
Review staff circumstances	<i>Staff Circumstances Panel</i>	Late October 2019
Draft outputs	<i>Unit of Assessment Group REF</i>	November 2019
REF Working group (discuss outputs and internal mock REF)	<i>REF Working Group</i>	November 2019
2 nd Equality Impact Assessment (final staff list)	REF Administrator and HR DoR	November 2019
Internal mock REF for outputs		November 2019
Draft Intention to submit documents	REF Administrator and HR	November 2019
Declare intention to submit	DoR	December 2019
Draft UoA Environment Impact Statement (EIS)	<i>Unit of Assessment Group REF</i>	March 2020
Staff special circumstances deadline to REF	<i>Staff Circumstances Panel</i>	April 2020
Equality and diversity training	<i>Director of Research, REF Administrator, HR</i>	June 2020
AECC University College Appraisal Process	Criteria for significant Research Responsibility discussed with line managers	June/July 2020
Academic Leadership Group discuss equity and consistency of appraisal process	<i>Academic Leadership Group</i>	July 2020
Draft Institutional EIS	<i>Unit of Assessment Group REF</i>	February 2020
3 rd Equality Impact Assessment (Outputs)	REF Administrator and HR	March 2020
Draft UoA Impact Case Studies	<i>Unit of Assessment Group REF</i>	May 2020
REF Working Group (discuss EIS and ICS)		April 2020
External mock REF		June 2020

4 th Equality Impact Assessment	REF Administrator and HR	July 2020
Submit AECC University College REF Submission		27 th Nov 2020

Appendix E: Application for Research Responsibility Pathways and Independence

RESEARCH PATHWAYS AND INDEPENDENCE APPLICATION SECTIONS IN INSTITUTIONAL APPRAISAL FORMS

Employee Appraisal Preparation Form

Part Four - Research Pathways

If you are a member of academic staff on a *Teaching and Research* or *Research only* contract for more than 0.2 FTE you have the opportunity to apply for one of TWO research pathway designations: *Research Responsibility* and the *Developing Research Responsibility*. Please indicate below which of the following you would like to be considered for.

Please see AECC University College Research Pathway guidance on the SIP and /or contact the Director of Research if you need further advice.

Please indicate below which of the following you would like to be considered for

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Research responsibility (RR)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <i>Developing research responsibility (DRR)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <i>Neither</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you ticked either RR or DRR pathways above you will need to provide evidence that you have achieved the minimum criteria for the chosen research pathway. **Please see AECC University College Research Pathway document on the SIP and/or contact the Director of Research if you need further advice.** Please enter the information below.

PUBLICATION (S)

<i>Title</i>	<i>Title</i>
<i>Journal</i>	<i>Journal</i>
<i>Publication date</i>	<i>Publication date</i>

PRESENTATION (S)

<i>Type (platform/poster: <u>delete as appropriate</u>)</i>	<i>Type (platform/poster: <u>delete as appropriate</u>)</i>
<i>Title</i>	<i>Title</i>
<i>Conference</i>	<i>Conference</i>
<i>Date</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Type (platform/poster: <u>delete as appropriate</u>)</i>	
<i>Title</i>	
<i>Conference</i>	
<i>Date</i>	

GRANT APPLICATION

Successful/unsuccessful: delete as appropriate

Principal Investigator/co-Investigator: delete as appropriate

Project title

Funding source

Amount applied for (£s)

Employee Appraisal Preparation Form

*Be prepared to present your case for categorisation on your pathway of choice in your appraisal with your line manager. This should including projected productivity as laid out in the guidance AECCUC research pathway document and how you aim to achieve these targets if approved. **Please talk to the Director of Research if you need further guidance***

Independent Researcher Status:

As part of the RR pathway application and to be eligible for inclusion in REF you will need to be categorised as an independent researcher. For the purposes of REF this is broadly defined as an *individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme.*

Please indicate below in a short paragraph how your research might align with such a description by outlining an existing research activity. **Please see AECC University College Research Pathway document on the SIP and/or contact the Director of Research if you need further advice.**

RESEARCH PATHWAYS AND INDEPENDENCE FEEDBACK SECTIONS IN INSTITUTIONAL APPRAISAL FEEDBACK FORMS

RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY AND DEVELOPING RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY DECISIONS.

Your Appraiser has decided that in consultation with yourself and view of the evidence provided by you that your application for the following research activity category has been approved. These decisions are subject to approval by Heads of Schools at the Academic Leadership Group by the end of June in any academic year

RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY (RR)

DEVELOPING RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY (DRR)

In addition the decision regarding categorisation of **Research Independence** is given below

YES

NO

Appraiser Comments:

Appendix F: Informing staff of REF submission and personal data usage

Dear _____,

Based on your contract of employment and annual appraisal, you have been identified as Category A admissible to the Research Excellence Framework (REF2021). The purpose of the REF is to assess the quality of UK research and to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research by the four UK higher education funding bodies. The REF is managed by the REF team, based at Research England (RE), on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies. RE is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and under this arrangement UKRI has the role of 'data controller' for personal data submitted by us to the REF.

As a researcher who has been included as part of our submission to the REF 2021, in 2020 we will send some of the information we hold about you to UKRI for the purpose of the REF2021. The information will not be in coded form and your name and details such as your date of birth, research groups, and contract dates will be provided along with details of your research. If you are submitted with individual circumstances that allow a reduction in the number of outputs submitted, without penalty, some details of your personal circumstances will be provided.

AECC University College believes strongly in protecting our users' privacy. We will not wilfully disclose information about our users to any third party without first receiving our users' consent. Please take time to read the privacy notice that applies to you via:

<https://www.aecc.ac.uk/media/5196/staff-privacy-notice.pdf>

You can find further information about what data are being collected on the REF website, at www.ref.ac.uk in particular publication 2019/01, 'Guidance on submissions'.

Sharing information about you

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

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

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

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

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

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

Publishing information about your part in our submission

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

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

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

Data about personal circumstances

You may voluntarily disclose personal circumstances to your submitting unit, which could permit us to submit your information to the REF without the 'minimum of one' requirement (without penalty), or to submit a reduced number of outputs without penalty. If (and only if) we apply either form of reduction of outputs, we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the 'Guidance on submissions' document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted. For more details see the AECC University College Code of Practice, section 4.4

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

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

Accessing your personal data

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

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

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

Email: dataprotection@ukri.org

Appendix G: Agreement from Staff Association representing AECC University College Staff



AECC
University College
*Transforming lives
through Health Sciences*

Perth and Kinross
Perth and Kinross
Perth and Kinross
Perth
801 209

info@perth.ac.uk
admissions@perth.ac.uk
+44 (0)1234 43000
www.perth.ac.uk

Research England
Lime Kiln Cl
Stoke Gifford
Bristol
BS34 8SR

4th November 2019

Dear

This letter confirms that the AECC University College Staff Association as a representative body of AECC University Staff have had the chance to review and clarify the processes by which academic staff employed by the AECC University College are designated as having **significant research responsibility** for the purposes of REF 2020.

We are satisfied that this process is appropriate and that staff are given the opportunity to be designated in this regard in an equitable and fair fashion and that this letter constitutes staff agreement for this processes within the AECC University College

Signed on behalf of AECC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE STAFF ASSOCIATION

Name: Rhianydd Haslock

Signature: 

Designation/Title: Chair, AECC University College Staff Association

Date: 04/11/2019

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Appendix H: Equality and Diversity Training for Staff

Section	Sub-section	Content and activities	Approximate timings
Equality and diversity in REF	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> REF Process Roles involved in REF Principles governing the REF 	5 minutes
	Why equality is important in the REF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDI in the REF What we mean by equality, diversity, and inclusion Equality Act Individual characteristics recognised in REF Activity – understanding terminology of equality law 	25 minutes
	Unconscious bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity – drawing stereotypes Unconscious bias video Defining bias Types of bias in REF decisions Discussion 	30 minutes
Embedding equality and mitigating bias in REF	Determining responsibility and independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant responsibility Independence Discussion 	15 minutes
	Selection and calculation of outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output pool Staff circumstances and HEI responsibilities Output reductions Disclosure of circumstances Discussion Calculation of outputs 	40 minutes
Support for embedding and promoting equality	Codes of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of Code of Practice 	5 minutes
	Equality impact assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to EIAs and how they are embedded 	5 minutes
	Local and institutional environment statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to environment statements Institutional considerations Unit of Assessment considerations Discussion 	15 minutes
	Appeals process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeals process and procedures 	10 minutes

Appendix I: Research Responsibility and Independent Research Status appeals form

Name	
Role	
School	
Date	

Appeals Basis	Research Responsibility / Developing Research Responsibility/Research Independence (delete as appropriate)
Date of Appraisal	
Appraisal completed by	

In completing this form I wish to lodge a formal appeal on the grounds of one of the following:

- There has been a material irregularity or significant procedural error during the appraisal process regarding designation for research responsibility/independence.
- The decision on research responsibility/independence was not conducted in accordance with guidelines as laid out in the COP.
- There is evidence of bias, or prejudice by the appraiser which affected the decision

Please provide information below to support this appeal. Please continue on a separate sheet if required, and append supporting documentation as appropriate:

Appendix J: Research Responsibility/Independence Appeals Panel

Membership

- *Vice Principal (Chair)*
- *Human Resources Manager*
- *Two academic staff representatives without Research Responsibility or Developing Research Responsibility status*

Terms of Reference

1. To consider and judge appeals regarding *Research Responsibility Pathway* categorisation and *Independent Research Status* using the following criteria:
 - a) There has been a material irregularity or significant procedural error during the appraisal process regarding designation for research responsibility/independence.
 - b) The decision on research responsibility/independence was not conducted in accordance with guidelines as laid out in the COP.
 - c) There is evidence of bias, or prejudice by the appraiser which affected the decision.
2. To consider whether any failure in aspects of the process, alignment with institutional regulations and adequate feedback had occurred

Appendix K: Unit of Assessment Group REF

Full Membership

- *Director of Research and REF Institutional Contact (Chair)*
- *Principal*
- *REF Administrator*
- *Unit of Assessment Lead*
- *Head of School to which submitting Unit of Assessment is aligned*
- *One other Unit of Assessment representative*

Terms of Reference

1. Be aware of the outcomes of the *Independent Researcher Status Panel* and *Staff Circumstances panel* relating to individual circumstances.
2. Notify members of staff about decisions made regarding inclusion or otherwise in the REF submission and provide feedback to members of staff who are not included
3. Maintain confidentiality at all times in line with the Code of Practice

Subgroup Membership

- *Director of Research and REF Institutional Contact (Chair):*
- *Unit of Assessment Leads:*

Terms of Reference

1. Prepare the Unit of Assessment submission for REF 2021, including draft submissions according to the REF schedule
 - a. Preparation of Staff details (REF 1a/b)
 - b. Selection of and preparation of research outputs (REF 2) as determined in section 4.1
 - c. Creation of Impact Case Studies (REF 3) for each Unit of Assessment
 - d. Collation and documentation of Environment data (REF a/b/c)
 - e. Creation of Institutional level Environment statement (REF 5a) and Unit of Assessment Environment template (REF 5b)
 - f. Staff Circumstances report if reduction in outputs sought (REF6a/b)

Appendix L: Guidance on output submissions

Definition of research for the REF

Research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.

It **includes** work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

It **excludes** routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also **excludes** the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.

It **includes** research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs (i.e. *the research you submit must be on the AECC University College Repository*; <https://libguides.aecc.ac.uk/OAIR>)

What Constitutes Output?

An output is the result of your research investigation. Examples are a conference paper, a public lecture, a conference workshop, the organisation of a conference, a journal article, an exhibition or a book which you have either written or edited. Outputs can be solely your own work or they can be co-produced/authored.

Number of Outputs

Each of member of academic staff designated with *significant research responsibility* as determined by the AECC University College COP will be asked to submit their **5** 'best' (as judged using the broad criteria outlined in **Appendix L**) research outputs (normally peer reviewed research publications). These must have been produced during the period 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2020. These should be submitted to the Unit of Assessment Lead for each Unit of Assessment by the end of September 2019.

Appendix M: Guidance on output ranking

Each of member of academic staff designated with significant research responsibility will be asked to provide their 'best' 5 outputs using the broad criteria below.

- 1* Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
- 2* Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
- 3* Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
- 4* Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Where *Originality*, *Significance* and *Rigour* is defined thus

- **Originality:** a creative/intellectual advance that makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge. This may include substantive empirical findings, new arguments, interpretations or insights, imaginative scope, assembling of information in an innovative way, development of new theoretical frameworks and conceptual models, innovative methodologies and/or new forms of expression.
- **Significance:** the enhancement or deserved enhancement of knowledge, thinking, understanding and/or practice.
- **Rigour:** intellectual coherence, methodological precision and analytical power; accuracy and depth of scholarship; awareness of and appropriate engagement with other relevant work.

These will be submitted to the Unit of Assessment leads with the subsequent quality assessed by the *Unit of Assessment Group* during an internal mock REF assessment in October 2019. As the institution is submitting for the first time to REF and the limited internal expertise amongst academic staff in submitting their output, to judge quality of research outputs, the *Unit of Assessment Group* may in discussion with the academic staff member, retain the option to ask for replacement, addition or alteration of the original submission by an academic staff member.

A consensus of this group will then inform the intention to submit process to REF in December 2019. External Benchmarking of outputs including Environment and Impact Case Studies along with individual outputs will take place in June 2020.

Appendix N: Individual circumstances form

Dear _____,

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 Colleges' 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 entered into REF 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.
- 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
- Junior clinical academics who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of training by 31 July 2020
- 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

Any information provided will only be used for REF purposes and will only be seen by the staff circumstances panel, comprised of the Vice Principal, and the Human Resources Manager. Submitted forms will be kept in a lockable cabinet in HR.

AECC University College believes strongly in protecting our users' privacy. It will not wilfully disclose information about our users to any third party without first receiving our users' consent. Please take time to read the privacy notice that applies to you via:

<https://www.aecc.ac.uk/media/5196/staff-privacy-notice.pdf>

If the institution 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.

Changes in circumstances

The university College 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 their HR partner to provide the updated information.

To submit this form you should email the Human Resources Manager – Amanda Armstrong at aarmstrong@aecc.ac.uk

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>Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).</p> <p><i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter a date.</p>
<p>Junior clinical academic who has not gained Certificate of completion of Training by 31 July 2020.</p>	<p>Tick here <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.</p> <p><i>Dates and durations in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter dates and durations.</p>
<p>Family-related leave;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statutory maternity leave • statutory adoption leave • Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more. <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>Disability (including chronic conditions)</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>Mental health condition</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>Ill health or injury</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>Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance</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>Caring responsibilities</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>Gender reassignment</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>
<p>Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement.</p> <p><i>To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

- The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below
- I realise that the above information will be used for REF purposes only and will be seen by the staff circumstances panel, comprised of Arvid Thorkelsden, as Vice Principal, and Amanda Armstrong, as Human Resources Manager.
- 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 an HR partner to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements in relation this these.

I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to the relevant contact within my department/faculty/centre. (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

Appendix O: Staff Circumstances Panel

Membership

- *Vice Principal (Chair):*
 - *Human Resources Manager:*
1. To consider individual circumstances as submitted by staff and judge the veracity of the submitted cases using the criteria as laid out in section 4.4.3 of the AECC University College Code of Practice to reduce outputs

Appendix P: Reductions for staff circumstances

1. Early Career Researchers: permitted reduction in outputs

Date at which the individual first met the definition of an ECR (Category A eligible on the census date, started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 st August 2016)	Output pool may be reduced by up to:
On or before 31 st July 2016	0
Between 1 st August 2016 and 31 st July 2017 inclusive	0.5
Between 1 st August 2017 and 31 st July 2018	1
On or after 1 st August 2018	1.5

2. Secondments or career breaks: permitted reduction in outputs

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

3. Junior Clinical Academics:

The total output pool may be reduced by up to 1 for junior clinical academics who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31st July 2020.

4. Family Leave:

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

- Statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the period 1st January 2014 to 31st July 2020, regardless of the length of the leave.
- Additional paternity or adoption leave, or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during 1st January 2014 to 31st July 2020.

5. Combination of circumstances

The total output pool may be reduced by up to 1.5 where individuals have had a combination of circumstances that have a defined reduction in outputs.