

STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK REF 2014

CODE OF PRACTICE

1. Introduction

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 is the new system put in place by the four UK Higher Education Funding Councils for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, replacing the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) carried out in 2008. The REF submission is an institutional return which is intended to enhance and optimise the reputational and financial position of Stranmillis University College.

This Code of Practice has been developed by the Head of Research Development in conjunction with the Head of Human Resources and the Research and Ethics Committee (incorporating the REF Working Group), to ensure that all staff engaged in excellent research are recognised in a selection process that is fair, evidence-based and transparent, and which promotes equality, avoids discrimination, and complies with legislation.

The Code of Practice sets out how Stranmillis University College will select staff for inclusion in its submission to the REF 2014, as well as providing information on how the submission will be coordinated, the support structures available to staff members, how individual circumstances will be accounted for in the process, and the timeline for selection and submission.

Stranmillis University College plans to enter the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 exercise in Main Panel C sub-panel 25 (Education).

The University College's first RAE entry was in 2008 and 6 staff were returned. 40% of research activity in the University College's first submission was found to be at or above 2* level. This met the University College's targets for this first submission.

Proud of this achievement, the University College plans to build on this achievement by improving the quality and quantity of its submission for the 2014 exercise by:

- encouraging academics from a range of disciplines within the University College to submit their research publications
- encouraging submissions from early career researchers and research active members of staff
- increasing the number of international publications
- increasing the number of scientific peer reviewed national publications.

2. Purpose and Aim of the Code

This Code sets out how the University College intends to meet the requirements of its funding body (currently the Department for Employment and Learning – DEL) and REF. This document is primarily for staff charged with responsibility for making

decisions about staff inclusion in the REF 2014. In providing transparent guidelines, the Code will also prove useful to staff considering entry to the REF 2014 and those with an interest in the selection process.

The University College aims to ensure that all eligible staff who are engaged in returnable excellent research are included in the REF 2014 submission.

The Code also demonstrates the steps taken and to be taken to ensure that the University College has acted lawfully and that equality considerations have been an integral part of this process.

3. Publication of the Code

The Code will be circulated to all staff by the REF Working Group via the University College's REF webpages and email system. Hard copies will be available on request, and the document will be available in the University College Library. This Code will also be available in alternative formats on request (in line with the provisions of the University College Equality Scheme¹ and equality policies, procedures and practice).

The publication of the Code will be publicised through announcement:

- at Staff Council
- in the University College bulletin
- via staff email and
- via University College noticeboards.

The Code will be sent to any eligible staff member who may be away from the University College for an extended period, such as on maternity, paternity, adoption leave, sickness absence, career break or sabbatical leave. The Human Resources team will send this document to the home address of any such employees.

4. Application of the Code

The University College is committed to ensuring that the Code will be applied fairly, consistently and equitably to all eligible staff, and any decisions taken at each stage of the process will be transparent. The University College view and expectation is that all staff should experience a consistent process in relation to REF.

The University College has been developing its research activity in recent years, building on its achievements in RAE 2008. The University College therefore intends

¹ The College has been identified as a public authority for the purposes of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) – “the Act.” The Act requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act. The College's Equality Scheme sets out its arrangements for meeting these duties.

that all eligible staff who wish to participate in REF 2014 will be supported in so doing. Such staff have access to the research expertise of a dedicated Research Officer who offers support in the form of data entry, analysis and interpretation, and a Research Administrative Officer who identifies calls for international publications in scientific peer reviewed journals, proofs and edits journal submissions and identifies research tenders, organises lunchtime seminars where staff disseminate and discuss their research findings, staff development training and regular one to one mentoring sessions with a senior member of staff. The University College approach has been to encourage self-selection into the REF, and a programme of communication and support (including mentoring) has been designed and delivered by the REF Working Group.

5. Responsibility/Authority

The responsibility for REF submission has been delegated from the Governing Body via the Principal to the Research and Ethics Committee (hereafter called the Research Committee), to the Head of Research Development.

The Research Committee reports to the Academic Leadership Committee, which in turn reports to the Governing Body.

REF Working Group

A REF Working Group has been established (a subgroup of the Research Committee) to take forward the REF submission and support staff who wish to participate. This is composed of the Head of Research Development and two senior members of academic staff.

The REF Working Group meets approximately three times per semester to identify eligible submissions, offer bespoke support to aid staff with REF potential and to develop the University College's response to REF.

This team is supported by the University College's Research Officer and Research Administrative Officer.

The University College's Head of Human Resources is also contributing to the University College's REF activities, e.g., advising on equality matters and providing equalities training, attending the REF Working Group as appropriate.

The Human Resources team advises on and monitors equality and diversity issues in relation to the University College's REF preparation and submission.

The Head of Research Development and Head of Human Resources meet as required, e.g., to address staff disclosures relating to individual staff circumstances, to prepare and/ or review equality screening reports and/or Equality Impact Assessment relating to REF.

These activities are carried out separately from the work of the REF Working Group. However, the Head of Research Development will be responsible for ensuring that there is timely and appropriate communication with the REF Working Group about equality considerations.

Given the relatively small size of the University College, a submission is being made under 1 Unit of Assessment.

6. Training

The University College will deliver equality training for all staff involved in:

- selection of eligible staff for REF 2014
- management of individual staff circumstances
- determining appropriate reductions in relation to individual staff circumstances
- the appeals process.

This training will be designed to meet the REF 2014 requirements, and will draw on materials provided for this purpose by the Equality Challenge Unit.

It will prepare those involved in these activities to carry this work out in a manner which is consistent with the University College's commitment to promoting equality and diversity and its legal obligations. Its aim is therefore to ensure that all staff are treated fairly and lawfully.

This training will be delivered by the Head of Research Development and the Head of Human Resources, assisted by the Human Resources Officer.

7. Process

The University College has invested in improving the accuracy and precision of staff records to ensure the integrity of the REF 2014 submission. This has been achieved through a number of benchmarking exercises conducted on an annual basis since 2010 with the aim of offering a transparent, inclusive and consistent approach.

Exercises include:

- informing staff about the REF 2014, in open information sessions
- annually auditing staff with regards to their research activity
- annually informing staff about REF developments
- publishing definitions of starred levels
- highlighting the personal circumstances detailed in REF documentation which may lead to a suitable reduction in the number of outputs submitted by an individual to REF
- inviting all members of academic staff to self-select into the REF 2014
- meeting staff to offer support and guidance on the quality of their submission

- offering support for staff in the preparation of research papers to enhance the quality of their submission (see Appendix 2)
- providing one-to-one mentoring for early career researchers
- obtaining details on staff submissions, updating records on a quarterly basis
- attending training on the development of impact case studies, impact templates and environment templates.
- involving the REF Working Group in discussions about individual submissions
- enhancing the integrity of the REF submission by involving the University College's Visiting Professor, as an external expert, at every stage of the process

Exclusion from the REF submission does not imply that a member of staff is not research active nor does it suggest that their publications are inadequate. Decisions on REF inclusion are made in discussion with the Head of Research Development and with the REF Working Group. An appeals process is in place for members of staff who wish to challenge decisions regarding their eligibility (see p.11).

Ineligible staff

The following staff are not eligible for submission:

- staff who are employed on non-academic contracts
- academic staff who are employed on teaching-only contracts on 31 October 2013
- Academic staff who are employed on contracts of less than 0.2FTE on 31 October 2013
- Research Assistants, unless, exceptionally, they are able to demonstrate research independence; or
- Visiting Professors, Fellows or lecturers employed by other HEIs both in the UK and overseas.

Eligible staff

Eligibility to be returned in the REF 2014 (see Appendix 5) is determined by the REF Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.2011).

- Category A: Academic staff with a research only or teaching and research contract of more than 0.2FTE (full-time equivalent) who are employed on the 31 October 2013;

All staff being returned in the University College's submission are within category A.

The University College will not differentiate between permanent staff and those employed on fixed term contracts who are in post on 31st October 2013.

The University College aims to ensure that all eligible staff who are engaged in returnable excellent research are included in the REF 2014 submission, subject to the following criteria:

- the fit of their research with the Unit of Assessment under which the University College is returning in REF 2014
- the quality of the individual's research outputs, as determined by rigorous external review and quality thresholds set for the Unit of Assessment (see Appendix 2)
- the requisite number of outputs, as determined by their individual staff circumstances (see section on p. 10, entitled 'Calculating an appropriate reduction in view of individual circumstances')
- their involvement in the Research Environment or Impact Case Studies.

As part of the REF preparation exercise the REF Working Group will make recommendations concerning the quality of research outputs. Submissions will be reviewed by an independent internal reviewer and an external reviewer for benchmarking purposes. This process will focus on the quality of each output and will not be used to make decisions about eligibility.

The REF Working Group will make recommendations to the Research Committee in December 2012 on the quality profiles of staff submissions to the REF.

External Review

Several measures have been undertaken to strengthen the quality of the University College's REF submission. In the first instance, all members of academic staff were invited to a REF training workshop on Monday 18th and Tuesday 19th October 2010 led by the Visiting Professor (Exeter University) to the University College. The quality indicators included in the Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions document to define unclassified, one, two, three and four star submissions were explained and staff invited to review their entries using this measure along with the Visiting Professor (VP) and Head of Research Development. This ongoing process involves the following:

2010/2012: VP offers one to one mentoring to early career researchers and staff with an interest in submitting to REF.

2010/2012: VP offers advice on the preparation of paper publications with a view to strengthening the REF submission.

2010/ 2012: With the Head of Research and REF Working Group, VP reviews Case Study submissions and offers constructive advice on research impact.

2012/2013: With the Head of Research and REF Working Group, VP will review the final submission using the quality indicators included (see Appendix 2) in the Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions document.

Communication

The University College intends that all eligible staff who meet the criteria noted above are included in the REF 2014 submission. To inform staff about the requirements of REF, several open meetings were held to encourage established research staff, early career researchers and staff with special circumstances to engage with the REF process. Details concerning REF information sessions, REF training workshops and one-to-one meetings can be found on the University College's REF webpages.

Staff will be selected for submission by the REF Working Group, according to the stated criteria. Confidentiality will be strictly observed during this process.

The Head of Research Development will communicate to each member of eligible staff:

- their inclusion in the submission,
- the impact of the quality threshold on their inclusion,
- feedback from the External Reviewer,
- which publications they will be submitting.

This information will normally be discussed on a one to one basis to allow staff the opportunity to discuss their inclusion and any support that may be given to ensure their inclusion.

If any individual feels that their exclusion from REF 2014 is unfair in any way they have the right to appeal (see section on 'Feedback and Appeals', p. 11).

Individual Staff Circumstances

Eligible staff will normally be expected to produce four excellent research outputs, (except where outputs could be counted as double-weighted), which meet the quality thresholds which the University College has determined, as set out in the section 'Calculating an appropriate reduction in view of individual circumstances' (see p. 10).

The University College acknowledges that some employees may encounter personal circumstances that prevent them from completing this level of research outputs. The University College is committed to delivering and promoting equality of opportunity and thus facilitating participation among all staff who wish to be involved in the REF 2014.

The University College has a suite of equality and diversity policies available to its staff. It also has an approved Equality Scheme (as required under the Northern Ireland Act 1998) which sets out how the University College seeks to promote equality across a range of equality dimensions:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

The Equality Scheme sets out how the University College will operate, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, therefore its provisions will overarch the University College's preparation to submit to REF 2014. Further information on how the University College will carry out its screening process in relation to REF is given in the section entitled 'Screening and Equality Impact Assessment (see p. 12-13).

In addition to the promotion of equality as required under the Northern Ireland Act (1998), the University College complies with anti-discrimination legislation to ensure that no employee is discriminated against, directly or indirectly.

Within REF, there are a number of provisions which mean that eligible staff may be submitted even if they have fewer than four research outputs:

(a) Clearly Defined Circumstances:

- those who are determined to fit the category of early career researcher, as defined in the REF 2014 Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.2011)
- staff working part-time
- individuals who have taken periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave
- those who have been on secondment or have taken career breaks outside the higher education sector, during which the individual did not undertake academic research.

(b) Complex Circumstances

- disability (the University College defines disability as per the Disability Discrimination Act 1995)
- ill health or injury
- mental health conditions
- constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a period of clearly defined period of maternity leave
- childcare or other caring responsibilities
- gender reassignment
- other issues related to the equality dimensions cited in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (all 9 equality dimensions are noted at page 8).

A staff member who is dealing with such mitigating circumstances can still be submitted, as long as they meet the University College's selection criteria (as set out in the next section).

Calculating an appropriate reduction in view of individual circumstances

The reduction in the number of research outputs to be submitted for each individual will vary with respect to each person's circumstance. REF has provided a tariff system to allow participating Higher Education Institutions to calculate the appropriate number of research outputs to be submitted by staff with Clearly Defined Circumstances.

This tariff system is also used as a guide for staff with Complex Circumstances, but the reduction of research outputs will be reviewed by the REF 2014 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. Further guidance on how the number of research outputs will be reduced will be provided by the Equality Challenge Unit and used for reference by the University College. The University College will use this tariff system and the guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit to ensure all excellent research is submitted to REF 2014, regardless of any individual's own circumstances.

To ensure such individual staff circumstances can be taken into consideration, these circumstances need to be declared to the Head of Research Development. The University College will take a robust and proactive approach to declaration; a form prepared by the Equality Challenge Unit will be sent to every eligible member of staff. These forms should be returned to the Head of Research Development to be dealt with in confidence, according to the procedures below, and to ensure that they are managed and stored according to the Data Protection Act 1998.

In the case of Clearly Defined Circumstances only the Head of Research Development and the Head of Human Resources will know the circumstances for reduction. The Head of Research Development will communicate directly with the individual concerned regarding the appropriate number of outputs to be submitted. The REF Working Group will be notified that Clearly Defined Circumstances exist and the appropriate number of research outputs to be submitted. If the individual concerned is line managed by the Head of Research Development, the Vice Principal will be asked to act in this circumstance.

In the case of Complex Circumstances, only the Head of Research Development and the Head of Human Resources will know the circumstances for reduction. They will consider the Complex Circumstances presented within the guidance from the REF 2014 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel and the Equality Challenge Unit. They will make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of research outputs to be submitted and ensure an appropriate case is made to the REF 2014 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel in the submissions process.

The Head of Human Resources and Head of Research Development will provide evidence for all decisions made and actions taken regarding individual staff circumstances in case of appeal or audit. They will formally monitor the inclusion of eligible staff with reduced numbers of research outputs to ensure such employees are not being discriminated against on these grounds.

8. Timescale for selecting staff

A detailed timeline of activities required for the selection of staff, including full external review and REF 2014 requirements, has been prepared. This can be found on the University College REF 2014 website.

9. Feedback and Appeals

All eligible staff will receive detailed feedback from the Head of Research Development regarding their inclusion in or exclusion from the submission. This will include discussion regarding the impact of the quality threshold on their inclusion, feedback from the External Reviewer, and will clarify those parts to which they will be submitted. Wherever possible, this will be conducted on a one-to-one basis to allow staff the opportunity to discuss their inclusion and any support that may be given to ensure their inclusion.

All eligible staff will receive this feedback on their inclusion by 1st May 2013.

Records of the decisions to include or exclude eligible staff from each area of the University College's submission and the feedback meeting will be kept by the Head of Research Development to be used in the case of appeals. They will also be required to adhere to the requirements of Data Protection and Freedom of Information in these records, seeking and following advice from the University College's DP/FOI Officer.

Any employee who feels that they have been unfairly excluded from the University College's submission, after detailed feedback and discussion with the Head of Research Development, has the right to appeal against their exclusion.

In the first instance, any complaint must be sent in writing to the Vice Principal within five days of receiving the feedback from the Head of Research Development. A copy should be sent to the Head of Human Resources for audit and procedural purposes.

The Vice Principal and an impartial third party will act as an appeal panel (e.g., Head of Teacher Education or Early Childhood Studies) to consider each case on its merit. The dissatisfied employee and the Head of Research Development will be invited to meet with the panel and make their representations. A member of the Human Resources team will also attend the meeting.

This meeting will be held within three working weeks of the Vice Principal receiving the appeal. At the end of the meeting the panel will arrive at a decision and will explain their decision to the employee.

If the employee remains dissatisfied with the outcome s/he has the right of appeal to the REF Formal Appeals Panel, consisting of the Principal and a member of the Governing Body. A member of the Human Resources team will also attend the meeting.

The formal appeal should be made in writing to the Vice Principal within 5 days of the decision on the appeals panel meeting and a copy sent to the Head of Human Resources for audit and procedural purposes.

The REF Formal Appeals Panel shall meet within three working weeks of receipt of the formal appeal. The dissatisfied employee and the Vice Principal will be invited to meet with the panel and make their representations. A member of the Human Resources team will also attend the meeting. Prior to its meeting with the employee, the Panel may seek advice from a subject expert external to the University College.

After considering all of the information available, the Panel will make its decision and inform the employee of its conclusions. The decision of this Panel will be final.

10. Screening and Equality Impact Assessment

The University College is using its screening and Equality Impact Assessment tools as outlined in its Equality Scheme to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. It is also following the REF Guidance on Submissions.

The following questions are applied as part of the screening process:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

The screening process leads to one of the following three outcomes:

- the policy is 'screened in' for equality impact assessment,
- the policy is 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted or
- the policy is 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

The screening and Equality Impact Assessment processes in relation to REF 2014 are conducted by the Head of Research Development and the Head of Human Resources to ensure the REF Code of Practice does not have a differential or adverse impact on any particular staff group.

The Human Resources department provides available data on those staff who are eligible to be submitted in regard of all the equality dimensions as stated in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This data are analysed and a commentary provided by Human Resources to ensure that no group of staff is being adversely

impacted upon or discriminated against in their inclusion in or exclusion from the University College's submission to REF 2014.

The screening process within the University College has shown that there is no evidence that any staff members are adversely affected by the provisions of the REF Code of Practice, or unfairly excluded from the REF submission. However, data from the Higher Education sector across the United Kingdom shows that there does not appear to be equal participation in REF across a number of equality dimensions. Therefore, the College is carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment in accordance with the University College's Equality Scheme, Equality Commission guidance and the REF Guidance on Submissions. The University College will consult with its staff as part of any Equality Impact Assessment process.

The Human Resources Manager and Head of Research Development will keep the screening process and data under review.

Any changes required to prevent discrimination or promote equality of opportunity will be taken prior to the submission deadline.

If potential discrimination is identified, this will either be objectively justified within the constraints of the law or action will be taken to change policy.

11. Monitoring

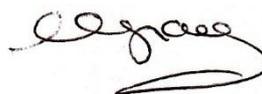
The implementation of this Code of Practice will be monitored by the REF 2014 Working Group on a quarterly basis to ensure that the principles of transparency, consistency and inclusivity are being complied with and the processes it details adhered to within and across the University College.

12. Approval

This Code of Practice was approved by the University College's Research and Ethics Committee on 20 June 2012.



Dr Clifford Boyd
Vice Principal



Dr Colette Gray
Head of Research Development

Appendix 1. REF Submission Coordination

REF Working Group

Membership:

- Head of Research Development
- Research coordinator (Early Years theme)
- Research coordinator (mentoring and support)

REF coordination: Head of Research Development

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- To ensure the timely return of full, appropriate and accurate information for all sections of the Unit of Assessment's UoA) return in accordance with HEFCE and University College guidelines.
- To ensure that all procedures are in place in the UoA well before 2014 and in a manner that will optimise the UoA REF return.
- Take responsibility for the management of the process of internal and external reviews of outputs between 2012 and 2013.
- In collaboration with the Head of Human Resources to produce the Code of Practice.
- To complete the HEFCE templates for REF3 and REF5; enhancing the submission by highlighting areas of excellence.
- To complete an environmental case study detailing the infrastructure that supports research excellence in the University College.
- To produce two impact case studies for the UoA.
- To manage the audits and reviews of research output submissions.
- To chair REF Working Group meetings for discussion and dissemination of information about the REF submission.
- To liaise with the Research and Ethics Committee.

Research and Ethics Committee

- University College Principal
- Vice Principal
- Acting Vice Principal
- Head of Research Development
- Research coordinator (Early Years theme)
- Administrative Officer

Appendix 2. Overall quality profile: Definitions of starred levels

Extracted from *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions* (p.43)

Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

Appendix 3. Assessment criteria

Extracted from *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions* (pp.8-9)

As with previous RAEs, the assessment process is based on expert review. Each sub-panel will examine the submissions made in its UoA, taking into account all the evidence presented. They will use their professional judgement to form an overall view about each submission. In doing so, the sub-panels will assess three distinct elements of each submission, against the following generic criteria:

- a. **Outputs:** The sub-panels will assess the quality of submitted research outputs in terms of their 'originality, significance and rigour', with reference to international research quality standards. This element will carry a weighting of 65 per cent in the overall outcome awarded to each submission.
- b. **Impact:** The sub-panels will assess the 'reach and significance' of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture that were underpinned by excellent research conducted in the submitted unit, as well as the submitted unit's approach to enabling impact from its research. This element will carry a weighting of 20 per cent.
- c. **Environment:** The sub-panels will assess the research environment in terms of its 'vitality and sustainability', including its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. This element will carry a weighting of 15 per cent.

Appendix 4. Summary of Equality Legislation

Extracted from *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions* (pp.54-59)²

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 the 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>
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² The College notes that the Equality Act 2010 does not apply in Northern Ireland. However, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) places a number of duties on public authorities, as explained in sections 7 and 10 of this Code.

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

	<p>cardiovascular diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia • mental health conditions such as depression and eating disorders • impairments caused by injury to the body or brain. <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 (see paragraphs 90-100 and the panel criteria).</p>
Gender reassignment	<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</p>

	<p>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 (see paragraphs 90-100, and the panel criteria). Information about the member of staff will be kept confidential as described in paragraph 98.</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<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>
<p>Political opinion</p>	<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</p>

	opinion.
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>
Religion and belief including	<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</p>

<p>non-belief</p>	<p>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, as set out in paragraphs 90-100 and in the panel criteria documents.</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</p>

	<p>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>
<p>Welsh Language</p>	<p>The Welsh Language Act 1993 places a duty on public bodies in Wales to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis. This is reinforced by the provisions of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.</p> <p>The arrangements for the assessment of outputs in the medium of Welsh by the REF panels are set out in paragraphs 128-130.</p>

Appendix 5. Individual Staff Circumstances

Extracted from *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions* (pp.28-31)

Individual staff circumstances

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.

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.

As a key measure to support equality and diversity in research careers, individuals may be returned with fewer than four outputs without penalty in the assessment, where their 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.

Where an individual is submitted with fewer than four outputs and their research has not been constrained by circumstances as described in paragraphs 92-95 of the *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions*, any 'missing' outputs will be graded as 'Unclassified'.

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. Clearly defined circumstances, which are:
 - i. Qualifying as an ECR (as defined at paragraphs 85-86 *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions*).
 - ii. Part-time working.
 - iii. 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 at sub-paragraph b 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).

- iv. Secondments or career breaks outside of the higher education sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.
- b. Circumstances that are more complex and require a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that can be reduced without penalty. These circumstances are:
 - i. Disability. This is defined in Part 4, Table 2 *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions* under 'Disability'.
 - ii. Ill health or injury.
 - iii. Mental health conditions.
 - iv. 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.)
 - v. Childcare or other caring responsibilities.
 - vi. Gender reassignment.
 - vii. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed at paragraph 190 *Assessment Frameworks and Guidance on Submissions*.

For clearly defined circumstances, the 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, the institution will need make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted, and the REF EDAP will consider these cases on a consistent basis across all UOAs. ECU will provide worked examples of complex circumstances, indicating the appropriate reduction in outputs for a range of particular circumstances. These will be available at www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF from September 2011.

Where an institution wishes to include a combination of clearly defined and more complex circumstances relating to an individual, the institution should return these as 'complex' so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances.

Appendix 6. REF 2014 Timetable.

March 2010	Publication of 'Initial decisions' by the funding bodies on the conduct of the REF (HEFCE Circular letter 04/2010)
July 2010	Publication of 'Units of assessment and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 01.2010)
November 2010	Publication of reports on the REF impact pilot exercise
February 2011	Panel membership announced
March 2011	Publication of 'Decisions on assessing research impact' (REF 01.2011)
July 2011	Publication of 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions' (REF 02.2011)
End July 2011	Publication of draft panel criteria and working methods for consultation
5 October 2011	Close of consultation on draft panel criteria and working methods
January 2012	Publication of panel criteria and working methods
31 July 2012	Institutions intending to make submissions to the REF submit their codes of practice on the selection of staff
Autumn 2012	Pilot of the REF submissions system
October 2012	Invitation to HEIs to make submissions; invitation to request multiple submissions; and start of survey of submissions intentions
December 2012	Survey of submissions intentions complete and deadline for requests for multiple submissions
January 2013	Launch of submissions systems and accompanying technical guidance
31 July 2013	End of assessment period (for research impacts, the research environment, and data about research income and research doctoral degrees awarded)
Mid 2013	Appointment of additional assessors to panels

31 October 2013	Census date for staff eligible for selection
29 November 2013	Closing date for submissions
31 December 2013	End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies)
Throughout 2014	Panels assess submissions
December 2014	Publication of outcomes
Spring 2015	Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles
