

Code of Practice for REF 2014

a) Preamble and context

As part of its commitment to ensure that the REF selection process is as inclusive as possible, the University has established this Code of Practice to address the issues of equality and diversity in the preparation of REF 2014 submissions. The Code has been informed by guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit and will be approved by HEFCE which will make it available via its REF website. The University is fully committed to being an equal opportunities employer and providing equality of opportunity to all of its staff. The University does not discriminate on grounds of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex/gender or sexual orientation.

As an equal opportunity employer, Edge Hill University actively seeks to eliminate any form of unfair discrimination from its policies and practices. It also recognises that it has a legal obligation to comply with equal opportunities legislation (enshrined in the Equality Act 2010) which makes it unlawful for a person to be treated less favourably than other people for a reason related to their disability, or on grounds of any other protected characteristic. It also makes it unlawful to discriminate indirectly against a person with protected characteristics, for instance, by applying a provision, criteria or practice which puts the particular group to which that person belongs, and hence that person, at a disadvantage.

In addition, fixed-term and part-time employees have the right not to be treated by an employer any less favourably than the employer treats a comparable 'permanent' full-time employee. This is recognised by Edge Hill through their access to University research funds (REF Investment Fund and Staff Development Fund).

Some legislation also imposes monitoring duties upon the University. Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, the University has a duty to monitor submission to the REF by racial group and to assess the impact of selection procedures on different racial groups. A similar exercise will be carried out in relation to disability and gender.

The higher education funding bodies in England, Wales and Scotland have statutory duties to monitor the higher education sector for any adverse and differential impact of a funding body, sponsored policy, or service on a minority ethnic community and to monitor, by racial group, the number of staff in the higher education institutions (HEIs) for which they are responsible. They are required to publish annually, as far as possible, the results of that monitoring. As part of their responsibility, they will need to monitor, by racial group, the staff submitted to the REF and this will extend to disability and gender for REF 2014. The University will carry out an equality impact assessment for this purpose (see section 4 below).

b) Principles

The intention of the University is to make a submission to the REF in 2014 which enhances the reputation and esteem of Edge Hill. In order to enhance our reputation, a balance needs to be struck between quality and quantity. In 2008, over 50 per cent of EHU submissions to the RAE were judged to be 1* or unclassified. The objective is to improve on this quality profile:

1. All eligible staff will be considered for inclusion
2. Inclusion will be based on the quality of an individual's research output, and the overall viability of a return in their area of expertise.
3. To be included, staff need to have four research outputs within the census period that reach the 2* threshold (unless there are special circumstances which permit a remission in the number of outputs: see below): any member of staff who believes that s/he meets the inclusion criteria should ensure that the Unit of Assessment (UoA) coordinator in the relevant subject area is aware of her/his output. This process is reinforced by all heads of department/area reviewing each staff member's research outputs via the Annual Academic Return (AAR) to ensure that no member of staff is excluded from consideration. AARs are discussed by the HoD, the Dean, Director of the RESO and PVC (Academic).
4. It should be noted that inclusion in a REF submission will not be a factor when considering promotions of any staff members nor indeed any other career development opportunity. Additionally, it is the view of the University that all fully engaged academic staff members are contributing to the Institution's REF performance regardless of whether or not they are named in the submission.
5. The University is committed to supporting its part-time and fixed-term contract staff in reaching their research potential and being eligible for inclusion in the REF. All staff have the same rights to research support including:
 - a. All Research Capacity Building training events (which are also open to PGR students and associate tutors)
 - b. Access to internal research support funds
 - c. Access to the services of the Research Support Office including support for bids for external grants.
 - d. Participation in the annual performance review process where individual research plans are discussed and support needs are identified.
 - e. Participation in departmental meetings where research issues are discussed and priorities established.
6. The initial decision on the inclusion of staff is the responsibility of the UoA coordinators and deputies who identify all members of staff (from any department) who potentially meet the criteria in their subject area. To help facilitate this process, the UoA coordinators meet with each other to share information on eligible staff; these meetings include the PVC (Academic) and the Director of the RESO to help facilitate an open approach to inclusion. Given that UoAs do not map directly on to departments, it is essential that UoA coordinators look outside their own departments when considering their submissions.
7. UoA coordinators and deputies plus the REF Steering Group, the Individual Circumstances Disclosure Group and the REF Appeal Committee will receive training in equality and diversity issues in relation to the REF. (Briefing events will also be made open to all staff members on a voluntary basis.)
8. Judgements on whether a research output meets the 2* threshold will be made by each UoA Group (UoA Coordinator and Deputy, Dean and Associate Dean (Research) in association with the Head of Department/Area).

9. When the UoA submission is ready in its final draft (December 2012), or possibly before, advice and guidance may be sought from an external reviewer regarding whether the research outputs reach the 2* threshold.
10. Once any review is complete, and any resulting changes made, the draft will be presented to the REF Steering Group (chaired by the PVC (Academic)) (15 Feb 2013).
11. The dean of the relevant faculty will meet with any research active staff member who has the requisite number of outputs but who has not been included in the UoA drafts to discuss the decision
12. Once approved by the REF Steering Group, the submissions will be posted on the wiki for all staff to have access (28 February 2013).
13. Any member of staff who wishes to challenge non-inclusion may ask for her/his research outputs to be reconsidered by the UoA Group; a request for reconsideration needs to be made in writing to the UoA Group within ten working days of the narratives being posted on the wiki (14 March 2013).
14. If the Group confirms the individual's non-submission, s/he may appeal against the decision to the REF Appeals Committee (see section 4 below).

(Please note the timetable is appended as appendix 1.)

c) Disclosure of Special Circumstances

In order for the University to include all staff members who meet the quality threshold, it is important that we know of situations where staff members may have been affected by personal circumstances, resulting in a reduction in research output. As such, we encourage all members of staff who believe that they have quality publications, but whose personal circumstances may have limited their capacity to produce four items, to make these circumstances known (examples of the types of circumstances that might be considered are available on the [Equality Challenge Unit's](#) website).

The circumstances which will be taken into account are:

- Early career researchers (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009)
- Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013
- Part-time employment
- Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research
- Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)
- Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare in addition to periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken.

- Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative). Under employment law, the term relative covers:
 - Parent, adopter, guardian, step-parent, parent-in-law
 - Son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law
 - Brother, sister, step-brother, step-sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law
 - Uncle, aunt
 - Grandparent
 - Adoptive relationships
 - Relationships such as half-brother and half-sister
- Gender reassignment
- Other personal circumstances which have had an impact on an individual's ability to produce the requisite number of research outputs in the census period

To support this process, all members of academic and academic-related staff will be invited to complete a form identifying any potential special circumstances (see HEFCE Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions paras 88 – 99), which permits fewer than four items to be submitted (see appendix 2). The form may be submitted to one of the following (whomever the individual feels most comfortable discussing the situation):

- Head of department/area
- Dean of Faculty
- Director of RESO

Whoever receives the information requires sufficient detail to be able to make a *prima facie* judgement. Where a case is made, the details will be presented to the Individual Circumstances Disclosure Group (ICDG) which adjudicates on special circumstances (see appendix 3 for membership and terms of reference). UoA groups will only be informed that there are grounds for the individual's inclusion with fewer than four items but without details being given (unless the individual wishes to disclose to the group).

If a staff member declares a circumstance for the first time, the University may request any information that it would normally request (but not beyond) for the purposes of:

- managing staff absence, including disability related absence
- making reasonable adjustments
- Referrals to occupational health
- ensuring health and safety
- ensuring staff wellbeing at work
- managing extenuating personal circumstances

If a staff member has already informed her/his line manager (or equivalent) of the circumstances, this information should already be available and the staff member should not be required to produce additional information to support her/his disclosure form.

No additional information disclosed for the sole purposes of the REF process will be kept in Human Resources' staff files.

d) Equality Impact Assessment

In keeping with HEFCE rules, the University will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment in August 2012 and this will be reviewed at key stages of the REF preparations. Findings from the EIA will inform the development of the REF submission.

e) Challenging the Decision and Appeals

Where an individual remains unsatisfied with the decision of the UoA Group after a request for reconsideration, s/he can appeal to the REF Appeals Committee (REF AC): the appeal can only be on the grounds of whether the individual meets the quality threshold, not a challenge to the principles underpinning the REF submission strategy. Individuals need to submit their appeal to the Research Support Office in writing by 30 April 2013 (research@edgehill.ac.uk). There is no right to appeal the decision of the REF AC. Members of the REF AC will receive appropriate training. For further information see appendix 4 below.

f) Dissemination

All information regarding the University's preparations for the REF are available via the Research Support Office wiki (<https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/research/Home>). Additionally, the policy will be announced via the weekly electronic news items and Heads of Department will be notified in a separate mailing and asked to encourage members of their department to familiarise themselves with the Code of Practice. It will also be the duty of the UoA Groups to ensure that staff members in their subject areas are aware of the Code. Finally, there will be announcements on noticeboards across the campus and through the Go Portal.

The Code of Practice will be available in electronic or hard copy as preferred. Other media (e.g. braille) will be available on request. UoA coordinators and Heads of Department will be asked to identify anyone they think may need a non-standard version of the Code and the RESO will be proactive in approaching these individuals to ensure that they have access to the Code in their preferred medium.

A full set of papers will be sent out in hard copy via the postal system to any member of staff who is absent from the University to ensure that s/he is aware of the circumstances for claiming a remission in the number of research outputs required to be included in the REF 2014. Where requested, a member of the Research Support Office team will be available to talk with the staff member either by telephone or in person (if requested and geographically feasible) if requested.

***If you have any queries about the Code or any other aspect of the University's
REF preparations, please contact the Research Support Office
research@edgehill.ac.uk or tel (01695 650) (7)925***

May 2013

Appendix 1 Outline Timetable

Due to delays with the external review process, there are changes to the deadlines associated with the REF 2014: the new deadlines are identified in the table below. If you have any questions or queries about these changes, please contact the REF Manager (nikki.craske@edgehill.ac.uk).

New Date	Old Date	Activity	Responsibility
N/A	April 2012	Publication of Code of Practice	Dissemination by RESO via HoDs/UoA coordinators
N/A	April 2012 onwards	Staff encouraged to declare special circumstances	Staff members
N/A	31 July 2012	Code of Practice submitted to HEFCE	RESO
N/A	21 December 2012	1 st 'Final' draft submitted for external review	UoA Groups
17 May 2013	15 February 2013	2 nd 'Final' draft submitted after external review to REF Steering Group	UoA Groups
31 May 2013	15 March 2013	Deadline for individuals to challenge their exclusion and ask for reconsideration ¹	Staff members (in writing to RESO)
	28 February 2013	Narratives published on research wiki	RESO
15 June 2013	31 March 2013	Response to individuals of any individual challenge	UoA Groups
15 July 2013	30 April 2013	Deadline for appeals	Staff members
10 Aug 2013	31 May 2013	Result of appeal	REF Appeals Committee
30 Sept 2013	30 Sept 2013	Deadline for submissions to be submitted to RESO	UoA Groups; RESO
29 November 2013	29 November 2013	Deadline for REF submission to HEFCE	RESO

¹ UoA coordinators will inform individuals who have been removed from the draft as a result of external review. Individuals will be given an explanation of why they have not been included on this occasion.

Appendix 2



Individual staff circumstances disclosure form

Name
Department
Unit of Assessment

Please read the guidance notes available on <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/research/REF+Code+of+Practice> before completing this form.

Section one:

Please select one of the following:

- I have **no** individual circumstances that I wish to be taken into consideration for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- I have individual circumstances that I wish to make known but I am **not** seeking a reduction in outputs. (Please complete sections two and three.)
- In completing this form I **am** seeking a reduction in research outputs. (Please complete sections two, three and four.)

Section two:

Please select as appropriate:

- I would like to be contacted by a member of human resources staff to discuss my circumstances and requirements and/or the support provided by the University. My contact details for this purpose are:

Email
Telephone
Preferred method of communication

- I do **not** wish to be contacted by a member of human resources staff

Section three

I wish to make the University aware of the following circumstances which have had an impact on my ability to produce four outputs or work productively between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013:

Please provide information required on relevant circumstance/s and continue onto a separate sheet of paper if necessary:

Circumstance	Information required
Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009: see paragraph 72 of the Panel Criteria and Working Methods)	Date on which you became an early career researcher
Information:	
Part time employee	FTE and dates of part time employment
Information:	
Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector	Dates and duration in months
Information:	
Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, or additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)	For each period of leave state which type of leave was taken and the dates and duration in months
Information:	
Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	
Mental health condition	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	
Ill health or injury	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	
Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare in addition to the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken.	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	
Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	

Gender reassignment	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	
Other exceptional and relevant reasons, not including teaching or administrative work	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information:	

Please confirm that you agree to the following:

I confirm that the information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances.

I recognise that the information provided will be used for REF purposes and will be seen by Individual Circumstances Disclosure Group (PVC (Academic), HR representative, Director of Student Services, Director of RESO)

I realise that it may be necessary to share information with the UK funding bodies' REF team, who may make the information available to REF panel chairs, members and secretaries and/or the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. Where permission is not provided Edge Hill University will be limited in the action it can take.

Signature
(Staff Member):

Date:

Please return to the Research and Enterprise Support Office in a sealed envelope marked REF Disclosure Form

For official use only

Following consideration of the personal circumstances described above, the Individual Circumstance Disclosure Group:

- Will progress the staff member's inclusion in the REF submission with [insert number] of research outputs. [Subject to specified institutional criteria of research meeting 2* quality threshold.] Rationale for the proposed number of outputs:

e.g. this decision is based on the tariffs outlined in the panel criteria.

- Requires further information of the circumstances described as follows:

e.g. please provide information from your occupational health assessment on the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments provided.

- Does not feel that the staff member meets the criteria outlined within the REF 'Panel criteria and working methods' for submitting fewer than four research outputs. The reason(s) for this decision are:

e.g. circumstances detailed are not recognised within the assessment framework and guidance on submissions.

If [insert name of staff member] wishes to appeal against the decision of the *Individual Circumstances Group* s/he will need to do so by 15 July 2013 and details of the appeals process can be found at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/research/REF+Code+of+Practice>.

Signature
(Professor JW Bruce):

Date:

Signature
(REF Manager):

Date:

Appendix 3 Membership and Terms of Reference of Groups

UoA Group: UoA Coordinator, UoA Deputy, Dean and Associate Dean (Research)

Terms of Reference: the UoA Group is charged with writing the UoA submission and for identifying staff across the University who may be eligible for inclusion in the UoA based on the subject area and quality of the individual's research output. The UoA Group *does not* make the final decision on:

- a. whether a submission is to go forward, or
- b. which members of staff are included in the final version of the submission (the final decision rests with Directorate).

The UoA Group is responsible for:

1. Coordinating the evidence gathering necessary for supporting the impact case-studies and will liaise with the Research Support Office in allocating responsibilities for data gathering
2. Organising its own internal meetings but the UoA Coordinator and Deputy will meet with the PVC (Academic), Director of RESO, Research Projects and Funding Manager quarterly to discuss the progress of the submission.

All members of the Group are required to undergo equalities training organised by the Research Support Office.

REF Steering Group: PVC (Academic) (chair); Director of RESO; Dean of Arts and Sciences; Associate Dean Arts and Sciences; Head of Research Faculty of Education; Head of Research Faculty of Health and Social Care; member of the professoriate; Research Projects and Funding Manager (secretary)

[Prof Bill Bruce; Dr Nikki Craske; Prof George Talbot; Prof Kevern Verney; Prof Martin Ashley (from May 2013 Prof Victor van Daal); Prof Barbara Jack; Prof Richard Parrish; Chris Hughes]

Terms of Reference: The REF SG oversees all aspects of preparations for the REF and meets quarterly to discuss developments. Specifically it is responsible for:

1. Allocating REF Investment Funds
2. Discussing developments in REF policy and how they have an impact on the University's preparations
3. Reviewing submissions in their final drafts
4. Reviewing feedback from external reviewers
5. Providing feedback to UoA Groups on decisions made regarding submissions
6. Provide Directorate with a view on which submissions merit inclusion in the University's final submission to the REF 2014

All members of the REF Steering Group are required to undergo equalities training organised by the Research Support Office.

Individual Circumstances Disclosure Group: PVC (Academic) (chair); Deputy Director of HR; Director of Student Services; Director of RESO (secretary)

[Prof Bill Bruce; Denny Hill; Chris Coleman; Dr Nikki Craske]

Terms of Reference: the ICDG will meet as required between August 2012 and November 2013 to review applications for remission in the number research outputs required to be included in a UoA submission. It is responsible for ensuring that all relevant and necessary documentation is reviewed and archived. The Group is responsible for ensuring that the results of the deliberations are conveyed to the UoA Groups; in conveying this information the ICDG will:

- a) Inform the UoA Group of any individuals named in its submission who are entitled to a remission in the number of research outputs and indicate the number of outputs which meet the quality needed for the individual to be included in the submission
- b) Maintain complete confidentiality regarding the reasons why an individual has been granted a remission on the number of research outputs required

All members of the ICDG are required to undergo equalities training organised by the Research Support Office.

REF Appeal Committee: PVC (Resources) (chair); Dean of Education as decanal representative; one representative from the professoriate; HR representative (committee will be serviced by RESO)

[Steve Igoe, Robert Smedley, Prof Andrew Millie, Clare Timon]

Terms of Reference: The Appeal Committee will convene in summer 2013 to consider any request from individuals who believe that they have been wrongly excluded from a Unit of Assessment. Appeals can only be upheld where:

- a) The individual meets the quality and quantity threshold (calibrated for any remissions due to special circumstances or particular characteristics identified in the Code of Practice)
- b) There is a suitable submission in their subject area

Where an appeal is upheld, the Appeal Committee will inform the UoA Group and the REF Steering Group of its judgement and the staff member will receive the decision of the committee in writing. Where the appeal is not upheld, the individual will receive the views of the Committee in writing and will have the opportunity to meet with the Chair for feedback.

The decision of the REF Appeal Committee is final.

All members of the REF Appeal Committee are required to undergo equalities training organised by the Research Support Office.

Appendix 4

The Appeals Process

The role of the REF Appeal Committee is to review the original decision regarding whether to include an individual in the REF submission taking into account the grounds of appeal, and to review the process that led to the original decision, establishing whether the inclusion criteria was correctly followed.

Following receipt of an appeal, the employee will be invited, in writing, to attend an appeal hearing, normally within 10 working days.

Appeal

- The employee will have the right to be accompanied to the appeal by an Edge Hill colleague or union representative.
- At the Appeal the employee will present her/his case for inclusion to the REF Appeal Committee. This may include submitting additional evidence regarding special circumstances and/or requesting that members of the Appeal Committee meet relevant witnesses.
- In order to seek clarity on the original decision-making process, the Appeal Committee will usually meet with key personnel involved in drafting the UoA submission.

Appeal Outcome

The decision of the REF Appeal Committee will normally be conveyed to the employee in writing within 10 working days of the Committee's meeting. Where appropriate, feedback may be provided via a meeting between the Chair and the employee.

The outcome of the Appeal may be that:

- The Appeal is upheld and the individual will be included in the REF submission, taking into account special circumstances as appropriate
- The Appeal is not upheld, in which case the original decision will stand.

The decision of the REF Appeal Committee is final.

If there is to be a delay in any stage of the procedure for any reason, the employee will be notified in writing.