

Cranfield Research  
Excellence Framework

Code of Practice

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## Section A

### General

#### 1. Introduction

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a peer review exercise which informs the distribution of quality-related (QR) research funds by the UK higher education funding bodies.

Further details on REF are available on the REF2014 website: [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk)

The REF exercise is led by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and reviews the following aspects of an institution's research:

- Outputs
- Impact
- Research Environment

The University will return its submission to the REF Team at HEFCE in advance of the deadline (31<sup>st</sup> November 2013). It will be reviewed during the course of 2014 and the outcome of the assessment will inform funding from academic year 2015/16.

Each Higher Education Institution (HEI) submitting to REF is required to develop, document and apply a code of practice clearly laying out how it will organise and undertake the development of its REF submission.

#### 2. Code of Practice – Aims

- To provide a framework for consistency and transparency across the University.
- To ensure that the selection of individuals for submission is fair and in accordance with both the University's Diversity Code of Practice and HEFCE's REF guidance.
- To clearly outline eligibility criteria and procedures for the selection of staff for inclusion.
- To outline procedures for decision-making, monitoring and appeals.
- To ensure that staff are aware of selection criteria, procedures and of the appeals process.

#### 3. Commitment to Diversity

The University values diversity and recognises its legal obligations under key equality legislation and, through its strategy, is committed to a culture of diversity and inclusion.

The University's Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives can be found on the Internet: <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/hr/diversity/index.html>.

This Code of Practice highlights how the University will take a transparent and fair approach to the selection of staff for REF and that all steps will be taken to ensure that staff are not discriminated against on the basis of any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation).

In addition, the University will ensure that staff on fixed term and/or part time contracts are treated equally and fairly when determining suitability for inclusion in the REF, in line with the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 and the Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002.

All staff involved in the REF decision-making process will have undertaken diversity development, which is tailored to the REF processes and delivered by the University Diversity Manager. This development highlights the University's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant employment legislation and includes case studies to explore issues such as the implications of dealing with special personal circumstances in the process of selecting staff for inclusion in the submission.

The University recognises that individuals may have special personal circumstances which may impact their ability to meet quantitative requirements for submission to REF. Where such special circumstances exist individuals will be actively encouraged to make an individual case for inclusion through the process outlined in Section B of this Code of Practice.

#### Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The University is committed to assessing the impact of all its policies and procedures and has a robust equality impact assessment system in place for doing this.

All REF policies and procedures (including this Code of Practice) relating to the University submission have been equality impact assessed by the University Diversity Manager and will be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure the University's equality expectations are upheld.

The key points at which the EIA will be reviewed are:

- When comparing data on staff eligible for selection against those who are selected to identify and address equality issues.
- When considering appeals (to ensure there is no negative impact on any particular group of staff)
- When preparing the final submission (to ensure any equality barriers have been considered and addressed).

Immediate action will be taken to address any equality issues which are identified in relation to this Code of Practice or its implementation over the course of the University's REF preparation.

Further information on the EIA and the impact on the protected characteristics can be found in Annex E.

## 4. Outcomes of REF 2014

### a. Allocation of Funding

Quality Related (QR) funding forms part of the block grant which the University receives annually from HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England). It is allocated centrally to each school and used strategically for the development of research capability in new and existing areas.

### b. Career Development

Criteria for promotion at Cranfield are transparent and published on the HR area of the Cranfield intranet. **Promotion within the University is in no way influenced by inclusion/non-inclusion in REF submissions.**

## 5. Communication

Communication of this Code of Practice (CoP) and the University's preparations for REF will be consistent with all other of its corporate communications. This will include communications through 'Perspectives' – the University's staff magazine, and on the corporate intranet.

This CoP will be available through Cranfield's REF intranet site and will be communicated directly to staff on long-term absence.

In addition the University will host staff briefing events where appropriate and staff will be invited to attend briefing and training sessions on the Cranfield Research Information System (CRIS) which is used to gather REF-related data.

## Section B

### Decision-making processes and procedures

The University's decision-making processes for REF 2014 will be transparent, fair and in accordance with the University's Diversity Policy and REF Code of Practice, and with REF guidance produced by the HE funding bodies.

**Decisions will be based on maximising the outcome from REF for the University as a whole and for all individuals employed by the University.**

#### 1. Selection of Units of Assessment

Decisions on the units of assessment (UoAs) under which the University will submit are made by the University's Executive Board. Decisions are informed by the REF Strategy Board, based on experience from previous research assessment exercises and best fit of the University's research domains (taking into account the spectrum and 'critical mass' of the University's research).

Cranfield's selected units of assessment are listed under Annex A.

#### 2. Staff Selection

##### a. Eligibility Criteria

On the basis of guidance from the HE funding bodies which can be found on the REF website:

<http://www.ref.ac.uk> the following categories of staff are eligible for consideration:

- **Research-active academic staff employed by Cranfield**. This includes academic staff with a contract of employment with Cranfield on the census date (31<sup>st</sup> October 2013), whose primary employment function is to undertake either research or research and teaching.
- **Other research-active staff with a clear, defined relationship with the University**. This will include staff employed by the NHS, Research Councils, charities or other organisations with a clearly defined relationship with the University and its selected Units of Assessment.
- **Research assistants and research fellows** will be eligible, where they have a sufficiently strong **independent** research record.

##### b. Selection Criteria

The selection of individuals for the University's REF submission will be on the basis of:

- the quality of their research outputs, taking into account published criteria from the HE funding bodies for research quality, and
- fit to the wider research environment as it relates to selected units of assessment.

The normal expectation is that four pieces of high-quality, REF-appropriate research output will be required per member of staff in order to be considered for inclusion. However, where exceptional circumstances exist, or where outputs are of an exceptional scale/scope (as defined by REF UoA panel guidance) staff may be considered for inclusion with fewer than four outputs. The process by which the University will assess such cases is outlined in the following section.

The nature of research outputs which are eligible for submission to REF 2014 are defined clearly in REF Guidance on Submissions and Panel Working Methods and Criteria on the REF2014 website [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk).

### **c. Staff Selection Process**

The Chair of the REF Strategy Board will write to all eligible staff outlining the REF process and initially assign them to a relevant Unit of Assessment.

If a member of staff feels that their assigned UoA is not the most appropriate fit or where a member of staff considers their research to overlap the boundary of one or more of the University's selected UoAs they may request a change of UoA. Such a request should, in the first instance, be made to the Lead of the assigned UoA who, together with the Lead of the requested UoA, will determine the best fit for the individual. Unit of Assessment Leads will be responsible for maintaining the list of eligible staff under their UoA.

The University's choice of units of assessment reflects our specialist nature. It is necessarily selective and, as a result, there may be a small number of cases where no suitable UoA is identified for an individual. Should an individual who has not been assigned a UoA wish to be considered for selection under REF they should contact the Chair of the REF Strategy Board informing him of which of the University's selected UoAs they wish to be considered under and outlining the fit of their research to that particular UoA. The Chair will then put the case forward to the relevant UoA Lead, who will determine whether the individual's research is suitable for consideration under the requested UoA.

Eligible staff will be invited to highlight their top research outputs on the Cranfield Research Information System (CRIS). Where outputs are co-authored, individuals are strongly encouraged to engage in discussion with their co-authors regarding who will claim the output under REF. Unit of Assessment Leads will monitor claims on co-authored publications and will have ultimate responsibility for the allocation of outputs to individuals.

Should individuals consider that one or more of their outputs merits double-weighting, as outlined in REF guidance, they should inform their UoA Lead once they have 'self-selected' their top outputs. UoA Leads will inform the individual concerned in writing whether the output(s) will be considered for inclusion as 'double-weighted' and will confirm whether 'reserve' outputs are required.

If an individual feels that their research should be cross-referred to another UoA during the official REF assessment they should also highlight this to their UoA Lead. Such requests will be considered by the Cranfield REF Strategy Board.

**Final decisions both on allocation of outputs to individuals and on weighting of outputs are the responsibility of UoA Lead.**

A quality assessment of research outputs will be carried out by UoA Leads with the aim of maximising the volume of high quality outputs within any submission. The assessment will be informed by CRIS (using its internal journal rankings as an initial quality indicator) and by external reviews, and documented by the relevant UoA working group. The normal expectation is that staff must have the equivalent of four quality outputs (3\* or 4 \*) in order to be selected for submission. The assessment may also take into account additional indicators such as impact of research, bibliometrics, and fit to research environment – as defined by individual UoA criteria <http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2012-01/>

**Decisions on inclusion will be made by the relevant UoA Lead with a view to maximising the outcome of REF for the University as a whole and will be monitored for equality purposes.**



Decisions on the research of Strategy Board and Working Group members and of Heads of School will be made by independent UoA Leads on the basis of evidence identical to that used for all other staff within the relevant UoA.

All decisions will be documented formally and staff will be notified of decisions relating to their inclusion/non-inclusion in writing by the relevant UoA Lead. If not included, individuals will also be informed of the appeals process such that any appeals are fully completed before the REF submission deadline.

#### **d. Individual Staff circumstances**

The University recognises that certain circumstances may have constrained an individual's ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period. The Funding Councils have identified a formulaic approach to this issue in the following circumstances:

- Early Career Researcher
- Part-time working
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave (maternity leave may involve related constraints on an individual's ability to conduct research in addition to the defined period of maternity leave itself. These cases can be returned as 'complex' as described below)
- Secondments or career breaks outside the higher education sector, where the individual did not undertake academic research.

Detailed information on how the funding Council will view the above listed circumstances can be found on the REF website: <http://www.ref.ac.uk>

In addition, the Funding Council has determined that there are circumstances which are more 'complex'. A judgement is required on whether such circumstances justify the consideration of an individual for inclusion with fewer than four outputs and if so the level to which an individual's outputs may be reduced. Such 'complex' circumstances relate to:

- Disability
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave (these may include: medical issues associated with pregnancy or maternity, health and safety restrictions in the laboratory or field work during pregnancy or breast-feeding, constraints on the ability to travel to undertake fieldwork due to pregnancy or breast-feeding)
- Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- Other circumstances related to the protected characteristics listed in section A3 of this Code of Practice.

Individuals are encouraged to flag on the CRIS system if they consider that any of the above circumstances may have limited their ability to produce the requisite number of outputs during the assessment period. This will not require the identification of any personal details relating to an individual's circumstances and the CRIS system will not be used to collect or store personal data on

individual circumstances. Any data on individual staff circumstances will be maintained by the Human Resources Department and will not be made available to Unit of Assessment Leads.

In addition to the CRIS flag, the Chair of the REF Strategy Board will also write to all REF-eligible staff inviting them to identify whether they have been affected by any of the above circumstances during the assessment period.

Complex personal circumstances must be presented in writing to the Chair of the Cranfield REF Exceptional Circumstances Panel (see Annex C for details). Requests to be considered for REF with fewer than four outputs on the grounds of complex circumstances will be considered by the Cranfield REF Exceptional Circumstances Panel (appointed by the Chair of the REF Strategy Board).

Any review of complex circumstances will be independent of the REF Strategy Board and UoA Working Groups. The individual concerned will be informed of the outcome by the Chair of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel within 20 days. If the Panel's decision leads to a reduction in the number of required outputs the relevant UoA Lead will be informed of the revised level of outputs required.

### **3. Appeals Process**

There are two grounds for appeal under the Cranfield REF process:

- Appeals against non-inclusion in the REF submission
- Appeals against the decision of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel regarding complex individual staff circumstances.

Such appeals will operate in line with University best practice and the flow-chart in Annex D outlines the process for staff selection and appeals.

#### **a. Appeals against non-inclusion**

Individuals concerned about their non-selection for REF 2014 should, in the first instance, engage in informal discussion with the relevant UoA Lead.

Should an individual wish to make a formal appeal against non-selection they must prepare a clear case of the grounds for appeal, in writing, to the Chair of the REF Strategy Board. The Chair will then appoint an independent member of the REF Strategy Board to review the case and where the appeal is straightforward this should normally be completed within 20 working days. The individual and the relevant UoA Lead will be informed, in writing, of the outcome of this Stage I appeal.

If an individual is not satisfied with the Stage I Appeal outcome and wishes to appeal further, they must outline the reasons in writing to the Chair of the REF Strategy Board. The Chair of the REF Strategy Board will then undertake a review of the Stage I Appeal.

The grounds for appeal against a decision at Stage I are limited to one or more of the following:

- 1) That evidence provided to the reviewer at Stage I was incorrect or incomplete, to the extent that it is reasonable to conclude that the outcome may have been different.
- 2) That the Stage I review was not conducted in accordance with this Code of Practice.
- 3) That there was prejudice or bias on the part of the reviewer.

The conclusion of this Stage II Appeal will normally be communicated in writing to the individual concerned within 5 working days of the appeal and will be the final decision under this appeals process.

#### **b. Appeals on grounds of exceptional circumstances**

Should an individual wish to appeal against the decision of the Cranfield Exceptional Circumstances Panel they should appeal in writing to the Chair of the REF Exceptional Circumstances Panel, outlining the basis of their appeal and presenting any additional evidence if available.

The Cranfield Exceptional Circumstances Panel will then review the case. Where the appeal is straightforward, this should normally be completed within 20 working days.

If the Panel determines that the individual's circumstances warrant a reduction in outputs the individual and relevant UoA Lead will be informed in writing of the outcome of this Stage I Appeal by the Chair of the Cranfield Exceptional Circumstances Panel.

If the Panel determines that the individual's circumstances do not warrant a reduction in outputs the individual will be informed in writing of the outcome of this Stage I Appeal by the Chair of the Cranfield Exceptional Circumstances Panel.

If the individual is not satisfied with the outcome of this Stage I Appeal and wishes to appeal further, they must outline the reasons in writing to the Chair of the REF Strategy Board.

The grounds for a stage II appeal are limited to one or more of the following:

- 1) That evidence provided to the panel at Stage I was incorrect or incomplete, to the extent where it is reasonable to conclude that the outcome may have been different.
- 2) That the Stage I review was not conducted in accordance with this Code of Practice.
- 3) That there was prejudice or bias on the part of the panel.

The second stage of the appeal will then be undertaken confidentially by the Chair of the REF Strategy Board and the Director of Human Resources & Development.

The decision from such a Stage II Appeal will normally be communicated in writing, within 5 working days of the appeal, to the individual concerned and, if appropriate, the relevant UoA Lead. The decision of this panel will be the final decision under this appeals process.

## **4. Data Collection and Monitoring**

### **a. Data Sources**

The University's REF submissions will draw on information held within the Cranfield Research Information System (CRIS) and other corporate databases, along with that provided by external organisations such as HE funding bodies and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

### **b. Data Protection**

Precise details on data requirements for REF will be released by the Higher Education Funding Bodies. The University will review any implications under the Data Protection Act and amend this Code of Practice appropriately.

### **c. Diversity Monitoring**

The University has a robust staff monitoring system which reflects the 2011 census codes on all of the protected characteristics and robust data on staff on fixed and part-time contracts.

Decisions on inclusion/non-inclusion will be monitored for equality purposes. Diversity data will be reviewed by the REF Strategy Board at each stage of the decision-making process, from identification of the initial eligible selection pool through to final submission. Monitoring will include data on all protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and individuals on part-time and fixed term contracts.

## Section C

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### 1. Strategy Board

##### a. Membership and Selection

The Chair of the REF Strategy Board is appointed by the University Executive and acts as the strategic lead on REF for the University.

Each Unit of Assessment under which the University will submit is represented on the Strategy Board by a Unit of Assessment Lead, formally appointed by the University Executive Board. According to the size and cross-school nature of the Unit of Assessment there may be one or more deputies.

UoA Leads are senior members of academic staff, selected for their knowledge of research assessment exercises and/or their responsibility in directing major areas of research within the University.

Heads of School are observers at the Strategy Board.

Full membership of the Strategy Board is published in Annex C of this Code of Practice.

The REF Strategy Board is supported by the University Diversity Manager and staff from the following areas:

- Library
- IT Department
- Vice-Chancellor's Office

Where necessary the REF Strategy Board can call on support from Human Resources and Development, Finance and Academic Services Departments.

All Strategy Board members receive training on diversity issues specific to the REF and on the implementation of this Code of Practice.

##### b. Role of Strategy Board

The REF Strategy Board:

- Provides strategic direction for preparation of the University's REF submissions.
- Ensures that selection processes and their implementation are fair and in accordance with the University's Diversity and REF Codes of Practice, and guidance received from the HE funding bodies.
- Ensures that Schools and shared services are providing all necessary data via the centralised University systems.
- Considers strategic positions on all aspects such as research outputs, the impact of the University's research and wider research environment.
- Ensures consistency of approach, where possible, across the University.
- Makes high-level decisions on submissions in order to maximise the outcome for Cranfield, both in terms of quality profiles and Quality Related (QR) funding.

- Encourages the active engagement of all academic staff with the University's REF submissions and ensure effective communications on the REF process.

### **c. Role of Unit of Assessment Leads**

Unit of Assessment Leads are responsible for final decisions on staff selection within their Unit of Assessment. They:

- Represent UoA at the REF Strategy Board
- Liaise with other UoA Leads and Deputies where appropriate
- Determine the fit of eligible staff to their UoA
- Determine which outputs are to be assigned to individual staff
- Ensure lists of eligible staff are correct and up-to-date
- Propose membership of UoA Working Groups to the REF Strategy Board
- Lead UoA Working Groups
- Ensure that the University's REF Code of Practice is implemented
- Lead the review of research quality for their UoA
- Review financial and student data for their UoA
- Lead UoA working groups in compilation of impact case studies
- Determine which Impact case studies will be taken forward
- Oversee drafting of impact studies and other textual inputs relevant to the submission
- Present a draft submission to the 'Red Team' for review

## **2. Working Groups**

Unit of Assessment Leads establish working groups for each of the University's selected units of assessment. These groups consist of UoA Leads and their deputies and draw on administrative support from within the schools.

Formal membership of working groups is agreed by the REF Strategy Board.

Working groups develop REF submissions, review outputs and other quality indicators, develop impact case studies, check data and draft any other relevant textual information.

With the agreement of the Strategy Board, working groups may draw on expertise of senior academics and researchers to make informed decisions on the quality of research outputs. Where this occurs it will be fully documented in writing.

All Working Group members are trained in diversity issues and receive specific training on the implementation of this Code of Practice. They are also required to develop a deep knowledge of specific UoA guidance from the HE funding agencies.

### **3. Red Team**

#### **a. Role**

- To provide an early stage review of draft submissions, including style, effectiveness, communication and overall quality.
- Review overall balance of the submissions including impact case studies and research environment.
- Ensure that submissions maximise the potential benefit for the University as a whole.
- Members of the Red Team will have the opportunity to comment on submissions under all UoAs.

#### **b. Membership**

The Red Team consists of Heads of School and is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in his role as Strategic Lead on REF for the University Executive.

### **4. Gold Team**

#### **a. Role**

- To provide a pre-submission critique of overall submission
- To approve final submission to REF

#### **b. Membership**

The Gold Team consists of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Secretary, and the Group Director of Finance and Resources.

### **5. External Advisors**

The expertise of external advisors may be sought in order to provide a view on submissions through one or more mock exercises.

Terms of Reference for the appointment of external advisors can be found in Annex B.

Annex A  
Selected Units of Assessment for Cranfield Submission

6	Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science
12	Aeronautical, Mechanical, Chemical and Manufacturing Engineering
19	Business and Management



## Annex B

### Terms of Reference - External Advisors

The expertise of external advisors may be sought in order to provide a view on draft submissions through one or more mock exercises.

External assessors will be formally appointed by the REF Strategy Board on the basis of their expertise in Units of Assessment of relevance to Cranfield University. They will generally be selected for their experience as panel members in previous 'research assessment' exercises.

The role of an external advisor is to provide:

- a critique of overall quality of draft submissions, including style and effectiveness of communication,
- a view on the credibility of the University's REF submissions
- feedback on impact cases studies and other quality measures such as environment
- comment on the quality of research outputs.

External advisors will be appointed as paid consultants to the University. They will receive a briefing on the University's REF Code of Practice and Diversity Policy before they carry out their work.

They will not be given any information relating to individual staff circumstances and will not be asked to comment on whether individuals should be submitted to the REF.

Their feedback on draft submissions will be recorded in writing and made available to members of staff on a confidential basis upon request.

## Annex C

### Cranfield REF Strategy Board and Working Group Membership

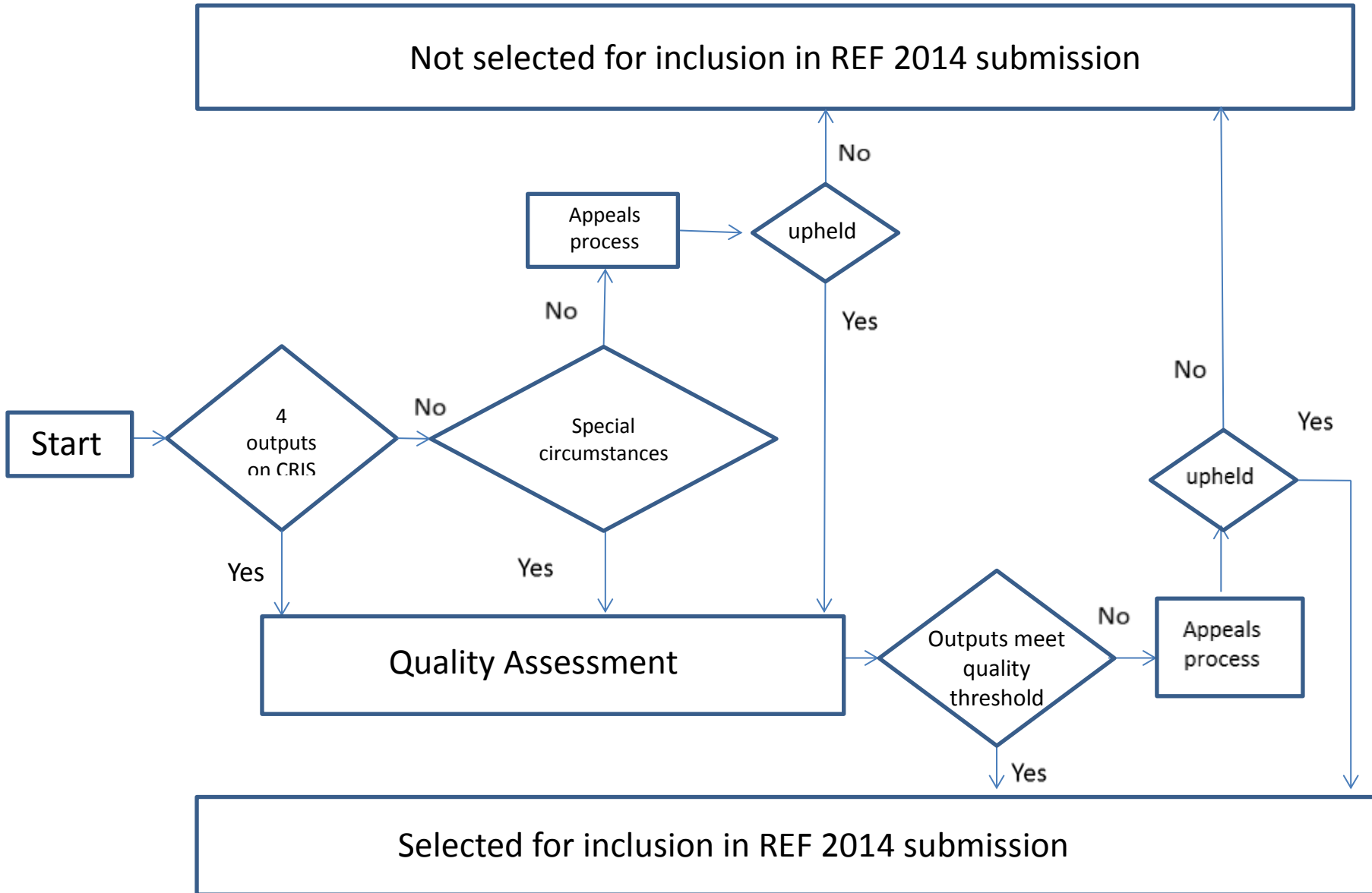
Strategy Board Chair	Professor Clifford Friend
UoA 6 Lead	Dr David Parsons
UoA 12 Lead	Professor Ralph Tatam
UoA Deputy	Professor Andrew Starr
UoA 19 Lead	Dr Colin Pilbeam
Strategy Board Secretary	Ms Rachel Burgon
Diversity Manager	Ms Hiran Odedra

The Strategy Board is supported by representatives from IT Department, Library and Information Services, Human Resources and Development and the Vice-Chancellor's Office

### Cranfield Exceptional Circumstances Panel Membership

Diversity Manager (Chair)	Hiran Odedra
HR Manager	Jo Catterill
Policy Manager & Secretary to REF Strategy Board	Rachel Burgon

Annex D – Selection and Appeals Process



## Annex E

### Cranfield University Equality Impact Assessment Form

Name of Policy/Procedure	REF Code of Practice
Brief Aim of Procedure	To provide a framework for consistency and transparency across the University and ensure the University's REF submission is fair.
Function	VCO

Assessment Date:	11/07/12
Assessed by (Name/title):	Hiran Odedra (University Diversity Manager)

	Positive/Negative/No Impact	Where appropriate, give reason/response
Does this policy or procedure have a positive, negative or no impact in terms of addressing prejudice or discrimination against people with a protected characteristic?	Positive	All staff involved in the REF process will undertake Diversity training to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act and to ensure that staff selection processes are fair and transparent.
Does the policy or procedure have a positive, negative or no impact in terms of minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to a	Positive	Staff with any protected characteristic are eligible for selection in the REF and can seek a reduction in

protected characteristic?		outputs if they have 'individual' or 'complex' circumstances (as outlined in the CoP).
Does this policy or procedure have a positive, negative or no impact on taking steps to promote equality of opportunity for all?	Positive	Staff will be given the opportunity to confidentially disclose any special circumstances which may have had an impact on their research and may be allowed a reduction in research outputs if deemed appropriate by the panel.
Does the policy or procedure have a positive, negative or no impact in terms of encouraging people with a protected characteristic to take part in the REF?	Positive	All eligible staff will be encouraged to take part in the REF using a variety of communications channels. It will also be clear to staff how to disclose individual circumstances confidentially to the REF Exceptional Circumstances Panel.

**Signed (Assessor)**  
(print or type)

**Hiran Odedra**

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