

Code of Practice on the Selection of Staff for the REF

Introduction

Each institution making a submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF) is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice on the selection of staff for inclusion in their submissions.

This Code of Practice has been submitted to the REF national team via HEFCE in December 2012. Its purpose is to support LSTM'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 REF and is intended to assist staff in finding information relevant to their situation whether they are:

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

1. Principles

1.1 The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine's (LSTM's) Code of Practice relating to the REF has been developed in line with Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submission document (REF 02.2011) published in July 2011 and takes into account, where relevant, the Panel Criteria and Working Methods updated guidance (REF 01.2012). It sets out the processes involved in decision-making during the preparations for REF and has been produced in consultation with representatives from LSTM's staff.

1.2 LSTM is committed to returning all eligible staff who are conducting excellent research to REF, taking full account of all relevant equal opportunities issues. As a research intensive post-graduate institution LSTM is committed to research of international excellence.

- 1.3 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 LSTM has submitted an independent REF submission. LSTM will adopt explicit criteria for staff inclusion in REF and it will require a greater degree of selectivity in all areas than it operated jointly with the University of Liverpool for RAE2008. The LSTM Director, guided by expert advice from the Senior Management Team, will be responsible for final decisions regarding the submission and the inclusion of individuals to the REF.
- 1.4 Recommendations on individual submissions will be made on the basis of academic peer review and judgment underpinned by strategic oversight from the Senior Management Team. Submission of researchers to the REF is only one aspect of the wide-ranging contributions made by staff to LSTM's Strategic Plan (2012 – 2017) and Key Ambitions and LSTM is committed both to recognizing 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 LSTM. Selection for the REF is based entirely on judgments of output quality and does not take into account issues of workload or wider performance.
- 1.5 LSTM 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 will take place between all individuals and their line managers (or delegated others as agreed) at each annual performance appraisal. Separate discussions, specific to REF, may also be used on request as an alternative arrangement. In all instances such discussions should be documented and make use of all relevant information.
- 1.6 Equality Legislation

The processes outlined in this document have been designed within the context of relevant equality legislation. The appraisal 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 appraisal process applies equally to all staff, including fixed-term and part-time staff members. The completion of appraisals and submission of signed copies will be monitored by the Human Resources Department to ensure this part of the process is in place.

1.7 An Equality Impact Assessment of the process will be carried out at relevant points within the preparations and the outcomes shared with staff. 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. This will be monitored by LSTMs Equal Opportunities Committee.

1.8 Selection of Category A staff

Oversight of the processes for the selection of Category A staff for submission to REF, in accordance with the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submission and (REF 02.2011) and Panel Criteria and Working Methods (REF 01.212), is the responsibility of the Dean of Biological Sciences in consultation with the Research Committee Chair.

1.9 Eligibility

Eligibility criteria for REF is as defined in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submission document (REF 02.2011).

1.10 Selection criteria and quality thresholds

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.

1.11 Confidentiality

All information provided by staff is protected under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will only be seen by the relevant panel members, as set out in this document.

1.12 LSTM will seek to maximize the quality of the profile in each of the units of assessment to which it will submit, with a view to maximizing the benefit of the REF exercise to the Institution. Final decisions on selection and submission will take account of the wider strategic benefits to the Institution and a decision not to return particular individuals must be seen in this context.

1.13 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.

2. Process

The selection of research outputs to be submitted will be determined on the basis of recommendations made through the following process:

- 2.1 All relevant research outputs will be subject to a robust and transparent internal peer review. While internal assessments cannot be a guarantee of eventual success in the REF exercise, our submission strategy will, as far as possible, be based on an informed judgment of expected quality levels.
- 2.2 Criteria used for assessment will be those set out in the REF guidance documents (REF 02.2011 and 01.2012) for the relevant main panel with a discipline-specific focus from associated sub-panel(s) guidance. In addition, assessments will make use of general guidance on the criteria for excellence, as distributed by the Senior Management Team, tailored to local requirements. The criteria will specify the characteristics of 3* and 4* outputs and be communicated to all academic staff.
- 2.3 Assessments based entirely on journal placement, ranking or citation measures will not be deemed valid.
- 2.4 The peer review process will encompass the reading of all outputs agreed suitable for assessment – partial reading, sampling, or judgments based on extrapolation will not be viewed as sufficiently robust.
- 2.5 A suitable panel of experienced staff will be established to assess outputs. As a minimum, each output will be read by two senior members of staff with associated processes for moderation and adjudication appropriate to the discipline.
- 2.6 Wherever possible, LSTM will seek to supplement its assessment expertise with input from colleagues with REF / RAE panel experience in relation to the application of assessment criteria.
- 2.7 Self-assessments will be benchmarked against external standards to ensure that internal calibration of assessments is appropriate. This will be achieved by engagement of reviewers in external academic networks and taking the advice of previous RAE2008 panel members.

It is vital that assessment processes are transparent to staff. LSTM will ensure the sharing of all relevant information with staff, including:

- Details of processes and methodologies adopted

- Membership of reading panels
 - Criteria for assessment, including interpretation of specific guidance, and how this has informed a strategy for maximizing the quality of outputs to be returned.
 - Timescales for activity
 - Expectations for feedback for individuals. 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 judgment.
- 2.8 It is recommended that processes are discussed in departmental staff meetings to address issues, anxieties or misunderstandings about activity and that staff should receive feedback on the outcomes of the assessment process at an individual level.
- 2.9 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 appraisal process (as per paragraph 5). Deans 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.
- 2.10 Preliminary discussions on selection have taken place during 2011 appraisals and these included consideration of future research and publication plans.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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 Dean as appropriate, and another relevant member of staff where required, to discuss the reasons for the decision and any individual support required.

3. Special Circumstances

- 3.1 LSTM 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 as set out in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.2011) document.

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.

- 3.2 Staff will be given the opportunity to disclose any special circumstances that may impact upon their research contribution via a proforma to the Human Resources Department. A REF Special Circumstances Panel, comprised of members of the Senior Management Team and a representative from the Human Resources Department, will be convened that will have responsibility for considering and deliberating upon cases of special circumstance. All disclosures will be protected under the Data Protection Act 1998 with the details and circumstances made available only to members of the REF Special Circumstances Panel who will observe confidentiality.
- 3.3 The remit of the Panel will be to consider, in a consistent manner, all cases of special circumstances submitted by staff eligible for REF in accordance with the criteria and details outlined in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.2011) and updated Panel Criteria and Working Methods (REF 01.2012) and to communicate decisions to the individual members of staff.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 Clearly Defined Circumstances
- Family and domestic matters, including absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave.
 - Part-time working or other flexible working arrangements.
 - 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.
 - Engagement on long-term projects of significant scale and scope.
 - Secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector, in which the individual did not undertake academic research.
 - Absences for religious observance.

- Other absences which the institution is legally obliged to permit, such as an absence arising out of involvement as a representative of the workforce.

3.6 Complex Circumstances

- Disability, ill-health and injury, including:
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 [Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions \(REF 02.2011\)](#) for further details on what is covered by the definition of a disability.
- Absence from work on the advice of a registered medical practitioner.
- Childcare or time spent acting as a carer, or other domestic commitments.
- Gender reassignment.
- 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.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Individuals

Decisions about REF will be made using existing management procedures. The arrangements for each REF panel submission will be agreed by the Senior Management Team and communicated to relevant staff.

LSTM has appointed, through its existing policies and procedures, the following individuals with responsibility for decisions relating to REF.

Director

The Director, guided by expert advice from the Senior Management Team, will be responsible for final decisions regarding LSTM submission and the inclusion of individuals to the REF.

The Research Committee Chair and Dean of Biological Sciences

These individuals report to the Director and have been empowered to make operational and planning decisions

regarding all aspects of REF submission strategy. They are responsible for administrative overview and for the following processes relating to LSTM's preparations for REF:

- Strategic selection of the Units of Assessment to which LSTM 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.
- Making decisions about inclusion of research activity following recommendations from the Senior Management Team.
- 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.
- Leadership in developing the strategy for REF submissions within LSTM
- Providing recommendations to the Director on submission strategy including the assessment of output quality and fit against UoA criteria.

Departmental Heads

Responsible for:

- Overseeing preparatory activity for the selection and development of Impact Case Studies, Impact Templates and Environment Templates.
- Communication to academic staff of outcomes and actions from Senior Management Team discussions.
- Ensuring consistency within their Departments in the application of the Code of Practice.
- Fulfilling obligations in the appeals process (see below).
- 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.
- Monitoring application of quality criteria for assessing outputs.
- Making recommendations to the Dean and Research Chair about the quality of research outputs

- Ensuring that information regarding special circumstances is taken into account when assessing the volume of excellent research outputs required for individuals.
- Providing reports on the progress of preparations, as required.

Director of Human Resources

Responsible for:

- Overseeing the development and review of policies to promote a positive environment in which to work and study, which are informed by robust monitoring mechanisms and by consultation with those affected by the policies. Equality issues are embedded within LSTM's business processes, including those associated with the REF.
- 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.

4.2 Governance Bodies

LSTM has appointed, through its existing policies and procedures, the following groups with responsibility for decisions relating to REF.

Senior Management Team

Terms of Reference 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 high level submission preparations and associated performance monitoring.
- Producing guidance material and advice for staff.
- Ensuring all activities are in compliance with the Diversity & Equality of Opportunity Policy.

Special Circumstances Panel

Information submitted to the Special Circumstances Panel will be seen by members only. All disclosures of individuals' circumstances will be treated as confidential and wherever possible, anonymised.

Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1.

- To consider anonymous cases of complex circumstances and advise individuals 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.

5. Development and Training

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.

6. Appeals Procedure

- 6.1 Individuals will have the opportunity to appeal against a decision relating to their exclusion from the submissions to REF2014.
- 6.2 Appeals against the internal assessment of quality of outputs will not be allowed, unless they relate to a perceived act of discrimination.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 The procedure for dealing with appeals will be as follows.
 - In the first instance, individuals should raise with their Departmental 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.
 - 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 Dean 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 Dean 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 Senior Management Team for consideration. The deadline for appeals on such grounds will be 30th June 2013.

- In considering the appeal, the Senior Management Team will consult as appropriate with the Departmental Head and Dean 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 LSTM Council who is not an employee, the Director and the Director of HR. Decisions on appeals will be communicated by 30th September 2013.
- The result of a successful appeal will be the application of the correct procedure for selection of staff, taking into account the deficits identified but may not in itself culminate in inclusion in the REF submission.

7. Contact Points

Queries regarding the interpretation of the REF Code of Practice in relation to equal opportunities issues should be directed to the Director of HR.

8. Communication

- 8.2 LSTM will endeavor 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 LSTM website, emailed to staff and sent to all individual home addresses, to ensure as far as is possible that staff away from LSTM receive the document.
- 8.3 Updates to this document and further information will be available on the internal website.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)

Senior Management Team

Terms of reference

To be responsible for the overall strategy for LSTM's submission to the REF, in particular with relation to:

- Selection within the policy framework
- Configuration of submissions

To be responsible for the final decisions on inclusion of research activity

To oversee high level REF submission preparations

To oversee performance monitoring, using exception reporting from levels below where required (e.g. from REF Reviews)

To advise the Faculty on REF submission strategies

To consider and approve methods of communication in relation to REF activity and awareness raising

Membership

The Director (Chair)

Deputy Director

Dean of Biological Sciences

Dean of Clinical Sciences

Director of Administration

Co-opted members:

Chair of Research Committee

Special Circumstances Panel

To be convened by the Director of HR.

Information submitted to the Special Circumstances Panel via the Human Resources Department will be seen by members only. All disclosures will be treated as confidential and wherever possible, anonymised.

Terms of reference

- To consider, in a consistent manner, anonymous cases of complex circumstances and advise individuals 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.

Membership

The Director (Chair)
Deputy Director
Chair of Research Committee
Director of Human Resources