

## **The Glasgow School of Art – Code of Practice for REF2014**

### **1 Introduction**

This Code of Practice ('The Code') sets out the principles and procedures that will be undertaken in the selection of staff for Glasgow School of Art (GSA)'s submission to the Research Excellence Framework, 2014 (REF2014).

The Code seeks to describe all aspects of the selection including:

- Communication with and support for staff to be considered for submission to REF2014
- The process involved in the assessment of the quality of outputs
- The support mechanisms available to eligible staff and the accessibility of these mechanisms across the institution for submitting their outputs for consideration
- The support mechanisms available to eligible staff to help enhance the quality of their research outputs
- The procedure through which individual staff circumstances are collected and considered
- The procedures through which selection decisions for inclusion or exclusion of staff in GSA's REF2014 submission will be made.

The Code was developed by Research and the Graduate School on behalf of the REF Planning Group and in consultation with GSA's Equality Office and Human Resources. It was also reviewed by GSA's Executive Group. The development of the Code has taken account of the additional responsibilities on Higher Education Institutions following the introduction of The Equality Act 2010.

### **2 Background to REF2014**

REF2014 is the latest UK National exercises in the assessment of research excellence across Higher Education Institutions. REF2014 is important to GSA for a number of reasons:

- REF2014 will inform the distribution of public funding for research from the main research funding councils (in the case of GSA, this is the Scottish Funding Council) from 2015/16.
- REF2014 results will be available in the public domain and will be important to GSA's profile in terms of attracting high quality students and staff.
- REF2014 is an opportunity for GSA to demonstrate that the public funds it has received to support research activities have been used effectively, resulting in research of high quality and impact.

All Higher Education Institutions in the UK eligible for funding through the funding bodies can take part in REF2014. REF2014 defines four main panels and 36 sub-panels

relating to different subject areas, known as ‘Units of Assessment’ (UoA). Institutions make their submissions by 29 November 2013.

Given its status as a Small Specialist Institution with a focus on Art and Design subjects, GSA will submit to the UoA that is best aligned with the institution’s research strengths. Within Main Panel D, GSA will submit its REF2014 return to UoA34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory<sup>1</sup>. [Note that Architecture is included in this UoA and either assessed within the scope of this UoA, or in some cases cross-referred to other panels.]

### 3 Principles of the Code

The Code, and the processes and procedures it contains are based on the application of four underpinning principles that are set out in the REF2014 guidance. These are:

**Transparency:** This involves ensuring that all the processes for selection, including the selection and roles of committee members are clearly communicated to staff and that there are adequate provisions for answering questions and for providing feedback.

**Consistency:** GSA will ensure that the Code is applied consistently and uniformly across the institution. All staff involved in REF2014 selection will be fully briefed on this Code, will be responsible for familiarising themselves with the Code and will be expected to act in accordance with the Code’s principles and procedures.

**Accountability:** GSA will ensure that all eligible staff are able to access information relating to the roles and responsibilities of those staff and committees that are involved in selection for REF2014. GSA will also ensure that decision-making processes are fully documented, recorded and auditable.

**Inclusivity:** GSA is committed to supporting an inclusive environment in which all eligible staff that provide evidence of the required quality and quantity of research outputs will be considered for inclusion in GSA’s submission to REF2014.

### 4 Eligibility

Staff must meet the following conditions before their research can be considered for submission to REF2014:

- their primary employment function is either ‘research only’ or ‘research and teaching’
- they are employed on a contract of 0.2 full time equivalent (FTE) or greater
- they are on the payroll of the submitting institution (i.e. GSA) on the end date for the census, which is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> REF2014 Panel criteria and working methods, Part 2D

Research Assistants and other staff that are employed to carry out duties on another individual's research programme are in most cases, excluded. The exception to this is if that individual is named as a Principal Investigator on a research grant or significant piece of research work on the census date, and for which GSA can provide evidence for audit purposes. Staff can obtain advice on their eligibility by contacting the Research Office.

## 5 Focus on Quality

REF2014 submissions will be assessed by peer review panels appointed from the academic community, with additional members from the 'user' community. The GSA method for selection also uses peer review judgments on quality, with the REF Planning Group acting as the assessment panel for the institution.

In line with the REF2014 panel's guidance, quality research is expected to demonstrate value in terms of:

- Significance – The degree to which the work has enhanced, or is likely to enhance, knowledge, thinking, understanding and/or practice in its field.
- Originality – The degree to which the work has developed new formulations or data and/or initiated new methods and/or forms of expression.
- Rigour – The degree of intellectual precision and/or systematic method and/or integrity embodied in the research.

The assessment criteria and the definitions of the starred levels used in the assessment are set out below.<sup>2</sup> All judgments of quality used by the REF Planning Group at GSA are based around these criteria. The Scottish Funding Council prioritises funding for 3\* and 4\* research, and indications are that future funding will be limited to the highest quality research.<sup>3</sup>

Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/assessmentcriteriaandleveldefinitions/>

<sup>3</sup>

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/universities/funding\\_streams/research\\_funding/funding\\_research.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/universities/funding_streams/research_funding/funding_research.aspx)

One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

In its guidance on panel criteria and working methods, the REF2014 team has made the following commitment to take full account of the diversity and range of research that is typical of our disciplines:

*‘The sub-panels are committed to applying criteria and working methods that reflect the distinctive character, methodologies and full breadth of these [Panel D] disciplines (including disciplinary research), and that facilitate the formation of a balanced range of judgments, without privileging or disadvantaging any particular form of outputs, research methodology or type of research environment’<sup>4</sup>*

This Code and its processes and procedures have been developed to share that approach to the assessment and selection of staff for inclusion in the GSA submission to REF2014.

## 6 Roles and responsibilities

Table 1 provides a summary of the main roles and responsibilities for REF2014 at GSA. Most of the groups and committees identified in this table have been assembled for the purpose of REF2014 and the role and remit is summarised in the table. Details of current post-holders and membership of these groups and committees are available to staff on the Research and Graduate School pages of the VLE, or by contacting the Research Office.

	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Role in REF2014</b>
Director of GSA	Director of GSA	Ultimate responsibility for the submission to REF2014
Head of Research	Head of Research	Chairs the REF Planning Group and reports to the Executive and other relevant committees on REF related matters on behalf of the REF Planning Group, Also responsible for overseeing the implementation of GSA’s REF2014 submission.
REF Planning Group	Head of Research	Responsible for collecting

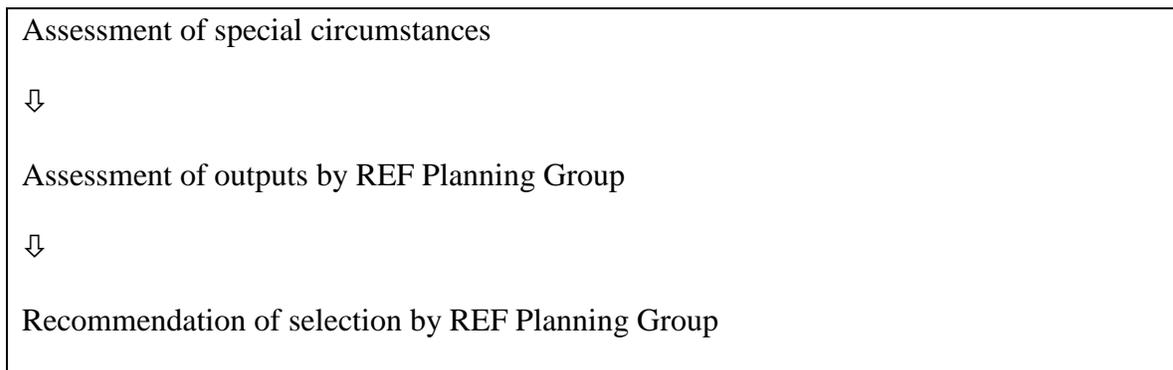
<sup>4</sup> REF2014 Panel criteria and working methods, Part 2D, p 79

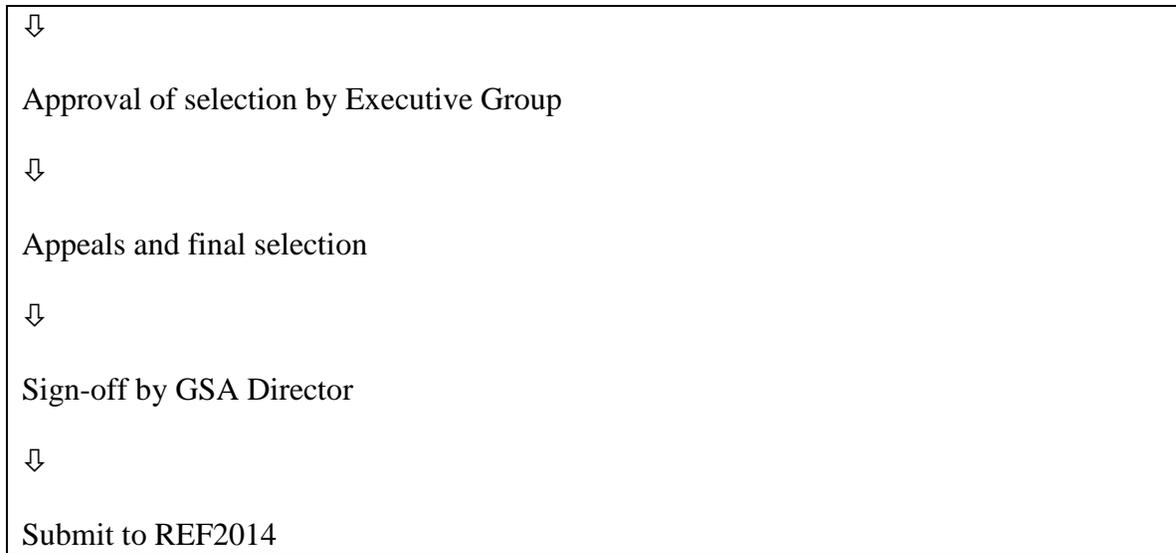
	(Chair), Senior Research Manager, Senior Researcher representatives from School of Design, School of Fine Art, Mackintosh School of Architecture, Digital Design Studio (DDS) and the Forum for Critical Inquiry (FoCI)	output materials, evidence and working with researchers to develop their portfolios. This group is also jointly responsible for making recommendations on the selection of staff and outputs to the GSA Executive Group and Directorate for GSA's REF2014 submission.  The role also involves advising on portfolio contents and presentation and the physical assembly, organisation and collection of materials.
REF Champions	Representatives from the three main schools plus DDS, FoCI and Research & Graduate School	Responsible for disseminating information about the REF and for coordinating support for researchers within their respective areas.
REF Consultant	Individual with significant research assessment experience	Provision of high level advice and insight on REF policy matters, preparation, management, implementation and selection. Will also offer consultation to individual staff in preparing their REF portfolios.
REF Equality Group	Representative from HR and Equality Office, Head of Research and the Senior Research Manager	Advising on the development of the REF2014 Code of Practice and responsible for determining the reduction of outputs relating to complex circumstances based on information provided by staff.  This group is also responsible for overseeing the Equalities Impact Assessment of the REF on staff.
REF Impact Working Group	A sub-group of the REF Planning Group including the Head of Research with additional representation from	Responsible for coordinating the impact case studies

	marketing, finance, cultural engagement and exhibitions.	
Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC)	Deputy Director of GSA (Chair), Head of Research, Senior Research Manager, Knowledge Transfer Manager, representation from the local research sub-committees, Head of Learning Resources, student representative.	Provides cross-school strategic input on Research. The REF Planning Group is a sub-committee of RKEC and reports to this committee.
GSA Executive Group	Director of GSA (Chair); representation from Heads of Schools and Senior Management	Provides Executive guidance and direction on REF2014 to the REF Planning Group, reports to the GSA Director and Governors on matters, including REF2014. Agrees investment decisions.
REF2014 Taskforce	Senior Research Manager, Research Information Manager, Collation Assistant, Research Developers, Knowledge Transfer Manager and Departmental Administrators.	Colleagues from the Research Office will be responsible for implementing REF2014 on behalf of GSA. This will involve tracking REF2014 requirements, preparing and delivering systems, assisting and compiling the submission itself, training and preparing staff.

*Table 1: Roles and responsibilities of main individuals and groups involved in preparing GSA's submission for REF2014*

The high level sign-off process for GSA's REF selection and submission is shown in *Figure 1*.





*Figure 1: Sign-off process for GSA's REF selection and submission*

## **7 Selection Criteria and Process**

REF2014 guidance clearly states that that primary criterion for selection for inclusion is quality of research.

### **7.1 MockREF1 – an audit of research at GSA**

MockREF1 was carried out during early 2012 to monitor the effectiveness of GSA's physical and electronic systems for recording, managing and assessing research outputs and as an initial 'audit' of research activity at GSA.

During MockREF1 all eligible staff employed at the time were invited to submit details of their research outputs to date to the GSA repository. Inclusion in the process was determined by the submission of details to the repository. Staff from Research Development assisted in promoting the exercise and provided guidance and support for all staff to use the repository system.

The REF Planning Group undertook the assessment of outputs submitted to MockREF1, primarily focusing on bibliographic or descriptive details and short (up to 300 word) narratives. Assessment was by consensus of the group and followed a 'traffic light' system that was communicated to staff by email and letters and is available on the VLE. Individual feedback was provided to staff for each of their submitted outputs. The returns from MockREF1 will also be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment, the results of which will be used to support and further equality in the development of GSA's research and REF return.

MockREF1 did not involve either confirming or discounting staff from inclusion in GSA's submission to REF2014.

## **7.2 Selection threshold**

The over-riding aim of GSA in submitting to REF2014 is to demonstrate research excellence in our disciplines. Consistent with this aim, GSA has determined a minimum quality threshold to be applied to the selection of staff for submission to REF2014.

REF2014 submission will focus on research that demonstrates excellence and reaching standards rated as 4\* and 3\*. Beyond this, the submission will also include some 2\* research, for example where a researcher has some, but not a full set of 3\* and 4\* outputs; or where the research appears to be on the upper boundaries of 2\* research or where its inclusion is deemed appropriate in terms of the shaping GSA's overall REF2014 submission.

The REF Planning Group will be responsible for academic judgments relating to submitted research outputs and portfolios. The Group will apply the assessment criteria as set out in section 5 of this Code.

## **7.3 MockREF2 and REF Selection**

The assessment exercise, MockREF2, will be the main mechanism for formal selection decisions for REF2014. Selection decisions will be made by the REF Planning Group, informed by data on Special Circumstances collated by the REF Equality Group.

## **7.4 Possible outcomes**

GSA intends to inform staff of their submission status for REF2014 by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. At this stage there will be three possible outcomes communicated:

- Selected for inclusion
- Not selected for inclusion
- Pending decision

A 'pending' decision may be given to a member of staff who has a portfolio containing some high quality outputs, but is awaiting the publication or completion of the final one, for example, or who requires further evidence to support an output. In exceptional cases, a member of staff not selected for inclusion after MockREF2 may be reconsidered for inclusion if circumstances change or if significant new evidence or outputs become available.

## **7.5 Feedback to staff**

The Head of Research will notify staff in writing of their selection status following MockREF2 by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Members of the REF Planning Group and REF Task

Force will give feedback to staff on an individual and face-to-face basis, wherever possible.

## **7.6 Special Circumstances**

The profile of staff at GSA is such that there are a significant proportion of staff for whom special circumstances criteria apply.

Special circumstances fall into two categories (as defined in REF2014 guidance):

*Clearly defined circumstances* include:

- Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher (ECR)
- Part-time working
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave
- Secondments or career breaks outside of the Higher Education sector

*Complex circumstances* include:

- Disability
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave
- Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics set out in The Equalities Act 2010.

Details and evidence of clearly defined circumstances will in most cases already be recorded by GSA's Human Resources department and are not deemed to be sensitive. The reductions in outputs required in these cases are mechanistic and will be assessed and applied by the REF Planning Group.

GSA will survey all eligible staff requesting details of special or complex circumstances. This survey will be conducted by colleagues from Human Resources on behalf of the REF Equality Group. The REF Equality Group will consider each circumstance and the evidence provided by that member of staff. If necessary further information will be requested. Where there is evidence that complex circumstances have impacted on an individual's ability to produce four research outputs, the Group will apply the REF2014 formulae and determine the appropriate reduction in outputs. The REF Equality Group will then inform both the individual and the REF Planning Group of any applicable reduction in the number of outputs required.

Worked examples of cases of complex circumstances are provided on the website of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and can be accessed at <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/re-materials/complex-circumstances-examples>.

Details of complex circumstances will be confidential to the REF Equality Group and used only to determine whether and what reduction in the number of research outputs is appropriate for the purpose of REF2014. Complex circumstances will not be considered relevant to any decisions made by the REF Planning Group on quality of outputs.

Staff should note that the UK Funding Councils, REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP), main panel chairs and the REF team will have access to the details of the circumstances leading to a reduction in outputs. EDAP will consider the anonymised details of all cases where a reduction in outputs is applied by GSA due to complex circumstances and will advise the main panel chairs on whether the submitted number of outputs is appropriate. Staff to whom this applies will be asked to consent to the relevant details of complex circumstances being communicated with their REF2014 submission.

## **7.7 New members of staff**

There will be opportunities for those staff joining GSA after the MockREF2 exercise is completed to be considered for submission to REF2014. Such staff will be subject to the same process of assessment both of quality research outputs and of any disclosed special circumstances where the timetable allows. In cases where this is not possible due to timing of the appointment, staff will be asked to inform the REF Equality Group of any complex circumstances and provide details of their outputs to the REF Planning Group during their induction period

## **8 Appeals**

### **8.1 Lodging an Appeal**

Those staff who receive a selection decision of 'not selected for inclusion' will be eligible to apply to a formal appeals process if they feel that they have been treated unfairly at any stage of the selection process. The appeals process relates to concerns relating to adherence to the processes set out in this Code of Practice. Any wider complaint should be addressed through GSA's standard Grievance Procedures.

The appeal process is in two stages with Stage 1 being informal and Stage 2 formal.

#### *Stage 1*

In Stage 1 any member of staff wishing to appeal will contact the Head of Research in his role as Convenor of the REF Planning Group. The Head of Research will discuss the issues raised with relevant members from the REF Planning Group and the REF Equality Group. The Head of Research will then arrange an advisory meeting with the member of

staff to discuss and review the case informally. Following this meeting, the member of staff could either withdraw the appeal or pursue it to Stage 2.

### *Stage 2*

Where the member of staff pursues an appeal to Stage 2, the appeal will be heard at a formal panel meeting. The Panel will consist of the Deputy Director and Director of Academic Development and a member of Human Resources staff. A work colleague or trade union official may accompany the member of staff to this meeting.

The panel will consider the appeal on the basis of whether due process, as set out in this Code of Practice was followed.

There are two possible outcomes of an appeal: upheld or dismissed. In the case of an appeal being upheld, the individual will have another opportunity to be re-assessed.

All decisions of the Stage 2 Appeals Panel are final.

## **8.2 Timescales of Appeals**

Notice of appeal must be lodged, in writing, within 5 working days of the selection judgment for the REF being confirmed to the staff member.

Appeals will normally be heard within 20 working days of the appeal being lodged or within such a time period as is reasonable taking into account the nature and complexity of the appeal.

## **9 Training**

GSA is committed to implementing this Code effectively. To this end, training will be provided by the REF Equalities Group and will include the communication of the Code itself, briefing on REF2014 requirements and working methods and aspects of the Equalities legislation underpinning the Code. The learning objectives of this training will be:

- To understand the Equalities implications of the REF2014 selection process and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- To raise awareness of equality and diversity issues and identify possible discrimination that can arise within protected groups with respect to research and research activities.
- To promote the effective implementation of this Code.

Training will be compulsory for the REF Planning Group, senior managers and all those who are involved in selection for REF2014. Additionally, the Code itself and information about selection for REF2014 will be available for all staff. Training will be tailored for REF2014 and for specific roles.

Staff from the REF Taskforce, REF Champions and the REF Consultant will provide support for staff wishing to be considered for REF2014 in selecting and preparing their outputs. This will take the form of workshops, individual guidance and advice and hands-on assistance in compiling portfolios and evidence.

## **10 Communication and awareness**

This Code will be communicated to staff in a number of ways, to ensure that all eligible staff are made aware of the processes and procedures involved in the selection process for REF2014, as follows:

- Circulated to all eligible staff as a hard copy and in email format
- Posted to the GSA's Virtual Learning Environment
- Presented through workshops and briefings to Schools and Departments
- Presented to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and to GSA's Executive Group
- Research Development staff will offer group and one-to-one support on the implementation of the Code, in consultation and partnership with the Equality Office
- GSA will ensure that information is available in a range of formats and is accessible to part-time staff and those with other special circumstances.
- REF guidance on the calculations used to apply reductions in required research outputs will be available from the Research Office and through the VLE.

## **11 Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) of the Code and the REF selection process will be conducted at key stages.

EIA will be overseen by GSA's REF Equality Group. EIA of GSA's submissions for RAE2008 and MockREF1 have been undertaken. EIA will be conducted at further key points of our selection process as follows:

- Submission of Code of Practice
- MockREF 2
- Selection
- Submission of GSA's REF2014 return

GSA will publish the results of EIA on the GSA website and for staff on the VLE in January 2014

## **12 Further information on REF2014**

31<sup>st</sup> July 2012

Further information on REF2014, including matters relating to Equality and Diversity is available from the following links:

REF2014 website	<a href="http://www.ref.ac.uk">www.ref.ac.uk</a>
REF2014 Guidance on Submissions	<a href="http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/subs/">http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/subs/</a>
REF2014 Panels Criteria and Working Methods (DRAFT)	<a href="http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/03_11/">http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/03_11/</a>
REF2014 Equality Briefing for Panels	<a href="http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/other/equality/">http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/other/equality/</a>
Equality Challenge Unit	<a href="http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF">http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF</a>
Examples of complex circumstances – case studies developed by ECU	<a href="http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/re-materials/complex-circumstances-examples">http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/re-materials/complex-circumstances-examples</a>

*Table 2: Useful links to further information*