



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF2014) Equality Code of Practice

1. Introduction

QMU is committed to encouraging the submission of all of its excellent researchers to REF, including those whose volume of research output may have been limited for reasons covered by the Equality Act 2010.

QMU's submission to REF will be informed by an overarching consistent policy of equality and inclusion and a detailed Equality Code of Practice has been developed to underpin this. The policy and Code of Practice together act as guides for academic managers in facilitating the process of academic staff selection and final submission to REF.

The development and implementation of this Code of Practice is a requirement of the funding bodies.

2. Purpose

Guidance from HEFCE on [Submissions to REF 2014](#) details the requirement for HEIs to develop a Code of Practice to assist in embedding the principles of equality and diversity legislation and other relevant legislation in the decision making processes in submissions to REF. The Code of Practice aims to assist the University in fulfilling its legal obligations and is designed to ensure fairness in the REF process.

3. Guiding Principles

- The processes concerned with the selection of staff for inclusion in REF submissions will be **transparent**.
- The policy in respect of staff selection will be **consistent** and applied uniformly across QMU.
- Responsibilities will be clearly defined, and individuals and bodies that are involved in selecting staff for REF submissions will be **accountable** by name or role.
- Eligible individuals will be selected for **inclusion** on the basis of the quality of their research taking into account the main and sub-panels published criteria for research quality.

- Consideration will be given to any personal circumstances which may apply to an individual as detailed in Sections 10 and 11.
- The University is committed to its obligations as an employer under equality, confidentiality and data handling legislation.

4. Transparency

The code will be:

- published on the QMU intranet.
- sent electronically to all academic staff via email.
- distributed in hard copy at academic tea points and other common staff areas.
- promoted via the staff log in box, staff moderator newsletter and grapevine.
- made available to staff absent from work.

5. Consistency

All Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads will be briefed in the implementation and promotion of the Equality Code of Practice. To ensure consistency an HR Advisor (or representative) will be present at all meetings where decisions relating to the selection of staff are made. The REF Manager is also a member of the Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC). The REF process at QMU is summarised in **Appendix A**.

6. Staff involved in decision-making

The members of staff who will be involved in decision-making on the content of REF submissions and the selection of staff and outputs for inclusion will be determined on the basis of research experience and seniority. These staff have been appointed by the Deans of School and Deputy Principal. A list of staff involved in the REF process, their responsibilities and their role in relation to the institutional management framework is detailed in **Appendix B** along with information on committees with designated REF responsibilities.

All staff involved in formal decision making with regard to REF submissions will undertake dedicated REF equality training to make them aware of their own and the institution's legal obligation regarding equal opportunities and to ensure that they have an appropriate level of understanding of QMU's equal opportunities policies, the equality code of practice and relevant legislation.

7. Process for Identifying Eligible Staff

HR will provide a list of all staff on a research or a research and teaching contract to the REF Strategy Group with details of FTE and contractual status. This list will be updated to reflect changes in the staffing establishment on a monthly basis. Each member of eligible academic staff is requested to:

- Put forward via eResearch, the institutional repository, up to six outputs for consideration in REF and provide a self assessment of the quality rating. Further quality ratings will be allocated by UoA Leads and External Reviewers.
- Indicate to the HR Advisor, using the REF disclosure form in **Appendix C**, whether there are any individual staff circumstances that may affect the number of outputs put forward. QMU will apply the strictest rules of confidentiality in the processing of the disclosure form. UoA Leads will only know if the individual circumstances rules apply and not the circumstances behind the application of the rules.
- Individual staff members are responsible for adding outputs to the institutional repository and putting forward their publications for consideration in REF. Dedicated assistance and help with this process is available from the Research Support Librarian and Systems Librarian in the Learning Resource Centre (LRC)

8. Selection of Staff

QMU REF Audits will form an iterative process with 6-monthly updates taking place during the census period. The Audits will draw on data extracted from eResearch. The UoA Leads will review reports provided from eResearch on outputs submitted by staff for inclusion in REF. This rolling process is intended to provide an opportunity for staff to seek feedback from the UoA Lead on the quality of their outputs. The following process will apply to the selection of staff:

- On receipt of the reports from eResearch, The UoA Lead will apply an internal rating on the quality of the output.
- External Reviewers may also be used to advise on the quality of the outputs. External Reviewers will advise only on the quality of outputs and the narrative sections of the REF submission. They will not be involved in decisions relating to the inclusion of staff.
- Decisions on eligibility and inclusion in REF will be made by the Selection of Staff Panel consisting of the REF Manager, UoA Lead, HR Advisor and Dean. These decisions will be fully informed by HR reports on FTE, contractual status and if the individual staff circumstances rule applies. The REF Manager will ensure that accurate records of these meetings are kept. Feedback to staff re inclusion will be communicated in writing by the Dean within 4-6 weeks of these meetings.
- On approval from the Dean the UoA Lead will make recommendations to the REF Strategy Group regarding submission models.
- Any new staff joining QMU or staff who have been absent from work are eligible for participation in this process and will be followed up by the REF Manager to ensure they are aware of the process.

The REF Strategy Group subsequently makes recommendations to Executive Board, Research Strategy Committee and the Equality and Diversity Committee (**Membership and Remit Appendix B**).

9. Individual Staff Circumstances

QMU strives to support all of its academic staff in carrying out research of the highest quality. At the same time the University recognises that certain equality issues may adversely affect the volume of high quality research outputs produced by some individuals. The quality of outputs for staff with such circumstances will be subject to the same assessment criteria as those with no special circumstances.

The following list provides details of individual staff circumstances that will be taken into consideration when determining which staff will be included in the REF Submission. **Appendix D** summarises relevant legislation.

10. Clearly Defined Staff Circumstances

Eligible staff may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty, if one or more of the following clearly defined circumstances significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period (1 January 2009 – 31 October 2013):

- Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher (ECR) (Defined as someone who started their career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009).
- Part-time working.
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave. (Note that maternity leave may involve related constraints on an individual's ability to conduct research in addition to the defined period of maternity leave itself. These cases can be returned as 'complex' as described below, so that the full range of circumstances can be taken into account in making a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty).
- Secondments or career breaks outside of the higher education sector, during which the individual did not undertake academic research.

11. Complex Staff Circumstances

Staff may have circumstances that are more complex and may require a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that can be reduced without penalty. These circumstances are:

- Disability. This is defined in **Appendix D** under 'Disability'.
- Ill health or injury.
- Mental health conditions.
- Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave. (These may include but are not limited to: medical issues associated with pregnancy or maternity; health and safety restrictions in laboratory or field work during pregnancy or breastfeeding; constraints on the ability to travel to undertake fieldwork due to pregnancy or breast-feeding.)
- Childcare or other caring responsibilities.
- Gender reassignment.
- Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed in **Appendix D**.

12. Process by which REF Panels will Consider Individual Staff Circumstances

For clearly defined circumstances, the REF panel criteria statements will provide tariffs to determine the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty in the assessment, depending on the duration of the circumstance (or combination thereof).

For more complex circumstances, QMU will need to make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted, and the HEFCE REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) will consider these cases on a consistent basis across all UoAs.

13. Confidential disclosure of individual staff circumstances.

QMU is committed to ensuring that all staff are able to disclose any circumstances in a confidential manner. The process for confidential disclosure is as follows:

- HR will ask all eligible staff to complete an Individual Staff Circumstances Disclosure Form and return to HR within a 4 week period.
- On collation of this data a decision will be made in relation to the number of outputs to be submitted for those staff with clearly defined circumstances. This will be informed by the Criteria and Working Methods of each panel. This refers to the process detailed in Section 8.
- Circumstances that are deemed complex or circumstances that are a combination of clearly defined and complex will be referred to the Complex Staff Circumstances Panel consisting of the Head of HR, HR Advisor, and the Dean who will make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted using the worked examples provided by the HEFCE Equality Challenge Unit. This group will draw on the advice of the UoA Lead without the disclosure of details of the complex circumstances.

14. Appeals Process

The outcomes of the decisions relating to the individual inclusion of staff in REF will be made available to staff in a written communication from the Dean. This decision will be made solely on the quality of outputs. Following this feedback, all staff will have the right to appeal.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Deputy Principal who will personally investigate the matter or appoint another senior academic, not involved in the earlier process to do so on his behalf. All appeals will must be completed and resolved by July 2013. All appeals will normally be considered and concluded within 15 working days of the appeal first being logged. The standard criteria for University appeals will apply.

15. Equality profile and Impact Assessments

The University will undertake an equality profile and impact assessment of staff eligible for submission. The profile will include age, disability, gender and ethnicity and clearly indicate staff submitted as part of the REF and those who are not. HR will conduct institution wide preliminary impact assessments in the period up to the submission date. This will enable an investigation in any areas where there appears to be an imbalance. If an imbalance is identified in a UoA during

the preparation of the QMU submission then the Equality and Diversity Committee will investigate and take appropriate action where necessary.

16.Fixed-term, Part-time Staff and Contract Research Staff

QMU fully supports its fixed-term and part-time staff, including contract researchers in relation to equality and diversity issues and REF. All contract research staff will be contacted by letter to advise them of QMU's REF plans and to invite them specifically to REF staff briefing events.

17.Enabling Staff Disclosure in Confidence

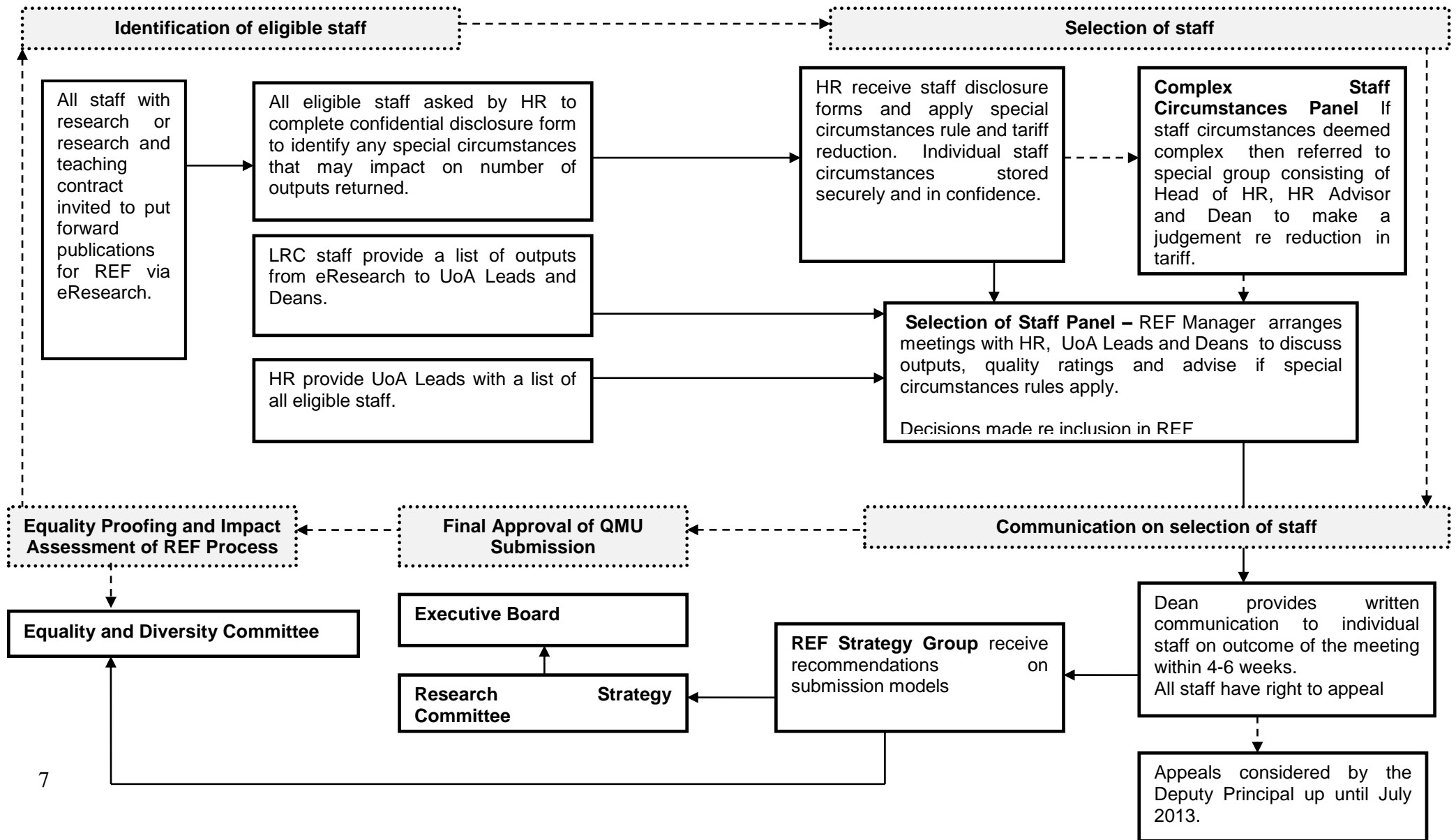
QMU is committed to developing robust procedures to enable staff to disclose individual circumstances that may impact on the number of research outputs that they have produced.

To encourage staff disclosure of individual circumstances that may be sensitive, we have developed systems to:

- reassure staff about the way in which data will be stored.
- communicate any safeguards that exist to protect staff members' confidentiality and privacy.
- support staff who disclose individual circumstances that we were previously unaware of.

All data collected, stored and processed will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

APPENDIX A – REF Process



APPENDIX B - Role of Staff and Committees

REF Strategy Group (RSG)

The RSG has been constituted to take responsibility for the overall management and co-ordination of the REF submission. RSG will receive recommendations on the inclusion of staff in REF and possible submission models from the meetings of the UoA Leads, Deans and the HR Advisor. The Group will consider and approve the draft and final versions of the REF submission. The Group was appointed by the Executive Board on the basis of research experience and seniority.

The Group provides regular reports to the Research Strategy Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee and Executive Board.

Mode of Operation

The role of the RSG is to prepare for and oversee the University's submission to REF and make recommendations regarding REF planning and policy. The RSG meets monthly and is chaired by Professor Jim Scobbie. The minutes of the meeting are submitted to the Research Strategy Committee and Equality and Diversity Committee.

Remit

- produce a REF strategy statement about how the selection and submission process will be carried out within the overall framework for incorporation into the Code of Practice. This will conclude criteria for submission;
- establish the criteria that it will use in carrying out its functions, the method by which these criteria will be communicated and the method and timescale in which feedback will be provided in respect of decisions made;
- agree and communicate to staff a timescale for the development of the submission, allowing time for discussions with individual members of staff as needed;
- ensure that its processes are transparent and consistent across the institution;
- ensure that discussions on submissions take place in accordance with the Equality Code of Practice and that decisions are appropriately and accurately recorded;
- ensure that QMU's Data Protection policy is adhered to and that access to sensitive personal information is restricted to as few people as possible;
- ensure that all staff who are eligible for submission to REF are kept informed of progress in formulating submissions.

Membership

REF Strategy Group Equality Training Provided: 18 January 2011, 1 December 2011, 25 April 2012, 10 June 2013		
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework
Professor Jim Scobbie	Nominated by the Deans and approved by the Deputy Principal on the basis of research experience and leadership.	Chair of the REF Strategy Group
Professor Barbara McPake	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead
Professor Andy Frew	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead
Professor Tom Mercer	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead
Dr Mark Percival/ Professor Jacquie L'Etang	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead
Professor Chris McVittie	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead
Professor Isobel Davidson/Dr Iain Gow	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead
Helen Muir	Participation requested by Chair of the REF Strategy Group to provide advice and support to the group.	Research Support Librarian and contact for eResearch.
George Harvie	Participation requested by Chair of the REF Strategy Group to provide advice and support to the group.	Systems Librarian and contact for eResearch.
Kim Gilchrist	Specified duty in job description to support the REF process.	REF Manager
Angela Gentle/Beth Campbell/ Lorna Prince. <i>*Rotation due to staff departure.</i>	Participation requested by Chair of the REF Strategy Group to provide advice and support to the group.	HR Partner
Viv Rutherford	Administrative support to REF Strategy Group and data input.	Administrator

Research Strategy Committee (RSC)

Remit

To provide strategic leadership on all matters associated with the University's research endeavour and associated knowledge exchange activities, to establish and review strategies, policies and procedures that promote best practice in research and taught doctorate registration, training, supervision and examination, and ensure that research conducted in the University complies with appropriate ethical standards.

Mode of Operation in Relation to REF

REF Strategy is a standing agenda item with quarterly updates from the Convenor of the RSG. RSC approves all strategy statements and guidance documentation prepared by the RSG

Membership

Research Strategy Committee Equality Training Provided: 12/6/13		
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework
Dr Richard Butt	Convener of the Research Strategy Committee.	Dean of ASSaM
Professor Alan Gilloran	Adjudicator in the case of appeals.	Deputy Principal
Dr Stuart Wilson	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Lecturer, Arts and Social Sciences
Dr Fiona Coutts	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Dean, Health Sciences
Dr Peter Falconer	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Reader, Business, Enterprise and Management
Professor Jim Scobbie	Member of the Research Strategy Committee/Chair of REF Strategy Group	Professor of Speech and Hearing Sciences
Professor Andy Frew	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Research Professor
Dr Margaret Smith	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Lecturer, Health Sciences
Professor Tom Mercer	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Research Professor, Health Sciences
Dr Magda Pieczka	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Lecturer, Arts and Social Sciences
Dr Jane McKenzie	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Senior Lecturer, Health Sciences
Kim Gilchrist	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	REF Manager
Professor Roni Bamber	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Director, Centre for Academic Practice
Rebecca Finkel	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Lecturer, Business, Enterprise and Management
Irene Hynd	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	University Secretary
Sheila Williams	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Liaison Services Manager, Library Services
Helen Muir	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Research Support Librarian and contact for eResearch.
Dr Joanne Cleland	Member of the Research Strategy Committee	Research Fellow, Speech and Hearing Sciences

**Note this reflects the Committee membership at the start of the REF process- some changes to membership occurred towards the end of the REF process but core membership remained the same.*

Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC)

Remit

To set the strategic framework for equality in service provision and in employment across the University.

To promote equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in all aspects of the University's business. Specifically to aim to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities and foster good relations, thereby ensuring the University avoids the potential for discrimination on grounds of the protected equality strands.

To advise the Senior Management Team, Executive Board and the University Court on the implementation of all aspects of the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy and Equal Opportunities Policy.

Mode of Operation in Relation to REF

Develop and approve the Equality Code of Practice. Receive and Monitor Impact Assessments. Ensure that processes concerned with the selection of staff for inclusion in REF submissions are transparent and consistent across the institution

Equality and Diversity Committee Equality Training Provided: 8/10/13		
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework
Irene Hynd	Convenor of the Equality and Diversity Committee	University Secretary
Olga Wojtas	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	Member of University Court
Katie Pirie	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	SU Students Officer
Lande Wolsey	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	Head of Student Services
Eilidh Richardson	Secretary to the Equality and Diversity Committee	Legal Adviser (Student Contract & Statutory Compliance)
Kim Gilchrist	Specified duty in job description to support the REF process.	REF Manager
Jim Bain	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	UNITE Representative
Elaine Ballantyne	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	ECU Link
Dave Graham	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	Director of IS and LRC

Equality and Diversity Committee Equality Training Provided: 8/10/13		
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework
Jim Bain	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	UNITE Representative
Dr Michael Stewart	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	EIS Representative
John Hughes	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	UCU Representative
Laura Burns or John Graham	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	Unison Representative
Fergus Boden	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	Student President
Gail Carin-Levy	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	School of Health Sciences Representative
Kavi Jagadamma	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	School of Health Sciences Representative
Anne Turner	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management Representative
Hannah Carruthers	Member of the Equality and Diversity Committee	HR Partner

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Purpose

Fortnightly Senior Management Group meeting, chaired by the Principal.

Mode of Operation in relation to REF

To approve recommendations made by the REF Strategy Group and oversee the submissions to REF 2014.

Executive Board Equalities Training Provided 4/4/12		
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework
Professor Petra Wend	Head of Institution	Principal and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Alan Gilloran	Senior Officer of the Institution	Deputy Principal

Irene Hynd	Senior Officer of the Institution	University Secretary
Malcolm Cutt	Senior Officer of the Institution	Director of Operations and Finance
Steve Scott	Senior Officer of the Institution	Director of Campus Services
Dr Fiona Coutts	Senior Officer of the Institution	Dean of School of Health Sciences
Dr Richard Butt	Senior Officer of the Institution	Dean of School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management
Dee Denholm	Senior Officer of the Institution	Head of HR

Selection of Staff Panel

Mode of Operation in Relation to REF

Appointed by the Deputy Principal specifically for the purposes of REF to make decisions re the selection of staff. These decisions will be fully informed by the Equality Code of Practice. The REF Manager will ensure that accurate records of these meetings are kept. Feedback to staff re inclusion will be communicated in writing by the Dean within 4-6 weeks of these meetings. On approval from the Dean the UoA Lead will make recommendations to the REF Strategy Group regarding submission models.

The panel will meet for each UoA.

Selection of Staff Panel			
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework	Equalities training provided
Kim Gilchrist	Specified duty in job description to support the REF process.	REF Manager	Induction Training on 18/1/11. Training 18/2/12 Training 25/4/12 Training 10/6/13
Angela Gentle/Beth Campbell <i>*Rotation due to staff departure.</i>	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	HR Partner	Induction Training on 18/1/11. Training 18/2/12 Training 25/4/12 Training 10/6/13
Dr Fiona Coutts	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	Dean of School of Health Sciences	Training 4/4/12 Training 12/6/13
Dr Richard Butt	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	Dean of ASSaM	Training 4/4/12 Training 12/6/13

Relevant UoA Lead (details listed under REF Strategy Group)	Nominated by the Dean on the basis of research experience and leadership.	UoA Lead	See REF Strategy Group for listing.
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Complex Staff Circumstances Panel

Mode of Operation in Relation to REF

Appointed by the Deputy Principal specifically for the purposes of REF to consider complex staff circumstances.

The group will make decisions relating to complex circumstances and appropriate reductions in tariff.

Panel to Deal with Complex Circumstances			
Member Name	Process for selection in REF process	Role in relation to the institutional management framework	Equalities training provided
Dee Denholm	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	Head of HR	Training 4/4/12 .
Angela Gentle/Beth Campbell/ Lorna Prince. <i>*Rotation due to staff departure.</i>	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	HR Partner	Induction Training on 18/1/11 Training 18/2/12 Training 25/4/12 Training 10/6/13
Dr Fiona Coutts	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	Dean	Training 4/4/12 Training 12/6/13 .
Dr Richard Butt	Appointed by the Deputy Principal.	Dean	Training 4/4/12 Training 12/6/13

Appendix C QMU Staff Disclosure Form



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

Individual staff circumstances disclosure form

Name	
Division	
Unit of Assessment (if known)	

Section one:

Please select one of the following:

- I have no individual circumstances that I wish to be taken into consideration for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
- I have individual circumstances that I wish to make known but I am not seeking a reduction in outputs. (Please complete sections two and three)
- In completing this form I am seeking a reduction in research outputs. (Please complete sections two and three)

Section two:

Please select as appropriate:

- I would like to be contacted by a member of human resources staff to discuss my circumstances and requirements and/or the support provided by [institution name].
My contact details for this purpose are:

Email	
Telephone	
Preferred method of communication	

- I do **not** wish to be contacted by HR.

Section three

I wish to make the University aware of the following circumstances which have had an impact on my ability to produce four outputs or work productively between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013:

Please provide information required on relevant circumstance/s and continue onto a separate sheet of paper if necessary:

Circumstance	Information required
Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009)	Date on which you became an early career research
Information	
Part time employee	FTE and duration in months
Information	
Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector	Dates and duration in months
Information	
Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, or additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)	For each period of leave state which type of leave was taken and the dates and duration in months
Information	
Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	
Mental health condition	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	
Ill health or injury	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	

Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare in addition to the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken.	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	
Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	
Gender reassignment	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	
Other exceptional and relevant reasons, not including teaching or administrative work	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
Information	

Please select as appropriate:

- I confirm that the information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances.
- I recognise that the information provided will be used for REF purposes and will be seen by [insert information].
- I realise that it may be necessary to share information with the UK funding bodies' REF team, who may make the information available to REF panel chairs, members and secretaries and/or the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. [Delete if not applicable: I recognise that if a joint submission is made, information may be shared with another institution.] Where permission is not provided QMU will be limited in the action it can take.

Signature: Date:
(Staff member)

For official use only

Following consideration of the personal circumstances described above, HR:

- Will progress the staff member's inclusion in the REF submission with [insert number] of research outputs. [Subject to specified institutional criteria].
Rationale for the proposed number of outputs:
e.g. this decision is based on the tariffs outlined in the panel criteria.
- Requires further information of the circumstances described as follows:
e.g. please provide information from your occupational health assessment on the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments provided.
- Does not feel that the staff member meets the criteria outlined within the REF 'Panel criteria and working methods' for submitting fewer than four research outputs. The reason(s) for this decision are:
e.g. circumstances detailed are not recognised within the assessment framework and guidance on submissions.

If [insert name of staff member] wishes to appeal against the decision of the [insert name of the committee or individuals] they will need to do so by [insert date] and details of the appeals process can be found at [insert web address].

Signature: Date:
([insert name of person/chair of committee responsible for decision])

Cover Letter

To: All members of staff eligible for return in REF 2014

From: HR

Subject: REF 2014, consideration of individual staff circumstances

Date:

QMU is committed to ensuring that decisions about selecting staff for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) are made in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. Information on how eligible staff will be selected for submission to the REF can be found in QMU's Code of Practice which can be found on the [Equality Code of Practice page of REF Intranet Site](#)

To ensure that REF processes are fair, QMU is collecting data on individual circumstances from all staff eligible for submission. The data will be used to identify which staff are eligible for submission with fewer than four outputs. Summary level data collected may also inform QMU's monitoring of staff selection procedures at the institutional level.

In determining whether eligible staff may be submitted to the REF with fewer than four research outputs, QMU's UoA Leads and Deans will take the following circumstances into consideration:

- = Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009)
- = Part time employment
- = Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research
- = Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)
- = Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)
- = Ill health or injury
- = Mental health conditions
- = Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare **in addition to** periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken. This could include for example, pregnancy related illness and health and safety restrictions in laboratory and field work.
- = Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)
- = Gender reassignment

If your research output has been affected by other circumstances, not including teaching and administration that are not listed above, please detail them on this form as they may be considered.

In determining the number of outputs staff are required to submit, QMU will observe the definitions of individual staff circumstances provided in the published REF ‘Panel criteria and working methods’ (January 2012) available at www.ref.ac.uk under ‘Publications’.

What action do I need to take?

If you are eligible for REF submission you are encouraged to complete the attached form. If further information is required about any circumstances disclosed, you will be contacted by HR.

Who will see the information that I provide?

Within the institution, the information that you provide will be seen by HR and your Dean. The UoA Lead and REF Strategy Group will only see that a special circumstances rule applies and not the details of the special circumstances.

The HR Advisor and Dean handling individual staff circumstances will observe confidentiality and information will be stored securely.

Information provided on the form may be shared externally for the purposes of evidencing any reduction in the number of research outputs:

- = For **circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs**, information will be seen by the relevant REF sub-panel, the REF panel secretariat and the UK funding bodies’ REF team. This will be information about early career researcher status, part-time working, career breaks or secondments, and periods of maternity, additional paternity or adoption leave taken.
- = For **more complex circumstances**, information will be seen only by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, the REF Main Panel Chairs and the UK funding bodies’ REF team. This will be information to explain the impact on your research of circumstances such as disability, ill health, injury, mental health conditions, gender reassignment, caring responsibilities or constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption and paternity (in addition to the period of leave taken). This information will **not** be seen by the REF sub-panel.

All REF panel members, chairs and secretaries are bound by confidentiality requirements, and acceptance of the confidentiality requirements is a condition of their appointment to the role. No information relating to identifiable individuals’ circumstances will be published by the funding bodies REF Team. All data collected, stored and processed by the UK funding bodies REF Team will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/, requires all higher education institutions participating in the REF to ensure appropriate confidentiality in handling individual staff circumstances. Where joint submissions are made it may be necessary to share the information provided with another institution.

What if my circumstances change?

QMU recognises that staff circumstances may change between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013. If your circumstances change you can download a copy of the attached form at on the [QMU REF intranet page](#).

Appendix D Summary of Legislation

Age	<p>All employees within the higher education sector are protected from unlawful age discrimination in employment under the Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or if they are associated with a person of a particular age group. (These provisions in the Equality Act 2010 are partially in force, but should be fully in place by April 2012.)</p> <p>Age discrimination can occur when people of a particular age group are treated less favourably than people in other age groups. An age group could be for example, people of the same age, the under 30s or people aged 45-50. A person can belong to a number of different age groups.</p> <p>Age discrimination will not be unlawful if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. However, in the context of the REF, the view of the funding bodies is that if a researcher produces excellent research an HEI will not be able to justify not submitting them because of their age group.</p> <p>It is important to note that early career researchers are likely to come from a range of age groups. The definition of early career researcher used in the REF (see paragraph 85) is not limited to young people.</p> <p>HEIs should also note that given developments in equalities law in the UK and Europe, the default retirement age will be abolished from 1 October 2011 in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.</p>
Disability	<p>The Equality Act 2010, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) (Northern Ireland only) and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 prevent unlawful discrimination relating to disability. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to have a disability or if they are associated with a person who is disabled, for example, if they are responsible for caring for a disabled family member.</p> <p>A person is considered to be disabled if they have or have had a physical and/or mental impairment which has 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Long-term impairments include those that last or are likely to last for at least 12 months.</p> <p>Cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis and progressive/degenerative conditions are disabilities too, even if they do not currently have an adverse effect on the carrying out of day-to-day activities.</p>

	<p>The definition of disability is different in Northern Ireland in that a list of day-to-day activities is referred to. There is no list of day-to-day activities for England, Scotland and Wales but day-to-day activities are taken to mean activities that people, not individuals, carry out on a daily or frequent basis.</p> <p>While there is no definitive list of what is considered a disability, it covers a wide range of impairments including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + sensory impairments + impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis, depression and epilepsy + progressive impairments, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, HIV and cancer + organ-specific impairments, including respiratory conditions and cardiovascular diseases + developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia + mental health conditions such as depression and eating disorders <p>impairments caused by injury to the body or brain.</p> <p>It is important for HEIs to note that people who have had a past disability are also protected from discrimination, victimisation and harassment because of disability.</p> <p>Equality law requires HEIs to anticipate the needs of disabled people and make reasonable adjustments for them. Failure to make a reasonable adjustment constitutes discrimination. If a disabled researcher's impairment has affected the quantity of their research outputs, they may be submitted with a reduced number of outputs.</p>
Gender reassignme	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 protect from discrimination trans people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change their sex. Staff in HE do not have to be under medical supervision to be afforded protection because of gender reassignment and staff are protected if they are perceived to be undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. They are also protected if they are associated with someone who has proposed, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment.</p> <p>Trans people who undergo gender reassignment will need to take time off for appointments and in some cases, for medical assistance. The transition process is lengthy, often taking several years and it is likely to be a difficult period for the trans person as they seek recognition of their new gender from their family, friends, employer and society as a whole.</p> <p>The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gave enhanced privacy rights to trans people who undergo gender reassignment. A person acting in an official capacity who acquires information about a person's status as a transsexual may commit a criminal offence if they pass the information to a third party without consent.</p>

	<p>Consequently, staff within HEIs with responsibility for REF submissions must ensure that the information they receive about gender reassignment is treated with particular care.</p> <p>Staff whose ability to work productively throughout the REF assessment period has been constrained due to gender reassignment may be submitted with a reduced number of research outputs.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 as amended, individuals are protected from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership status. The protection from discrimination is to ensure that people who are married or in a civil partnership receive the same benefits and treatment in employment. The protection from discrimination does not apply to single people.</p> <p>In relation to the REF HEIs must ensure that their processes for selecting staff do not inadvertently discriminate against staff who are married or in civil partnerships.</p>
Political opinion	<p>The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protects staff from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of political opinion.</p> <p>HEIs should be aware of not making any judgements about the selection of staff for REF submissions based on their political opinion.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 women are protected from unlawful discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>Consequently researchers who have taken time out of work or whose ability to work productively throughout the assessment period because of pregnancy and/or maternity, may be submitted with a reduced number of research outputs, as set out in paragraphs 90-100 and in the panel criteria documents.</p> <p>In addition, HEIs should ensure that female researchers who are pregnant or on maternity leave are kept informed about and included in their submissions process.</p> <p>For the purposes of this summary it is important to note that primary adopters have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave.</p>
Race	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination connected to race. The definition of race includes colour, ethnic or national origins or nationality. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular race.</p>

	<p>HEIs should be aware of not making any judgements about the selection of staff for REF submissions based on their race or assumed race (for example, based on their name).</p>
<p>Religion and belief including non-belief</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination to do with religion or belief. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular religion or belief.</p> <p>HEIs should be aware of not making any judgements about the selection of staff for REF submissions based on their actual or perceived religion or belief, including non-belief. ‘Belief’ includes any structured philosophical belief with clear values that has an effect on how its adherents conduct their lives.</p>
<p>Sex (including breastfeeding and additional paternity and adoption leave)</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination to do with sex. Employees are also protected because of their perceived sex or because of their association with someone of a particular sex.</p> <p>The sex discrimination provisions of the Equality Act explicitly protect women from less favourable treatment because they are breastfeeding. Consequently the impact of breastfeeding on a women’s ability to work productively will be taken into account, as set out in paragraph 90-100 and the panel criteria documents.</p> <p>From 3 April 2011, partners of new mothers and secondary adopters will be entitled to up to 26 weeks of additional paternity and adoption leave. People who take additional paternity or adoption leave will have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave and barriers that exist to taking the leave, or as a result of having taken it, could constitute unlawful sex discrimination. Consequently researchers who have taken additional paternity and adoption leave may be submitted with a reduced number of outputs.</p> <p>HEIs need to be wary of selecting researchers by any criterion that it would be easier for men to comply with than women, or vice versa. There are many cases where a requirement to work full-time (or less favourable treatment of people working part-time or flexibly) has been held to discriminate unlawfully against women.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p>The Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination to do with sexual orientation. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with someone who is of a particular sexual orientation.</p> <p>HEIs should be aware of not making any judgements about the selection of staff for REF submissions based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation.</p>

Appendix E QMU REF Timetable

Date	HEFCE Action	QMU REF Strategy	QMU REF Equality Code of Practice
Summer 2011 to end January 2012		QMU REF Audit	
5 October 2011		Institutional response to draft Panel Criteria and Methods	
28 October 2011		REF Staff Briefing Event	
2012			
Spring 2012	Publication of Panel Criteria and Methods and Guidance on Equality Training	1 st QMU REF Audit UoA Leads review outputs and quality ratings only. Discuss outcomes of the audit with individual staff on the basis of quality only. HR Advisor provides data on staff FTE and contract status only. All staff sent letter inviting to disclose individual staff circumstances. Four weeks to respond.	
End April 2012	Deadline for Equality Code of Practice Submission	Submit QMU Equality Code of Practice on 27 April with supporting letter from Principal.	
April 2012		REF Manager and HR Advisor meet with UoA Lead and Dean. Initial predictions made re staff selection	Equality Training for all staff involved in REF process.
May 2012		Decisions re staff selection communicated to staff in written communication from the Dean.	
May 2012		Draft Impact Case Studies Presented and Confirmed.	
July 2012	6 July - Feedback to QMU on approval of Equality Code of		Equality Assessment Impact

Date	HEFCE Action	QMU REF Strategy	QMU REF Equality Code of Practice
	Practice.		
Autumn 2012		2 nd QMU REF Audit	
November 2012		REF Manager and HR Advisor meet with UoA Lead and Dean. Further predictions made re staff selection Decisions re staff selection communicated to staff in written communication from the Dean.	Equality Assessment Meeting Impact Review
December 2012		Staff Briefing Event - Contract Researchers	
December 2012	7 December Deadline for Multiple Submission Request.	QMU will use this deadline for any multiple submission request.	
October – December 2012		Survey of submissions intentions	Equality Assessment Meeting Impact Review
2013			
January 2013	REF Software Issued		Equality Training for all staff involved in REF
January 2013	18 January HEFCE Feedback on Multiple Submission		
Spring 2013		3 rd QMU REF Audit	
March 2013		REF Manager and HR Advisor meet with UoA Lead and Dean. Further predictions made re staff selection	Equality Assessment Meeting Impact Review Equality Training for all staff involved in REF process
April 2013		Decisions re staff selection communicated to staff in written communication from the Dean.	
June 2013		Final Draft Submission to Executive Board	
June 2013		REF Staff Briefing Event	
September 2013		Final Draft Submission to Executive Board	Equality Assessment Impact Review

Date	HEFCE Action	QMU REF Strategy	QMU REF Equality Code of Practice
			Meeting
October 2013		Final Draft Submission to Executive Board	
31 October 2013	Census Date for staff eligible for inclusion	REF Audit	Equality Assessment Meeting Impact Review
29 November 2013	Deadline for Submission	Final Draft Submission to Executive Board	
December 2014	Results		

Approved by REF Strategy Group, Research Strategy Committee, Executive Board and Equality and Diversity Committee.