

## THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

### REF2021

#### CODE OF PRACTICE

If you require a copy of this Code in an alternative format (e.g. Braille, large print or audio), or have any questions about the Code, please e-mail [leedsref@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:leedsref@leeds.ac.uk) or telephone 0113 343 4076.

#### REF2021

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is an assessment of the research in UK higher education institutions carried out by the national higher education funding bodies. The outcome of the REF informs the allocation of quality research related funding ('QR'). It contributes to the accountability for public funding and demonstrates the benefits of public investment in research and impact.

Submissions are organised into discipline-based 'Units of Assessment' (UOA) and assessed by UOA sub-panels comprising academic and research user members. The REF is not an assessment of individual members of staff. A list of submitted staff will not be published. Further information about REF2021 is in Appendix A.

All institutions submitting to REF2021 must have a Code of Practice. This document is the University of Leeds' Code of Practice.

#### The University of Leeds Code of Practice for REF2021

##### Part 1: Introduction

1. The University is conducting preparations for the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) in a transparent, consistent, accountable and inclusive manner in accordance with its values (professionalism, inclusiveness, integrity, community and academic excellence) and existing policies and codes of practice, including the Equality and Inclusion (E&I) Framework and the policy and procedures on Dignity and Mutual Respect (Appendix B).
2. This Code of Practice ('the Code') is intended to help us ensure that these values are upheld in our REF preparations and to support the University in meeting its legal obligations in relation to equality and diversity, in line with the Equality Act 2010. The Code does not replace any existing University policy. The Code has been drawn up in accordance with the guidance provided by the funding bodies in the following documents: *REF2021 Decisions on Staff and Outputs* (REF2017/04, November 2017, updated April 2018); *REF2021 Guidance on Submissions* (REF2019/01); *REF2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods* (REF2019/02); and the *Guidance on Codes of Practice* (REF2019/03), all of which are available from the funding bodies' REF2021 website. In addition, the open letter to the sector from the Chair of the funding bodies' Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) has been considered.
3. The Code addresses the following aspects of REF2021 preparations:
  - a. identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (Part 2);
  - b. determining research independence (Part 3);
  - c. the selection of outputs for inclusion in the submission (including the voluntary, confidential disclosure of staff circumstances) (Part 4);
  - d. an appeals process (Part 2, paragraphs 53 – 58); and

- e. equality impact assessment (Part 2, paragraphs 59 – 63).
- 4. The Code applies to all members of the University involved in REF2021, both those involved in the preparation of submissions and those who will be included within a submission. The processes and policies described in the Code are common to all, with no Faculty- or School-specific variations. Likewise, there is a single, common appeals process.
- 5. All University of Leeds staff involved in making decisions concerning the content of the University's REF2021 submissions will receive role-specific, mandatory equality and inclusion training, which will cover the content and enactment of the Equality Act, the Code, ways in which bias may be mitigated, and reference to University policies and frameworks, as appropriate (Appendix D).
- 6. Where external advisers are engaged, the Code will be drawn to their attention (via their engagement letters), and the need to undertake assessments in a transparent, consistent, accountable and inclusive manner reinforced. External advice may inform decisions on the selection of material for inclusion in the submission. External advisers will be involved in neither the processes to identify those with significant responsibility for research nor the processes for determining independence.

### **REF2021 at the University of Leeds**

- 7. As indicated above, the REF is an assessment of research activity and output in the assessment period. The assessment is based on discipline-based UOAs and the sub-set of academic and research staff whose roles fulfil the submission criteria. REF is an assessment of the work submitted in a UOA; it is not an assessment of individual members of staff. The outcome of the REF is published at UOA level only. A list of submitted staff will not be published.
- 8. The inclusion or otherwise of an individual's work in the REF return does not of itself influence career progression. It will not directly influence their workload portfolio, promotion or career progression. While REF2021 preparation draws on data sets that inform other processes (for example, Annual Academic Meeting (AAM) and Staff Review and Development Scheme (SRDS) discussions), REF decisions will not feed back into these processes unless the member of staff chooses to introduce them.
- 9. The University's preparations for REF2021 are led by the REF2021 Steering Group (REFSG), supported by four REF Review Groups. The Steering Group is responsible for the final decisions on all matters relating to REF2021. In making their decisions, the Steering Group will aim to maximise the overall outcome for the University. The Steering and Review Groups combine senior academic leadership and research assessment expertise (including interdisciplinary research and impact) with appropriate professional services support (Appendix C).
- 10. UOA leaders and deputies are responsible for drawing up the submissions and making recommendations, via the Review Groups, to the REF Steering Group, about the content and configuration of these submissions.
- 11. These governance arrangements were approved via the University's committee structure (Research and Innovation Board, University Executive Group, and Senate) in January 2018. The University committee structure is in Appendix B.
- 12. The terms of reference for the University's REF2021 Steering Groups, Review Groups and UOA leaders include a responsibility to 'promote and monitor ethical practice and ensure all equality and diversity standards are adequately met'. Equality and inclusion training will be undertaken early in the process to assist these groups in fulfilling this responsibility, which will include guidance on the interpretation of the equality analyses that will be undertaken (Appendix E).

13. The University recognises the University and College Union (UCU) for the purposes of collective bargaining on behalf of academic and academic-related (professional and managerial) staff. However, we note that in the generation, consultation and communication of this Code of Practice other staff representative bodies, including UNISON and Unite, were fully engaged.
14. The University is committed to the spirit (as well as the letter) of both the Fixed Term Employee and Part Time Worker Regulations. The requirements for equally favourable treatment have been University policy for many years. All members of fixed-term and part-time staff are treated as favourably as those on continuing or full-time contracts for example in relation to pay, staff benefits, training, promotion and career development opportunities.
15. Wherever possible, REF preparations and processes build on existing processes. For example: annual academic meetings (AAM) and discussions under the staff review and development scheme (SRDS) are used to set academic plans for the forthcoming year, confirm roles, responsibilities and expectations and identify support required to achieve agreed objectives; compilation of the annual Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff return provides an opportunity to ensure that roles are coded correctly in our Human Resources (HR) systems; and, information about external research grants and research outputs will be taken from the University's core systems. In the interests of transparency this information is visible to members of staff via our in-house research and impact information system (IRIS), where research and academic staff can also view REF-relevant HR information, such as the current classification of their role for REF purposes (i.e. whether or not the role is REF-eligible).
16. While REF preparations draw on existing processes as indicated above, decisions about REF eligibility (and in particular decisions about independence for REF purposes and the selection of material for inclusion) will not feed back into these processes unless the member of staff chooses to introduce this information.
17. Appendix B includes information about how data is collected and used for REF2021.
18. Since REF2014, a number of measures have been introduced at the University to support equality and inclusion, informed by benchmarking exercises such as REF and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and engagement with the Athena SWAN Charter. For example, we have worked to support the attraction, retention and promotion of female academic staff and introduced measures to support staff returning from significant periods of leave, for example through a reduction in teaching loads. Pilot interventions are being evaluated and recommendations for University-wide adoption will be made where interventions have proved valuable. Other measures include:
  - The enhancement of the annual academic meeting process, to ensure consistent, fair and equitable treatment of staff across the University.
  - The implementation of an annual outputs review process to help staff understand and apply the characteristics of a high-quality research output (The University Annual outputs Review, (UAR) (Appendix B).
19. In addition to the generic enhancement of our procedures outlined in paragraph 18 above, a number of REF-specific actions have occurred since REF2014:
  - Our REF2014 equality impact assessment action plan identified some opportunities to improve the process for disclosure and assessment of requests for submission with fewer than four outputs. Based on this feedback, our REF2021 processes give greater emphasis to opportunities for confidential, informal discussion of circumstances with the Head of Equality and Inclusion (E&I) and/or another E&I professional in advance of the submission of a case. Submitted cases will be considered in batches at a small number of regular assessment meetings, rather than on a rolling basis. This will enable us to

provide greater clarity about the timing of outcomes and will also enable us to achieve consistency by considering cases in larger batches. The process will be led by E&I, with input on REF-specific matters from the central REF team.

- We also fed back to the REF2014 team that the effects of bereavement should be included in information on staff circumstances and this has now been incorporated into the funding bodies standard declaration form, which we shall use in our processes (Appendix F).
- Consideration was also given to more systematic, on-going collection of information about some staff circumstances. However, it was decided that, on balance, it would be more appropriate to await specific REF2021 guidance. This would avoid the risk of requesting sensitive information unnecessarily or having to ask for additional information at a later stage.
- For members of staff who were not included in the REF2014 submission the AAM/SRDS system was used, as appropriate, to discuss relevant support. This might include: personal development plans, mentoring, study leave, reduction in teaching load, or support for conference attendance.

### **How the Code is being communicated**

20. The approved Code will be published on the University intranet. It will also be sent by direct email to all academic and research staff. Faculty Heads of HR are responsible for disseminating the Code to staff who are absent, such as staff on long-term absence or staff working away from the main campus. They will use 'keeping in touch' days for staff absent on maternity/paternity leave, for example, to share the Code. Accessible formats are available on request to the central REF team via [leedsref@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:leedsref@leeds.ac.uk) or telephone 0113 343 4076. Staff are encouraged to raise any queries with either their local HR manager, Faculty E&I contact, central E&I staff or the central REF team.

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

### Policies and procedures

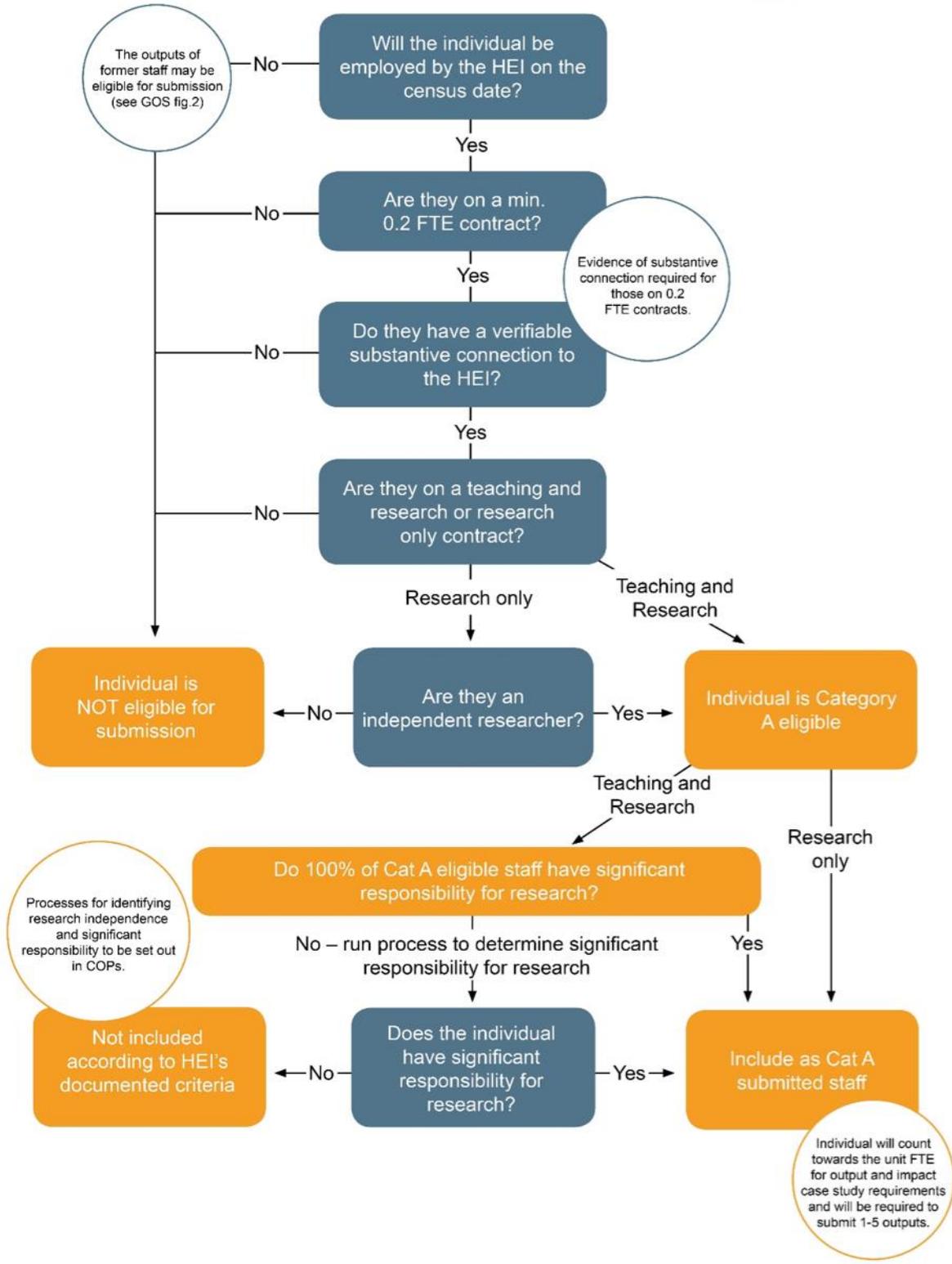
21. This section describes the process that we will use to determine which eligible staff have significant responsibility for research and will be submitted. This process will apply to all relevant staff, regardless of which Faculty they are in. This process is required purely for REF purposes and, as indicated above (paragraph 8), is separate from normal University arrangements, for example AAM and SRDS discussions.
22. For the purpose of REF, the following definitions are used
  - a. Category A eligible staff: *'academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date [31 July 2020], whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'<sup>1</sup>. Staff should have a substantive research connection with the submitting unit (see paragraphs 123 to 127). Staff on 'research only' contracts should meet the definition of an independent researcher (paragraphs 128 to 134).' [Guidance on Submissions paragraph 117]*
  - b. Staff with significant responsibility for research: *'... those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role.' [Guidance on Submissions paragraph 138]*
  - c. Independent researcher: *'... an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme.' [Guidance on Submissions paragraph 131]*
23. REF guidelines refer to two sets of staff – 'Category A eligible' and 'Category A submitted'. 'Eligible' staff are 'submitted' if, and only if, they have significant responsibility for research. Figure 1 (overleaf), from the *Guidance on Submissions* summarises REF eligibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research' are staff returned to the Higher Education Statistics Agency Staff Collection with an academic employment function of either 'Academic contract that is research only' or 'Academic contract that is both teaching and research' (identified as codes '2' or '3' in the ACEMPFUN field).

Figure 1

Staff eligibility in REF 2021



24. Some Category A *eligible* staff may not yet have achieved independence as researchers. i.e. they are not undertaking 'self-directed research'. Thus they do not fulfil the REF definition of having *significant responsibility for research* and must not be included in the University's submission to REF2021. A process is therefore required to ensure that only staff with significant responsibility for research are included in the University's submission.
25. **Academic 'teaching and research' staff on Grade 8 or above, whose role fulfils the definition of Category A eligible stated above, are deemed to fulfil all aspects of the definition of significant responsibility for research and hence are Category A submitted.** No further process is required to determine eligibility for inclusion in the REF submission for these members of staff. In accordance with REF2021 rules, all such staff will be included in the submission.
26. However, **some academic 'teaching and research' staff on Grade 7 or lower may not currently fulfil the criterion in relation to independence.** Faculty Heads of HR will be responsible for identifying all staff in these roles in the first instance. Their roles will then be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they fulfil the REF2021 independence criterion.
27. We recognise that attaining independence is a continuous process, reflecting an individual's development in their role. Our procedure allows for cases to be revisited if circumstances change. We also recognise that staff may have attained research independence but may not be in a role where 'self-directed' research is an expectation on the REF census date (31 July 2020).
28. The **criteria** that will be used to determine independence for the purposes of REF2021, will be as set out in the funding bodies' *Guidance on Submissions* paragraph 132:
- leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project;
  - holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement (an illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of independent fellowships can be found in Appendix A and at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk);
  - leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.
29. As stated in the *Panel Criteria and Working Methods*, paragraph 189, for members of staff who would be returned in UOAs within Main Panels C or D (see list in Appendix A) the following additional indicators apply and will be considered:
- being named as a co-investigator on an externally funded research grant/award;
  - having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.
30. As stated in the *Guidance on Submissions* (paragraph 132), each indicator may not individually demonstrate independence and multiple factors may need to be considered.
31. In accordance with the *Guidance on Submissions*, a member of staff will not be deemed to have undertaken independent research purely on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs.
32. The **criteria will be applied** by reference to relevant information including job description, nature and scope of research grants held and externally-funded research fellowships. As indicated in the *Guidance on Submissions* (paragraph 139), the assessment will be based 'upon the expectations of staff as a function of employment, and not upon the quality or volume of what has been delivered as a result of that employment function'.

## Decision making

33. For each Faculty, an *ad hoc* panel will be formed comprising the Faculty Head of HR, a member of the central REF team, plus all the Head(s) of School (or Institute or Division in large Schools) that employ staff whose roles are being assessed for independence. The composition of these panels will reflect local academic leadership and line management responsibilities, supported by equality and inclusion and REF professional support. In addition, a trades union observer may be present at these meetings.
34. Each Faculty panel will assess the evidence of independence against the relevant REF criteria (including, where appropriate, Main Panels' C and D additional criteria designed to recognise disciplinary differences). Decisions will be made by the Heads of School (Division or Institute) advised by the Faculty Head of HR and REF team member.
35. As far as practicable, all cases for a Faculty will be considered at the same meeting to enhance consistency. Where the volume of cases precludes a thorough consideration of all cases at one sitting, the Faculty Head of HR will be responsible for ensuring consistency of approach with the Faculty.
36. The outcome of the assessment will be:
  - a. the member of staff is deemed to be independent and eligible and must be submitted to REF2021; *or*
  - b. the member of staff is not yet independent as defined by REF2021 and is currently not eligible for submission, but is expected to be so by the REF staff census date, 31 July 2020, in which case a further review date will be set in accordance with the anticipated achievement of independence; *or*
  - c. the member of staff is not yet independent and it is not an expectation of their job role that they will achieve independence as defined by REF2021 by the REF census date, in which case the member of staff is not expected to be eligible for submission; *or*
  - d. there is insufficient evidence to arrive at an assessment, in which case the panel will identify what additional information is required and how it will be obtained, and will set a further review date.
37. Once all Faculty panels have undertaken their assessments, the Faculty Heads of HR will meet to share the outcomes and examine any apparent variations to ensure that they are justified. In keeping with University practice regarding the sharing or analysis of aggregated data and the consistent application of policies, a trades union officer will also be involved in this process. Where differences are not justified, cases will be revisited, with additional evidence sought if necessary, to arrive at a fair judgement. To inform this discussion an equality impact analysis (EIA) will be carried out on the cases and outcomes, and any differential impact on groups with protected characteristics examined to mitigate the risk of any inadvertent bias and discrimination in our processes, and to understand how greater equality and inclusion can be achieved in the future.
38. A written record will be kept by the Faculty Head of HR to confirm what evidence was considered and the extent to which this demonstrated that the criteria had been met. This information will be retained by HR and may be submitted to the funding bodies in the event of an audit of the University's REF2021 submission. It will form the basis of feedback to the member of staff on the evidence informing the final decision.
39. The anonymised outcome of the assessment of independence will be reported to the REF Steering Group, alongside the relevant equality analysis to assist the Group in fulfilling its responsibilities in relation to equality and inclusion.

## **Communication**

40. When we communicate about the Code, we will draw attention to the processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research and determining independence.
41. Tailored follow-up emails will be sent to staff to either confirm their REF eligibility or to confirm that their role will be reviewed through the processes described in paragraphs 33-39 above.
42. The outcome will be communicated to the member of staff by email by their Head of School (or Institute or Division as appropriate), and will outline the evidence considered and how the criteria were applied. The feedback will include a reminder about the appeals process and the arrangements for declaring staff circumstances (for those staff deemed eligible).
43. In the interests of transparency, the current REF status of an individual (i.e. whether their role is classified as not REF eligible, Category A eligible, or Category A submitted) will be visible to the individual member of staff via the University's REF system, IRIS. This information is visible to the member of staff and other authorised users (for example, Heads of School, Unit of Assessment Leaders) only.

## **Timing**

44. We aim to complete the identification of our pool of academic Category A submitted staff as soon as possible. To that end we will proceed with reviews as soon as possible after the Code has been accepted by the Senate and the Council, and panel members have taken part in the REF-specific Equality and Inclusion briefings scheduled for June 2019. We will communicate the initial outcome to members of staff no later than 10 working days from the panel meeting.
45. It is recognised that eligibility is determined by an individual's role on the staff census date, 31 July 2020. Changes to the relevant role information in our HR systems will be flagged to the central REF team and changes in relation to REF eligibility considered as indicated above.

## **Approval of processes**

46. The principles underpinning the Code (including those for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research, determining research independence and selecting outputs for submission) have been developed since March 2018 by the REF Steering Group, informed by input from HR staff, the University's Research and Innovation Board, University Executive Committee, Equality and Inclusion Committee, Unit of Assessment leaders, Equality and Inclusion co-ordinators, Staff Equality Networks and via staff open meetings (see Appendix D for a schedule of open meetings).
47. The draft Code was published for consultation in the University via the intranet in March 2019. The consultation was promoted via email to academic and research staff and via all staff electronic bulletins. In addition, three 'drop-in' sessions were held to allow staff to give feedback or raise questions face-to-face. During the four-week consultation period the draft was considered formally via the Joint Committee of the University and the UCU and the arrangements set out in the Code approved. As a result of consultation feedback some amendments were incorporated in the Code. UNISON and UNITE were also provided with the opportunity to input and proposed no further amendments.
48. The Code was approved by the University Council on 30 May 2019 and will be communicated as indicated in paragraph 20 above.

## **Staff, committees and training**

49. As indicated above, for each Faculty an *ad hoc* panel will be formed comprising the Faculty Head of HR, a member of the central REF team, and all the Head(s) of School (or Institute or Division in large Schools) that employ staff whose roles are being considered. Panel members

are *ex officio*. The composition of the panel reflects local line management and leadership responsibility, and provides appropriate professional support for consistent decision-making.

50. All staff (including staff involved in the REF decision making roles including the Review and Steering Group members) are required to complete the mandatory on-line, interactive module '*An Introduction to Equality & Inclusion*,' which provides all University staff the same introductory grounding in key principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.
51. The module covers the type of behaviours that are expected of all members of our university community, information about equality law, and ways in which we support and promote equality and inclusion at Leeds. It also explains the potential impact of unconscious bias and ways through which we can mitigate against it. REF-specific briefings will complement this generic provision.
52. UOA leaders take part in monthly briefings on all aspects of REF. These briefings are delivered by the University's central REF team, supported by other professional staff with relevant expertise, and cover all aspects of REF requirements and the University's process for developing the submission. We will use this infrastructure to deliver REF2021 specific Equality and Inclusion training to colleagues: sessions will be delivered by the Head of Research Quality and Policy and the Head of Equality and Inclusion in June 2019. This will include workshops specifically for Heads of School or Institute, to support their role in the decision-making processes described in this Code. Individual arrangements will be made for staff taking up REF roles after the scheduled training has been delivered. Resources from the national sessions which Advance-HE have delivered will be drawn into the training, ensuring the training is informed by advice and good practice.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

53. The University's general approach to complaints will be followed, meaning that attempts will be made to resolve any complaints as quickly and as informally as possible. Any member of staff who wishes to complain of discrimination should raise this through the procedures described in the University's policy and procedures on Dignity and Mutual Respect (Appendix B).
54. Where a member of staff feels that they have not been dealt with in accordance with this Code of Practice, they should raise the matter informally in the first instance with their Executive Dean of Faculty who will investigate and attempt to resolve the matter. Appeals may also be raised informally with the Head of Equality and Inclusion. Where the matter remains unresolved, the appeal will be considered by a named, senior member of academic staff not directly involved in REF2021 decision-making processes described in this Code. The Faculty Executive Dean, Head of Equality and Inclusion, and the person hearing appeals may take advice from appropriate other staff in investigating the complaint. The member of staff raising the appeal may invite a trades union officer to accompany them to any meeting concerning their appeal.
55. Appeals may be raised on whether due process outlined within this Code has been followed. Colleagues may not raise an appeal on the grounds of academic judgement regarding, for example, staff allocation to a UOA assessment, or decisions regarding selection of outputs.
56. Details of our appeals process forms part of this Code of Practice and will be included in the communication of this Code. Information on appeals will also be included when the outcome of the processes to determine eligibility and independence is communicated. The funding bodies have indicated that they will '...put in place measures to enable individuals to make a formal complaint, where it is believed that the agreed processes are not being followed' (REF2019/3). Information on this process will also be provided via e-mail to staff when this is available.
57. While appeals may be raised at any time, members of staff are strongly encouraged to raise matters informally as soon as they arise. No appeals will be considered after the final, full draft

submission is completed for internal review, which is expected to be in late summer 2020. This is to allow appeals to be considered properly and their outcomes to be considered as necessary in the submission itself.

58. Anonymised outcomes of appeals will be reported to the next meeting of the REF Steering Group.

### **Equality impact assessment**

59. We will carry out equality impact assessments at periodic stages leading up to our submission and post-submission to ensure that we pay due regard to equality issues throughout the REF submission process. We will carry these out to:

- understand the representation of the eligible and submitted staff against our academic staff profile;
- understand how the selection of outputs for submission represent the diversity of the eligible and submitted staff community;
- identify where further progress on diversity issues is needed so that this can be strengthened in the delivery of the University's research and innovation strategy.

60. The equality impact assessments will draw on the data that has already been provided to the institution (as part of the employment relationship of an individual to the University). Intersectional data analyses will also be carried out where possible (for example age and gender, or gender and ethnicity) to enable us to look at the information at a greater granular level. We will fully respect all General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will only publish the information at aggregated levels. No individuals will be identified and we will be careful to address any issues relating to low numbers. We will publish final equality impact assessments as required by the funding bodies.

61. The equality impact assessment will be carried out at an institutional level and at UOA level by the relevant UOA lead, supported by the Head of Research Quality and Policy, the Head of Equality and Inclusion and the Faculty Head of HR.

62. We will aim to use qualitative sources of information and consultation, proportionate to the overall aim and emphasis of the REF2021 exercise.

63. Also see paragraph 37 above and Appendix E.

### **Part 3: Determining research independence**

64. Only those eligible staff in 'research only' roles who are independent on the census date are eligible for inclusion in REF.
65. Staff whose roles are 'research only' and who are employed to carry out another individual's work programme are not normally regarded as independent for the purposes of the REF, and must not be submitted
66. While grade and/or job title may provide a helpful starting point, these indicators are not sufficient in themselves to fully, fairly and accurately identify independent research roles. A process that draws on a wider set of evidence to make a judgement is required. This section describes that process. The process has been developed and approved through the procedure set out in paragraphs 46 – 48 above.

#### Criteria

67. The criteria, and their application will be as set out in Part 2 (paragraphs 28-32) above.

#### Decision Making

68. The process for decision making will be as outlined in Part 2 (paragraphs 33 – 39) above.

#### Communication

69. See Parts 1(paragraph 20) and 2 (paragraphs 40-43) above.

#### Timing

70. See paragraphs 44 – 45 above.

#### Staff, committees and training

71. See paragraphs 49-52 above.

#### Appeals

72. See paragraphs 53 – 58 above.

#### Equality Impact Assessment

73. See paragraphs 59 – 63 above and Appendix E.

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

### **Policies and Procedures**

74. Final decisions on which work is included in the REF submission, how it is distributed across UOAs, and to which individual staff members outputs are attributed, is the responsibility of the REF Steering Group, informed by the advice of Review Groups and UOA leaders. Decisions will be taken to deliver the best outcome from REF2021 for the University.
75. The total available pool of eligible research outputs will comprise REF eligible outputs registered by staff in the University's publications database ('Symplectic Elements').
76. The selection of outputs for inclusion and their attribution to submitted Category A staff in the submission will be guided by the REF2021 outputs eligibility criteria and rules about the maximum and minimum number of outputs that may be attributed to an individual in the submission.
77. Within the parameters defined by the rules of REF2021, the primary criterion in the selection of outputs will be quality. As the REF is an institutional assessment, this primary criterion will be applied to achieve the best outcome for the University.
78. The assessment of quality will take account of local independent reviews and those commissioned via the UAR (Appendix B). As such the assessment will necessarily rely on academic judgement. Items for review may be nominated by members of staff, their Heads of School or UOA leaders.
79. Following an initial selection of outputs based on quality, the following secondary indicators will be considered to differentiate between outputs deemed to be of equivalent quality for the purposes of the submission. The indicators are listed alphabetically, and no hierarchy exists.
  - Avoidance of the submission of outputs with significant material in common (to limit the risk of panels' disregarding a second output if the overlap is felt to be too great);
  - citations, where and to the extent that, these are employed by the sub-panel to which the work is to be submitted (and taking account of the limitations of such data);
  - open access status of outputs within the scope of the REF2021 Open Access policy (to limit the risk of violating the threshold for submission of non-compliant items, leading to an 'unclassified' rating);
  - relationship of the set of selected outputs to the strategy and achievements described in the unit environment statement (for example, to facilitate the use of submitted outputs to evidence claims made in the environment statement).
80. Where an output has more than one author eligible for submission to the returning UOA, the allocation of the output to an individual for the purposes of the REF submission will be determined to achieve the best outcome for the University and will take account of:
  - the author contribution (to minimise the risk of submitting an item for which the panel may deem the author contribution to be insufficient, leading to an 'unclassified' rating);
  - the UOA to which the work may be submitted (to maximise the benefit of the available pool of outputs);
  - the other outputs available to an author for submission to the UOA, based upon the criteria set out in paragraphs 77-79 (to maximise the benefit of the available pool of outputs).
81. Where all relevant criteria have been considered and outputs associated with both former Category A eligible and current Category A submitted staff remain to be allocated, the preference will be to attribute remaining outputs to current staff. UOA leaders will have no

information as to the reason for someone's departure from the University and will be unable to differentiate between the outputs of staff made redundant and those who have left the institution for other reasons.

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

82. As indicated above, final decisions on which work is included in the REF submission, how it is distributed across UOAs, and to which individual staff members' outputs are attributed, is the responsibility of the REF Steering Group, informed by the advice of Review Groups and UOA leaders. As indicated in Appendix D UOA leaders' Equality and Inclusion briefings will focus on the selection of outputs.

### **Disclosure of circumstances**

83. The same process will be followed for all staff who wish to declare circumstances, and will cover all circumstances described in the *Guidance on Submissions* paragraphs 160 – 163, i.e.

#### *Summary of applicable circumstances*

*160. The funding bodies, advised by EDAP, have identified the following equality-related circumstances that, in isolation or together, may significantly constrain the ability of submitted staff to produce outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period. Details of the permitted reductions are set out in Annex L:*

- a. Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher*
- b. Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector.*
- c. Qualifying periods of family-related leave.*
- d. Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1–6, as defined in paragraphs 162-163*

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

- i. Disability: this is defined in the 'Guidance on codes of practice', Table 1 under 'Disability'.*
- ii. Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions.*
- iii. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of – or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to – the allowances set out in Annex L.*
- iv. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).*
- v. Gender reassignment.*
- vi. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed in the 'Guidance on codes of practice', Table 1, or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.*

*161. As part-time working is taken account of within the calculation for the overall number of outputs required for the unit (which is determined by multiplying the unit's FTE by 2.5)*

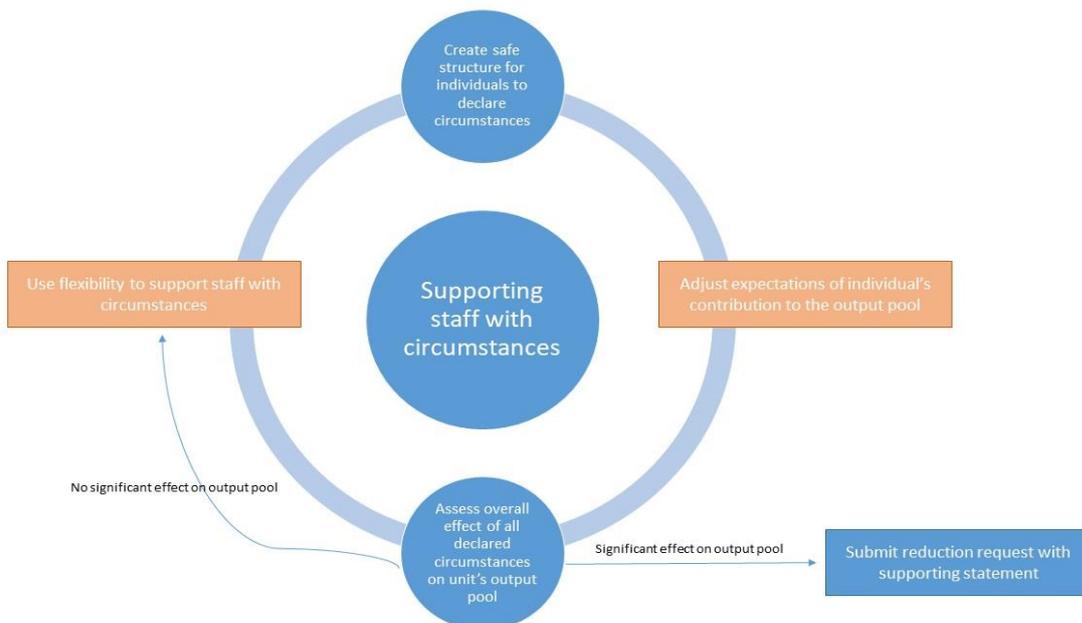
*reduction requests on the basis of part-time working hours should only be made exceptionally. For example, where the FTE of a staff member late in the assessment period does not reflect their average FTE over the period as a whole.*

*162. In UOAs 1–6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to one, without penalty in the assessment, for Category A submitted staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 July 2020.*

*163. This allowance is made on the basis that the clinical staff concerned are normally significantly constrained in the time they have available to undertake research during the assessment period. Where the individual meets the criteria in paragraph 162, and has had significant additional circumstances – for any of the other reasons in paragraph 160 – the institution can make a case for further reductions as part of the unit reduction request, using the tariffs set out in Annex L as a guide.*

84. Following formal approval of the Code by the Council, the Head of Equality and Inclusion will write to all academic and research staff via e-mail to invite them to voluntarily and confidentially declare any circumstances (as set out in the *Guidance on Submissions* paragraph 160) that have affected their ability to research productively throughout the REF period. The communication will make it clear that this option is voluntary and the individual member of staff may choose to declare circumstances or not. Each case will be dealt with sensitively.
85. Declarations will be made on a standard form via a dedicated, central, confidential email address: [refequality@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:refequality@leeds.ac.uk), which will be managed by the central E&I team (Appendix F).
86. As part of the process, staff will be offered the opportunity of a face-to-face confidential discussion(s) with HR and/or E&I to assist them in deciding whether or not to formally declare circumstance(s), and to discuss what evidence would be helpful in cases requiring judgement.
87. Where circumstances are clearly defined, they will be validated by reference to relevant HR records and the appropriate reduction in outputs calculated using the tariffs set out in the *Guidance on Submissions* Annex L (see Appendix F). Where circumstances require judgement, E&I, HR and the central REF team will review cases in advance of formal consideration to ensure that the information provided is sufficient for the panel to make a fair assessment. Where necessary, further information may be requested before the case is considered, and this will be managed by the Head of E&I.
88. A senior member of academic staff who is not directly involved in the REF decision-making processes will chair the circumstances panel. In addition, the panel will comprise academic staff from a range of disciplines, a trades union officer (as observer), the Faculty Head of HR, and the Head of Equality and Inclusion (Appendix C).
89. Cases for consideration will be anonymised as far as practical.
90. For all cases requiring judgement, the panel will determine whether the circumstances would justify a reduction in outputs and calculate the reduction, which will be in accordance with the reductions described in Annex L of the *Guidance on Submissions*.
91. The panel will also receive reports on clearly defined cases, to ensure that criteria are being applied appropriately and consistently.

92. There will be up to four deadlines for the submission of requests for circumstances, with clearly stated deadlines for feeding back the outcome of the assessment. The schedule will reflect the funding bodies' deadline for the submission of cases for consideration (March 2020). Where a member of staff joining the University after this date declares circumstances and it is agreed to make a request for a unit reduction in outputs (or for permission to submit the member of staff with zero outputs), this request will be made alongside the submission.
93. The outcome of the assessment of circumstances will be reported to the member of staff and to their Head of School. The Head of School will be asked to confirm that the expectations of the member of staff's contribution to the overall pool of eligible outputs have been (or will be) moderated in light of their circumstances.
94. UOA Leaders will be informed of the reduction in outputs that may be available, subject to approval by the funding bodies. UOA leaders will not receive any information about individual's circumstances.
95. Where a case has been validated by the University's REF staff circumstances panel, a request may be made to the funding bodies to reduce the number of outputs required by the UOA. This is in the interests of ensuring that all circumstances are treated equally, and recognises that the affect of an individual's circumstances may be felt beyond the individual directly affected (for example, periods of absence of one colleague may lead to a diminution of research time for colleagues who are required to take on additional teaching duties). In addition, it may not be possible to determine by the deadline for the submission of applications for reductions, whether or not such reductions will be required in the final submission.
96. Where a case has been made for the submission of a Category A submitted member of staff with no output, applied for and accepted by the funding bodies, this will be applied to the submission.
97. Where other cases for a reduction have been accepted by the funding bodies, the actual number of outputs submitted will be determined by the REF Steering Group, on the advice of REF Review Groups and UOA leaders. The figure below illustrates how circumstances will be considered in REF2021.



98. All circumstances information will be treated as highly confidential and will only be seen by members of the circumstances panel. The information will be kept securely in the Equality Policy Unit in line with all GDPR requirements. The information will be securely held until the audit functions of the REF2021 have all passed and the results of REF2021 are published. The information will be confidentially destroyed following this point.

#### Equality Impact Assessment

99. An EIA will be carried out on all circumstance cases and outcomes, as described in paragraphs 59-63. The outcome of the EIA will be to:

- understand any differential impact on groups with protected characteristics.
- understand, and mitigate, any risk of bias and inadvertent discrimination in our processes.

100. Where necessary, processes will be amended to address any issues identified, and appropriate cases will be revisited.

## Part 5: Appendices

A	Further information about REF2021
B	The University of Leeds policies, processes and committee structure referred to in the Code
C	University of Leeds REF2021 governance and decision-making panels
D	Training and communication plans
E	Equality Impact Assessments
F	Staff declaration form and Guidance on Submission Annex L (Reductions for staff circumstances)
G	University of Leeds REF2021 - key dates and timetable for submission development
H	Equality and Inclusion Framework (in full) (For EDAP reference) Policy on Dignity and Mutual Respect (in full) (For EDAP reference)

