



MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

**RESEARCH EXCELLENCE
FRAMEWORK**

CODE OF PRACTICE

October 2012

Middlesex University REF 2014 Code of Practice

1.0 Introduction

Each institution making a submission to REF 2014 is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice detailing how staff will be selected for inclusion in their REF submissions. The funding bodies require that institutions' codes of practice be submitted to the REF team by 31 July 2012. An Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) will examine these in advance of the submission deadline, and all institutions' codes will be published with the rest of the submissions at the end of the assessment process. On making submissions, the head of institution will be required to confirm adherence to this code.

This document sets out Middlesex University's Code of Practice by which individuals will be selected for submission to REF 2014, taking into account the published REF criteria and legislative framework.

The REF criteria can be found in 'Assessment Framework & Guidance on Submissions', at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/.

The principal legislative requirements are set out in the Equality Act 2010, details of which can be found at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/equality/>

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with information and documents that can be found at the above web sites.

2.0 Principles

Middlesex University is committed to the support and development of all its staff. It does this through

- An institution-wide commitment to an Equality and Diversity Strategy (<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/edstrat6.pdf>) whose principles are enshrined in the Equality & Diversity Policy statement (<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/HRPS8.pdf>) in which the University states that it "aims to proactively avoid any form of unfair discrimination in either education or employment";
- Annual review of the operation of that broadly based strategy (e.g. <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/AnnualREO0910.pdf>) and discussion at the Academic Board of the University;
- Top management oversight of equality and staff engagement through a Deputy VC, report to Governors, regular consultation with unions, and an active 'staff engagement' initiative.

This REF code has been developed in consultation with the University Equality and Diversity Manager, who will play an important role throughout the period of preparation for the REF. Our aim has been to ensure consistency of this Code with both the letter and the spirit of the Equality and Diversity Policy statement.

The University is committed to maximising the potential of its staff and the REF provides an important opportunity for both the University and individuals to demonstrate their excellence in research. All eligible staff (see Sections 3 and 5 below) will be considered for possible inclusion in the final submission. It is important to note that non-selection will not mean that a particular individual is not regarded as making a significant contribution to the University, merely that the quality and/or quantity of their research outputs have not been adjudged to be of the level required for inclusion in this particular exercise. **The University will continue to support the career progression of all staff, irrespective of their inclusion or otherwise in the REF.**

Four over-riding principles will guide our preparations for the REF, namely transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity:

- a. **Transparency:** The University is committed to openness, fairness and transparency in all of its decision making processes. To this end, academic staff will be involved in relevant decision making committees and minutes of meetings will be made freely available on the University Intranet. The University regards the dissemination of transparent information as a vital element of good staff engagement, and the Ethics Framework Statement enshrines these values (http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/ethics_framework.pdf). A number of dissemination activities designed to raise awareness of the REF and to bring this Code of Practice to the attention of all academic staff have taken place, and more are planned. (See Section 4.0 Communication below);
- b. **Consistency:** The practice, policy and procedures summarised in this Code of Practice will be applied consistently across the University. A number of panels and committees have responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the process (See Section 6). Deans of academic Schools have responsibility for ensuring that UoA panels act consistently in exercising judgement and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) ensures this by means of regular report and the inclusion of Deans in key committees. The REF process will make use of these mechanisms to ensure consistent treatment of all staff presenting for inclusion in the University's REF submission;
- c. **Accountability:** The roles and responsibilities of the various individuals, panels and committees are set out in Section 6 and Annex A. All staff involved in these panels and the relevant committees will have received training in the principles enshrined in this Code of Practice by the end of January 2013, and the terms of reference of all decision-making committees will be available for inspection on the University Intranet (<http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/research-business/committees/index.aspx>). These committees will be expected to conform to the same principles of accountability that define the University's approach to governance more generally;

- d. **Inclusivity:** It has been a University requirement since 2009 that all academic staff should submit details of all their research outputs to the University e-Repository, a publicly accessible record of academic work. Periodic reminders are sent and it is expected that all staff will keep their own entry up to date. The e-Repository will be used as the primary source of outputs and hence all staff will be considered for inclusion. Submission to the e-Repository is possible for staff working remotely from the University, and for visually impaired and other disabled staff; entries are capable of submission by support staff. In addition to this, staff appraisals allow for the regular review of outputs and discussion with staff of the scope for inclusion of new eligible outputs. Heads of Department regularly review outputs in bilateral meetings with all staff in their care, and Deans of academic Schools promulgate inclusive research plans for the staff in their departments. The REF process will draw upon this inclusive and extensive approach.

3.0 University Policy

Middlesex University is committed to expand investment in research and, as recently agreed by the Board of Governors, to ‘place a greater emphasis on significantly growing our internationally rated research and enhancing its impact on society and the economy’. In support of this vision, the over-riding principle that underpins preparation for the REF is that only work adjudged to be of high international standard, in terms of the outlet, rigour and impact, will be considered for submission to REF 2014. The University’s single touchstone will be the quality of the outputs for inclusion, irrespective of their source, when judging what might be included in any final submission.

It is also recognized that securing the best possible outcome in REF 2014 is an important strategic goal, and the focus will be to maximize the outcome for the University, while continuing to support the development of its staff. To this end, a systematic and strategic approach will be taken to all aspects of the submission and non-selection of an individual staff member does not imply a lack of research activity. Equally, if selected, individual staff members cannot opt out of being submitted as part of the REF. The final decision on the content of the submission will rest with the Vice Chancellor and the Governors of the University.

4.0 Communication

As part of the University’s commitment to transparency, openness, fairness and equality, all staff will be made aware of this Code of Practice and the policies, processes and criteria that will be used in the selection of outputs and hence staff for submission to the REF. This Code will be available on the Staff Intranet, together with minutes of the various committees and panels. Periodic global emails will be sent to all academic staff employed by the University with regular updates and at key stages in the process (See

Annex C for Timetable). This will ensure that all staff, including those on part-time contracts or who may be temporarily absent from the University, are kept fully informed.

A series of meetings will be held in January 2013 (one in each of the University's six academic Schools) to which all staff will be invited, to discuss the REF and the University's approach, and any matter arising from the implementation of this code. All materials used at these meetings (e.g. PowerPoint slides, handouts, etc.) will be placed on the University Staff Intranet, together with a summary of the Q&A sessions, for any staff who are not able to attend the meetings in person.

5.0 Criteria for Selection

The basic requirements for eligibility for submission to REF 2014 are detailed in 'Assessment Framework & Guidance on Submissions', Part 3, paras 78 -83: (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/). All staff (full-time, part-time, fixed term, etc.) who satisfy the REF criteria for submission will be considered for possible inclusion, subject to the University's principles and policy for selection as detailed in Sections 2.0 and 3.0 above.

All eligible staff will therefore be assessed for submission to REF 2014, based on the following criteria:

- Research which meets the REF published definition of research.
- Volume – the number of research outputs required by a staff member, taking into account any reported individual circumstances.
- Quality of the individual's outputs relative to the REF criteria in the particular UoA.
- Fit with the submission to the particular UoA and with the University's policy and strategy for research.

i) Definition of Research

The definition of research for the purposes of the REF 2014 exercise can be found at: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/ (Annex C)

ii) Volume

The normal requirement is that four items of research output must be submitted per staff member returned in a particular UoA. Under certain circumstances, it may be possible to submit a reduced number of outputs per staff member. For full details, please see: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/ (Part 4).

The UoA coordinators will take into account any individual staff circumstances that are reported to them and make appropriate reductions in the required number of outputs required for consideration for inclusion in REF 2014.

For clearly defined circumstances (e.g. early career researchers, maternity leave, career breaks, etc.), UoA coordinators will adhere to the published REF panel criteria (see Annex C of above document). More complex cases will be referred to the University REF Equality Panel for consideration and evaluation.

In cases where an individual staff member does not wish to disclose their particular circumstances to their UoA coordinator, they may submit their case direct to the Chair of the University REF Equality Panel.

In all cases, judgments will be made based on guidance provided by the Equality Challenge Unit (<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF>). In turn, the REF Equality and Diversity Panel (EDAP) will consider all cases on a consistent basis across all UoAs.

iii) Quality

Quality will be assessed on the basis of the published REF criteria and working methods (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/), and the University's stated principles (see 2.0 above). REF Panels will rank outputs based on three overarching criteria, namely novelty, rigour and reach (or impact).

Wherever possible, use will be made of various metrics to inform the decision making process (e.g. ranking/impact factor of outlet, citations, reviews, etc.). The views of independent external assessors will also be sought as part of the selection process.

UoA coordinators will be responsible for making these judgments, based on their domain expertise and knowledge of REF criteria. All UoA coordinators will receive training and will be guided and supported by the University Equality and Diversity Manager and the University REF Strategy Panel.

iv) Fit

Staff who satisfy the above criteria will be further assessed in terms of their fit with the University's submission strategy. The list of UoAs under consideration for submission is subject to ongoing review and may be revised up to the date of the final submission.

Where possible, the UoA coordinators will make a recommendation to which UoA an individual staff member should be submitted. If the UoA coordinators are unable to make a recommendation or reach agreement, the decision will be referred to University REF Strategy Panel for resolution. No member of staff affected by such a decision will remain uninformed of it, or the rationale for the decision.

6.0 Panels and Committees

A simple management structure comprising two University level panels and six School Committees will oversee and manage the preparations and final submission to REF 2014.

Brief summaries of the main function and responsibilities of the various Panels and Committees are provided here, for membership and full Terms of Reference please see Annex A.

6.1 University REF Strategy Panel

The University REF Strategy Panel has overall responsibility for all decisions related to the University's REF 2014 submission, ensuring that it adheres to the University's strategy and vision, and this Code of Practice. It is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) and reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

The Panel is responsible for ensuring that all rules and regulations pertaining to the REF 2014 submission, as prescribed by HEFCE, are observed and for the integrity of all submitted data. The Panel is also responsible for the appointment of staff to key roles in the process (e.g. UoA coordinators, external advisors, etc.), and for decisions on such matters as appeals by individual staff.

6.2 University REF Equality Panel

The University REF Equality Panel will provide an independent body that advises the University REF Strategy Panel on all matters relating to equality in relation to REF 2014. The panel's main purpose is to oversee REF preparations to ensure that all staff are treated equitably and that selection is based on equitable and transparent procedures.

The Panel will be responsible for conducting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) at key points in the preparation process, in order to ensure that the University's REF policy and procedures do not have a differential impact on particular groups as identified in the Equality Act 2010 (<http://homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act/>).

The Panel will also be responsible for considering cases for staff who may be eligible for inclusion in the REF with reduced outputs, that may be referred to it by UoA coordinators or directly by individual staff.

6.3 School REF Committees

The School REF Committees will be responsible for the detailed preparation of individual UoA submissions. UoA coordinators will play a key role and where UoAs span more than one School, the relevant UoA coordinator will be a member of each relevant School Committee.

6.4 University REF Forum Group

A REF Forum Group, which will comprise all members of the above Panels and Committees, will meet periodically to discuss matters of concern, receive updates and training, share good practice, and ensure consistency across the various UoAs. This is an informal group and as such has no official Terms of Reference. It will normally be chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise but may be delegated to other members of the University REF Strategy Panel.

Minutes of all the above Panels and Committees will be available on the Staff Intranet.

6.5 Staff Training

All staff involved in the selection of staff for inclusion in the REF 2014 submission have received initial training and guidance on various aspects of the process including matters relating to equality and diversity, which includes completion of the University's generic on-line equality and diversity training course via the Staff Intranet. Two members of the University REF Strategy Panel have also attended the one day workshops organised by EDAP. Further experience has been gained through a mock exercise undertaken during the 2011/12 academic year, which has in turn informed and refined this Code of Practice. Independent assessment has been sought from recognised external experts as part of the mock exercise and discussed with the various UoA teams and University REF Strategy Panel. The mock exercise concluded with a preliminary Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) involving all of those with an active part in the process.

The University Equality and Diversity Manager will provide two REF specific training workshops in November 2012 which all staff with a direct involvement in the REF selection processes will be required to attend. These sessions will be recorded and made available via the Staff Intranet, together with copies of PowerPoint slides and any handouts. Two further hands-on workshops will be run in December 2012, again with compulsory attendance for all those with a direct involvement in the REF selection processes. These will be specific to the REF and will use the materials made available by EDAP, via their web site. A link to the EDAP training materials will be included on the Staff Intranet, together with a full list of all those attending the training workshops.

7.0 Disclosure of Individual Staff Circumstances

REF 2014 includes a provision for staff to be submitted with less than the normal four outputs, for example when an individual has not been able to work productively throughout the assessment period (1 January 2008 to 31 December 2013). Such circumstances may be considered 'clearly defined' (e.g. maternity leave) or 'complex' (e.g. an ongoing medical condition or disability). (See Annex B)

Full details of how REF panels will deal with individual staff circumstances can be found in 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods' Part 1, paras 63 – 91. A copy can be downloaded via: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2012/01_12/.

The University will need to present the case, with suitable supporting evidence, for any claim for reduced outputs to the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) for consideration. If the case presented is accepted, the chair of the relevant UoA Panel will be informed (but not advised of the circumstances); if the case is not accepted, then the chair and hence UoA Panel will not be notified and will simply treat any reduced outputs as a null submission (i.e. 0 score).

Three possible options are available for the disclosure of these details:

i) Completion of the REF survey questionnaire requesting all academic staff to submit their individual circumstances in relation to possible REF submission. Staff should not unreasonably withhold such information when requested.

ii) Consultation between individual staff and UoA coordinators to consider particular circumstances and supporting evidence that may be required.

iii) In situations where an individual member of staff consider their particular circumstances to be of a sensitive nature that they do not wish to discuss with their UoA coordinator (e.g. health conditions), but would like to be considered for possible inclusion in the REF submission with reduced outputs, an alternative route is available via the University REF Equality Panel. Staff who wish to be considered via this route must be prepared to make a full disclosure, with supporting evidence to the chair who will then take all reasonable steps to anonymise the case prior to discussion with the University REF Equality Panel. As part of this process, the Panel may also seek the advice of EDAP before reaching a final decision.

If agreed, the chair of the University REF Equality Panel will notify the relevant UoA coordinator that the individual in question should be considered for inclusion with the agreed number of reduced outputs.

8.0 Feedback and Appeals

Staff may seek feedback at any time from their UoA coordinator, however there will be two key consultation periods in the preparation process when staff will be advised of their inclusion or otherwise in the draft REF submission (See Annex C). Where issues arise, every effort will be made to resolve them at the UoA level. Where this is not possible, staff may submit an appeal setting out their case in writing to the chair of the University REF Strategy Panel. The case will be put to the relevant UoA coordinator and a written response requested.

A small Appeal Panel will then be convened to consider any appeal, comprising a member of the University REF Strategy Panel, a member of the University REF Equality Panel, an independent UoA coordinator and an independent professor. (Nb: the associated UoA co-ordinator and/or appellant will be ineligible to be part of this Panel.) The Appeal Panel will consider the written statements from the staff member and their UoA coordinator and may invite both for interview. The Panel may also seek external expert opinion to help inform their decision.

The Appeal Panel will prepare a report which will be sent to the chair of the University REF Strategy Panel, together with their recommendation. The chair will then reach a decision which will be final.

Copies of the Appeal Panel report will be made available to the staff member and their UoA coordinator, together with notification of the outcome. Under normal circumstances,

the whole process should be completed within two weeks of receipt of an appeal, but this may be extended in cases where external opinion is sought, or for any other substantial reason.

The final draft of the REF submission will be disseminated on 31st July 2013. There will then be a further two weeks during which staff may submit a formal appeal (14th August 2013 deadline) which will be considered and a decision returned by 31st August 2013.

Nothing in this Code of Practice should be taken to remove or supplant rights of appeal or grievance which exists as part of the employment contract at Middlesex University, promulgated to staff as the grievance procedure at <http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/working-here/management/complaints-grievance/index.aspx> .

Annex A

University REF Strategy Panel

Constituted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor.

Membership: DVC Research and Enterprise (Chair)
Director of Research
Director of Knowledge Transfer
Independent Professor
Professor/Reader Representative
Dean Representative
Designated REF Main Contact

Terms of Reference:

- To oversee and manage preparations for the REF 2014 submission
- To ensure the REF 2014 submission is aligned with University Policy and Strategy
- To appoint staff to key roles (e.g. UoA coordinators, REF panel and committee members)
- To approve, appoint and receive feedback from external advisors

University REF Equality Panel

Constituted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor.

Membership: Independent Professor (Chair)
University Equality and Diversity Manager
Academic Staff Representative
Clerk to the Board of Governors

Terms of Reference:

- To oversee and ensure compliance with the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to REF exercise
- To advise the University REF Strategy Panel and/or Vice-Chancellor as appropriate
- To take responsibility for REF Equality Impact Assessments
- To consider applications from individual staff for submission with reduced outputs

School REF Committees

Constituted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise in consultation with Deans.

Membership: Dean of School (or Deputy Dean) (Chair)
UoA Coordinator(s)
Independent Professor/Reader (One per UoA)
Other members as appropriate

Terms of Reference:

- To oversee and guide the selection process for individual UoAs
- To inform, implement and ensure compliance with policies and procedures as approved by the University REF Strategy and Equality Panels
- To keep staff in the School informed of REF developments
- To prepare and refine UoA submissions as appropriate

University REF Forum Group

Constituted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise

Membership: DVC Research and Enterprise (Chair)
Chair of the University REF Equality Panel
University Equality and Diversity Manager
All members of the University REF Strategy Panel
All members of the School REF Committees

Terms of Reference:

- To discuss and advise the University REF panels and committees on matters of relevance to the REF 2014 submission
- To share best practice as a means to ensuring consistency across all UoAs to be submitted by the University

Annex B

Individual Staff Circumstances

Staff may be submitted with fewer than four outputs under certain circumstances. These are categorised as 'clearly defined' and 'complex' for the purposes of the REF; full details can be found in the 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods' (Part 1: paras 63 to 91) <http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2012-01/> .

Examples of clearly defined circumstances are:

- i) Early carer researchers
- ii) Absence from work
- iii) Maternity, paternity or adoption leave

Fixed reductions in the required number of outputs are defined for staff who fall into these categories (See 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods' (Part 1: paras 72 to 75) <http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2012-01/>).

Examples of complex circumstances are:

- i) Disability
- ii) Ill health or injury
- iii) Mental health conditions
- iv) Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside those circumstances considered to be clearly defined
- v) Other caring responsibilities
- vi) Gender reassignment
- vii) Other circumstances relating to protected characteristics not covered above (age, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) (See Part 4 of 'Assessment Framework & Guidance on Submissions', at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/).

The University is required to make a judgement in respect of the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs to be submitted for staff who fall into these categories.

The University will take all of the above circumstances into account when considering the number of outputs required by individuals for possible inclusion in the REF. Details of how such circumstances will be considered by the University are provided in Section 7.0 of this document.

Annex C

REF Timetable

Jan 2008	Start of REF period
Jan 2011 Dec2011	Preliminary planning for REF submission, initial data trawl, identification of key staff, preparation of preliminary draft submission
Jan 2012 - July 2012	Preparation of first draft REF submission, development of Code of Practice, Training Workshops, feedback.
Sept 2012 - Dec 2012	Formation of REF Committees, Training Workshops, staff communication and dissemination, preparation of second draft. Individual staff circumstances survey.
Dec 2012	Indicative UoAs and staff numbers to HEFCE.
Jan 2013 - Mar 2013	Refinement of second draft REF submission, Staff consultation. Equality Impact Assessment on draft.
Apr 2013 - Jun 2013	Revisions to draft following consultation process, review and outcome of any appeals. Second staff consultation round, further opportunity for appeals.
July 2013	Final revisions to draft REF submission. Equality Impact Assessment on final draft. Staff list for inclusion finalised at this stage, conditional only on the outcome of any final appeals and/or changes in staff status in relation to REF eligibility criteria, paras 78 -83: (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/).
Aug2013	Dissemination and final opportunity for appeals.
Sept 2013 - Oct 2013	Submission finalised. Final data integrity checks and uploading.
Oct 2013	REF eligible staff census date.
Nov 2013	REF submission date.