

**SWANSEA UNIVERSITY**

**RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2014**

**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY STATEMENT AND CODE OF PRACTICE**

The following REF Code of Practice includes a policy statement, code of practice and individual circumstances form in relation to Swansea University's REF preparations and submission.

**Purpose**

1. Each institution making a submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 is required to develop, document and apply a code of practice on selecting staff to include in their submissions. A REF code of practice assists an Institution embed the principles of equality and diversity legislation and other relevant legislations in their decision making process on submissions.
2. A code of practice ensures fairness, transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity, as is highlighted in the Assessment framework and guidance on submissions, to ensure that all REF processes are fair from the outset.

**Requirement**

3. HEIs are required to submit their codes of practice to the REF team **on or before 27 April 2012**. The Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) will examine the codes of practice.
4. If the EDAP advises the REF team that an institution's code of practice does not meet the requirements of the guidance, the four UK funding bodies will take appropriate action. Heads of institutions will be required to confirm adherence to their institution's code of practice when making their institution's submission.

*(This document can be provided in alternative formats on request. Please contact [ref@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:ref@swansea.ac.uk) who will make the appropriate arrangements).*

## POLICY STATEMENT

### Principles

5. The University's code of practice will make all the processes concerned with selection of staff for inclusion in REF 2014 submissions transparent. Practice in respect of submissions will be consistent across the Institution and will set out the principles to be applied to all aspects/stages of the processes. Responsibilities will be clearly defined and the operating criteria and terms of reference for individuals, committees, advisory groups and any other bodies concerned with the REF will be made readily available to all individuals and groups concerned. The existence of the code will be well publicised throughout the institution.
6. The following principles govern the conduct of the REF and the University's Code of Practice.

**Transparency:** All processes for the selection of staff for inclusion in REF submissions will be transparent. This policy and code of practice will be made available and easily accessible to all academic staff across the institution, and drawn to the attention of those absent from work. It will be made available in a variety of formats on request. There will be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the code of practice and explain the processes related to selection of staff for submission. This should be documented in the code. This policy and code of practice will be available on the University's web-site, and will be included as part of the REF submissions.

**Consistency:** The policy in respect of staff selection will be consistent across the University and the code of practice will be implemented uniformly. This policy, and the code of practice sets out the principles to be applied to all aspects/stages of the process at all levels within the institution where decisions will be made.

**Accountability:** Responsibilities will be clearly defined, and individuals and bodies that are involved in selecting staff for REF submissions will be identified. This policy, and the code of practice sets out the training requirements for those who are involved in selecting staff. Operating criteria and terms of reference for individuals, committees, advisory groups and any other bodies concerned with staff selection will be set out and made available.

**Equity and Inclusivity:** All types of research and all forms of research output across all disciplines shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Criteria and assessment processes will be adopted that recognise excellence in research on comparable basis across the community. Within unit of assessments, members of staff involved in selecting colleagues and impact case studies for REF submission should, where possible, reflect the diversity of research within a Unit of assessment.

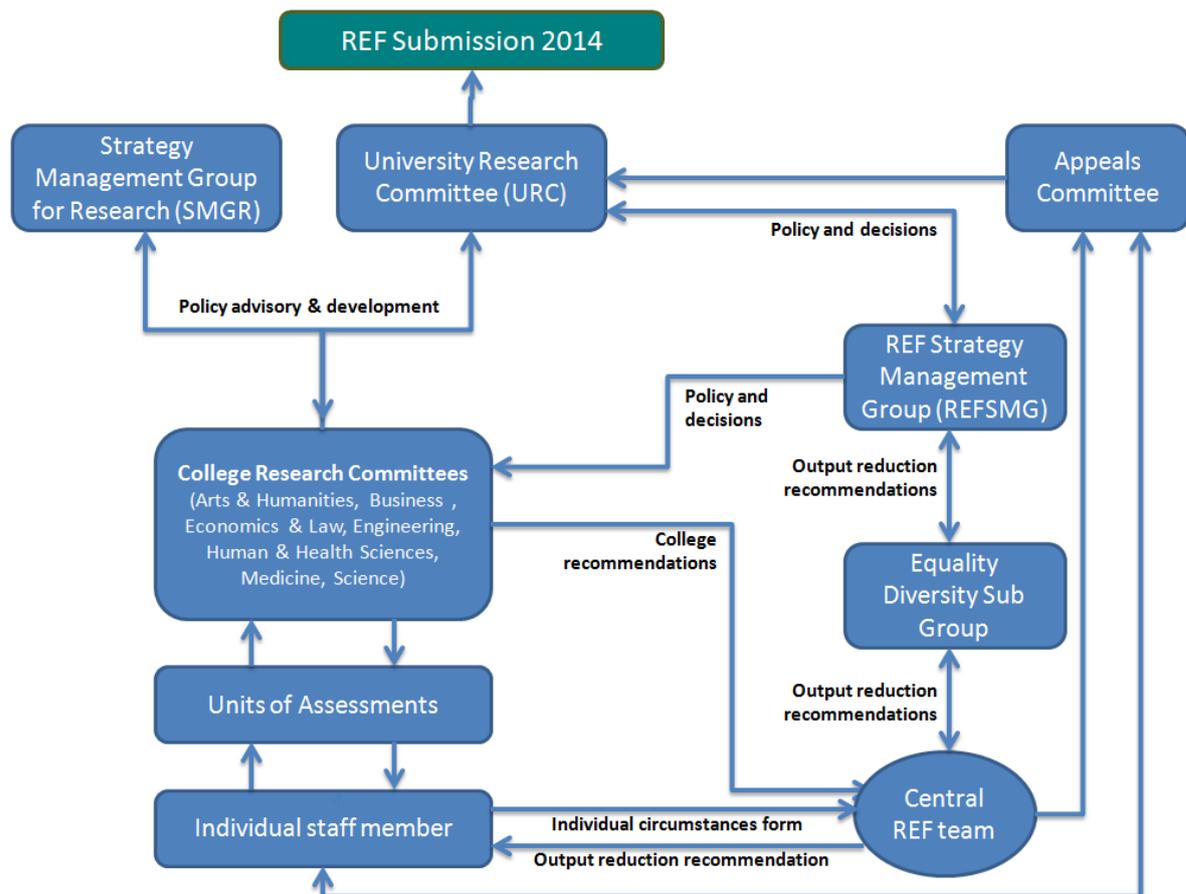
7. The University will:
  - 7.1 Take into account the requirements and recommendations within the REF Assessment, framework and guidance on submissions, to assist institutions promote an inclusive environment.
  - 7.2 Take into account requirements based on the Equality Act 2010 and relevant employment law.
  - 7.3 Develop open and transparent selection criteria for use by the University's selection panels/boards while being mindful of ensuring that staff experience is in line with the principles, policies and procedures outlined in the codes of practice.
  - 7.4 Encourage all excellent researchers to submit their work and make the criteria of selection and submission sufficiently transparent.

- 7.5 Ensure that all staff in Colleges involved in the REF management process and Senior Management involved in selection of staff, receive the Equality training tailored to REF processes.
  - 7.6 Detail the communication channels to be used to convey the relevant information to all involved in advance of the selection process.
  - 7.7 Take account of individuals' personal circumstances in accordance with the guidance set out in the *REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions*.
  - 7.8 Ensure an inclusive approach towards all groups of academic staff involved in REF processes (e.g. ensure that meetings are held at times that are convenient for part time staff and staff with childcare commitments), and ensure that staff on extended leave (e.g. maternity or disability related leave) are kept involved and informed.
  - 7.9 Ensure that selection for REF submissions does not discriminate on the grounds of Race, Disability, Gender, Age, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief as well as fixed term or Part time status. Mini REF exercises will include equality impact assessments as part of the process, and the implications of these will be considered when preparing the final submission. Impact assessments may also be undertaken at the level of UOAs if, for example an imbalance in a particular UOA is perceived.
  - 7.10 The terms of reference for any committees or groups concerned with the REF will be identified and made available on the University web site. Clear definitions of each person's role within the selection process will be provided, including the rationale for their role, how they were selected for this role and where the role fits into the institutional management framework.
  - 7.11 This Policy and Code of Practice sets out guidance on how selection should take account of individual circumstances that may have an impact on an individual's ability to produce four outputs or work productively throughout the assessment period.
  - 7.12 This Policy and Code of Practice will be published on the University's web site and there will be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the code of practice and explain the processes related to selection of staff for submission.
  - 7.13 Appropriate and timely procedures will be put in place to inform staff who are not selected of the reasons, and of the appeals process. This process will allow appeals to be considered before a final selection is made. The code of practice contains details of the appeals procedures.
8. **Fixed term and part-time staff** In the light of the Fixed-term and Part-time Regulations, consideration will be given by the University to individual circumstances affecting part time and fixed term staff, such circumstances might for example include pro rata consideration of the application criteria for submission in the case of part time staff and breaks in the continuity of employment of fixed term and where relevant, contract research staff.
  9. Part time and fixed term staff are supported via the University's Fixed Term Employment and Contract research staff Code of Practice. This policy is underpinned by the primary principle whereby equality of opportunity is reflected in all aspects of employment. The Fixed Term Employment Regulations 2002 and the Part Time Workers Regulations 2002 are also explicit in key employment policies such as recruitment and selection.
  10. The University recognises the crucial contribution that its research staff, make, to its research performance. Early Career Researchers are especially important for sustaining high quality research and the university is committed to valuing and promoting career development for this diverse group of staff. The University has attained the "HR excellence in research" badge which acknowledges alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their recruitment. Principle 6 of this charter ensures that diversity and equality is promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

## CODE OF PRACTICE

### Swansea University Committees and Strategy Groups

11. Swansea University will be utilising existing formal governance committees and strategy groups, in addition to the implementation of the REF Strategy Management Group and Appeals Committee. The committees involved with process links are shown in the diagram below, followed by the terms of reference, formation, membership for each committee/group.



## 12. The University Research Committee

12.1 **Terms of Reference:** The University Research Committee will be responsible for the formulation of the University's submission and ensuring compliance with this code of practice through impact assessment. It will:

- develop, communicate and regularly review the University's research strategy focusing on strategic planning and preparation for the Research Excellence Framework.
- monitor Colleges' and University Research Centres' delivery of strategic research objectives and "test and challenge" key components of Colleges' research strategies.
- promote and support Colleges in their pursuit of external research funding opportunities.
- recommend to Senate the establishment, amendment and closure of University Research Centres, receive reports and review their performance at suitable intervals.
- discuss major strategic issues relating to the University's research environment, strategy and performance.

- act as a forum for the cross-institutional exchange of information and ideas and for the promotion of good practice in research.
- liaise with and receive reports from the Research Management Groups as appropriate.
- work towards the implementation of the Concordat to support the career development of research staff for increasing their contribution, capability and visibility in the institution.
- develop a University-wide awareness of ethical issues relating to research and furnish guidelines for Colleges via the Research Ethics Sub-Committee.
- receive reports on the activities of the Department of Research and Innovation.
- engage as appropriate with the Academic Board (Research).
- advise on any matter referred to it by Senate.
- review and confirm the units of assessment to be submitted to the Research Excellence Framework Exercise.
- review and confirm the overall quality and level to be expected from REF submissions.
- review and confirm decisions made with regard to inclusion or exclusion and ensure appropriate feedback to changes to proposals made for inclusion/non inclusion of members of staff.
- confirm the decisions on REF appeals

12.2 **Formation:** The Committee is part of the existing governance structure of the University.

12.3 **Membership:** It is expected that wherever possible membership of this group shall be diverse so as to represent the pool of staff from which selection to the REF takes place. The current membership comprises of academic staff from Colleges and key representatives from administrative departments playing a pivotal role in research strategy formulation and implementation. The membership is as follows:

- a) Pro- Vice Chancellor's Research x 2
- b) College Directors of Research x6
- c) Director of the Research Institute of Applied Social Sciences
- d) Dean of Academic Board (Research)

Also in attendance will be senior members of the Administrative Units such as Information Systems and Services, Department of Research and Innovation and Planning and Strategic Projects Unit.

12.4 **Position within the REF process:** Ultimate responsibility for the University's REF submission.

12.5 **Members Briefing:** Members will be expected to have participated and passed the most recent version of the Marshall Equality On line Equality Training package. In addition members of the University equality team will deliver equality training specifically tailored to the REF process which will include reference to the fixed term and part time regulations as well as on the Equality Act 2010. The use of case studies on complex staff circumstances (provided by the Equality Challenge Unit) will ensure that practical application is transparent, consistent, and inclusive.

12.6 **Mode of operation:** The University Research Committee convenes once per term. It will, with the assistance of the Strategy Management groups, produce University guidelines and strategy for staff detailing the selection criteria for REF submissions. These criteria will be based on a 1\*-4\* scale, for both published work and impact case studies. The criteria will also place particular emphasis on work of international and world-leading quality.

The University Research Committee will review and endorse the REF selection and submission decisions of the Advisory Sub Committees (e.g. REF Strategy Management Group

and Strategy Management Group for Research). It is anticipated that final decisions on submissions will be made in early summer 2013. Outcomes of decisions will be communicated to the College Research Committees and College Staff by Directors of Research in conjunction with UoA co-ordinators.

- 12.7 **Communications:** Strategy, policy, criteria and internal assessment requirements will be communicated via a series of channels including REF roadshows, REF preparation exercises, 1 to 1 meetings with staff, performance enablement reviews and via electronic medium such as SharePoint and the Internet. The selection of staff will be kept under review by means of the REF preparation exercises with involvement from HR, Pro Vice Chancellors and Head of College/Director of Research.
- 12.8 **Appeals mechanism:** A sub-committee will be established towards the end of 2012 to deal with appeals from colleagues who have not initially been selected for the institution's REF submission. A Pro Vice Chancellor, not involved in the REF submission process, will Chair the appeals committee. The panel will be drawn from College Directors of Research but, to ensure fairness and objectivity in the process, will not include any Senior Academic Staff member from the College of the candidate whose appeal is being considered. It is expected that wherever possible membership of this group shall be diverse so as to represent the pool of staff from which selection to the REF takes place.

### 13. REF Strategy Management Group

- 13.1 **Terms of Reference:** The REF Strategy Management Group, in its capacity as the Advisory Committee to University Research Committee will:
- provide strategic direction and support to all Colleges on REF related activities;
  - define, manage, approve and review REF related strategies and policies;
  - oversee the REF2014 submission;
  - regularly review the REF project plan;
  - handle and resolve strategic issues and risks.
  - escalate any key risks or issues to University Research Committee and Senior Management Team.
  - regularly assess the University's current REF capability and activity.
  - identify information management requirements and opportunities.
  - communicate with researchers via research road shows.
  - conduct relevant one-to-one meetings with researchers deemed at risk of non-submission.
  - inform key stakeholders of REF related progress and activities, including University Research Committee, Senior Management Team (SMT), University Management Board, Council, Senate, and Union bodies.
  - assess resource needed to address challenges and progress opportunities.
  - prioritise College/institutional requirements.
  - review the REF submissions of UoA's.
  - implement and manage a fair and equitable process to monitor and review REF related activities conducted across the institution.
  - Work with Directors of Research to ensure consistency and fairness in the selection process and to ensure the strongest possible UoA REF submissions.
  - notify members of staff about decisions made with regard to exclusion or inclusion

- Work with Directors of Research to ensure that the Code of Practice is fully and properly applied in relation to all REF related activities.
- Review personal circumstance forms and apply the relevant tariffs through assessments through an Equality and Diversity Sub Group that will be established for this purpose consisting of members of the Group with specialist advisers including HR and Equal Opportunities.

**13.2 Formation:** The REF Strategy Management Group is an advisory body formed to oversee the University REF submission and strategy development.

**13.3 Membership:** It is expected that wherever possible membership of this group shall be diverse so as to represent the pool of staff from which selection to the REF takes place. The current membership of the REF Strategy Group comprises of Senior Management Staff and Administrative Staff responsible for the University's submission to the Research Excellence Framework Exercise. The membership is as follows:

- a) Pro- Vice Chancellor (Research) x 2
- b) Pro- Vice Chancellor Strategic Development and Change Management
- c) Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor and Institutional Impact lead

Also in attendance will be Senior Administrative Managers from Human Resources, Information Systems and Services, and the Planning and Strategic Projects Unit.

**13.4 Position within the REF process:** The REF Strategy Management Group will oversee the REF management process; provide direction and communicate decisions to the formal grievance process through University Research Committee; and where appropriate, seek advice and guidance from the Strategy Management Group for Research.

**13.5 Members Briefing:** Members will be expected to have participated in and passed the most recent version of the Marshall Equality On line Equality Training package. In addition members of the University Equality team will deliver equality training specifically tailored to the REF process which will include reference to the fixed term and part time regulations in addition to the Equality Act 2010. The use of case studies on complex staff circumstances (provided by the Equality Challenge Unit) will ensure that practical application is transparent, consistent, and inclusive.

**13.6 Mode of operation:** The REF Strategy Group will meet at least once a month. It will discuss, endorse and, where necessary, refer any strategies for REF selection. It will inform the University Research Committee of the outcomes and recommendations of the internal REF assessments and final selection decisions for REF inclusion/exclusion.

- the timescale for selecting staff: It is suggested January 2013 for provisional selection before test and challenge and final selection by REF Strategy Group in early Summer.
- the method and timescale in which feedback will be provided in respect of the decisions made As noted above communication will be via DoR and UoA coordinators.

All submitted complex circumstance forms will be considered by the REF Equality and Diversity Sub Group, on a consistent basis across all UOAs. The Sub Group will make recommendations about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty to the relevant Unit of Assessment Coordinators and to the members of staff concerned. The relevant UoA Team will then be informed of the decisions and will assess the remaining outputs without penalty.

**13.7 Communications:** Strategy, policy, criteria and internal assessment requirements will be communicated via a series of channels including REF roadshows, REF preparation exercises, 1 to 1 meetings with staff, performance enablement reviews and via electronic medium such as SharePoint and the Internet. The process leading to staff selection will be kept under review by means of the REF preparation exercises with involvement from HR, PVC and Head of College/Director of Research. The outcome of this process will be communicated to staff by Directors of Research/Heads of College and where appropriate by Pro Vice Chancellors.

## **14. Strategy Management Group for Research (SMGR)**

### **14.1 Terms of Reference:**

- to promote strategic engagement with representatives of the Research Councils and other funding bodies;
- Foster national and international contacts in relation to funding opportunities;
- Discuss and confirm pressing issues in relation to the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
- Foster engagement with partner institutions and organisations.
- Support major research initiatives of university-wide significance.
- Facilitate responses to collaborative research themes.
- Brief on the activity of research centres and institutes.

**14.2 Formation:** The Strategy Management Group (Research) is a strategy implementation and advisory body formed to enhance and assist research decision making for the University Research Committee.

**14.3 Membership:** It is expected that wherever possible membership of this group shall be diverse so as to represent the pool of staff from which selection to the REF takes place. The current membership is as follows:

- a) Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) x2
- b) College Directors of Research (Arts & Humanities, Business, Economics & Law, Engineering, Human & Health Sciences, Medicine and Science).
- c) Directors of Cross-institutional Research Centres/Institutes.
- d) Nominated individuals.
- e) Research related Administrative Heads (or nominated other) including Planning and Strategic Projects Unit, Department of Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Services, and Marketing.

**14.4 Position within the REF process:** Policy advisory and developmental group.

**14.5 Mode of Operation:** The Strategy Management Group for Research convenes once every three weeks. The group advises the Pro Vice Chancellors for Research and the University Research Committee on REF and research related matters.

## **15. College Research Committees/ College REF Planning Units**

- Each College Research Committee or the equivalent College REF Planning Unit will have responsibility for initial proposals for inclusion or exclusion of members of staff and the application of the code of practice. College Research Committees will submit proposals for inclusion in the REF to the Strategy Management Group for Research for referral to the REF Strategy Management Group and University Research Committee.

- The College Research Committee or the equivalent College REF Planning unit may appoint a Unit of assessment team to carry out assessments on its behalf.

**15.1 Terms of Reference:** The College Research Committee or the equivalent College REF Planning Unit in conjunction with the UOA Team where appropriate will:

- Communicate to College Staff the detailed criteria that reflect the quality level expected by the University within each unit of assessment being submitted; Whilst there will be a uniform process across the University for selecting staff for the REF, the criteria to be used will vary from discipline to discipline in accordance with REF Panel guidelines.
- produce a statement of intent giving information about how it will carry out its selection and submission process. Staff should be consulted on the statement. Such a statement should be based on the guidance set out in the Assessment framework and guidance on submissions at [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02\\_11/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/) Further guidance of minimum expectations to be included in the Statement of Intent are set out below. A sample template is available at the University SharePoint site.
- carry out meaningful consultation with members of staff on the Statement of intent. The statement should be provided to all members of staff in the UoA for comment and it should be an item for the agenda at staff meetings.
- measure the submissions of individual members of staff against the specified UoA criteria and make proposals for inclusion of members of staff to the University Strategic Committees.
- notify members of staff about the process of appeal.

**15.2 Formation:** The composition of College Research Committee or the equivalent College REF Planning Unit will normally be determined by the Head of College in conjunction with the Director of Research, though they are encouraged to take the advice of colleagues.

**15.3 Membership:** It is expected that wherever possible membership of this group shall be diverse so as to represent the pool of staff from which selection to the REF takes place. Clear definitions of each person's role within the selection process must be provided, including the rationale for their role and where the role fits into the institutional management framework. Those involved in selection will have normally published work deemed 3\* or 4\* quality in the RAE or in the period since the RAE but subject to considerations of equality and diversity of membership

**15.4 Position within the REF process:** The **Statement of Intent** will set out the process by which the College Research Committee or the equivalent College REF Planning Unit or as may be delegated to the UoA Team will carry out its selection and submission, including details of those who will be involved in the decision-making process, the criteria that they will use, the evidence that they will call upon, the circumstances that they will take into account, and the channels of communication that they will employ..

**15.5 Members Briefing:** Members will be expected to have participated and passed the most recent version of the Marshall Equality On line Equality Training package. In addition members of the University equality team will deliver equality training specifically tailored to the REF process which will include reference to the fixed term and part time regulations in addition to the Equality Act 2010. The use of case studies on complex staff circumstances (provided by the Equality Challenge Unit) will ensure that practical application is transparent, consistent, and inclusive.

- 15.6 Mode of operation.** The UoA Statement of intent will set out
- the criteria that it will use in carrying out its functions [as above]
  - the method by which these criteria are communicated [as above but have there been any College level methods of communication]
  - the method by which feedback will be provided in respect of the decisions made

**15.7 Communication:** The UOA Statement of Intent will set out the communication mechanisms

## **16 Statement of Intent**

As a mandatory requirement for REF, each Units of Assessments within the Colleges has produced a statement of Intent with the following eight minimum requirements:

### **16.1 UOA Team Structure**

- Membership and roles/responsibilities
- Date of appointment
- The rationale and process involved in appointing colleagues.
- Assurance that the membership balance has considered diversity and equality and where possible team diversity reflects the balance of those eligible for REF submission.
- The process of consultation in the formation of the panel with assurance, that where applicable, the wider unit of assessment community has been consulted on membership of the UOA Team.

### **16.2 Published outputs:**

- Where possible, to include, selection process of internal assessors (readers, timescales, usage of citations and JIFs)
- Selection and consistency of use of external assessors.

The statement of intent refers to the following:

- To ensure consistency the same assessment template has been used.
- Internal assessment: As a minimum 2 readers normally from the Unit of assessment team has assessed the publication. In case of disagreements, or in instances of borderline cases between 2\* and 3\*, an external assessors is expected to have been used.
- External Assessment: An external assessor would have received formal guidance on how to assess publications and provided with a review template. External assessment would have been used in the following circumstances: 1) where internal assessors disagree; 2) in borderline cases; and 3) selecting a sample to ensure consistency across the Unit of Assessment.
- Selection of external assessors would have been on the basis of expertise and standing as indicated by, for example, membership of RAE Panels, acting as reviewers for other universities, editing major journals or other indicators of eminence in the profession.
- The names and a short biography of external assessors would have been provided to the REF Planning Unit.
- The final recommendation on the outcome of assessment is the responsibility of the College Research Committee or any equivalent College Planning Unit.
- The individual member of staff to be informed of the outcome (see “feedback” below)

### **16.3 Research Impact would include**

- Impact case study selection and development process.
- The process involved within the UoA on selecting case studies.
- Engagement with external users
- Auditable evidence
- Use of external assessors

The statement of intent would show that:

- consideration and justification has been given to the selection of choice of impact lead.
- All members of staff were invited to submit a case study
- internal selection/guidance should be provided within the UoA on institutional assessment. mechanisms
- Feedback had been provided to members of staff.
- Equity impact assessment will apply at a University level.
- All case studies put forward by the Units of assessment were assessed by four panels. Each panel consisted of 5+ academics, including both expert and non-expert members as well as the relevant Pro Vice Chancellor and Prof Tavi Murray as Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor for Impact. Every case study is assessed independently by 2 or 3 reviewers on these panels and was separately commented by a representative from DRI. Case studies were classified according to the REF definitions, with the addition of a category “Unclassifiable” where insufficient information had been supplied.
- Feedback on each case study submitted to the mini REF exercise was collated by the REF Planning team and shared with Unit of assessment co-ordinators, Impact lead, Director of Research and Head of College.

### **16.4 Environment**

- Includes reference to the process of narrative development.
- Collation and assessment of quantitative data (PGR and Research Income).

The statement of intent makes clear that:

- Staff were consulted on the environment narrative and they had access to its development.
- Specifies who lead on developing the narrative and timescales involved.
- Outlines the process to share quantitative indicators for Environment with all UoA staff (PGR and research income).

### **16.5 Staff selection process**

The statement of intent outlines the Unit of assessment selection process reflecting, as minimum, the University selection criteria and this Code of Practice.

- Refers to the University's threshold as being 3\* or above, which aligns with the proposed QR funding allocation.
- Indicates that the number of papers individuals need to have at that level will be dependent on personal circumstances, although the norm is 4 papers.
- Explains that Individuals are invited to submit their 4 strongest publications within the REF census period.
- Indicates cases where double weighting is relevant and appropriate to the UoA panel.
- Indicates instances of joint authorship issues and how these will be resolved.
- States that, members of staff in the UoA should be consulted on the selection process, for example at an appropriate meeting of relevant staff. Members of staff not present (e.g. on maternity leave or working part time) should also be consulted
- Explains that there will be a University Equality and Diversity Sub Group which will consider personal circumstances submissions and decide the appropriate tariff in accordance with REF Guidance. This tariff will be provided to the UoA co-ordinator, the individual concerned and REF Strategy Group.

## **16.6 Equality and Diversity**

The Statement of intent explains that:

- Every eligible member of staff will be given the opportunity to complete a personal circumstances form. All members of staff will be expected to complete and return a form even where this is a nil return
- Equality considerations will apply to UoA teams (as above), selection of staff, ensuring equality monitoring of applicants by the institution in terms of key protected characteristics and that appropriate support will be provided at an individual level in accordance to the outcome of an equality impact assessment.
- All selectors will be trained in equality with specific regard to REF and all external assessors will be provided with appropriate consistent guidance.
- The CoP and the Statement of Intent will be adhered to throughout the process and made available to all members of staff through appropriate mechanism e.g. staff meetings and SU's SharePoint site.
- The same principles (equity, transparency, consistency and accountability) will apply to institutional impact case studies.

## **16.7 Communications**

- Includes method of communicating to all research staff.
- An indication of consistent feedback mechanisms and processes.
- Information provided to researchers on the REF process.
- How expectations were managed.

The statement of intent will include statements to the effect that:

- Members of staff in the Unit of assessment will be consulted on the Statement of Intent, for example at an appropriate meeting of relevant staff. Members of staff not present (e.g on maternity leave or working part time) should also be consulted.
- Both written and verbal feedback will be given on the outcome of assessment on each submitted paper by the Head of College, UoA coordinator or a member of the UOA Team. A short written statement on the outcome of the internal assessments of each paper will be provided stating the outcome and the reasons for that outcome; a copy to be provided to the REF Planning team.
- Individual members of staff may provide a short written statement on any disagreement with the assessment. This statement should be forwarded to REF Planning team and the College Research Committee.
- The outcomes of mini REFs will be communicated to individual members of staff as above.

## 16.8 Support

- Includes identification of research support needs.
- Support given to aid submission of individual staff.
- The statement of intent to include statements to the effect that: all staff will be encouraged and supported in developing a REF profile for submission. This should be a focus both of the Professional Development Review process and regular informal meetings. More specifically, every individual will have the opportunity to develop and monitor a publications strategy.
- Support will be provided for those 'at risk' of non submission through additional developmental guidance.
- Consideration will also be given to those groups with protected characteristics shown up in mini REF impact assessment to be disadvantaged. Such support may be provided at individual, UoA, College or University level, depending on the issues involved.

## 17 Appeals

Appeals against exclusion should be made in writing and **submitted to PSPU by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013** these will be considered by the Appeals Panel before the final selection is made. Such appeals should clearly set out the case for inclusion. Where the appeal relates to personal circumstances that were not previously identified in the individual circumstances form these should be set out.

The membership of the Appeals Panel has yet to be determined but will **not** include members of the REF Strategy Group nor anyone who has been involved in the selection of any of the appellants. Consideration will be given to membership in terms of diversity where practicable.

The Appeals Panel will consider the reasons given for exclusion by the College Research Committee and the case put forward for inclusion, and where external assessors have not been utilized, may seek the views of up to two external assessors.

Outcomes of Appeals will be notified to members of staff and to the College Research Committee and reasons provided.

## 18 Individual staff circumstances

- 18.1 REF Main panels and sub-panels have produced guidance on how they will deal with individual circumstances that might have had an effect on an individual's contribution to a submission and each panel's guidance document has an equal opportunities statement to ensure that personal circumstances are taken into account.
- 18.2 In common with the panel guidance, the University and College Research Committees and the REF Strategy Management Group will consider the following individual circumstances to the extent that they are stated to have had a material impact on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period:
- 18.2.1 Clearly defined circumstances: These include qualifying as an Early Career Researcher, junior clinical academic staff who have not gained Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013, part-time working, career breaks and secondments outside of HE, maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, or additional paternity leave.
- 18.2.2 Complex circumstances: These include disability, ill health or injury, mental health conditions, gender reassignment, childcare or other caring responsibilities, constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity adoption or childcare in addition to the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken. Other exceptional and relevant reasons, not including teaching or administrative work.
- 18.3 Research active staff intending to be submitted to the REF in all disciplines are expected to produce four outputs of the appropriate quality (3\* or 4\*) in time for the REF. However, where an individual's productivity has been constrained due to particular personal circumstances during the assessment period but has nevertheless produced high quality research, that person may be permitted to submit a reduced number of such outputs.
- 18.4 In addition there may be constraints related not to personal circumstances but to the range of duties undertaken, for example in relation to teaching load or administrative responsibilities. Such circumstances will **not** be taken into account in the REF exercise but may be used in MiniREF exercises for background information.

## 19 Clearly Defined Circumstances

- 19.1 Where circumstances involving discrete periods of time away from the submitting institution, for example maternity leave and part-time working, have adversely affected an individual member of staff's contribution, s/he may wish to indicate that these have led to a diminished number of outputs (they can also be considered with the full number of outputs if they so desire). These circumstances should have occurred or be ongoing after 1 January 2008 and should be set out in the **Individual Circumstance Form at appendix 1**.
- 19.2 To encourage staff disclosure of individual circumstances that may be sensitive, members of staff will be
- reassured about the way in which data will be stored
  - informed of the safeguards that exist to protect staff members' confidentiality and privacy
  - supported in disclosing individual circumstances that the University was previously unaware of
- 19.3 The Data Protection Act 1998 requires compliance with a number of important principles regarding privacy and disclosure when handling personal data. Some of the data that HEIs will

need to collect for REF purposes on individual staff circumstances are classed as sensitive personal data under the Act. Members of staff will be invited to give their permission to provide this personal data through the Individual Circumstances Form.

19.4 Where members of staff meet the criteria described below, the number of expected outputs will be reduced.

19.5 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).

19.5.1 Qualifying as an Early Career researcher (ECR) - see below.

19.5.2 Part-time working.

19.5.3 Qualifying periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave:

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 leave<sup>1</sup> lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013.

*(Note that maternity leave or additional paternity leave may involve related constraints on an individual's ability to conduct research in addition to the defined period of maternity leave itself. These cases can be returned as 'complex' as described below, so that the full range of circumstances can be taken into account in making a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty).*

19.5.4 Secondments or career breaks outside of the higher education sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

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

- part-time working.
- 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**

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

<sup>1</sup> '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'.

21 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 x 0.4 = 12.

## 22 Early Career Researchers

22.1 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:

22.2 They held a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, which included a primary function of undertaking ‘research’ or ‘teaching and research’, with any HEI or other organisation whether in the UK or overseas, **and**

22.3 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.) Further guidance is available in the REF Guidance on Submissions at [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02\\_11/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/)

Table 3 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment for early career researchers who meet this definition.

**Table 3 Early career researchers: permitted reduction in outputs**

<b>Date at which the individual first met the REF definition of an early career researcher</b>	<b>Number of outputs may be reduced by up to</b>
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

22.4 There may be cases where an early career researcher also has periods of absence. These cases can be returned as ‘complex’ as described below, so that the full range of circumstances can be taken into account in making a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty.

## 23 Complex Personal Circumstances

Circumstances that are more complex and require a judgement about the appropriate number of outputs that can be reduced without penalty are:

23.1. **Disability** - While there is no definitive list of what is considered a disability, it covers a wide range of impairments including:

- sensory impairments
- impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis, depression and epilepsy
- progressive impairments, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, HIV and cancer
- organ specific impairments, including respiratory conditions and cardiovascular diseases
- developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia
- mental health conditions such as depression and eating disorders
- impairments caused by injury to the body or brain.

**23.2 Ill health or injury.**

**23.3 Mental health conditions.**

**23.4 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).

**23.5 Other caring responsibilities.** Including child care or caring for elderly or disabled relatives.

**23.6 Gender reassignment.**

**23.7 Other circumstances relating to any of the protected characteristics** which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

**23.8** For more complex circumstances, the University will need make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted. 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](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF)

These circumstances should have occurred or continue to exist after 1 January 2008 and should be set out in the Individual Circumstance Form at Appendix 1. Members of staff will need to provide sufficient, explicit information about the nature of the circumstances, what timeframe they occurred within and how they have adversely affected the individual's contribution and research outputs. They should:

- describe the nature and timing of the circumstances
- explain the effects on working hours or ability to fulfil contracted working hours
- explain any other effects on the ability to work productively
- suggest the number of outputs to be reduced.

## **24 Submission of Individual Staff Circumstance Information.**

- 24.1 All eligible staff will be asked to complete an Individual staff circumstance form. Members of Staff should set out any such information in the **Individual Circumstance Form at appendix 1.**
- 24.2 Submitted information about defined circumstances should be limited to 200 words and the appropriate tariff will be applied by the REF Strategy Management Group.
- 24.3 Submitted information about all complex circumstances should be limited to 300 words. It will be reviewed by the Equality and Diversity Sub-Group of the REF Strategy Management Group together with specialist advice from the Director of Human Resources, the Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Occupational Health or other appropriate officer, who will review the evidence and make a recommendation in each case. This information will be maintained in strict confidence.

## **25 Work Related Circumstances**

- 25.1 There may be circumstances that have impeded production of high quality outputs, which are not related to personal factors but to the range of duties undertaken, for example in relation unusually high teaching load or significant administrative responsibilities. This will be for use in the mini REF exercises only **such factors will not be taken into account in the REF.** However members of staff may wish to note them on the Individual Circumstances Form as points for consideration or discussion during feedback.

## **26 Mini REF Exercises**

Mini REF exercises based on publications and impact will be carried out during the REF census period.

- 26.1 These exercises will be used as an opportunity to apply this code of practice and where appropriate refine it further.
- 26.2 External advisors will be informed and provided with this code of practice. Guidance will be provided to external advisors on the appropriate level of detailed comment on individuals.
- 26.3 All mini REF exercises will include equality impact assessments, and the implications of these will be considered when preparing the final submission.
- 26.4 An equality impact assessment will be carried out for impact case studies that are individual submissions as opposed to group submissions to ensure transparency and fairness in the process of selection.

## **27. Communication and Training for Selectors**

- 27.1 This Policy and code of Practice will be provided to all those involved in the selection process.

- 27.2 There will be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the code of practice and explain the processes related to selection of staff for submission. To ensure an inclusive approach towards groups of staff involved in REF processes meetings will be held at times that are convenient for part time staff and staff with childcare commitments. Staff on extended leave (e.g. maternity or disability related leave) will be kept involved and informed.
- 27.3 All members of staff with selection responsibilities will be provided with training on equality and diversity tailored to the REF processes. Training will be delivered on a College by College basis by the Director of Human Resources and the Senior Equal Opportunities Officer or their nominees, and will be supported by the presence of a Pro Vice Chancellor. All selectors participating in the session will be expected to participate and pass the most recent version of the Marshall Equality On line Equality Training package. In addition members of the University equality team will deliver equality training specifically tailored to the REF process which will include reference to the fixed term and part time regulations in addition to the equality act 2010. The training will also include case studies that are used to explore issues such as the implications of dealing with personal circumstances in the process of selecting staff for inclusion in the submission. Utilising the training material that will be available on the ECU web-site [www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF) )The training materials used will be made available on the University REF SharePoint site in order that all those eligible for submission can have access.

## **28. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 28.1 The University will conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) of staff who are eligible for submission. The REF Strategy Management Group will monitor this using anonymised data supplied from the HR database. If any prima facie imbalance is found relative to the total potential pool, then the REF Strategy Management Group will investigate and consider what remedial action needs to be taken.
- 28.2 Impact Case studies will also be monitored by Equality Impact Assessment.
- 28.3 An equality impact assessment will be conducted on the policy and procedures for selecting staff for the REF to determine whether the staff selection policy for the REF may have a differential impact on particular groups. For this reason EIAs will be conducted on each mini REF to inform the institution's code of practice and be kept under review as submissions are prepared.
- 28.4 EIAs will be informed by an analysis of data on staff eligible for selection in respect of all the protected characteristics for which data are available. The analysis will cover all eligible staff and will include information gained from engaging, consulting or involving staff from protected groups to inform an EIA.
- 28.5 EIAs will be considered at key stages of the selection process, to ensure that any necessary changes to prevent discrimination or promote equality are taken prior to the submission deadline. These stages will be:
- when identifying eligible staff who are likely to be selected through mini-REFs
  - when considering appeals
  - when preparing the final submission.
- 28.6 Where the data shows that an imbalance exists in a particular protected characteristic, The REF Strategy Management Group will undertake impact assessments at the level of

Colleges or UOAs with the proviso that this will not be at the UoA level where small numbers are involved (as is the case with some UoAs) as the data may not be meaningful or individual members of staff may be identified.

- 28.7 The EIAs may identify both positive and negative outcomes and can help ascertain where outcomes can be prevented or justified within the permits of the law or where the impact is positive, extended to other protected groups.
- 28.7 Where a particular policy or procedure is found to have a negative impact on a protected group, The Equality and Diversity Sub-Group of the REF Strategy Group will explore alternative procedures and consider whether steps can be taken to mitigate the impact. If a policy cannot be changed the REF Strategy Group will consider whether actions might be taken to support staff during the remainder of the census period with the ultimate aim of increasing staff selected from particular protected groups. For example, mentoring or additional support on return from maternity leave.
- 28.8 The REF Strategy Group will record any steps that have been taken to change the policy or mitigate the impact to ensure that any negative impact does not constitute unlawful discrimination and can be justified and will be recorded in the EIA report.
- 28.9 Consideration for appropriate support will be given to those groups with protected characteristics that may be identified in mini REF impact assessment exercises. Such support may be provided at individual, Unit of Assessment, College or University level, depending on the issues involved.
- 28.10 The REF equality impact assessment will be published on the University's website after the submission has been made. The published information will include the outcomes of any actions taken to prevent discrimination or advance equality.

## Consideration of individual staff circumstances

### Covering Note To All members of staff eligible for return in REF 2014

Swansea University is committed to ensuring that decisions about selecting staff for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) are made in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. Information on how eligible staff will be selected for submission to the REF can be found in Swansea University's Code of Practice which can be found at <https://collaborate.swan.ac.uk/research/ref/>

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

In determining whether eligible staff may be submitted to the REF with fewer than four research outputs, Swansea University and the REF Strategy Group will take the following circumstances into consideration:

- Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009) and Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 Part time employment
- Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research
- Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)
- Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)
- Ill health or injury
- Mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare in addition to periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken. This could include for example, pregnancy related illness and health and safety restrictions in laboratory and field work.
- Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)
- Gender reassignment
- other circumstances, that are not listed above that have affected your research output,. N.B. other professional commitments or duties such teaching, management or administration will NOT be taken into account

In determining the number of outputs staff are required to submit, the institution will observe the definitions of individual staff circumstances provided in the published REF 'Panel criteria and working methods' (January 2012) available at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk) under 'Publications'.

## Frequently asked Questions

Q What action do I need to take?

A If you are eligible for REF submission you are encouraged to complete the attached form. If further information is required about any circumstances disclosed, you will be contacted by a member of staff acting on behalf of the Equality and Diversity Sub-Group of the REF Strategy Group.

Q Who will see the information that I provide?

A Within the institutions, the information that you provide will be seen by the REF Strategy Group and members of staff of the PSPU and HR.

Members of the Equality and Diversity Sub-Group of the REF Strategy Group or individuals handling individual staff circumstances will observe confidentiality and information will be stored securely by PSPU. Information provided on the form may be shared externally for the purposes of evidencing any reduction in the number of research outputs

For circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs, information will be seen by the relevant REF sub-panel, the REF panel secretariat and the UK funding bodies' REF team. This will be information about early career researcher status, part-time working, career breaks or secondments, and periods of maternity, additional paternity or adoption leave taken.

For more complex circumstances, information will be seen only by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, the REF Main Panel Chairs and the UK funding bodies' REF team. This will be information to explain the impact on your research of circumstances such as disability, ill health, injury, mental health conditions, gender reassignment, caring responsibilities or constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption and paternity (in addition to the period of leave taken). This information will not be seen by the REF sub-panel.

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

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

Q What if my circumstances change?

A Swansea University recognises that staff circumstances may change between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013. If your circumstances change you can download a copy of the attached form at <https://collaborate.swan.ac.uk/research/ref/>

## REF Preparation Exercise

### Individual Circumstances Form

#### Section one:

**Please select one of the following:**

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

#### Section two:

**Please select as appropriate:**

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

<b>Email</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Preferred method of communication</b>	

- I do **not** wish to be contacted by a member of human resources staff

#### Section three

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

##### 1 Discrete Personal Circumstances

Please set out any circumstances (from 1 January 2008) involving a discrete period (a prolonged absence of six months or more) away from research which may include:

- a. Part-time working
- b. Maternity/paternity/adoptive leave
- c. Secondment to non research work, for example to industry or other sectors.
- d. Career breaks including periods working in other sectors

**Dates and duration: From .....**      **To .....**

**If Part Time, please state FTE during the period of part time working: .....**

**Please provide a brief description of circumstance (Limited to 200 words):**

## 2 Early Career Researchers

Early Career Researchers are defined as those who first gained an academic position that renders the individual REF eligible after 1 January 2008. Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 may also complete this section.

**Date of commencement of Current Post:** .....

**Current post title:** .....

**Previous post title:** .....

## 3 Complex Personal Circumstances

Complex individual staff circumstances are those where the adverse impact on productivity requires judgement. These circumstances should have occurred or continue to exist after 1 January 2008. Circumstances where the adverse impact on productivity is more complex include (but are not limited to) disability, ill health or injury, mental health issues, caring responsibilities gender reassignment etc,

**Period affected: From** ..... **To** .....

**Please provide sufficient, explicit information about the nature of the circumstances and the impact on your ability to undertake research.**

**(Limited to 300 words)**

- describe the nature and timing of the circumstances
- explain the effects on working hours or ability to fulfil contracted working hours
- explain any other effects on the ability to work productively
- suggest the number of outputs that should be reduced.

## 4. Work Related Circumstances

Work related circumstances are those that have impeded production of high quality outputs since 1 January 2008, which are not related to personal factors but to the range of duties undertaken, for example in relation to unusually high teaching load or significant administrative responsibilities. N.B. These will not be used as mitigation in the REF but may be points for consideration or discussion during feedback in the Mini-REF exercises.

**Period affected: From** ..... **To** .....

**Please provide sufficient, explicit information about the nature of the duties or responsibilities, explaining why they are particularly onerous:**

Please select as appropriate:

I confirm that the information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances.

I recognise that the information provided will be used for REF purposes and will be seen by [insert information].

I realise that it may be necessary to share information with the UK funding bodies' REF team, who may make the information available to REF panel chairs, members and secretaries and/or the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. [Delete if not applicable: I recognise that if a joint submission is made, information may be shared with another institution.] Where permission is not provided Swansea University will be limited in the action it can take.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

(Staff member)