



Research Excellence Framework: Code of Practice

Each institution making a submission to REF2014 is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice on the selection of staff for inclusion in REF submissions.

The Code of Practice will be submitted to the REF national team by 31 July 2012, examined and approved by the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel and ultimately published along with submissions at the end of the assessment process.

The Code of Practice will support the University's aim to ensure the submission of world leading and internationally excellent research from its eligible staff, with particular attention to those individuals whose research outputs may have been significantly restrained by their personal circumstances during the assessment period.

This document sets out the principles, roles and responsibilities and procedures to be used in the selection of staff for the REF2014. It is intended to assist you in finding information relevant to your situation whether you are:

- a research active member of staff eligible for submission,
- seeking guidance on how individual circumstances may affect your position (for example an Early Career Researcher or as someone whose work may be affected by a period of absence or ill-health)
- a Level 1 or Level 2 Head, or other member of staff involved in our preparations, seeking confirmation of the policies on submission.

Further information and detail on the REF, its importance to the University and our approach to managing preparations can be found on our dedicated internal website <https://www.liv.ac.uk/intranet/ref>

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Research Excellence Framework: Code of Practice

Principles

1. The University of Liverpool's Code of Practice relating to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) has been developed in line with the [Guidance on Submissions](#) document published by the Funding Council in July 2011 and takes into account, where relevant, the [Criteria and Working Methods statements](#) of the main panels and sub-panels as published in January 2012.
2. The University is committed to returning all eligible staff who are conducting excellent research to REF2014, taking full account of all relevant equal opportunities issues and regardless of contractual status. The institutional definition of excellent research for REF purposes is based on the research policy principles agreed by the University Senate in 2009. These principles, and the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014, recognised the importance of world-class research for the University's success.
3. The selection criteria for REF is therefore based upon the production of research outputs that meet the criteria for 3* and 4* research. This is the first time that the institution has adopted explicit criteria for staff inclusion in REF/RAE and it will require a greater degree of selectivity in all areas than for RAE2008. The Vice Chancellor, guided by expert advice from an institutional REF Board, will be responsible for final decisions regarding the University submission and the inclusion of individuals to the REF.
4. Recommendations on individual submissions will be made on the basis of academic peer review and judgement underpinned by strategic oversight from the REF Board. Submission of researchers to the REF is only one aspect of the wide-ranging contributions made by staff to the University's Strategic Plan and Key Ambitions and the University is committed both to recognising all aspects of the contribution made by staff and to supporting their efforts within the context of the institutional Research Strategy. The inclusion or not of individual members of staff to the REF exercise will not in itself influence career progression or reflect the value of those staff to the overall performance of the University. Selection for the REF is based entirely on judgements of output quality and does not take into account issues of workload or wider performance.
5. The University will want to satisfy itself that a suitable dialogue has occurred in relation to matters of research contribution. As such a specific discussion related to REF submission should take place between all individuals and their line managers (or delegated others as agreed) at an appropriate point in the assessment of research outputs. Discussion will normally occur as part of the (PDR) process, but separate discussions, specific to REF, can be used on request as an alternative arrangement. In all instances such discussions should be documented and make use of all relevant information.
6. The institution works to embed the principles of diversity and equality into all policies and processes. The PDR process focuses on the importance of a regular discussion with staff about matters of research planning, workload, work output, professional development and progression/ promotion and provides an opportunity for issues of diversity and equality to be raised and discussed. The PDR process applies equally to all staff, including fixed-term and part-time staff members. The completion of PDRs

and submission of signed copies will be monitored by the Human Resources department to ensure this part of the process is in place.

7. Preparations for REF2014 are fully embedded in the University's Planning and Performance Cycle.
8. This Code of Practice sets out the processes involved in decision-making during the preparations for REF2014 and has been produced following widespread consultation with representatives from the University's staff. This consultation process included dissemination of a draft to all eligible staff, drafting meetings with trades' union representatives, feedback from relevant staff networks representing protected groups and testing of key processes with Level 1 and 2 Heads. This consultation process resulted in the incorporation of valuable input to the document in the form of agreed amendments or additions.
9. The University's Diversity and Equality of Opportunity Policy underpins all aspects of the proposed approach to matters involving individual members of staff. An Equality Impact Assessment of the process has been carried out to inform the drafting of the Code and will be repeated at relevant points within the preparations. Impact Assessment will focus on the continued relevance and effectiveness of the Code along with analysis of intended staff submission data in relation to the effect of submission policies and the self-disclosure exercise on protected groups. The outcomes of Impact Assessment will be used to inform potential changes to the policy to avoid potentially discrimination and improvements to communication and implementation where necessary. Such outcomes will be shared with staff, including publication on the REF intranet. Individuals and groups involved in the preparations for REF will have received relevant training on diversity and equality issues and will take full account of current legislation and the criteria and working methods published for each REF panel and sub-panel.

Selection of Research Activity for Submission to REF2014

Selection of Category A staff

10. Oversight of the processes for the selection of Category A staff for submission to REF2014, in accordance with the Guidance on Submissions, is the responsibility of the PVC-RKE.

Eligibility

11. Eligibility criteria for REF is as defined in the [Guidance on Submissions](#) document.

Selection criteria and quality thresholds

12. Decisions on the selection of individuals for REF will be based on an assessment of the quality of research outputs, the volume of research (taking into account any equal opportunity issues), and the principles outlined in section 1.

The University will seek to maximise the quality of the profile in each of the units of assessment to which it will submit, with a view to maximising the benefit of the REF exercise to the University as a whole. Final decisions on selection and submission will take account of the wider strategic benefits to the department, unit or institution and a decision not to return particular individuals must be seen in this context.

13. In line with institutional research policy principles the initial threshold for selection of individuals will be based on the production of 3* or 4* research outputs as defined by REF quality criteria. However, final selection of individuals will need to incorporate analysis of the overall profile of an individual's outputs and their relationship with the profile of the relevant submitting Unit. As such, the selection of research outputs to be

submitted will be determined on the basis of recommendations made through the following process:

- All relevant research outputs will be subject to a robust and transparent internal peer review. While it is recognised that such internal assessments cannot be a guarantee of eventual success in the REF exercise it is extremely important that our submission strategy is based as far as possible on an informed judgement of expected quality levels.
 - Individual Level 2 units will be responsible for the operation of such review processes, under the guidance of the REF Board.
 - Criteria used for assessment should be those set out in REF Criteria and Working Methods document (published in its final version in January 2012) for the relevant main panel with a discipline-specific focus from associated sub-panel(s) guidance. In addition, assessments should make use of general guidance on the criteria for excellence, as distributed by the REF Board, tailored to local requirements. The criteria will specify the characteristics of 3* and 4* outputs and be communicated to staff via the appropriate structures at Levels 1 and 2.
 - Assessments based entirely on journal placement, ranking or citation measures will not be deemed valid.
 - The peer review process should encompass the reading of all outputs agreed suitable for assessment – partial reading, sampling, or judgements based on extrapolation will not be viewed as sufficiently robust.
 - A suitable panel of experienced staff should be established to assess outputs. As a minimum, each output should be read by two senior members of staff with associated processes for moderation and adjudication appropriate to the discipline and local structures.
 - Wherever possible, units should seek to supplement their assessment expertise with input from colleagues with REF / RAE panel experience in relation to the application of assessment criteria.
 - Where units choose to use external assessors to provide additional input to peer review, their role should be outlined clearly to staff. External assessors should not decide which staff are to be submitted to the REF nor should they be given any information relating to individual staff circumstances. Assessors should be asked to comment on the quality of an individual's research only.
 - EPVCs are responsible for ensuring that the self-assessments are appropriately benchmarked against external standards and that evidence of internal calibration of assessments is appropriate. Normally this will be achieved by engagement of reviewers in external academic networks, taking the advice of previous RAE2008 panel members internally, and seeking external advice (to check calibration criteria and general research plans only).
- 14.** It is vital that assessment processes are transparent to staff. Units should ensure the sharing of all relevant information with staff, including:
- Details of processes and methodologies adopted
 - Membership of reading panels
 - Criteria for assessment, including any departmental interpretation of specific guidance, and how this has informed a strategy for maximising the quality of outputs to be returned.
 - Timescales for activity
 - Expectations for feedback for individuals and units. To include as standard a discussion with each individual on the outcomes of the assessment process and the opportunity for individuals to initiate a review of the outcome by providing any

additional expert opinion or evidence which may lead the reading panel to revisit their judgement.

It is recommended that processes are discussed in staff meetings to address issues, anxieties or misunderstandings about activity and that staff should receive feedback on the outcomes of the assessment process, both on an individual and unit level.

15. Discussions relating to the selection and submission of the research outputs of individual members of staff will be held either in their own right or as part of the PDR process (as per paragraph 5). The Level 1 Head will hold individual discussions with staff about the quality and number of published outputs as determined by internal review, taking full account of equality issues as defined in the relevant guidance. If agreed by the Level 1 Head and staff member, this responsibility may be delegated to an appropriately trained senior member of staff. The Level 1 Head (or delegate) and staff member will confirm in writing that the discussions have taken place and that any equal opportunity issues have been raised and considered.
16. Preliminary discussions on selection will take place within the same timescale as PDR2011 and will include consideration of future research and publication plans.
17. Individuals will be informed by the end of 2012, of the expected decision with respect to the return or otherwise of their research outputs in submissions to REF2014. This discussion will include the requirements for production of any evidence about forthcoming outputs being in the public domain within the outputs assessment period (deadline of 31st December 2013) and an opportunity to discuss issues of support for research output production in line with the research planning elements of PDR. Discussions will take place by the end of December 2012, in line with the timetable for completion of PDR that year.
18. Individuals will be informed in writing by 1st June 2013 of final decisions with respect to the return or otherwise of their research outputs in submissions to REF2014, including any statement proposed for the submission that relates to them. In cases where the selection of an individual is dependent on the production and publication of further outputs, these conditions will be specified in the letter. A follow up meeting will be offered to all staff with their line manager or PDR reviewer as appropriate, and another relevant member of staff where required, to discuss the reasons for the decision and any individual support required including any elements for inclusion in PDRs.

Details of Special Circumstances

19. The University will take into account any circumstances of individual staff that have significantly adversely affected their contribution to the submission, adhering to appropriate advice and guidance, including:
 - [Equality Briefing for Panels](#)
 - [Guidance on Submissions](#)
 - [Main Panel and Sub-Panel Criteria](#)
 - [Equality Challenge Unit](#)
 - [REF Equalities and Diversity Advisory Panel](#)

20. In addition, selection processes and the contribution of individuals to the submission will take into account the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and relevant employment law.
21. All REF eligible staff will be given the opportunity to proactively disclose any special circumstances that may impact upon their research contribution via a proforma circulated in 2012 and based on guidance provided from the Equality Challenge Unit. Staff should be aware of the Guidance on Submissions and Panel Criteria as to how disclosures relating to individual circumstances will be treated. This process will be tested as part of the draft submission process in summer 2012 with feedback and lessons learned being used to improve future communication, methodologies and processes as appropriate. The self disclosure exercise will be repeated in 2013 in advance of the final submission preparation.
22. Consideration will be given to individual circumstances to the extent that they are stated to have had a material impact on the individuals' ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period:

Clearly Defined Circumstances

- a. Family and domestic matters, including absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave.
- b. Part-time working or other flexible working arrangements.
- c. Status as an Early Career Researcher. These are individuals of any age who first entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to REF as Category A staff on or after 1 August 2009. Attention will be paid to additional REF sub-panel statements that offer subject-specific guidance on this.
- d. Engagement on long-term projects of significant scale and scope.
- e. Secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector, in which the individual did not undertake academic research.
- f. Absences for religious observance.
- g. Other absences which the institution is legally obliged to permit, such as an absence arising out of involvement as a representative of the workforce.

Complex Circumstances

- h. Disability, ill-health and injury, including:
 - i. Disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 is "a physical and/or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". Long term means a condition that lasts, or is likely to last, 12 months or more, or one that is recurring. See the [Guidance on Submissions](#) for further details on what is covered by the definition of a disability.
 - ii. Absence from work on the advice of a registered medical practitioner.
- i. Childcare or time spent acting as a carer, or other domestic commitments.
- j. Gender reassignment.
- k. Any other personal circumstances which are considered to have had a significant impact on an individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period.

Roles and Responsibilities: Individuals

- 23.** Decisions about REF will be made using existing management procedures. The level at which preparations will be managed will depend on the configuration of Level 2 and Level 1 Units compared to REF Units of Assessment. The arrangements for each area will be agreed by the REF Board and communicated to relevant staff.
- 24.** The University has appointed, through its existing policies and procedures, the following individuals with responsibility for decisions relating to REF.

25. Vice-Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor, guided by expert advice from an institutional REF Board, will be responsible for final decisions regarding the University submission and the inclusion of individuals to the REF.

26. Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange (PVC-RKE) reports to the Vice-Chancellor and has been empowered to make operational and planning decisions regarding all aspects of REF submission strategy. She is responsible for administrative overview and for all processes relating to the University's preparations for REF:

- Strategic selection of the Units of Assessment to which the University should make submissions and the assignment, where appropriate, of the research activity of individuals to a Unit of Assessment. This will be made after full consideration of the nature of the research outputs, the panel criteria and membership, and issues of critical mass.
- Chairing the REF Board, which includes representation from all Faculties and reports directly to the Strategic Management Team.
- Making decisions about inclusion of research activity following recommendations from Level 3 (Executive PVCs).
- Ensuring all REF policies and processes are developed and implemented in compliance with the Diversity & Equality of Opportunity Policy and underpinned by appropriate training. That due regard for any potential equality impact has been taken and associated equality impact assessments have been completed.

27. Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors (EPVCs) are accountable for submissions within the three Faculties and are members of REF Board. They have the following role:

- Leadership in developing the strategy for REF submissions within their Faculties, including the delegation of responsibilities at Levels 1 and 2.
- Providing recommendations to REF Board on submission strategy within their areas of responsibility, including the assessment of output quality and fit against UoA criteria.
- Overseeing preparatory activity for the selection and development of Impact Case Studies, Impact Templates and Environment Templates.
- Communication to Level 1 and 2 Heads and REF Coordinators, of outcomes and actions from REF Board discussions.
- Ensuring that Level 2 Heads fulfil their responsibilities regarding the Professional Development and Review process and offering relevant support for this.
- Ensuring consistency within their Faculties in the application of the Code of Practice.

- Fulfilling obligations in the appeals process (see below).

28. Level 2 Heads

Level 2 Heads refers to individuals with responsibility for such an organisational unit as defined by the University. Within Level 2 units most research may be returned to a single REF Unit of Assessment. In these cases the Level 2 Head will take direct responsibility for all elements of the preparations.

In cases where a Level 2 unit encompasses research of significant volumes spanning more than one Unit of Assessment, Level 2 Heads may appoint Level 1 Heads as the main coordinator for submissions but will oversee the activity. In addition, Level 2 and Level 1 Heads may, as necessary, constitute local REF Advisory Groups to carry out these roles.

With respect to REF, responsibilities include the following:

- Assigning roles to Level 1 Heads.
- Overseeing the communication and implementation of all REF processes and production of REF material for relevant submissions.
- To review draft submissions against main panel and sub panel criteria and revise as necessary.
- Ensuring that all units within their remit follow the agreed processes for REF, including application of the institutional Code of Practice.
- Unless delegated to Level 1, identifying and communicating appropriate criteria for assessing the quality of research outputs as per the REF Criteria and Working Methods document (published in its final version in January 2012).
- Monitoring application of quality criteria for assessing outputs.
- Making recommendations to the Executive PVC about the quality of research outputs
- Unless delegated to Level 1, selection, collation and submission of Impact Case Studies, Impact Templates and Environment Templates.

29. Level 1 Heads

Level 1 Heads are managerially responsible for all academic staff within their unit. With respect to REF, their responsibilities include the following:

- Management of the Professional Development and Review process within their unit.
- Where appropriate, and as agreed with the Level 2 Head:
 - Identifying and communicating appropriate criteria for assessing the quality of research outputs, collating and moderating quality assessments as per the REF Criteria and Working Methods document (published in its final version in January 2012).
 - Selection, collation and reporting of evidence of research excellence for Impact Case Studies, Impact Templates and Environment Templates.
 - Making recommendations to the Level 2 Head about the quality of research outputs.
- Ensuring the outcomes of internal review processes for outputs are discussed with individual academic members of staff and recorded.
- Ensuring that information regarding special circumstances is taken into account when assessing the volume of excellent research outputs required for individuals.

30. REF Co-ordinators

REF Co-ordinators provide assistance to Level 2 and Level 1 Heads in preparing draft and final submissions for REF2014. REF Co-ordinators may provide advice to Level 1 Heads on submission strategies, but the formal recommendation to the Executive PVC will be made by the Level 2 Head.

- Coordinating the processes of data collection for REF submission.
- Acting as a point of contact for Executive PVCs with respect to REF processes.
- Providing reports on the progress of preparations, as required by the Executive PVC and REF Board.
- Overseeing administrative processes for assessing output quality.

31. Administrative Support Offices

Administrative support for REF2014 is co-ordinated by the Research Policy Team. It has responsibility for:

- Supporting and advising the PVC-RKE, EPVCs, Level 2 and Level 1 Heads, REF Coordinators and Faculty RKE Managers on administrative and regulatory matters relating to the University's submission to REF2014.
- Liaising with other administrative offices and support departments providing input to the University's submission to REF2014.
- Ensuring consistency of approach between cognate panels and across the University as a whole, including issues of selection and equal opportunities.

32. Organisational Development Manager (Equality and Engagement)

Acting on behalf of the Director of Human Resources, the Organisational Development Manager (Equality and Engagement) is responsible for overseeing the development and review of policies to promote a positive environment in which to work and study, that are informed by robust monitoring mechanisms and by consultation with those affected by the policies. Equality issues are embedded within the University's business processes, including those associated with the REF.

The Diversity and Equality team have responsibility for:

- Advising on issues relating to complex circumstances relating to the protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religious belief and non belief, Sex, and Sexual orientation.
- Providing training and advice to all those who have responsibility for decision making in relation to the impact of complex circumstances

Roles and Responsibilities: Governance

- 33.** The University has appointed, through its existing policies and procedures, the following groups with responsibility for decisions relating to REF.

34. REF Board

Terms of Reference and Membership attached at Appendix 1.

- Responsibility for overall submission strategy (selection of individuals, performance expectations, configuration of submissions).
- Defining framework and timetable for preparation and overseeing submission preparations at Level 3 and associated performance monitoring.
- Producing guidance material and advice for REF coordinators and Level 2 Heads.

- Considering advice from Level 3 on the contents of submissions and making final recommendations about inclusion of activity.
- Ensuring all activities are in compliance with the Diversity & Equality of Opportunity Policy.

35. Equality Panel

The REF board will establish an Equality Panel whose role is:

- To consider anonymous cases of complex circumstances against guidance from the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and advise individuals and Level 2 and Level 1 Heads on the reduction in number of outputs appropriate for each case.
- To carry out all responsibilities in compliance with the Diversity & Equality of Opportunity Policy and supporting documents and to attend appropriate training as set out in the associated training plan.
- To consider any cases of appeal in relation to the internal process and procedures adopted for the purposes of assessing individual staff circumstances.

The Equality Panel operates independently of the REF Board in terms of its decision making. The Equality Panel is chaired by Professor Kelvin Everest with a membership of six academics providing cross-Faculty representation and guided by the Deputy Director of Human Resources. Secretarial and administrative support is provided by Human Resources and Research Policy staff.

Development and Training

36. All of the relevant aspects of the draft Code of Practice that will require ongoing development and training will be supported by a detailed Training Plan. All those involved in making decisions relating to the eligibility of staff and the selection of outputs for the REF submission have received diversity and equality training and ECU - provided training on equality in the REF. In addition the University has in place an Equality Panel which is charged with considering individual staff circumstances and complex circumstances. The Equality Panel has received both diversity and equality training and ECU-provided training on equality in the REF.

Throughout the University's preparations for the REF the University's trained Diversity and Equality team will provide advice and guidance and will monitor the implementation of equality related processes.

Appeals Procedure

37. Individuals will have the opportunity to appeal against a decision relating to their exclusion from the submissions to REF2014. Appeals against the internal assessment of quality of outputs will not be allowed, unless they relate to a perceived act of discrimination. Differences of opinion related to the quality of outputs should be dealt with via the dialogue associated with the feedback and review elements of the output assessment process. The procedure for dealing with appeals will be as follows.
38. In the first instance, individuals should raise with their Level 1 Head possible concerns with respect to failure to follow the process described in the Institutional Code of Practice. This will include failure to consider equal opportunity issues and perceived acts of discrimination in the application of the Code of Practice.
39. In the event of a failure to reach agreement arising from **procedural issues** covered by the institutional Code of Practice, individuals may raise concerns with the relevant Level 2 Head in the first instance, making clear how assessment of their research outputs and individual circumstances has not followed the process outlined in the

Code. If agreement is reached between the individual and the Level 2 Head on an appropriate action, the issues can be resolved at local level. In the event of failure to reach a suitable resolution, a written appeal can then be submitted to the relevant EPVC for consideration. The deadline for appeals on such grounds will be 30th June 2013.

40. In considering the appeal, Executive PVCs will consult as appropriate with the relevant Level 1 Head and an independent Level 2 Head and will inform individuals of the result of the deliberations in writing. Individuals will have a final right of appeal on procedural grounds to a panel comprising a member of the University Council who is not an employee, a Policy Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Director of HR. Members of the appeals panel will not have had any involvement in prior decisions relating to selection of staff for submission. Decisions on appeals will be communicated by 30th September 2013.
41. The result of a successful appeal will be the application of the correct procedure for selection of staff as set out by the REF Board and as such may not in itself culminate in inclusion in the REF submission.

Contact Points

42. Queries regarding the interpretation of the REF Code of Practice in relation to equal opportunities issues should be directed to the Research Policy Manager, Bob Cooney (r.cooney@liv.ac.uk, 0151 794 8550).
43. For further information on the REF process and ongoing preparations for REF2014, please refer to the University of Liverpool REF website:
<https://www.liv.ac.uk/intranet/ref>.

Communication

44. The University will endeavour to ensure that every eligible member of staff receives a copy of this Code of Practice in a suitable format. This will be available on the internal REF website, emailed to staff and sent to all individual home addresses as appropriate, to ensure as far as is possible that staff away from the University receive the document.
45. A programme of communication activities will be rolled out during the REF preparations to embed and monitor the application of agreed processes. These activities will utilise existing practices or be specifically tailored to REF preparations as appropriate and will be overseen by the REF Board.
46. Updates to this document and further information will be available on the internal website.

Appendix 1

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) BOARD

(Secretary; Research Policy Manager)

Terms of reference

- a) To be responsible for the overall strategy for the University's submission to the REF, in particular with relation to:
 - i) Selection within the policy framework set by Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee
 - ii) Configuration of submissions
- b) To be responsible for the final decisions on inclusion of research activity on advice from Level 3
- c) To oversee REF submission preparations at Level 3
- d) To oversee performance monitoring at Level 3, using exception reporting from levels below where required (e.g. from REF Reviews)
- e) To advise the Faculty REF boards on REF submission strategies at Level 1 and 2
- f) To consider and approve methods of communication in relation to REF activity and awareness raising

Constitution and Membership

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange (Chair)
Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Director of Finance
Head of Research Policy
Research Policy Manager

Co-opted members:

Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Leads
Deputy Director of Human Resources
Faculty REF Coordinators

Reporting relationship

The Board reports to the University Strategic Management Team