



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

**Code of Practice
Governing the Selection of Staff
for Submissions to the
2014 Research Excellence Framework**

Approved by the University Court of The University of Stirling on 25 June 2012

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Code of Practice sets out the procedures by which the University of Stirling will manage the selection of eligible staff for inclusion in the University's submissions to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). It was approved by the University Court on 25 June 2012.
- 1.2. The REF is the system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions in the UK. It is conducted jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL). The REF is managed by the REF team, based at HEFCE, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies.
- 1.3. The primary purpose of REF 2014 is to produce assessment outcomes for each submission made by institutions. The higher education funding bodies intend to use the assessment outcomes to inform the selective allocation of their grant for research to the institutions which they fund, with effect from 2015-16. The assessment also provides accountability for public investment in research and produces evidence of the benefits of this investment. The assessment outcomes provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use within the higher education sector and for public information.
- 1.4. The funding bodies invite Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to make submissions for assessment in any of the 36 Units of Assessment (UoAs) which they have established for REF 2014. It is for HEIs to decide:
 - which UoAs they make submissions to;
 - which of their staff who are eligible for submission are included in submissions.
- 1.5. Each HEI making a submission is required to develop, document and apply a code of practice on the fair and transparent selection of staff for their REF submissions.
- 1.6. The funding bodies have published detailed guidance on the conduct of REF 2014. This is available online at www.ref.ac.uk. The University's arrangements for managing the preparation of submissions for REF 2014 are supported by the Research and Enterprise Office (REO), working closely with other University Services including Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD) and Policy, Planning & Governance (PPG). As part of this support, REO provide guidance and advice, available to all University staff, on the regulations and requirements of the REF 2014 process and on the University's procedures and arrangements for taking part in the exercise. This includes:
 - An email helpline: ref@stir.ac.uk
 - Webpages with guidance, resources and frequently asked questions: <http://www.research.stir.ac.uk/about/performance/ref/>
 - Telephone and/or in person discussions via extension 7041.

2. Principles Governing Selection

2.1. The process of selecting staff will be governed by the following key principles:

- **Transparency:** The procedures and criteria for selecting staff for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 will be fully and openly communicated to all eligible staff within the University, including those who are absent from work.
- **Consistency:** The University will operate a single decision-making process, as set out in this Code of Practice, thus ensuring that a consistent approach is taken in respect of all eligible staff.
- **Accountability:** The roles and responsibilities of all those who are involved in making decisions on the inclusion of eligible staff for submissions to REF 2014 are set out in this Code of Practice.
- **Inclusivity:** The procedures for selecting staff for inclusion, as set out in this Code of Practice, are designed to ensure that all eligible staff are identified and considered fully for inclusion in submissions. The University intends to include all eligible staff who meet the criteria set for inclusion in its submissions to REF 2014. This principle is consistent with the University's Research Strategy and management practices which set and support expectations of research excellence for virtually all academic staff.

2.2. The criteria which are used in the selection of staff for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 will be derived from, and fully consistent with, the objectives for research set out in the University's Strategic Plan, 2011-2016, and the University Research Strategy, 2011-14. Both of these documents are publicly available and have been widely disseminated to staff.

2.3. The 2014 REF will have strategic, reputational and financial consequences for the University, in common with other UK Higher Education Institutions. Accordingly, the criteria used in the selection of staff for inclusion in submissions will be designed to optimise the University's competitive position within the REF, consistent with strategic objectives. In making inclusion decisions the University recognises this context as well as the criteria governing eligibility for inclusion in the REF. The contribution to the University's activities and strategic objectives of the many staff that are not eligible for inclusion as a consequence of the nature of their contracted duties is valued. Non-eligibility for the REF 2014, and so for consideration under this Code, will not be viewed by the University in any way as diminishing that value or restricting the career development opportunities and support for such colleagues. For staff that are, as a consequence of their contracted duties, eligible for inclusion in the REF, the University is committed to supporting their development and performance as researchers on an ongoing basis. The criteria for inclusion may result in situations where some eligible staff have the required number of research outputs (taking into account allowable individual circumstances) for inclusion in REF submissions, but which are judged not to reach the standard required, or to fit coherently with the profile of research presented in one of the University's submissions to REF 2014. A decision not to include such members of eligible staff in any of the University's submissions to REF 2014, therefore, will not of itself lead to any decision on the future career development of those staff.

3. Application of the Code of Practice

3.1. The provisions of this Code of Practice apply to all staff of the University who are eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014. They also apply, wherever relevant, to such staff of the University who are not eligible for inclusion but who are

involved in the operation of the procedures set out in the Code (for example, non-academic staff who are involved in supporting the decision-making process are required to undertake the prescribed equality and diversity training.)

- 3.2. Those staff who are eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 are determined by the University in accordance with the definitions, regulations and requirements set out for the exercise by the higher education funding bodies. The funding bodies define eligible staff as:

academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE [Full Time Equivalent] or greater and on the payroll of the submitting HEI on the census date (31 October 2013), and whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research

- 3.3. Research Assistants, even where they meet the requirements of the definition of eligible staff above, are not eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 unless, exceptionally, they are named as principal investigator or equivalent on a research grant or other significant piece of work on the census date.
- 3.4. The University, following the principle of inclusivity, wishes to maximise the opportunity for academic staff to be considered for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014. Accordingly, throughout its preparations for REF 2014 it will continue to keep under review the position of Research Assistants and Teaching Only staff. Where any such staff have an independent portfolio of research they will be supported to achieve a status which makes them formally eligible for inclusion in REF 2014 submissions, and so for assessment under the process set out in this Code of Practice. Equally, to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all staff, no expectation will be set that Research Assistants or Teaching Only staff shall have an independent portfolio of research (unless specifically required by their contract of employment).
- 3.5. The full definition of, and notes on, eligible staff and other individuals who may be included in submissions can be found in the REF 2014 Assessment Criteria and Guidance on Submissions: www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11.

4. REF Preparations, Strategy, and the Decision Making Process

- 4.1. The University has been undertaking preparations for its participation in REF 2014 for a number of years. These preparations have included:
- Development of a REF 2014 Strategy, consistent with the University's Research Strategy which regards REF 2014 as an important milestone against which to measure progress towards strategic research objectives, and designed to steer preparatory work;
 - Participation in the pilot exercises run by the higher education funding bodies on the potential use of bibliometrics for research assessment and the assessment of impact within the REF;
 - Contributions to consultation exercises undertaken by the funding bodies during their development of the regulations, criteria and procedures through which REF 2014 will operate;
 - Periodic internal reviews of the developing portfolio of research publications and other outputs, and other information required for submissions to REF 2014;

- A university-wide Research Review, involving external assessors, focused on informing both REF 2014 preparations and ongoing research management and development;
 - Development of draft impact templates, impact case studies and environment narratives for potential inclusion in submissions to REF 2014.
- 4.2. The University also undertakes a range of research planning, management, development and support activities on an ongoing basis. Supporting research performance for academic staff with research in their contracts is a key element in the University's Achieving Success process:
- <http://www.hr-services.stir.ac.uk/policies-procedures/AchievingSuccess.php>
- Research performance features strongly in the University's recruitment and promotion processes, and in ongoing staff management within Academic Schools.
- 4.3. The University's Strategy for REF 2014 was approved by the University Court in June 2011, and is available to all staff on the University intranet. The REF Strategy is derived from, and consistent with, the University's Strategic Plan and Research Strategy. The REF Strategy sets out a series of strategic outcomes which the University is pursuing in its submissions to REF 2014. The detailed objectives and measures through which the University seeks to achieve its strategic outcomes continue to be developed and refined through the ongoing governance and management arrangements which the University has in place.
- 4.4. Both ongoing research management and the preparatory work outlined above are, of course, related to the University's participation in REF 2014. It is important to note, however, that no decisions on the selection of staff for inclusion in REF 2014 submissions have been made as a result of these activities. Decisions on selection for inclusion are made only through the process and arrangements set out within this Code of Practice.

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1. The University is committed to promoting equality and diversity in research careers. This commitment is embedded in our institutional Research Strategy:

[We] recognise that excellence in researcher development is both fundamental to our competitive position and a hallmark of our research reputation. We value diversity within our research community and promote equality of opportunity in research careers, aspiring to best practice standards.

University of Stirling, Research Strategy 2011-2014, 4

We were one of the first UK universities to adopt and launch the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and have a detailed Concordat implementation plan in place. We hold the European Commission HR Excellence in Research badge and are members of the Athena Swan Charter for Women in Science.

- 5.2. We have a Single Equality Scheme in place, approved by the University Court in December 2009, which is an integrated strategy and action plan designed to promote and enhance equality and diversity. The Scheme sets out how the University will comply with its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. It contains specific provisions designed to embed due regard for equality and diversity into both research management processes and REF 2014 preparations. It has been widely publicised to staff and is available at <http://www.diversityandequality.stir.ac.uk/>

- 5.3. The University is committed to evaluating and learning from the operation of our REF 2014 decision-making process as part of our ongoing commitment to promoting equality and diversity in research careers. A formal review will be undertaken following completion of the decision-making process, with the outcomes reported to the University Court and embedded within our Single Equality Scheme.
- 5.4. In pursuit of our strategic commitment to equality, to ensure that we meet our responsibilities under current equalities legislation, and to comply with the funding bodies' requirements for REF 2014, this Code of Practice has been designed to ensure that all eligible staff are treated equitably and fairly throughout the selection process.
- 5.5. This will be achieved by:
- The use of a single, centrally managed, decision-making process which is applied equally to all eligible staff, including those on part-time and/or fixed-term contracts;
 - The opportunity, as a formal part of the decision-making process, for all eligible staff to comment on the list of research outputs on which decisions on their inclusion are to be taken and to disclose any individual circumstances which they wish taken into account;
 - Full adherence to the guidance set out for the REF 2014 by the higher education funding bodies on the individual circumstances which permit a reduction without penalty in the number of research outputs listed by members of staff (see Annex 1);
 - Clearly separating the process to determine the required number of outputs from the process to determine whether a member of staff fulfils the criteria for inclusion;
 - Monitoring equality and diversity demographics at key milestones during the decision-making process;
 - Mandatory Equality and Diversity training and briefing, tailored for REF 2014 purposes, for all staff involved in REF decision making;
 - The existence of an appeals process for staff who do not believe that the processes set out in this Code have been followed correctly.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.1. Final decisions on the inclusion of staff for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 will be made by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University ("the Principal"), who will be advised on those decisions by the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG).
- 6.2. The Principal, advised by USPG, will make decisions in response to recommendations from a REF Assessment Committee. The sole responsibility of the REF Assessment Committee will be to make recommendations on the inclusion of eligible staff in the University's submissions to REF 2014 through the process set out in this Code of Practice.
- 6.3. The membership of the REF Assessment Committee will be:
- The Deputy Principal for Research (Chair);

- One member of staff from each of the University's seven Academic Schools, who shall be a Professor and either the Head of School, the Deputy Head of School, or the School Research Director. The member of staff from each School shall be nominated in advance by the Head of School. Following confirmation of the membership, the nominated member from any School may not be changed save in exceptional circumstances (for example, absence through sickness, vacancy in the designated post through resignation).

The University's Director of Research and Enterprise will be the Secretary to the REF Assessment Committee but will not be a member.

- 6.4. Appeals against an initial recommendation from the REF Assessment Committee that a member of staff is not intended to be included in one of the University's submissions to REF 2014 will be considered by an Appeals Panel. The Appeals panel will be chaired by the Senior Deputy Principal and will consist of the Chair and two other members appointed by the University Court from amongst the professoriate of the University. In order to ensure that neither member of professorial staff is from the same Academic School as the member of staff making the appeal, and that all those potentially involved in hearing appeals receive Equality and Diversity training in advance, a small pool of professorial staff who may serve on the Appeals Panel will be appointed in advance.
- 6.5. An Equality and Diversity Panel (EDP) will be appointed for the purposes of the decision making process governed by this Code. The EDP will:
- Oversee the equality and diversity impact assessment of the decision-making process, and the demographic monitoring at each key milestone;
 - Approve and oversee the arrangements for Equality and Diversity briefing and training for all those involved in the process governed by this Code;
 - Review and approve recommendations from the University's Director of Research and Enterprise, which shall be made in accordance with the Guidance on Submissions to REF 2014 set out by the higher education funding bodies, on the reduction of the required number of outputs for members of eligible staff with clearly defined individual circumstances;
 - Examine the cases of any members of eligible staff who present complex individual circumstances, and determine the appropriate reduction in the required number of outputs for such members of staff.
- 6.6. The EDP will be chaired by the Deputy Principal for Education and Students and will consist of the Chair, the University's Equality and Diversity Officer, the Deputy Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, and two members of senior academic staff.

7. Description of the Decision-Making Process

- 7.1. The decision making process on the inclusion of eligible staff in submissions to REF 2104 will be undertaken during 2013, with some preparatory work undertaken in the last quarter of 2012. The University will make decisions on the inclusion of eligible staff in submissions to REF 2014 during the period 1 January 2013 to 15 November 2013. No decisions on inclusion will be taken in advance of 1 January 2013. The last date on which decisions may be made has deliberately been set:

- two weeks after the REF 2014 census date (31 October 2013), to allow time for decisions to be taken on any staff who join the University shortly before the census date, and;
 - two weeks before the deadline for submissions (29 November 2013), to allow time for the final preparation of submission information.
- 7.2. In practice, the great majority of decisions on inclusion will be taken well before 15 November 2013. It is important, however, to allow the maximum possible period for decision making in order to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all eligible staff including those with complex individual circumstances, those who may wish to appeal against preliminary decisions, and those who may join the University shortly before the census date.
- 7.3. In September and October 2012, briefing sessions on this Code of Practice and the procedures it sets out, open to all staff, will be provided. These will be widely publicised in advance.
- 7.4. In October 2012, a list of all staff in the University believed to be eligible for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 will be extracted from the University HR record. This list will be subdivided by School and indicative Unit of Assessment (UoA) and the relevant sections sent to each Head of School and School Manager.
- 7.5. The School lists of staff will be accompanied by a list containing bibliographic information on the required number of research outputs against each member of staff. These outputs will be derived from the lists provided for the purposes of the University Research Review undertaken during 2012. In any cases where the number of outputs listed appears to be less than the number required, the number of missing outputs will be clearly indicated.
- 7.6. Heads of Schools and School Managers will be required to check both staff and output listings and either confirm that they are correct or propose amendments as appropriate. Where amendments are proposed, the reason for those amendments will require to be stated.
- 7.7. Heads of Schools will also be required to indicate their opinion of the quality of each output listed against their members of staff, using the rating scale (Unclassified to Four Star) and with reference to the criteria set out by the funding bodies for the assessment of outputs in REF 2014. In giving these opinions, Heads of Schools may take advice from their senior School colleagues as they deem appropriate.
- 7.8. Heads of Schools will be invited to give their opinion on the UoA which appears to be most appropriate for the research output profile of each of their members of staff. In doing so, they will have regard to the UoA descriptor set out by each REF 2014 Panel in their statement of criteria and working methods. In giving these opinions, Heads of Schools may take advice from their senior School colleagues as they deem appropriate. It is recognised that there may be some cases where the profile of outputs for a member of staff could be submitted to more than one UoA and, in such cases, this will be clearly stated with the reasons for the opinion given.
- 7.9. At the same time, in October 2012, each member of eligible staff will receive an extract of the lists of eligible staff and outputs which relate to themselves. They will be invited to comment on whether they believe the staff and output details shown are correct, or to propose amendments. Where amendments are proposed, the reason for those amendments will require to be stated.
- 7.10. Each member of eligible staff will also be invited to state whether they believe that allowable individual circumstances apply to their situation which permits a reduction without penalty of the required number of outputs. The range of such circumstances is set out in the Guidance on Submissions to REF 2014 provided by the higher

education funding bodies. Where staff believe that such circumstances do apply, they will be given an opportunity to set out, in confidence, those circumstances. Where they believe that no such circumstances apply, they will be asked to confirm this.

- 7.11. The deadline for receipt of comment and opinion on the lists of staff and outputs, and notification on individual staff circumstances, will be in November 2012.
- 7.12. In January 2013, the Equality and Diversity Panel (EDP) will consider the position of all eligible staff to whom individual circumstances may apply which permit a reduction in the number of required outputs. The EDP will determine the reduction in the required number of outputs in all cases where allowable individual circumstances are found to apply.
- 7.13. The EDP will base its determination on the provisions set out by the higher education funding bodies in the Guidance on Submissions for REF 2014 through:
 - In the case of clearly defined circumstances, recommendations from the University's Director of Research and Enterprise on the application of the REF 2014 provisions;
 - In the case of more complex circumstances, detailed consideration of those circumstances in the light of the guidance and advice provided by the higher education funding bodies including the examples, case studies and other guidance given for this purpose by the Equalities Challenge Unit. In recognition of the often sensitive and confidential nature of such circumstances, and with the aim of encouraging staff to disclose relevant circumstances, cases will be considered by the EDP on an anonymised basis.
- 7.14. In February 2013, a complete list of eligible staff and the required number of outputs listed against them will be assembled, together with the information which will be used to assess whether staff meet the criteria for inclusion in submissions.
- 7.15. In March and April 2013, the REF Assessment Committee will meet to consider the position of all eligible staff. For each staff member, bibliographic data will be presented on the required number of outputs. Using the criteria and information set out in this Code, the REF Assessment Committee will make an initial recommendation on whether each member of eligible staff is intended to be included or not included in one of the University's UoA submissions to REF 2014.
- 7.16. The initial recommendation of the REF Assessment Committee, in respect of each eligible member of staff, will be one of the following:
 - Include within one of the University's UoA submissions, with the UoA specified;
 - Include within one of the University's UoA submissions, subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions by a defined date, with the UoA, conditions and date specified;
 - Do not include within any of the University's UoA submissions.
- 7.17. The REF Assessment Committee will base its recommendations solely on the criteria for inclusion in submissions, information, and procedures set out in this Code of Practice. As provided for under the equality and diversity section, it will not be involved in considering the reduction in the required number of outputs which may be submitted without penalty by staff who have relevant individual circumstances.
- 7.18. The nominated member of each School's staff who is a member of the REF Assessment Committee will not be involved in discussion, recommendations or decisions concerning any member of staff in his/her School made by the REF

Assessment Committee and will be absent from meetings of the REF Assessment Committee during discussions and decisions about staff in his/her School.

- 7.19. Each member of eligible staff will receive written confirmation of the initial recommendation of the REF Assessment Committee. Heads of School will receive notification of the initial recommendations regarding all members of eligible staff in their School. In the case of any staff where the initial recommendation is to be not included in a submission, the reasons for that judgement will be clearly stated. Members of staff for whom the initial recommendation is to be not included in a submission will have the right to appeal against that decision. There will be no right of appeal against an initial recommendation of inclusion in a submission.
- 7.20. In May 2013, any appeals received will be considered by an Appeals Panel. The appeals process is described in a separate section below. The outcomes of appeals will be notified to the relevant members of staff and their Heads of Schools, and to the REF Assessment Committee.
- 7.21. In June 2013, the REF Assessment Committee will review its initial recommendations, taking account of the outcome of any appeals, and will reach a final recommendation on each member of eligible staff.
- 7.22. The final recommendations from the REF Assessment Committee will be presented to the Principal for decision. The Principal will take advice from USPG in arriving at decisions. The Principal's decisions shall be final.
- 7.23. Final decisions on the inclusion of staff in the University's submissions to REF 2014 will be notified to staff and to their Heads of Schools.
- 7.24. For staff who join the University during or after this process, the same process steps will be followed, but with decisions being made and communicated as soon as practical following the commencement of their employment.

8. Criteria for Inclusion in Submissions

- 8.1. In accordance with the principle of inclusivity, eligible staff will be included in the University's submissions to REF 2014 unless one or more of the following criteria apply:
 - i. The number of their research outputs does not reach that required for inclusion.
 - ii. The quality of their portfolio of research outputs is judged not to reach the standard required for inclusion.
 - iii. The profile of their research outputs does not fit coherently with the profile of research within one of the UoA submissions made by the University to REF 2014.
- 8.2. The number of research outputs required from each member of eligible staff for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 shall be four (4) in all cases except where individual staff circumstances apply which permit a reduction in the number of outputs without penalty, as determined by the Equality and Diversity Panel under the procedures set out in this Code.
- 8.3. The standard of research quality required for inclusion in submissions to REF 2014 will be determined by the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG) and notified to all members of eligible staff in advance of decisions on inclusion being taken.
- 8.4. The range of UoAs to which the University will make submissions in the 2014 REF will be determined by USPG. As this range may continue to change and develop up

to the submission date in accordance with the University's strategic objectives, changes in staffing, ongoing research management, and other factors, regular updates on the University's submission intentions will be publicised to eligible staff. In particular, should the submission intentions change from those previously publicised to eligible staff, an update notification will be issued.

- 8.5. Indicative submission intentions and targets were approved by the University Court in June 2011 in the *Research Excellence Framework 2014 Strategy* which is available to all staff through the staff intranet. These will be reviewed and updated as required by USPG.
- 8.6. Judgements about the quality of the portfolio of research outputs for each member of eligible staff will be made in accordance with the procedures set out in this Code of Practice.
- 8.7. Judgements about the fit between the profile of research outputs for each member of eligible staff and the profile of research within the University's intended UoA submissions will be made in accordance with the procedures set out in this Code of Practice.

9. Information for Decision-Making

- 9.1. In making judgements in order to arrive at recommendations for inclusion in REF 2014 submissions, the REF Assessment Committee will use the following sources of information:
 - Staff data, derived from the University's HR record, covering those pieces of information required on staff by the REF Guidance on Submissions;
 - Information, in the form specified for submissions to REF 2014, on the research outputs listed against each member of eligible staff;
 - Opinions on the quality of research outputs given by Heads of Schools, advised as they deem appropriate by their senior colleagues;
 - Opinions on the quality of research outputs given by external assessors appointed by the University to assist with the Research Review conducted by the University in 2012;
 - The academic judgement of members of the REF Assessment Committee;
 - The statements of Criteria and Working Methods for REF 2014 set out by the panels appointed by the funding bodies to conduct the assessment;
 - The draft environment and impact sections of REF 2014 submissions.
- 9.2. The REF Assessment Committee may also use some or all of the following sources of information to inform its judgements:
 - Citation analysis on research outputs produced by some or all of SCOPUS, Web of Science, Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic;
 - Journal impact factors;
 - Opinions on the quality of research outputs which may be sought from external assessors as required other than through the 2012 Research Review;
 - Opinions on the fit between individual research outputs and the profile of research being presented in proposed UoA submissions, from Heads of Schools and/or external assessors;

- Examination of research outputs.

10. Appeals Process

- 10.1. Any member of eligible staff for whom the initial recommendation of the REF Assessment Committee is that they should not be included in one of the University's submissions to REF 2014 will have the right to appeal against that recommendation.
- 10.2. Appeals will be considered by an Appeals Panel, constituted in accordance with the provisions of this Code of Practice.
- 10.3. An appeal may be submitted on one or both of the following grounds:
 - The process set out in this Code of Practice (up to the point at which initial recommendations are made) has not been properly followed;
 - Any information previously disclosed on relevant individual staff circumstances has not been properly taken into account.
- 10.4. Appeals must be submitted in writing, stating the reason(s) for the appeal, together with any relevant supporting information. The Appeals Panel will have available to it the written submission from the appellant, and all information previously available to the REF Assessment Committee.
- 10.5. The date by which appeals must be lodged will be set out in writing to relevant staff when the initial recommendation of the REF Assessment Committee is communicated to them. A minimum of 10 days will normally be given within which appeals may be submitted.
- 10.6. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be communicated in writing as soon as practical following the meeting at which the case is considered. No further right of appeal will be available. Staff will continue to have recourse to the University's normal Grievance Procedure if relevant.

11. Dissemination and Communication

- 11.1. This Code of Practice will be published on the staff intranet, and publicised to all staff through the University's Information Bulletin. A series of briefing meetings on the Code and the processes it contains will be held, open to all staff, before the commencement of the decision-making process. The Code will be sent in writing to all eligible staff absent from work (other than for short-term sickness or annual leave) at the time it is first published. This Code will be made available in alternative formats as required, on request to the Research and Enterprise Office.

12. Further Information

- 12.1. For any questions regarding this Code of Practice contact the Research & Enterprise Office, 01786 467041 (Internal Extension 7041), ref@stir.ac.uk.

Diagram 1: REF 2104 Decision Making Preparatory Phase

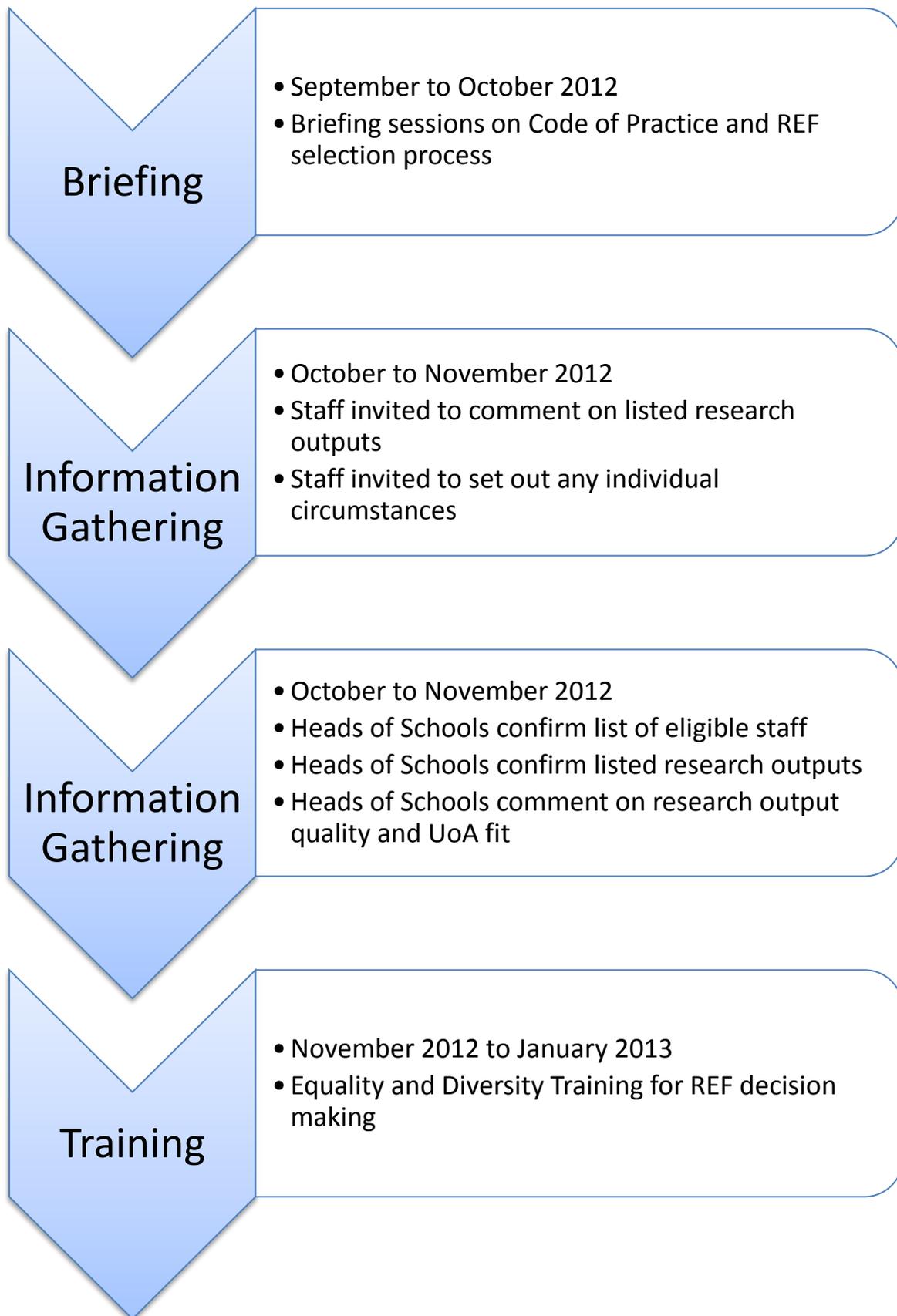
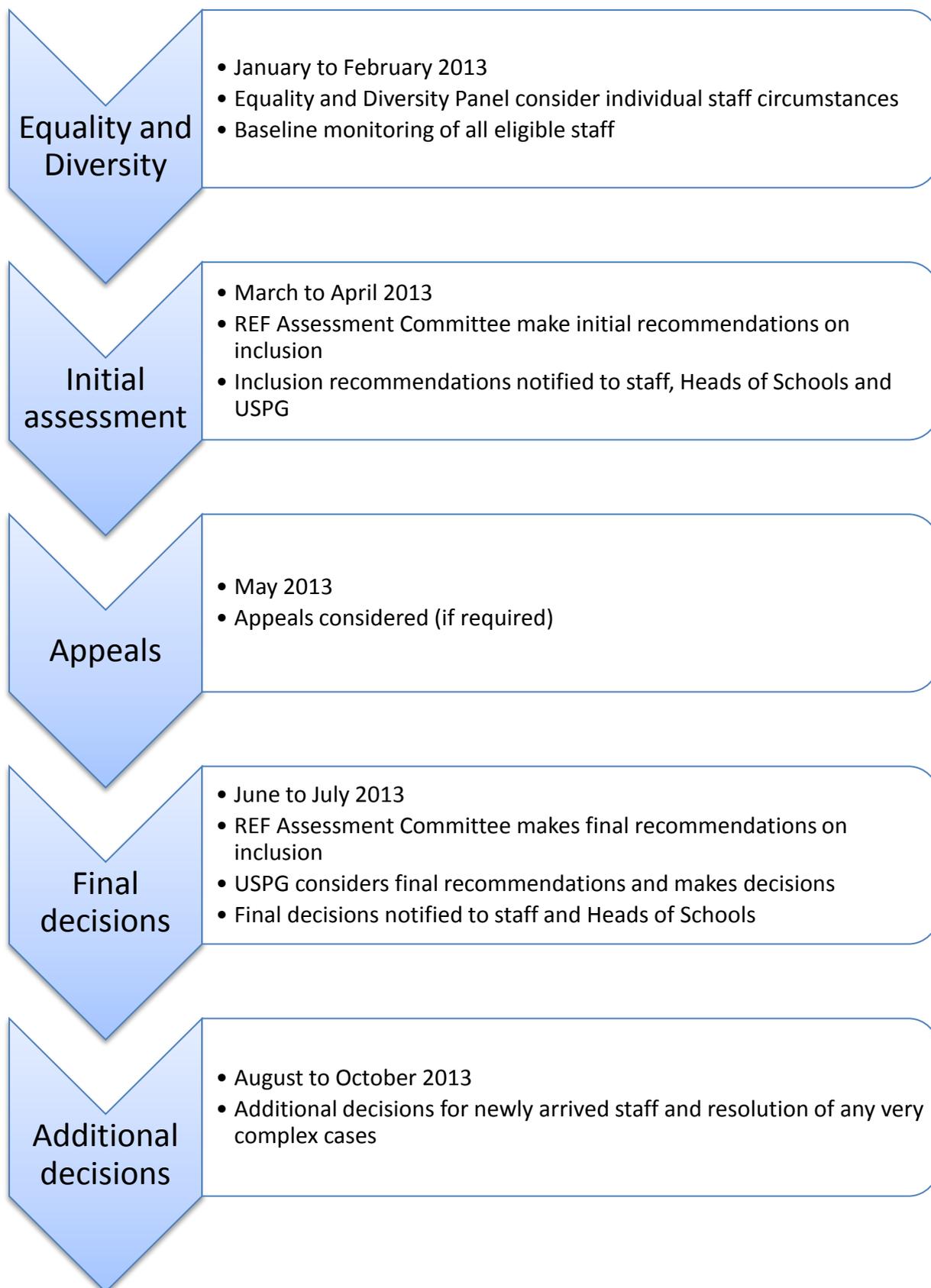


Diagram 2: REF 2014 Decision Making Process



Annex 1: Individual Staff Circumstances

The Higher Education Funding Bodies have set out a range of circumstances which may have impacted on the ability of eligible staff to produce four research outputs during the assessment period for REF 2014. Where such circumstances apply, the number of outputs returned for the member of staff concerned may be reduced below four without penalty in the assessment. These measures are designed to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all eligible staff, and to support equality and diversity in research careers.

The University, under the provisions set out in this Code of Practice, is committed to adhere fully to this guidance. The provisions relating to individual staff circumstances have been enhanced and extended for REF 2014 compared with those which operated in the former Research Assessment Exercises. For ease of reference, they are reproduced in full below from the guidance published by the funding bodies. The source document is an Addendum to the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions published in January 2012 and available at <http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2011-02/>.

In issuing an addendum, the funding bodies continue to refer to paragraphs in the original Guidance on Submissions document. Particularly important in this case are the paragraphs from that document which describe the criteria for staff to be eligible as Early Career Researchers (paragraphs 85 and 86 of the Guidance on Submissions). Those paragraphs are reproduced below following the extract from the addendum.

The University recognises the complexity of this guidance, and so will pay particular attention to explaining it to staff during the briefing sessions for staff in September and October 2012. Support with this aspect of the REF guidance, as with all REF administrative matters, is available from the Research and Enterprise Office, Room 3B1, Cottrell Building; ref@stir.ac.uk; extension 7041.

Extract from *Addendum to Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions, January 2012*

63. Up to four research outputs must be listed against each member of staff included in the submission. A maximum of four outputs per researcher will provide panels with a sufficient selection of research outputs from each submitted unit upon which to base judgements about the quality of that unit's outputs. Consultations on the development of the REF confirmed that this is an appropriate maximum volume of research outputs for the purposes of assessment.

64. As a key measure to support equality and diversity in research careers, in all UOAs individuals may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty in the assessment, where their individual circumstances have significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period. This measure is intended to encourage institutions to submit all their eligible staff who have produced excellent research.

65. HEIs are allowed to list the maximum of four outputs against any researcher, irrespective of their circumstances or the length of time they have had to conduct research. A minimum of one output must be listed against each individual submitted to the REF.

66. In order to provide clarity and consistency on the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty, there will be a **clearly defined** reduction in outputs for those types of circumstances listed at paragraph 69a. Circumstances that are more complex will require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs; these are listed at paragraph 69b. Arrangements have been put in place **for complex** circumstances to be considered on a consistent basis, as described at paragraphs 88-91.

67. Where an individual is submitted with fewer than four outputs and they do not satisfy the criteria described at paragraphs 69-91 below, any 'missing' outputs will be graded as 'unclassified'.

68. Category A and C staff may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty in the assessment, if one or more of the following circumstances significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period:

- a. Circumstances with a **clearly defined** reduction in outputs, which are:
 - i. Qualifying as an early career researcher (on the basis set out in paragraph 72 and Table 1 below).
 - ii. Absence from work due to working part-time, secondments or career breaks (on the basis set out in paragraphs 73-74 and Table 2 below).
 - iii. Qualifying periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave (on the basis set out in paragraphs 75-81).
 - iv. Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1-6, as defined at paragraph 86.
- b. **Complex circumstances** that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:
 - i. Disability. This is defined in 'guidance on submissions' Part 4, Table 2 under 'Disability'.
 - ii. Ill health or injury.
 - iii. Mental health conditions.
 - iv. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of – or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to – the allowances made in paragraph 75 below.
 - v. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
 - vi. Gender reassignment.
 - vii. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed at paragraph 190 of 'guidance of submissions' or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

Clearly defined circumstances

69. Where an individual has one or more circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs, the number of outputs that may be reduced should be determined according to the tables and guidance in paragraphs 72-86 below. All sub-panels will accept a reduction in outputs according to this guidance and will assess the remaining number of submitted outputs without any penalty.

70. In REF1b, submissions must include sufficient details of the individual's circumstances to show that these criteria have been applied correctly. The panel secretariat will examine the information in the first instance and advise the sub-panels on whether sufficient information has been provided and the guidance applied correctly. The panel secretariat will be trained to provide such advice, on a consistent basis across all UOAs. Where the sub-panel judges that the criteria have not been met, the 'missing' output(s) will be recorded as unclassified. (For example, an individual became an early career researcher in January 2011 but only one output is submitted rather than two. In this case the submitted output will be assessed, and the 'missing' output recorded as unclassified.)

Early career researchers

71. Early career researchers are defined in paragraphs 85-86 of 'guidance on submissions'. Table 1 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment for early career researchers who meet this definition.

Table 1 Early career researchers: permitted reduction in outputs

Date at which the individual first met the REF definition of an early career researcher:	Number of outputs may be reduced by up to:
On or before 31 July 2009	0
Between 1 August 2009 and 31 July 2010 inclusive	1
Between 1 August 2010 and 31 July 2011 inclusive	2
On or after 1 August 2011	3

Absence from work due to part-time working, secondments or career breaks

72. Table 2 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment for absence from work due to:

- a. part-time working
- b. secondments or career breaks outside of the higher education sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

Table 2 Part-time working, secondments or career breaks: permitted reduction in outputs

Total months absent between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013 due to working part-time, secondment or career break:	Number of outputs may be reduced by up to:
0-11.99	0
12-27.99	1
28-45.99	2
46 or more	3

73. The allowances in Table 2 are based on the length of the individual's absence or time away from working in higher education. They are defined in terms of total months absent from work. For part-time working, the equivalent 'total months absent' should be calculated by multiplying the number of months worked part-time by the full-time equivalent (FTE) **not** worked during those months. For example, an individual worked part-time for 30 months at 0.6 FTE. The number of equivalent months absent = $30 \times 0.4 = 12$.

Qualifying periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave

74. Individuals may reduce the number of outputs by one, for each discrete period of:

- a. Statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013, regardless of the length of the leave.
- b. Additional paternity or adoption leave¹ lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013.

75. The approach to these circumstances is based on the funding bodies' considered judgement that the impact of such a period of leave and the arrival of a new child into a family is generally sufficiently disruptive of an individual's research work to justify the reduction of an output. This judgement was informed by the consultation on draft panel criteria, in which an overwhelming majority of respondents supported such an approach.

76. The funding bodies' decision not to have a minimum qualifying period for maternity leave was informed by the sector's clear support for this approach in the consultation; recognition of the potential physical implications of pregnancy and childbirth; and the intention to remove any artificial barriers to the inclusion of women in submissions, given that women were significantly less likely to be selected in former RAE exercises.

77. The funding bodies consider it appropriate to make the same provision for those regarded as the 'primary adopter' of a child (that is, a person who takes statutory adoption leave), as the adoption of a child and taking of statutory adoption leave is generally likely to have a comparable impact on a researcher's work to that of taking maternity leave.

78. As regards additional paternity or adoption leave, researchers who take such leave will also have been away from work and acting as the primary carer of a new child within a family. The funding bodies consider that where researchers take such leave over a significant period (four months or more), this is likely to have an impact on their ability to work productively on research that is comparable to the impact on those taking maternity or statutory adoption leave.

79. While the clearly defined reduction of outputs due to additional paternity or adoption leave is subject to a minimum period of four months, shorter periods of such leave can be taken into account as follows:

- a. By seeking a reduction in outputs under the provision for complex circumstances, for example where the period of leave had an impact in combination with other factors such as ongoing childcare responsibilities.
- b. By combining the number of months for shorter periods of such leave in combination with other clearly defined circumstances, according to Table 2.

80. Any period of maternity, adoption or paternity leave that qualifies for the reduction of an output under the provisions in paragraph 75 above may in individual cases be associated with prolonged constraints on work that justify the reduction of more than one output. In such cases, the circumstances should be explained using the arrangements for complex circumstances.

Combining clearly defined circumstances

81. Where individuals have had a combination of circumstances with clearly defined reductions in outputs, these may be accumulated up to a maximum reduction of three

¹ 'Additional paternity or adoption leave' refers to leave of up to 26 weeks which is taken to care for a child where the person's spouse, partner or civil partner was entitled to statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave, and has since returned to work. The term 'additional paternity leave' is often used to describe this type of leave although it may be taken by parents of either gender. For the purposes of the REF we refer to this leave as 'additional paternity or adoption leave'.

outputs. For each circumstance, the relevant reduction should be applied and added together to calculate the total maximum reduction.

82. Where Table 1 is combined with Table 2, the period of time since 1 January 2008 up until the individual met the definition of an early career researcher should be calculated in months, and Table 2 should be applied.

83. When combining circumstances, only one circumstance should be taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously. (For example, an individual worked part-time throughout the assessment period and first met the definition of an early career researcher on 1 September 2009. In this case the number of months 'absent' due to part-time working should be calculated from 1 September 2009 onwards, and combined with the reduction due to qualifying as an early career researcher, as indicated in paragraph 83 above.)

84. Where an individual has a combination of circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs **and** complex circumstances, the institution should submit these collectively as 'complex' so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances. Those circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs should be calculated according to the guidance above (paragraphs 72-84).

Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1-6

85. In UOAs 1-6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to two, without penalty in the assessment, for the following:

- a. Category A staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 October 2013.
- b. Category C staff who are employed primarily as clinical, health or veterinary professionals (for example by the NHS), and whose research is primarily focused in the submitting unit.

86. These allowances are made on the basis that the staff concerned are normally significantly constrained in the time they have available to undertake research during the assessment period. The reduction of two outputs takes account of significant constraints on research work, and is normally sufficient to also take account of additional circumstances that may have affected the individual's research work. Where the individual meets the criteria at paragraph 86, and has had significant additional circumstances – for any of the reasons at paragraph 69 – the institution may return the circumstances as 'complex' with a reduction of three outputs, and provide a justification for this.

Complex circumstances

87. Where staff have had one or more complex circumstances – including in combination with any circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs – the institution will need to make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted, and provide a rationale for this judgement.

88. As far as is practicable, the information in REF1b should provide an estimate – in terms of the equivalent number of months absent from work – of the impact of the complex circumstances on the individual's ability to work productively throughout the assessment period, and state any further constraints on the individual's research work in addition to the equivalent months absent. A reduction should be made according to Table 2 in relation to estimated months absent from work, with further constraints taken into account as

appropriate. To aid institutions the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) will publish worked examples of complex circumstances, which will indicate how these calculations can be made and the appropriate reduction in outputs for a range of complex circumstances. These will be available at www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF from February 2012.

89. All submitted complex circumstances will be considered by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP), on a consistent basis across all UOAs. The membership and terms of reference of the EDAP are available at www.ref.ac.uk under Equality and diversity. The EDAP will make recommendations about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty to the relevant main panel chairs, who will make the decisions. The relevant sub-panels will then be informed of the decisions and will assess the remaining outputs without any penalty.

90. To enable individuals to disclose the information in a confidential manner, information submitted about individuals' complex circumstances will be kept confidential to the REF team, the EDAP and main panel chairs, and will be destroyed on completion of the REF (as described in 'guidance on submissions', paragraphs 98-99).

Extract from *Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions*, July 2011

Early career researchers

85. Early career researchers are defined as members of staff who meet the criteria to be selected as Category A or Category C staff on the census date, **and** who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2009. For the purposes of the REF, an individual is deemed to have started their career as an independent researcher from the point at which:

- a. They held a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, which included a primary employment function of undertaking 'research' or 'teaching and research', with any HEI or other organisation, whether in the UK or overseas, **and**
- b. They undertook independent research, leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of research work. (A member of staff is not deemed to have undertaken independent research purely on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs.)

86. The following do **not** meet the definition of an ECR (this list is not exhaustive):

- a. Staff who first acted as an independent researcher while at a previous employer – whether another HEI, business or other organisation in the UK or elsewhere – before 1 August 2009, with a contract of 0.2 FTE or greater.
- b. Staff who first acted as an independent researcher before 1 August 2009 and have since had a career outside of research or an extended break from their research career, before returning to research work. Such staff may reduce the number of outputs submitted according to paragraph 92a.iv. (career breaks).
- c. Research assistants who are ineligible to be returned to the REF, as defined in paragraphs 80-81.