

## Code of Practice on Selection of Staff for REF 2014

### Introduction

1. It is a requirement of the Research Excellence Framework, as defined in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in July 2011 that institutions submitting research for consideration to the Research Excellence Framework 2014 develop, document and apply a code of practice on selecting staff to include in their REF submissions.
2. The College aims, as defined in its Mission Statement, include the aims to:
  - Maintain and develop excellence in research and provide the highest quality research training in all our subject areas;
  - Make available the results of research and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisation and the promotion of civic and public debate.

The College key supporting objectives includes the objective to:

- Ensure the College provides an inclusive working and learning environment for its students and staff so that all may develop to their full potential.
3. The College's Research Strategy 2010-2013 has established a key objective of the College of "maximis[ing] its performance in each submitted unit of assessment for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework, when compared with performance within the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise".
  4. The Master's paper to the Governors in October 2011 on the strategic direction of the College noted that "... the College has always maximised the number of staff submitted by including all individuals with four research publications. This approach may not be viable in the future... having a tail of low-rated research could penalise the College and lose it the funding otherwise justified by its higher scoring research." Any selection criteria to be adopted by the College will be approved by the Master, reported to Academic Board and communicated to all academic staff of the College by 31 July 2012.
  5. This is the Birkbeck, University of London Code of Practice required by HEFCE to enable the College to submit to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. It will outline the principles and legislative context that the College will use when considering individuals for inclusion. It will outline the selection process, and the individuals and groups involved in that process. It will identify the arrangements made by the College to ensure, as far as possible, that the process is transparent, consistent and inclusive, including the arrangements made by the College in respect of training and equality impact assessment. Finally, it will outline the appeals process for individuals who wish to challenge decisions made in respect of REF inclusion.

6. This Code of Practice applies for all units of assessment submitted to by the College as a single institution. Where the College submits to any unit of assessment jointly with University College London (UCL), the UCL selection criteria and processes will apply with the exception of the appeals process for staff employed solely by Birkbeck, in which case the appeals process outlined in this Code of Practice will apply.
7. It should be noted that non-selection does not mean staff are not research-active nor does it prejudge selection for future REF submissions.
8. The selection process described in this Code of Practice is entirely separate from College processes relating to performance. Performance management of research is undertaken via the College's Progress and Development Review process and Capability (performance) Policy; decisions taken under this Code of Practice relate solely to decisions to include or exclude staff members from the 2014 REF submission.
9. The Code of Practice was adopted by the Governors on 3 July 2012. It was considered by Academic Board on 19 June 2012 and staff unions were invited to comment on the draft Code on 15 May 2012.

### **Purpose and Aims**

10. The College affirms its commitment to the following principles as defined in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions:
  - **Transparency:** All processes for the selection of staff for inclusion in REF submissions will be transparent. This Code of Practice will be drawn up and made available in an easily accessible format and publicised to all academic staff across the College, including on the staff intranet, and drawn to the attention of those absent from work. There will be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the code of practice (see paragraphs 55-56) and explain the processes related to selection of staff for submission. The Code of Practice will also be published on the College external web-site;
  - **Consistency:** The policy in respect of staff selection will be consistent across the institution and the code of practice will be implemented uniformly. The code of practice will set out the principles to be applied to all aspects/stages of the process at all levels within the institution where decisions will be made.
  - **Accountability:** Responsibilities will be clearly defined, and individuals and bodies that are involved in selecting staff for REF submissions will be identified by name or role. The Code will also state what training those who are involved in selecting staff will have had. Operating criteria and terms of reference for individuals, committees, advisory groups and any other bodies concerned with staff selection will be made readily available to all individuals and groups concerned.
  - **Inclusivity:** The code will promote an inclusive environment, enabling institutions to identify all eligible staff who have produced excellent research for submission to the REF.
11. The College aims to submit to the REF 2014 all eligible staff who are conducting excellent research and who meet the criteria outlined in paragraphs 11-19 of this Code of Practice, including those whose ability to produce four outputs or work productively throughout the assessment period has been constrained for reasons covered by equality legislation. The selection

of staff will be consistent with the research quality criteria laid down for each Unit of Assessment (UoA) and the provisions made with respect to individual staff circumstances.

## Principles

12. The College will consider all eligible staff for submission to the REF 2014. This process will be based on the principles for selection that are detailed below. Prior to consideration of inclusion, all eligible staff will be asked to complete a confidential form that asks them to detail any individual staff circumstances that have significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period. The College will take only individual staff circumstances that are reported in the form into account. This information will, where possible, be validated by the Human Resources department.
13. Individuals will be selected on the basis of adherence to the following criteria:
  - Research which meets the REF published definition of research;
  - Volume – the number of research outputs are required for each person, taking into account any reported individual staff circumstances or part time working (see paragraphs 14-15);
  - Quality of the individual’s potential submission relative to the REF criteria in the particular UoA (see paragraphs 16-19)
  - Fit with the submission to the particular UoA (see paragraphs 20-21).

## Volume

14. Submissions must include the equivalent of four items of research output<sup>1</sup> for each person submitted, unless a decision is made that the number of items to be submitted may be reduced as a result of the individual’s circumstances . The College will take into account any reported staff circumstances and where appropriate make a reduction in the required number of outputs. For the clearly defined circumstances (e.g. early career researchers), they will adhere to the panel criteria tariffs.
15. For the more complex circumstances the College will make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted. They will do this following the approach of the worked examples provided by the Equality Challenge Unit. It should be noted that the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel will also consider these cases across all UoAs, making recommendations as to whether to accept the judgements of institutions on complex cases to the relevant REF Panels.

## Quality

16. Quality will be assessed on the basis of the staff member’s potential contribution to a submission relative to the REF criteria and working methods. This will be assessed by at least two people who will read all of the research presented for submission and make a judgement on the quality of each output in accordance with the assessment criteria outlined in Annex A of the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions

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<sup>1</sup> Where the REF Working Party approves a proposal for an individual research output to be put forward as “double weighted”, this item will be counted as two items; any individuals putting forward “double weighted” outputs will need to supply details of a reserve output.

([http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/assessmentframeworkandguidanceonsubmissions/02\\_11.pdf](http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/assessmentframeworkandguidanceonsubmissions/02_11.pdf))

17. The Master, acting on the recommendation of the REF Working Party, will establish a minimum quality threshold for all staff to achieve to ensure inclusion in REF submissions. This quality threshold will be based on the assessment made above. The quality threshold will be publicised to all staff following adoption, and will include a statement on the assessment of publications for whom there are multiple authors.
18. Individual units of assessment may set higher quality thresholds than the minimum standard approved for the College by the Master. Such thresholds must be approved by the REF Working Party and the Master, and be publicized to all potential submitters to that unit of assessment.
19. Throughout all stages of this process, Unit of Assessment Panels (see paragraphs 34-36) will ensure compliance with the REF Guidance on Submissions and Panel Criteria and Working Methods guidelines for individual staff circumstances.

#### *Fit*

20. Staff members who are deemed by the College as submissible based on their assessment of quality will then be assessed for fit with the units of assessment that the College has decided to submit to. If a staff member is not recommended to be submitted on the basis of quality, the College will not consider their potential fit.
21. In order to be submissible, research conducted by any staff member must demonstrably meet the criteria for the unit of assessment as outlined in the panel criteria published by HEFCE. In addition, unit of assessment panels will assess the research and judge whether the research forms part of a narrative that can be presented as demonstrating a coherent research environment. Where panels judge that this is not possible then the staff member will be considered not to “fit” the submission and will not be included within the submission for that unit of assessment.

#### **Legislative Context**

22. Since RAE 2008, equality law has been strengthened and streamlined and the REF 2014 guidance on submissions puts greater weight on the equalities element of selection of staff for inclusion in the REF.
23. The Code of Practice takes account of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Birkbeck has a duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not.
24. This includes existing employment law on fixed-term and part-time working. The College recognises that under the fixed-term employee and part-time workers regulations, fixed-term employees and part-time workers have the right not to be treated by the College any less favourably than it treats a comparable ‘permanent’ employee. The relevant regulations are:
  - Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
  - Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002.

25. Birkbeck will ensure that the REF process complies with relevant legislation in the promotion of equality and diversity. As an employer, the College will aim to ensure that its policies do not directly or indirectly discriminate against its employees on the grounds of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or if they are pregnant or have recently given birth, other than as a proportionate means of achieving the aims identified in this Code. These obligations also apply to REF selection procedures.
26. It is important to ensure that the REF selection processes are assessed for their impact on different protected characteristics by gathering data on staff submissions in relation to protected characteristics, and to be mindful of the duty to foster good relations when evaluating the research environment.

### **Relevant Officers and Panels**

27. All recommendations relating to submission to the REF, including decisions to submit to units of assessment, and inclusion decisions on inclusion taken in relation to individual staff members, will be subject to endorsement by the Master, who may amend, overturn or refer back any such recommendation.

#### *REF Working Party*

28. The REF Working Party (REF WP) was established to support the College Research Committee in its role of advising ABExCO and the Academic Board on the adoption of College strategies to support research, with specific reference to the REF 2014.
29. The Working Party's terms of reference provide for it to:
  - advise Research Committee on preparations for the Research Excellence Framework and the adoption of a new College Research Strategy;
  - make strategic decisions about submissions to the Research Excellence Framework;
  - consult with Schools concerning their research plans and strategies as they relate to the REF;
  - commission reports (internal and external) on RAE 2008 submissions and their implications for the Research Excellence Framework
  - consider any other issues relating to the Research Excellence Framework as referred to it by the Research Committee or Senior Management Team of the College.
30. The REF WP will report to Academic Board on the consistency of judgements across unit of assessment panels. It will review assessments of the quality of outputs, comparing these where applicable to performance in the 2008 RAE, and may refer submissions for independent and / or external advice.

31. The REF WP is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Master for Research and consists of academic members from all the Schools of the College, plus the Deputy Academic Registrar (Academic Services). The membership of the Working Party is attached as Appendix 1 (correct as of 1 July 2012)

#### *Unit of Assessment Leads*

32. Executive Deans have confirmed the appointment of Unit of Assessment Leads, for each unit assessment that the College intends to submit to. Unit of Assessment Leads are responsible for convening Unit of Assessment Panels to consider recommendations on inclusion to their unit of assessment, and for providing reports to the REF Working Party on these units of assessment.
33. Unit of Assessment Leads should also lead on the drafting of the impact and environment sections of the submission to their UoA.

#### *Unit of Assessment Panels*

34. Unit of Assessment Leads will convene panels, with the agreement of the appropriate Executive Dean, to support them in their duties outlined above. The responsibilities of these Panels are to:
- Undertake an internal assessment of individual submissions, including an assessment of the quality of each individual research output;
  - Assess to which Unit of Assessment individuals would best be submitted, and which individuals ought to be cross-referred to other sub-panels; and to refer individual cases if necessary for consideration by other Panels;
  - Where appropriate, seek independent and / or external advice to assist with a judgement on the quality of individual submissions or the submission as a whole;
  - Provide feedback (via, where appropriate the relevant Executive Dean or Assistant Dean) as and when appropriate to each member of staff eligible for submission to the REF;
  - Make recommendations to the REF Working Party, Executive Deans and Master regarding the inclusion of staff into submissions.
35. Unit of Assessment Panels will include the Executive Deans, or their nominees, as ex-officio members. Where the Executive Dean is based in the same department as the Unit of Assessment Lead the Dean will normally nominate a representative for this role who is based outside of the department concerned. All Panel recommendations should be approved by the relevant Executive Dean.
36. Unit of Assessment Leads and Panels are identified in Appendix 2 (correct as of 1 July 2012)

### **The Process of Selection and Submission**

#### **Procedure for Identifying Eligible Staff**

37. A list of all staff on a “research” or a “research and teaching” contract will be produced by the Human Resources department and updated in September 2012 and September 2013.

38. On the basis of the list of staff provided by the Human Resources department, each member of eligible academic staff is requested to:

- Submit details of at least four items of research for submission to the REF;
- Indicate on the Individual Staff Circumstances form provided by the Human Resources Department whether there are any “individual staff circumstances” which have prevented her / him from publishing four suitable pieces of work for submission (See Paragraphs 38-41, Individual Staff Circumstances). This information will be kept confidential – Unit of Assessment Leads and Panels will only know that the Individual Circumstances rules apply and the number of items which have been agreed;
- It is the responsibility of individual members of staff to provide a copy of their outputs when requested, either for external or internal assessment, or for the REF itself.

39. Where a co-authored output is submitted for consideration by more than one member of the same unit of assessment, panels will be guided by the relevant Main Panel statement on co-authored publications. Individuals may be required to submit additional information in accordance with the relevant main panel criteria statement; where panels consider that an insufficient case is established for such submission they may require individuals to submit an alternative output for consideration.

#### **Individual staff circumstances and disclosure**

38. A reduction in the number of outputs from 4 or below may be possible due to individual staff personal circumstances. These circumstances fall into two broad categories, clearly defined and complex circumstances

39. Staff will be proactively invited to submit an Individual Staff Circumstances form to Patricia Crampton, the HR Manager (Equalities), for consideration by a panel reporting to the REF Working Party, who will confirm any reduction in the number of publications to be submitted.

40. A panel will be convened consisting of the Chair of the REF Working Party, one other member of the REF Working Party and the Director of Human Resources or her nominee, which will be supported by the Deputy Academic Registrar (Academic Services). This panel will be responsible for considering applications for consideration of individual staff circumstances, and will report decisions back to Unit of Assessment Leads and the REF Working Party. This report will consist solely of the number of publications to be submitted by the individual concerned.

41. Appeals against decisions of this sub-panel may be considered on the grounds that the decision made conflicts with the guidance produced by the Equality Challenge Unit and/or HEFCE on consideration of individual staff circumstances, or that the process used conflicts with this Code of Practice. Any such appeal will be considered in accordance with the process outlined in paragraphs 52-54 of this Code of Practice.

#### *Clearly defined circumstances*

- Age
- Qualifying as an early career researcher
- Part-timed and fixed term working
- Clearly defined periods of leave
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave
- Career breaks or secondments outside of the HE sector that may not have required undertaking academic research

#### *Complex circumstances*

- Disability that may be physical or mental
- Caring responsibilities (children, disabled and older people)
- Constraints relating to pregnancy or maternity in addition to a clearly defined period of leave
- Gender reassignment
- Any other exceptional circumstances related to the equality protected characteristics

#### **Selection Procedure**

42. Firstly, the Unit of Assessment Panels, taking into account their assessments of staff publications and any external assessments, make recommendations to the REF Working Party regarding the inclusion of staff into submissions.
43. The REF Working Party will review these recommendations, taking into account the comments of the UoA Leads and Panels, profiles from previous exercises and, where appropriate, comments from external reviewers. The REF Working Party may refer individual cases or whole units of assessment to external reviewers for comment and / or may refer recommendations back to the Unit of Assessment panels where, in their judgement, the recommendations do not conform with the criteria outlined in this Code or the published quality threshold.
44. The REF Working Party will submit their recommendations to the Master. The Master may refer recommendations back where, in his judgement, they do not conform with the criteria outlined in this Code or the published quality threshold. The Master may also seek further advice from an advisory panel which will include the Pro-vice Master (Strategy & Special Projects), Pro-vice Master (Research) and the College Secretary.
45. All decisions on inclusion and exclusion will be communicated to the individual staff member in writing by the Human Resources department. Where a decision not to include an individual is taken, the individual will be advised of the reasons, and invited to discuss the decision with the appropriate Executive Dean and / or the Master.
46. By January 2013 a majority of the decisions about individual staff inclusion in the College's REF 2014 submission will have been made. However, there will be some exceptions where a final decision has not been made. For example, new staff who join the College after May 2012, or



where a particular publication comes into the public domain after January 2013 but before the census date. The process of considering staff members for submission will therefore in some cases continue up until the published census date.

47. A flowchart to illustrate the process is provided as Appendix 3.

### **Training in Equality Issues**

48. All staff members involved in the selection process, including members of Unit of Assessment Panel members, UoA Leads, Executive Deans, the Master, Appeal Panel members and REF Working Party members will have received equality and diversity training prior to decisions on selection being taken. Case studies of individual staff circumstances and panel responses will be provided in support of the training.

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

49. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) will be undertaken on the 'policy and procedures' for selecting staff to determine whether the selection policy may have a differential impact on particular groups. This will be led by HR and those that are involved in the REF process.
50. The EIA process may be informed and supported by:
  - Analysis of REF "Dry Runs" conducted by the College;
  - Analysis of data on eligible and staff selected for submission with regard to the equality protected characteristics for which data is available;
  - Analysis of HESA staff data on staff eligibility to submit to the REF and those staff who are selected during any "Dry Run" exercises conducted.
51. The EIAs will be reviewed regularly during the REF process as submissions are prepared. The College will publish the EIAs on the staff intranet.

### **Appeals Procedure**

52. An individual has the right to appeal the decision not to submit them to REF 2014 or the decisions made by the panel constituted to consider individual staff circumstances (see paragraphs 38-41). Staff that appeal, will be required to put in writing the grounds for their appeal to the Vice Master. Appeals may be considered on the basis that the procedure and/or criteria used to reach a decision on inclusion was not in accordance with this Code of Practice. Appeals solely against the judgement of the Unit of Assessment panel, REF Working Party or Master will not be considered.
53. Appeals will be heard by a panel of three academic staff not previously involved in consideration of the appellant for selection for the 2014 REF, including the Vice Master who will chair the panel. Panel members will include a PVM and an Executive Dean from a School that does not include any staff being submitted to the unit of assessment in question.
54. The latest date for submitting an appeal is 10 June 2013 or one month after the decision not to include the individual has been communicated to that individual, where that date is later than 10

June 2013. Appeals will be considered by the panel by the end of June 2013. Where decisions on inclusion are taken and communicated to individuals after June 2013, panels will be set up no later than 21 days after an appeal is heard. The absolute final deadline for receipt of any appeal is 1 November 2013.

### **Communication of Code of Practice**

55. The Code of Practice will be disseminated via the following activities:
- All staff email; College launch of the Code of Practice
  - Publication on the staff intranet and website;
  - Accessible formats available from the Human Resources Department upon request;
  - Consideration by Academic Board and Governors.
56. To support this process the Human Resources department will also offer staff drop in sessions or targeted briefings to explain the Code of Practice, for example by discussing definitions of complex cases or early career researchers.

### **Appendices**

1. REF WP Membership
2. Unit of Assessment Panel membership
3. Timetable flowchart

## **REF Working Party**

### **Membership and Terms of Reference (as of July 24 2012)**

The Research Excellence Framework Working Party is a Working Party of the Research Committee.

#### Terms of reference

The Research Excellence Framework Working Party has been established to support the Research Committee in its role of advising Academic Board on the adoption of College strategies to support research, with specific reference to the Research Excellence Framework 2013

In pursuit of its objectives the Working Party will:

- (i) advise Research Committee on preparations for the Research Excellence Framework and the adoption of a new College Research Strategy;
- (ii) make strategic decisions about submissions to the Research Excellence Framework;
- (iii) consult with Schools concerning their research plans and strategies as they relate to the REF;
- (iv) commission reports (internal and external) on RAE 2008 submissions and their implications for the Research Excellence Framework
- (v) consider any other issues relating to the Research Excellence Framework as referred to it by the Research Committee or Senior Management Team of the College.

#### Scheme of membership

##### *Ex-officio*

Pro-Vice Master (Research) - Chair

##### *School representatives*

Representatives drawn from all of the Schools of the College, in agreement with Executive Deans.

##### *Secretary*

Nominee of the Academic Registrar

### **Membership 2011/12**

#### **Pro-Vice Master (Research)**

Professor Li Wei [Chair]

#### **School Representatives**

##### **School of Arts**

Professor Esther Leslie

Dr John Kraniuskas

##### **School of Business, Economics & Informatics**

Professor John Kelly

##### **School of Law**

Professor Patrick Hanafin

##### **School of Science**

Professor Martin Eimer

##### **School of Social Science, History & Philosophy**

Professor Andrew Jones

Professor Julian Swann

Professor Sasha Roseneil

#### **Secretary**

Trevor Pearce

## **Unit of Assessment Panels**

### **4 Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience**

Professor Martin Eimer (Unit of Assessment Lead)

Professor Nicholas Keep (Executive Dean)

Professor Michael Oaksford

### **5 Biological Sciences**

Professor David Attwell (University College London – Unit of Assessment Lead)

Professor Annette Dolphin (University College London)

Professor Gabriel Waksman (Joint Birkbeck / University College London)

Professor Steve Wilson (University College London)

### **7 Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences (if not submitting jointly with UCL)**

Dr Gerald Roberts (Unit of Assessment Lead)

Dr Charles Bristow

Dr Andrew Carter

Professor Nicholas Keep (Executive Dean)

### **11 Computer Science & Informatics**

Professor Michael Zakharyashev (Unit of Assessment Lead)

Dr Brad Baxter (nominee of the Executive Dean)

Professor Trevor Fenner

Professor Mark Levene

Professor George Magoulas

Professor Steve Maybank

Professor Alexandra Poulouvassilis

### **18 Economics & Econometrics**

Professor Anne Sibert (Unit of Assessment Lead)

Dr Brad Baxter

Professor John Driffill

Professor Sandeep Kapur

Professor Philip Powell (Executive Dean)

Professor Haris Psaradakis

### **19 Business and Management Studies**

Professor John Kelly (Unit of Assessment Lead)

Professor Helen Lawton-Smith

Dr Andreas Liefoghe

Professor Klaus Nielsen

Professor Philip Powell (Executive Dean)

**20 Law**

Prof. P. Hanafin (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Prof. C. Douzinas  
Prof. M. Everson  
Prof. P. MacAuslan  
Prof F. Macmillan  
Prof. L. Moran  
Dr. P. Haldar  
Prof. P. Tuitt (Executive Dean)

**21 Politics and International Studies**

Dr Eric Kaufmann (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Dr Alex Colas  
Professor Diana Coole  
Professor Joni Lovenduski  
Professor Deborah Mabbett  
Professor Sasha Roseneil (nominee of the Executive Dean)

**23 Sociology**

Professor Sasha Roseneil (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Professor Claire Callender  
Dr Rosie Cox  
Professor Stephen Frosh  
Professor Miriam Zukas (Executive Dean)

**28 Modern Languages**

Professor William Rowe (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Professor Hilary Fraser (Executive Dean)  
Dr John Kraniauskas  
Dr Joanne Leal  
Professor Li Wei  
Dr Martin Shipway  
Luis Trindade

**29 English Language and Literature**

Professor Roger Luckhurst (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Dr Anthony Bale  
Professor Russell Celyn Jones  
Professor Hilary Fraser (Executive Dean)  
Professor Esther Leslie  
Professor Sue Wiseman

**30 History**

Professor Frank Trentmann (Unit of Assessment Lead)

Dr Sunil Amrith  
Professor John Arnold  
Dr Jennifer Baird  
Professor Sasha Roseneil (nominee of the Executive Dean)

**32 Philosophy**

Professor Ian Rumfitt (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Professor Jennifer Hornsby  
Professor Sasha Roseneil (nominee of the Executive Dean)

**34 Art and Design: History, Practice & Theory**

Dr Tag Gronberg (Unit of Assessment Lead)  
Professor Hilary Fraser (Executive Dean)  
Dr Laura Jacobus  
Professor Laura Mulvey  
Dr Michael Temple

Panel Memberships correct as of 26 October 2012

Timetable for the Selection Process



