

Royal Agricultural University REF 2014

Code of Practice for the selection of staff

REF 2014 Code of Practice

1. Purpose

This Code is to ensure the selection of staff for submission to REF2014 meets the obligations and aspirations of the Equality Act, to ensure that selection takes place in a transparent, consistent, accountable and inclusive way.

This Code of Practice was submitted to HEFCE by July 2012 and has been revised in October 2012.

2. Royal Agricultural University REF panel

The University will convene a subgroup of the Research Committee to manage the REF selection process, led by the Director of Research.

3. Training

All individuals involved in the selection process will attend a REF specific equality and diversity training event in the spirit of the Equality Act 2010. The training will utilise REF-specific training materials, such as the case studies published by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU).

4. Criteria for selection of work

Work will be selected only on the basis of its quality, and will take no account of any personal characteristics of its author including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion and belief including non-belief, sex (including breastfeeding and paternity or adoption leave) or sexual orientation. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken at pertinent points in the selection process to ensure that discrimination is avoided and promote equality.

4.1 Selection of staff

Staff will be selected on the basis of the quality of their outputs, and the effect of these on the overall quality rating of the University. Outputs will be judged primarily on the expectation that they have met a sufficient quality rating in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Staff with 4 outputs, and staff with reduced output due to personal circumstances, will be accepted for submission. Individuals who have been significantly constrained in their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period by Equality protected characteristics will have their circumstances taken into account and an appropriately lower number of outputs decided (see section 7.1).

Co-authored outputs where two or more authors are under consideration for submission to the REF will be primarily resolved through discussion between the individuals involved on the basis of relative contributions to the work.

Only those outputs deemed eligible according to the *Assessment framework and guidance on submissions* or final panel criteria will be considered.

Only those staff eligible for submission on the census date will be considered. Where a staff member may reach retirement before this date, the individual will be consulted on his / her plans.

5. Identification of work for consideration

All staff are routinely invited to put work forward for consideration for REF submission in the annual review of publications and outputs in January each year. Staff are also regularly made aware of the requirements of outputs for potential submission to REF at meetings and by email.

These activities are supported by a wider communication strategy within the institution to raise awareness that REF preparation activity is taking place.

6. Impact case study

An open call process will be utilised to allow staff to suggest examples of excellent research that have generated impact, or examples of impact which are attributable to research generated through the University. These will be considered and further developed by the REF selection team, in consultation with wider academic staff.

Selection will be based on the extent to which impact meets the basic criteria, the threshold quality level for the underpinning research and the practicality of evidencing cause and effect between the research and the impact.

7. Individual staff circumstances

The REF team will make provision for staff to be submitted with a reduced number of outputs where their circumstances have significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or work productively throughout the assessment period.

7.1 Disclosure

In order to support this, eligible staff are invited to disclose their individual circumstances via a form available on the staff intranet, and in other formats on request. Staff will be notified of the availability of this form through the email system. This will allow staff to indicate if they have been subject to significant constraining circumstances over the assessment period, and wish to be considered for submission with a reduced number of outputs. This information will be treated with strict confidentiality, and **the information will only be seen by the Individual Circumstances panel**. The panel will make decisions based on the REF2014 guidance regarding both clearly defined and complex staff

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circumstances. Decisions on the appropriate level of reduced outputs will generally be based on correlation of individual circumstances with total absence from work over the assessment period (i.e. the cumulative effect on ability to undertake contracted hours of work across the whole of the assessment period).

Only the judgement on appropriate level of reduced number of outputs will be provided to REF selection panels. Disclosed information will be kept securely, and used only to inform the REF2014 selection process, as outlined above. Permission will be requested from individuals for the information to be added to existing confidential staff HR records.

Where staff have been subject to constraining circumstances but do not disclose this information through the identified channels, they will not be considered for submission with reduced outputs. Such staff will be considered only via the general selection process outlined in this document.

7.2 *Circumstances taken into account*

The clearly defined circumstances which will be taken into account are as follows:

- Part time workers;
- Fixed term workers
- Early Career Researchers;
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave;
- Secondments or career breaks outside the Higher Education sector.

Fixed term and part-time staff will be considered using the same criteria as open contract and full-time staff. Such staff will be automatically considered for submission with reduced outputs, due to the nature of their contract. However, these staff will also be invited to disclose any additional circumstances that may have affected their work, and in order to verify contractual details across the assessment period. This will be calculated by the individual staff circumstances panel, and the reduction in outputs advised to the relevant selection panels.

Early Career Researchers will be identified in consultation with the individual and selection panel staff, due to the complexity of this criterion. Staff will be supported in identifying the point at which they became an independent researcher, to allow the individual staff circumstances panel to accurately calculate the appropriate reduction in outputs. This will also allow the completion of the additional information required to be submitted for ECRs, regardless of whether they are returned with reduced outputs.

These circumstances will be dealt with by direct application of the REF panel criteria guidance, applying the reduced output tariff using calculations of total absence from contracted work over the assessment period (Please see the Assessment framework and guidance on submissions document REF 02.2011 for further information).

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Consideration will also be made of more complex individual circumstances. These include:

- Disability
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity leave (which will be considered in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave).
- Childcare or other caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- Other circumstances relating to characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

Where complex circumstances exist, the individual staff circumstances panel will make a judgement on the appropriate level reduction in the number of outputs submitted (this may include a judgement that the appropriate level is no reduction). These decisions will be based on the worked examples of complex circumstances produced by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), published in March 2012. As far as is practicable, the impact of complex circumstances will be equated to clearly defined absences. Specifically, the panel will seek to evidence the following in order to justify a reduction in the number of outputs:

- The nature and timing of circumstances which constrained the individual.
- Explain effects on the individual's contracted hours or ability to fulfil contracted hours.
- Explain any other effects on the individual's ability to work productively.
- Provide a calculation for the reduction in outputs and the number of outputs returned.

Staff will be provided with opportunities to disclose their individual circumstances for consideration of reduced number of outputs ahead of each key selection stage.

8. Feedback on staff selection

Staff will be informed in a timely manner as to whether or not their outputs have been selected for submission to REF. Where a member of staff has not been selected for submission to REF, full reasons will be provided.

9. Appeals process

Appeals against selection decisions will be handled by an independent panel, as outlined in appendix A. The timing of this will allow appeals to be considered before final selection is made.

10. Equality impact assessment

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Equality impact assessments will be carried out at key points in the selection process to ensure that there is no differential impact on particular groups. These will be informed by summary level data on protected characteristics provided by HR from the staff database.

EIAs will take place :

- An initial review of the protected characteristics of all academic staff
- When identifying eligible staff who are under consideration for selection, staff with 2 or more eligible outputs will be invited to disclose any relevant characteristics (see section 7.1)
- At the point of impact case study selection
- Following initial selection decisions and when considering appeals
- When preparing final submission.
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If any differential impact on particular groups is detected, the selection process will be reviewed in the light of each EIA.

11. Communications plan

This code of practice will be disseminated to all academic staff:

- 1) The Code of Practice will be published on the University's intranet.
- 2) Staff will be made aware of the code through email briefings.
- 3) Staff absent from work will receive a copy of this code by letter.
- 4) The results of staff selection decisions, appeals and feedback will be communicated on an individual basis.

Dated 2 November 2012

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Appendix A – Selection committees

Name of Panel	Committee formation	Membership	Position within selection process
REF Panel	Comprises the key staff actively involved in managing research activity.	Director of Research Chair of the Research Committee Principal	Assess feasibility of University submission based on quality of research. Make appropriate decisions on generic issues such as quality thresholds and the timetable for the selection process. Develop the impact case study and develop research environment data for submissions.
Individual staff circumstances panel	The panel has been formed by staff with knowledge of the REF process, HR knowledge and expertise in equality and diversity legislation.	Disability Officer HR delegate Principal	To consider information disclosed by staff relating to individual circumstances that may merit submission with a reduced number of outputs. The panel will make decisions on whether a member of staff can be submitted with reduced outputs, calculating the likely number of reduced outputs for clearly defined and complex. The decisions made by this panel will be passed to the REF Panel to inform selection decisions.
Appeals panel	The panel has been formed from staff with knowledge of REF processes who are familiar with research activity but have not been involved in selection.	Chair of the Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity Committee HR Manager	The panel will consider any appeals received from staff following feedback from the selection panel. Cases for appeal will be considered ahead of the final selection for submission, and decisions will be passed to the selection committee.

Mode of operation

All committees will use the *Assessment framework and guidance on submissions* and final panel criteria to as the basis for all recommendations and selections.