

## **Background**

A credible submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is an important part of the University strategy; it is also an important matter for individual academics. It can be perceived as a mark of recognition within the University and more widely in the sector of achieving a certain level of research activity and standing. It can lead to an individual feeling valued within the University's research culture and enhance self-esteem in relation to research. For those individuals in areas identified as Units of Assessment that are likely to be submitted by the University to the REF, not being selected for REF might, if not handled appropriately, convey the opposite i.e. they perceive themselves not to be a credible researcher and/or perceive that they are not valued by the University. Furthermore, it is important that the process of selection for REF is (and is seen to be) a transparent and fair process that selects against clear criteria and operates within the University's Equality Policies and Scheme.

HEFCE have prepared specific guidance relating to the selection of staff (Part 4, Guidance on REF submissions, July 2011) and this has informed the University's Code of Practice.

## **Principles of selection**

The University adopts the HEFCE principles for REF submission:  
(*HEFCE Guidance on REF submissions, July 2011*)

- a. **Transparency:** All processes for the selection of staff for inclusion in REF submissions should be transparent. Codes of practice should be drawn up and made available in an easily accessible format and publicised to all academic staff across the institution, including on the staff intranet, and drawn to the attention of those absent from work. We would expect there to be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the code of practice and explain the processes related to selection of staff for submission. This should be documented in the code. We encourage institutions to publish their codes of practice on their external web-site, and they will be published by the REF team as part of the submissions.
- b. **Consistency:** It is essential that policy in respect of staff selection is consistent across the institution and that the code of practice is implemented uniformly. The code of practice should 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.
- c. **Accountability:** Responsibilities should be clearly defined, and individuals and bodies that are involved in selecting staff for REF submissions should be identified by name or role. Codes should 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 should be made readily available to all individuals and groups concerned.
- d. **Inclusivity:** The code should promote an inclusive environment, enabling institutions to identify all eligible staff who have produced excellent research for submission to the REF.

## **Who will make the selection?**

The final decision as to which individuals are included in the REF submission will be made by the Vice Chancellor based on the recommendation of the University's REF Project Team (REFPT) chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). The membership of the REFPT is shown in Appendix 1. Individuals were selected to join the Team based on their responsibilities either for academic staff (e.g. Heads of Academic Departments) or particular aspects of the University strategy or operation (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Director of Research). The Senior HR and Equality Officer is also named in the Terms of Reference as an advisor to be co-opted for specific items. The Terms of Reference of the team allow for Heads of Department to draw in suitably experienced members of academic staff to join the team for specific discussions. Notes are taken at the meetings and these are made available to the Research

Committee as well as other relevant groups (See ToR in Appendix 1) (references to specific individuals will be kept confidential).

Before any decisions are made about selection of staff all members of the REFPT (and the Vice Chancellor) will have received specific training in Equality and Diversity issues (see above) in addition to having completed the University's online Equality and Diversity training. The REFPT adopts a shared learning approach to the REF, drawing upon experience of entering the RAE2008, advice received from external advisors, subject association meetings, HEFCE meetings, HEFCE REF workshops and documentation. At each meeting intelligence is discussed and implications for the University explored. If further specific training is required e.g. on research impact, then an appropriate individual will attend that meeting and report their learning back to the team.

#### **University level working criteria:**

Submissions will need to have sufficient international reach and the necessary headcount to be likely to secure a relatively high REF rating. The REF rating is comprised of three factors: Output quality, Environment and Impact, and each will be assessed using a 5-point scale ranging from 4\* to unclassified (see below). The University has published its specific aim to its academic staff.

#### **Equality and Diversity**

Selection for the REF, as with all other University practices, policies and strategies, is covered by the recent Equality Act (2010) which harmonised and consolidated previous anti-discrimination legislation. As both employers and public bodies (as defined by the Act), Universities need to ensure that their REF procedures do not discriminate or disadvantage individuals on the grounds of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or because of pregnancy or maternity.

The University must also be mindful that under the Fixed-Term Employees and Part-time Workers Regulations, fixed term and part-time employees have the right not to be treated any less favourably than comparable employees whose terms and conditions are permanent or full-time.

HEFCE guidance provides a summary of the relevant legislation and this information can be accessed through the 'Equality' tab on Portia, together with the University's Equality Policies and Scheme and information about relevant training at the University.

An Equality Analysis (EA) is being completed on the Code of Practice by the REFPT, to ensure there is no bias in the process and that it is compliant with the Equality Act and our own Equality Policies. The initial screening was completed in January 2012 and the analysis will be ongoing until the point of submission, with formal review points at key stages including:

- when identifying eligible staff who are likely to be selected;
- when considering appeals;
- when preparing the final submission.

All members of the REFPT, and those involved in the Appeals process, have undertaken and passed the University's online Equality and Diversity in the Workplace Training Programme, and will continue to receive training on Equality and Diversity tailored to the REF 2014. Training material is available at site [www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF) for REFPT members and all staff. In general, at the University all staff are required to undertake the Equality and Diversity in the Workplace Training and have access to a range of additional Equality and Diversity training and development through the staff programme.

#### **Entitlement to a reduction in the number of outputs**

In specific circumstances staff may be entitled to a reduction in the number of outputs required for the REF submission (e.g. Early Career Researchers, part-time staff, staff who have had maternity leave or extended periods of absence). Guidance has been produced by HEFCE on how REF panels will deal with individual circumstances that constrained an individual's ability to produce four outputs or work productively throughout the assessment period and is available at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>. The Director of Research is available to answer any queries you may have relating to this matter ([a.dixon@chi.ac.uk](mailto:a.dixon@chi.ac.uk)).

HEFCE require institutions to have robust procedures to enable staff to disclose their circumstances with an appropriate degree of confidentiality, with particular regard to the disclosure of sensitive issues such as ongoing illness or mental health conditions. The University is taking a proactive approach: instead of relying on individuals coming forward, all staff initially identified for selection (census point REFPT 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2012) will be asked to complete a form (based on the Equality Challenge Unit template <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/ref-materials>) about their individual circumstances. To enable individuals to disclose circumstances in confidence we will be managing this process centrally through the Human Resources department. Staff will be able to disclose information pertaining to their circumstances up until the point of submission. In the first instance the Equality and Diversity Officer will capture relevant information in a sensitive manner and then bring this to the REFPT Equality sub-group for discussion and approval.

### **Process to agree reduced outputs**

The REFPT has established an REFPT Equality sub-group to receive and consider all disclosures of defined and complex circumstances as defined here:

#### **Clearly defined circumstances:**

- Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher
- Part-time working
- Maternity/paternity or adoption leave
- Secondment or career breaks outside of the sector.

The HEFCE publication (REF 01.2012 January 2012 page 10-12) REF Panel Criteria and Working Methods details the reduction in outputs for researchers with clearly defined individual circumstances.

#### **Complex circumstances:**

- Disability
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to pregnancy or maternity
- Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- Other circumstances related to protected characteristics.

The REF Equality sub-group will be chaired by the Director of Research and will include the Senior HR and Equality Officer and a member of academic staff not associated with UoA or Department identified for REF submission. This member of academic staff will also be required to undergo bespoke REF Equality training as per members of the REF PT before they take up their role in the sub-group. The role of this sub-group will be to consider, in confidence, information disclosed by individuals and to advise the REFPT of the required number of outputs for each individual submitting defined or complex circumstances.

### **How will REFPT select individuals?**

The REF PT will identify clear criteria for each Unit of Assessment (to be published on the Research Moodle), coherent with the University's overall aim for the REF (published on the Research Moodle and included herein).

These criteria will refer explicitly to:

- The University's overall aim for the REF;
- The particular objective for the identified Unit of Assessment;
- The achievement of a specific number of eligible outputs at the required quality with reference to originality, rigour and significance ;
- An individual's contribution to the research environment and/or research impact (NB it is not expected that all individuals submitted will be named in the research impact statement).

This will be expressed in terms of a REF plan for each individual identified as having potential to be submitted to REF. This plan will:

- identify the estimated quality assessment for outputs already achieved (e.g. U, 1\*, 1-2\*, 2\*, 2-3\*, 3\*, 3-4\*, 4\*);
- have a clear plan and timetable, with appropriate milestones to achieve any future outputs of a specific quality;
- identify any resources that need to be deployed in order to achieve that output and identify any constraints that might prevent it being achieved;
- clearly indicate the critical path i.e. time at which milestones must be met (and in which order) and the consequence of not achieving those milestones (e.g. if a first draft of the monograph is not with the publisher by xx/xx/xx you will no longer be part of the University's REF submission);
- apply a likelihood factor to each future output to guide 'traffic lighting' (see below):
  - Likelihood of completing the output in the timescale (1 = low; 3 = high);
  - Likelihood of it being assessed at the required quality (1 = low; 3 = high);
  - Multiply these numbers together to get a 'likelihood factor'. Higher the factor = more likely to achieve required outcome.

In addition, indicate the level of control that the individual has in terms of achieving the output at the required quality (1 = little control; 3 = greatest possible control);

Taking into account the information described above and the 'likelihood' and 'control' factors, assign an individual to a particular category that will indicate their progress towards a complete REF submission at the required quality. The categories are:

- Arrived (A), have achieved the required number of outputs at the required quality
- On the way (O), have almost achieved the required number of outputs at the right quality and is on track to achieve the remaining outputs
- Still to get there (S), have achieved some of the outputs at the required quality, has a plan to achieve the remaining outputs but there may be some factors that indicate some risk and/or constraint in achieving those outputs at the required quality
- Contributing to the research environment and culture in another way (C)\*, individuals who have not achieved the required number of outputs at the required quality and in the view of the REF Project Team are not likely to achieve those outputs in the required timeframe.

\*The REF PT will advise those individuals identified as (C) as to how they might contribute to the research culture and environment. This will vary from area to area and individual to individual and may include activities such as support for writing aspects of the REF Submission, preparing the impact case studies, collating evidence to support impact case studies and/or contributing to the Research Environment statement.

A summary of progress against individual REF plans will be reviewed in broad terms at every REFPT meeting. In addition, and in order to provide clear communication to individuals working towards their REF submission, the REFPT have identified a series of '**Milestone Checkpoints**' at which individual plans will be discussed in detail (see 'Roadmap for the University REF submission on the Research Moodle' for timing of these events). Normally, it will be at these milestone checkpoints where the 'status' for an individual will be considered and changed if required. If significant information comes to light in an interim period between milestone checkpoints then individual plans may be reviewed at any of the REFPT meetings.

When individual performance is discussed the REFPT will be made aware of the outcome of the assessment of complex circumstances as advised by the REFPT Equality sub-group i.e. the required number of outputs but not the facts relating to the individual.

At the earliest opportunity academics in UoAs identified for REF submission should receive advice as to whether or not they are to be included in the University's submission. The REFPT should seek to give academics every opportunity to achieve the required number and quality of outputs and should only recommend exclusion of an academic from the submission in circumstances where:

- It is highly unlikely, in the view of the REFPT taking into account all reasonable advice available to them, that the individual will achieve the required number and quality of outputs within the necessary timescale, and
- that for the individual to continue to pursue those outputs with a view to inclusion in the REF is likely to be deleterious to the individual, the department or the University (e.g. other work suffers due to REF-focused activity).

### **When will the decision be made?**

Decisions will be made at the earliest opportunity taking into account due process and diligence as per the milestones in the REF Roadmap.

### **Communication to individuals de-selected from the REF?**

The Director of Research and the appropriate Head of Department will personally communicate with any individual who is deemed no longer to be part of the REF submission at the earliest opportunity following a decision at the REFPT. The emphasis will be on looking at other ways in which the individual can contribute to the REF, supporting the individual to continue to undertake research and underlining the value of that research to the University and the contribution that the individual makes, and can make in the future, to the University's research community.

### **Is there any right to appeal?**

Yes, individuals will have the right to appeal should it be recommended that they are not to be included in the REF or if their case for individual circumstances is not upheld by the REFPT or its Equality sub-group. The Director of Quality and Standards will chair an appeals panel to consider all appeals relating to the REF. The panel will include a member of the Academic Board and a disinterested Reader of Professor who is not part of the submission nor a member of an academic department whose staff feature in the submission. The panel may also call upon appropriately qualified and experienced individuals to join the panel with the proviso that they are not connected to any submitting Unit of Assessment or the REFPT (or its sub-group) or otherwise with the consideration of the individual making the appeal. In addition all members of the appeals panel will undertake the Online Workplace Training and the tailored REF Equality Training. The Appeal procedures will be available on the Equality tab of Portia. Appeals will be accepted on the grounds that the principles outlined in this Code were not followed, including on the basis of discrimination or consideration of individual circumstances. No appeals will be accepted on the basis of quality decisions or where a strategic decision means that no UOA is being submitted for REF which is relevant to the individual's work. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Director of Quality and Standards by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 in order to allow sufficient time for the appeal to be heard before the submission is made.

### **Dissemination**

Once approved this guidance will be published on the University's website and intranet. In addition there will be a University level announcement using the Campus announcement/Personal Announcement system or equivalent. Furthermore the University will ensure that the guidance is drawn to the attention of those absent at the time of the announcement through a written letter to their home address.

### **Data protection**

The University of Chichester has an obligation to provide information as part of the REF which will be accessed by those individuals listed in Appendix 1 as well as an REF administrator. All personal data relating to the REF will be processed fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Data subjects will be notified in advance if personal data will be submitted to the REF. Individuals have a right to check or amend the data held; to know what it is being collected for and how it will be used, and due care will be taken to ensure confidentiality. The data collected for the REF will only be used to inform the REF and to inform future research strategy.

### **Equality and Diversity monitoring**

The REFPT will consider any action that may impact on REF2014 or future REF exercises as a result of information from the Equality Analysis, and embed within the University's equality objectives where appropriate.

### **Further reference**

For further information, clarification or guidance surrounding eligibility and selection for REF 2014, staff are invited to contact the Director of Research (a.dixon@chi.ac.uk). Other useful sources of information may be found at:

- HEFCE (2012) REF 2014: Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.11). [Available at: [www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/)]
- HEFCE (2012) Panel Criteria and Working Methods (REF 01.12). [Available at: [www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2012/01\\_12/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2012/01_12/)]

## Appendix 1: Research Excellence Framework Project Team (REFPT) Membership and Terms of Reference

### Membership

Dr Sarah Gilroy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Dr Andy Dixon, Head of Research & Employer Engagement Office

#### **Heads of Departments of areas identified for submission to REF:**

Representative (tbc), English and Creative Writing (English Language and Literature)

Cathy Childs, Dance (Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts)

Dr Nik Chmiel, Psychology and Counselling (Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience)

Dr Ben Francombe, Performing Arts (Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts)

Dr Hugo Frey, History (History)

Dr Mike Lauder, Sports and Exercise Science (Sports-related Studies)

Dr Elizabeth Pike, Sports Development & Management (Sports-related Studies)

(Louise Birch (Senior HR and Equality Officer) to advise on Equality and Diversity issues and be co-opted for specific items)

### In attendance

Dr Antony Walsh (note taking)

### Terms of Reference

The Research Excellence Framework Project Team (REFPT) is responsible for overseeing the University's preparations for, and submission to, the Research Excellence Framework (REF). In particular, it aims to optimise the submission that the University makes to the REF.

The REFPT will:

- (i) Maximise the benefit of the REF to the University.
- (ii) Draw upon guidance from relevant individuals/institutions to ensure that the REFPT remains informed – to the best of its ability – of REF guidance, criteria and initiatives.
- (iii) Analyse strengths and weaknesses in the potential submission and identify solutions to improve the University's submission in the areas identified.
- (iv) Make recommendations with respect to allocating funds for targeted assistance and providing assistance for external reviews of research outputs.
- (v) Make recommendations about strategic decisions regarding the REF submission such as the inclusion of members of staff and their assignment to particular units of assessment, consistent with HEFCE's equality guidance and legislation.
- (vi) Commission drafting of components of the submission.
- (vii) Shape a communication plan to ensure that academic and professional services staff are well informed regarding the REF submission and ensure there is maximum transparency in decisions regarding the REF submission.

(viii) Comply with all equality legislation in its decision-making capacity and operate under the terms of the University's Equality and Diversity Policy for the preparation of the REF 2014 submission at all times.\*

*\*The REF process will be subject to an Equality Analysis*

### **Meeting Frequency**

The Project Team will meet at least 4 times per semester from January 2011 onwards.

### **Reporting**

The REFPT reports to Academic Board through the Research Committee. The REFPT makes recommendations regarding funding allocations to ChET through the Executive Dean's Team.

Meeting notes will also be circulated to members of the Heads of Department Forum, and relevant Professional Service Heads.

### *Note on document history:*

*Originally published by the REF Project Team in February 2012 as a working document. Revised version May 2012 discussed and approved at the University's Research Committee July 4<sup>th</sup> 2012. Currently in the process of undergoing an Equality Impact Assessment, the mapping and screening has already been completed. Following feedback from HEFCE the CoP was revised again and resubmitted in November 2012.*