



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean

Research Excellence Framework 2014

Code of Practice and Guidance Note for Equality and Diversity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework Submission Process: Staff Selection

Originally Published March 2012
(including subsequent modest updating)

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UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

**CODE OF PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE NOTE FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN
THE 2014 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK SUBMISSION PROCESS: STAFF
SELECTION**

The Code of Practice (CoP) and Guidance Note for Equality and Diversity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework Submission Process: Staff Selection, which comprises this document, is divided into two sections:

Section 1 provides some background to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), an introduction to the Equality and Diversity Code of Practice and Guidance Note, and an outline of the Guiding Principles underpinning UHI's approach to its preparations for the 2014 REF.

Section 2 provides the substance of the UHI CoP and Guidance Note and covers the following: staff selection process; management of the REF process at UHI; communications; appeals, monitoring; and final checking and submission. A Special Circumstances reporting process is also included as an annex (Annex 1).

The Code of Practice and Guidance Note has been subject to broad consultation across the University, including Deans, Academic Partner Principals, senior (and other) academic staff, human resources practitioners, and campus trades unions.

The document has been received and approved by the University's Impact Assessment Working Group, Equal Opportunities Committee, REF Steering Group, Research Practitioners' Group, Research Committee, Finance and General Purposes Committee (on behalf of Court), and Academic Council.

Michael Rayner
Dean of Research

30 March 2012

SECTION 1

1. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) has been introduced in the UK as the successor to the former Research Assessment Exercise, which ran from 1986 to 2008, as the basis for assessment of research quality of a range of outputs from the UK's Higher Education Institutions (HEI). There have been six RAEs, with a direct link made to public funding from the 1993/94 academic session, based on performance in the 1992 RAE. From that time onwards, the results of all assessment exercises have been used by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils to allocate research-based grant resource to institutions, amounting to well over £1bn-sterling per annum. The REF will be linked to the allocation of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) core grant for research.

Beyond core Funding Council grants, the results achieved by individual institutions have a significant bearing on access to other sources of research grants and income, most notably from the Research Councils, businesses, and charities. This link between performance and access to research grant opportunities becomes increasingly strong the further away (in time) from the preceding assessment one moves, and it tends to reflect greater concentration of research funding on areas that performed well. In view of this, the REF will be viewed as extremely important in the life of any higher education institution that wishes to be recognised for the good standing of its research activity.

However, whilst income secured from the SFC's research grant is clearly a very important resource for UHI, which needs to be secured and grown if possible, the REF also has a range of other consequences that are equally important. Good success in the REF will be important for UHI's institutional reputation, both within the context of UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and also internationally. Increasingly, high quality research active staff are attracted to institutions in which their academic discipline is rated highly and this is largely associated with RAE/REF performance. This helps to generate a virtuous cycle, which makes securing enhanced research opportunities and associated income generation possible. This also makes involvement in research collaborations that include external partner HEIs easier to establish and grow, an approach that is growing in importance across the whole HE sector.

Against this background, the seriousness with which UHI as a whole must approach the 2014 REF is self-evident. As part of this, it is right and proper that preparations for any public assessment of research quality should take into account an institution's approach to meeting the requirements of Equal Opportunities and Diversity legislation, and to confirm that its decision-making processes for staff inclusion in the REF are transparent and equitable.

The 2014 REF process rightly requires that submitting institutions should establish formal Codes of Practice on Equality and Diversity. These are intended to guide the way institutions' decision-making processes on staff inclusion in the REF are undertaken. The resultant documentation is expected to be made publicly available both within and outwith the institution, and may be subject to consultation and review by the REF assessors.

The Code of Practice and Guidance Note that is being presented herein is UHI's response to this specific requirement.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE UHI EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CODE OF PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE NOTE

This Code of Practice and Guidance Note on Equality and Diversity relates specifically to the requirements of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), and also adheres to current UK legislation in these areas. The document does not replace UHI's standard policies in the area of Equal Opportunities and Diversity but serves to contextualise and expand on these policies where necessary, specifically in relation to the REF.

UHI is, and remains, committed to discharging effectively its responsibilities as a good employer. The Code of Practice enshrined in the present document, together with UHI's related policies (available for information at: <http://uhi.ac.uk/en/about-uhi/governance/policies-and-regulations/policies>), will be used to guide the work of all those involved in the preparations for the final UHI submission to the 2014 REF, and in particular to the selection for inclusion of staff's relevant research outputs and other relevant research-related contributions. This CoP and Guidance Note has been developed at the earliest stage of the University's preparations for the REF, thereby signaling the seriousness with which UHI is addressing this important matter. It has been designed in a way that will assist UHI in ensuring that equality and diversity issues are given appropriate consideration at all stages in the preparations process.

It is worth noting at the outset that where the document refers to staff inclusion in the REF, this applies to the suite of REF-related contributions that staff are able to make, but the primary driver for inclusion is the number, and assessed quality, of published outputs that have entered the public domain for the first time between 1 January 2008 and 31 December 2013.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

UHI is committed to operating an open, transparent and equitable approach to its preparations for the 2014 REF. The main guiding criterion for staff inclusion will be based on the quality of the research being undertaken by an individual, taking into account the general Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions supplied by the national (UK) REF Management Team and also the specific Unit of Assessment Criteria and Working Methods statements.

Quality will primarily be gauged in terms of the published outputs (in various permissible forms) produced by individuals during the formal assessment period, but will also take into account contributions to research Environment and research Impact. This includes an expectation that each individual will have produced the standard minimum number of outputs required for submission to each Unit of Assessment (UoA) during the assessment period. However, the number of outputs may be affected by relevant special/exceptional circumstances, which are articulated in the general guidance for submissions information provided by the office of the National REF 2014 Manager, as a result of which a reduced number of outputs may be acceptable in some cases.

Examples of the types of circumstances that may be taken into account by the REF have been advised to submitting institutions in a range of guidance documents from the National REF Management Team, based in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) offices in Bristol (see Annex 1). These exceptional circumstances include a number of issues that will be subject to internal confidential assessment and evaluation by UHI and also, subsequently, to confidential statements being included in the final submission to the REF by UHI. In addition, there will be some allowance given for a reduced number of outputs (within specified boundaries) for early career researchers, subject to the specific criteria and requirements published by the National REF Team.

The Vice Principal Research & Enterprise, acting on advice from the Dean of Research and the University Research Committee, will decide the final recommendation to the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University, on the Units of Assessment to which the UHI will make a submission to the 2014 REF and the staff composition of the submission.

The process leading up to this recommendation will involve iteration across and between senior Faculty staff (principally, the Deans), the UHI Research Committee, the UHI REF Steering Group, the UHI Research Practitioners' Group, UHI Unit of Assessment Coordinators, and other relevant senior academic colleagues based in the Academic Partners (AP), including AP Principals. Information on the development of the final submission strategy will be presented to UHI's senior governing and academic bodies/committees at regular intervals throughout the entire preparation process.

In the context of the Code of Practice and its specific intentions, the UHI accepts that it has a duty to monitor submissions to the REF by racial group. In view of this, the internal REF selection processes will be assessed for their impact on different racial groups. Assistance with this monitoring will be provided by the UHI Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of Human Resources). UHI, like all other Higher Education Institutions, also has similar responsibilities in respect of age, gender and disability, and steps will be taken to ensure that fixed-term and part-time employees will not be treated any less favourably than comparable employees in possession of open contracts.

SECTION 2.

UHI CODE OF PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE NOTE FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE 2014 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK SUBMISSION PROCESS: STAFF SELECTION

1. SELECTION PROCESSES FOR STAFF INCLUSION IN THE REF SUBMISSION

A strong performance in the national (i.e. UK-wide) process of research assessment is crucial for any higher education institution within which research is an integral and important part of its core mission. There is a further imperative towards high performance in the 2014 REF, however, which is related to the increasingly competitive and difficult global, UK and Scottish-specific funding climate that has been experienced during a significant part of the period covered by the exercise. In view of this, the main guiding principle for staff inclusion in the REF at UHI will be that of quality, with an associated minimum target quality threshold needing to be established by UHI for each Unit of Assessment (UoA) area to which the University wishes to make a submission, which will be agreed following a due and appropriate form of consultation.

The quality threshold that will be established by UHI for each of its submissions to Units of Assessment/sub-Panels in the REF will take into account a number of factors, including:

- the general level of research excellence achieved across the (broadly equivalent) subject area in the 2008 RAE;
- the relative position and strength of anticipated submissions across Scotland (first priority) and the rest of the UK (second priority); and
- whether the discipline area is new, emerging, or well established in general terms, and whether it is new, emerging or well established within the context of UHI.

UHI will adhere to the precepts of its mission, which is: “to be a distinctive and innovative regional university of national and international significance: a university...which reaches out to the people of the Highlands and Islands and to the rest of the world through its research and teaching.” By implication, appropriately high quality standards for any submission to the 2014 REF by UHI will need to be set.

UHI will be guided by the National REF Team’s Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions document (2011 publication (REF 02.2011)), together with any additional briefing and instruction provided by the national REF Team subsequently. In addition, any specific requirements presented in the sub-Panel/UoA Criteria and Working Methods statements in UoAs to which UHI wishes to make a submission, will also be taken properly into account. These will cover various aspects of the three core components of the assessment exercise, which relate to Research Outputs, Environment, and research Impact.

The above noted general UHI approach, and the quality threshold standards of performance that will be applied to each of UHI’s submissions to the 2014 REF, will be discussed and agreed by the UHI REF Steering Group and the UHI Research Committee. They will also be subject to agreement by the Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise and, ultimately, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of UHI, acting on behalf of Court. These bodies and individuals will be advised by the Dean of Research, following consultation and discussion with a range of stakeholders from across the University, including: the REF Steering Group, Faculty Deans, Unit of Assessment (UoA) Coordinators and senior academic/research staff.

It should be noted that staff who are on fixed term contracts or other flexible bases of employment, including part-time, will have the same equality of opportunity in the UHI submission to the REF. In this, UHI will act in accordance with relevant policy and guidelines on fixed term contracts and the requirements of current legislation. The same applies to staff who are registered disabled, or who have other special circumstances that are covered by the general terms of the REF, as outlined in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions document.

It should also be noted that the Code of Practice and Guidance Note contained in this document has been received and approved by the UHI Equal Opportunities Committee, the UHI Impact Assessment Working Group, the UHI Research Committee, and the UHI Academic Council.

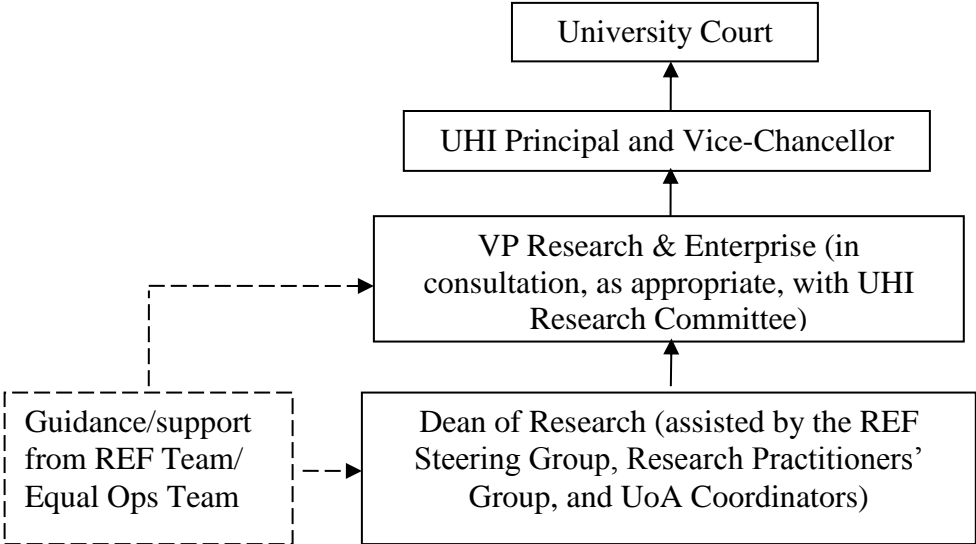
2. MANAGEMENT OF THE REF PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

UHI’s preparations for, and final submission to, the 2014 REF are ultimately the responsibility of the University Court. The Principal & Vice-Chancellor of UHI, as Chief Executive Officer, is responsible on behalf of Court for all matters relating to the effective and efficient operation and management of the institution. However, specific areas of responsibility are devolved to senior officers within UHI. One of these is the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise, within whose remit overall responsibility for the REF resides.

In addition, UHI has a Dean of Research, who, amongst a range of responsibilities, acts as Institutional REF Manager. The Dean is a senior member of the Executive Office staff and has broad experience of key factors that will affect UHI’s submission approach and policy. The Dean works directly with the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise and has devolved responsibility for UHI’s REF planning and strategy. The Dean is assisted by staff in the Research and Enterprise Office, a REF Steering Group, the Research Practitioners Group (RPG), Unit of Assessment (UoA) Coordinators, and a network of support across the Academic Partnership that comprises UHI. Together, these form the core management and administrative support for the REF.

2.1 Committees and Advisory Groups

Schematic for REF-related decisions and approvals



In preparing for the 2014 REF, UHI has established a network of academic UoA Coordinators, who work closely with the Dean of Research and the other members of the REF Management Team. The UoA Coordinators provide the main day-to-day supporting role for the Dean in the academic development of submissions to the REF. These are academics and/or managers and they have access to administrative and other support in their host Academic Partner institutions. The choice of each UoA Coordinator has been discussed and agreed by the REF Steering Group and the Research Practitioners' Group, following a process of nomination that involved the relevant Faculty Dean and Academic Partner Principals. The resultant nominations have been approved by the UHI Research Committee.

The Dean of Research is responsible for formulating the strategic and operational approach to UHI's preparations for the 2014 REF. In doing so, however, the strategy and operational approach are subject to agreement and oversight by the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise and the UHI Research Committee and, ultimately, by the Principal & Vice-Chancellor of UHI (hereafter referred to as the Principal of UHI). The Research Committee reports to the Academic Council. In addition, for purposes of the REF, occasional reports will be presented to the Executive Board, which is the senior planning, budgeting, and operational management Committee of UHI. It is chaired by the UHI Principal and reports to the UHI Court.

The Dean of Research is advised in his day-to-day role by the Research Practitioners' Group (RPG), which he chairs. The RPG is a stand-alone group that reports to the UHI Research Committee. Membership of the RPG is drawn from the Academic Partners, Executive Office research units, and involves 'attending officers' from the UHI Executive Office. The Dean is also advised and supported by the REF Steering Group, whose membership is derived mainly from the RPG.

2.2 Equality and Diversity Training

All relevant staff associated with the REF submission, including the Principal of UHI, Academic Partner Principals, UHI Vice-Principals, UHI Deans, Heads of Departments/academic areas, members of the Research Committee, the REF Steering Group, the Research Practitioners' Group, Unit of Assessment Coordinators and administrative staff, will be provided with general training in Equal Opportunities and Diversity matters, which they will be expected to take and to pass. This training will also highlight particular aspects and issues that are deemed to be of special relevance and significance in the context of the REF. In part this will be provided by the UHI Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR), who will arrange to provide access to an online e-learning module on equal opportunity and diversity matters, including Equality Challenge Unit material. The main aims of the training will be to:

- provide an overview of diversity and equality legislation and recent case law;
- promote awareness of equality and diversity issues;
- contextualise the issues faced within the wider national picture; and
- provide a useful reference and information resource for staff.

The University will undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) at various stages, comprising an initial baseline EIA and subsequent updates when undertaking mini- or mock REFs. In doing so, care will be taken to ensure that the results of any such analyses are reported to the University's relevant committees, with a view to ensuring that appropriate actions are taken in reviewing and amending policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity in research and other areas.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

In preparing for any exercise as complex and important as the REF, good and effective communications are essential. This ensures that all those who are involved in the process know the roles they are to play, the expectations that are placed on them, and the timescales within which they are expected to operate. The following two sub-sections describe: (1) UHI's intended general approach to communications about its 2014 REF preparations; and (2) UHI's specific approach to dealing with staff personal circumstances:

3.1 General Communications about the REF

UHI's preparations for the REF will be guided in part by a timeline of actions and activities prepared by the Dean of Research. This timeline will be developed, discussed and agreed as appropriate with the Research Committee, and any subsequent significant amendments will also be reported. Information on UHI's REF preparations process and procedures, and the timescales involved, including the publication of the *Code of Practice and Guidance Note for Equality and Diversity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework Submission Process: Staff Selection*, will be made available to staff across UHI via an internet and an intranet site, both of which are being developed in the Research and Enterprise Office and will subsequently be updated as required by UHI's REF Team.

In addition to the usual flows of information that typically follow the presentation of papers to formal groups and committees, a regular schedule of REF update meetings and presentations will also be followed with respect to the following groups: Faculty Deans, Unit of Assessment Coordinators, senior University officers and managers, general UHI staff, and also UHI (and Academic Partner) staff who have specific responsibility for aspects of HR, IT and data recording/entry. Through this process it is intended to address a key priority for UHI's preparations, which is to ensure that the staff community across the University is kept well advised about developments in the REF and that clear information and contact points are available so that any questions and enquiries can be raised and addressed effectively and efficiently.

Beyond the above noted provisions, a mechanism will be established within Faculties and Academic Partners to ensure that relevant information and arrangements relating to the REF are transmitted to all relevant staff across UHI. This process will be reinforced by the activities of the RPG, the REF Steering Group and UoA Coordinators.

3.2 Specific Communications With Respect to Individual Circumstances

UHI will undertake a number of preparatory activities in advance of the 2014 REF. These will include the introduction of annual general research audits involving REF-returnable research active academic staff. At least one of these, and possibly two, will take the form of specific reviews and assessments of outputs quality and other metrics that will be used in the final REF assessment. These reviews/audits may be termed a 'mini/mock REF' and will use the scoring mechanism that will be used for the REF, which comprises a profile from 4* (world leading) to 1* (national level), and also an 'unclassified' level, which relates to contributions that do not achieve a nationally recognised standard of research quality. The initiation of such exercises will be communicated to staff via a range of mechanisms, with the initial exercise taking place in 2011, with assistance of members of the RPG.

The results of these audits will be analysed by the Research and Enterprise Office and thereafter discussed by the Dean of Research, in confidence, with the REF Steering Group. This process will lead to the initial formation of staff into Unit of Assessment (UoA) aggregations. A baseline Equality Impact Assessment will also be conducted. The process leading up to this, and the proposals on UoA aggregations, will also be discussed and agreed with the Vice Principal Research & Enterprise, the Principal of UHI and the Research Committee.

The proposed aggregation of staff into UoAs will be based on a range of considerations that will include: the appropriate 'fit' of those staff members' research outputs in terms of the subject areas covered by UoAs/sub-Panels; critical mass; and research group membership. The Dean of Research, with advice from relevant stakeholders, will also consider the potential for beneficial joint submissions with other institutions and/or for coordinated submissions in the context of the Research Pooling initiative in Scotland.

The above noted process will provide an early indication of the strength and breadth of contributions to the future REF submission that are likely to be made by staff, and it will reveal any gaps that may need to be filled in order to maximize the strength of each UoA submission.

With this information in hand, discussions will be held with the Faculty Deans, the relevant Academic Partner Principals and other colleagues as appropriate, to agree how the most strategically important gaps will be filled, and over what timescale this can/should be done. The process will also identify cases where colleagues will be unlikely to be able to achieve the required number and quality of contributions that will be necessary in order for them to be included in the final UHI submission to the 2014 REF.

In tandem with the above noted process, and following consultation with relevant stakeholders, UHI will decide the minimum expected quality threshold that should be applied, in order for each submission to the REF to achieve its strategic goal. This is intended to help UHI achieve suitably beneficial profiles that will position the University appropriately well in the final published results. These threshold standards will be formed into a proposal for consideration by the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise and the Research Committee. The decisions reached by the Research Committee will be presented to the Academic Council for endorsement, and ultimately to the Principal of UHI for approval, prior to presentation to the University Court.

In addition to internal forms of self-assessment and analysis, a number of advisors who are external to UHI will be identified and commissioned to act on behalf of UHI. These 'critical friends' will assist with the assessment of outputs' quality and will provide an independent source of help and advice during relevant stages of the preparations process for the final submission. These engagements are intended to help confirm the rigor and integrity of internal processes and procedures, and to sharpen the focus of the final submissions so that these can be made as strong and complete as possible. The input of UHI's 'critical friends' will be guided by UHI's CoP on the selection of staff and the agreed targets for the University's performance in the REF.

Data on research income, research students, and research studentships will also be secured and analysed for their contributions to the eventual submissions that UHI will

wish to make. Impact Case Studies will be produced as per the requirements of the National REF Team, and these will be fed at appropriate stages into future internal assessments of quality and progress towards final submission status.

Based primarily on the decisions taken with respect to minimum quality standards, and following the annual update audit reviews, provisional decisions on the inclusion status of individual staff will be considered and decided. At the conclusion of this, an appropriate communication with relevant staff across UHI will be undertaken. Across the whole period staff will be given the opportunity to flag confidentially if they have any personal circumstances that they wish to be taken into account with respect to their potential inclusion in the UHI REF submission. This will be based on the staff member wishing to submit fewer published research outputs for assessment than would normally be required for submission and assessment, but their proposal must be within the terms and conditions identified by the National REF Team.

If a staff member wishes to make such a declaration, s/he will notify this fact confidentially to UHI's Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR) as early as possible, using the REF 2014 Individual Staff Circumstances Form that will be available in hard copy format and also electronically from UHI's REF Website (see Annex 1, Appendix A). At this point, an initial check of the information provided will be undertaken by the Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR) to ensure that the disclosure falls within the circumstances/definitions recognised by the REF. Where this is the case, the disclosure will progress to the Dean of Research, who will decide reductions in the number of outputs for straightforward disclosures. Complex cases will be considered by a small group comprising the Dean of Research, a Faculty Dean, a UoA Coordinator, and the UHI Compliance and Equality Officer. This process will take into account relevant equal opportunities legislation and guidance, not least as presented in the guiding rules and regulations of the REF. The outcome of this process will be notified to the staff member, with due confidentiality.

The Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR) will monitor the proposed submissions to ensure that all relevant actions have been taken to ensure equitable and appropriate representation, and to ensure that all relevant equality and diversity issues have been taken properly into account.

The above noted process will be initiated following the conclusion of the mini-REF audit in late 2011/early 2012, and then repeated following any update assessments in 2012 and/or 2013. It is intended that the final stage of decision-making with respect to a member of staff's inclusion in the UHI REF submission will normally take place by June 2013, and be communicated forthwith to the relevant staff.

Staff who are being considered for inclusion in the REF submission will be advised of their provisional (or final) inclusion status at several stages throughout the preparations process normally, as stated, following the conclusion of the most recent audit update process. The decision on inclusion will be based in the first instance on the number and quality of published (/eligible) outputs that they have/will have available for final submission, which will have entered the public domain for the first time within the assessment period. Consideration will also be given to a range of other contributions to the REF that will be taken into account in the assessment by UoA Sub-Panels. These will include contributions to the research 'Environment' and research 'Impact', and will also take into account any relevant factors that are identified by the UoA Criteria and Working Methods statements.

Once staff have received notification of their *final* inclusion status, those who have not hitherto done so, and who now wish to make an appeal against the decision reached in their own case within the context of this Code of Practice (i.e. on the basis of Equalities issues), may invoke a process of Appeal. This process is outlined in the following section.

4. APPEALS AGAINST INCLUSION/NON-INCLUSION ON THE BASIS OF THE NUMBER OF OUTPUTS AVAILABLE FOR SUBMISSION – INDIVIDUAL (PERSONAL) CIRCUMSTANCES

In cases of inclusion/non-inclusion, an opportunity will be provided for those staff who wish to appeal against the decision on the inclusion/non-inclusion of their outputs (with respect to them not submitting the minimum required number of outputs normally required for submission to a particular Unit of Assessment), to bring forward any further, *previously undisclosed*, personal circumstances that might have a bearing on the provisional decision reached. It will normally be expected in these cases that the Dean of Research will review the initial decision in the light of the new information provided in respect of clearly defined cases of disclosure that are recognised by the REF process. In more complex cases, the Dean will establish a small group comprising the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise (chair), 1 representative from the Research Committee, 1 representative from the Research Practitioners' Group, and with the Dean and/or the Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR) in attendance (non-voting) to provide any necessary background information. This small group will have authority to decide in these cases. The decisions reached will be communicated to the relevant staff members by the Dean of Research, in confidence.

Under normal circumstances, appeals will be accepted up until 19 July 2013, and a decision will be reached by 16 August 2013, with communication back to the appellant by 23 August 2013.

Beyond this initial stage, the final course of appeal for individuals who have been reviewed through the above noted mechanism, will be to the Principal of UHI, who will otherwise (to that point) not have been involved directly in discussions or decisions on inclusion status relating to their appeal.

Staff will have five working days to make a final appeal following the date of receipt of the letter from the Dean of Research confirming their inclusion/non-inclusion in UHI's submission to the 2014 REF. The staff member's wish to make a final appeal should be communicated formally to the Principal of UHI via the office of the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise.

The Principal of UHI will then consider the case and will normally invoke an independent review by a REF Appeals Group. This will normally comprise a Senior Officer who has not otherwise been involved in the decision-making process and two further senior academic staff who are independent of the individual appellant, their department and of the preceding discussions over the case. The review will be conducted and concluded within fifteen working days of receipt of the referral to the Principal of UHI by the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise. In some cases, advice from a subject-specialist (of good academic and research standing) will also be sought, but the decision on if and when this is required will rest with the REF Appeals Group. The decision reached by the REF Appeals Group will be subject to confirmation by the Principal of UHI. The Principal's decision on the case will be considered final and communicated accordingly to the staff member, confidentially.

The final appeals process will be concluded by the end of September 2013.

5. MONITORING

UHI will produce, prior to final submission to the REF in late 2013, an equality and diversity profile for all staff who are: (a) eligible for submission and (b) submitted. These data will be analysed for any imbalance and assessed for the need for further impact assessment.

6. FINAL CHECKING AND SUBMISSION

Following completion of the above noted appeals process, the Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR) will liaise with the UHI REF Team to ensure that a final check is undertaken of the proposed staff submission, with respect to any hitherto unregistered equalities issues. Once this has been completed, relevant statements with respect to individuals who are being included, and for whom appropriate special circumstances are deemed by the UHI to pertain, which have adversely affected their ability to produce the standard minimum number of research outputs, will be entered into the confidential section of the REF submission for that Unit of Assessment.

A report will be produced highlighting the equality profile of the submission by UHI as a whole, and also on a Unit of Assessment–by–Unit of Assessment basis. This will serve as a final check of the proposed submission in all relevant areas. The resultant Equality Impact Assessment will be published at an appropriate stage following the submission.

Upon completion of all checks, the University will make its submission to the 2014 REF by the submission deadline date, which is 29 November 2013.

Web Links:

REF 2014 website: www.ref.ac.uk/

UHI REF web site: <http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/staff-dev/ref-info>

(Note: the UHI REF web site is also the point of entry into the UHI Intranet site for the 2014 REF preparations.)

INDIVIDUAL (PERSONAL) CIRCUMSTANCES

All arrangements within the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), in preparation for its submission to the 2014 REF, will operate in accordance with the University's equality and diversity policies, relevant laws and guidance documents, and Equal Opportunities guidance issued by the National REF Team.

Within this, it is understood that there are likely to be staff in UHI whose volume of research output for the REF has been limited during the assessment period for published outputs, which is 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2013, as a result of personal circumstances. In some of these cases, provision may be made to reduce the number of outputs that staff will be required to submit to the REF for formal assessment.

The personal circumstances that are being recognised by the National REF Team in this way are as follows:

- a) Early career researchers (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009, i.e. this is not related to a person's actual age).
- b) Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013.
- c) Part time employment.
- d) Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research.
- e) Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters).
- f) Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue).
- g) Ill health or injury.
- h) Mental health conditions.
- i) Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare in addition to periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken.
- j) Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)
- k) Gender reassignment.
- l) Other exceptional and relevant reasons (including other circumstances identified in relevant Panel-specific Criteria and Working Methods Statements).

All staff who are eligible for the REF are strongly encouraged to declare any relevant personal circumstances using the 'Individual Staff Circumstances Disclosure Form' (Appendix A), and opportunities to do this will be provided initially via a direct communication in early 2012 and via use of the downloadable form from the REF section of the UHI web site at any time thereafter until end June 2013, and by direct request to the Dean of Research thereafter until the end of September 2013.

It should be noted that the National REF Team has agreed that researchers may reduce the number of outputs in a submission for each period of maternity leave taken during the REF period, by one output per maternity leave. It is crucial, therefore, to report all such periods of maternity leave via the process notified here.

However, it should also be noted that academic and academic-related duties that might be expected to be undertaken by any member of academic staff, including teaching and administration duties, are not regarded as sufficient explanation in themselves for insufficient quantity of output relative to the standard requirement for the submission of four published outputs across the assessment period (in a form relevant to the discipline area). Please refer to the national REF website, where the Panels' Criteria and Working Methods statements are published www.ref.ac.uk.

All eligible staff whose outputs and other contributions to the REF are not initially selected for submission will have the opportunity to submit a case for re-consideration of that decision based on disclosure of one or more individual staff circumstances listed above.

However, only circumstances related to volume of output will be considered for appeal, not issues of output quality, the assessment process of which is outlined in the *Code of Practice and Guidance Note for Equality and Diversity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework Submission Process: Staff Selection* (see: <http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/staff-dev/ref-info>).

All information relating to personal circumstances disclosed by staff will be used strictly for REF purposes and will not be used for any other purpose without the express consent of the individual concerned. All national REF Assessment Panel members and secretaries are bound by confidentiality requirements. No information relating to individual circumstances will be published by the National REF Team.

Personal data will be handled and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Good Practice Guidelines and the Data Protection Act 1998.

INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES DISCLOSURE FORM

Name	
Department	
Unit of Assessment	

SECTION ONE:***Please select one of the following:***

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 the UHI human resources staff to discuss my circumstances and requirements and/or the support provided by UHI (*note: this may require further discussion with the HR section in the host Academic Partner. Ticking this box confirms that this may take place*). My contact details for this purpose are:

Email	
Telephone	
Preferred method of communication	

I do **not** wish to be contacted by a member of UHI 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)	Date on which you became an early career research
Information	
Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 [Delete as appropriate: applies to specific units of assessment within Panel A]	Please place a tick in this box if the circumstance applies:
Part time employee	FTE and duration in months
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,	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other

breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare in addition to the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken.	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 select as appropriate:

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 UHI’s Compliance and Equality Officer (the UHI HR staff member associated with the REF), and the UHI Dean of Research. Complex cases will also be seen by the relevant UoA Coordinator, Dean of Faculty, and the VP for Research.

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. [Delete if not applicable: I recognise that if a joint submission is made, information may be shared with another institution.] Where permission is not provided UHI will be limited in the action it can take.

Signature: Date:

(Staff member Name (CAPS): _____)

Staff member’s Academic Partner affiliation: _____)

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Following consideration of the personal circumstances described above, the UHI REF Steering Group:

- (1) Will progress consideration of the staff member's inclusion in the REF submission with ____ [insert number] of research outputs. [Subject to specified institutional criteria]. Rationale for the proposed number of outputs:

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

- (2) Requires further information on the circumstances described, as follows:

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

- (3) 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 reflected in '1' or '3' above, they will need to do so to the Dean of Research ***within 10 working days of receipt of this notice***, and details of the appeals process can be found at <http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/staff-dev/ref-info>

Signature: Date:
(UHI Compliance and Equality Officer / UHI Head of HR)

Signature: Date:
(UHI Dean of Research)

The completed form should be submitted electronically, and under strictly confidential cover, to the UHI Compliance and Equality Officer or the UHI Head of HR

UHI COMMITTEES AND GROUPS WITH DESIGNATED REF RESPONSIBILITIES

A range of information relating to the individuals and groups/committees that are, or will be, associated with the University of the Highlands and Islands' preparations for the 2014 REF submission, has already been provided within the text of the Equality and Diversity Code of Practice and Guidance Note. However there are several UHI Committees that have designated REF responsibilities. These are as follows:

- 1) UHI REF Steering Group
- 2) UHI Research Practitioners Group
- 3) UHI Research Committee

These Groups and Committees report to more senior committees within the governance structure of UHI, which are akin to most other Institutions' senior management/institutional committees, and which do not therefore require separate details to be provided other than to note their names:

- 4) UHI Senior Academic Team
- 5) UHI Executive Board
- 6) UHI Academic Council (similar to the Senate in some HEIs)
- 7) UHI Court

The formation, membership/composition and function of the 3 main REF-related groups are described individually, in turn, below:

1) UHI REF Steering Group

Role and Remit:

To provide confidential guidance and support to the Dean of Research in the formation of UHI submissions approach for the 2014 REF, and to make recommendations and proposals as required to the Research Practitioners Group and the Research Committee as required.

The REF Steering Group was initiated in early 2011 by the Dean of Research, with approval of the UHI Research Committee, as the primary forum in which strategic and operational issues relating to the University's preparations for the 2014 REF are discussed and agreed. The Group is not a decision-making body *per-se*, but aims instead to co-ordinate a strategic and practical approach to UHI's REF preparations. The Group reports on relevant issues to the Research Committee, occasionally via a summary report on its activities to the Research Practitioners Group (RPG). The Dean of Research and one member of the REF Steering Group (who is also a member of the RPG) are members of the Research Committee and therefore report on discussions of the REF Steering Group in that forum. This process includes presentation of any paper-based reports that may be available. The membership of the REF Steering Group is drawn primarily from the broader membership of the UHI RPG, and has been selected to represent the breadth of research activity within and across the University. Most members of the Group also act as Unit of Assessment Coordinators for the academic/subject areas they represent. The Group retains the ability to supplement its membership for discussion of particular items.

The Group will consider details of UHI's REF submissions at a significant level of detail, and therefore each member is bound by strict confidentiality when addressing issues of particular sensitivity and seriousness. Training on equality and diversity and other relevant legislation is made available to the members of the Group through UHI's Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or the UHI Head of HR), which they are required to undertake and pass.

Committee Formation:

The REF Steering Group was formed in early 2010 at the request of the Dean of Research (in his role as institutional Manager/Director of REF preparations) and with the endorsement of the Research Practitioners Group, the Research Committee and the UHI Senior Academic Team. The Group was formed specifically with the REF preparations in view, and it will continue in existence until the final results have been published in 2014 and dissemination and analysis of the results has been undertaken within and across UHI in early 2015.

Membership:

Composition – Members drawn (primarily) from the UHI Research Practitioners' Group.

Chair – Dean of Research

Members – 7 senior academics from across UHI (drawn primarily from the Research Practitioners Group, and with one nominated member from the Scottish Association of Marine Science). The UHI Research Data and Information Manager is in attendance at meetings, and the Executive PA to the Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise acts as committee secretary.

Faculty Reps: 3 members from the Faculty of Science, Health and Education,
4 members from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Business.

Mode of Operation:

Typically meets 3 times per annum, and on *ad hoc* occasions as required.

An agenda of items for consideration is established by the Chair ahead of each meeting, through consultation with the members.

Papers are prepared and presented by various members of the Group, allied to any specific tasks and responsibilities relating to the REF preparations that they hold. Most general and strategy-related papers are produced and introduced by the Dean of Research.

The members of the Group do not represent their own discipline area or host Academic Partner *per-se*, but instead are required to operate without prejudice for the best interests of the strongest possible UHI submission to the REF, whilst taking into account issues of equality, diversity and associated legislation and sector norms of practice.

Strictly confidential and sensitive material is subject to appropriate Freedom of Information Act restrictions and data protection legislation. Confidentiality and integrity are core components of the work of this Group.

2) UHI Research Practitioners Group

Role and Remit:

The main remit of the Research Practitioners' Group (RPG) is as follows:

- To consider those issues which are essentially of an operational nature and affect those involved “on the ground” in research and knowledge exchange.
- To foster research-informed teaching and increased activity and capacity in research and knowledge exchange.
- To assist collaborations between researchers in UHI, including through research networks, and between researchers in UHI and in other institutions.
- To encourage collaboration on training/support for the next/new generation of researchers across Academic Partners and Faculties.
- To report to the Research Committee on a regular basis on these and other issues and respond to points raised at meetings of the Research Committee, including those related to the REF.

As part of its developing role, the RPG acts as a forum for receipt of general information on the development of the UHI REF submission, typically arising from the Dean of Research (as institutional REF Manager/Director) and the REF Steering Group, which it then discusses. Specific proposals that are intended for progression to the Research Committee are also discussed and agreed, such as the selection of UoA Coordinators, the decision on quality threshold levels, and processes for undertaking mock/mini-REF exercises. As with the REF Steering Group, training on equality and diversity and other relevant legislation is made available to the members of the RPG through UHI's Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or UHI's Head of HR), which they are required to undertake and pass.

Committee Formation:

UHI has adopted a standard approach since its formation, which seeks to involve a variety of 'practitioner groups' from across the UHI academic partnership as part of its governance and decision-making processes. The Research Practitioners' Group is one of those groups and it has been in existence since 2008.

Membership:

Composition – Members drawn from the research communities based in each of the 13 UHI Academic Partner institutions, in a representative format.

Chair – Dean of Research

Members – Senior academic researchers represent each Academic Partner and/or specialist Research Centre from within and across the UHI partnership structure. In addition, relevant UHI officers are in attendance, including the UHI Head of Graduate School, the UHI Librarian, the UHI Research Data and Information Manager, and the UHI Research Grants and Contracts Manager. The Secretary to the RPG is the Executive Secretary to the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise.

Faculty Reps: 8 members from the Faculty of Science, Health and Education.

8 members from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Business.

Mode of Operation:

Typically meets 3-4 times per annum.

Receives routine reports from RPG, Academic Partner representatives, and the REF Steering Group. Other reports are provided on an annual or *ad hoc* basis from the UHI Librarian, the Head of the UHI Graduate School, and other individuals and office-bearers as required.

The RPG was formed principally as a representative forum for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of good research practice. It acts as the formal interface between the research active practitioner community within UHI and the UHI Research Committee, to which it reports.

The RPG receives papers and summary update reports from the Dean of Research, various members of the RPG as required. It also receives update reports from the REF Steering Group, not least with respect to requests for endorsement of relevant matters, such as the identification and appointment of UoA Coordinators, timescales for particular REF-related actions, and quality threshold levels to set and apply to individual discipline areas that may form part of UHI's eventual submission to the 2014 REF.

3) UHI Research Committee

Role and Remit:

The Research Committee is the primary formal Committee within UHI's governance structure that considers research-related issues and items.

The Committee shall, subject to the overall authority of the Academic Council and within the budgetary framework set by Executive Board and approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Board of Governors, formulate a research development plan. Within the plan the Committee shall:

1. develop and promote UHI's core strategy for research, knowledge exchange and commercialisation.
2. ensure that strategic issues affecting the growth of research can be best supported
3. develop an implementation plan for sustainable research activity within UHI
4. audit the quality of research and monitor compliance with national policies and frameworks and legal requirements governing research and its conduct
5. oversee the development of staff research capability within UHI
6. support as required Academic Council in meeting the requirements of the Title Management Group.
7. establish a Research Practitioners Group (RPG) with whom it will consult and from whom it will receive reports
8. liaise with the Research Degrees Sub-Committee with respect to research student research

Training on equality and diversity and other relevant legislation is made available to the members of the Research Committee through UHI's Compliance and Equality Officer (and/or UHI's Head of HR), which they are required to undertake and pass.

Committee Formation:

Like virtually all universities throughout the UK, the UHI Research Committee was established as a standing committee within the governance framework of the institution on its formation as a university.

Membership:

Chair – Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise

Members – The Committee comprises the Principal of UHI, The Dean of Research, the Director of the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), the Head of Graduate School/Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee, and the Faculty Deans, all as *ex-officio* members. The membership also comprises a senior member of the academic staff nominated by the Dean of Research as a senior REF-related researcher, 4 senior members of the academic staff, two from each Faculty, and a PGR student member. The UHI Head of Knowledge Exchange and the UHI Director of Development and Enterprise are in attendance. In addition, the Committee includes external representatives from UHI's 3 sponsoring universities (Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Strathclyde) as *ex-officio* members. The Secretary to the Research Committee is the Executive Secretary to the Vice Principal Research and Enterprise.

Faculty Reps: 4 members from the Faculty of Science, Health and Education.

4 members from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Business.

Mode of Operation:

Typically meets a minimum of 3 times per annum.

Reports routinely to the UHI Academic Council, and to the University Court as appropriate.

Receives reports from RPG and Post Graduate Research Degrees Sub-Committee.