



Research Excellence Framework 2014

Code of Practice on the selection of staff

Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 Code of Practice

1. Purpose

To ensure that our activities in the preparation and selection of staff for submission to REF2014 meets our equality obligations, and ensure that selection takes place in a transparent, consistent, accountable and inclusive way.

This Code of Practice will be submitted to HEFCE in July 2012.

2. University of Cumbria REF panels

The University will utilise existing working structures within the University for research to manage the REF selection process, as outlined below (Appendix A):

2.1 Panels

Please see appendix A for the details of panel formation, membership, role in the selection process and mode of operation.

- 1) Research Leads Working Group
- 2) Final Selection panel
- 3) Individual staff circumstances panel
- 4) Appeals panel

The selection decisions will be referred to the University's Research and Enterprise Committee to accept selection decisions and verify that the selection processes have been implemented as outlined in this code. This will include verification on decisions on selection of Units of Assessment, individuals and impact case studies selected for submission to REF2014.

2.2 Panel membership

The membership of the various panels will be drawn from staff with knowledge of research activity, other relevant skills or strategic responsibility from across the University, who have the expertise to judge the quality of work available in subject disciplines. Please see appendix A for further details.

3. Training

All individuals involved in the selection process will attend a REF specific face-to-face training event, which will refresh previous equality and diversity training in light of the Equality Act 2010. The training will utilise REF-specific training materials published by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), including the case studies providing examples of individual staff circumstances

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The appeals panel will also receive this training. Additionally, online materials will be provided to ensure a sufficient level of understanding can be gained by any individuals who are co-opted into selection panels to provide supplementary advice during the process.

Whilst co-opted members will only provide expert advice on discipline norms, awareness of this code and availability of these materials will ensure that this advice is given solely on the basis of the quality of the research being assessed.

Decisions by the Final Selection Panel will be passed to University committees for verification as appropriate. These committees will not receive specific equality and diversity training as they will provide oversight only, and will not be actively involved in selection. It will be verified that the individuals chairing these committees have appropriate and up to date understanding of the relevant legislation.

4. Criteria for selection of work

Work will be selected only on the basis of its quality, and will take no account of any personal characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion and belief including non-belief, sex (including breastfeeding and paternity or adoption leave) or sexual orientation. Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken at pertinent points in the selection process to ensure that discrimination is avoided and promote equality (see section 11).

4.1 Selection of Units of Assessment

The University is committed to submitting all excellent research to REF2014 and ensuring the best possible quality profiles possible. However, this cannot be based solely on the excellence of individual staff members or individual pieces of work. Judgements will also be made regarding the wider viability of each Unit of Assessment as a whole. This will consider whether the unit will be capable of achieving scores of suitable quality in the assessment of reach and significance of impact as well as the vitality and sustainability of research environment. Where the risk of low scores in these elements is deemed high enough to reduce the overall quality profile of a UOA to an unacceptable level, a decision may be taken not to submit to a UOA. The primary driver is the enhancement of the academic reputation of the University. Such decisions will also take into account the strategic benefit of identifying an active area of research, the strategic risk of submission based on the characteristics of the research activity within that particular area and the likelihood of receiving income on the basis of the submission.

Where Quality Group (see Appendix D) research activities span a number of UOAs, the most appropriate unit will be selected for submission, in terms of identifying the strongest outcome for the University. This will be considered at the level of the strength of disciplines as whole units. Where necessary, staff can be submitted with an expectation that outputs may need to be cross-referred to another UOA or, if appropriate, considered for selection to a UOA falling without the core discipline of the Quality Group.

UOA selection may be reconsidered at later selection stages (see timetable in Appendix C) on the basis of significant changes in staffing or other factors which affect the viability of submission within the UOA.

Selection processes for individuals will take place only where a decision has been made to submit to a UOA which is relevant to the research outputs of that individual or group.

4.2 Selection of staff

Staff will be selected on the basis of the quality of their outputs, and the likely effect of these on the overall quality rating of the UOA to which they will be submitted if their work is selected. Outputs will be judged primarily on the expectation that they have met a suitable quality rating in terms of originality, significance and rigour to generate a positive result for UOA submission. Judgements as to whether work meets the quality criteria for excellent research will be made in line with the expectations and norms for individual subject areas based on the individual panel criteria as outlined in the guidelines (REF 02.2011 and REF 01.2012).

The number of outputs will also be considered as part of the selection process, as too few outputs will lead to an 'unclassified' grading, and have a negative effect on the overall quality profile of a submitted UOA. This will apply to all staff under consideration, with the exception of individuals who have disclosed circumstances which have significantly constrained in their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period (who can be considered for selection with fewer than four outputs, through the process described in section 8).

Consideration will also be made for the criterion surrounding outputs with significant material in common, as the REF guidance clearly states that such materials may be considered as a single output, leading to a significantly reduced quality assessment for individual outputs. Co-authored outputs where two or more authors are under consideration for submission to the REF will be considered in the light of individual panel criteria, and primarily resolved through discussion between the individuals involved.

The selection panel will reject any research outputs which are deemed ineligible according to REF 02.2011. These include theses, dissertations or other items submitted for research degrees, including doctoral theses (but not other assessable published items based on research carried out for a research degree), outputs produced by research assistants unless co-authored or co-produced by the named eligible staff member, editorships of journals and other activities associated with the dissemination of research findings or any work which does not reflect the definition of research in REF (REF 02.2011, Annex C).

Selection will also take account of situations where it is known that a member of staff will no longer be eligible for submission on the census date, for example where a staff member is due for retirement before this date. These elements will be identified in direct consultation with individuals.

Staff members may suggest preferred outputs for selection where more are available than can be submitted. However, the outputs submitted for selected individuals will be determined by the selection panels.

4.3 *Selection criteria*

Outputs will be assessed on the basis of quality to underpin the identification of the most positive submission for the University as a whole in the UOAs chosen for submission. Assessment of quality will be guided by the subject norms as identified in the final panel criteria (REF 01.2012).

5. **Identification of work for consideration**

Invitations to put work forward for consideration for REF submission will take place at regular intervals during the preparation period leading to REF submission. Invitations to self-submit will take place outside of the faculty and line management structure, to ensure that all staff members have the opportunity to put themselves forward. This will ensure that all eligible members of staff have the opportunity to put their work forward for consideration on the basis of the quality of individual outputs. This also facilitates the identification of the volume of work available within different subject disciplines.

The primary method for this is through an online survey, open to all academic staff. This requires staff to state outputs published within the assessment period for consideration. Members of staff who are currently away from the University will be contacted via letter at pertinent points in the process, in order to inform them of the ongoing work, and allow for their involvement in the REF process. These activities are supported by a wider communication strategy within the institution to raise awareness that REF preparation activity is taking place. Communication will take a range of forms (including non-written), and alternative formats will be made available on request for all stages of the REF selection process.

6. **Impact case study selection**

An open call process will be utilised to allow staff to suggest examples of excellent research that have generated impact, or examples of impact which are attributable to research generated through the University. Further examples will be identified through the knowledge and experience of members of the selection panels and will be driven in collaboration with key research groups. Identified case studies will be considered and further developed by the REF selection team, in consultation with academic staff.

Selection will be based on the extent to which impact meets the assessment criteria, the threshold quality level for the underpinning research and the practicality of evidencing cause and effect between the research and the impact.

Impact case study development and selection will be driven by the REF working group, in parallel to development of information about the research environment element.

7. Externality

The University will use external assessors to verify the quality of outputs and impact case studies under consideration for submission to REF2014. Assessors will be asked to provide opinion on how individual outputs compare to national and international standards within research subject areas and, where appropriate, provide comment on the specific UOA to submit individual staff members or bodies of work. Assessors will also be asked to comment on the strongest outputs where more are available than required for an individual, likelihood of completion for on-going work, the possible strength of draft case studies and whole submissions to individual UOAs.

External assessors will not be provided with any information about individual staff circumstances. They will be made aware of the parameters for the selection process outlined in this document.

The expertise of external assessors in subject disciplines will be used to inform understanding of subject norms and ensure that assessment of the quality of individual outputs is fair and consistent across tranches of work.

Feedback from external assessors will be used to inform discussion by the selection panels, including on the viability of submitting to individual UOAs, but external assessors will not be involved in making selection decisions.

8. Individual staff circumstances

The REF team have allowed clear provision for staff to be submitted with reduced outputs without penalty where their circumstances have significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or work productively throughout the assessment period. The guidelines state a range of circumstances which should be considered, and provide guidance on the appropriate level of output reduction without penalty. This is to aid institutions in considering the excellent research of all eligible staff, even where staff have been subject to constraints which reduce the number of research outputs below the expected level.

8.1 Disclosure

In order to support this, a process will be put in place to allow eligible staff to disclose their individual circumstances. This will primarily be through a form that will be available on the staff intranet, and in other formats on request. Staff will be notified of the availability of this form through the email system, screensavers and other media. This will allow staff to indicate if they have been subject to significant constraining circumstances over the assessment period, and wish to be considered for submission with a reduced number of outputs. This information will be treated with strict confidentiality, and **the information**

will only be seen by the individual staff circumstances panel. The panel will make decisions based on the REF2014 guidance regarding clearly defined and complex staff circumstances. Decisions on the appropriate level of reduced outputs will generally be based on correlation of individual circumstances with total absence from or disruption to work over the assessment period (i.e. the cumulative effect on ability to undertake contracted hours of work across the whole of the assessment period). This can include a decision that a reduction in outputs cannot be recommended based on the disclosed information, in line with the official guidance and tariffs. A recommendation for a reduction in outputs can only be made where the panel can provide a clear rationale for the reduction based on the official guidance.

Disclosed information will be kept securely through the use of password protected files with restricted access, and used only to inform the REF2014 selection process, as outlined above. Permission will be requested from individuals for the information to be added to existing confidential staff HR records. Disclosed information will be destroyed following the conclusion of the REF process, in line with REF audit requirements.

Only decisions on appropriate level of reduced number of outputs will be provided to selection panels. No details of any individual circumstances that can be deemed personal or sensitive will be disclosed to these individuals (with the exception of Early Career Researchers – please see section 8.2). No information relating to individual staff circumstances will be shared beyond the relevant committees outlined in this document, with the exception of submitting information to REF. This will be required to evidence the requested reduced number of submitted outputs, where an individual with an accepted reduction in outputs is selected for submission. In this case, the information will also be handled confidentially in accordance with the processes in REF 02.2011 and REF 01.2012. Information may be disclosed to the Appeals Panel where this is necessary to make an informed decision on an appeal brought by the individual. In such cases the confidentiality arrangements for the Individual Staff Circumstances Panel will be exceptionally extended to Appeals Panel members.

Where staff have been subject to constraining circumstances but do not disclose this information through the identified channels, they will not be considered for submission with reduced outputs. Such staff will be considered only through the general selection process outlined in this document, particularly the criteria in section 4.2, which includes a requirement for four outputs of excellent quality in order to ensure the inclusion of the individual will not adversely affect the quality profile of the UOA via automatic inclusion of an “unclassified” rating.

8.2 *Clearly defined circumstances*

The clearly defined circumstances which will be taken into account are as follows:

- Part time workers;
- Fixed term workers;

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- Early Career Researchers;
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave;
- Secondments or career breaks outside the Higher Education sector.

Fixed term and part-time staff will be considered using the same criteria as open contract and full-time permanent staff. However, such staff will be asked to complete a form to disclose this circumstance, in order to ensure that accumulated effects across the whole of the assessment period can be taken into account and that individuals are aware that they may be submitted with a reduced number of outputs if they are selected. This will also allow the consideration of any other circumstances that may have affected their ability to produce outputs during the assessment period.

8.2.1 Early Career Researchers

Early Career Researchers will be identified in consultation with the individual and selection panel staff, due to the complexity of this criterion. Staff will be supported in identifying the point at which they became an independent researcher, to allow the individual staff circumstances panel to accurately calculate the appropriate reduction in outputs. This will also allow the completion of the additional information required to be submitted for ECRs, regardless of whether they are returned with reduced outputs.

Clearly defined circumstances will be dealt with by direct application of the REF panel criteria guidance, applying the appropriate tariff for reduction in outputs (see REF 01.2012 for details).

8.3 Complex circumstances

Consideration will also be made of more complex individual circumstances. These include:

- Disability
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity leave (which will be considered in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave).
- Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- Other circumstances relating to characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

Where complex circumstances exist, the individual staff circumstances panel will make a judgement on the appropriate level reduction in the number of outputs submitted. These decisions will be based on the worked examples of complex circumstances produced by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), published in March 2012. As far as is practicable, the impact of complex circumstances will be equated to clearly defined absences. However, clearly identifiable periods of disruption will also be taken into account. Specifically, the panel will

seek to evidence the following in order to justify a reduction in the number of outputs, in line with the official guidance:

- The nature and timing of circumstances which constrained the individual.
- Explain effects on the individual's contracted hours or ability to fulfil contracted hours.
- Explain any other effects on the individual's ability to work productively.
- Provide a calculation for the reduction in outputs and the number of outputs returned.

Staff will be provided with opportunities to disclose their individual circumstances for consideration of reduced number of outputs ahead of each key selection stage.

9. Feedback on selection of UOAs and staff

Staff will be alerted in a timely manner as to whether or not UOAs relevant to their role or their outputs have been selected for submission to REF. Where a member of staff has not been selected for submission to REF, full reasons will be provided to the individual on behalf of the Final Selection Panel by Research Office, in writing.

10. Appeals process

Appeals against selection decisions will be handled by an independent panel, as outlined in the indicative REF preparation and selection timetable in Appendix C. The timing of this will allow appeals to be considered before final selection is made. 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 Research Office within the designated timeframe. Handling of appeals will allow the reconsideration of selection decisions ahead of REF submission.

11. Equality impact assessment

Equality impact assessment will be carried out at key points in the selection process, to ensure that there is no differential impact on particular groups. These will be informed by summary level data on protected characteristics, provided by HR.

Equality impact assessment will take place at the following points:

- On development of this code of practice;
- Following initial and final selection of staff;

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- Following the appeals process.

We will use best practice in equality assessment and use information gained from engaging, consulting or involving staff from protected groups to inform EIAs in the REF preparation process.

12. Communications plan

This code of practice will be disseminated widely to all eligible staff members at the University:

- 1) The Code of Practice will be published on the University's intranet (StaffNet).
- 2) Hard copies of the code (including those printed in alternative formats) will be available from Research Office and Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager, on request.
- 3) Staff will be made aware of the code through email briefings, newsletters, electronic communication tools and payslip messages. The main communication tool for REF will be staff email.
- 4) Staff away from work will be kept updated by letter.
- 5) This code will be published on the external facing website once approved by HEFCE.
- 6) The results of staff selection decisions, appeals and feedback will be communicated on an individual basis.
- 7) Terms of Reference for the Selection Panels will be available on StaffNet.
- 8) On-going dialogue will be undertaken with members of staff under consideration in order to manage the iterative process of development towards Ref submission. This will include helping staff to identify their readiness for submission and prioritisation of individual workload.

Research Office

Date: 7 February 2012

Updated: 1 June 2012

Final update: February 2014

Equality Impact Assessment of the code

Date: 9 February 2012

Updated: 27 July 2012

Final: December 2013

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Appendix A – Selection committees

Name of Panel	Committee formation	Membership	Roles	Position within selection process
Research Leads Working Group	Comprises the key staff actively involved in managing research activity, including faculty and centralised roles. The members link in to research activity across the whole of the University.	Pro Vice Chancellor Academic	Chair of the group, with strategic responsibility for all academic activities at institutional level. Will present the recommendations of the Group to the final selection panel.	Assess feasibility of submission to relevant UOAs based on quality of research and make recommendations for selection to the Final Selection Panel. The committee will have responsibility to make appropriate decisions on generic issues such as quality thresholds and timetable for the selection process. It will also assess, select and develop impact case studies and research environment data for selected UOAs. The panel will coordinate REF activity and make recommendations based on scoping and assessment to the Final Selection Panel. This will include considering appropriate placement of individuals with interdisciplinary work.
		Director of Research and Graduate Studies	Strategic responsibility for research activity across the institution. Role in ensuring consistency of the application of selection practices across Faculties.	
		Faculty Associate Deans for research, or equivalent (3)	Local responsibility for research strategy, ensuring that recommendations on UOAs to be submitted meet Faculty needs.	
		Faculty Research Coordinators (3)	In-depth knowledge of on-going research activity within each faculty. Liaison with individual staff members to scope readiness for REF submission and with discipline leads to identify UOA viability. Key drivers of impact and environment elements for UOAs under consideration.	
		Research Officer	Administrative support, including record keeping, and support on official REF guidelines and consistent application of Code.	
Final Selection Panel	Formed from key members of the	Vice Chancellor	Chair of the Final Selection Panel with responsibility for selection decisions for the institution.	Receive recommendations from Research Leads Working Group and make the strategic decisions

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	University with strategic responsibility for research.	Pro Vice Chancellor Academic	Liaison with Research Leads Working Group recommendatory panel and strategic responsibility for academic matters.	on UOAs to be submitted and staff selection.
		Faculty Executive Deans (3)	Strategic responsibility for submissions as a representation of Faculty research activity.	
Individual Staff Circumstances Panel	The panel has been formed by staff with knowledge of the REF process, HR knowledge and expertise in equality and diversity legislation.	Research Officer	Knowledge of REF guidelines regarding the handling of Individual Staff Circumstances. Liaison with selection panels on decisions for reduced outputs without penalty. Responsibility for receiving and handling disclosed information on staff circumstances.	To consider information disclosed by staff relating to individual circumstances that may merit submission with a reduced number of outputs. The panel will make decisions on whether a member of staff can be submitted with reduced outputs, calculating the appropriate number of reduced outputs for clearly defined and complex. The decisions made by this panel will be passed to the Research Leads Working Group and Final Selection Panel to inform selection decisions. The panel will consider both clearly defined and complex circumstances. Decisions will be made by consensus on the basis of the information disclosed by the individual in each case.
		Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Expertise on the Equality Act 2010.	
		HR delegate	Liaison with staff data to verify circumstances disclosed where these relate to contractual issues or defined periods of absence from work.	

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Appeals Panel	The panel has been formed from impartial individuals with knowledge of research who have not been directly involved in the selection process. It includes the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager to ensure the relevant obligations have been followed.	Director of Research and Graduate Studies	Chair, with responsibility for ruling on whether any complaints received should be upheld. Knowledge of how the selection procedure took place.	The panel will consider any appeals received from staff following feedback from the Final Selection Panel. Cases for appeal will be considered ahead of the final selection for submission, and decisions will be passed to the Final Selection Panel, identifying whether the appeal should be rejected or if the selection decision must be reconsidered.
		Research Officer	Knowledge of guidelines, administrative support including records of selection decisions.	
		Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Expertise in the Equality Act 2010.	
		Union Representative	Academic representative.	

The University Research and Enterprise Committee will receive the selection decisions as determined by the Final Selection Panel, for formal acceptance and record keeping. The committee will not be directly involved in selection decisions.

If required due to unforeseen circumstances, a panel member will be replaced by an individual with relevant and equivalent knowledge to apply the selection criteria as outlined in this code, and will only take place if absolutely necessary. Any such individuals will be required to complete the same training as outlined in section three, and will be communicated immediately to staff.

N.B. Two changes to panel members were undertaken during 2013, due to individuals leaving the University. These individuals were replaced in line with the statement above, with new panel members receiving full training as per section 3. Some changes to the selection panels took place in September 2013, due to a Faculty restructure. This reduced the number of individuals involved in selection, but did not reduce the breadth of representation (move from three Faculties to two - see Appendix D ii).

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Appendix B – Selection Panel terms of reference

1.1 Panel responsibilities:

- To develop the REF submissions on behalf of the University.
- To ensure the strongest submission to the REF possible based on the excellent research of all eligible staff at the institution.
- To ensure that selection processes are implemented in a fair and consistent manner across Faculties and Units of Assessment.

1.2 General requirements:

It is important that all members of selection panels understand the following:

- These formal terms of reference for the panel;
- The constitution and membership of the panel;
- The role that the panel takes within the selection process;
- The implications of the Equality Act 2010 on selection procedures;
- The place of the panel in the University's process for selecting Units of Assessment and individuals for submission to REF.

1.3 Member responsibilities:

- To undertake equality and diversity training specifically tailored to the REF process;
- To uphold the selection principles outlined in this Code of Practice for the selection of staff;
- To follow the criteria for selection in the REF as outlined in the official guidance (REF 02.2011 and REF 01.2012);
- To apply the selection principles in liaising with individual staff members, discipline leads and external assessors outwith panel meetings;
- To understand the scope of the panel on which they sit, as outlined in Appendix A;
- To ensure the fair and consistent application of quality criteria to all elements of the submission.

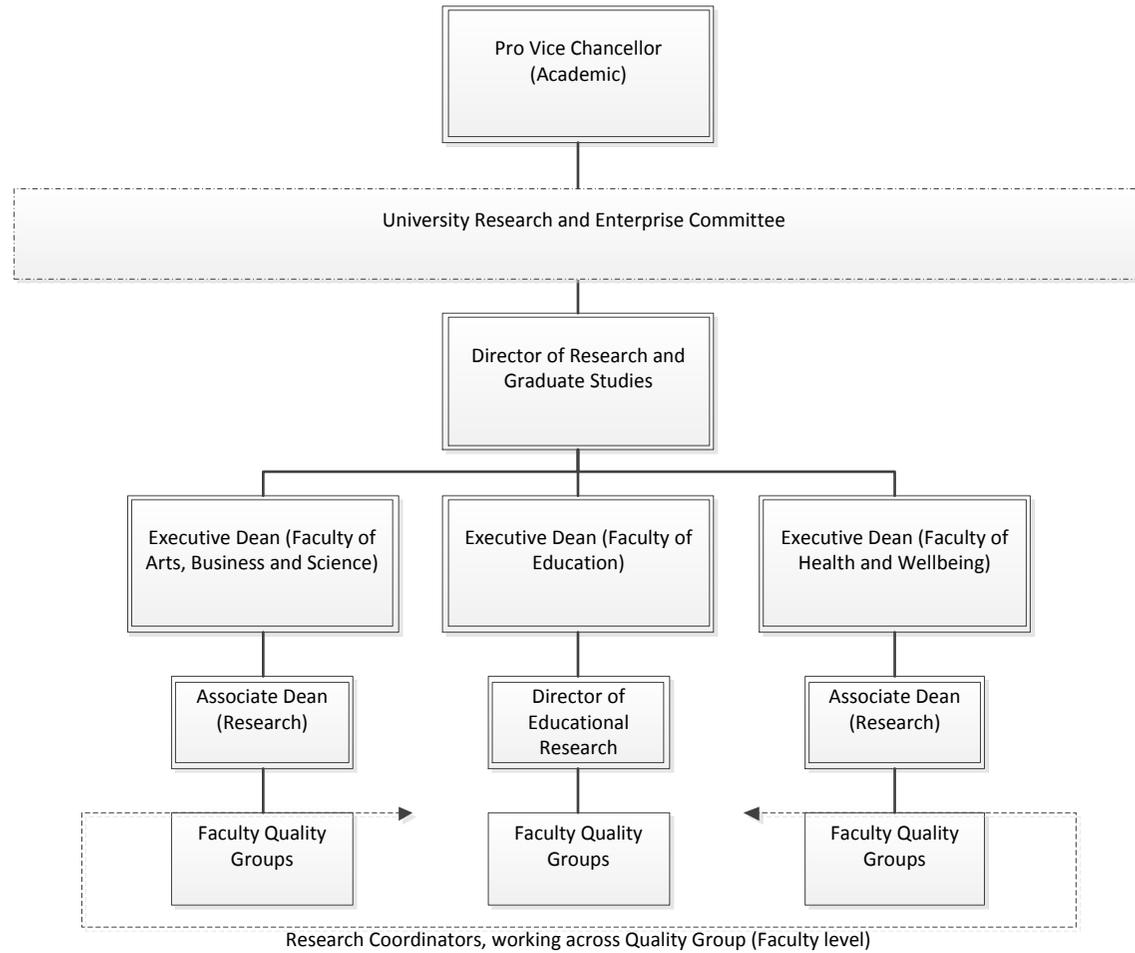
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Appendix C – Indicative Selection Timeline

Action	Responsibility	Timing
Selection panel training	All attend	14 May 2012
First Individual Staff Circumstances Panel meeting (one per month until end October 2012)	Individual Staff Circumstances Panel	Late May 2012
Selection panel terms of reference finalised	Research Office/Research Leads	June 2012
Run initial mock, based on all eligible staff identified	Research Leads Working Group	June 2012
Initial data gathering and assessment for environment element and drafting of impact template and early identified case studies	Research Leads Working Group	July – August 2012
Completion of draft Research Environment templates	Research Leads Working Group	October 2012
Draft pool of impact case studies completed	Research Leads Working Group	November 2012
Initial identification of UOAs plan to submit	Research Leads Working Group	November 2012
Initial selection and completion of survey of submission intentions	Research Leads Working Group and Final Selection Panel	November 2012
Equality Impact Assessment on selection	LISS Manager Equality and Diversity	December 2012
Feedback to individuals and initiation of appeals process	Research Leads Working Group	December 2012
Evidence verification for impact case studies; initial selection.	Research Leads Working Group	January 2013
External review of impact case studies	External advisers	February 2013
Appeals panel meeting	Appeals Panel	February 2013
Testing of data with REF submission system	Research Office	February 2013
Collection of metadata for outputs begins	Research Leads Working Group	March 2013
Review of Research Environment data	Research Leads Working Group	March 2013
Selection review: outputs and impact case studies	Research Leads Working Group and Final Selection Panel	April 2013
Feedback to individuals and initiation of appeals to changes	Research Leads Working Group	May 2013
Appeals panel meeting	Appeals Panel	July 2013
Finalisation of Research Environment data and impact template	Research Leads Working Group	August 2013
Uploading of data into the REF submission system	Research Office	September 2013
Final review of selection (verification of accuracy, re: census date) prior to submission	Research Leads Working Group and Final Selection Panel	October 2013
Submission	Research Office	By 29th Nov 2013

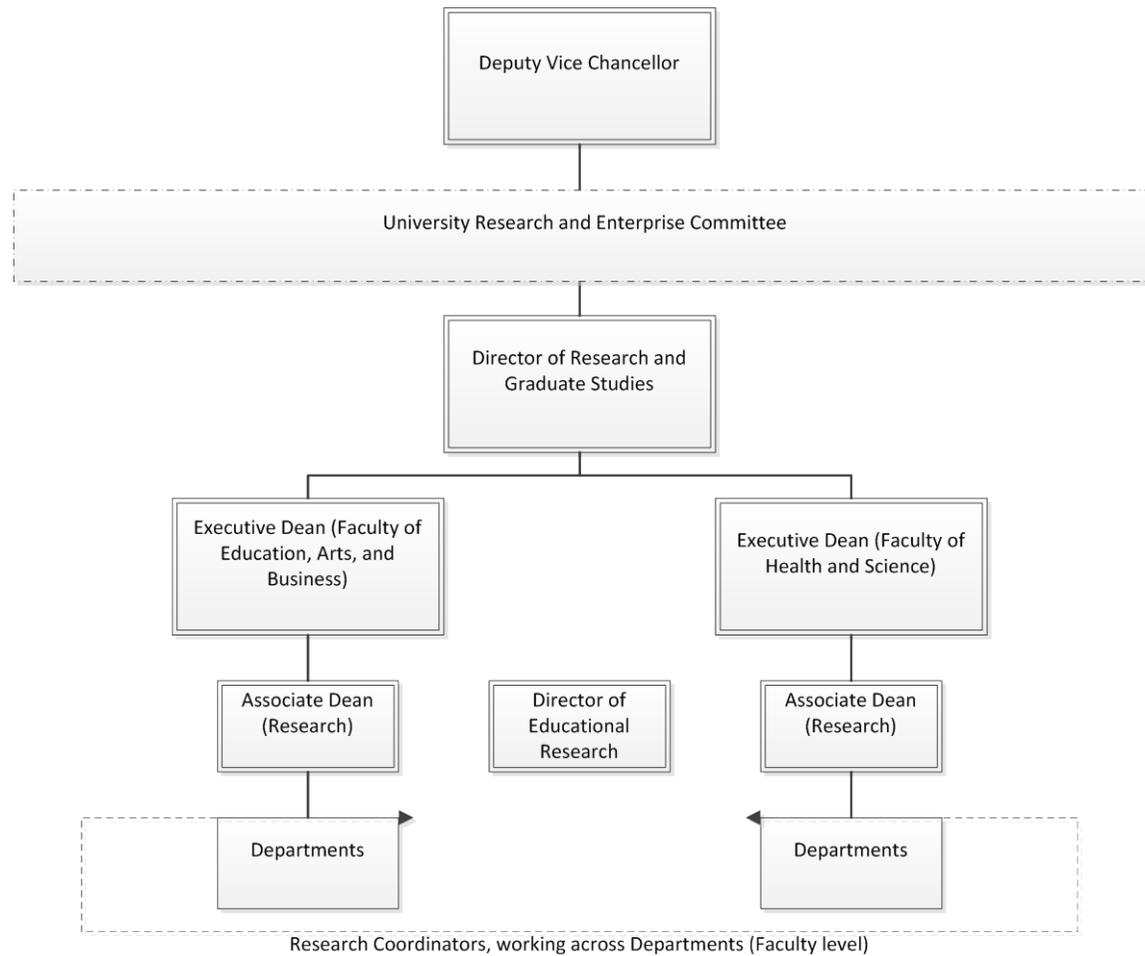
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Appendix D i – University of Cumbria Academic Structure to 31 July 2013



“Quality Group” is the phrase used to denote a subject or discipline grouping, which works as an academic unit within the Faculty.

Appendix D part ii – University of Cumbria Academic Structure from 1 August 2013



A Faculty restructure took place, moving from three to two Faculties. However, the representation across Faculties and Departments was maintained. Selection structures were maintained with equivalent Associate Dean level research leads and Director of Educational Research up to REF submission, although some of these structures subsequently changed within the restructure. (Move to Deputy Deans).