



REF2029

Research Excellence Framework

Code of Practice template

Institution name: University of the West of England, Bristol

Date of submission: 11th May 2026

Table of Contents

Part 1: Introduction	5
1.1 Context	5
1.2 Robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion	5
1.2.1 Robustness	5
1.2.2 Transparency	6
1.2.3 Equity and inclusion	8
1.3 Contextualisation of the UWE Bristol REF 2029 Code of Practice within institutional policies	10
1.3.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion	10
1.3.2 People, culture and environment	11
1.3.3 Responsible research assessment	13
1.4 Update on actions since REF 2021	14
1.4.1 Mitigation of equalities risks relating to indicators used to identify contracts with significant responsibility for research	14
1.4.2 Reflection on criteria used to identify contracts with significant responsibility for research	14
1.6 Staff queries and concerns about the implementation of this Code of Practice ..	15
Part 2: Identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR)	16
2.1 Policies and procedures	16
2.1.1 Criteria for SRR	16
2.1.2 Decision-making and communication	18
2.1.3 A University process	20
2.2 Staff, committees and training	20
2.2.1 Roles and responsibilities	20
2.2.2 Training	20
2.3 Appeals	21
2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	22
2.4.1 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 2	23
Part 3: Determining research independence	26
3.1 Policies and procedures	26
3.1.1 Criteria and evidence	26

3.1.2 Decision-making and communication	27
3.1.3 A University process.....	28
3.2 Staff, committees, and training	29
3.2.1 Roles and responsibilities.....	29
3.2.2 Training	29
3.3 Appeals	29
3.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	29
3.4.1 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 3	30
Part 4: Allocating contracts to UoAs.....	31
4.1 Policies and Procedures	31
4.1.1 Criteria and evidence for allocating contracts to UoAs	31
4.1.2 Decision-making and communication	31
4.1.3 A University process.....	32
4.2 Staff, committees and training	32
4.2.1 Roles and responsibilities for allocating contracts to UoAs	32
4.2.2 Training	33
4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	33
4.3.1 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 4	33
Part 5: Selecting outputs.....	34
5.1 Policies and procedures	34
5.1.1 Criteria and evidence for selecting outputs for submission to REF	34
5.1.2 Identifying substantive links to outputs.....	35
5.1.3 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff	36
5.1.4 Assigning outputs to UoAs	37
5.1.5 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs	38
5.1.6 Procedures for ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken within the submitting unit during the REF period	39
5.1.7 Responsible research assessment practice	40
5.2 Staff, committees and training	41
5.2.1 Roles and responsibilities for the selection of outputs	41
5.2.2 Training	41
5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	42

5.3.1 Mitigating relations taken in relation to Part 5	42
Part 6: Annexes	44
6.1 Equality Impact Assessment	44
6.1.1 Context	44
6.1.2 Activities to support EIA development	44
6.1.3 EIA questions	45
6.1.4 Equality Impact Assessment on parts 2 and 3: Identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research and determining research independence...	47
6.1.5 Mitigating actions taken in relation to parts 2 and 3.....	49
6.1.5 Equality Impact Assessment on Part 4: Allocating eligible contracts to UoAs	51
6.1.6 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 4	51
6.1.6 Equality Impact Assessment on Part 5: Selection of outputs (including identifying substantive links, allocating outputs to UoA and ensuring that submissions are representative).....	52
6.1.7 Mitigating relations taken in relation to Part 5	52
6.2 Referenced material in the Code of Practice.....	54
6.2.1 Academic structure at UWE Bristol	54
6.2.2 Research centres and groups.....	54
6.2.3 The Research Excellence Group	56
6.2.4 The Research Excellence Team	58
6.2.5 UoA Leads	58
6.2.6 The UoA Leads' Forum.....	58
6.2.7 UWE REF 2029 UoA Lead role description	59
6.2.8 Further details on mitigation of equalities risks relating to indicators used to identify contracts with significant responsibility for research.....	60

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

It is a condition of participation in REF 2029 that Universities develop, agree and publish a Code of Practice that sets out the policies and procedures that will be implemented in the development of submissions to REF.

This Code of Practice was developed by the University's [Research Excellence Group](#), acting on behalf of the University's Academic Board. Following consultation and engagement with staff, this Code of Practice received executive approval via the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, with academic governance oversight provided via the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Academic Board.

1.2 Robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion

The University's approach to REF 2029 embodies the principles of robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion, as set out in sections [1.2.1-3](#) of this Code of Practice.

1.2.1 Robustness

1.2.1.1 Reliable identification of contracts contributing to the volume measure

The processes described in [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#) of this Code of Practice ensure that the identification of staff contracts which contribute to the REF volume measure reliably reflects the responsibilities of staff holding those contracts.

The University uses role descriptions as recorded in the University's HR system, and workload for research as recorded in the University's academic workload management system, to identify staff contracts which have significant responsibility for research ([2.1.1-2](#)). Workload allocations for research recorded in the workload management system are transparent and auditable.

The University uses role descriptions as recorded in the University's HR system to identify contracts that carry an expectation of independent research, supplemented with indicators of research independence developed by Research England¹ to identify exceptions to a presumption of non-independence for certain role types ([3.1.1-2](#)). Presumptions of independence and non-independence are based on the expectations set out in role descriptions. These role descriptions are based on national frameworks and align with sector norms.

¹ [Volume Measure guidance](#) 9.2.1.

The processes described in [Parts 2](#) and [Part 3](#) are centrally-administered, algorithmic, and do not involve making subjective judgements about an individual's activities or performance.

1.2.2 Transparency

1.2.2.1 Communication of REF processes during development of the Code of Practice

Details of UWE Bristol's REF processes were communicated to staff through consultation on the REF processes set out in [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#) and [Part 5](#) of this Code of Practice, and staff engagement activities to support Equality Impact Assessments on all REF processes described in this Code of Practice.

The University has developed a Research Excellence Framework intranet site, which contains information for staff on the UWE Bristol REF 2029 Code of Practice and other aspects of the University's REF preparations. The REF intranet pages were used to support consultation and engagement with staff on proposed processes for REF 2029, with details of proposed processes and consultation and engagement events made accessible to staff via the pages. These details were also published in successive editions of the University's weekly internal comms bulletin, which is sent to all staff. Both the intranet and the internal comms bulletin are accessible to UWE Bristol staff who are not based in the UK.

A draft of this Code of Practice was provided to the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Academic Board.

Consultation and engagement activities also included:

- A consultation and engagement session with staff representatives of the University and College Union (UCU) (the other relevant union, UNISON, chose to provide feedback in writing).
- A consultation and engagement session with representatives of the University's [staff networks](#). These networks are self-organised groups run by staff, for staff. They bring together people from all colleges and services who identify with a group relating to one of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010, and/or staff with a common interest linked to a protected characteristic (for example, a parents' group).
- A consultation and engagement session with representatives of the University's Black Professors' Group.
- Consultation and engagement sessions with representatives of the University's research centres and groups across all academic schools.
- An 'all-comers' consultation session.

All consultation and engagement activities were publicised together, and staff were informed that they could attend any or all of the events, to maximise participation and avoid disadvantaging staff taking leave during the relevant period.

Staff were able to provide feedback in-person, at the events or via a dedicated email address. Staff were made aware, via the channels described above, that they did not have to attend any of the events to offer feedback on the draft REF processes.

The feedback from the staff consultation and engagement activities informed the development of this Code of Practice.

1.2.2.2 Communication of approved Code of Practice

Once approved by the funding bodies, the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice will be published on both the University's REF intranet pages, and on the UWE Bristol [external internet pages](#).²

To ensure accessibility, key information about the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice will be presented in a range of formats across a range of channels. A series of communication events will be run for:

- The [UoA Leads' Forum](#);
- [Research centre and group leads](#);
- Any staff network or group requesting a communication session;
- All staff.

The sessions will include a brief presentation of key points, and then an extended Q&A section. The sessions for all staff will be hybrid or online delivery, and spread throughout 2026 and into early 2027, to maximise participation and to avoid disadvantaging staff taking a leave of absence during this period. Staff are also able to submit questions at any time via REF@uwe.ac.uk, and these questions and the University's responses will inform the development of a list of FAQs hosted on the REF intranet pages.

In addition to the full text of this Code of Practice being made accessible on the web pages and intranet, a brief summary of key points will be made accessible via the intranet, together with slides and recordings from the communication events.

² [Code of Practice guidance](#) 12.1.1.

1.2.3 Equity and inclusion

1.2.3.1 Collaboration with the UWE Bristol Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team

This UWE Bristol REF 2029 Code of Practice embodies the University's commitment to inclusivity; a [core value](#). In developing this Code of Practice, the [University's Research Excellence Group](#) and [Research and External Engagement](#) service have collaborated closely with [UWE Bristol's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) team. This collaboration included:

- Planning and undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (see [6.1](#)) on REF criteria and processes described in this Code of Practice.
- Supporting staff consultation and engagement activities to inform EIAs on REF criteria and processes described in this Code of Practice.
- Developing EDI-related training tailored to REF processes for key staff working on REF (see [2.2.2](#)).

1.2.3.2 Supporting and valuing diverse research contributions

As highlighted in our [RISE](#) agenda (see [1.3.2](#)), research at UWE Bristol is action-orientated (and therefore highly interdisciplinary) and practiced-based. The University's preparations for REF are accordingly designed to support and value diverse research contributions, including research which is highly interdisciplinary, practiced-based and/or represented in 'non-traditional' output formats. UWE Bristol's REF processes as described in this Code of Practice, are designed to ensure that diverse research contributions are considered for REF on an equal footing.

1.2.3.3 Supporting interdisciplinary research

UWE Bristol has a strong track record of interdisciplinary research and a number of interdisciplinary research centres. The University also runs several interdisciplinary research schemes to enable researchers to look beyond their immediate disciplinary area and develop new research with colleagues working in different fields. The scheme has run throughout the REF 2029 cycle, with the most recent grants for the period 2024-26. The University therefore expects a significant number of interdisciplinary research outputs to be eligible for submission by UWE Bristol to REF 2029.

[Part 5](#) of this Code of Practice describes processes to ensure that interdisciplinary research is:

- treated equitably when identifying research outputs for review;
- reviewed for appropriate REF units of assessment;
- assessed fairly;

- not disadvantaged in the selection of output portfolios for submission to REF.

1.2.3.4 Supporting practice research

Practice-based research is an essential strand of the University's research portfolio, and the University has set up the Practice Research Peer Review College (PRPRC) to support its ambitions in this area, and ensure that practice-based research is not disadvantaged in assessment and selection for REF.

The University's Practice Research Peer Review College (PRPRC), based in the [College of Arts Technology and Environment](#), works to enhance the visibility, impact and support of practice research at UWE, including the development of practice research portfolios to be submitted to REF. The PRPRC is a dedicated group of experienced practice researchers who provide expert peer review, mentorship and advocacy, to strengthen our research culture and foster a thriving community of practice research. UWE Bristol's [REF UoA Leads](#) work with the PRPRC to support the development and evaluation of practice research which may be relevant to their units.

[Part 5](#) of this Code of Practice describes processes to ensure that practice research is:

- treated equitably when identifying research outputs for review;
- reviewed for appropriate REF units of assessment;
- assessed fairly;
- not disadvantaged in the selection of output portfolios for submission to REF.

1.2.3.5 Mitigating for potential bias relating to protected characteristics in REF reviews and selection of outputs for submission

The University monitors potential bias in REF reviews by looking at REF scores through the lens of the protected characteristics of authors (see [6.1](#)). This information is made available to [UoA Leads](#).

Once initial output portfolios have been selected for submission to REF, the [Research Excellence Team](#) will conduct analysis looking at the protected characteristics of UWE staff named on selected outputs against the protected characteristics of staff holding volume-contributing contracts allocated to the UoA, to identify any potential biases affecting the selection of outputs³.

³ Although the decoupling of output submissions from the volume measure in REF 2029 means that the former staff are not necessarily a subset of the latter, significant discrepancies between the representations of protected characteristics across the two groups may indicate a potential issue with bias that can be mitigated for in the final selection.

[UoA Leads](#) are asked to consider diversity (including career stage) when convening internal panels for the review of outputs to inform selection for REF, and to consider diversity when appointing external reviewers.

The University's policies and processes for the selection of outputs for REF are described in [Part 5](#).

1.3 Contextualisation of the UWE Bristol REF 2029 Code of Practice within institutional policies

1.3.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.3.1.1 Strategy

UWE Bristol's REF 2029 Code of Practice sits within a broader framework of organisational culture at the University which includes an overarching institutional strategy for 2020 - 2030, [Strategy 2030 - Transforming Futures](#), which is supported by an [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity](#) strategy for the same period. These strategies cover a period which encompasses the REF survey periods for outputs, impact case studies and SPRE indicators.

UWE Bristol is an inclusive University that aims to support everyone to achieve their full potential, and which challenges discrimination at all levels. Inclusivity is one of the University's [Core Values](#). The University strives to be a supportive and inspiring place to learn and work, where diversity of experience and perspective is encouraged, and learning and research is shared and accessible. The University takes seriously its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, to advance equality for all, to promote a fair and equal society, and protect the rights of everyone. Throughout the institution we design with inclusion in mind and work to remove barriers and disadvantage (see [6.1](#)).

1.3.1.2 Governance of equality, diversity and inclusion at UWE Bristol

The People Executive Committee, chaired by the institution's Chief People Officer, serves as the senior governance body responsible for equality, diversity, and inclusion. It reports directly to the Vice Chancellor's Executive (VCE) and provides assurance to the People and Academic Assurance Committee, a sub-group of the Board of Governors. All members of the VCE act as Senior Diversity Champions, each aligned to a specific protected characteristic, reinforcing leadership accountability across the institution. The VCE is further supported by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Advisory Group, whose membership comprises senior external executives from diverse sectors across the region. Strategic development and delivery of the equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda is led by the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team.

1.3.1.3 Athena Swan

Across our research activities, the University's commitment to inclusivity is evidenced strongly through the work of school- 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 colleges and at University level. UWE Bristol [achieved](#) an institutional Athena SWAN Silver Award in 2024, demonstrating real institutional progress since the REF 2021 submission. The University is now implementing a five-year action plan for the period 2024 – 2029.

1.3.1.4 Anti-Racism and support for Global Majority researchers

The University has also developed and adopted an [Anti-Racism strategy](#) and action plan for the period 2025-2028, with the intention that UWE Bristol will become a sector leader for racial equity, setting a new standard for higher education and embedding a lasting culture of inclusion. The University has pledged to embed anti-racism within the research environment at UWE Bristol, setting targets such as increasing the proportion of Global Majority colleagues with significant responsibility for research to 20% by 2030 (as measured in the annual HESA return).

1.3.2 People, culture and environment

1.3.2.1 RISE Agenda

[RISE](#) – standing for Research, Innovation, Skills, and Enterprise – describes the University's research ecosystem⁴. Research at UWE Bristol is action-orientated and practiced-based.

The University's priorities for research are organised through the RISE Research Beacons:

- [Shaping integrated healthcare](#);
- [Harnessing creativity and technology](#);
- [Enriching culture, place and community](#);
- [Securing a green, resilient future](#).

1.3.2.2 Strategy

The University's ambitions and priorities for people, culture and environment are set out in UWE Bristol's [Transforming Futures People Strategy 2020-2030](#) and [Transforming Futures Research Strategy 2020-2030](#).

⁴ 'RISE is the University's institutional compass – a unifying lens through which we shape priorities, steer decisions and grow with purpose. It's a framework for aligning our ambitions, our identity and our impact'. [We're creating tomorrow, today. RISE - Home | UWE Bristol](#).

The strategic priorities for research at UWE include:

- Developing and supporting research which drives outstanding, research-enabled, practice-based learning and skills development across all learner-communities.
- Developing and supporting opportunities for research career development across the University as a whole.
- Ensuring that UWE research is outstanding in terms of ethics and governance, is responsible, well-evidenced and authoritative, and open to scrutiny.
- Working to address the under-representation of individuals and organisations from Global Majority communities across our research activities, and opposing racism in all its forms.

1.3.2.3 Academic structure at UWE Bristol

Teaching and research at UWE Bristol is delivered through ten academic schools, situated across three colleges (see [6.2.1](#)).

1.3.2.4 Researcher concordat

UWE Bristol is strongly committed to enhancing the support for researchers as an integral part of creating a more positive, diverse, inclusive and open research culture and environment. As a part of this commitment, UWE Bristol became a signatory to the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers \(Researchers' Concordat\)](#) in July 2024.

The Concordat sets the expectations and responsibilities of researchers, their managers, employers and funders to achieve this aim. By signing up to the Concordat, the University made a public commitment to Concordat's principles and an engagement to develop, publish and implement an action plan.

The action plan addresses three key areas:

- Environment and culture – fostering a healthy, inclusive, and diverse research environment where all researchers can flourish, promoting integrity, well-being, and tackling issues like harassment.
- Employment – ensuring fair, transparent, and merit-based recruitment, progression, and promotion, with good work-life balance and addressing insecure contracts.
- Professional and career development – making development integral to research careers, equipping researchers with the skills to reach their potential and adapt to future needs.

A set of specific actions to support each of the principles has been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders across the University. The UWE Researcher Concordat [Action Plan](#) has been approved by the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the University Academic Board.

Details of support for research and researchers at UWE Bristol will be set out in the University's institutional- and unit-level Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) submissions.

1.3.3 Responsible research assessment

UWE Bristol is committed to the principles of responsible research assessment. Although not a signatory to DORA, the University's approach to REF aligns with the relevant [DORA recommendations](#) (specifically recommendations 1 and 5):

- The University's guidance to [UoA Leads](#) and staff involved in the review of research outputs to inform selection for REF makes clear that the University will not use journal-based metrics, such as 'journal impact factors', as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles (DORA [Recommendation 1](#)).
- REF reviewers evaluate all types of research output on an equal footing (see [1.3.1](#) and [Part 5](#)) (DORA [Recommendation 5](#)).

[UoA Leads](#) and their teams, who are responsible for organizing reviews of outputs to inform selection for REF, are required to undertake training on responsible research assessment provided by an external consultant, [Pearn Kandola](#), and to cascade insights to all staff involved in REF reviews (see [2.2.2](#)).

The University's commitment to responsible research assessment extends beyond REF preparations, informing the way research is evaluated more broadly. For example, the development and use of UWE Bristol's suite of [research metrics](#) was consciously informed by the Metric Tide's principles of robustness, humility, transparency, diversity and reflexivity. In 2018 the University committed to not using the *h-index* in academic appraisal, because of concerns that it could disadvantage staff with specific protected characteristics.

The University's approach to the use of 'artificial intelligence' algorithms in the evaluation of research to inform selection for REF is set out in [Part 5](#) (sections [5.1.5](#) and [5.1.8](#).)

1.4 Update on actions since REF 2021

UWE Bristol has addressed a number of the key recommendations from the University's REF 2021 EIA to support equity, diversity and inclusion, as described below.

1.4.1 Mitigation of equalities risks relating to indicators used to identify contracts with significant responsibility for research

The University's approach to determining significant responsibility for research in REF 2029, described in [Part 2](#) of this Code of Practice, is broadly continuous with the approach taken in [REF 2021](#), relying on role titles and workload allocations for research to identify contracts with SRR. Since REF 2021, UWE Bristol has taken steps to mitigate equalities risks related to both of these indicators.

The University has taken steps to mitigate equalities risks relating to:

- awarding of research time through internal workload allocations;
- support for staff to apply for external research funding;
- promotion of staff into Associate Professor and Professor roles.

See also [6.2.8](#). Further details will be made available in our institutional-level Strategy, People and Research Environment submission.

1.4.2 Reflection on criteria used to identify contracts with significant responsibility for research

The University has given careful consideration to the criteria used for determining significant responsibility for research, developing these from the REF 2021 criteria to promote inclusivity and thereby recognise a more diverse portfolio of research activity and community of researchers across the institution. As described in [Part 2](#), the University uses a combination of role type and workload allocated for research to identify contracts with SRR. This REF 2029 Code of Practice reflects the following refinements of the criteria used for determining SRR:

- The University has reflected on what counts as 'significant' responsibility within the institutional context at UWE Bristol. Where SRR is determined via workload, the threshold has been lowered from approximately 20% of workload allocation for research in REF 2021, to approximately 16% in this Code of Practice. This development of criteria is designed to promote inclusion, leading to a broader and potentially more diverse range of contracts being determined as having significant responsibility for research.

- The University has reflected on our classification of workload in light of the REF definition of research and now includes a broader range of activities under the heading of ‘research’. This development of criteria is designed to promote the recognition of a more diverse portfolio of research at UWE Bristol.

1.6 Staff queries and concerns about the implementation of this Code of Practice

Where staff have queries or concerns about the implementation of this Code of Practice, they should contact the [Research Excellence Team](#) via REF@uwe.ac.uk, providing any relevant evidence. The [Research Excellence Team](#) will investigate and take corrective action where necessary. Where there is evidence of a serious breach of the Code of Practice, the Research Excellence Team will refer the matter to the [Research Excellence Group](#).

The funding bodies will provide a complaints and investigations process for when individuals believe codes have not been followed. The complaints and investigations process will include a requirement (where appropriate) to take corrective actions on submissions where complaints are upheld. The REF Team at Research England can be contacted at info@ref.ac.uk.

Part 2: Identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR)

2.1 Policies and procedures

The following section sets out policies and procedures for identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR).

This section of the Code of Practice is concerned particularly with academic contracts for ‘teaching and research’ and ‘research only’ (that is, contracts returned to HESA as ACEMPFUN codes 3 and 2), as these contracts have been identified by the funding bodies as eligible to contribute to the volume measure. The consequent omission of any discussion of ‘research-enabling’ contracts, such as those held by technicians or professional services staff, in this section or in the Code of Practice more broadly, does not in any way detract from the indispensable contribution of these staff to research at UWE Bristol. The University is working across all units of assessment to ensure that any outputs and contributions to impact from research-enabling staff are considered for inclusion in the University’s submissions to REF 2029.

2.1.1 Criteria for SRR

Eligible academic staff contracts are those that belong to academic staff members on our payroll during the REF volume survey period, whose primary employment functions, as recorded in the University’s HESA staff returns, are either ‘teaching and research’ or ‘research-only’. For REF 2029, the REF volume survey period comprises the academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27.⁵

The University is required to identify all eligible staff contracts belonging to staff with significant responsibility for research (SRR). Contracts with SRR are those for which explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and where this is an expectation of the role.⁶ These contracts will be flagged through the University’s HESA staff returns and will contribute to the REF volume measure.

This Code of Practice sets out the University’s criteria for determining which eligible staff contracts have SRR. These criteria are based upon job role expectations, and explicit time for research, rather than past performance, and will be applied objectively and consistently across the University.

⁵ [Volume measure guidance](#) 6.0.1.

⁶ [Volume measure guidance](#) 8.4.

In summary, the following eligible staff contracts will be considered to have SRR:

- All professorial contracts– Professors and Associate Professors;
- Contracts relating to Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and equivalent roles where the total workload allocation for research is at least 35 days pro rata in the relevant academic year;
- Contracts relating to Senior Research Fellow roles;
- Contracts relating to Research Fellow, Research Associate and KTP Associate roles where, *exceptionally*, there is evidence of acting as independent researchers (see [Part 3](#)).⁷

No other eligible staff contracts will be considered as meeting our criteria for SRR.

2.1.1.1 Contracts held by Professors and Associate Professors

The University considers that all contracts held by Professors and Associate Professors have SRR by virtue of the job role, which confers explicit time and resources for research activity through the standard professorial allowance of at least 35 days per year (pro rata for part-time, or part-year working).

2.1.1.2 Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and equivalent contracts

Not all of UWE Bristol's Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and equivalent contracts meet the University's criteria for SRR, in line with a diverse academic workforce. The University considers that an explicit total workload allocation for research of 35 days or greater for a full-time contract across an academic year reflects sufficient time and resources to justify a contract having SRR. Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and equivalent contracts where the total workload allocation for research reaches this threshold of 35 days (pro rata for part-time or part-year working) will therefore be considered to have SRR for REF purposes.

The University will pro rata the threshold of 35 days of total workload allocation for research for part-time contracts, and contracts that start or end part-way through an academic year. For example, for a part-time contract at 0.6 FTE for a full academic year, the threshold for total workload allocation for research would be reduced to 21 days (0.6 x 35 days). For a full-time contract starting three months after the start of the academic year, the threshold for total workload allocation for research would be reduced to 26.25 days (0.75 x 35 days).

⁷ Contracts relating to Research Assistants, as distinct from Research Associates, are administrative contracts and are not eligible to contribute to the volume measure. Staff holding these contracts nonetheless make a valuable contribution to the research process at UWE (see [2.1](#)).

‘Equivalent’ contracts are those teaching and research contracts which relate to roles with alternative job titles that reflect additional responsibilities for managerial or administrative functions – for example Associate Director roles. These contracts will be treated in the same way as Lecturer and Senior Lecturer contracts, and will have SRR only if they have sufficient workload allocation in the relevant academic year.

2.1.1.3 Senior Research Fellow contracts

It is an expectation of the job role for all Senior Research Fellow contracts to act as independent researchers (see [Part 3](#)). The University therefore consider that all Senior Research Fellow contracts have SRR, as they have explicit time and resources available to actively engage in independent research.

2.1.1.4 Research Fellow, Research Associate and KTP Associate contracts

Whilst Research Fellows, Research Associates and KTP Associates have explicit time and resources to engage in research, they are primarily employed to support existing research activity and these contracts do not carry an expectation to act as independent researchers (see [Part 3](#)). Only where there is evidence of pursuing independent research, according to the criteria outlined in [Part 3](#), will Research Fellow, Research Associate and KTP Associate contracts be considered to have SRR.

2.1.2 Decision-making and communication

2.1.2.2 Process

The process for determining which of the University’s eligible staff contracts have SRR will take place annually, once per academic year, as follows:

2.1.2.2.1 Contracts that have SRR by virtue of the job role

All contracts held by Professors and Associate Professors, and contracts held by Senior Research Fellows, during the academic year, are identified from data held in the University’s HR system, and recorded as having SRR.

2.1.2.2.2 Contracts that have SRR by virtue of the total workload allocation for research

For contracts relating to Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and equivalent roles, finalised workload allocations for the academic year are extracted from the University’s workload management system. The total workload allocation for research is calculated as the sum of all workload allocations tagged as research in the workload management system in a given academic year. This includes workload allocations resulting from both

internal and external funding. Where this total workload allocation equals or exceeds our threshold of 35 days (pro rata for part-time or part-year working), Senior Lecturer and Lecturer and equivalent contracts are determined to have SRR and recorded as such. All other Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and equivalent contracts are recorded as not having SRR for the given academic year.

2.1.2.2.3 Contracts that require a determination on research independence to have SRR

For the University's Research Fellow, Research Associate and KTP Associate contracts, the process outlined in [Part 3](#) is applied annually to determine research independence, leading to a determination on SRR. Where research independence has been demonstrated for a contract in a given academic year, it will be deemed to persist into future academic years.

2.1.2.3 Roles

The process is administered, and initial determinations of SRR made, by the [Research Excellence Team](#), based in the University's [Research and External Engagement](#) service. The initial determinations of SRR for all eligible staff contracts are presented to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

2.1.2.4 Timelines

The process is run annually in August-September for the preceding academic year. For example, data extracted from HR and workload management systems on 1st August 2026 will relate to eligible staff contracts in the 2025-26 academic year, and the 2025-26 HESA staff record.

All staff with eligible staff contracts in the preceding academic year, who are still in post, are able to access the determination of the SRR status of their contract(s) in September.

2.1.2.5 Communication of decisions

In August, staff are notified of how to access decisions via the University's internal comms bulletin and the Research Excellence Framework intranet pages. To support transparency, staff are provided with context for decisions and details about processes for queries and appeals.

2.1.3 A University process

To support consistency and fairness, the University will run a single, centrally administered institutional process for identifying contracts with significant responsibility for research.

2.2 Staff, committees and training

2.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

The following staff are involved in the University's determinations of significant responsibility for research:

2.2.1.1 The Research Excellence Team

The [Research Excellence Team](#), based in the University's Research and External Engagement service, provides advice, procedures and information to underpin determinations of SRR for eligible staff contracts. This team administers the process for determining SRR and recommends annual SRR designations to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

2.2.1.1 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange

The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange has decision-making authority for SRR determinations to inform the REF fields in the 25/26 and 26/27 HESA staff returns.

2.2.2 Training

All staff supporting the University's REF preparations, including those involved with identifying staff contacts with significant responsibility for research, are required to complete EDI training tailored specifically to REF processes.

Staff supporting REF preparations are required to complete:

- An e-learning module on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion developed at UWE Bristol;
- Two e-learning modules on Anti-Racism developed at UWE Bristol;
- A Responsible Research Assessment e-learning module developed by an external provider, [Pearn Kandola](#);

- A session on fair and responsible research assessment, incorporating EDI issues, developed by the [Research Excellence Team](#);
- Any additional external training recommended by the REF People and Diversity Advisory Panel.

The following groups are required to complete this training:

- Members of the University's [Research Excellence Group](#) (this group includes the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange);
- [UoA Leads](#) and their teams;
- School Directors of Research and Enterprise;
- Deans and Heads of School;
- The [Research Excellence Team](#);
- Staff supporting the appeals process (see [2.3](#)).

2.3 Appeals

An appeals process, in relation to identifying contracts with significant responsibility for research and research independence (RI, see [Part 3](#)) is available to all staff. Appeals may be made once provisional determinations have been made available to relevant staff in September of 2026 and 2027.

In August, staff are notified of how to access decisions via the University's internal comms bulletin and the Research Excellence Framework intranet pages.

Communications notifying staff of whether their contracts will contribute to volume for REF include information on REF 2029 and the University's Code of Practice to contextualise the determinations, together with details of an initial queries process and formal appeals process (including the grounds on which staff can appeal).

Initial queries will be managed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange, advised by the [Research Excellence Team](#). The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange has authority to amend determinations following initial queries where errors are identified.

Staff can formally appeal provisional determinations via a dedicated inbox: REFappeals@uwe.ac.uk. Appeals can only be made on the grounds that the process for determining significant responsibility for research or research independence has been incorrectly applied. As set out in [2.1.2](#), where SRR determinations are dependent on

workload allocations, the HESA timeline requires that determinations are made on the basis of data extracted on 1st August. Amendments to workload allocations made after 1st August cannot constitute the basis of an appeal. Appeals will be heard by a senior staff member appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, who has authority to amend SRR determinations following the formal appeals process. The decision of this staff member is final. The senior staff member is required to have completed the REF EDI training described in [2.2.2](#).

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For the full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this REF 2029 Code of Practice, including details of supporting activities and EIA questions see [6.1](#).

The University's approach to the identification of contracts with significant responsibility for research in REF 2029 is broadly continuous with the approach taken in REF 2021. The University has carefully explored other possible options (for example, membership of a research centre conferring SRR), but has concluded that the combination of role type and workload for research used for REF 2021 is the only feasible option which is applicable across the University and does not have serious unintended consequences for staff.

As described in [1.4.2](#), the University has carefully considered the criteria used for determining significant responsibility for research, developing these from the REF 2021 criteria to promote inclusivity and thereby recognise a more diverse portfolio of research activity and community of researchers across the institution. The University's REF 2029 Code of Practice reflects the following refinements of the criteria used for determining SRR:

- The University has reflected on what counts as 'significant' responsibility within the institutional context at UWE Bristol. Where SRR is determined via workload, the threshold has been lowered from approximately 20% of workload allocation for research in REF 2021, to approximately 16% in this Code of Practice. This development of criteria is designed to promote inclusion, leading to a broader and potentially more diverse range of contracts being determined as having significant responsibility for research.
- The University has reflected on our classification of workload in light of the REF definition of research and now includes a broader range of activities under the heading of 'research'. This development of criteria is designed to promote the recognition of a more diverse portfolio of research activities at UWE Bristol.

Engagement from staff in support of this EIA focussed specifically on the internal

allocation of time for research, which feeds into the University's process for identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research, rather than the process itself.

2.4.1 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 2

2.4.1.1 Adjustments to internal research schemes

As set out in [6.2.8](#), the University has put in place measures to mitigate equalities risks relating to the administration of internal schemes which allocate workload for research.

The University has recently undertaken a review of internally-administered funding schemes, as part of a broader Research Readiness Review. The review made use of both quantitative evidence (returns on investment, REF submissions, career progression) and qualitative feedback from staff, to understand the potential impacts on different groups of the design and administration of the schemes. The review identified issues with unnecessary complexity, short-term allocations, and risks of exclusion for part-time staff, technical staff, and staff on fixed-term contracts. In response to the review, the University implemented the following initiatives to mitigate identified risks:

- *Mentoring and career development support.* MCAP, RIS and NS⁸ now include mentoring and tailored training, which can support underrepresented groups in navigating academic careers.
- *Protected research time.* A new emphasis on guaranteed and meaningful research time helps mitigate the disadvantage faced by staff with care-giving responsibilities and those on part-time contracts, which often include women and disabled staff.
- *Inclusive scheme design.* Schemes are now more flexible, better-timed, and inclusive, which potentially benefits staff from diverse backgrounds. Scheme documentation now uses inclusive language and avoids assumptions about

⁸ The University administers the following research and research-related schemes:

- The AHRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) supports knowledge exchange and impact from arts and humanities research.
- The Challenge Fund (CF) supports cross-disciplinary research collaborations.
- The Engagement and Impact Fund (EIF) supports engagement with external communities to enhance research impact.
- The Mid-Career Accelerator Programme (MCAP) builds capacity and supports bidding skills for mid-career researchers to lead world-class research.
- The Women Researchers' Mentoring Scheme (WRMS) promotes professional development and equality for women in research.
- The New Starter Research Development Scheme (NS) supports new staff to initiate impactful research.
- The Research Investment Scheme (RIS) supports research aligned with strategic goals.

career paths or applicant availability. EDI-awareness training for application reviewers helps to recognise and mitigate unconscious bias in application assessments.

- *Transparent reporting.* The University now shares anonymised data and findings on scheme participation and outcomes internally, to build trust and accountability.

The revised frameworks introduced standardised online applications, transparent timelines, and consistent monitoring linked to development plans, ensuring decisions are fair, evidence-based, and accountable. Feedback from awardees has also helped to shape continuous improvement to activities and processes.

2.4.1.2 Acknowledgement of the contributions to research of technical and other research-enabling staff

Responding to concerns raised by staff that technicians and other research-enabling staff were not referred to in parts 2 and 3 of the University's Code of Practice (which focusses on those academic staff contracts, reported to HESA as ACEMPFUN codes 3 and 2, which are eligible to contribute to the volume measure), the University has introduced statements in sections [2.1](#) and [3.1](#) acknowledging the indispensable contribution of technicians and other research-enabling staff to research at UWE Bristol. The University is working across all units of assessment to ensure that any outputs and contributions to impact from research-enabling staff are considered for inclusion in the University's submissions to REF 2029.

2.4.1.3 Improved communications process relating to determinations of significant responsibility for research and research independence

The University has revised its proposed plan for communication of decisions relating to significant responsibility for research and research independence, and the related appeals process (see [2.3](#)), due to concerns about the ability of staff taking leave of absence over the relevant period to engage with the appeals process. Due to the tight timeline for communication of decisions and the appeals process, which is constrained by the HESA timetable, staff who take a leave of absence may have less opportunity to engage with the appeals process. This could disproportionately affect staff on maternity or parental leave, staff with a disability, and staff with school-age children who may be more likely to take annual leave during the relevant period. To promote inclusion, the University has committed to giving relevant staff notice of the timeline for forthcoming decisions on SRR and RI, well in advance of August. Line managers and centre directors will also be asked to communicate with relevant staff taking a leave of absence in the relevant period.

Part 3: Determining research independence

3.1 Policies and procedures

The following section sets out policies and procedures for identifying staff contracts which demonstrate research independence.

This section of the Code of Practice is concerned particularly with contracts for ‘teaching and research’ and ‘research only’ (that is, contracts returned to HESA as ACEMPFUN codes 3 and 2), as these contracts have been identified by the funding bodies as eligible to contribute to the volume measure for REF 2029. The consequent omission of any discussion of ‘research-enabling’ contracts, such as those held by technicians or professional services staff, in this section or in the Code of Practice more broadly, does not in any way detract from the indispensable contribution of these staff to research at UWE Bristol. The University is working across all units of assessment to ensure that any outputs and contributions to impact from research-enabling staff are considered for inclusion in the University’s submissions to REF 2029.

3.1.1 Criteria and evidence

In line with REF 2029 guidance,⁹ the University considers an eligible staff contract (see [2.1.1](#)) to demonstrate research independence if the relevant staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual’s research programme.

Most staff with eligible academic contracts that have sufficient time and resources for research to meet the threshold for SRR (see [2.1.1](#)) undertake self-directed research and act as independent researchers, and this is an expectation of their role. This applies to Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Research Fellows, and Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and equivalent with SRR.

Staff with Research Fellow, Research Associate and KTP Associate contracts do not carry an expectation to act as independent researchers by virtue of their job role, as they are primarily employed to support another individual’s research¹⁰. For this group of staff, eligible contracts will only contribute to volume where there is evidence of independent research, according to the following criteria:

⁹ [Volume Measure guidance](#) 9.1.3.

¹⁰ Contracts relating to Research Assistants, as distinct from Research Associates, are administrative contracts and are not eligible to contribute to the volume measure. Staff holding these contracts nonetheless make a valuable contribution to the research process at UWE.

- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence. [This is the list of eligible research fellowships](#).
- Acting as lead applicant on externally funded research projects
- Leading a research group or a substantial/specialised work package
- For staff whose work is primarily aligned with UoAs 13-34 this may also include:
 - being named as a co-applicant on an externally funded research grant/award
 - having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.

These criteria have been recommended by Research England,¹¹ and have not been supplemented for this Code of Practice. Contracts relating to staff meeting one or more of the above indicators may be considered to be independent researchers. Contracts which have previously been identified as for independent research will be presumed independent unless, exceptionally, there is evidence to the contrary.

3.1.2 Decision-making and communication

3.1.2.1 Process

3.1.2.1.1 Contracts that carry an expectation of acting as an independent researcher

All contracts held by Professors and Associate Professors, and Senior Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and equivalent contracts with SRR, are identified from data held in the University's HR and workload management systems, and recorded as research independent.

3.1.2.1.2 Contracts that do not carry an expectation of acting as an independent researcher

All contracts relating to Research Fellows, Research Associates and KTP Associates are identified from data held in the University's HR system. Contracts which have previously been identified as for independent research are marked as research independent.

The [Research Excellence Team](#) undertake an annual survey of the University's research management system, Worktribe, and other records held by the Research and External Engagement service, to identify evidence of independent research as set out in [3.1.1](#). Where evidence of any one of the criteria for independence described above is identified, the contract is marked as research independent.

¹¹ [Volume measure guidance](#) 9.2.1.

Initial determinations and relevant evidence are then made available to the College Deans for Research and Enterprise. The Deans, in consultation with the School Directors for Research and Enterprise, can apply relevant knowledge of the research environment at UWE Bristol to identify any gaps in the evidence for research independence on the University's systems, and if necessary suggest amendments to the [Research Excellence Team](#). The determinations are then presented to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

3.1.2.1 Roles

The process is administered, and initial determinations of research independence made, by the [Research Excellence Team](#), based in the University's Research and External Engagement service. Scrutiny of the evidence used to identify exceptions to the presumption of non-independence for Research Associates, Research Fellows and KTP Associates is provided by the College Deans for Research and Enterprise. The initial determinations of research independence for all eligible staff contracts are presented to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

3.1.2.2 Timelines

The process is run annually in August-September for the preceding academic year. For example, data extracted from the University's HR systems in August 2026 will relate to eligible staff contracts in the 2025-26 academic year, and the 2025-26 HESA staff record.

All staff with eligible staff contracts in the preceding academic year, who are still in post, are able to access the determination of the research independence status of their contract(s) in September.

3.1.2.3 Communication of decisions

In August, staff are notified of how to access decisions via the University's internal comms bulletin and the Research Excellence Framework intranet pages. To support transparency, staff are provided with context for the decision and details about processes for queries and appeals.

3.1.3 A University process

To support consistency and fairness, the University will run a single, centrally administered institutional process for identifying contracts for independent research.

3.2 Staff, committees, and training

3.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

3.2.1.1 The Research Excellence Team

The [Research Excellence Team](#), based in the University's Research and External Engagement service, provides advice, procedures and information to underpin determinations on research independence for relevant staff contracts. This team administers the process for determining research independence and recommends annual research independence designations to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

3.2.1.2 The College Deans for Research and Enterprise

The College Deans Research and Enterprise, in consultation with the School Directors for Research and Enterprise where appropriate, provide scrutiny of the evidence used by the [Research Excellence Team](#) to make initial determinations on research independence, to identify any gaps in the evidence which could affect determinations.

3.2.1.3 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange

The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange has decision-making authority for research independence determinations to inform the REF fields in the 25/26 and 26/27 HESA staff returns.

3.2.2 Training

All staff supporting our REF processes, including those involved with identifying contracts for independent research, receive EDI training tailored specifically to REF processes (training for staff supporting REF is detailed in [2.2.2](#)).

3.3 Appeals

Please see the appeals process set out in [2.3](#).

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For the full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this REF 2029 Code of Practice, including details of supporting activities and EIA questions see [6.1](#).

The University's criteria for determining research independence (see [3.1.1](#)) have been adopted from the guidance provided by the funding bodies¹². Comments on the proposals for [Part 3](#) focussed principally on the communication of decisions on research independence.

3.4.1 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 3

3.4.1.1 Acknowledgement of the contributions to research of technical and other research-enabling staff

Responding to concerns raised by staff that technicians and other research-enabling staff were not referred to in parts 2 and 3 of the University's Code of Practice (which focusses on those staff contracts, reported to HESA as ACEMPFUN codes 2 and 3, which are eligible to contribute to the volume measure), the University has introduced statements in sections [2.1](#) and [3.1](#) acknowledging the indispensable contribution of technicians and other research-enabling staff to research at UWE Bristol. The University is working across all units of assessment to ensure that any outputs and contributions to impact from research-enabling staff are considered for inclusion in the University's submissions to REF 2029.

3.4.1.2 Improved communications process relating to determinations of significant responsibility for research and research independence

The University has revised its proposed plan for communication of decisions relating to significant responsibility for research and research independence, and the related appeals process (see [2.3](#)), due to concerns about the ability of staff taking leave of absence over the relevant period to engage with the appeals process. Due to the tight timeline for communication of decisions and the appeals process, which is constrained by the HESA timetable, staff who take a leave of absence may have less opportunity to engage with the appeals process. This could disproportionately affect staff on maternity or parental leave, staff with a disability, and staff with school-age children who may be more likely to take annual leave during the relevant period. To promote inclusion, the University has committed to giving relevant staff notice of the timeline for forthcoming decisions on SRR and RI, well in advance of August, when such decisions will be made. Line managers and centre directors will also be asked to communicate with relevant staff taking a leave of absence in the relevant period.

¹² Volume measure guidance 9.2.1.

Part 4: Allocating contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedures

The following section sets out policies and procedures for allocating eligible contracts to UoAs in the annual HESA staff return.

4.1.1 Criteria and evidence for allocating contracts to UoAs

Contracts are initially mapped to UoAs based on the [academic school](#) in which the member of staff holding the contract is based, where there is a clear alignment between an academic school and a single REF 2029 UoA (for example, the School of Engineering and UoA 12). The location of staff in a particular academic school is held in HR records.

Where UWE Bristol's academic schools do not align with a single UoA, or where relevant staff are based in an organisational unit which is not an academic school, contracts are allocated to UoAs based on role descriptions, supplemented if necessary by a survey of relevant research projects, outputs and CVs, considering how these map to UoA descriptors. Role descriptions are held in HR records and details of research projects and outputs are held on the University's research management system, Worktribe.

To ensure alignment of contracts with UoA descriptors, initial allocations based on mapping of academic schools to UoAs may be revised based on a survey of relevant research projects, outputs and CVs where this is considered necessary, for example, if the REF 2029 Panel Criteria and Working Methods include significantly revised UoA descriptors compared with REF 2021.

4.1.2 Decision-making and communication

4.1.2.1 Process

Initial allocation of contracts to UoAs is undertaken by the [Research Excellence Team](#), using data from HR systems and Worktribe. A UoA rationale is recorded for each contract. Initial allocations are made available for scrutiny by the [UoA Leads](#), who may suggest revised allocations on the basis of their local knowledge of the research landscape at UWE Bristol, to inform the preparation of the HESA return. The allocation of contracts to the UoAs in the HESA return is presented to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

4.1.2.2 Roles

Initial allocations of contracts to REF UoAs are made by the [Research Excellence Team](#), based in the University's Research and External Engagement service. The [UoA Leads](#) provide scrutiny of the initial allocations of contracts to REF UoAs, suggesting revised allocations where appropriate. The allocation of contracts to the UoAs in the HESA return is presented to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange for approval on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

4.1.2.3 Timelines

The process is run annually in August-September for the preceding academic year. For example, data extracted from our HR systems in August 2026 will relate to eligible staff contracts in the 2025-26 academic year, and the 2025-26 HESA staff record.

4.1.3 A University process

To support consistency and fairness, the University will run a single, centrally administered institutional process for allocating contracts to UoAs.

4.2 Staff, committees and training

4.2.1 Roles and responsibilities for allocating contracts to UoAs

4.2.1.1 The Research Excellence Team

The [Research Excellence Team](#) make recommendations to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange on the allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs.

4.2.1.2 The UoA Leads

The [UoA Leads](#) scrutinise initial allocations made by the [Research Excellence Team](#), suggesting revised allocations where appropriate.

4.2.1.3 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange

The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange approves the allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs in the HESA return on behalf of the [Research Excellence Group](#).

4.2.2 Training

All staff supporting our REF processes, including those involved with allocating contracts to UoAs, receive EDI training tailored specifically to REF processes (training for staff supporting REF is detailed in [2.2.2](#)).

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For the full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this REF 2029 Code of Practice, including details of supporting activities and EIA questions see [6.1](#).

The allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs was not an area which attracted feedback in the staff engagement sessions to support this EIA. However, we have put in place mitigations against the possibility that the allocation of staff contracts to UoAs in the HESA return could disadvantage staff with specific protected characteristics.

4.3.1 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 4

4.3.1.1 UoA Lead scrutiny of allocations and rationales

As described in [4.1.2](#), initial mappings of contracts to UoAs made by the Research Excellence Team, together with the rationale for each allocation, are made available to all UoA Leads for scrutiny. UoA Leads are able to flag issues with the allocations.

4.3.1.2 Communication to staff

The University has committed to clearly communicating to staff that the allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs in the HESA return does not determine the University's view of the disciplinary identity of the contract holders, and that the allocation of contracts to UoAs for REF may not align with the coding of contracts by HESA cost centres in every case. Staff are also made aware that the allocation of an eligible contract to a given UoA does not determine the units to which outputs are submissible.

Part 5: Selecting outputs

5.1 Policies and procedures

The following section sets out policies and procedures for selecting outputs for submission by the University to REF 2029.

5.1.1 Criteria and evidence for selecting outputs for submission to REF

5.1.1.1 Selection on the basis of quality

Outputs will be selected for submission to REF on the basis of quality, where differentiation on quality is feasible, to best represent the excellent research generated by the submitting unit over the assessment period. Where selection decisions need to be made between outputs assigned to the same quality banding, selections will be made on the basis of representativeness (see [5.1.7](#)), in its multiple dimensions, taking account of the provenance of all outputs, including those outputs assigned to a higher quality banding.

5.1.1.2 Evaluation of quality

Quality is evaluated via a process of peer review, which has been undertaken on an on-going basis. All outputs considered for REF, including outputs where the substantive link is via former staff, are required to have at least two assessments, by internal and/or external reviewers, and scored against the published REF quality criteria. 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 [UoA Leads](#), reporting to the [University's Research Excellence Group](#). 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 (such as serving on a relevant sub-panel for REF 2021). The appointment of external reviewers is managed by the [Research Excellence Team](#) in consultation with [UoA Leads](#). The [Research Excellence Team](#) review proposed appointments for potential conflicts of interest and suggest alternatives where relevant.

[UoA Leads](#) are also responsible for each output being given an overall score, based on at least two assessments. This score and the relevant underpinning reviews are stored in the REF Module of the University's research management system, Worktribe. In assigning overall scores, which will inform selection for REF, [UoA Leads](#) are assisted by a moderation panel convened from colleagues working in the unit with relevant expertise.

[UoA Leads](#) may revise overall scores prior to making initial selections for REF, based on additional reviews or where the evaluation of an output against the criterion of ‘originality’ would have been different had the review been conducted at the point of selection.

5.1.1.3 Feedback to authors and reviewers

To support transparency, overall scores are made available to output authors by [UoA Leads](#). Authors may also be offered additional anonymous feedback based on the reviewers’ comments as appropriate, for developmental purposes. Scores and feedback are contextualised by a brief description of the review process, and an acknowledgement of its limitations. Where overall scores have been communicated to authors, and subsequently revised, authors will be notified of the updated overall score. To support robustness and consistency, overall scores may also be shared with reviewers for those outputs which they have reviewed, to help with calibration. The final output portfolios submitted to REF will be shared internally following submission.

5.1.1.4 Additional checks

[UoA Leads](#) will establish that a significant research contribution¹³ can be evidenced for selected outputs as part of the selection process, and will check for significant material in common¹⁴. [UoA Leads](#), assisted by the [Research Excellence Team](#) and the Library team will ensure that output portfolios meet the requirements of the REF 2029 Open Access policy and fall within the outputs publication period.¹⁵

5.1.2 Identifying substantive links to outputs

5.1.2.1 Approach to identifying a substantive link where an output was first made publicly available during an eligible employment relationship

Outputs are identified for REF review using the University’s institutional repository, which is provided by Worktribe. The system uses HR data to identify potentially eligible outputs and enables outputs to be mapped to relevant UoAs for review. The system also enables staff to nominate outputs which they would like to be considered for submission to REF.

Staff are encouraged to ensure that all research outputs are recorded on Worktribe, including practice-research outputs. However, to support diversity of research, staff are also able to nominate outputs for review which do not have a corresponding Worktribe

¹³ See [CKU guidance](#) 8.

¹⁴ See [CKU guidance](#) 5.7.

¹⁵ See [CKU guidance](#) 6.2.

record, where the output cannot be adequately represented via the system, or where the author's contract excludes the output from the Worktribe REF review area.

Following the review process, all outputs included by [UoA Leads](#) in their initial selection of outputs for REF will be checked against HR data by the University's [Research Excellence Team](#) to confirm a substantive link via an eligible employment relationship¹⁶. Outputs for which a substantive link cannot be demonstrated will be removed from output portfolios.

5.1.2.2 Approach to identifying a substantive link where the eligible employment relationship concluded prior to the output being first made publicly available

The [Research Excellence Team](#) and [UoA Leads](#) will conduct proportionate surveys, on an ongoing basis, to identify outputs authored by staff who have previously had an eligible employment relationship with the University within the relevant time-limited period (to be defined by the panels during the criteria-setting phase). The [Research Excellence Team](#) will then investigate the substantive link, notifying the relevant [UoA Leads](#) as to whether a substantive link can be demonstrated for these outputs. These outputs are then reviewed to inform selection for REF and may be selected for submission to REF in relevant units as described in section [5.1.5](#).

5.1.3 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

Outputs where the substantive link is via former staff will be considered for submission to REF on the basis of quality and representativeness, in the same way as outputs authored by staff in an eligible employment relationship with UWE Bristol at the point of submission ([see 5.1.1](#)).

5.1.3.1 Outputs of former staff subject to compulsory redundancy

The outputs of former staff members who have been made compulsorily redundant will not be considered for submission to REF where they are the sole UWE author, irrespective of whether the output was first made publicly available during or following the eligible employment relationship. This commitment not to return the outputs of staff subject to compulsory redundancy to REF will not apply in the case of co-authored outputs where a substantive link can be established via an eligible employment relationship with an author who has not been subject to compulsory redundancy.

¹⁶ Eligible employment relationships are defined in section 6.3.1 of the [CKU guidance](#).

5.1.3.2 Outputs of former staff who have left due to retirement, expiration of fixed-term contracts and voluntary redundancy or severance

The outputs of former staff who have left due to retirement, expiration of fixed-term contracts and voluntary redundancy or severance will be considered for submission to REF, assuming that a substantive link can be established in the case of those outputs first made publicly available after the conclusion of the eligible employment relationship.

5.1.4 Assigning outputs to UoAs

5.1.4.1 Selection of outputs for review

[UoA Leads](#) are responsible for identifying those outputs which represent the most original, significant and rigorous work which is relevant for their UoA. Given disciplinary differences in publishing volumes, and the differing research capacity across submitting units, it will not always be possible to review every eligible output to inform submission for REF. To help ensure that outputs from a wide range of staff are reviewed in each unit, output authors are given opportunities to nominate outputs to inform [UoA Leads'](#) selection of outputs for review, and have opportunities to identify multiple UoAs for which their output or outputs may be relevant. Where outputs have been identified by authors to [UoA Leads](#) as potentially relevant for other units, or where the review process in a given unit identifies outputs which may be relevant in another unit, this information is shared with the relevant [UoA Leads](#) via the [UoA Leads' Forum](#).

[UoA Leads](#) may also identify alternative or additional outputs for review, to ensure that all potentially relevant outputs have been considered for submission. To support this, outputs are initially mapped to UoAs for review in the University's Worktribe research repository system, based on the units that UWE Bristol authors' contracts are assigned to in the HESA return (see [4.1.1](#)). In the case of co-authored outputs with more than one UWE Bristol author, where the authors' contracts are assigned to different UoAs for HESA, the output is mapped to all of the relevant UoAs for review. Where authors have multiple contracts which are tagged to different UoAs, the output is mapped to all of the relevant UoAs for review.

[UoA Leads](#) do not make use of 'artificial intelligence' (AI) algorithms to identify outputs for review, but may use AI tools to help match outputs identified for review to appropriate reviewers.

To support interdisciplinary research, the [Research Excellence Team](#) monitors the proportion of outputs tagged as relevant for more than one UoA on Worktribe which are

selected for review, and compares this with the selection for review of outputs tagged as relevant for a single UoA. To support research diversity, the [Research Excellence Team](#) also monitors the proportions of different output types reviewed, relative to the proportions of different output types curated on the institutional repository, across all UoAs, to identify any issues with the selection of outputs for review in specific UoAs.

5.1.4.2 Selection of outputs for submission to REF

The pool of relevant outputs for submission to REF in a given UoA comprises those eligible outputs which have been reviewed specifically for that unit. The extent to which outputs reviewed for a particular UoA align with the disciplinary areas defined by the descriptor for that unit will be tested through the output reviews and review moderation process (see [5.1.1](#)) and inform the relevant [UoA Lead's](#) initial selection for submission to REF.

When making initial selections for submission, [UoA Leads](#) will refer to REF UoA descriptors and other relevant guidance to ensure that selected outputs align with the disciplinary areas defined by the UoA descriptors set out in relevant sections of the REF 2029 panel criteria.

[UoA Leads'](#) initial selections of outputs for submission to REF will be scrutinised by the [Research Excellence Team](#) to ensure that interdisciplinary research and diverse output types are not being disadvantaged by the review and selection processes.

The [Research Excellence Team](#) will conduct analysis to assess the extent to which outputs which have been reviewed in additional UoAs (and which are therefore potentially interdisciplinary) are represented in the [UoA Lead's](#) initial selection. The [Research Excellence Team](#) will also provide analysis of initial selections by output type. The Research Excellence team will discuss any findings with [UoA Leads](#), who may amend submissions in light of this evidence. These analyses will also be shared with the [Research Excellence Group](#) to inform their sign-off of output submissions to REF.

Actions to mitigate for potential bias relating to protected characteristics in REF reviews and selection of outputs for submission are described in Part 1 (see [1.2.3](#)).

5.1.5 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

All staff are given opportunities to nominate research outputs for review to inform selection for REF. Nominated outputs may be of any type and from any discipline or disciplines. [UoA Leads](#) and researchers are encouraged to think as broadly as possible when identifying potential outputs for review. Annex K to the REF 2021 [Guidance on submissions](#) is promoted to staff via the Research Excellence Framework intranet

pages, and will be supplemented with updated materials following the publication of the REF 2029 panel criteria.

5.1.5.1 Practice research

The University's [Practice Research Peer Review College \(PRPRC\)](#), based in the [College of Arts Technology and Environment](#), works to enhance the visibility, impact and support of practice research at UWE, including the development of practice research portfolios to be submitted to REF. The PRPRC is a dedicated group of experienced practice researchers who provide expert peer review, mentorship and advocacy, to strengthen our research culture and foster a thriving community of practice research. UWE Bristol's [UoA Leads](#) are encouraged to work with the PRPRC to support the development and evaluation of practice research which may be relevant to their units.

The Research Excellence Team provide analysis to [UoA Leads](#) and the [Research Excellence Group](#) on REF review scores by output type, on an ongoing basis, to ensure that non-traditional output types are not disadvantaged. At the point that [UoA Leads](#) make their initial output selections for submission to REF, the [Research Excellence Team](#) will provide analysis to [UoA Leads](#) and the [Research Excellence Group](#) on the representation of different output types in the proposed portfolio, to inform the revision of selections where necessary.

5.1.5.2 Outputs in British Sign Language

All outputs in British Sign Language (BSL) nominated for REF Review by authors within the relevant timeframe will be reviewed to inform selection for REF, by reviewers with relevant linguistic competence and disciplinary expertise.

5.1.6 Procedures for ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken within the submitting unit during the REF period

Outputs will be selected for submission to REF on the basis of quality, where differentiation on quality is feasible, to best represent the excellent research generated by the submitting unit over the assessment period (see [5.1.1](#)). Where selection decisions need to be made between outputs assigned to the same quality banding, selections will be made on the basis of representativeness, in its multiple dimensions, taking account of the provenance of all outputs, including those outputs assigned to a higher quality banding. The representativeness of the reserve list will be considered separately from the representativeness of the main submission. The University will provide a framework to guide [UoA Leads](#) through the process of selecting outputs based on representativeness, informed by the work of the REF panels during the criteria setting phase and the final REF guidance.

When making initial selections, [UoA Leads](#) will also take account of the expectation that no more than five outputs will be associated with a single substantive link within a unit-level submission. Where this number is exceeded in a proposed unit-level portfolio, the [UoA Lead](#) will provide a rationale for consideration by the [Research Excellence Group](#).

When making initial selections, [UoA Leads](#) will take account of relevant research strategies and structures, the diversity of research outputs, and the contributions, collaborations and partnerships of the submitting unit. The [Practice Research Peer Review College \(PRPRC\)](#) will provide advice to the panel on the inclusion of practice research. Following the initial selection of outputs for submission, the [Research Excellence Team](#) will provide analysis on the representation of output types as recorded on Worktribe to inform [UoA Leads'](#) selections, comparing the profile of output types for outputs selected for submission with the corresponding profile for outputs reviewed in the unit. [UoA Leads](#) may then amend the proposed portfolio of outputs for submission, and the analysis will be provided to the [Research Excellence Group](#) to inform sign-off of submission.

5.1.7 Responsible research assessment practice

UWE Bristol's approach to responsible research assessment is outlined in [1.3.3](#).

Output reviews to inform selection for REF are aligned to the following responsible research assessment practices:

- Outputs are reviewed against the published REF criteria of 'originality', 'significance' and 'rigour'.
- Output reviewers and [UoA Leads](#) do not rely on aggregate bibliometrics such as journal rankings in the assessment of output quality. Other bibliometrics (eg. citation data) may be used in evaluation in a way which aligns with the approach of relevant sub-panels (adhering to REF 2021 norms until the publication of the REF 2029 panel criteria).
- Output scores are used by the University to inform output selection for REF, as formative feedback to authors and reviewers, and as a proxy for the evaluation of research quality at an institutional and UoA level. The University does not systematically make use of outputs scores in the evaluation of authors, in promotion decisions or performance reviews. However, to support transparency, scores are shared with output authors (see [5.1.1](#)), who may refer to output scores to support promotion applications if they wish.

5.1.7.1 ‘Artificial intelligence’ (AI) and responsible research assessment practice

The University’s policy on [Generative AI and Large Language Models in Research](#), sets out the potential risks posed by researchers’ use of AI for confidence in research. In the area of research evaluation, there is scope for importing unacknowledged bias into assessments. There is also the risk of a lack of transparency and accountability arising from the inscrutability of AI assessments of output quality.

A 2025 report [REF-AI: Exploring the potential of generative AI for REF 2029](#) recommended that ‘*REF assessments should include a human verification step for any AI-assisted analyses or summaries, confirming that final judgements rest on human academic expertise*’. For REF 2029, the University’s approach goes beyond this recommendation; requiring that output reviewers do not make use of ‘artificial intelligence’ algorithms in the evaluation of research outputs to inform selection for REF. Human judgement, informed by academic expertise, has primacy over all aspects of the preparation of UWE Bristol’s REF 2029 submission, including the review of outputs.

5.2 Staff, committees and training

5.2.1 Roles and responsibilities for the selection of outputs

5.2.1.1 UoA Leads

[UoA Leads](#) organise REF reviews for their units, assign overall scores to outputs to inform selection for REF and make recommendations on output submissions to the [Research Excellence Group](#). [UoA Leads](#) will convene groups of researchers to review outputs, assist with score moderation and inform output selection recommendations on the basis of representativeness as appropriate.

5.2.1.2 The Research Excellence Team

The [Research Excellence Team](#) provide guidance, analysis and administrative support to [UoA Leads](#) for the REF review process.

5.2.1.3 The Research Excellence Group

The [Research Excellence Group](#) has oversight of the output review process and agrees the final selection of outputs for the University’s submissions to REF.

5.2.2 Training

Staff supporting our REF processes, including those coordinating the selection of outputs for REF, receive EDI training tailored specifically to REF processes (training for

staff supporting REF is detailed in [2.2.2](#)).

In addition, all staff involved in the review of outputs to inform selection for REF are required to have completed:

- An e-learning module on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion developed at UWE Bristol.
- Two e-learning modules on Anti-Racism developed at UWE Bristol.

Staff involved in the review of outputs are also encouraged to access a recording of a session on fair and responsible research assessment, incorporating EDI issues, developed by the [Research Excellence Team](#).

As part of the onboarding process for external reviewers, the [Research Excellence Team](#) ensure that prospective reviewers have completed relevant EDI training within the last two years (for example, at another Higher Education Institution). Where this training has not been made available, reviewers are given an opportunity to complete a Responsible Research Assessment e-learning module developed by an external provider, [Pearn Kandola](#).

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For the full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this REF 2029 Code of Practice, including details of supporting activities and EIA questions see [6.1](#).

Engagement with staff on [Part 5](#) focussed on the possibility of systematic bias in the review of outputs, which would disproportionately affect staff with specific protected characteristics.

5.3.1 Mitigating relations taken in relation to Part 5

5.3.1.1 Restrictions on the use of bibliometrics in the evaluation of research outputs

Due to concerns about the potential of aggregate bibliometrics such as journal impact factors to import bias into research evaluation, the University has introduced a requirement that reviewers and UoA Leads do not make use of these metrics in the evaluation of research outputs to inform selection for REF (see [5.1.8](#)). The University has further specified that other bibliometrics (eg. citation data) may only be used in a way which aligns with the approach of relevant sub-panels (adhering to REF 2021 norms until the publication of the REF 2029 panel criteria) (see [5.1.8](#)).

5.3.1.2 Limitations on the use of ‘artificial intelligence’ (AI) in the evaluation of research outputs

Due to concerns about the potential of AI tools to import unacknowledged bias into research evaluation, the University has introduced a requirement that reviewers do not make use of AI algorithms in the evaluation of research outputs to inform selection for REF and that UoA Leads do not use AI to identify outputs for review (see [5.1.8](#)). The University’s REF 2029 Code of Practice explicitly affirms that *'human judgement, informed by academic expertise, has primacy over all aspects of the preparation of UWE Bristol’s REF 2029 submission, including the review of outputs'*.

5.3.1.3 Staff queries and concerns route

The University has introduced a route for staff to raise queries and concerns about the implementation of the University’s REF 2029 Code of Practice ([1.6](#)), which is distinct from the appeals process relating to the identification of staff contracts with significant responsibility for research and determinations of research independence described in section [2.3](#). This route will complement the complaints process put in place by the funding bodies. Although the scope of the queries and concerns route is not limited to the University’s REF processes described in [Part 5](#) of the Code of Practice, the route has been introduced partly in response to the need, identified by the Black Professors Group, for staff to be able to flag concerns about systematic bias in output scoring, if necessary. Where there is clear evidence of systematic bias, the Research Excellence Team will notify the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost to take action as appropriate.

Part 6: Annexes

6.1 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1.1 Context

Completing and submitting an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a core requirement of REF 2029. This anticipatory EIA demonstrates that the University has given due regard to its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. In relation to each of the University's core REF processes, this EIA documents the consideration given to equality before, and at the point of, decision-making, and provides evidence that this consideration was conscientious, rigorous and informed.

Going beyond this aim, this EIA also provides an opportunity for the University to embody its commitment to inclusion as a [Core Value](#) and ensure that the University's REF processes are designed with inclusion in mind.

The funding bodies have encouraged institutions to update and adapt their Codes of Practice over time. Should this happen, the University will update this anticipatory EIA where processes evolve, or where new risks and mitigations emerge during the period surveyed by REF 2029.

6.1.2 Activities to support EIA development

The development of this anticipatory EIA has been informed by engaging with staff from protected groups,¹⁷ via a series of staff engagement events and an open call for submissions in early 2026.

Relevant engagement events included:

- A consultation and engagement session with staff representatives of the University and College Union (UCU).
- A consultation and engagement session with representatives of the University's [staff networks](#). These networks are self-organised groups run by staff, for staff. They bring together people from all colleges and services who identify with a group relating to one of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010, and/or staff with a common interest linked to a protected characteristic. The University's staff networks include:
 - Africa Staff Network
 - All Faiths and None (AFAN) Staff Network
 - Christian Staff Network

¹⁷ See [Code of Practice guidance](#) 13.3.2.

- Disabled Staff Network
 - European Staff Network
 - Global Majority Staff Network
 - LGBTQIA+ Staff Network
 - Mental Wellbeing Staff Network
 - Muslim Staff Network
 - Neurodiversity Staff Network
 - Parents' Group
 - Women of Colour Staff Network
 - Women's Staff Forum
 - Young Staff Network
- A consultation and engagement session with representativeness of the University's Black Professors' Group.
 - Consultation and engagement sessions with representatives of the University's research centres and groups across all academic schools.
 - An 'all-comers' consultation and engagement session.

All consultation and engagement activities were publicised together, and staff were informed that they could attend any of the events, to maximise participation and avoid disadvantaging staff taking leave during the relevant period.

Staff were able to provide feedback in-person at the events, or via REF@uwe.ac.uk. Staff were made aware that they did not have to attend any of the events to offer feedback on the draft REF processes.

The feedback from the staff consultation and engagement activities informed the development of this EIA.

6.1.3 EIA questions

At each session, staff were asked to consider three questions, in relation to the University's proposed REF processes:

- Whether you anticipate that any of these proposals might have a disproportionate direct or indirect effect on staff with a specific protected characteristic or characteristics?
- If so, what mitigating actions might we take, or how might we adjust the Code to lessen the impact?

- Can you see any additional opportunities to design our processes in a way that proactively supports inclusion or recognises diverse contributions?

Participants were also referred to the more detailed list of EIA questions, set out in sections 45-47 of the [EIA guidance](#).

Feedback from staff attending these events, together with feedback submitted to REF@uwe.ac.uk has informed this development of this EIA and consequently the revision of the University's proposed REF processes set out in this REF 2029 Code of Practice.

For the REF processes described in parts 2-5 of the University's Code of Practice, the University used the following questions to assess potential impacts on staff with one or more of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation):

6.1.3.1 Eliminating unlawful discrimination

- Could this process or decision disproportionately exclude or disadvantage people with protected characteristics?
- Are any criteria, systems, or practices indirectly discriminatory (that is to say, neutral on the surface but unequal in effect)?
- Have reasonable adjustments been considered or applied where appropriate?
- Are there any legacy practices or default assumptions that could disadvantage certain groups?

6.1.3.2 Advancing equality of opportunity

- Have barriers to access or participation been identified and addressed?
- Do all relevant staff groups have a fair opportunity to contribute to, benefit from, or be considered in this process?
- Have we used disaggregated data to monitor representation, participation, or outcomes?
- Are there opportunities to design this process in a way that proactively supports inclusion or recognises diverse contributions?
- Have steps been taken to minimise over-reliance on metrics or conventions that may structurally exclude some groups?

6.1.3.3 Fostering good relations

- Have relevant staff groups or equality networks been consulted or engaged?

- Has the process been clearly and transparently communicated, with reasons and routes for feedback?
- Could the approach help build confidence in fairness and trust across different groups?
- Are staff encouraged to raise concerns or suggestions in a constructive and supported way?

6.1.4 Equality Impact Assessment on parts 2 and 3: Identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research and determining research independence

The University's criteria and processes for identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research and determining research independence are set out in parts [2](#) and [3](#) of the University's REFE 2029 Code of Practice.

6.1.4.1 Identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (Part 2)

The University's approach to the identification of contracts with significant responsibility for research in REF 2029 is broadly continuous with the approach taken in REF 2021. The University has carefully explored other possible options (for example, membership of a research centre conferring SRR), but has concluded that the combination of role type and workload for research used for REF 2021 is the only feasible option which is applicable across the University and does not have serious unintended consequences for staff.

As described in [1.4.1](#), the University has carefully considered the criteria used for determining significant responsibility for research, developing these from the REF 2021 criteria to promote inclusivity and thereby recognise a more diverse portfolio of research activity and community of researchers across the institution. The University's REF 2029 Code of Practice reflects the following refinements of the criteria used for determining SRR:

- The University has reflected on what counts as 'significant' responsibility within the institutional context at UWE Bristol. Where SRR is determined via workload, the threshold has been lowered from approximately 20% of workload allocation for research in REF 2021, to approximately 16% in this Code of Practice. This development of criteria is designed to promote inclusion, leading to a broader and potentially more diverse range of contracts being determined as having significant responsibility for research.
- The University has reflected on its classification of workload in light of the REF definition of research and now includes a broader range of activities under the

heading of ‘research’. This development of criteria is designed to promote the recognition of a more diverse portfolio of research activities at UWE Bristol.

Engagement from staff in support of this EIA focussed specifically on the internal allocation of time for research, which feeds into the University’s process for identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research, rather than the process itself.

6.1.4.2 Determining research independence (Part 3)

The University’s criteria for determining research independence (see [3.1.1](#)) have been adopted from the guidance provided by the funding bodies¹⁸. Comments on the proposals for [Part 3](#) focussed principally on the communication of decisions on research independence.

6.1.4.3 Data analysis to support EIA on parts 2 and 3

To inform the EIA on the University’s criteria for identifying contracts with significant responsibility for research and contracts for independent research, the University conducted demographic analysis of the 24/25 (‘pilot year’) HESA return, with the aim of detecting any disproportionate effect of the University’s criteria on staff with specific protected characteristics. The analysis looked at race, sex, disability and age, and compared the 24/25 HESA return against the REF 2021 return, with a view to identifying any impact on inclusion of the development of REF criteria between exercises.

Race

In the 24/25 HESA return, 22% of eligible staff were from Global Majority backgrounds, and 23% of staff contributing to the volume measure were from these backgrounds. This figure exceeds the University’s research KPI for its Anti-Racism strategy of 20% of staff contributing to REF volume from Global Majority backgrounds.

Sex

In the 24/25 HESA return, 53% of eligible staff were female, with 49% of staff contributing to the volume measure from this group. This represents an improvement on the situation in REF 2021 where 50% of eligible staff were female, with only 39% of staff contributing to volume from this group.

Disability

In the 24/25 HESA return, 9% of eligible staff had declared a disability, with 7% of staff

¹⁸ Volume measure guidance 9.2.1.

contributing to volume from this group. However, there are known issues affecting the robustness of data on staff disabilities, including the number of staff for whom disability status is not known, and so it is not clear if the data represent a real issue with the inclusion of disabled staff.

Age

In the 24/25 HESA return, 55% of eligible staff were over 45, with 61% of staff contributing to volume for this group. The slight over-representation of staff in the over 45 age group may simply reflect the fact that staff in this group have had more time to develop their careers to the point where they are more likely to have secured significant research funding or a professorial appointment.

Overall, the data do not indicate substantive issues with inclusion introduced by the University's development of criteria for REF 2029.

6.1.5 Mitigating actions taken in relation to parts 2 and 3

6.1.5.1 Adjustments to internal research schemes

As set out in [6.2.8](#), the University has put in place measures to mitigate equalities risks relating to the administration of internal schemes which allocate workload for research.

The University has recently undertaken a review of internally-administered funding schemes, as part of a broader Research Readiness Review. The review made use of both quantitative evidence (returns on investment, REF submissions, career progression) and qualitative feedback from staff, to understand the potential impacts on different groups of the design and administration of the schemes. The review identified issues with unnecessary complexity, short-term allocations, and risks of exclusion for part-time staff, technical staff, and staff on fixed-term contracts. In response to the review, the University implemented the following initiatives to mitigate identified risks:

- *Mentoring and career development support.* MCAP, RIS and NS¹⁹ now include mentoring and tailored training, which can support underrepresented groups in navigating academic careers.

¹⁹ The University administers the following research and research-related schemes:

- The AHRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) supports knowledge exchange and impact from arts and humanities research.
- The Challenge Fund (CF) supports cross-disciplinary research collaborations.

- *Protected research time.* A new emphasis on guaranteed and meaningful research time helps mitigate the disadvantage faced by staff with care-giving responsibilities and those on part-time contracts, which often include women and disabled staff.
- *Inclusive scheme design.* Schemes are now more flexible, better-timed, and inclusive, which potentially benefits staff from diverse backgrounds. Scheme documentation now uses inclusive language and avoids assumptions about career paths or availability. EDI-awareness training for application reviewers helps to recognise and mitigate unconscious bias in application assessments.
- *Transparent reporting.* The University now shares anonymised data and findings on scheme participation and outcomes internally, to build trust and accountability.

The revised frameworks introduced standardised online applications, transparent timelines, and consistent monitoring linked to development plans, ensuring decisions are fair, evidence-based, and accountable. Feedback from awardees has also helped to shape continuous improvement to activities and processes.

6.1.5.2 Acknowledgement of the contributions to research of technical and other research-enabling staff

Responding to concerns raised by staff that technicians and other research-enabling staff were not referred to in parts 2 and 3 of the University's Code of Practice (which focusses on those staff contracts, reported to HESA as ACEMPFUN codes 2 and 3, which are eligible to contribute to the volume measure), the University has introduced statements in sections [2.1](#) and [3.1](#) acknowledging the indispensable contribution of technicians and other research-enabling staff to research at UWE Bristol. The University is working across all units of assessment to ensure that any outputs and contributions to impact from research-enabling staff are considered for inclusion in the University's submissions to REF 2029.

-
- The Engagement and Impact Fund (EIF) supports engagement with external communities to enhance research impact.
 - The Mid-Career Accelerator Programme (MCAP) builds capacity and supports bidding skills for mid-career researchers to lead world-class research.
 - The Women Researchers' Mentoring Scheme (WRMS) promotes professional development and equality for women in research.
 - The New Starter Research Development Scheme (NS) supports new staff to initiate impactful research.
 - The Research Investment Scheme (RIS) supports research aligned with strategic goals.

6.1.5.3 Improved communications process relating to determinations of significant responsibility for research and research independence

The University has revised its proposed plan for communication of decisions relating to significant responsibility for research and research independence, and the related appeals process (see [2.3](#)), due to concerns about the ability of staff taking leave of absence over the relevant period to engage with the appeals process. Due to the tight timeline for communication of decisions and the appeals process, which is constrained by the HESA timetable, staff who take a leave of absence may have less opportunity to engage with the appeals process. This could disproportionately affect staff on maternity or parental leave, staff with a disability, and staff with school-age children who may be more likely to take annual leave during the relevant period. To promote inclusion, the University has committed to giving relevant staff notice of the timeline for forthcoming decisions on SRR and RI, well in advance of August. Line managers and centre directors will also be asked to communicate with relevant staff taking a leave of absence in the relevant period.

6.1.5 Equality Impact Assessment on Part 4: Allocating eligible contracts to UoAs

The University's criteria and processes for allocating eligible contracts to UoAs are set out in [Part 4](#) of the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice.

The allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs was not an area which attracted feedback in the staff engagement sessions to support this EIA. However, the University has put in place mitigations against the possibility that the allocation of staff contracts to UoAs in the HESA return could disadvantage staff with specific protected characteristics.

6.1.6 Mitigating actions taken in relation to Part 4

6.1.6.1 UoA Lead scrutiny of allocations and rationales

As described in [4.1.2](#), initial mappings of contracts to UoAs made by the [Research Excellence Team](#), together with the rationale for each allocation, are made available to all UoA Leads for scrutiny. UoA Leads are able to flag issues with the allocations.

6.1.6.2 Communication to staff

The University has committed to clearly communicating to staff that the allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs in the HESA return does not determine the University's view of the disciplinary identity of the contract holders, and that the allocation of contracts to UoAs for REF may not align with the coding of contracts by HESA cost centres in every case. Staff are also made aware that the allocation of an eligible contract to a given UoA does not determine the units to which outputs are submissible.

6.1.6 Equality Impact Assessment on Part 5: Selection of outputs (including identifying substantive links, allocating outputs to UoA and ensuring that submissions are representative)

The University's criteria and processes for selecting outputs are set out in [Part 5](#) of the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice.

6.1.7 Mitigating relations taken in relation to Part 5

6.1.7.1 Restrictions on the use of bibliometrics in the evaluation of research outputs

Due to concerns about the potential of aggregate bibliometrics such as journal impact factors to import bias into research evaluation, the University has introduced a requirement that reviewers and UoA Leads do not make use of these metrics in the evaluation of research outputs to inform selection for REF (see [5.1.8](#)). The University has further specified that other bibliometrics (eg. citation data) may only be used in a way which aligns with the approach of relevant sub-panels (adhering to REF 2021 norms until the publication of the REF 2029 panel criteria) (see [5.1.8](#)).

6.1.7.2 Limitations on the use of 'artificial intelligence' (AI) in the evaluation of research outputs

Due to concerns about the potential of AI tools to import unacknowledged bias into research evaluation, the University has introduced a requirement that reviewers do not make use of AI algorithms in the evaluation of research outputs to inform selection for REF and that UoA Leads do not use AI to identify outputs for review (see [5.1.8](#)). The University's REF 2029 Code of Practice explicitly affirms that '*human judgement, informed by academic expertise, has primacy over all aspects of the preparation of UWE Bristol's REF 2029 submission, including the review of outputs*'.

6.1.7.3 Staff queries and concerns route

The University has introduced a route for staff to raise queries and concerns about the implementation of the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice ([1.6](#)), which is distinct from the appeals process relating to the identification of staff contracts with significant responsibility for research and determinations of research independence, described in section [2.3](#). This route will complement the complaints process put in place by the funding bodies. Although the scope of the queries and concerns route is not limited to the University's REF processes described in [Part 5](#) of the Code of Practice, the route has been introduced partly in response to the need, identified by the Black Professors

Group, for staff to be able to flag concerns about systematic bias in output scoring, if necessary. Where there is clear evidence of systematic bias, the Research Excellence Team will notify the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost to take action as appropriate.

6.1.7.4 Commitment to monitor output reviews by author protected characteristics

Due to concerns raised by the Black Professors Group about possibility of systematic bias in the review of outputs for REF affecting staff with specific protected characteristics or combinations of characteristics, the University has committed to ongoing monitoring of output review scores by author protected characteristics. Where there is clear evidence of systematic bias, the [Research Excellence Team](#) will notify the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost to take action as appropriate.

6.1.7.5 EDI and responsible research training

To help mitigate the risk of equalities-related issues arising from the output review and selection processes, the University has committed to ensuring that key staff supporting REF preparations are required to complete:

- An e-learning module on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion developed at UWE Bristol.
- Two e-learning modules on Anti-Racism developed at UWE Bristol.
- A Responsible Research Assessment e-learning module developed by an external provider, Pearn Kandola.
- A session on fair and responsible research assessment, incorporating EDI issues, developed by the Research Excellence Team.
- Any additional external training recommended by the REF People and Diversity Advisory Panel (see [2.2.2](#)).

UoA Leads and their teams are tasked with cascading information to all staff involved in REF reviews.

6.1.7.6 Commitment not to re-purposes REF scores

As set out in section [5.1.8](#), output scores are used by the University to inform output selection for REF, as formative feedback to authors and reviewers, and as a proxy for the evaluation of research quality at an institutional and UoA level. The University has committed not to systematically use REF scores in the evaluation of authors, in promotion decisions or performance reviews.

6.2 Referenced material in the Code of Practice

The following documentation is referenced in the UWE Bristol REF 2029 Code of Practice.

6.2.1 Academic structure at UWE Bristol

UWE Bristol's colleges are:

- College of Arts, Technology and Environment
- College of Health, Science and Society
- College of Business and Law

UWE Bristol's academic schools are:

College of Arts, Technology and Environment

- School of Architecture and Environment
- School of Computing and Creative Technologies
- School of Engineering
- School of Arts

College of Health, Science and Society

- School of Health and Social Wellbeing
- School of Applied Sciences
- School of Social Sciences
- School of Education and Childhood

College of Business and Law

- Bristol Business School
- Bristol Law School

The colleges and schools are supported by central professional services, including Research and External Engagement, which provides support for research activities.

6.2.2 Research centres and groups

As of March 2026, the UWE Bristol has the following research centres and groups:

6.2.2.1 College of Arts, Technology and Environment

Centre for Print Research

Bristol Robotics Laboratory

Centre for Advanced Built Environment Research (CABER)

Centre for Environment, Society and Resilience (CESR)

Centre for Machine Vision (CMV)

Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments (SPE)

Centre for Transport and Society (CTS)

Computer Science Research centre (CSRC)

Digital Cultures Research centre (DCRC)

Science Communication Unit (SCU) (CHSS/CATE)

Architecture Research group (ARG)

Creative Technologies Lab (CTL)

Engineering, Modelling and Simulation Group (EMSG)

Humanities Research group (HRG)

Mathematics and Statistics Research group (MSRG)

Screen Research (SR)

Technologies for Intelligent Digital Engineering (TIDE)

Unconventional Computing Group (UCG)

Visual and Material Practices Research (VAMP)

WHO Collaborating Centre

Institute of Bio-Sensing Technology (CATE/CHSS)

6.2.2.2 College of Health, Science and Society

Centre for Appearance Research (CAR)

Centre for Health and Clinical Research (CHCR)

Centre for Biomedical Research (CBR)

Centre for Public Health and Wellbeing (CPHW)

Centre for Sustainable Agri-Food and Environment (SAFE)

Science Communication Unit (CHSS/CATE)

Social & Public Policy Research group

Psychological Sciences Research group

Education & Childhood Research group (ECRG) (formerly Bristol Inter-disciplinary Group for Education Research (BRIDGE))

6.2.2.3 College of Business and Law

Bristol Leadership and Change Centre (BLCC)

Applied Marketing Research group (AMRG)

Bristol Research in Economics (BRE)

Data Research, Access and Governance Network (DRAGoN)

Global Crime, Justice and Security Research group (GCJS)

Governance and Accountability Research group (GARG)

Human Resources, Work and Employment (HRWE)

Innovation, Operations Management and Supply (IOMS)

Research in Public International Law (RIPIL)

Sustainable Economies Research group (SERG)

Excellence in Education Research and Practice Research group (EERPG)

6.2.3 The Research Excellence Group

The Research Excellence Group provides leadership, oversight and assurance relating to the development and delivery of the University's submissions to REF 2029 and future exercises. It reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on matters related to development and delivery of the University's REF submissions, for which it has delegated decision-making authority. It also directly advises the Vice-Chancellor's Executive of key strategic decisions and provides regular updates to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors.

6.2.3.1 Research Excellence Group - ToR

Approved September 2025

6.2.3.1.1 Purpose

The Research Excellence Group (REG) provides leadership, oversight and assurance in strategic activities related to the delivery of excellent and impactful research across the University, that will underpin the University's submission to REF 2029 and future exercises. It also acts as the project board for REF 2029, overseeing the development and delivery of the University's submission.

REG will take direction from, and provide reports, to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) on matters related to development and delivery of the University's REF 2029 submission, for which it has delegated decision-making. It will also directly advise the Vice-Chancellor's Executive of key strategic decisions and provide regular updates to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors as required and/or requested.

6.2.3.1.2 Membership

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost - Chair
- Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange – Vice Chair
- College Deans of Research and Enterprise (three, one per college)
- Three professorial research leaders (one per college, nominated by respective Pro Vice-Chancellors and Heads of College)
- Director of Research and External Engagement
- Head of Research Excellence

6.2.3.1.3 In attendance

- Research Excellence Manager
- Other colleagues from across the University may be invited to the Group meetings to support discussions of specific items.

6.2.3.1.4 Responsibility

- Monitor the external landscape and policy decisions relating to research assessment and REF 2029 and lead the interpretation and internal communication of published guidance and criteria.
- Regularly monitor KPIs and other relevant data related to research, impact and culture, and model possible scenarios to optimise the size and shape of the REF 2029 submission.
- Encourage participation in external panels and working groups relating to research assessment and REF 2029 to gain further insight and steer future direction.
- Review and oversee adherence to the commitments and decision-making processes outlined in the REF Code of Practice, including the designation of significant responsibility for research (SRR) for academic staff.

6.2.4 The Research Excellence Team

The Research Excellence Team, based in our Research and External Engagement service, provides support for all aspects of the REF submission, supporting the Research Excellence Group and UoA Leads, providing advice, training and operational support for REF.

Reporting to the Director of Research and External Engagement, the team comprises:

- Head of Research Excellence
- Research Excellence Manager
- Research Excellence Impact Managers
- Data and Insights Analyst (Research)

6.2.5 UoA Leads

UWE Bristol's UoA Leads provide leadership for all aspects of the discipline-level REF submission, acting as a point of contact between the UoA and the University's Research Excellence Group, Research and External Engagement and other University stakeholders.

UoA leads work on behalf of the University's Research Excellence Group. They are appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost on behalf of the University and report directly to the Research Excellence Group (see [6.2.3](#)).

UWE Bristol's REF UoA Leads were appointed in November 2025. UoA Leads were appointed via an open call for applications in July, communicated via the University's internal comms bulletin. All applicants were interviewed by a panel comprising the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Enterprise, the College Dean Research and Enterprise from the college in which the UoA is 'hosted', and the Research Excellence Manager. This panel made recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, who confirmed appointments in November 2025.

6.2.6 The UoA Leads' Forum

The UoA Leads' Forum brings together all staff providing leadership for the University's REF submission. The UoA Leads' Forum exists to:

- Keep colleagues informed of REF policy developments, the University's strategic priorities for REF and activities to support REF.
- Facilitate collaboration across UoAs and sharing of best practice.

The Forum comprises:

- The Research Excellence Group

- UoA Leads and their teams
- College Deans Research and Enterprise (one per college)
- School Directors Research and Enterprise (one per school)
- The Research Excellence Team

6.2.7 UWE REF 2029 UoA Lead role description

Approved June 2025

6.2.7.1 Responsibilities

- UoA Leads will provide leadership across all aspects of the UoA's REF submission (Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding, Engagement and Impact, and People, Culture and Environment).
- UoA Leads will act as a single point of contact between the UoA and REG, REE or other University stakeholders.
- UoA Leads will work with REG to assemble a team to help with coordinating submissions.
- UoA Leads will be responsible for coordinating the drafting of structured statements for CKU, EI, PCE.
- UoA Leads will work closely with relevant College Deans for Research and Enterprise, School Directors Research and Knowledge Exchange, Research centre and Group leads and REE on all aspects of the submission.

6.2.7.2 Reporting

- UoA leads will provide leadership for the UoA's REF team.
- UoA leads will work on behalf of the University's Research Excellence Group. They are appointed by REG on behalf of the University and report directly to REG.

6.2.7.3 Person specification

- UoA leads will be professors or associate professors, with a track record of research leadership, together with knowledge and experience of the REF²⁰.

²⁰ The University expects that UoA Leads will normally be professors, but REG may appoint associate professors where this is necessary.

6.2.7.4 Tenure

- UoA leads will be appointed from 01 October 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter, with tenure beyond REF submission to include transition to new survey period and communication of results (so up to end 29/30).
- All appointments to be subject to annual review in summer, with any changes to leadership arrangements for the following year coming into effect 1st August.

6.2.7.5 Resourcing

- All UoA leads will receive a standard minimum workload allocation of half a day a week in 25/26. Additional time for leads appointed in large units and to support UoA REF teams more widely, will be reviewed and put in place as appropriate.
- It is anticipated that the time commitment for UoA leads and teams will be reviewed / adjusted regularly, and is expected to be different at different points in the REF cycle.

6.2.7.6 Appointment process

- There is a single UoA Lead role per unit. The University expects that normally, this role will be fulfilled by one person. However, REG will consider two colleagues sharing this role where this is judged to be expedient.
- REG will work with the new UoA Leads to assemble UoA REF teams, which will be dependent on size and complexity.

6.2.8 Further details on mitigation of equalities risks relating to indicators used to identify contracts with significant responsibility for research

6.2.8.1 Awarding of research time through internal workload allocations and support for staff to apply for external research funding

UWE Bristol administers the following research and research-related schemes:

- The AHRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) supports knowledge exchange and impact from arts and humanities research.
- The Challenge Fund (CF) supports cross-disciplinary research collaborations.
- The Engagement and Impact Fund (EIF) supports engagement with external communities to enhance research impact.
- The Mid-Career Accelerator Programme (MCAP) builds capacity and supports bidding skills for mid-career researchers to lead world-class research.

- The Women Researchers' Mentoring Scheme (WRMS) promotes professional development and equality for women in research.
- The New Starter Research Development Scheme (NS) supports new staff to initiate impactful research.
- The Research Investment Scheme (RIS) supports research aligned with strategic goals.

The University recently undertook a review of all internally-administered funding schemes, as part of a broader Research Readiness Review. The review made use of both quantitative evidence (returns on investment, REF submissions, career progression) and qualitative feedback from staff, to understand the potential impacts on different groups of the design and administration of the schemes. The review identified issues with unnecessary complexity, short-term allocations, and risks of exclusion for part-time staff, technical staff, and staff on fixed-term contracts. In response to the review, the University implemented the following initiatives to mitigate identified risks:

- *Mentoring and career development support.* Schemes like MCAP, RIS and NS now include mentoring and tailored training, which can support underrepresented groups in navigating academic careers.
- *Protected research time.* A new emphasis on guaranteed and meaningful research time helps mitigate the disadvantage faced by staff with care-giving responsibilities and those on part-time contracts, which often include women and disabled staff.
- *Inclusive scheme design.* Schemes are now more flexible, better-timed, and inclusive, which potentially benefits staff from diverse backgrounds. Scheme documentation now uses inclusive language and avoids assumptions about career paths or availability. EDI-awareness training for application reviewers helps to recognise and mitigate unconscious bias in application assessments.
- *Transparent reporting.* The University now shares anonymised data and findings on scheme participation and outcomes internally, to build trust and accountability.

The revised frameworks introduced standardised online applications, transparent timelines, and consistent monitoring linked to development plans, ensuring decisions are fair, evidence-based, and accountable. Feedback from awardees (has also helped to shape continuous improvement to activities and processes.

6.2.8.2 Promotion of staff into Associate Professor and Professor roles

In 2022, UWE Bristol introduced a new academic promotion scheme, through which staff can apply for promotion into Associate Professor and Professor roles. The design of

this process included an EIA which identified actions to mitigate equalities risks to specific groups.