

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

REF2014: Code of Practice

Introduction

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) assesses the quality of the research that is produced within the Higher Education system in the UK. The importance to the University of the Exercise are financial and reputational and it is important that the University balances these elements in maximising the benefits from the exercise. The precise nature of the submission, in terms of which units to submit to and which information to include, therefore needs to be considered very carefully. This document sets out the criteria and approach to securing the best possible outcome for the University in REF2014 whilst at the same time ensuring that the University discharges its legal responsibilities as an employer. It seeks to ensure transparency and fairness in the decision making process within the University over the selection of eligible staff for submission into the REF.

This Code of Practice will be submitted to the Funding Councils REF Team for verification and will be published on the Research Support Office web site as well as the HEFCE website at the end of the exercise.

Policy statement

Decisions regarding the University submission to the REF will lie with the Vice-Chancellor on the advice of the REF Steering Group. No other group will be formally involved in the selection of staff to be returned. In advising the Vice-Chancellor the REF Steering Group will:

- Adopt open and transparent selection criteria
- Detail the communication channels to be used to convey the relevant information
- Take account of individual's personal circumstances in accordance with the guidance set out in REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions (REF Circular 02.2011 available at www.ref.ac.uk under Publications).
- Ensure that selection for REF submissions do not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation as well as fixed term or part time status.
- Detail an appeal process that can be used by all members of eligible staff in order to seek further consideration for submission.
- Highlight the impact assessment process that will be undertaken in order to assess any adverse impact on the inclusion and exclusion of all eligible staff by age, disability, gender and ethnicity.
- Confirm the University's commitment to equality and the REF process by cross referencing the REF into the University's key Equality policies and documents, and cross referencing equality into the University's key REF policy statements.

REF Steering Group

Responsibility for developing the submission to REF and advising on key decisions will be carried out by the University's REF Steering Group (REFSG), set up on the authority of UMAG and endorsed by the Senate (November 2009).

The REFSG will:

- develop detailed criteria that reflect the quality level expected by the University within each unit of assessment to be submitted; whilst this will be a uniform process across the University for selecting staff for the REF, the criteria to be used will inevitably vary from discipline to discipline.
- define which units of assessment are to be submitted
- define the overall quality level to be expected from submissions
- notify Heads of Department and relevant staff in writing about decisions made with regard to exclusion or inclusion
- report regularly to Senate

The REFSG will have responsibility for ensuring that the Code of Practice is consistently implemented and will test and challenge proposals from contributing units in the university.

All selection decisions regarding the University submission to the REF will lie with the Vice-Chancellor on the advice of the REFSG. Therefore, the Vice-Chancellor and all members of the REFSG will be given appropriate training in Equal Opportunities that has been tailored to the REF, through the Human Resources Division. In addition, to promote an awareness and understanding of these issues training will be provided to selected faculty and departmental staff involved with the REF process.

The membership and terms of reference of the REFSG are given in Appendix 1. The REFSG will be chaired by the PVC Research who was appointed using the process detailed in Appendix 3

Decision making framework

The decision about which eligible staff to select for submission is a University one; such decisions must be justifiable in the sense that they do not display any unjust discrimination.

The REF Steering Group (REFSG) will recommend to the Vice-Chancellor which eligible members of staff will be selected for submission to REF2014.

The REFSG will consider a number of research indicators when deciding whether to recommend a member of staff for submission. The primary factor will be the quality of the research outputs as defined by the published REF criteria contained in the Guidance on Submission and Panel Criteria documents. In this exercise the direct link between individuals and research income and PhD students have been lost but these data will be considered if a particular contribution is highlighted in the return. Likewise, esteem indicators and contributions to the environment and impact activity will be influential if they enhance the submission.

The REFSG will also make a judgement of the most advantageous overall profile for the University, or for a given UoA and this will involve deciding on the most appropriate UoA for a member of staff.

Personal circumstances

REF Main panels and sub-panels have produced guidance on how they will deal with individual circumstances that might have had an effect on an individual's contribution to a submission (available at www.ref.ac.uk under Publications) and each panel's guidance document has an equal opportunities statement to ensure that personal circumstances are taken into account.

In common with the panel guidance, the University, through the process outlined below, will consider the following individual circumstances to the extent that they are stated to have had a material impact on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period:

a. Clearly defined circumstances, which are:

- i. Status as an early career researcher (ECR). These are individuals of any age who first entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to REF2014 as Category A staff on or after 1 August 2009.
- ii. Part-time working, or other flexible working arrangements
- iii. Absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave
- iv. Secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector, in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

b. Complex circumstances:

- i. Disability as defined in Part 4, Table 2 of the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions
- ii. Ill health or injury
- iii. Mental health conditions
- iv. Constraints relating to pregnancy or maternity in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave
- v. Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- vi. Gender reassignment
- vii. Other circumstances which the institution is legally obliged to permit e.g. absences for religious observances

c. Fixed-term and part-time staff

In the light of the fixed-term and part-time regulations, consideration will be given by the University to individual circumstances affecting part time and fixed term staff, such circumstances might for example include pro rata consideration of the application criteria for submission in the case of part time staff and breaks in the continuity of employment of fixed term and where relevant, contract research staff.

Other circumstances comparable with the examples above will be considered, as long as an explanation is provided as to the way in which they are said to have impacted on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs.

Any member of staff wishing to bring one of the above circumstances to the attention of the University should use the Individual Staff Circumstances-disclosure form 2 (See appendix 4) to provide:

- a. A broad description of the nature of the circumstances (e.g., ill-health, maternity leave).
- b. The timing of circumstances, i.e., when they occurred.
- c. The duration of the circumstances.
- d. The extent of the impact of the circumstances on the individual's ability to carry out research activities (e.g., impossible to carry out research at all, roughly 50% reduction in time available).

This should be submitted to, the Head of Department or the Director of Human Resources who will then forward it to the Head of Research Support. A panel consisting of the PVC Research, the Equality and Diversity Manager (HR), the Head of Research Support and an Associate Dean for Research (from a faculty other than that of the member of staff being considered) will review the circumstances and will recommend to the REFSG an appropriate level of reduction in research outputs.

All other staff with no circumstances to report should complete self disclosure form 1 and return them to the Head of Research Support.

Individual circumstances will be considered on a confidential basis, with advice from Human Resources in the case of complex circumstances and using guidance and examples produced for REF2014 by the Equality Challenge Unit (<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/ref-materials/complex-circumstances-examples>).

Notification of selection for submission

The University has agreed that all eligible members of Category A staff, including those staff absent from the University, will receive information from their Head of Department on a frequent basis, about whether they are likely to be selected for submission into REF2014. It is expected that this will be done in April 2012 and February 2013. These notifications will be provisional at that point in time and hence may be revisited for good reason.

Staff will be notified in writing of the final decision in September 2013 and appeals on this final decision must be made within 7 working days of the date of the notification letter.

Impact assessment

The University will provide an equality profile – in terms of age, disability, gender and ethnicity – of staff who are eligible for submission and indicate those who are submitted and those who are not. The Code of Practice has been subjected to an Equality Analysis according to standard University practices and no causes for concern were identified. Further Equality Analyses will be performed on the REF processes as they progress up to the submission date. The REFSG will monitor this using anonymised data supplied from the

HR database. If any prima facie imbalance is found relative to the total potential pool, then the REFSG will investigate in order to account for it. The staff profile for 2011 is given in appendix 2.

Appeals

An appeal process seeks to address any perceived unfair discrimination, concerns about process (including if it is felt that procedure has not been followed) or circumstances where previously unavailable evidence has come to light. The decision on the inclusion of staff to the REF is a strategic and qualitative process in which judgements are made about the quality of research of individual members of staff. The judgements are subjective, based on factual information. Hence, disagreement with the decision alone would not be appropriate grounds for an appeal. Appeals can be made at any point up to the end of 8th October 2013. If a member of staff believes that they have appropriate grounds for a complaint they should initially discuss this with their Head of Department, following a request in writing laying out the nature of the concerns. A meeting should take place within 10 days of the request and the outcome followed up within 7 days of the meeting. The Head of Department may consult with the Associate Dean for Research in their faculty as part of their consideration of the appeal.

Any staff member remaining dissatisfied, should submit formal written notification to the Director of Human Resources within 5 working days of receiving the decision of the original panel, requesting their case be reviewed by a Dean of another faculty.

Communication programme for the Code of Practice

The Code of Practice was considered by UMAG and Senate in November 2011. Following approval the existence and key features of the Code will be communicated to all staff through the University e-newsletter, LU Text, and Heads of Department will discuss it at one of their meetings with the Vice-Chancellor. Deans will include the Code as a specific agenda item for the Policy Resources Committee and Heads of Department will include it as a specific agenda item in a departmental staff meeting. The Central Services Division will discuss it at a Heads of Division meeting.

Heads of Department will communicate the existence of the Code and the individual staff circumstance forms to absent staff. The REFSG recommends that these communications should be made by post to staff absent in September 2012, and again to staff absent in April 2013.

The Code and details of the individual staff circumstance procedures will be available to staff on the Research Support Office website. The existence of the Code will be further advertised through LU Text, in July 2012, December 2012 and August 2013.

Institutional contact for further information:
Head of Research Support, Yvonne Fox,
email - y.fox@lancaster.ac.uk

Appendix 1: REF Steering Group

Terms of reference

1. To recommend to the Vice-Chancellor for final confirmation to which units of assessment Lancaster should submit, and the content of each unit's submission, including the staff selected.
2. To receive guidance from the Funding Councils' REF Team and ensure it is promulgated and implemented throughout the units of assessment.
3. To receive regular reports from the associate deans (research) on behalf of the faculties and consider action arising at institutional level.
4. To take responsibility for ensuring that the university complies with its agreed code of practice on equal opportunities in relation to REF2014
5. To take all such other actions as are necessary to optimise Lancaster's submission to REF2014.

Membership

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Professor TJ McMillan) (Chair)
 Associate Dean for Research, Science and Technology (Professor M Kosch)
 Associate Dean for Research, Arts and Social Sciences (Professor C Ram-Prasad)
 Associate Dean for Research, Management School (Professor L Introna)
 Associate Dean for Research, Health and Medicine (Professor P Bates)

Professor PJ Diggle Professor C Lambert Professor L Woodhead Professor M Pidd Professor R Cooper Professor K Knott	}	Members ad hoc with senior involvement in previous Assessment exercises or on REF Panels
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Mrs Y Fox (Head of Research Support and institutional contact for REF2014)

Mr R Kemp (Equality and Diversity Manager, HR) (in attendance)

N.B. Since the group will undertake its work over a period of a number of years, the membership may be varied from time to time in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor.

Procedure

The REF Steering Group is a project management group that makes recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor. Regular reports are made to the following bodies:

Vice-Chancellor's meetings with heads of departments;
University Management Advisory Group;
University Research Committee;
Senate (including issues of institutional policy that arise during the period to 31 October 2013).

The committee will be laid down by 31st December 2014.

Appendix 2: Academic and research staff equality profile

REF 2014 - Equality Analysis - Summary Report

		Returned		Non-Returned		% Returned
		Number	%	Number	%	
Age	25 to 34	104	16.6%	18	10.5%	85.2%
	35 to 44	189	30.2%	55	32.2%	77.5%
	45 to 54	184	29.4%	55	32.2%	77.0%
	55 to 64	113	18.1%	38	22.2%	74.8%
	65 & over	36	5.8%	5	2.9%	87.8%
	Total eligible staff	626	100.0%	171	100.0%	78.5%
Disability	No disability or impairment	540	86.3%	152	88.9%	78.0%
	Disabled or impairment	28	4.5%	13	7.6%	68.3%
	Not known	58	9.3%	6	3.5%	90.6%
	Total eligible staff	626	100.0%	171	100.0%	78.5%
Ethnicity	White	494	78.9%	140	81.9%	77.9%
	Black & minority ethnic	64	10.2%	18	10.5%	78.0%
	Not known	68	10.9%	13	7.6%	84.0%
	Total eligible staff	626	100.0%	171	100.0%	78.5%
Gender	Female	193	30.8%	60	35.1%	76.3%
	Male	433	69.2%	111	64.9%	79.6%
	Total eligible staff	626	100.0%	171	100.0%	78.5%
Full/part-time	Full-time	553	88.3%	152	88.9%	78.4%
	Part-time	73	11.7%	19	11.1%	79.3%
	Total eligible staff	626	100.0%	171	100.0%	78.5%

Table updated 5/12/13

Appendix 3: Appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

The current PVC Research was appointed through the following process:

1. The Senate agreed the job description and person specification.
2. A call was put out to Senate for senior members of staff to sit on an appointing committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.
3. A call was put out for nominations, informed by the agreed criteria, of persons to be considered for appointment. Each nominee was named by ten nominators, led by a lead nominator who consulted the Vice-Chancellor about whether he wishes to exercise his veto in the case of any name notified to him.
4. The persons who received the requisite numbers of nominations were interviewed by the appointing committee, using the criteria laid down, and on behalf of the Senate have the authority to reach a binding recommendation to the Council.
5. The Council endorsed the recommendation of the appointing committee.

Appendix 4: Individual Staff Circumstances disclosure Forms 1 and 2

The Code of Practice notes that one of the factors for consideration when agreeing which staff to select for submission into the REF is any circumstance which may have had an impact on your research performance and capability during the assessment period. The individual circumstances are outlined in paragraph 92 of the Assessment Framework and the Guidance on Submission for REF2014, Panel criteria and working methods and are described in more detail in the REF sub-panel assessment criteria statements. These are available at www.ref.ac.uk under Publications.

If you have experienced one or more of the specific circumstances described during the REF assessment period (i.e. since 1 January 2008), then you are invited, if you wish, to provide a confidential written statement to your Head of Department or the Director of Human Resources. The statement should be made on the individual staff circumstance form 2, which is available on the University's Research Support Office Website at <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/depts/research/lancaster/REF2014.html>

Please ensure that your statement includes a description of the circumstance, its timing, duration and the impact on your ability to carry out research.

In all cases, your form will be passed confidentially by the Head of Department or the Director of Human Resources to the University for the purposes of equality monitoring. In addition, if the University chooses to provide this information in the REF submission, then the content of your form will be included confidentially, in form REF1b of the University's REF submission.

Any such statements are captured for REF purposes only and will be considered by the University in accordance with the Lancaster University REF2014: Code of Practice when deciding whether to select you for submission to the REF.

The REF sub-panels have, in their criteria statements, been clear that they will consider individual circumstances on the basis of their impact on the volume of research work produced during the assessment period. This means, that where an individual returns fewer than the maximum four research outputs and a valid individual circumstance applies, the sub-panel can elect not to penalise the individual for submitting fewer outputs. This is subject to guidance from the Funding Councils Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP). The University will adopt the same approach and thus consider any individual circumstances on the basis of whether they had a material impact on the volume of research produced by an individual during the assessment period.