



# **University of the West of England, Bristol**

## **Code of Practice for REF2021**

**University of the West of England, Bristol**

**Code of Practice for REF2021**

**Executive Summary**

**Part 1: Introduction**

- 1.1 The REF in the context of the UWE Bristol Strategy 2020 and 2030
- 1.2 Equality and Diversity
- 1.3 Transparency, Consistency, Fairness and Communication with staff
- 1.4 Accountability, staff, committees
- 1.5 Consultation
- 1.6 Training
- 1.7 Appeals
- 1.8 Equality impact Assessment

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

- 2.1 Category A eligible staff
- 2.2 Category A submitted staff
- 2.3 Significant Responsibility for Research
- 2.4 Process for determining SRR
- 2.5 Systems supporting the process
- 2.6 Decision-making process
- 2.7 Staff, committees and training
- 2.8 Communication with staff
- 2.9 Appeals
- 2.10 Equality impact Assessment

**Part 3: Determining Research Independence**

- 3.1 Research Independence and research staff
- 3.2 Research Independence and research and teaching staff
- 3.3 Decision-making process

- 3.4 Communication with staff
- 3.5 Staff, committees and training
- 3.6 Appeals
- 3.7 Equality impact assessment

**Part 4: Selection of outputs and declaration of individual circumstances**

- 4.1 Policy and Procedures
- 4.2 Decision-making process
- 4.3 Staff, committees and training
- 4.4 Staff circumstances
- 4.5 Disclosure process
- 4.6 Decision-making process
- 4.7 Communication with staff
- 4.8 Reduction in outputs
- 4.9 Early Career Researchers
- 4.10 Equality impact assessment
- 4.11 Data collection and privacy

**Part 5: Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Committee structures, membership and terms of reference

Appendix 2 - Reporting lines

Appendix 3 – Unit of Assessment role descriptor

Appendix 4 – Details of the REF E&D Training Programme

Appendix 5 - Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 6 – Definition of Key REF Terms

Appendix 7 – Overview of process for identifying staff who are eligible and submitted for REF 2021

Appendix 8 – Guidance for Reviewers

REVISED 16 SEPT 2020

Appendix 9 – Output eligibility and selection process

Appendix 10 - Guidance on Individual Circumstances

Appendix 11 - Individual Circumstances Disclosure Form

Appendix 12 – REF Timetable

Appendix 13 - - Staff Data Collection Statement for the REF2021

Appendix 14 – UWE Staff Data Privacy Notice

Appendix 15 – REF Guidance Publications

## **Executive Summary**

It is a requirement of REF2021 that Universities develop, agree and publish a Code of Practice that sets out the policies and procedures being undertaken with respect to their REF submission. Guidance published by the Funding Bodies in January 2019 provides the context within which the University has drafted this Code of Practice (and accompanying appendices).

Following an initial consultation on the Key Elements of the Code of Practice (November 2018 - January 2019), a full consultation with all academic staff to finalise the Code of Practice took place in March/April 2019, culminating with approval by Academic Board in May. The Code will be submitted to the Funding Bodies for approval by 7 June 2019 and is expected to be published by December 2019.

This document focusses on the three core areas of the Code which relate to:

- the process by which the university will determine staff considered to have 'significant responsibility for research' (and whose research outputs are therefore eligible for submission);
- the definition of 'research independence', a criterion we are expected to apply to staff in the early stages of their research career;
- the process of selecting the outputs to be submitted from the total pool of eligible outputs.

### **Eligible staff**

For the purposes of REF2021, all academic staff will be designated as 'eligible' if they are academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll on the census date, whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'. For staff on 'research only' contracts, the eligible pool will only include those who are independent researchers.

### **'Submitted' staff**

'Submitted' staff will be designated as those from among the total pool of eligible staff who have been identified as having 'significant responsibility for research' on the census date of 31 July 2020. Eligible staff will typically be considered to have significant responsibility for research if, on that date, they:

- a) are Professors or Associate Professors, *or*
- b) have been allocated 110 bundles (approx. 20%) or more of 'research time' within their workload for 2019/20 (pro rata for part-time staff), *and*

- c) are operating as independent researchers.

Workload allocations will be those reflected in the version of the workload model for the year 2019/20 as on the census date.

All staff will be made aware of their status with respect to REF2021 in autumn 2019 and an appeals process will be put in place for staff who wish to have their position reviewed.

### **Research independence**

In line with REF guidance, an independent researcher is considered to be an ‘individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual’s research programme’. This may include those:

- leading or acting as a PI or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of research work (including internally-funded competitive schemes).
- holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement.
- acting as a co-investigator on an externally funded research project

For REF 2021, therefore the default position is that;

- Senior Research Fellows on the census will be considered as independent researchers,
- Research Fellows will be considered on an individual basis, against the criteria noted above.
- Research Associates will not be considered as independent researchers

All research staff will be made aware of their status with respect to REF2021 in autumn 2019 and an appeals process will be put in place for staff who wish to have their position reviewed.

### **Selection of outputs**

Outputs will be chosen for submission on the basis of quality, to best represent the excellence of research generated by the unit over the assessment period and to ensure as far as possible that the submission benefits the University as a whole. The quality of outputs will be determined by at least two assessments by internal or external peer reviewers (including outputs generated by eligible staff at UWE who have left during the assessment

period). The selection process will recognise the requirement to include at least one, and a maximum of five, outputs per submitted member of staff.

### **Individual Circumstances**

Account will be taken as appropriate, of the individual circumstances of staff that may have affected their ability to generate research outputs over the assessment period (2014- 2020). However, the University has no expectation about the contribution any individual may make to the pool of outputs selected for submission.

All submitted staff will be invited, voluntarily, to submit details of the individual circumstances, which will be treated in confidence and considered by an independent panel.

Where a case is made that an individual has been unable to generate the minimum requirement of one output over the period, this will be considered in confidence and, if agreed, will be submitted to the Funding Bodies for consideration.

### **Early Career Researchers**

Early Career Researchers will be identified in accordance with the REF definition and their outputs considered alongside those of all submitted staff and assessed against the same quality criteria.

### **Equality Impact Analysis**

An initial equality impact assessment on the overall Code has been undertaken on the draft Code of Practice and a further, more detailed, equality analysis will be undertaken following the Mock REF in autumn 2019.

## Part 1: Introduction

### 1.1 The REF in the context of the UWE Bristol Strategy 2020 and 2030

The University's ambition for 'Research with Impact' 2020 Strategy is to achieve "*world-class performance in selected areas of research that meets the needs of our community, a sustainable economy and society and feeds the scholarship and enquiry that underpins our learning and teaching*". As we approach REF2021, we recognise this as an important measure of our progress, a milestone in our development to establish critical volume and ensure the sustainability of our research. Successful engagement with the REF is the means by which we seek to maximise the reputational and financial benefits to the University but also to implement a process that is rigorous, transparent and fair, in line with the expectations of the Funding Bodies.

It is important however that UWE Bristol's REF strategy is seen in the context of our broader ambition and in particular our emerging Strategy 2030 which prioritises "working together to create, challenge, develop and apply knowledge to solve problems and broaden understanding". Our strategy for the next decade is "to continue to drive and inspire a culture of transformation – locally, nationally and globally. We will be at the forefront of creating new solutions to worldwide challenges, and maximising the potential of our students and staff through our outstanding practice-led learning and teaching, research and enterprise. We want UWE Bristol to be recognised globally as a leader in real world focused teaching and research."

In doing so, we have identified five key values, including *inclusivity*. We aim to make UWE Bristol "a supportive and inspiring place to learn and work – somewhere where diversity of experience and perspective is encouraged, and learning and research is shared and accessible to as many people as possible." This is reflected in our approach to REF2021 which is designed to address the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability, and inclusivity.

For example, in its approach to REF 2021, and in particular the criteria set out to identify staff with significant responsibility for research, the University has sought to be more inclusive of staff supported to undertake research than in previous exercises. This is in line with the outcome of the Stern Review and the framework for REF2021 set out by the Funding Bodies, as well as the institution's own inclusivity objectives. Initial estimates suggest that something like 33% more UWE staff are likely to have their research submitted to REF2021 than in REF2014.



## **1.2 Equality and Diversity**

UWE Bristol's REF 2021 Code of Practice sits within a broader framework of organisational culture at UWE Bristol which includes an organisational strategy (*Inclusivity 2020*) committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. In addition to meeting needs of individuals in the protected groups outlined in the Equality Act 2010, we strive to embed inclusivity in all our strategic and day-to-day activities.

Strategic activity at UWE Bristol reaches every corner of our work, and is underpinned by our ambitions and values. Our Equality and Diversity Policy sets out the University's commitment to the development of inclusive and supportive learning and working environments for all students and staff where all individuals have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

In our research activities, this commitment is evidenced most strongly through the work of our departmental and University level Athena SWAN self-assessment teams and the delivery of associated action plans, which champion and implement gender equality and intersectional initiatives within Faculties and at University level. We were proud to have renewed our Institutional Athena SWAN Bronze award in 2017.

All planned changes whether of buildings, policies or other initiatives (including this Code of Practice) undertake an equality-focused consultation to ensure that impact on protected groups has been considered and mitigating actions put in place for any negative impacts identified.

The governance committee responsible for equality, diversity and inclusivity, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost of the institution. They also serve as the Senior Diversity Champion, leading the six Executive Deans and Heads of Service who serve as Senior Diversity Champions for specific protected characteristics. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee is supported by a dedicated Equality and Diversity Unit.

In developing this Code of Practice, the REF Management team has liaised closely with the Equality and Diversity Unit. This has included planning and undertaking Equality Impact Assessments and analysis and in supporting associated stakeholder consultation and equality training.

### **Actions taken since REF 2014**

Our Equality Analysis for REF2014 indicated that there were 'no apparent issues in relation to ethnicity, disability and age but some concern over smaller proportion of women being

submitted than men' (32% of eligible men submitted compared to 22% of eligible women). We have therefore sought to provide further support to female researchers, most notably through active engagement with Athena SWAN. This is seen as a key strategy for fulfilling our commitment to the advancement of gender equality in academia. Led by two senior staff, one of whom is also a member of REFSIG, UWE Bristol renewed its Athena SWAN Bronze university status in 2017. Since 2014, three departments have had their Bronze awards renewed and two have made their first successful applications. The university also continues to promote the careers of women and early career researchers through a Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme and through the Vice Chancellor's Early Career Researcher awards (in which the success rate for female applicants is higher than for male). The equality analyses being undertaken through the implementation of this Code of Practice will be scrutinised in particular to identify progress with regard to the inclusion of women researchers in the REF.

Since 2014, the University has also reinforced its programme of support of Equality and Diversity through a range of actions seeking to promote its objectives for inclusivity, led by a team of six Executive Deans and Heads of Professional Service serving as Senior Diversity Champions. This has included making online E&D training made mandatory for all staff since 2014. The UWE Manager training package, which includes a unit on 'Creating an inclusive workplace', also became mandatory for all people managers in 2017.

Inclusivity 2020 (UWE Bristol's four year Single Equality Scheme launched in 2016) supports our aspiration for each protected characteristic group to have as good an experience and progression as every other protected characteristic group. For example, support for disabled staff included the launch in 2016 of a dedicated Support Service for Disabled Staff, including advice and support for staff and managers on Reasonable Adjustments, Access to Work, and Mental Health. UWE Bristol became a Disability Confident employer in 2016 and a Mindful Employer in 2017.

In 2015, UWE Bristol was ranked 11th in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, the top university in the Index, We have remained a Stonewall Diversity Champion in subsequent years. We have sponsored Bristol Pride since its re-launch in 2010 and have been one of its six main sponsors since 2015. We were the inaugural Bristol Pride Accessibility Sponsor in July 2018.

UWE Bristol has pioneered support for mental health and well-being issues through its Mental Health First strategy, led by the Vice Chancellor personally and comprising a range of support services, guidance and training. This includes a confidential and independent Employee Assistance Programme and a suite of training modules around mental health and well-being, including mandatory mental health and stress management training for managers.

### **1.3 Transparency, Consistency, Fairness and Communication with staff**

The process set out in this Code makes transparent the means by which we will identify staff with significant responsibility for research, determine research independence and select outputs for inclusion in REF submissions. These processes, as embodied in this Code of Practice, will be applied consistently and fairly across the institution. Key to this commitment is the importance of consulting and communicating with staff across the institution (including to those on leave of absence), through various mechanisms and channels, including the staff intranet. In addition to the consultation process described below, regular updates on progress in the development of the Code have been made via the University's committee structures and other key fora. Once agreed by the Funding Bodies and published on the external web site and intranet, all staff will be alerted to the final version of the Code.

### **1.4 Accountability, staff, committees and training**

Ultimately the Vice Chancellor is responsible for ensuring the REF submission is made in accordance with the Code of Practice, which will require agreement by the Academic Board and with the staff body more widely, including the University and College Union.

Responsibility for the day-to-day development and implementation of the Code of Practice, and for all aspects of the REF submission, lies with the REF Strategy Implementation Group (REFSIG) which comprises the senior research managers of the University. This is chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) and comprises the Associate Deans (Research) in each of the four University Faculties and two Assistant Directors of Research, Business & Innovation (RBI), the professional service responsible for supporting research and innovation, including the REF. One of the Assistant Directors is also designated as the University REF Manager (see Appendix 1).

REFSIG reports directly to the Vice Chancellor and also provides reports for the University's Academic Board and its Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee. Communication with Faculties is via Faculty Executives and the Associate Deans (Research) who also chair Faculty Research & Knowledge Exchange Committees.

For each Unit of Assessment the University is submitting to, a UoA leader (or Co-leaders) has been appointed through an open recruitment process. They are responsible for leading the development of the submission to that unit, reporting to the relevant Associate Dean (Research) and thence to REFSIG. Other staff or groups may be appointed within Faculties to support the Unit of Assessment leaders in that task.

**(See Appendix 1 – Committee structures, membership and terms of reference Appendix 2 -Reporting lines, and Appendix 3 – Unit of Assessment role descriptor).**

### **1.5 Consultation**

The University has consulted widely in the development of this Code. An initial consultation document on the *Key Elements of a Code of Practice for REF2021* was published on the intranet in November 2018 with a consultation period running through to 31 January 2019. All UWE Bristol staff were alerted to the publication of the consultation document via the Weekly Staff News which is emailed to all staff. It was also circulated directly to Executive Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Heads of Departments, the Researchers Forum (the representative forum for research-only staff) and REF Unit of Assessment leads. The document was considered at a range of committees and fora including Academic Board, Faculty Executives, University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee, the Athena SWAN Steering Group and all Faculty Research & Knowledge Exchange Committees. A drop-in session open to all staff was organised as was a meeting with E&D Staff Networks (self-organised groups that bring together staff who identify with a group relating to one of the protected characteristics). It was also discussed with the Equality & Diversity Unit, Human Resources and UCU.

Comments on the *Key Elements of a Code of Practice for REF2021* were submitted by a range of individuals, committees and groups in a variety of forms, including verbal comments, meeting minutes, emails and more formal responses. These were considered by the REFSIG and adjustments and clarifications made to the key elements of the Code in drafting the full version.

The consultation on the full Code of Practice was instigated in March 2019, with a deadline for comments of 30 April. Published on the intranet, all staff were alerted to the publication of the Code via personal emails, or via home address if on leave of absence, and in accessible formats if required. As with the initial consultation, it was considered at all relevant fora and committees and circulated directly to Executive Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Heads of Departments, the Researchers Forum, E&D Staff Networks, UCU and REF Unit of Assessment leads. The Code was considered by Faculty Executives, University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee and all Faculty Research & Knowledge Exchange Committees. Drop-in sessions open to all staff were held on each of the university's three main campuses. Issues raised by the consultation were considered by REFSIG on 25 April REF and final adjustments and clarifications made to the Code. Final approval was given by Academic Board on 15 May. Agreement with the staff body has been secured through discussion with and consideration by, UCU.

## 1.6 Training

All staff with a significant role in the implementation of the Code of Practice will undergo mandatory training with respect to equality and diversity, specifically tailored to the context of the REF and of the Code of Practice. This will include staff involved in the key processes of i) identifying staff with significant responsibility for research, ii) determining research independence and iii) selecting outputs to be submitted. It will therefore include members of REFSIG, the REF team in RBI, UoA leaders and members of the Appeals and Individual Circumstances Panels. Internal and external reviewers will also be invited to attend.

The resources to support training will include material provided by Advance HE Equality, (Diversity, Inclusion and the Research Excellence Framework 2021: A workshop for practitioners) and the Funding Bodies (REF Guidance and associated webinars and presentation slides). Based on guidance provided by Advance HE, training will also include how to discuss 'significant responsibility' and 'independence' with staff and the impact of this on their career. An open event for all staff will also be organised to feedback on the REF process and its implications for staff careers, as well as advising where appropriate on the appeals process.

This training will take place following the Mock REF in autumn 2019 and agreement of the Code by the Funding Bodies, in advance of the implementation of the Code and the decision-making process that will confirm who has been identified as having significant responsibility for research and the final selection of outputs to be submitted.

**(See Appendix 4 – Further information about the REF E&D Training Programme).**

## 1.7 Appeals

An appeals process, in relation to identifying staff with significant responsibility for research and determining research independence, is available to all staff. Appeals may be made once a provisional indication has been given of staff who would be considered Category A eligible and Category A submitted for REF2021. This will follow a Mock REF being undertaken in the summer/autumn 2019. Details of the appeals procedure will be communicated to all staff as part of the process of informing staff of their provisional designation as Category A eligible and Category A submitted, and any subsequent changes. This will include making available an appeals form and associated guidance.

Once staff are aware of their provisional designation, appeals can be made anytime up to the REF census date of 31 July 2020. This will be considered initially as an informal appeal with the option of moving into a formal appeal if the member of staff concerned wishes to do so. Only staff whose status changes as a consequence of the implementation of the Code following the census date can appeal after that date, with a final deadline of 30 September 2020.

Appeals can only be made on the grounds that the process for determining significant responsibility for research or research independence has been incorrectly applied or is based on inaccurate information for the individual concerned.

Appeals will be submitted to the REF Manager and considered by a panel reporting to REFSIG comprising an Executive Dean from a faculty different to that of the appellant, a member of the Board of Governors, the Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and the Head of Human Resources, or nominee, supported by the Deputy REF Manager. Appeals will be considered and the outcome conveyed to the individual within a period of 15 working days. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final. Staff involved in the appeals process will also undergo REF-specific equality and diversity training.

### **1.8 Equality impact Assessment**

An initial equality impact assessment on the overall Code has been undertaken on the draft Code of Practice (**Appendix 5- Initial Equality Impact Assessment**). This has been compiled in collaboration with the Equality & Diversity unit and published for consultation in March 2019.

A further, more detailed, equality analysis will be undertaken following the Mock REF in autumn 2019. This will look in particular at:

- the equality profile of Category A staff provisionally identified as having SRR, compared to the profile of all Category A eligible staff
- the equality profile of research-only staff provisionally considered to be independent researchers compared to the profile of all research staff
- the equality profile of the designated authors of provisionally selected outputs compared to the profile of the designated authors of the total pool of selectable outputs (including ECR status)
- the equality profile of staff allocated internally funded research time compared to the profile of those applying for such time

In addition, intersectional analyses will be undertaken where the data is of sufficient detail to provide meaningful information.

Following analysis and publication of the outcome, REFSIG will consider what, if any, actions should be taken in relation to the Code and advise the Vice Chancellor accordingly. Any significant changes to the Code will need to be agreed with the Funding Bodies.

A final equality impact assessment and analysis will be undertaken on the final submission early in 2021 to inform the University's future thinking in relation to equality and diversity and research, including our approach to future REF exercises.

### **Equality and impact case studies**

Impact case studies will be selected through an iterative and developmental process over the assessment period designed to identify those eligible case studies that can demonstrate the greatest reach and significance, irrespective of who is designated as the academic lead(s). This process is led by the REFSIG in liaison with Unit of Assessment leaders and case study leads with support from staff in RBI. As part of the final equality impact assessment, the equality profile of academic staff leading submitted case studies will be analysed by comparison to the profile of all eligible and submittable staff with a view to informing the University's approach to the support and facilitation of impact post-REF2021, including the future selection of case studies.

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

### **2.1 Category A eligible staff**

The University is required to identify REF-eligible staff. These staff will comprise the total pool of staff from which individuals deemed to have significant responsibility for research are identified and whose outputs will be eligible for submission.

For the purposes of REF2021, all academic staff will be designated as ‘eligible’ if they meet the following definition, as provided in the guidance published by the Funding Bodies: *Academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) or greater, on the payroll on the census date, whose primary employment function is to undertake either ‘research only’ or ‘teaching and research’. Staff should have a substantive connection with the submitting institution. For staff on ‘research only’ contracts, the eligible pool should only include those who are independent researchers.*

At UWE Bristol, eligible staff will include all staff on standard academic contracts with an FTE of 0.2 or greater on the census date (31 July 2020) and a substantive connection to the institution (**see Appendix 6 – Definition of Key REF Terms**).

It will also, typically, include Senior Research Fellows given the expectation that their role requires them to undertake independent research. Research Fellows will be considered on a case by case basis against the definition of research independence given that there are variable practices and disciplinary differences in the way research at this level is organised. Research Associates, typically, will not be considered eligible as they are not normally considered to be undertaking independent research (see Part 3 below).

### **2.2 Category A submitted staff**

In line with the REF guidance, ‘submitted’ staff will be designated as those from among the total pool of eligible staff who have been identified as having significant responsibility for research on the census date. As a consequence of this designation, their outputs can be included in the institution’s submission.

### **2.3 Significant Responsibility for Research**

In the REF guidance, staff with significant responsibility for research are defined as *“those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role”*. In addition, it is specified that *“many institutions will want to draw on the proportion of time that is allocated for research to*



*identify staff in scope. The funding bodies consider that this will be an appropriate approach, where there is a clear and agreed rationale for the proportion that is set".*

Based on this guidance, it is proposed that eligible staff at UWE Bristol will typically be considered to have 'significant responsibility for research' if they:

- d) are Professors or Associate Professors, *or*
- e) have been allocated 110 bundles or more of 'research time' (approx 20%) within their workload for the year of the specified REF census date, pro rata for part-time staff, *and*
- f) are operating as independent researchers.

It is important to recognise that the criteria for defining significant responsibility for research apply on the census date of 31 July 2020 and do not reflect the status of staff over the whole assessment period. While the REF process assesses research over an extended period (2014 to 2020), in terms of staff eligibility, the REF (as with the RAE before it) is based on a snapshot on the census date. The criteria for significant responsibility therefore reflect expectations on staff in relation to their roles and workload position as they are on the census date and are not linked to any expectations about either the quality or number of outputs that are generated over the assessment period.

- **Professors and Associate Professors**

Professors and Associate Professors are typically considered to have significant responsibility for research as an expectation of their roles. Exceptionally these titles may be used where there is no such expectation e.g. senior managers and those appointed on the basis of their expertise and role in support of knowledge exchange rather than research. Where this is the case such staff will not be considered to have significant responsibility for research. This expectation should be explicit in the terms of their employment.

- **Workload allocation**

110 workload bundles (broadly equivalent to 20% of workload) is considered to reflect sufficient time and resources to justify someone being considered to have *significant* responsibility for research on the census date of the REF. As indicated above, it is a requirement that this is determined on the census date, it is not specifically a measure of the time or resources required to generate outputs for the REF, either during the year of the census date (2019/20) or over the assessment period of REF2021 as a whole (2014-2020).

The workload allocation of part-time staff will be treated pro rata so that, for example, an eligible member of staff on a 0.5 FTE contract on the census date would be considered to have significant responsibility if they have 55 workload bundles or more for independent research or more (i.e. equivalent to 20% of workload, consistent with the % threshold for full-time staff).

- **Independent research**

It is recognised that not all staff on standard academic contracts who are allocated research time are expected to undertake independent research. Staff in the early stages of their research development, including those undertaking doctoral or equivalent level research training or research support, for example, would not normally be considered to be undertaking independent research. Where appropriate, the criteria for independence will therefore be applied to determine whether an eligible member of staff is considered to have 'significant responsibility' (see Part 3).

- **Application of criteria**

Staff will be considered 'submitted' for REF 2021 if they are considered to have significant responsibility for research on the census date (31 July 2020) according to the above criteria. Workload allocations will be those reflected in the final version of their workload model for the year of the census date (2019/20).

- **Research time**

For the purposes of this definition, 'research time' includes:

- internally funded research allocations (to support someone undertaking independent research)
- externally funded research allocations (to support someone undertaking independent research)

- **Internally funded research**

The University is committed to providing internal support for research-related activities in the areas of research excellence and emerging excellence that align with the University strategic priorities. This support is provided through a number of mechanisms including in the form of internally funded research time.

Internally funded time for research is the resource that supports the time of staff on academic contracts to undertake research activities, where they align with UWE Bristol research priorities. Resources are allocated via various schemes and processes according to clearly stated criteria, some organised at faculty level and some through central schemes such as the Vice Chancellors Early Career Researcher Awards and the Interdisciplinary Research Challenge Fund. All workload data is held centrally on a single workload management system.

Equality data on the allocation of resources are monitored to ensure equality of opportunity and that allocations are made through fair and transparent processes. In addition to general monitoring, for the REF census year in particular, REFSIG will oversee a university-wide equality analysis to identify any issues regarding the allocation of research workload. This

will include comparing the equality profile of staff being allocated research time with that of those applying for such allocations (see section 1.8).

- **Externally funded research**

Workload associated with externally-funded research is also included within the workload model of academic staff. All applications for external research income are provided with Full Economic Cost estimates relating to the proposed inputs of staff associated with the project. These are converted into an individual's workload regardless of the grade of the member(s) of staff involved. Where this is designated as research workload for Category A eligible staff, this will count towards the 110 workload bundles used in the Code in the criteria for SRR, provided they are associated with an expectation that the staff are undertaking independent research.

## **2.4 Process for determining SRR**

As noted, staff will be considered 'submitted' for REF 2021 if they are considered to have significant responsibility for research on the census date (31 July 2020) according to the above criteria. Where appropriate, workload allocations will be those reflected in the final version of their workload model for the year of the census date (2019/20).

As part of the preparations for REF2021, a mock process will be undertaken with 31 July 2019 as the census date. As a result, all Category A eligible staff will be made aware of whether they meet the definition of having 'significant responsibility for research' as at that census date, based on provisional data for workloads in 2019/20, and where appropriate whether they are considered to be independent researchers.

Any changes to this status as they emerge during 2019/20 in the lead up to the REF2021 census date, including any changes required as a consequence of the review of our Code of Practice by the Funding Bodies, will be communicated to the individual staff affected, and once the final Code is published. Any further changes to this status as a consequence of the applying the Code as on the census date of 31 July 2020 will also be communicated to the individual staff affected.

Category A eligible staff (excluding Professors and Associate Professors) who join the university during 2019/20, and whose workload allocation only covers part of the year, will be considered to have SRR if their research time consists of the equivalent of at least 110 workload bundles for the year, calculated pro rata from the FTE period of employment during the year. So, for example, someone joining the University on a full-time contract on 1 February 2020 and who has an allocation of 55 research wlbs for the remaining 6 months of 2019/20 will be identified as having SRR (the FTE equivalent of this allocation for 12 months being 110 wlbs).

The same principle will apply to staff who are on long-term absence for a specific period during 2019/20 and whose workload allocation is only agreed for part of the year, including those, for example, on maternity leave and long term sickness. In such circumstances the period of absence and the period of the workload should be clearly identified and recorded.

## **2.5 Systems supporting the process**

Advice, procedures and information systems in support of the REF process are provided by staff in Research, Business & Innovation (RBI), led by the designated REF Manager with a team comprising a Deputy REF Manager and Head of Research Information & Systems. All data about people, outputs and other aspects of the REF process are held on a central database managed by RBI, held in accordance with the University's data protection policy. This includes a REFCV system linked to the institutional repository that includes information about the research outputs of staff, and the outcomes of reviews of those outputs. The database also includes information from HR about the employment status of staff and data about workload allocations acquired from the University's workload management system. Staff considered to have significant responsibility for research are identified through this information according to the process outlined above and in Appendix 4.

## **2.6 Decision-making process**

For both the mock and final submission, the information regarding SRR and research independence will be presented to the REFSIG and shared with the relevant Unit of Assessment lead. Any issues raised by the process will be considered by the REFSIG who will be the decision-making body.

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

The process of defining Significant Responsibility for Research and of considering the position of individual staff will be governed by the same committees described in Part 1 above.

## **2.8 Communication with staff**

As noted above, all staff will be made aware of their provisional status with respect to REF2021 following the Mock REF in 2019 via individualised emails (or letters if absent from work for an extended periods). An appeals process will be available for staff who wish to have their position reviewed. Any changes in status will be communicated directly to the relevant staff, and will be confirmed once the final Code is applied on the census date of 31 July 2020.

## **2.9 Appeals**

Staff will be entitled to appeal if they feel an incorrect decision has been made regarding their designation (see Appeals above). Appeals can only be made on the grounds that the process for determining significant responsibility for research has been incorrectly applied or is based on inaccurate information for the individual concerned.

## **2.10 Equality impact Assessment**

As noted in Part 1 above, a detailed, equality impact analysis will be undertaken following the Mock REF in autumn 2019, which includes an analysis of the equality profile of Category A staff provisionally identified as having SRR, compared to the profile of all Category A eligible staff. Intersectional analyses will be undertaken where the data is of sufficient detail to provide meaningful information.

Following analysis and publication of the outcome, REFSIG will consider what, if any, actions should be taken in relation to the process and criteria for identifying staff with SRR and advise the Vice Chancellor accordingly. Any significant changes to the Code will need to be agreed with the Funding Bodies.

A final equality impact assessment and analysis will be undertaken on the final submission early in 2021 to inform the University's future thinking in relation to the process and criteria for identifying staff with SRR within its wider aim of being "a supportive and inspiring place to learn and work – somewhere where diversity of experience and perspective is encouraged, and learning and research is shared and accessible to as many people as possible."

**(See Appendix 7 – Overview of process for identifying staff who are eligible and submitted for REF 2021).**

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

### **3.1 Research Independence and research staff**

In line with REF guidance, an independent researcher will be considered to be an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme on the census date. This may include those:

- leading or acting as a principal investigator or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of research work (including internally-funded competitive schemes such as the Vice Chancellor's Early Career Research Awards or Interdisciplinary Research Challenge Fund awards) .
- holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement.
- leading a research group or a substantial work package

In addition, in the social sciences, arts and humanities (panels C and D), it may include:

- acting as a co-investigator on an externally funded research project
- making significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research

As noted above, at UWE Bristol it is an expectation of their role that Senior Research Fellows act as independent researchers. Research Fellows could be acting independently - there are variable practices and disciplinary differences in the way research at this level is organised, as reflected for example in the broader criteria noted above for social sciences, arts and humanities. Research Associates would typically be carrying out research in the capacity of an assistant to a senior colleague and therefore would not be considered as independent researchers.

For REF 2021, therefore;

- Senior Research Fellows on the census date will be considered as independent researchers, unless exceptionally it can be shown that they do not meet any of the criteria of independence given above.
- Research Fellows on the census date will be considered on an individual basis, against the criteria of independence given above.
- Research Associates on the census date will be not considered as independent researchers, unless exceptionally it can be shown that they do meet at least one of the criteria of independence given above.

### **3.2 Research Independence and research and teaching staff**

As noted in paragraph 2.3, UWE Bristol staff on 'teaching and research' contracts cannot be assumed to be independent researchers. The criteria of independence, as noted in paragraph 3.1 above, will therefore be applied as part of the process of determining significant responsibility for research (see Part 2 and Appendix 7).

### **3.3 Decision-making process**

The process for determining research independence, for both 'research' and 'research and teaching' staff will mirror that for significant responsibility described in Part 2 above. Through the communication and consultation on the Code of Practice, all staff have been made aware of the proposed eligibility criteria for both Category A eligible and Category A submitted staff, including the definition of 'independence' in relation to research-only and research and teaching staff (see Part 1, Communication with Staff).

For research staff, information provided by HR will be used to identify SRFs, RFs and RAs. The position of RFs in relation to independence will be considered by the Associate Dean (Research) for the relevant faculty, liaising with the Fellow and their line manager to determine if one or more of the criteria of independence have been met, and a recommendation made to REFSIG accordingly.

For staff who are Category A eligible, the independence criterion will be applied in considering the nature of workload allocation, in particular whether the external or internal resources allocated support an expectation that the individual will be operating independently. In most cases where the resources support research time it will be assumed the independence criterion will be met unless it is evident that it is specifically for doctoral or equivalent level research development, or research-related activities that do not in themselves constitute independent research.

### **3.4 Communication with staff**

Following the Mock REF in summer/autumn 2019, all research staff will be informed via individual emails, or by letter if absent from work for an extended period, whether they are considered to meet the definition of 'independence' as of the mock census date, and therefore meet the definition of both Category A eligible and Category A submitted. This will include the outcome of the review of all Research Fellows by the relevant Associate Dean (Research) reporting to the REFSIG.

As a result, Research Associates will be given the opportunity to make a case to be considered as independent researchers, and Senior Research Fellows will be given the opportunity to make a case not to be considered as independent researchers. These will also be considered by the relevant Associate Dean (Research) reporting to the REF Strategy Implementation Group. The REFSIG will make the final judgement although the appeals process will still be open if staff wish to pursue an appeal (see paragraph 1.7).

In all cases a record will be kept by the REF Manager which will comprise the evidence to support the decision regarding a judgment on research independence of research staff. Any changes to this status as they emerge during 2019/20 in the lead up to the REF2021 census date, including any changes required as a consequence of the review of our Code of Practice by the Funding Bodies, will be communicated to the individual staff affected, and will be confirmed once the final Code is applied on the census date of 31 July 2020. For staff who are Category A eligible, communication about their status as independent researchers is covered in Part 2 above.

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

The process of defining research independence and of considering the position of individual staff will be governed by the same committees described in Part 1 above.

### **3.6 Appeals**

The Appeals process regarding the determination of research independence will be as described in Part 1 above. Appeals can only be made on the grounds that the process for determining research independence has been incorrectly applied or is based on inaccurate information.

### **3.7 Equality impact assessment**

As noted in Part 1 above, a detailed, equality analysis will be undertaken following the Mock REF in autumn 2019, which includes an analysis of the equality profile of research-only staff provisionally considered to be independent researchers compared to the profile of all research staff.

Following analysis and publication of the outcome, REFSIG will consider what, if any, actions should be taken in relation to the process and criteria for identifying staff considered to be independent researchers and advise the Vice Chancellor accordingly. Any significant changes to the Code will need to be agreed with the Funding Bodies.



REVISED 16 SEPT 2020

A further equality impact assessment and analysis will be undertaken on the final submission early in 2021 to inform the University's future thinking in relation to the process and criteria for identifying staff considered to be independent researchers within its wider inclusivity objectives.

## **Part 4: Selection of outputs and declaration of individual circumstances**

### **4.1 Policy and Procedures**

Outputs will be chosen for submission on the basis of quality, to best represent the excellent research generated by the unit over the assessment period. In doing so, the outcome of any equality impact assessment will be taken into account to ensure that outputs have been selected without disadvantaging any particular protected groups. However, there is no expectation that outputs will be selected specifically to reflect the diversity of Category A submitted staff in any particular unit.

The process of selection will recognise the requirement to include at least one, and a maximum of five, outputs per Category A submitted member of staff. However, beyond this there will be no expectation of how many outputs any particular individual will contribute. This is an important principle of the University's process that will be impressed on staff involved in the selection process through the mandatory training provision.

#### **Review process**

Since 2016, all staff have been invited to provide details of their outputs over the REF2021 assessment period on a central database (REFCV system) linked to the institutional repository, managed by the REF team in RBI. Review of these outputs has been undertaken on an on-going basis. All outputs under consideration, including eligible outputs generated by Category A staff who have left UWE Bristol during the assessment period, are required to have at least two assessments, by internal and/or external reviewers and scored against the published REF quality criteria (**See Appendix 8 – Guidance for Reviewers**). Where there is significant disparity in the assessment of a particular output by two reviewers, a third will be sought.

These assessments are organised by the UoA leaders, reporting to Associate Deans (Research). Internal and external reviewers are chosen on the basis of their research expertise and, in the case of external reviewers, often on the basis of their experience of the REF process. UoA Leaders are also responsible for each output being given an overall score, based on at least two assessments, which is stored on the central database in RBI (see Part 1). Output scores are provided at the level of high/solid/low within each grade as defined by the REF guidance e.g. high 3\*, solid 3\*, low 3\*.

Staff are given feedback on the overall score for their individual outputs by UoA Leaders and may be offered additional anonymous feedback based on the reviewers' comments as appropriate, for developmental purposes.

The total pool of selectable outputs will comprise all eligible outputs of submittable members of staff, up to a maximum of 5 for any one individual. Outputs with co-authors within the same Unit of Assessment will only be counted once within the total pool.

An initial indication of the outputs likely to be selected from the total will be generated as an outcome of the Mock REF being conducted in summer/autumn 2019. However the final selection will take place following implementation of the Code of Practice and after the census date of 31 July 2020 when the FTE of submittable staff and the exact number of outputs required will be known, including any reductions agreed by the Funding Bodies.

Given the requirement for eligible outputs to have at least two internal or external reviews as part of the selection process, the deadline by which outputs have to be available for review will be 31 October 2020. This may include outputs not yet publicly available but which can be reviewed in pre-published form, provided they are expected to be publicly available by the REF deadline of 31 December 2020, or where the appearance of the final version in the public domain has been delayed due to the effects of COVID-19, and it meets the eligibility criteria for delayed outputs set out in 'Guidance on Revisions to REF2021' (REF2020/02).

Outputs for submission will be chosen as follows, by unit of assessment:

- For each Category A submitted member of staff, their most highly rated output will be selected for submission.
- After that, the remaining number of outputs required to be submitted will be chosen on the basis of quality, up to a maximum of 5 outputs per Category A submitted member of staff, including eligible outputs by staff who have left the institution over the assessment period.
- Co-authored outputs will be notionally allocated to one Category A submitted member of staff but will be reviewed if that member of staff reaches the maximum of 5 outputs, and may be re-assigned if any further outputs with that author are selected on the basis of their quality scores
- If it is necessary to choose between outputs of the same quality in order to reach the required number, account will be taken of the distribution of outputs between individuals and across the subject areas of the submission.
- The final selection of outputs will be agreed by the REFSIG.
- Staff will be informed which of their outputs have been selected for submission once the final selection has been agreed. The notional attribution of co-authored outputs will not be indicated to staff.

## **4.2 Decision-making process**

As with all aspects of the REF preparation, the process for selecting outputs is the responsibility of the REFSIG, working with UoA Leaders. The rationale for the process is to ensure that the submission best reflects the excellent research generated by staff in the unit over the assessment period. As noted, there is no expectation about the number of outputs any particular individual may contribute to the submission, and so the decision-making process will not take individual circumstances into account, with the exception of an individual who has made a successful case to be included with zero outputs (see 4.4 below). The eligible outputs of Category A staff who have left the institution during the assessment period will be treated in the same way as those of staff identified as submittable on the census date.

The eligible outputs of staff who have been made compulsorily redundant, where they are the sole UWE author, will only be included with the written permission of the person concerned. Where they are co-authors, and the output is co-authored by a current Category A submitted member of staff, the output may be submitted without requiring the permission of the former staff member who has been subject to redundancy.

**(See Appendix 9 – Output selection process).**

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

The process of selecting outputs for the REF will be governed by the same committees described in Part 1 above. The important principle underpinning the selection process - that there will be no expectation of how many outputs any particular individual will contribute - will be impressed on staff involved in the selection process through the mandatory training provision.

## **4.4 Staff circumstances**

The University will implement the guidance published by the Funding Bodies in taking into account staff whose circumstances have affected their ability to research productively throughout the period in relation to the unit's total output requirement, including any exceptional effects on the ability of an individual staff member to research productively throughout the period so that they do not have the required minimum of one output. In doing so it will be reinforced that the University has no expectation about the number of outputs that staff have produced over the assessment period that may be included in the pool of submitted outputs. In the context of the REF, the information will therefore only be used in a situation where a submitted member of staff has no research outputs as a

consequence of their circumstances, or where the cumulative impact of staff circumstances has had a disproportionate effect on the unit (see 4.8 below).

**(See Appendix 10 - Guidance on Individual Circumstances)**

#### **4.5 Disclosure process**

As part of the REF Mock in 2019, all staff identified provisionally as Category A submitted will be invited to disclose any individual circumstances that are covered by the above guidance, if they wish this to be taken into account. Staff subsequently identified as Category A submitted will also be invited to disclose any individual circumstances. There will be no requirement to disclose such circumstances and it will be made clear to staff how the information will be treated and who will have access to it.

In inviting staff to disclose their circumstances, they will be informed of the reasons for doing so in the context of the University's REF strategy and submission process but will also be given the opportunity to discuss their circumstances in confidence with someone from the HR Advice Hub. It will therefore be an opportunity for staff to raise issues and seek advice and support irrespective of any impact on the REF process.

Disclosure forms with supporting evidence as appropriate, will be submitted and considered in strict confidence by an Individual Circumstances Panel comprising the University's Deputy REF Manager and representatives of Human Resources and the Equality & Diversity Unit. The panel will decide on whether the circumstances clearly meet the requirements of the guidance. **(See Appendix 11 - individual Circumstances Disclosure Form).**

#### **4.6 Decision-making process**

Where such circumstances are not straightforward and a judgment is required, the Individual Circumstances Panel will make an anonymous and confidential recommendation to REFSIG as the decision-making body. This will include taking account of exceptional effects that staff circumstances may have had upon an individual's ability to research productively throughout the period and where there may be a case to submit zero outputs. Where the REFSIG accepts the case that an individual has been unable to generate the minimum requirement of one output over the period, this will be submitted to the Funding Bodies for consideration.

#### **4.7 Communication with staff**

In all cases, the member of staff making the disclosure will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible. Where there are straightforward circumstances and the Individual

Circumstances Panel is able to reach a decision itself, the person will be given feedback within 15 working days. Where such circumstances are not straightforward and a judgment is required by REFSIG, including taking account of exceptional effects that staff circumstances may have had upon an individual's ability to research productively throughout the period, the person will be given feedback within 20 working days. This will include, where relevant, an indication that a case will be made on their behalf to the Funding Bodies for consideration to be given for the person to be submitted with zero outputs. The decision of the Funding Bodies will be conveyed to the individual as soon as it is known.

Where such circumstances could form the basis of a reduction in the number of outputs to be submitted to a particular unit, whether due to one or more individuals being included with zero outputs and/or where the cumulative impact is considered sufficient to make a case for a reduction, the REF Manager will inform the relevant Associate Dean (Research) and UoA leader, without disclosing the nature of any individual circumstances or who they apply to.

#### **4.8 Reduction in outputs**

The University will not routinely request reductions to the number of outputs required to be submitted by a submitting unit. However, where, as a consequence of the cumulative effect of staff circumstances, the available pool of outputs within a particular unit is disproportionately affected, the University may seek a reduction to the total number of outputs required. In doing so, the REFSIG will consider the size and quality of the available output pool compared to the number of outputs required in the unit and make a judgment as to whether the number required prior to any reduction is sufficient to reflect the excellent research generated over the assessment period, or whether a reduction should be sought to allow it to do so. The decision on whether a reduction should be sought sits with the REFSIG.

#### **4.9 Early Career Researchers**

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) will be identified in accordance with the REF guidance and their outputs considered alongside those of all submitted staff and assessed against the same quality criteria.

ECRs are defined as members of staff who meet the definition of Category A eligible on the census date, **and** who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.

For the purposes of the REF, an individual is deemed to have started their career as an independent researcher from the point at which:

- they held a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, which included a primary employment function of undertaking 'research' or 'teaching and research', with any HEI or other organisation, whether in the UK or overseas, **and**
- they first met the definition of an independent researcher

At the same time as collecting information about individual circumstances, all Category A eligible staff with at least one published output on the institutional repository will be invited to indicate whether they consider themselves to meet the definition of an ECR noted above, including the date at which they consider themselves to have met the definition of an independent researcher. Category A eligible staff with no published output on the institutional repository will be assumed not to meet the definition of an ECR. The data provided will be cross-checked with HR records where appropriate. This process will be overseen by the REF Manager reporting to the REFSIG. As with all aspects of the submission, the decision on defining staff as ECRs sits with REFSIG.

All staff who meet the definition of an ECR will be identified as ECRs in the submission through the HESA staff record - the HESA staff return for 2019/20 will include a field to identify all eligible academic staff who meet the REF definition of an ECR. The identification of ECRs will be undertaken initially as part of the Mock REF in the summer of 2019 and again in 2020, to inform the HESA return that year which will be reflected in the REF submission.

In identifying ECRs, the process for determining independence will be that covered in Part 3 above, using the definition of independence given at paragraph 3.1.

#### **4.10 Equality impact assessment**

As noted in Part 1 above, a detailed, equality analysis will be undertaken following the Mock REF in autumn 2019, which includes an analysis of the equality profile of the designated authors of provisionally selected outputs compared to the profile of the designated authors of the total pool of selectable outputs. This analysis will include ECRs as an equality category.

Following analysis and publication of the outcome, REFSIG will consider what, if any, actions should be taken in relation to the process and criteria for selecting outputs and advise the Vice Chancellor accordingly. Any significant changes to the Code will need to be agreed with the Funding Bodies.

A final equality impact assessment and analysis will be undertaken on the final submission early in 2021 to inform the University's future thinking in relation to the process and criteria

for selecting outputs within its wider inclusivity objectives, including its approach to future REF exercises.

#### **4.11 Data Collection and Privacy**

UWE Bristol needs to process certain information about its employees for various employment related purposes, including the preparation and compilation of its submission to the REF. In doing so, we are committed to protecting the privacy and security of personal data in accordance with our Staff Data Privacy Notice. Personal data will only be processed in a way which is compatible with UWE Bristol's policies and procedures.

#### **(See Appendix 13 - Staff Data Privacy Notice)**

The Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR also require institutions to inform their staff as to how data about them that are submitted to the REF will be used by the Funding Bodies. To ensure that staff whose outputs are included in our submission are aware of these uses, we have provided a staff data collection statement for REF 2021, adapted from a model statement provided by the Funding Bodies.

In brief, all information submitted by UWE to the REF will be collected, stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. Information will be submitted to the REF via a secure website. UWE will only be able to access our own data. Information will be processed for the purposes of conducting and evaluating the REF. Information may be shared with other organisations to facilitate this, and will be shared with panel members (comprising panel chairs, members, assessors, advisers, secretaries and observers) for the purpose of assessing submissions. Panel members are all bound by confidentiality and data security arrangements.

#### **(See Appendix 14 - Staff Data Collection Statement for the REF2021)**