

# Annex C

## Equality and diversity in the nominations process

1. The four UK higher education (HE) funding bodies recognise that diversity of perspective and experience contributes fundamental insight and value to the work of the REF panels, and that this insight and value comes not only from academic achievement but also from other aspects of panel members' lives. We have introduced several measures to the recruitment process for panel members, which are aimed at increasing the representativeness of the REF panel membership. This reflects the funding bodies' wider commitment to supporting equality and diversity in research careers.

### Guidance and contextual data

2. The purpose of the guidance below is to inform nominating bodies' considerations about equality and diversity issues when following processes for nominating panel members for REF 2021. Responsibility for compliance with equality and diversity requirements when making nominations rests with nominating bodies. Further information, advice and guidance relating to the Equality Act (2010) can be obtained from the Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>7</sup>.

3. We recognise that there will be substantial variation in the nature and size of the nominating bodies that will put forward candidates for REF panel membership. Consequently, the processes each body follows to identify and select nominees will vary, as appropriate to that body's nature and size.

4. To help achieve diversity in the pool of nominated candidates, we expect nominating bodies to give due consideration to equality and diversity in the process of identifying and selecting nominees. The term 'equality and diversity' describes an approach that values difference and treats each individual fairly and with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying.

5. Processes for identifying and selecting nominees should incorporate the principles of transparency and inclusivity:

- Transparency: processes should be transparent and made available to interested groups.
- Inclusivity: processes should promote an inclusive approach, enabling the identification of all interested candidates that meet the role requirements.

This could involve, for example:

- increasing understanding of any equality and diversity issues relevant to the nominating body's research area of interest (we have made available current contextual data, which may inform nominating bodies – see paragraph 6)

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en>. This site includes links to the work of the Commission in Scotland and in Wales.

- reaching out to or tackling any known barriers for under-represented groups, to identify nominees
- establishing transparent criteria for any processes followed to select nominees
- reviewing the language used in any communications and criteria in the nominations process, to consider its inclusivity and accessibility
- making clear in communications that nominees from groups under-represented in REF2014 panels are encouraged
- considering the representativeness of any groups involved in selecting nominees
- raising awareness of, or providing training on, unconscious bias for groups involved in selecting nominees.

6. To further inform nominating bodies, we have made available on our website (see [www.ref.ac.uk/about/nompan/Contextual>Data](http://www.ref.ac.uk/about/nompan/Contextual>Data)) contextual data relating to HE academic staff in the UK, split by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. We have drawn on existing data sources to provide this contextual information by academic job type, and by subject. The contextual data provides a broad indication of the current representation of staff according to these protected characteristics. The data highlights where key challenges remain for equality and diversity in the academic staff population.

7. Nominating bodies may also be interested to review the analysis conducted on the REF 2014 panel membership. The analysis highlighted that, while some progress had been made to improve the representativeness of the panels from previous exercises, some groups remained under-represented on the panels. The report and data can be accessed at [www.ref.ac.uk/2014/pubs/analysisofpanelmembership](http://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/pubs/analysisofpanelmembership).