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Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel final report

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Supporting and promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in REF 2021: Final Report of the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel

Foreword by the Panel Chair

Events over the past two years have shone a spotlight on the importance of equality and equity – both fundamental to REF 2021 and particularly to the work of the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP). The effects of the COVID pandemic have highlighted some of the deep-seated inequalities in our society, including in our academic institutions. EDAP has had to be flexible, not only to embrace the necessary operational changes brought about by the pandemic, but also in trying to find the right balance between taking account of the recommendations of the Stern Review, whilst also listening, and responding to, feedback from the sector. I have therefore been lucky to have been supported by a panel which is fully committed to doing all it can to support and promote equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)¹ in REF 2021, despite whatever the challenges have been. I recognise that being a member of EDAP has not been easy at times, and I am grateful for the considerable energy and time that the panel has devoted to the planning and, particularly, implementation of the various equality measures. EDAP brings together individuals with a wide range of backgrounds and expertise – including first class researchers focusing on equality-related issues, HR specialists, equality professionals, and senior management. Members come from a range of institutional types, from across the four nations. EDAP sees itself not simply as an assessment panel. Our main aim throughout has been to implement measures to encourage institutions to fully support staff with equality-related circumstances so that they can thrive in their research environments. Although much of our work has focused on individual cases

¹ Although REF guidance and EDAP's earlier publications have used the term 'equality and diversity', this report uses 'equality, diversity and inclusion', which is now more widely used across the sector and beyond.

and operational details, we have tried to be a vehicle for positive cultural change².

Looking back to REF 2014, when I also had the privilege of chairing EDAP, I can see that considerable progress has been made across the sector, and more broadly, over the past seven years. Significant events and campaigns such as the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the Me Too and other zero tolerance campaigns have all increased awareness of the fundamental importance of EDI within our society today. Equality is now far better embedded within our academic institutions, and EDAP has been impressed by some of the excellent practice that is now in place. However, our work has also shown that this is not yet widespread and that there is still work to be done in many areas. As we discuss later, the challenge for those planning future research assessment exercises is how to continue to drive positive behaviours in terms of EDI, and support staff with equality-related circumstances, without introducing perverse outcomes, and without creating unnecessary burden on institutions and those delivering the next REF.

² See annex 1 for EDAP's membership. Terms of Reference and Working Methods will be published in July 2022.



Introduction

1. The UK funding bodies have long recognised that equality, diversity, and inclusion are essential predicates for research excellence, and are fully committed to supporting and promoting EDI in research careers. From the outset, they have viewed REF 2021 as a further opportunity to bring about positive cultural change across the sector, placing emphasis on institutions' role in creating and sustaining an inclusive and supportive environment for all their researchers. Working with the REF team and EDAP, the funding bodies put in place a number of measures to support and promote EDI in REF 2021³. This report outlines how each of the measures was implemented, what the outcomes were, and reflects on the extent to which they have met their intended purpose. It documents EDAP's work, helping to provide public accountability and assurance that equality issues have been taken seriously throughout the exercise. In the final section, the report makes a number of recommendations for future research assessment exercises.
2. At the outset, however, it is important to comment on some of the terminology adopted in this report. There are several ongoing debates across the equality landscape on the usage of various words, phrases, and / or acronyms. Appropriate usage of sex and gender has received particular attention. In a nutshell, sex refers to the biological status of a person as male or female. In contrast, gender refers to cultural and social distinctions between men and women, and is often preferred as it is a more inclusive term and allows for non-binary identification. In practice, the two terms are often used interchangeably. In this report, gender is used throughout apart from when discussing potential or actual impacts on groups with particular protected characteristics (e.g. in institutional Equality Impact Assessments, where many analyses are based on employment data).
3. There is also contention around the use of different terminology to refer to marginalised racial and ethnic groups. The acronym BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) is increasingly replacing BME in publicly available data, policy documents and media statements. It is used in the UK to describe all non-white ethnic groups. BAME is an imperfect descriptor as it implies homogeneity and conceals differences in heritage and ethnicities, and may disguise issues of intersectionality or super-diversity. Despite its limitations, this report uses the term as it is widely recognised and goes some way to describe patterns of marginalisation and attitudes

³ See REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions, para 44-48.

toward an individual's ethnicity that may constrain equality of opportunity.



Monitoring and improving the representativeness of appointed panels

4. Following analysis of the REF 2014 panel membership, the then EDAP recommended that more should be done to mainstream EDI considerations at all stages of the panel appointment process. It was therefore agreed that, for REF 2021, nominating bodies would be required when submitting nominations to provide information about how EDI issues were taken into account in the nomination process. In November 2019, EDAP published a review of the 604 nominating bodies' completed templates that were submitted alongside the suggested nominees for the first round of panel appointments⁴. Although the amount and nature of information provided was very varied, most organisations did take measures to ensure that EDI was considered in their own nomination and / or selection processes. Pleasingly, a good number stated that they had done so as a result of having to complete the template. The strongest submissions clearly demonstrated that the organisations recognised the importance and value of embedding EDI in their structures and processes. It was clear from the templates, however, that where interventions were made these primarily related to gender, with much less focus on ethnicity, and virtually no mention of other protected characteristics. The report therefore included a number of recommendations for both the nominating bodies and the funding bodies.
5. In summer 2020, the funding bodies issued a call for nominations for the second round of panel appointments, identifying particular gaps in expertise in the current panel membership. Nominating bodies were only required to submit EDI templates if they had not participated in the first round of panel appointments, or if they had used a different process from that outlined in their submitted template for the first round. The REF team received 53 entirely new templates and 36 amended templates. Overall, EDAP was disappointed not to see a notable

⁴ 'Improving panel representativeness: Review of Nominating Bodies' Equality and Diversity Templates' (2019), accessed at www.ref.ac.uk under 'Reports and publications'.

improvement in the descriptions of processes used to identify and select nominees over those outlined in the first set of templates. The focus was again on gender, although the panel did note a small, but increased, proportion of organisations that also tried to reach out to potential nominees from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds⁵. EDAP also wondered whether progress in reaching out to a wider range of nominees, and in embedding EDI in selection processes, may have been hampered by the impact of COVID on nominating organisations. Furthermore, the panel recognised that there were additional constraints on nominating bodies as the second-round call was primarily targeted at specific areas of expertise, thus limiting the pool of potential nominees.

Was there any effect on panel representativeness?

6. A key question is whether the changes to the nominations process had a positive impact on the representativeness of appointed panels – did they lead to more diverse voices being involved in the assessment of research quality? On the positive side, an initial analysis following the first round of appointments in autumn 2019⁶ showed a highly significant increase in the proportion of female panel members compared with 2014, and a significant, but smaller, increase in the proportion of panel members who declared as disabled. Unfortunately, there was no significant increase in the proportion of members from BAME backgrounds. The analysis was repeated following the second round of appointments⁷ and showed that the increased proportion of female appointed panel members found in the initial analysis was maintained, as was the improvement in appointed members who declared as disabled. In addition, there was a significant increase in appointed members from BAME backgrounds compared with both the criteria phase appointments and with REF 2014. The increased proportion, however, was still lower than the proportion of BAME staff in the permanent academic population.
7. So, it seems likely that the changes to the nominations process did improve the representativeness of REF panels, although there is clearly still much more progress needed. Thinking ahead to any future assessment exercise, EDAP reflected on potential process improvements, such as doing more to encourage nominating bodies to consider the full

⁵ 'BAME' is used throughout the remainder of this report as it is the most generally accepted term in use across the sector at present. See comment on terminology in the introduction section to this report.

⁶ 'Analysis of REF 2021 panel membership' (REF 2019/07), accessed at www.ref.ac.uk under 'Reports and publications'.

⁷ 'Analysis of full REF 2021 panel membership' (REF 2021/01), accessed at www.ref.ac.uk under 'Reports and publications'.

range of protected characteristics when planning and implementing their selection process, and encouraging them to go beyond the usual groups who rank highly in terms of typical markers of esteem. This is important as barriers to progression for those in under-represented groups may mean that they have the appropriate experience and knowledge to carry out the role, without having attained the usual markers of seniority. In addition, the funding bodies could consider appointing one or more additional observers to panels, enabling them to gain important insight into the processes involved in and around research assessment. Or maybe more radical suggestions need to be considered, such as moving to an open applications process? EDAP considered this option but decided against recommending it. Although open nominations would reduce the reliance on nominating bodies, there is good evidence that people from certain groups, such as women, are much less likely to put themselves forward for opportunities such as new jobs and promotions. Another form of positive action for the funding bodies to consider would be to introduce recommended targets for under-represented groups, for nominating bodies and / or panel chairs and others involved in the final selection process.



Supporting panels to take account of EDI throughout their work

8. Although EDAP was primarily responsible for overseeing EDI matters in REF 2021, it was important that all subject panel members were mindful of equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout their work. At the start of the criteria-setting phase, panels were therefore provided with a detailed equality briefing, developed by the REF team and EDAP. The document set out the relevant legislative framework and provided guidance on specific equality issues for panels to consider when developing their assessment criteria and working methods. This was followed by two further updated briefing documents ahead of the assessment phase. These provided advice to panels on equality issues that should be considered when finalising panel membership and when assessing submissions, including on the use of citation data and consideration of self-reported indicators of esteem. Panels were also encouraged to note any potential EDI-related implications arising from their assessment of impact case studies and the environment supporting impact, so these could be fed into the planning of any future research assessment exercise.

9. As a further measure to support the embedding of EDI in REF 2021, all panel members and assessors were required to take an e-learning course on safeguarding fairness in the REF assessment process. The module aimed to introduce panels to the concept of unconscious bias and help individuals to identify their own biases. It was developed with input from Main Panel chairs and EDAP so that it was relevant for REF selection and assessment processes. The training was originally provided for those involved in the selection of additional panel members and assessors for the assessment phase. It was then rolled out to all panellists and assessors. Following the training, panellists were invited to undertake an Implicit Association Test to explore any biases in more depth. Panel members also had an opportunity to discuss their experiences of the training and key lessons learned during the January 2021 round of panel meetings. To prepare for these discussions, panel chairs were provided with a briefing document, developed with input from the chair and deputy chair of EDAP. The document included advice for panel chairs, as well as reflections on the effectiveness of unconscious bias training and suggestions for how this can be increased.
10. One way to increase the effectiveness of unconscious bias training is to consider how learning from the training applies to the specific task at hand, and then to revisit this on a frequent basis. It was therefore agreed that each main and sub-panel would develop an intention plan, setting out the panel's commitment to mitigating against biases and ensuring equitable assessment of REF submissions. EDAP provided advice on the development and implementation of the plans. Although panels found a range of ways to create and format their documents, the plans typically covered:
 - how the panel would commit to ensuring awareness of biases is maintained,
 - specific measures to mitigate against risks of bias,
 - steps to ensure objectivity is maintained and criteria are adhered to throughout all assessments, and
 - the most appropriate way to challenge potential biases.
11. Intention plans featured on the agendas of all assessment panel meetings to ensure members remained aware of potential bias throughout their work. Lengthier discussions took place at the start of each different phase of assessment (outputs, impact, environment). An exemplar intention plan, at Main Panel level, is included in Annex 2. Further information on panels' reflections on the effectiveness of their intention plans can be found in the Panel Overview reports. As can be seen from the reports, the panels' experiences of developing and using

intention plans were largely very positive. Given this, the funding bodies should consider finding a way to draw out good practice that could be applied in other research assessment settings.



Institutional Codes of Practice

12. A key measure to support EDI in REF 2021 was to require institutions to develop and submit a Code of Practice which framed their decision-making processes for determining significant responsibility for research and research independence, as well as selecting outputs for submission. EDAP's review of codes published in Autumn 2019⁸ showed that many institutions had built on measures put in place for the previous exercise, so that EDI was not only fully embedded in their REF 2021 processes but was also playing a more central role throughout institutions and the way they operate. The vast majority of codes in 2021 were judged to adhere to the guidance, although some included one or more minor omissions which needed to be rectified. The most common areas where codes fell short of the guidance were in processes for identifying significant responsibility for research (SRR), appeals procedures, failing to outline their approach to considering the outputs of former members of staff, and procedures for handling individual staff circumstances and adjusting associated expectations on staff. These shortcomings, however, need to be balanced with the high number of codes which exemplified good and, in some cases, excellent practice in one or more areas, as documented in the Autumn 2019 report. In terms of SRR, although EDAP's review of Codes ensured that institutional processes were based on expectations of staff and not on their research outputs, the panel did note that some institutions had developed relatively complex definitions of SRR. Furthermore, they felt that it is possible that this could have resulted in different outcomes for staff in certain protected groups. It is important that the funding bodies take account of this when considering the findings of their planned analyses of the protected characteristics of the pool of submitted staff compared with those of the pool of eligible staff.
13. One challenge with Codes of Practice is the tension between the time needed for them to be developed and assessed sufficiently far in advance so that they can have a positive impact on institutional REF processes, and then managing to keep them 'alive' in institutions throughout the remainder of the assessment period. This was particularly challenging in the current REF given the four-month

⁸ 'Codes of Practice in REF 2021', accessed at www.ref.ac.uk under 'Reports and publications'.

extension due to COVID. From reading the submitted environment templates and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), EDAP felt that, in some institutions, the initial energy around Codes of Practice and the practices described within them had waned, potentially exacerbated by pandemic-induced fatigue. In other institutions, however, there was clear evidence that codes of practice remained very much as living documents, with EIAs thoroughly reviewing the effectiveness of the processes outlined within them. In any future assessment exercise, more should be done to encourage institutions to put in place mechanisms to recognise the 'living' nature of such codes so that they are routinely reviewed throughout the exercise and are better able to drive change and take account of changes over time.



Supporting staff with individual circumstances

14. A key recommendation of the Stern review was that staff should be decoupled from outputs in REF 2021, providing a flexibility in submissions which would remove the need for staff circumstances measures. While the sector widely supported the principle of decoupling, concerns were raised that a flexible approach would not make sufficient allowances for those with individual staff circumstances. Following extensive consultation, the funding bodies agreed that, despite the flexibility provided by decoupling, additional measures were needed to recognise the effects of individual circumstances on research productivity. The Guidance on Submissions set out the key principles which guided the REF team and EDAP's approach to developing the agreed measures. Fundamental to the approach was the requirement for institutions to establish, and document in their Codes of Practice, safe and supportive processes to enable individuals to declare voluntarily their individual circumstances. In addition, institutions were required to recognise the effect of declared circumstances on a staff member's ability to contribute to the output pool at the same rate as other staff, and to provide the appropriate support for affected staff. EDAP believed that such recognition was a core part of a research environment that supports and promotes EDI. In an open letter to the sector in early 2018⁹, the Chair of EDAP stressed that, given the additional flexibility, institutions should not routinely need to request reductions in the number of required outputs for submitting units. However, reductions

⁹ <https://www.ref.ac.uk/about/ed-open-letter-to-sector/>

could be requested when the available output pool in one or more of their units had been disproportionately affected by equality-related circumstances. Given the considerable variance in units across the sector in terms of their size, disciplinary focus, and institutional context, it was agreed that institutions would be best placed to determine, and document in their Code of Practice, the basis on which the impact of circumstances on units would be judged as being disproportionate. In addition to unit reduction requests, the guidance also allowed for staff to be returned without the required minimum of one output, where the nature of the individual's circumstances had an exceptional effect on their ability to work productively through much of the assessment period. To further support EDI and encourage institutions to submit and fairly represent the work of staff with equality-related circumstances, the funding bodies agreed that institutions could submit cases for staff circumstance reductions in March 2020 so that they could be assessed, and feedback provided, in advance of the REF submission deadline¹⁰.

March 2020 outcomes

15. Although, the 'clock stopped' for other aspects of REF at the end of March 2020 due to the pandemic, EDAP went ahead with their planned initial assessment of submitted circumstances. Requests were submitted by 58% of institutions. Table 1 shows the breakdown across the different types of request, as well as the corresponding acceptance rates. It should be noted that a good proportion of submissions were only recommended for approval following the provision of further information.

¹⁰ Initially scheduled to be late November 2020, but subsequently delayed until the end of March 2021 due to the onset of COVID-19.

Table 1: Numbers of circumstances requests submitted, and corresponding acceptance rates (March 2020)

	Submitted	% Recommended
REF6a	179	83%
REF6b Unit requests	461	88%
REF6b underpinning requests	4099	98%

16. EDAP's working methods and findings are set out in their Interim Report published in September 2020¹¹. The report provides detailed feedback on the basis on which the panel made its judgements, the range of information considered, and reasons for cases being judged as requiring further information and / or not having met the guidance. The report also comments on the different strategies that institutions applied in determining how many unit reduction requests to submit, and on what basis, resulting in very different numbers of requests being submitted across institutions. Although concerned by this, EDAP agreed that, provided reductions were applied within the boundaries of the published guidance, the panel would assess all cases on an equitable basis, using only the available evidence. The panel also agreed that it would be helpful to include in their interim report some broad rules of thumb which they had explicated and used for sense checking their assessments of disproportionality.

March 2021 - staff submitted with circumstances

17. As a result of COVID-19, the Funding Bodies provided further guidance on REF 2021 to take account of the impact of the pandemic. This included changes to the process for removing the minimum of one output requirement. The criteria for assessing applied reductions were amended to incorporate circumstances relating to COVID in addition to the effects of individual circumstances earlier in the period. This included delays to outputs due to COVID illness, caring responsibilities, furlough, redeployment to front-line services or to other priority areas within institutions, and restricted access to key facilities¹².

¹¹ 'EDAP interim report', accessed at www.ref.ac.uk under 'Reports and publications'.

¹² These changes are set out in more detail in the 'Guidance on revisions to REF 2021', accessed at www.ref.ac.uk under 'Reports and publications'.

18. At the March 2021 submission deadline, 62% of all submitting institutions had either applied previously approved requests, or submitted new reductions for consideration. This included 164 REF 6a submissions (including 65 entirely new reductions), and 433 REF 6b unit reduction submissions (including 62 entirely new reductions). In addition, there were 4534 REF 6b individual circumstances cases, with 1027 of these being entirely new cases. EDAP noted that some of the new unit submissions related to cases where institutions had modified their definition of disproportionality following EDAP's interim report.
19. Overall, the proportion of staff entered in REF 2021 with equality-related circumstances was 6%. This varied slightly across main panels, as can be seen in table 2.

Table 2: No and % of all submitted staff with circumstances

Main panel	All	A	B	C	D
All submitted staff head count	82,407	21,852	19,515	25,150	15,890
Number of staff with circumstances¹³	4,625	1,025	780	1,917	903
% of submitted staff with circumstances	6%	5%	4%	8%	6%

20. The overall percentage (6%) is notably lower than in REF 2014, where 29% of staff with circumstances were submitted. This reduction is not surprising given that the decoupling of staff and outputs in REF 2021, and the emphasis on voluntary declaration, meant there was less pressure on staff to declare. In addition, the average output requirement per FTE¹⁴ was reduced from 4 per person to 2.5 per fte, with part-time working being routinely incorporated into the calculation of the number of outputs required for each unit.
21. Table 3 shows a breakdown of types of circumstance submitted across REF 6a and 6b, by main panel. It can be seen that the overall percentage of defined circumstances (84%) was considerably higher than the percentage of circumstances requiring judgement (16%). The disparity was larger in REF 2014, with the equivalent percentages being 93% and 7%. A wide range of circumstances was reported within the 'requiring judgement' category, including caring responsibilities, long-term physical

¹³ REF 'circumstances' include those which are protected characteristics, and some which are not (i.e. ECR, Junior Clinical Academic, and Career breaks).

¹⁴ Full-time Equivalent.

and mental health problems, different forms of disability, and the impact of bereavement. As in 2014, early career researcher (ECR) status was by far the most frequently submitted circumstance.

22. It can also be seen from tables 2 and 3 that the proportion of staff submitted with circumstances varied across the four main panels, with Main Panel B having the lowest overall proportion and Main Panel C having the highest. Main Panel B also had a much lower proportion of staff submitted with circumstances associated with family-related leave. The data in these tables raise questions about what might be leading to these different proportions, which should be explored further before the next assessment exercise.

Table 3: Percentage of all submitted circumstance by circumstance type (REF6a+REF6b)

Circumstance type	All		A		B		C		D	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
ECR	2752	57%	574	52%	633	78%	1127	57%	418	44%
Secondment /Career break	77	2%	18	2%	12	1%	31	2%	16	2%
Family-related leave	1142	24%	313	29%	88	12%	465	23%	276	29%
Junior clinical academic	34	1%	34	3%						
Requiring judgement	826	16%	150	14%	75	9%	366	18%	235	25%
Total	4831	100%	1089	100%	808	100%	1989	100%	945	100%

March 2021 – Outcomes

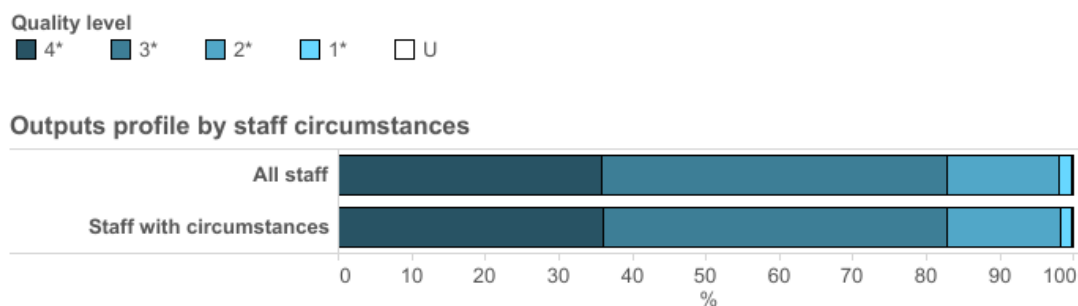
23. In terms of outcomes, 97% of REF 6a reductions were approved, as were all of the REF 6b unit reductions. In addition, 99% of the REF 6b individual circumstances reductions were approved. The very high acceptance rates demonstrate the benefit of running the 2020 exercise, including the detailed feedback that was included in EDAP's Interim Report. The information provided by institutions to support new and modified requests in March 2021 was more fit for purpose, resulting in a much smaller proportion of requests for further information. However, EDAP was again concerned about the long-term nature of some of the circumstances, and questioned whether adequate support had been provided for the researchers to enable them to research productively.

This was particularly the case for some disabled staff, including those living with long-term physical and mental health problems. EDAP was also concerned that, although some of the new and modified REF 6a reductions included issues relating to the impact of COVID-19, the timescale meant that REF 2021 could not capture the full extent of the impact on those with equality-related circumstances. Taking account of the longer-term impact of COVID on research productivity and research careers will need to be built into the planning of the next REF.

24. Looking more closely at the REF 6b data, unit reductions were submitted by 46% of institutions and, on average, reductions were applied across 38% of their units. Again, there was considerable variance, with institutions applying reductions in between 6% and 100% of their units. Twenty-four institutions applied reductions in 50% or more of their units; four of these were small specialist institutions which only submitted in one unit of assessment. Of the others, there was no effect of institution type. EDAP always recognised that developing and implementing an individual staff circumstances process in REF 2021 would be challenging, given the decision to decouple staff and outputs. Much was done through dissemination events, webinars, and the published guidance to explain the purpose of the agreed measures, and to try to minimise unintended consequences, but clearly this played out differently in different institutions. Some applied large numbers of reductions, for example for ECRs and maternity leave, whereas others managed through the flexibility provided by decoupling. It seems unlikely that the variance in numbers of reductions is due to the different prevalence of staff with equality-related circumstances across institutions.
25. Finally, in terms of outcomes, figure 1 shows the number of outputs, scored at each of the quality levels, attributed to staff submitted with circumstances compared with all staff. It can be seen that outputs by staff submitted with individual circumstances¹⁵ were judged by REF panels to be of equally high quality as outputs by staff submitted without circumstances. As in REF 2014, the circumstances process enabled institutions to submit staff who had produced excellent research but may not otherwise have been included without penalty. Further analyses comparing output scores for by protected characteristics of the attributed staff member will be published by the Funding Bodies later this year.

¹⁵ REF 'circumstances' include those which are protected characteristics, and some which are not (i.e. ECR, Junior Clinical Academic, and Career breaks).

Figure 1: Outputs profile for all staff and staff submitted with individual staff circumstances



Institutional Staff Circumstances Reports

26. Following the submission deadline, institutions were required to submit a report reflecting on their experience of supporting staff with circumstances. The report included data on the number and type of circumstances declared. This was to gain a fuller picture of all declared circumstances, rather than just those which were submitted to REF. Institutions were also asked to reflect on how declared circumstances fed into decisions on whether or not to apply unit reductions, and how expectations made of individuals with circumstances were managed.
27. Across institutions, the overall percentage of staff reported as declaring circumstances was around 15%. It is not possible to be more precise, given that some institutions varied in terms of how they presented their data. Nevertheless, this percentage is notably lower than the percentage of staff who declared (and were submitted with) circumstances in 2014 (29%). It is clear that the changes to the guidance in REF 2021 impacted on staff willingness to declare, as well as on the proportion of staff submitted with circumstances. Across institutions, around 75% of declared circumstances were reported to be defined, and a quarter as requiring judgement. Not surprisingly, the most commonly declared circumstance reported by institutions was ECR status (around 60%). This is broadly similar to the percentage of submitted circumstances for ECRs (57% - table 3 above), and slightly lower than the percentage of defined circumstances for ECRs in 2014 (66%).

28. Most institutions stated that declaration rates and / or the size of the consequent output reduction were the main factors in determining whether to apply reductions at unit level. Several noted that their decision making would have been made easier if the rules of thumb outlined in EDAP's interim report had been made available at the start of the exercise. Clearly, a more precise definition of disproportionality could be provided in the initial guidance if unit reduction requests were included in any future exercise. In terms of adjusting expectations on staff, the majority of institutions stated that they had no set expectations beyond the minimum of one output requirement.
29. Overall, feedback on the circumstances process was mixed, with some institutions being very positive, seeing it as an opportunity to further drive their inclusivity and wellbeing agendas. Several noted that they became aware of circumstances that they were previously unaware of and were able to provide support. Others, however, were more negative, stating that the administrative cost outweighed the benefits. In general, the REF 6a process was welcomed by institutions, whereas more concern was expressed in relation to REF 6b. Several institutions commented on the unit-based process being difficult to explain to staff, with the result that many could not see any personal benefit from declaring circumstances. In addition, it was noted that some staff were unhappy about declaring (sometimes highly sensitive) circumstances which were not then submitted to REF as part of a unit reduction. One issue raised by the majority of institutions was ECRs having to make voluntary declarations of their status, when the data was held in HR records, with a plea that this should be addressed in any future exercise. Another common concern was the lateness of the publication of the final guidance on the staff circumstances process, with a request that this is agreed and made available much earlier in any future REF.
30. A key aim of the circumstances process is to minimise any potential negative impact on the research careers of staff whose productivity has been impacted by equality-related circumstances, particularly those who have not been able to produce an output. The REF 6a process appears to have met this aim, at least to some extent, hopefully benefiting individuals' ongoing research careers and making them feel more valued as active members of their research community. Moreover, as in REF 2014, the circumstances process did enable institutions to submit staff who had excellent outputs but may not otherwise have been included without penalty. Given the concerns over the REF 6b process, however, EDAP considers that it is time to reflect on purpose and benefits of the REF circumstances process, and to consider what else might be done to drive positive behaviours in terms of EDI, and support staff with equality-

related circumstances, without introducing unintended consequences. This is further considered in the Conclusions section of this report.



Capturing support for EDI through the environment statements

31. During the early planning of REF 2021, EDAP recommended that there was a further opportunity to promote EDI through the environment template, and suggested several ways in which this could be done. These were incorporated into the institutional (REF 5a) and unit-level (REF 5b) environment templates. It was further agreed that EDAP would review the People section of the submitted templates in order to inform sub-panels' and the Institutional Level Environment Pilot Panel's assessments of the research environment. EDAP reviewed the templates from an EDI perspective, identifying strengths and limitations in relation to supporting an inclusive research culture (vitality) and ensuring future diversity and wellbeing (sustainability). In making its judgements, the panel was mindful of the diversity of institutions, recognising the challenges faced by some of the smaller institutions and units, with less developed research environments and fewer resources, in providing significant support for EDI. Panel members therefore focused on how well the institutions / units reflected on their particular situations, used their limited resources to address issues of most concern, and set out plans to build on positive outcomes achieved to date.

Institutional statements

32. Most of the institutional-level statements demonstrated a credible commitment to EDI, although there was notable variation in the extent of this across the submissions. The majority of submissions cited a number of equality-related accreditations (e.g. Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter) although, for many, the information was not sufficiently clear as to whether they had achieved a certain level of recognition or were merely working towards it. Similarly, many noted being a signatory to initiatives such as the Technicians' Commitment and the Researcher Development Concordat, but failed to describe any actions they were taking to implement these within their institutions. In relation to the latter, EDAP was concerned how few institutions described attempts to address the growing problem of precarity of employment.

33. In general, weaker statements tended to focus on legislation-driven improvements. They typically considered a much narrower range of protected characteristics, sometimes just gender, and described generic initiatives rather than ones targeted at particular issues within their institution. They included very little data, either in relation to baseline populations or outcomes of initiatives. In contrast, in the strongest submissions, there was clear executive-level leadership of, and commitment to, EDI, which was evident throughout all aspects of recruitment, progression, and support for their staff and students. EDI came across as a driver and was embedded throughout the template rather than just being siloed into one specific section. Furthermore, the statements tended to be reflective, rather than just descriptive, with a richness of data as well as narrative and clear evidence of data-driven improvements. For example, in describing their staffing strategy, most institutions and units referred to increases in staff numbers and level of investment in new posts, whereas only the strongest identified under-represented groups and demonstrated how they were attempting to build sustainable pipelines of diverse applicants and staff. Similarly, many referenced strong academic support for ECRs and postgraduate research (PGR) students, but only the better submissions reflected on how structural inequalities were being addressed, such as through targeted interventions for those with protected characteristics. Indeed, many institutions (and units within them) seemed to accept certain structural inequalities as a *fait accompli* rather than taking steps to tackle them. EDAP was also surprised by how few institutions extended their EDI training and support for staff, to their PGR students.

Unit statements

34. EDAP's review of the unit-level statements also found considerable variability in support for EDI across submissions, as well as in the degree of alignment with the institutional statements. In some cases, there was notable duplication of information between the unit and institutional statements whereas, in many others, units failed to include information on how institutional support was used for the benefit of the unit's staff and students with protected characteristics. Indeed, the weakest unit statements provided little or no evidence of unit-level support for EDI. Only the strongest units showed their own commitment to EDI by elaborating on the institutional strategy, describing initiatives and considerations above and beyond those of the institution. They demonstrated active consideration of inclusivity throughout the work of the unit, ensuring that under-represented groups were supported and had a voice in decision making, such as through committee membership, network groups, and regular research culture surveys. There was also

clear evidence of reflection and data-driven improvements in several areas. It is also clear that some institutions and units viewed environment statements as an opportunity simply to describe things they had successfully done since 2014. However, they failed to use the template as an opportunity to look ahead at what more needs to be done to challenge accepted norms and to address built in structural inequalities that impact on the assessment of research quality.

35. In both institutional and unit level submissions, there was a strong focus on gender, with a lesser focus on ethnicity, and relatively little attention to other protected characteristics. EDAP acknowledged that the predominance of gender was likely due to the influence of Athena Swan, but were surprised by how few institutions, and particularly units, applied what they had learned from engaging with Athena Swan to improve support for staff with other protected characteristics. The panel did note progress in relation to institutions developing race equality action plans and establishing anti-racist programmes, as well as providing ring-fenced studentships for BAME candidates and tailored career development programmes for BAME staff, but such initiatives were far from widespread. Only a small minority of statements mentioned initiatives focused on sexual orientation and religion. EDAP was particularly struck by the paucity of information on disability. Although most submissions cited having Disability Confident status, only the strongest outlined their additional support for disabled staff, including ensuring that all facilities were fully accessible, and appropriate reasonable adjustments were made and managers were trained in their implementation. Similarly, only the strongest submissions distinguished between their support for staff with physical disabilities and those who were neurodivergent or had long-term health conditions. In addition, some institutions appeared to accept low reporting rates for disability as a sector-wide phenomenon, seemingly making little or no effort to foster a culture where staff feel comfortable to disclose their personal circumstances as a routine part of their employment.
36. Finally, although units were not expected to address all the potential areas of support for EDI outlined in the Guidance on Submissions, they were required to demonstrate how they had paid due regard to EDI issues in the construction of their REF submissions, including in the selection of the output portfolio. Surprisingly, around a third of the unit submissions failed to do this. For those which did, accounts primarily focused on procedural aspects, with some citing the proportion of female and / or BAME staff contributing outputs. Stronger submissions referred to their institutional Code of Practice and how it underpinned their inclusive approach to selecting outputs. Only a minority of

statements noted carrying out one or more equality impact assessments, with just a few reporting outcomes.

COVID Annexes

37. The majority of institutions submitted a COVID annex, with around half making reference to equality-related issues and / or support. Of those which did, most noted supporting PGRs through funding extensions and hardship funding, as well as extending the contracts of research staff on fixed-term posts. A good number of institutions also described attempts to identify and support those most disadvantaged by the pandemic (e.g. those with caring responsibilities), such as through the redeployment of funding and research time. One institution reported how its Women and BAME network groups provided a set of recommendations to help senior management recognise, and take appropriate action, to support those most badly affected. Some also noted consideration of the potential longer-term implications of the pandemic for future career development, and how the impacts might be mitigated over time.



Seeking reassurance through Institutional Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

38. The funding bodies required all institutions to conduct and submit EIAs on their policy and procedures for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (where applicable), determining research independence, and for selecting outputs for submission. The purpose was to determine whether institutions' processes had any differential impact on groups with particular protected characteristics, so that institutions could identify where any positive impacts or potential discrimination may have occurred. EDAP read all the submitted EIAs in order to inform their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the EDI aspects of REF 2021 at sector level, and to identify any lessons learned for the future.

39. Most institutions referred to carrying out one or more interim EIAs in addition to their final submitted one; far more so than in REF 2014. Overall, however, EDAP noted considerable variation in the length and

content of the submitted EIAs, including in the reporting of any qualitative and quantitative analyses. In a few cases, although institutions submitted relatively comprehensive EIAs, they did not include comment on how they took account of EDI in the selection of outputs for submission. Some EIAs appeared to be written in order to fulfil a funding body requirement and were solely focused on EDI in the context of REF, with little attempt to make them accessible to wider audiences. Stronger EIAs were clearly written for the institutions' staff, governors, and other audiences, showing how REF requirements aligned with what the institutions were doing to support EDI and how the EIAs fitted into their ongoing work programmes.

Scope of EIAs

40. As required, nearly all institutions referred to their processes for determining SRR (where relevant), research independence, and the selection of outputs. Many of the smaller submissions combined their SRR and research independence processes to compare the characteristics of submitted staff with eligible staff. Several institutions extended their EIAs above and beyond REF requirements, including looking at the diversity of REF decision making committees, and the sex of impact case study leads. Some also compared the diversity of submitted staff for REF 2021 with that in REF 2014, with several noting an increased proportion of female participation, and a smaller number noting increased representation of staff from BAME backgrounds. There was also variation in which protected characteristics were included in the assessments. Several included all or most characteristics in their outlined scope, but the majority only reported potential or actual impacts for sex¹⁶ and ethnicity. Some noted that this was due to low reporting rates (e.g. for disability), but did not reference actual or planned attempts to improve these. Virtually all submissions reported analyses at institution level only, with a few including data at faculty or UoA level. Most, but not all, institutions included action plans, although these varied notably in terms of whether planned actions had clear measurable objectives, and whether actions actually stemmed from findings of the EIA. Several of the stronger EIAs noted planned actions relating to further data analyses, including looking at various intersectional effects, as well as seeking feedback from staff in particular equality groups on their experiences of the REF process.

¹⁶ See note on use of terminology in the introduction section of this report.

Reported findings

41. In terms of findings, most EIAs focused on potential negative effects. One positive impact noted by several, however, was the benefit of REF equality-related training for increasing staff members' wider understanding of equality and its importance in relation to research. One institution commented that the EDI measures in the current REF have played a crucial role in raising the profile of EDI in institutions, as well as in highlighting existing structural inequalities and encouraging institutions to take steps to try to counter them. Given the large degree of variance in the reported analysis and data, it is not possible to draw out systematic findings in terms of the effects of most protected characteristics. The only consistently reported findings related to sex. Around half of the institutions carried out an analysis comparing their submitted population with their eligible population. Of these, the vast majority reported an under-representation of female staff in the submitted population. Similarly, a good proportion of institutions reported an under-representation of outputs allocated to female authors, as well as a significant under-representation of female staff having four or five outputs allocated to them. In discussing the findings, several institutions noted that the under-representation was not necessarily due to the impact of REF processes, but rather that the exercise highlighted existing structural inequalities that were common in the sector. One observed that 'the selection of outputs, at the least, reinforces existing gender imbalances'.
42. Given the notable variation in the quality of the submitted EIAs, EDAP recommended that, in any future exercises, more guidance should be provided to institutions. This should emphasise that the main aim of the EIA is to bring about positive change in the research environment. EIAs should be more reflective, with a clear link between findings and required changes. Action plans need to have measurable objectives, designated responsibility holders, and clear indicators against which progress could be measured over time.



Conclusions and recommendations for future research assessment exercises.

43. The equality measures in the current REF have continued to highlight the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion in the research environment, as well as in the outcomes of research. They have raised the level of debate and driven conversations about EDI in nominating bodies, institutions, and REF panels. For example, several nominating bodies reported that they had taken measures to ensure that EDI was duly considered in their selection processes directly as a result of the new REF requirements. Similarly, EDAP's review of Codes of Practice and EIAs showed that, in many institutions, REF has triggered a positive change in EDI awareness, as well as in supporting research careers in a fairer and more transparent way. For example, several institutions described how engagement with REF-related training had increased staff members' broader understanding of EDI and its importance in the research environment. Others noted actions being taken as a result of reflecting on the outcomes of their circumstances process, including plans to provide more support for dyslexic staff, introducing paid time off work in relation to miscarriages and fertility treatment, setting up a staff carers' network, and launching a new wellbeing module for managers of researchers.
44. However, the REF equality measures, particularly the individual circumstances process, have also come at a cost – both to institutions and the funding bodies. It is clear that much thought needs to be given to determining how EDI can best be supported and promoted in future research assessment exercises. Clearly, it is not yet known what the shape of any future assessment exercise might be. However, building on measures taken in the current REF, EDAP reflected on whether support for EDI might be better captured through the assessment of the research environment, thus removing, or significantly reducing, the cost of developing and implementing an individual circumstances process. Could there be a new equality component within the environment section that captures progress against equality targets, supported by data? For example, institutions could be required to demonstrate how they are supporting staff with equality-related circumstances so that they can research productively on an ongoing basis, reporting progress against specified metrics.

45. Although EDAP's review of the environment statements revealed much good, and some excellent, practice across the sector, it also showed that this was far from widespread. The panel therefore had little confidence that all, or the majority, of institutional research environments would be sufficiently mature in terms of support for EDI within the next few years to totally dispense with a circumstances process. However, EDAP also felt that any future process should be a more slimmed down version than the one implemented in REF 2021, with a significant reduction of burden for all those involved. For example, information about ECR status, and potentially other defined circumstances, could be taken from HR records for most staff. This would lead to a greater degree of consistency in the approach taken by different institutions than in the current exercise. Similarly, any unit reduction process could be focused on smaller units and, potentially, certain disciplines, with a single definition of disproportionality being provided up front. Thus, the balance needs to shift with the environment template being remodelled so that it better recognises and captures good practice in EDI, with reductions for circumstances focusing on individuals and units most in need of support. Both aspects will need to be designed so that they drive positive behaviours, and limit unintended consequences. It is also essential that the agreed measures do not create inequality and, wherever possible, do not amplify existing inequalities. Some of what is directly, or indirectly, assessed in REF in its current form is already known to be biased against staff in particular protected groups. It is known that women, for example, are less likely to be awarded large research grants or to have highly cited outputs. Addressing this will be a challenge for those involved in the planning of future research assessment.
46. Looking ahead, EDAP felt that a future environment assessment should be more structured in terms support for EDI, and set out the key areas and data that are seen as being integral to fostering a positive research culture and driving up standards. For example, this could include improvements in the diversity of the staff and PGR profile, as well as in the support in place to mitigate against the impact of circumstances on research careers. Institutions should be asked to reflect on their data and report actual and planned outcomes, supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence. They should also be required to consider a much wider range of protected characteristics. In particular, the assessment should do more to encourage recognition of the contributions of disabled researchers, so that they are supported and enabled to develop and engage in meaningful research careers. EDAP also felt that a future research assessment should not just be based on documents primarily written by senior staff, but should do more to capture the lived

experiences of researchers, particularly those with equality characteristics. It should also widen its remit to include assessment of support for other staff groups who are essential to the research process, particularly technical staff.

47. In addition to changes to the assessment of the research environment, the panel recommended that any future research assessment exercise should extend the remit of the EDAP to include equality considerations in relation to measures of research impact. This could include looking at the protected characteristics of lead authors of impact case studies. Several institutions reported examining this in their submitted EIAs, with most finding an under-representation of female lead authors.
48. Finally, EDAP reflected on its own make up and the effectiveness of its ways of working. It felt that bringing together members from different backgrounds and types of institution, all committed to supporting and promoting EDI across the sector, was highly beneficial. However, the panel also felt that it would have been helpful if there had been a more formalised interchange of ideas with subject panels, particularly in those disciplines where members had relevant expertise. This could be built into the planning of future research assessment exercises.
49. The final section of this report sets out a number of recommendations for the UK Funding Bodies and, particularly, those leading the Future Research Assessment Programme. Whatever equality measures are developed and implemented in the next assessment, a future EDAP should hope, and expect, to see considerable further progress in the mainstreaming of EDI across the sector. Institutions should not only be recognising issues arising from structural inequalities but should be doing more to understand the implications of them for their own contexts, and be making progress in breaking down some of the long-standing barriers. Units, institutions, and the wider sector can only thrive if they have safe, open and sustainable cultures in which upholding equity and equality are paramount, and diversity and inclusion are fully encouraged and supported. To enable this to happen, the sector needs to receive clear guidance on how EDI will be supported and assessed in the next research assessment exercise (whatever shape this takes) as early as possible in the planning process, to enable institutions to have the right mechanisms in place.



Recommendations

Monitoring and improving the representativeness of appointed panels

- Nominating bodies should be encouraged to consider the full range of protected characteristics when planning and implementing their selection process, and to go beyond the usual groups who rank highly in terms of markers of esteem.
- The funding bodies should consider:
 - appointing one or more additional observers to subject panels, to enable individuals from certain protected groups to gain necessary experience
 - providing recommended targets for nominees from under-represented groups, for nominating bodies and / or panel chairs and others involved in the final selection of panel members.

Supporting panels to take account of EDI throughout their work

- Given the panels' overall positive experiences in developing and using intention plans, the funding bodies should consider finding a way to draw out good practice so that it could be applied in other research assessment settings.

Institutional Codes of Practice

- Those involved in implementing the next research assessment exercise should:
 - reflect on the processes and criteria used for determining significant responsibility for research, and the potential for different outcomes for staff in certain protected groups,
 - encourage institutions to put in place mechanisms that recognise the 'living' nature of Codes of Practices, so that they are routinely reviewed throughout the exercise and are better able to drive change and take account of changes over time.

Individual Circumstances Process

- Those involved in the planning of the next research assessment exercise should consider:

- exploring the questions raised by the different rates of staff submitted with circumstances across the four main panels,
- how best to capture the longer-term effects of COVID on research productivity and research careers,
- doing more to streamline the process, to significantly reduce the burden for all those involved,
- allowing institutions to take information about ECR status (and potentially other defined circumstances) from HR records,
- Focusing any unit reduction process primarily on smaller units and, potentially, certain disciplines, with the guidance including a single consistent definition of disproportionality.

Environment Statements

- Those involved in the planning of the next research assessment exercise should consider:
 - making the environment assessment more structured in terms of support for EDI; setting out the key areas and data that are seen as being integral to fostering a positive research culture and to driving up standards,
 - requiring institutions to reflect on their data and report actual and planned outcomes, as well as to cover a much broader set of protected characteristics,
 - highlighting the importance of EDI training and support for PGR students, as the researchers of the future,
 - encouraging institutions to recognise the contributions of disabled researchers, so that they are supported and enabled to develop and engage in meaningful research careers,
 - doing more to capture the lived experiences of researchers, particularly those in protected groups,
 - widening the remit to include assessment of support for other staff groups who are essential to the research process, particularly technical staff.

Equality Impact Assessments

- Clearer guidance should be provided to institutions, emphasising:
 - that the main aim of the EIA is to bring about positive change in the research environment,
 - EIAs should be reflective with a clear link between findings and required changes,
 - the need for action plans to have measurable objectives, designated responsibility holders, and clear indicators against which progress could be measured over time.

Broader recommendations

Those involved in the planning of the next research assessment exercise should:

- ensure that any future circumstances process and environment assessment are designed to drive positive behaviours, whilst limiting unintended consequences. Agreed measures should not create inequality and, wherever possible, should not amplify existing inequalities,
- encourage institutions to understand the impact of structural inequalities in their own contexts, and to make progress in breaking down long-standing barriers,
- extend the remit of the equality measures to include research impact,
- provide clear guidance on how EDI will be supported in the next research assessment exercise as early as possible in the planning process, to enable institutions to have the right mechanisms in place,
- develop ways to ensure a more formalised exchange of ideas between EDAP and subject panels, particularly in disciplines where members have relevant expertise.

Annex 1

EDAP Membership

Chair	Role	
Professor Dianne Berry OBE	University of Reading	Criteria and assessment phase
Members	Role	
Professor Dame Janet Beer	University of Liverpool	Criteria phase
Professor Sally-Ann Cooper	University of Glasgow	Assessment phase
Mr Paul Davidson	Ulster University	Assessment phase
Dr Angharad Davies	Swansea University	Assessment phase
Professor Tara Dean	London Southbank University	Assessment phase
Professor Scott Fleming	Bishop Grosseteste University	Assessment phase
Professor Yvonne Galligan OBE	Queens University Belfast	Criteria phase
Ms Sarah Guerra	King's College London	Assessment phase
Mr Patrick Johnson	University of Law	Criteria and assessment phase
Professor Raheela Khan	University of Nottingham	Assessment phase
Professor Tessa Parkes	Salvation Army Centre for Addiction Services and Research	Criteria and assessment phase
Dr Katie Perry	Daphne Jackson Trust	Criteria and assessment phase
Mr Gary Reed	Aberystwyth University	Criteria phase

Professor Fiona Ross CBE	Kingston University and St George's, University of London	Criteria and assessment phase
Professor Kate Sang	Heriot-Watt University	Assessment phase
Dr Ralph Wilde	University College London	Assessment phase* <i>*Until December 2019</i>
Observers	Role	
Ms Ellen Pugh	Advance HE	Criteria and assessment phase
Ms Fiona Bates	Scottish Funding Council	Assessment phase
Ms Sophie Lowry	Scottish Funding Council	Criteria phase

Annex 2

Exemplar Main Panel Fairness in REF Assessment Intention Plan

Heading	Intentions
Awareness	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the Intention plan as a standing agenda item at the start of each calibration meeting and meeting at which sub-panel scoring progress is reviewed, with review/reflection at the end of the meeting • Receive confirmation from each sub-panel that intention plans are being reviewed regularly, and promote discussion of issues arising • Actively consider and monitor different potential types of bias relevant to each aspect of the assessment stage • Re-visit the intentions plan throughout the assessment process and revise as necessary.
Preparation	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure clarity of workload and timelines to enable effective planning • Block time to allow sufficient space to fulfil commitments and meet deadlines • Allow adequate breaks (within formal meetings and in personal working time) to mitigate against bias • Keep the criteria close at hand to ensure that they are followed closely when reviewing material • Be aware of our own biases and ask other members to help us to counter them (e.g. methodological bias) • Remain aware of issues specific to main panel X.

Process	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful of biases triggered by hunger, fatigue, looming deadlines; to be mitigated by ensuring adequate breaks and realistic time allocation for tasks • At the end of the day, re-visit assessments performed to self-regulate against generous/harsh scores • Perform on-going calibration individually, within sub-groups and as a panel to ensure scores are robust and fair • Beware the 'contrast' effect – ensuring that material is assessed solely against the criteria and not other submitted material • Encourage disagreements in judgements to be aired openly, paying attention to dissenting voices to mitigate against Group Think • Check that difficult writing style or unusual methodological approach is not leading to bias in the assessment • Allow ourselves to be surprised by assessment outcomes, guarding against pre-judging material before conducting the assessment process. • Ensure that reference to outputs and impact case studies is by reference number or title, not author or HEI, also ensuring that where reference to the author is unavoidable that gender neutral pronouns are used.
Challenge	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to challenge and be challenged, normalising it so that it is part of our business and not an exception • Ensure that any challenges are made in a respectful and non-confrontational manner, to encourage open and fair debate. • Remember that no member of the panel (including Chairs and Deputy Chairs) is above challenge • Ensure that Chairs empower the Secretariat to challenge when appropriate • Be mindful of our language and the need to treat everyone equally • Provide feedback on the conduct of our meetings where needed, during the meeting itself or afterwards as appropriate.

Examples of potential biases			
Staff	Outputs	Impact	Environment
Career stage	Type of output (journal, monograph, review paper etc)	Scale of impact (local/national/international)	Type of institution (Mission group / reputation)
Age	Type of journal	Topicality of case study	Size of submission
Gender	Research / disciplinary field	Quantitative vs qualitative evidence of impact	Amount / profile of research income
Name (Reputation /'halo' effect/overseas bias)	Institutional or author reputation	Public engagement vs practical actions	(inter)national standing
Ethnicity	Length of output	Ideologically neutral	Profile of partnerships / collaboration
Disability	Basic / applied research		"Halo" effect
Fellow REF panel members	Language of output		

Escalation procedure

Members may need to draw attention to repeated unconscious bias where it cannot be addressed and rectified within group discussion.

If the concern lies with:

- Another member, raise with Chair or Panel Adviser
- The Chair, raise with Panel Adviser or Deputy Chair
- The REF team or Panel Secretariat raise, with the Chair