



**CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE SELECTION OF  
STAFF FOR REF2014**

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## I. The Research Excellence Framework (REF)

1. REF is the seventh in a series of peer-review exercises conducted nationally to assess the quality of UK research and to inform the selective distribution of public funds for research by the UK higher education funding bodies. REF replaces the [Research Assessment Exercise](#) (RAE) and will be completed in 2015.
2. Submissions from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will be assessed by experts in 36 Units of Assessments (UoAs) and quality profiles (QPs) will be provided. Further information about the REF can be accessed at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>.

## II. The University of Ulster and REF

3. The University of Ulster's research strategy is to strengthen the research base in Northern Ireland and positively influence the educational, economic, legal, social political and cultural interests regionally, nationally and internationally through the promotion of high-quality basic, strategic and applied research.
4. It is Ulster's aim to secure the best possible rating and support for its continued research excellence through the REF2014 process. However, the University also recognises that success is dependent on selectivity. An intermediate strategy of encouragement, support and facilitation has been put in place to ensure the eventual inclusion of the maximum number of staff possible while recognising that UoAs and staff should only be submitted where there is confidence of a positive result.

## III. Background to the Code of Practice

5. Each institution making a submission to REF is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice (CoP) on selecting staff to include in their REF submission and, on making the submission, the Head of each HEI will be required to confirm adherence to this code.
6. The purpose of the CoP is to ensure that the process for selecting staff is fair and transparent. The CoP sets out the institutional arrangements to develop the REF2014 submission and clarifies the process to be followed taking account of equality and diversity and all relevant legislation.
7. The CoP outlines the equality and diversity principles and procedures that will inform the selection and submission processes and the working method to be adopted to select UoAs and staff for inclusion. The CoP will be kept under review and updated to incorporate emerging best practice or new legislation or guidance on equality and diversity.

8. The CoP includes:
- i. open and transparent selection criteria for inclusion in the REF2014 submission and ensures that these do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, including gender reassignment; marital or civil partnership status; having or not having dependants; religious belief or political opinion; race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller); disability; sexual orientation; age; socio-economic background; trade union membership; and employment status;
  - ii. details of the equality screening/impact assessment process that will be undertaken in order to assess any differential or adverse impact on the inclusion and exclusion rates of all eligible staff;
  - iii. details of the appeal process that can be used by all members of eligible staff in order to seek further consideration for submission.
9. There will be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the CoP and the CoP will be available to all Ulster staff through the University web page and will be publicised via an email to all staff. Human Resources will be asked to provide a list of those staff who are absent and the University will ensure that details of the CoP and other REF-related matters are communicated directly to these staff. Furthermore, all staff will be directed to Equality and Diversity Services by email on [equality@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:equality@ulster.ac.uk) or telephone 028 9036 88137 if they require the CoP in an alternative format.

#### IV. The Legislative Framework

10. In selecting staff for inclusion in the REF the University will take account of the guidance and requirements specified by HEFCE in REF Circular '[Equality briefing for REF panels](#)' and will comply with the existing equality and employment law in Northern Ireland (NI). Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on the University, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
  - between men and women generally;
  - between persons with a disability and persons without; and
  - between persons with dependants and persons without.
11. In addition, and without prejudice to its obligation above, the University will also have regard to the desirability of [promoting good relations](#) between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

## V. Policy Statement

12. The University's policy for entering the REF is to maximise its reputation and resources for research. *The quality of performance in research, in accordance with REF guidelines, will determine an individual's inclusion in a REF submission.*
13. The University's CoP will make all the processes in relation to the selection of staff for inclusion in the REF2014 submissions transparent. Practice will be consistent across the institution and will set out the principles to be applied to all aspects/stages of the process. 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 CoP will be well publicised throughout the institution.
14. The University values the contribution of all staff, whether this is through teaching, research, knowledge transfer and/or administration. Engagement in REF returnable research represents one aspect of the contribution staff may make and the University wishes to be as inclusive in this as possible. The overarching principle of the CoP is that each member of staff who is considered for inclusion in the University's submission should be treated fairly and in accordance with the principles of equality. All members of staff will be able to access information on the following:
  - how (ie: by whom and on what basis) a decision for inclusion/exclusion in the REF submission is taken;
  - how the decision can be reviewed;
  - the outcome of any such review.
15. Although HEIs are encouraged to submit the work of all their excellent researchers, it is possible that a researcher who is undertaking high quality research may not be returned in REF2014. The reasons for this may be that:
  - i. s/he is a lone researcher (or one of a small group of researchers) in a UoA to which the University is not making a submission and where a cross-referral would not be appropriate;
  - ii. s/he has fewer than the required 4 outputs within the REF timeframe and has no relevant individual circumstances that s/he wish to have taken into consideration;
  - iii. his or her outputs are being appropriately submitted by other researchers within the institution;
  - iv. his or her outputs have not been assessed as of appropriate quality for inclusion in REF2014.

Within the guidelines for REF2014, every possible effort will be made to try and encourage the individual to be returnable. This may be through seeking another UoA for the person to join with the potential to cross-refer their work if appropriate.

16. The University recognises that a non-submitted individual may contribute to REF2014 through their contribution to impact case studies, the research environment, PhD completions and successful grant spend.

#### Quality Threshold for Inclusion in REF 2014

17. The following statements outline the quality and quantity thresholds for inclusion in the REF submission. The quality threshold will apply across the University and at all levels of decision-making and will be used in determining those individuals who are to be submitted to REF2014:
- i. **Quality of Outputs:** for inclusion in REF2014, the University would wish the outputs to be at least 3\* quality as defined in the REF [Assessment framework and guidance on submissions](#) (see Appendix V). *However, some individuals may have one or two outputs below 3\* quality and in this case such individuals may be considered for return in the University's submission. Each submitting UoA should aim to have a quality threshold of not less than a GPA<sup>1</sup> for outputs of 2.5. UoAs that achieved a GPA for outputs greater than 2.5 in RAE 2008 or UoAs whose outputs are currently averaging at a GPA greater than 2.5 should aim to match or exceed that higher GPA for REF2014.*
  - ii. **Quantity of Outputs:** the normal expectation is that individuals will not be submitted unless they have 4 quality outputs that have been brought into the public domain between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. However, individuals with fewer than 4 outputs may be submitted if they meet the REF sub-panel criteria for 'clearly defined circumstances' or 'complex circumstances' (ie: as set out in paragraphs 69 – 91 in the [Addendum](#) to the REF [Assessment framework and guidance on submissions](#) (see Appendix VI).
18. Accepting paragraphs 69 - 91 alluded to in Paragraph 17ii above, members of staff who do not meet the quality threshold for outputs will be excluded from the University's REF submission. Similarly those whose research does not fit with the UoAs selected by the University for submission will be excluded (See also Paragraph 15i. above).

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<sup>1</sup> The outputs "grade point average" (GPA) is the average score of outputs in the quality profile. To calculate the GPA, the number of outputs within a UoA which receive a 4\* grading is multiplied by 4, the number of outputs which receive a 3\* grading is multiplied by 3, the number of outputs which receive a 2\* grading is multiplied by 2, the number of outputs which receive a 1\* grading is multiplied by 1 and the number of outputs which receive an Unclassified grading are multiplied by 0: the results are added together and divided by the total number of outputs to give an average score between 0 and 4.

## VI. The Management of Research/REF at Ulster

### i. Overview

19. The strategic management and monitoring of research performance and the co-ordination of the REF submission occur through the [Research Office \(RO\)](#) reporting to the [Pro-Vice-Chancellor \(Research & Innovation\) \(PVC \(R&I\)\)](#).
20. Research is managed and supported strongly within all Faculties across a number of disciplines grouped within [Research Institutes<sup>2</sup> \(RIs\)](#), each led by a [Research Institute Director \(RID\)](#). In RIs where there are a number of distinct UoAs a [UoA Co-ordinator<sup>3</sup>](#) is designated for each UoA and s/he works closely with the relevant RID(s).
21. The responsibilities of the key players in the University's preparations for REF 2014 and the principles on which decisions will be taken, are outlined in the [Roles and Responsibilities](#) section (see paragraphs 22 – 36 below). This includes details of the decision-makers, the relevant committees, their roles and position within the decision-making process, and the criteria for their decision-making.

### ii. Roles and Responsibilities

#### *Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)*

22. The PVC (R&I) is responsible for implementing the University's research strategy with a particular focus on the REF. The PVC (R&I) is ultimately responsible for the content of the University's REF submission and managing all aspects of the REF process and making key decisions in consultation with relevant senior officers.
23. The PVC (R&I) chairs the majority of research-related committees and all performance-monitoring meetings with RIs. He reports on all research activities through the Research & Innovation Committee, which is a sub-committee of Senate. The PVC (R&I) also reports on research performance and research activities to the University's Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group (VCAG).
24. The PVC (R&I) is also responsible for the negotiation of funding for research and the allocation of budgets to Research Institutes.

#### *Research Office*

25. The [Director of the Research Office](#) is responsible for overseeing the co-ordination of the University's REF submission and reports directly to the PVC (R&I).

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I for a list of RIs and RI Directors

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix II for a list of UoA Co-ordinators

26. Databases in relation to research staff, research outputs, research students and grants are maintained by the RO.
27. The [Research Policy team](#) within the RO is responsible for all aspects of the REF submission including:
- i. the administration of the REF submission across the University;
  - ii. ensuring that the integrity of the submission process is upheld through careful guidance to all parties involved in the process and by assuring the integrity of data in the submissions through data verification;
  - iii. servicing the REF Steering Committee and all REF related meetings with RIDs and UoA Co-ordinators so as to monitor progress in relation to the REF submissions;
  - iv. advising on the University's overall timetable for preparation of the REF submission;
  - v. interpreting REF Guidelines and providing guidance on all REF-related matters to RIDs, UoA Co-ordinators and other relevant staff;
  - vi. collating data from a variety of in-house sources relating to staff, students, studentships, research outputs, research income in a format consistent with the funding councils' requirement for REF;
  - vii. acting as the first point of contact between the University and the funding councils on matters relating to the REF;
  - viii. testing and implementing the REF data collection system, and offering guidance, training and advice on its usage across the University;
  - ix. working with Equality and Diversity Services (EDS) in the development and implementation of an appropriate internal code of practice, which meets the requirements of equality and other legislation and promotes an inclusive environment;
  - x. providing training on the code of practice and equality legislation in conjunction with EDS to all staff involved in the REF decision-making process.
28. Each UoA to which the University is making a submission is assigned a member of the Research Policy team who is the RID/UoA Co-ordinator's [point of contact](#)<sup>4</sup> for all REF related queries.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix III for a list of Research Policy contacts by UoA

### Office of Innovation (Ooi)

29. The University, through the Ooi, integrates research and innovation to reflect the increasing convergence between research impact and innovation in the REF and the external funding landscape. The Ooi has established a Research Impact Award scheme to translate research findings into products and services that will have an impact upon the economy, culture and society. The fund provides a means of assisting Ulster's academics realise and demonstrate the impact of their high quality research.

### Research Institutes (RIs)

30. The University's 15 RIs reflect its existing strengths in research and are intended to better enhance its reputation for research excellence at national and international level.
31. The RIs are designed to:
  - i. ensure that the research undertaken is of a sufficiently high standard to provide the best advantage to the University in terms of taking forward its research strategy and maximising its performance in the REF;
  - ii. achieve an excellent Quality Profile (QP) in the REF2014, thereby attracting additional external regard and external funding to underpin future research development;
  - iii. ensure that research resources target those areas and staff that are performing at the highest level of international excellence;
  - iv. ensure that our best scholars are given the time and resources necessary to support their work;
  - v. ensure that Early Career Researchers (ECRs) who demonstrate clear research ability are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

### Research Institute Directors (RIDs)

32. Each RI is led by an RI Director who has a strong personal record of research achievements in the relevant area and a track record of success in the management of research projects.
33. The day-to-day management of research is the responsibility of the RID, in some cases working with UoA Co-ordinators who have delegated responsibility for specific areas within the remit of an Institute. RID work closely with the relevant Head(s) of School (HoS) and report directly to the Dean and, through regular performance monitoring meetings, to the PVC (R&I). To ensure that RIs are embedded within the University's robust management structures all RIDs are members of their respective Faculty

Executive Committees (FECs) and Faculty Research Committees (FRCs). Some RIDs sit on other University committees such as Senate.

34. The role of the RID is to provide strategic leadership and management on all aspects of the work of the RI and to work in consultation with other senior staff, to identify staff most likely to be returned in the REF.
35. Through regular monitoring meetings chaired by the PVC (R&I), RI Directors report on how they are working to optimise the developments and achievements of the RI so as to maximise performance in the REF.

#### **Unit of Assessment Co-ordinator (UoA Co-ordinator)**

36. A UoA Co-ordinator has been identified for each UoA to which the University intends to submit a return and, in the majority of cases, the UoA Co-ordinator is the RI Director. In RIs where there are a number of UoAs, responsibility is devolved to UoA Co-ordinators for the preparation, coordination and submission of the final REF return on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The UoA Co-ordinator will remain available as a point of contact during 2014 for any queries about the submissions from the REF assessment panel or the REF audit team.

### **iii. Relevant Committees**

#### **Research and Innovation Committee**

37. All research activities are reported to Research and Innovation Committee (RIC),<sup>5</sup> which is a sub-committee of Senate and chaired by the PVC (R&I). The Vice-Chancellor, PVCs and Deans are all members of RIC and the large number of elected and co-opted members ensures that the research community has a strong voice.
38. Formal communication with the wider university occurs through the dissemination of RIC minutes at FRCs. Within each Faculty there is a relevant research committee structure although there are variations between Faculties to ensure the best support for the work of that area.

#### **REF Steering Committee**

39. In 2012 the REF Steering Committee (REFSC)<sup>6</sup> was established. This committee, which is a sub-committee of RIC, is chaired by the PVC (R&I) and its membership includes all RIs, UoA Co-ordinators, REF sub panel members and relevant RO Office and OoI staff.
40. The role of the REFSC is predominantly advisory. Its primary purpose is to advise on the University's focus and strategy for the REF and the organisation of the REF submissions.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix IV for RIC Terms of Reference and Membership

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix IV for REFSC Terms of Reference and Membership

## REF Reviews

41. The University's organisational structure for research management facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of each RI/UoA's research performance for REF through six-monthly<sup>7</sup> review meetings. These meetings are chaired by the PVC (R&I) and attended by the RID/UoA Co-ordinator, key staff from the RI/UoA, the relevant Dean(s) and HoS(s) and senior RO staff. Attendance by all parties is encouraged.
42. For the review meetings the RID/UoA Co-ordinator prepares a general report on the performance of the RI/UoA against its strategic goals and benchmarks. The review process allows discussion of all key indicators and formulation of targets for the forthcoming year and also alerts senior management to any changes needed to policies, procedures and the general operating environment. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for institutional performance against the research strategy to be assessed regularly and for the status of RIs/UoAs to be re-appraised, thus guiding subsequent resource allocation decisions.
43. For the review meetings RIDs and UoA Co-ordinators are required to report on the performance of staff in their RI/UoA in terms of the following REF indicators:
  - publications and other research outputs;
  - research environment;
  - external grant income and spend;
  - research student numbers and completion rates;
  - research impact.
44. Any action points arising from the meetings are recorded and progressed rigorously by the RO. A summary report on the meetings is submitted to the RIC.

## VII. Process/Framework for the Identification and Selection of Staff for Inclusion in REF2014

45. The University's policy for submitting to the REF is to maximise its reputation and resources for research. The quality of performance in research, in accordance with REF standards, will be a determinant of an individual's inclusion in the REF submission (see paragraphs 17-18). A primary driver will be the identification and selection of work of international excellence (as defined by the [REF criteria](#)<sup>8</sup>) for consideration by REF Sub Panels.
46. The development of each REF submission and the list of staff to be included is an incremental process and the final submission will evolve through the regular performance monitoring meetings between the PVC (R&I) and RIs/UoAs. *Judgement*

<sup>7</sup> In the period leading up to the REF submission more frequent monitoring meetings may take place.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix V for REF definitions of Star Quality

*on the quality of research will be determined by the REF starred criteria and will be the main determinant of inclusion in the final submission (see paragraphs 17 and 18).*

47. The process for making decisions on REF submissions will apply across the University. The guiding principles of the University's REF process are outlined below:
- i. At periodic meetings, the PVC (R&I) meets with RIDs (and designated UoA Co-ordinators where appropriate) to discuss and ultimately confirm each submission.
  - ii. Each member of staff is responsible for providing details on his/her research outputs through the Ulster Institutional Repository (UIR) and other outputs and activities through the appropriate and identified channels (ie: the RID or relevant UoA Co-ordinator for RI members and the Dean for non-RI members).
  - iii. As a key measure to support equality and diversity, staff may be returned with fewer than four outputs if they meet the criteria for 'clearly defined circumstances' and/or 'complex circumstances' (i.e.: as set out in paragraphs 64 – 91 in the [Addendum](#) to the [Assessment framework and guidance on submissions](#). This will be applied consistently across UOAs.
  - iv. Preliminary judgements will be reached on the quality and level of performance in terms of the REF criteria. The use of additional external peer judgements is recommended where appropriate. In contentious cases, external review is mandatory.
  - v. No one individual can decide on whether a person is included or excluded. Normally this decision will be made by the RID/UoA Co-ordinator and ultimately by the PVC (R&I).
  - vi. Staff will be identified on an ongoing basis for potential inclusion in the REF (the list of staff will be subject to continual change as research outputs and other performance indicators are identified and evaluated); staff outputs will be evaluated throughout the REF cycle with decisions made as to inclusion when the actual output profile of individuals and the UoA as a whole is clear; the REF status of a member of staff may alter in the lead up to the final submission (e.g. if an awaited output does not materialise).
  - vii. The RID/UoA Co-ordinator will ensure clear communication with each staff member. Staff will be informed<sup>9</sup> of their targets and receive feedback on the quality of their work as it arises from ongoing evaluation (whether internal or external).
  - viii. The RID/UoA Co-ordinator will identify and, where reasonable within available resources, provide the support needed by individual staff members to allow

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<sup>9</sup> RIDs and UoA Co-ordinators are expected to record details of individual targets and feedback provided to individuals on the quality of their work and their assigned inclusion category in relation to the REF

them the opportunity to attain the necessary performance level for inclusion. The RIDs will take into account financial constraints and those related to other academic activities such as teaching and administration. They will be responsible for ensuring that, as far as possible and where justified and realistic, those needs are met.

- ix. Decisions regarding inclusion/exclusion will be documented by RIDs/UoA Co-ordinators to provide transparency on the evolution of final submissions.
48. There may be situations where two researchers are claiming the same output and where there are not enough outputs for both staff members to be submitted. In this case the RI/UoA Co-ordinator will make the decision taking into account the relative contributions of the individuals to the output or, where relevant, the grant.
49. The final decision on whether a person is returned in REF and what outputs they are submitting will be the responsibility of the RID/UoA Co-ordinator and ultimately the PVC (R&I).
50. Decisions on inclusion/exclusion will be made on an ongoing basis up until late Summer 2013 when details of the final submission will be agreed.

#### **i. The Role of the Decision-Makers**

51. Those with responsibility for making decisions must:
- i. endeavour to ensure that they have all the relevant facts relating to individuals about whom decisions are being made;
  - ii. ensure that any relevant individual staff circumstances are taken into account;
  - iii. document all relevant decisions that affect individuals;
  - iv. ensure that, where a decision is taken not to submit an individual, the person will be informed of the decision, the basis for it, and their right to appeal against the decision on the grounds that it is potentially discriminatory because of the way in which it was made. There is no right to appeal on the grounds of academic or strategic judgement (e.g. what UoA to return, the agreed quality threshold, reputational impact and resource maximisation). The appeal process is set out in paragraphs 80 – 88.

#### **ii. Training and Guidance for Decision-Makers**

52. Those staff who are in key decision-making roles, including members of relevant committees, will undergo detailed training on the operation of the criteria for the REF2014 as they apply to equality and diversity and the special circumstances of staff.

53. All RIDs/UoA Co-ordinators have been provided with equality training (with particular reference to REF) as part of the University's overall programme of activities relating to equality and diversity.

### **iii. Data Protection**

54. The University has an obligation to provide information as part of the REF. All personal data relating to the REF will be processed fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. RIDs are responsible for controlling the data collected at UoA level and for ensuring that the data held are accurate. Individuals have a right to check or amend the data held and due care will be taken to ensure confidentiality. The data will only be used to inform the REF2014 exercise and to support future research planning.

## **VIII. Equality and Diversity in the REF**

55. The funding bodies and REF team take their duty to promote and support equality and diversity seriously. As such, they have developed a number of mechanisms tailored to the REF. These are to encourage HEIs to submit in the REF2014 the work of all their excellent researchers, including those whose individual circumstances significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs during the REF publication period. These circumstances include issues covered by equalities and employment legislation.
56. To promote inclusivity, the University is pro-active in inviting all eligible staff, including those who are currently absent, to submit their work for consideration and therefore to have the opportunity to participate in the REF. All eligible staff have been encouraged to engage with appropriate staff within the Faculty to ensure their research is given due consideration.
57. EDS will deliver equality training for all staff with responsibility for REF selection processes. Training will outline the requirements of relevant equality legislation and will use case studies to explore equality issues in the explicit context of the selection of staff for the REF. Equality training materials will be made available online.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

58. As required by the funding bodies, and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, the University will conduct equality screening and an equality impact assessment (EQIA) on the CoP and processes for selecting staff for the REF. The University has established a REF2014 Equality Working Group (REF2014 EWG)<sup>10</sup> to monitor the implementation of the CoP through regular equality screening and to determine the extent of any impact upon the Section 75 categories. The PVC (R&I) is chair of the REF2014 EWG.

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix IV for the Terms of Reference and Membership of the REF2014 Equality Working Group

59. The REF2014 EWG will conduct an EQIA based on the final submission. The findings and recommendations from the EQIA will be used to develop the research profile of any group or groups shown to be underrepresented in the REF submission.

## IX. Individual Staff Circumstances (ISC)

60. All HEIs are encouraged to submit the excellent research of all their eligible staff including those staff whose individual and/or complex circumstances<sup>11</sup> which *'have significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period'*.
61. The standard list of individual and/or complex circumstances can be found in the [Assessment framework and guidance on submissions](#) (and the *Addendum*). In addition, each REF2014 Sub-Panel's criteria include guidance on how the panel will deal with ISC that might have an effect (in quantitative not qualitative terms) on an individual's contribution to a submission.
62. Grounds for special consideration will only be applied in accordance with the panel criteria and working methods of the relevant REF sub-panel. Some REF sub-panels may have additional grounds for special consideration, and these are defined in their respective criteria and working methods documentation. Consideration of ISC only affects the decision on the **quantity** of outputs submitted. Staff with ISC can of course submit up to four outputs if these meet the quality threshold set for those outputs.
- i. Disclosure of ISC**
63. All staff who are potentially eligible for selection will be asked to complete a disclosure form about their individual circumstances and to disclose in strictest confidence any circumstances that may have had an adverse effect on their research outputs and which they wish to be taken into account. The disclosure form will be emailed to all eligible staff and will be available to download from the University's website throughout the REF assessment period. Staff will be encouraged to complete the form even if they have no individual circumstances to disclose. Staff may declare individual circumstances at any time but would need to do so before the penultimate draft submission to ensure these are taken into account in the selection process.
64. Completed forms will be submitted to Ms Sara Hunter, Head of EDS who will separate these into clear and complex circumstances.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix VI for a list of individual and complex circumstances

### **i. Clear Circumstances**

Those forms with clear circumstances will be forwarded immediately to the RO who will advise the relevant RID/UoA Co-ordinator on those staff who have grounds to be submitted with a reduced number of outputs.

### **ii. Complex Circumstances**

Those forms with complex circumstances will be anonymised before being submitted to the REF2014 Individual Staff Circumstances Sub-Group (REF2014 ISCSG)<sup>12</sup> for consideration.

## **ii. Decisions on ISC**

65. The REF2014 ISCSG will consider all complex circumstances and decide whether, on the facts before them, there are sufficient grounds for an individual to be submitted with a reduced number of outputs. In making their decision, they will consult the relevant main and sub-panel guidance. The REF2014 ISCSG is independent of the REF Steering Committee.

66. Without disclosing the circumstances, the REF2014 ISCSG will inform the relevant RI Director/UoA Co-ordinator that a member of staff has grounds to be submitted with fewer than four outputs. The information pertaining to the circumstances will be disclosed in outline on the confidential section of the REF return and this confidential section will be restricted to the University's REF Co-ordinator, [Natalie Dallat](#).

## **iii. Data on ISC**

67. All data in relation to individual staff circumstances will be anonymised, handled confidentially, stored securely and destroyed appropriately once the outcomes of REF are published. The data will only be used internally to identify what staff are eligible for submission with fewer than four outputs and externally for the purpose of evidencing any reduction in the number of research outputs.

### **i. Clear Circumstances**

For circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs, (eg: maternity leaves, career breaks, ECR status, etc) the information will be seen by the relevant REF sub-panel, the REF panel secretariat and the UK funding bodies' REF team.

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<sup>12</sup> Terms of Reference and Membership of the REF2014 ISCSG are included in Appendix IV

## ii. Complex Circumstances

For more complex circumstances, information will only be seen by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, the REF Main Panel Chairs and the UK funding bodies' REF team. This information will **not** be seen by the REF sub-panel and no information relating to identifiable individuals' circumstances will be published by the REF team. All data collected, stored and processed by the REF team will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988.

## X. Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

68. ECRs<sup>13</sup> can be submitted with fewer than 4 outputs without penalty (see Appendix VI). ECRs can of course submit up to four outputs if these meet the quality threshold set for those outputs. Research potential is developed by ensuring appropriate support for staff who are at the earliest stages in a research career. In Ulster this involves the effective mentoring of such staff by more experienced colleagues, including direct assistance to become established among the most prestigious funding and output producing communities. Mentors also support project planning and management and effective networking and conference participation.

## XI. Part-Time and Fixed-Term Staff

### i) Part-Time Staff

69. A member of part-time staff will be treated on the same basis as a comparable full-time member of staff in that his/her selection for inclusion in the REF will be based on the quality of his/her outputs with reference to the REF starred criteria. Part-time staff can be submitted with fewer than 4 outputs without penalty (see Appendix VI). They can of course submit up to four outputs if these meet the quality threshold set for those outputs.

### ii) Fixed-Term Staff

70. Under the fixed-term Employees Regulations a fixed-term employee has the right not to be treated by the University less favourably than a comparable permanent employee (see also paragraphs 71 to 76 below).

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<sup>13</sup> ECRs are staff who started their careers as independent researchers on or after the 1 August 2009.

## XII. Contract Research Staff (CRS)

71. Since the initial launch by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) of the Research Concordat for Contract Research Staff in 1996, the University has sought to improve the terms and conditions of CRS.
72. CRS have access to a range of staff development programmes, including a tailored induction session, to help them improve their profile while at the University. The University also operates an appraisal and promotion scheme specifically for CRS which allows the advancement of high-performing individuals. All promotions/advancements are independent of the ability of the external funding source to cover the cost of the promotion.

### i) Co-ordinator for Concordat Matters

73. In 1999 the University established a post of Co-ordinator for matters related to the Concordat and this post is filled by a research-active member of academic staff. Improved communication with CRS has been established by the Co-ordinator and various recommendations have been taken forward by the PVC (R&I) following a number of online surveys among CRS.

### ii) Research Concordat Steering Group

74. The Research Concordat Steering Group<sup>14</sup> was set up in 1999 and includes CRS representation from all Faculties. The Steering Group provides a forum for CRS to raise pertinent issues in relation to the working conditions of this cohort of staff.

### iii) Selection of Members of CRS for inclusion

75. In relation to the selection of fixed-term CRS for inclusion in the REF submission, the University will adhere strictly to the REF 2014 rules (see Paragraphs 80 – 81 in the [Assessment framework and guidance on submissions.](#))
76. A member of CRS who is employed to carry out another individual's research programme rather than as an independent investigator in his/her own right is not eligible for inclusion in a submission. A member of CRS can only be entered in the REF submission if there is clear evidence to show that he/she is an independent researcher or a Principal Investigator on a grant or a significant piece of research work **and** satisfy the definition for Category A academic staff as stated in the REF2014 [Assessment framework and guidance on submissions \(paragraphs 78-79\)](#). The inclusion of each member of CRS will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the RI performance monitoring meetings.

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<sup>14</sup> Terms of Reference and Membership of RCSG are included in Appendix IV

### XIII. Non-RI Staff

77. To promote equality of opportunity, the University is pro-active in inviting all members of staff to submit their work for consideration and therefore to have the opportunity to participate in the REF. All eligible staff have been made aware of the REF exercise through an email and REF Roadshows hosted by the PVC (R&I). All eligible staff have been encouraged to engage with appropriate staff to ensure their research is given due consideration.
78. Faculties/Schools are encouraged to identify and support, within available resources, individuals whose research does not fit within the existing RI/UoA structure. Each Faculty/School has appropriate mechanisms/processes in place to identify, encourage and develop (within available resources) non-RI research-active staff (e.g. associate RI membership, regular appraisal, mentoring, co-supervision, developmental funding, etc).
79. It is possible for non RI Staff to be returned in REF and/or to make a contribution to the submission through their input into research impact, research environment, research grant income and PhD completions. The RI Director/UOA Co-ordinator and PVC (R&I) will determine if a non RI staff member is returnable in REF.

### XIV. Appeals

80. On or after 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 staff will be able to determine whether or not their outputs and other contributions are expected to be included in the University's submission. If they wish, individuals will then have the opportunity to discuss the decision with their RID. Staff wishing to arrange such a discussion should contact their RID in the first instance.
  - i. Right to Appeal*
81. Appeals are possible only against a decision **not** to include an individual's outputs.
82. An individual has the right to appeal the decision not to submit them in REF2014 on the grounds of potential discrimination.
83. An appeal cannot be lodged regarding the peer view of the quality of the individual's outputs. The appeals process will not extend to the UoA to which an individual's outputs and contributions would be returned, nor whether an individual can 'opt out' of the University's submission.

## **ii. Appeals Process**

84. The appeals process is intended to be the means by which academic staff can review the University's decision in a fair and transparent way, in advance of the final submission being agreed.
85. The expectation is that all appeals should be lodged before 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013, although appeals after that date may also be accepted if, in exceptional cases e.g. the appellant's status was not known on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013 and a decision to exclude the applicant's outputs was made subsequent to that date (*please note that the date for appeals to be lodged was subsequently revised to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 as notified in an email to all academic and research staff from the PVC (R&I) on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013*).
86. Appeals against exclusion should be made in writing to the PVC Educational Partnerships & External Affairs, clearly stating the grounds on which they wish to make the appeal. The PVC (EP&EA) will request a written report from the decision-maker that provides reasons for the decision and details the information that was taken into account.
87. If the PVC (EP&EA) considers there are grounds for appeal, the case will be considered by the REF Appeals Panel (chaired by the PVC (EP&EA) and comprising representation from EDS, the RO and an RI Director from a Faculty other than that of the appellant(s)). The Panel will take into account the decision already made in relation to the quality of outputs included, and ensuring that the correct number of outputs were considered, in keeping with the individual's personal circumstances. Members of the Appeals Panel will be independent of the REF decision-making processes and will be trained in equality legislation.
88. The individual will be informed of the decision by letter and a meeting will be offered should the individual wish to discuss the matter further.

## RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE DIRECTORS

RESEARCH INSTITUTE	DIRECTOR
<b>FACULTY OF ARTS</b>	
Arts and Humanities	Professor F Lyons
Irish and Celtic Studies	Professor B Ó Corráin
Centre for Media Research	Professor M McLoone
<b>FACULTY OF ART, DESIGN &amp; THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT</b>	
Art and Design	Professor K Fleming
Built Environment	Professor S McGreal
<b>FACULTY OF COMPUTING AND ENGINEERING</b>	
Computer Science	Professor B Scotney
Engineering	Professor J McLaughlin
<b>FACULTY OF LIFE AND HEALTH SCIENCES</b>	
Biomedical Sciences	Professor AJ Bjourson
Environmental Sciences	Professor S Steacy
Institute of Nursing and Health Science Research	Professor B McCormack
Psychology	Professor M Stringer
Sport & Exercise Sciences	Professor E Wallace
<b>FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES</b>	
Institute for Research in Social Sciences	Dr C Gormley-Heenan
Transitional Justice Institute	Professor B Rolston
<b>ULSTER BUSINESS SCHOOL</b>	
Business and Management	Professor P Humphreys

## Appendix II

### REF UoA CO-ORDINATORS

REF UoA	REF UoA Title	Research Institute	RI Director(s) (UoA Co-ordinator)
3	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing & Pharmacy	Nursing and Health Science Biomedical Sciences	Prof B McCormack Prof T Bjourson
4	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	Psychology	Prof M Stringer
7	Earth Systems & Environmental Sciences	Environmental Sciences	Prof S Steacy
11	Computer Science & Informatics	Computer Science	Prof B Scotney
13	Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy & Materials	Engineering	Prof J McLaughlin
16	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning	Built Environment	Prof S McGreal
19	Business & Management Studies	Business & Management	Prof P Humphreys
20	Law	Transitional Justice Institute	Prof W Rolston
21	Politics & International Studies	Institute for Research in Social Sciences Arts and Humanities	Dr C Gormley-Heenan Prof F Lyons (Dr F Ashe)
22	Social Work & Social Policy	Institute for Research in Social Sciences	Dr C Gormley-Heenan (Prof J Offer)
25	Education	Institute for Research in Social Sciences	Dr C Gormley-Heenan (Dr A McCully)
26	Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism	Sports & Exercise Science	Prof E Wallace
28	Modern Languages and Linguistics		
	a) Languages and Linguistics	Arts and Humanities Institute for Research in Social Sciences	Prof F Lyons Dr C Gormley-Heenan (TBA)
	b) Celtic Studies	Irish and Celtic Studies	Prof B O'Corrain
29	English Language and Literature	Arts and Humanities	Prof F Lyons (Dr A Jamison)
30	History	Arts and Humanities	Prof F Lyons (Prof I Thatcher)
34	Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	Art and Design	Prof K Fleming
35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	Arts and Humanities	Prof F Lyons (Dr C Newark)
36	Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library & Information Management	Centre for Media Research	Prof M McLoone

## REF2014 Research Policy Contacts by UoA

MAIN PANEL	UNIT OF ASSESSMENT		RESEARCH POLICY CONTACT
A	3	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy	Natalie Dallat
	4	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	Natalie Dallat
B	7	Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences	Yvonne Dunwoody
	11	Computer Science and Informatics	Yvonne Dunwoody
	13	Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials	Yvonne Dunwoody
C	16	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning	Wendy Aiken
	19	Business and Management Studies	Wendy Aiken
	20	Law	Natalie Dallat
	21	Politics and International Studies	Wendy Aiken
	22	Social Work and Social Policy	Wendy Aiken
	25	Education	Wendy Aiken
D	28	Modern Languages & Linguistics a. Languages & Linguistics b. Celtic Studies	Natalie Dallat
	29	English Language and Literature	Yvonne Dunwoody
	30	History	Yvonne Dunwoody
	34	Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	Barbara Wilson
	35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	Barbara Wilson
	36	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management	Barbara Wilson

**Terms of Reference and Membership of Relevant Committees**

- Research and Innovation Committee
- REF Steering Committee
- REF 2014 Equality Working Group
- REF2014 Individual Staff Circumstances Working Group
- Research Concordat Steering Committee

**RESEARCH and INNOVATION COMMITTEE**  
**(Sub-Committee of the Senate)**

**Terms of Reference**

- 1 To oversee the formulation of the University's strategy for Research and Innovation and to keep it under review.
- 2 To advise and make recommendations to the Senate on:
  - i) matters relating to the organisation of, and support services for, research and innovation;
  - ii) the impact of the research conducted at the University of Ulster;
  - iii) both internal and external funding of research and innovation and related matters, including the allocation of research funding within the University;
  - iv) policy in relation to intellectual property, including patents and inventions; technology transfer; consultancy and related matters; incubator units and spin-out companies; science park development; and the social, economic and cultural impact of research;
  - v) policy in relation to national/international research collaboration;
  - vi) policy in relation to the governance of research;
  - vii) criteria and procedures for the monitoring and assessment of research and innovation performance against targets;
- 3 To keep under review staffing matters relating to research and innovation
- 4 To consider any other matters relating to research and innovation policy and practice which the Senate may require.
- 5 To receive reports:
  - on research activities within the University and to monitor and assess research against targets;
  - from the University Press office on media coverage of Ulster's research and innovation;
  - from Innovation Committee on Innovation progress against targets;
  - and consider recommendations from the Research Degrees Committee which will oversee the admission, supervision, training, progress and examination of research students;
  - and consider recommendations relating to funding for research degree programmes;
  - and consider recommendations from the Research Governance Steering Committee which will oversee the implementation of policies and procedures for the governance of research on human subjects;
  - and consider recommendations from the Research Concordat Steering Group which will oversee the implementation of the University's policy in relation to contract research staff;
- 6 To establish, whether from within its own membership or otherwise, such sub-committees and advisory groups as it may think fit, to advise and report on any of the above matters.
- 7 To charge the sub-committees or working groups that might be established from time to time, with tasks and initiatives, in pursuit of the University's research strategy.

*In reaching decisions the Committee will have due regard to their impact on, and implications for, the University's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and good relations as outlined in its Equality Scheme, and associated policies, and where possible and practicable the Committee will ensure that its actions are proactive in this respect.*

**RESEARCH and INNOVATION COMMITTEE**  
**(Sub-Committee of the Senate)**

<u>Composition</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Vice-Chancellor	Professor R Barnett
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Professor HP McKenna (Chair)
Pro Vice-Chancellors	Professor A Adair Professor D McAlister Professor A Moran
Deans	Professor P Carmichael Professor C Curran Professor M McHugh Professor R Millar Professor I Montgomery Professor P O Dochartaigh
Chair of Research Degrees Committee	Professor S McClean
Senate Representatives	Professor CA Upton Professor P Seawright Professor G Lloyd
Six members elected by the Research Active Constituency	Dr N Garnham Prof F Lyons Professor B Scotney Professor M Sinclair Professor S Steacy Prof H Wang Professor P Humphreys Professor M McGinnity Professor AJ Bjourson Professor JAD McLaughlin Professor B Hamber
Co-opted members as required	
<b>In attendance:</b>	
Director of the Research Office Senior Admin Officer (Research Grants & Contracts) Senior Admin Officer (Research Students) Senior Admin Officer (Research Governance)	Dr AM Patton Mr N McFarland Ms A Rippey Mr N Curry
Director of Innovation	Mr T Brundle
Head of Business Liaison & Academic Development Head of Knowledge Transfer Other Innovation Staff as required	Mr E Friel Mr S Nelson
<u>Secretariat</u>	
Head of Research Policy	Ms N Dallat

## REF STEERING COMMITTEE

### Sub-Committee of the Research and Innovation Committee

#### Terms of Reference

The REF Steering Group will be responsible for:

- i. agreeing the University's strategy and timetable for preparing the REF2014 submission;
- ii. developing and overseeing the University's Code of Practice on the selection of staff members whose work is to be included in the REF, and ensuring the University is consistent and fair in its selection decisions;
- iii. the formulation of the University's REF submission and ensuring compliance with the University's Code of Practice on the selection of staff;
- iv. the provision of crucial guidance and support at the time of developing the REF submissions and providing a forum through which good ideas/practice can be shared
- v. defining which UoAs are to be submitted;
- vi. defining the overall quality level to be expected from submissions;
- vii. the identification, and selection for consideration by the REF panels, of work of the highest quality as defined in the REF starred criteria;
- viii. the establishment of a small Working Group to review in detail drafts of submissions as they are developed;

*In reaching decisions the Committee will have due regard to their impact on, and implications for, the University's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and good relations as outlined in its Equality Scheme, and associated policies, and where possible and practicable the Committee will ensure that its actions are proactive in this respect.*

<b>REF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP</b> <b>Sub-Committee of the Research and Innovation Committee</b>	
<u>Composition</u> Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)  Director of the Research Office  Director of Innovation  REF Panel Members	<u>Membership</u> Professor H McKenna (Chair)  Dr AM Patton  Mr T Brundle  Professor A Adair (UoA 16) Dr S Hodgett (UoA 27) Professor M Murphy (UoA 26) Professor M Nic Craith 27) Professor S O'Connor (UoA 22) Professor P Ó Dochartaigh (UoA 28) Professor P Seawright (UoA 34) Professor M Sinclair (UoA 3)
RI Directors	Professor T Bjourson Professor K Fleming Dr C Gormley-Heenan Professor P Humphreys Professor F Lyons Professor B McCormack Professor S McGreal Professor J McLaughlin Professor M McLoone Professor B Ó Corráin Professor W Rolston Professor B Scotney Professor S Steacy Professor M Stringer Professor E Wallace
UoA Co-ordinators	Dr F Ashe Dr A Jamison Dr A McCully Dr C Newark Professor J Offer Professor I Thatcher
<u>In attendance</u> Head of Research Policy Administrative Officer (Research Policy) Head of Research Students Head of Research Grants and Contracts	Ms N Dallat Mrs B Wilson Mrs A Rippey Mr N McFarland

**REF 2014 EQUALITY WORKING GROUP**  
**(Sub-group of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group)**

Terms of Reference

The purpose of the REF 2014 Equality Working Group is to ensure that the University meets its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and the UK funding bodies. The REF 2014 Equality Working Group will:

1. oversee the development of the REF 2014 Code of Practice on selecting staff and complete equality screening after the first draft submission (March 2012);
2. monitor the operation of the Code of Practice through regular equality screening at an institutional level, and at unit of assessment level as deemed necessary to:
  - determine the extent of any impact upon the Section 75 categories;
  - revise and improve the Code as required based on the outcome of screening;
  - report the outcome of equality screening to the Research and Innovation Committee, Research Institute Directors and Unit of Assessment Coordinators as required.
3. undertake and publish, after the submission deadline on 29 November 2013, an equality impact assessment based on the final submission; and to report the findings to Research and Innovation Committee and Senior Management Team so as to further develop the research profile of any group or groups shown to be underrepresented in the REF submission; and
4. provide advice and guidance on issues relating to equality and diversity in relation to the preparation of the REF submission.

*In reaching its decisions, the Working Group will support and promote the values contained in the University's Equality Scheme and associated policies. It will ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity and good relations among persons of different religious belief; political opinion; racial group; age; marital status; sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; between persons with dependants and persons without, and that its actions do not adversely impact on any of these groups.*

**REF 2014 EQUALITY WORKING GROUP**  
**(Sub-group of the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group)**

<u>Composition</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Professor H McKenna (Chair)
Research Institute Directors	Professor K Fleming Dr Cathy Gormley-Heenan Professor B Scotney Professor M Stringer
Heads of School	Dr L Clarke Professor L Maguire
Research Office	Dr M Patton Mrs N Dallat
Co-ordinator for Research Concordat Matters	Dr M McCracken
Equality and Diversity Services	Ms S Hunter Ms M McGilloway
Secretariat:	Mrs J Smyth Equality and Diversity Services

**REF2014 INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES SUB-GROUP  
(Sub-Group of the REF Equality Working Group)**

1. To review all 'Complex Circumstances Disclosure' forms.
2. To reach decisions in relation to reductions in research outputs and advise the individual members of staff accordingly.
3. To advise the relevant RID/UoA Co-ordinator of any reduction (without disclosing the reasons/individual circumstances).
4. To report to the REF2014 Equality Working Group as appropriate.

**Equality Statement**

*In reaching decisions the Committee will have due regard to their impact on, and implications for, the University's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and good relations as outlined in its Equality Scheme, and associated policies, and where possible and practicable the Committee will ensure that its actions are proactive in this respect.*

**REF2014 INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES SUB-GROUP  
(Sub-Group of the REF Equality Working Group)**

Composition

Chair

Head of School

Occupational Health and Safety Adviser

Research Office

Equality and Diversity Services

Membership

Professor L Maguire

Dr M Hannon-Fletcher

Mrs Michelle McGill

Mrs N Dallat

Ms S Hunter

**RESEARCH CONCORDAT STEERING GROUP**  
**Sub-Committee of the Research and Innovation Committee**

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and review the implementation of institutional policy related to Contract Research Staff (CRS)
2. To review the University's progress in meeting the recommendations of the Research Careers Initiative
3. To receive reports from the university's Co-ordinator for the Concordat on CRS Career Management
4. To receive reports from Human Resources and Staff Development on matters related to CRS
5. To make recommendations to the Research and Innovation Committee and Research Fora<sup>15</sup> on matters related to CRS, the Concordat, the Research Careers Initiative and other related bodies and documentation

*In reaching decisions the Committee will have due regard to their impact on, and implications for, the University's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and good relations as outlined in its Equality Scheme, and associated policies, and where possible and practicable the Committee will ensure that its actions are proactive in this respect.*

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<sup>15</sup> The research fora established under the Research Strategy are:  
- Research/Communications & External Affairs Forum  
- Research/Finance Forum  
- Research/Human Resources Forum

**RESEARCH CONCORDAT STEERING GROUP**  
**Sub-Committee of the Research and Innovation Committee**

<u>Composition</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Professor H McKenna (Chair)
Human Resources Representatives	Mr P Davidson Mrs D Gordon
Ulster's Co-ordinator for the Concordat on CRS Staff Career Management	Dr M McCracken
Staff Development Representative	Dr M Davidson
University and Colleges Union (UCU) Representative	Professor C Holscher
RI Director Representative	Professor S Steacy
CRS Representatives:	
<i>Faculty of Arts</i>	Dr B Kelly
<i>Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment</i>	Dr M Haran
<i>Faculty of Computing and Engineering</i>	Mr N Rooney
<i>Faculty of Life and Health Sciences</i>	Dr P Slater
<i>Faculty of Social Sciences</i>	-
Career Development Centre	Mrs M Curran
CRS Line Manager Representative	Professor JJ Strain
<u>In Attendance</u>	
Director of the Research Office	Dr AM Patton
Head of Research Policy	Mrs N Dallat

**REF 2014**

***Criteria and Definitions of levels for the outputs sub-profile***

<b>Four star</b>	<b>Exceptional:</b> Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour
<b>Three star</b>	<b>Excellent:</b> Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence
<b>Two star</b>	<b>Very good:</b> Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
<b>One star</b>	<b>Good:</b> Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
<b>Unclassified</b>	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 the assessment

### Individual Staff Circumstances

*(Extract from the Addendum to the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions (REF 02.2011))*

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

a. Circumstances with a **clearly defined** reduction in outputs are:

- i. Qualifying as an early career researcher (on the basis set out in paragraph 72 and Table 1 below).
- ii. Absence from work due to working part-time, secondments or career breaks (on the basis set out in paragraphs 73-74 and Table 2 below).
- iii. Qualifying periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave (on the basis set out in paragraphs 75-81).
- iv. Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1-6, as defined at paragraph 86.

b. **Complex circumstances** that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:

- i. Disability. This is defined in 'guidance on submissions' Part 4, Table 2 under 'Disability'.
- ii. Ill health or injury.
- iii. Mental health conditions.
- iv. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of – or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to – the allowances made in paragraph 75 below.
- v. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
- vi. Gender reassignment.
- vii. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed at paragraph 190 of 'guidance of submissions' or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

## Clearly defined circumstances

70. Where an individual has one or more circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs, the number of outputs that may be reduced should be determined according to the tables and guidance in paragraphs 72-86 below. All sub-panels will accept a reduction in outputs according to this guidance and will assess the remaining number of submitted outputs without any penalty.
71. In REF1b, submissions must include sufficient details of the individual's circumstances to show that these criteria have been applied correctly. The panel secretariat will examine the information in the first instance and advise the sub-panels on whether sufficient information has been provided and the guidance applied correctly. The panel secretariat will be trained to provide such advice, on a consistent basis across all UOAs. Where the sub-panel judges that the criteria have not been met, the 'missing' output(s) will be recorded as unclassified. (For example, an individual became an early career researcher in January 2011 but only one output is submitted rather than two. In this case the submitted output will be assessed, and the 'missing' output recorded as unclassified.)

## Early career researchers

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

**Table 1 Early career researchers: permitted reduction in outputs**

<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

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

73. Table 2 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment for absence from work due to:
- part-time working

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

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

<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 by up to:</b>
0-11.99	0
12-27.99	1
28-45.99	2
46 or more	3

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

#### Qualifying periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave

75. 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>16</sup> lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013.
76. The approach to these circumstances is based on the funding bodies’ considered judgement that the impact of such a period of leave and the arrival of a new child into a family is generally sufficiently disruptive of an individual’s research work to justify the reduction of an output. This judgement was informed by the consultation on draft panel criteria, in which an overwhelming majority of respondents supported such an approach.
77. The funding bodies’ decision not to have a minimum qualifying period for maternity leave was informed by the sector’s clear support for this approach in the consultation; recognition of the potential physical implications of pregnancy and childbirth; and the

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<sup>16</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’.

intention to remove any artificial barriers to the inclusion of women in submissions, given that women were significantly less likely to be selected in former RAE exercises.

78. The funding bodies consider it appropriate to make the same provision for those regarded as the 'primary adopter' of a child (that is, a person who takes statutory adoption leave), as the adoption of a child and taking of statutory adoption leave is generally likely to have a comparable impact on a researcher's work to that of taking maternity leave.
79. As regards additional paternity or adoption leave, researchers who take such leave will also have been away from work and acting as the primary carer of a new child within a family. The funding bodies consider that where researchers take such leave over a significant period (four months or more), this is likely to have an impact on their ability to work productively on research that is comparable to the impact on those taking maternity or statutory adoption leave.
80. While the clearly defined reduction of outputs due to additional paternity or adoption leave is subject to a minimum period of four months, shorter periods of such leave can be taken into account as follows:
  - a. By seeking a reduction in outputs under the provision for complex circumstances, for example where the period of leave had an impact in combination with other factors such as ongoing childcare responsibilities.
  - b. By combining the number of months for shorter periods of such leave in combination with other clearly defined circumstances, according to Table 2.
81. Any period of maternity, adoption or paternity leave that qualifies for the reduction of an output under the provisions in paragraph 75 above may in individual cases be associated with prolonged constraints on work that justify the reduction of more than one output. In such cases, the circumstances should be explained using the arrangements for complex circumstances.

#### Combining clearly defined circumstances

82. Where individuals have had a combination of circumstances with clearly defined reductions in outputs, these may be accumulated up to a maximum reduction of three outputs. For each circumstance, the relevant reduction should be applied and added together to calculate the total maximum reduction.
83. Where Table 1 is combined with Table 2, the period of time since 1 January 2008 up until the individual met the definition of an early career researcher should be calculated in months, and Table 2 should be applied.
84. When combining circumstances, only one circumstance should be taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously. (For example, an

individual worked part-time throughout the assessment period and first met the definition of an early career researcher on 1 September 2009. In this case the number of months 'absent' due to part-time working should be calculated from 1 September 2009 onwards, and combined with the reduction due to qualifying as an early career researcher, as indicated in paragraph 83 above.)

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

#### Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1-6

86. In UOAs 1-6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to two, without penalty in the assessment, for the following:
  - a. Category A staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 October 2013.
  - b. Category C staff who are employed primarily as clinical, health or veterinary professionals (for example by the NHS), and whose research is primarily focused in the submitting unit.
87. These allowances are made on the basis that the staff concerned are normally significantly constrained in the time they have available to undertake research during the assessment period. The reduction of two outputs takes account of significant constraints on research work, and is normally sufficient to also take account of additional circumstances that may have affected the individual's research work. Where the individual meets the criteria at paragraph 86, and has had significant additional circumstances – for any of the reasons at paragraph 69 – the institution may return the circumstances as 'complex' with a reduction of three outputs, and provide a justification for this.

#### **Complex circumstances**

88. Where staff have had one or more complex circumstances – including in combination with any circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs – the institution will need to make a judgement on the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs submitted, and provide a rationale for this judgement.
89. As far as is practicable, the information in REF1b should provide an estimate – in terms of the equivalent number of months absent from work – of the impact of the complex circumstances on the individual's ability to work productively throughout the

assessment period, and state any further constraints on the individual's research work in addition to the equivalent months absent. A reduction should be made according to Table 2 in relation to estimated months absent from work, with further constraints taken into account as appropriate. To aid institutions the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) will publish worked examples of complex circumstances, which will indicate how these calculations can be made and the appropriate reduction in outputs for a range of complex circumstances. These will be available at [www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF) from February 2012.

90. All submitted complex circumstances will be considered by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP), on a consistent basis across all UOAs. The membership and terms of reference of the EDAP are available at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk) under Equality and diversity. The EDAP will make recommendations about the appropriate number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty to the relevant main panel chairs, who will make the decisions. The relevant sub-panels will then be informed of the decisions and will assess the remaining outputs without any penalty.
91. To enable individuals to disclose the information in a confidential manner, information submitted about individuals' complex circumstances will be kept confidential to the REF team, the EDAP and main panel chairs, and will be destroyed on completion of the REF (as described in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions (paragraphs 98-99)).

<b>GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	
<b>CoP</b>	Code of Practice
<b>ECR</b>	Early Career Researcher
<b>EDS</b>	Equality and Diversity Services
<b>EQIA</b>	Equality Impact Assessment
<b>FEC</b>	Faculty Executive Committee
<b>FRC</b>	Faculty Research Committee
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>HEFCE</b>	Higher Education Funding Council for England
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>HoS</b>	Head of School
<b>ISC</b>	Individual Staff Circumstances
<b>OoI</b>	Office of Innovation
<b>PVC (EP&amp;IA)</b>	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Educational Partnerships & International Affairs)
<b>PVC (R&amp;I)</b>	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)
<b>QP</b>	Quality Profile
<b>RAE</b>	Research Assessment Exercise
<b>RCSG</b>	Research Concordat Steering Group
<b>REF</b>	Research Excellence Framework
<b>REFSC</b>	Research Excellence Framework Steering Committee
<b>RI</b>	Research Institute
<b>RIC</b>	Research and Innovation Committee
<b>RID</b>	Research Institute Director
<b>RO</b>	Research Office
<b>SMT</b>	Senior Management Team
<b>UIR</b>	Ulster Institutional Repository
<b>UoA</b>	Unit of Assessment
<b>VCAG</b>	Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group

### Useful Contacts/ Websites

- National REF website: <http://www.ref.ac.uk>
- Equality and Diversity Services: <http://www.equality.ulster.ac.uk/>
- Internal University REF website:  
<http://research.ulster.ac.uk/uuresearch/ref.html>
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: <http://www.equalityni.org>
- Equality Challenge Unit: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/REF>

### Further Information:

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For information on Equality & Diversity matters, please contact: Sara Hunter, Head of Equality and Diversity Services, Room 2H15B, Jordanstown Campus, email: [sp.hunter@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:sp.hunter@ulster.ac.uk) telephone: 028 9036 6845.