

**Code of Practice for the Preparation of the
Research Excellence Framework 2029
Submission**

May 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Principles

How your CoP supports the principles of:

- **Robustness** – Explain how the policies and processes set out in the CoP ensure that contracts identified as contributing to the volume measure reliably reflect the responsibilities of staff.

Matters regarding the designation of research responsibilities for staff are well embedded at the University. These have been operating continuously and consistently since early 2019, and are as per those set out in the University's [REF 2021 Code of Practice](#). The University has continued to implement its REF 2021 Code throughout this REF period, and this revised REF 2029 Code reflects how these policies and processes are embedded.

This Code also demonstrates that the University has continued to review and refine operations, to reflect institutional changes, and to ensure greater transparency and consistency of process and decision making across the University. In particular, the migration of Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) processes onto a single online plan (in November 2023) has brought greater consistency and oversight to this activity.

Two significant changes introduced to this Code of Practice refresh relate to updates necessitated by the introduction in 2021 of two new roles - Associate Professor, which replaced the role of Reader; and Associate Head, which replaced the role of Principal Lecturer (both detailed in Section 2.1).

The SRR designation process is firmly established into annual planning rounds. Each December, all staff on teaching and research (ACEMPFUN 3) contracts are invited to submit a forward-looking Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE) plan, with a deadline in late February/early March. These are generally supported by an adjoined backwards-looking Narrative CV, or equivalent mechanism, which helps demonstrate a track record of quality, and provides evidence that the proposed plan is viable. RIKE plans and Narrative CVs are produced and submitted on a central system, which enables monitoring across all structural and disciplinary units, including Colleges, Schools/Institutes and Units of Assessment. Decisions then feed into the allocation of work planning hours for the proceeding academic year. HESA returns made in the autumn after the academic year (i.e. 18 months after the decisions are made) simply confirm that same data in retrospect.

Any academic member of staff can, and is encouraged to, produce a RIKE plan. Those from staff on teaching and research contracts - where these determine SRR designation - are light-touch reviewed annually, with a full review every three years.

The fact that SRR processes have been embedded since 2019 has enabled a positive cultural shift and is how all hours supporting the development of academic staff (including ones other than SRR; see Section 2.1) are allocated across the University. Staff and managers are engaged, and the forward-looking planning focus is - through its design - also fundamentally connected to staff and career development discussions and provision via Performance and Development Review (PDR) and the University's [Researcher and Innovator Development Academy](#) (RIDA).

Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange-only (ACEMPFUN 2) contracts all contribute to the volume measure based on their grade as the marker of independence, not on an individual level (details in Section 3.1).

The University has very small numbers of teaching-only (ACEMPFUN 1) contracts (n=8 grade 6 academic tutors); these do not contribute to the volume measure.

- **Transparency** – Detail how the CoP is communicated to all staff, including those on leave of absence or based outside the UK. Ensure accessibility by providing information in various formats and through appropriate channels. Highlight any additional resources (FAQs, web pages) to support staff understanding. An up-to-date version of the CoP should be published and available externally.

Although this Code of Practice represents a continuation of long-standing existing processes, upon approval by Research England, a copy of this 2029 refresh will be emailed to all staff for information. It will also be published on this [external webpage](#) and an intranet page. The final version will be accessibility tested to ensure suitability for screen readers and assistive technologies. Each December, when invitations for updated RIKE plans to be submitted are communicated, links to the Code will also be recirculated. Refresher workshops for staff and decision-makers will be run at College, School/Institute and/or Unit of Assessment (UoA) level each winter, as necessary.

This Code of Practice was developed in co-operation with the local branch of University and College Union (UCU), who also communicated the relevant updates to their members.

During the development of the Code of Practice, two all-staff engagement sessions were held. These were held in-person, once at each campus, and a recording of one was made available afterwards to all staff. A particular focus of these was socialising the concepts of decoupling and non-portability, as there was seen to be limited understanding of the significant implications of these across the sector in general.

- **Equity and Inclusion** – Explain how decisions about submissions are fair and impartial supporting a diversity of people and research, where diverse contributions are valued and supported.

Any academic member of staff can complete a RIKE plan. For staff on teaching and research contracts they have the REF-specific purpose of determining SRR designations. RIKE plans are designed to enable staff to assess and develop a diversity of interests and pathways within the RIKE umbrella. The assessed responses cover:

- Overarching vision for your RIKE activity (next 3 years)
- RIKE outputs (next 3 years)
- Pursuit of RIKE external funding (next 3 years)
- Impact from RIKE (next 3 years)
- Doctoral supervision activity (next 3 years)
- Connectivity of RIKE with student activity and Teaching and Learning (T&L) (next 3 years)
- Development/CPD activities (next 3 years)
- Contribution to the field (next 3 years)

The RIKE forms are considered in their entirety, and the different components provide a holistic view of the quality and viability of plans.

As part of this RIKE planning process, the form also connects to development needs, with an open 'What support and resources do you need?' question, followed by 12 radio buttons enabling individuals to register specific development needs, covering areas such as income generation, innovation and impact, ethics and integrity etc. This enables the objectives set for the designation of

SRR to be tied to the provision of specific development interventions and resources. This data is analysed and used to inform the provision of the University's [RIDA](#) programme. It also informs development conversations with line managers and PDRs.

These forward-looking plans are usually complemented by adjoining backwards-looking Narrative CVs, where applicants provide 1000 words highlighting their contribution, covering:

- Generation of Knowledge
- Development of Individuals
- Research Community/Contributions to the Discipline
- Broader Society/Impact and Knowledge Exchange

This format - endorsed by UKRI as a way to showcase the diversity of track records that form pathways to being successful researchers and innovators - enables the presentation of diverse experiences and contributions, beyond traditional publications and grants. As with the RIKE plans, the Narrative CV is considered in its entirety by SRR decision-makers and diversity is positively encouraged.

In addition to SRR, the University also operates two other categories of support for the development of academic staff – Significant Research Potential (SRP) and Academic Development (AD). These are used both to support earlier-career staff transition to SRR and to resource other activities in the RIKE space, e.g. innovation and knowledge exchange work, or staff doctorates. These also work in the same way – i.e. via the submission of RIKE plans; staff indicate their current designation and which they wish to apply for in the following year. A tapering up to SRR is designed to improve access for all staff, by graduating the steps to it. SRP is intended as developmental stage for researchers, rather than somewhere they will remain; as such it can normally only be allocated for two consecutive years before progression to SRR is expected. The two-year limit for SRP does not currently apply to that awarded for specific innovation and knowledge exchange (IKE) activities - which is currently being piloted in one College - as opposed to research hours. These conditions normally apply in the cases of staff moving to SRR: i) applications are assessed on merit and history of performance, and ii) two consistently performing years at SRP are a strong basis for consideration of becoming SRR.

Decision-making relating to these processes is addressed in Section 2.1.

1.2 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

Describe how this Code of Practice relates to your institution's context on equality, diversity, and inclusion, SPRE and responsible research assessment.

This Code of Practice connects to the University's [Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EEDI\) Framework 2024-27](#). It is also aligned to the University's [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) commitments and action plans. In particular there is convergence between these three areas of activity around the themes of career development and progression, advancing equality of opportunity and access, and strategies to continually enhance culture and environment for researchers. The EEDI team were instrumental in this Code of Practice working group, ensuring key institutional principles and practices informed the development of the Code.

The University also has robust [ethics and integrity](#) and [open research](#) expectations, which drives the highest standards on matters such as open access, open data, reproducibility, peer reviewing, authorship and publication practices.

The University has a [Responsible Metrics Policy](#) and is a signatory of DORA. All internal research assessment (described in Section 5.1) is based on the peer review of research and innovation outputs by UoA reading groups, with at least two reviewers reviewing each item.

1.3 Update on Actions since REF 2021

Summarise key actions taken since REF 2021 to address issues or recommendations from previous EIAs.

The Action Plan from the University’s REF EIA was as follows:

Actions from 2021 EIA	Progress as at winter 2025/6
1. Continue to monitor EDI at all future internal research assessment exercises and address any arising concerns accordingly	The University has moved to the continuous review of outputs throughout the REF assessment period, to better support staff development. As such EDI analysis has focused on the allocation of SRR prior to and during the REF staff volume census dates, as reported in HESA staff returns
2. Effective implementation and monitoring of institutional action plans aligned to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and to Athena Swan	The University’s Researcher Concordat Operations Group (RCOG) and its constituent subgroups (Environment and Culture; Employment; Professional and Career Development) oversee implementation and monitoring of the action plan. The University has been a signatory to the Concordat and has held the HR Excellence in Research Award throughout this REF assessment period. Annual reports and associated actions plans are available here . The University’s Athena Swan bronze award was recently renewed, and a new Concordat renewal is being submitted in May 2026
3. Deliver the UoA people strategies, as set out in REF5a documents	The University’s strategy for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange has prioritised the training, development and support of people through new investment and initiatives across career stages, underpinned by the establishment of the Researcher and Innovator Development Academy . Specific actions will be reported on fully in the SPRE returns for REF 2029
4. Align the activities of core directorates (Human Resources and Organisational Development, Research and Innovation Services, Academic Development and Diversity) to focus on gender and ethnicity within our people strategy for research - through the lens of recruitment, development, retention and experience at the University	Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) is an institution-wide priority with strategic direction, set by the EEDI Framework 2024-27 . The EEDI delivery plan that accompanies the framework is informed via the EEDI Staff Survey and roundtable discussions with key stakeholders (including research staff and students) on priority areas, including disability, neurodiversity and anti-racism. This plan brings

	<p>together multiple EEDI-focused action plans - including the HR Excellence in Research (HREIR) Action Plan and incorporates several actions that are aligned with the Concordat principles and will benefit the RIKE community, particularly under two (Learning & Development; and Recruitment, Reward & Progression) of its six workstreams. The delivery plan has several delivery groups, including one for gender and one for race, each of which are led by two senior EEDI champions.</p>
<p>5. Undertake more thorough investigation of the fixed-term female eligible pool to determine if there is a particular cause of their low submission rate</p>	<p>The small numbers involved (2.7% of eligible pool - 39 of 1454; as at 31/7/25) and staff turnover, has made this challenging to explore in detail. Small focus groups have identified a need for better support for colleagues, notably females returning from carers leave, to help reintegrate back into work and re-establish research careers. Initiatives to encourage females to engage with institutional research initiatives, inclusion of staff on all contract types in these schemes, and a newly-launched returning carers scheme - are designed to include and support this staff group. The University seeks to address researcher precarity by minimising the use of fixed-term contracts where possible - 80% (108 of 134; as at 31/7/25) of REF-eligible research-only staff are on permanent contracts</p>
<p>6. Continue to engage with our research community through surveys (e.g. Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey (CEDARs) and institutional staff surveys), focus groups and other engagement activities to ensure a two-way dialogue and institutional responsiveness to need</p>	<p>Support for development is tailored to the needs of staff and students and is identified and refined based on data from surveys (CEDARS, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), internal surveys), feedback (focus groups, researcher networks), and individual annual development plans. CEDARS response rates have increased during this REF census period, while a new researcher network and a RIKE forum have both been established</p>
<p>7. All new and revised University policies and processes (including those specific to research) will include an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), and completed EIAs will be available for all staff to view</p>	<p>An EIA tool and review process has been developed to ensure policy and practice does not disadvantage or discriminate against any group on the basis of protected characteristics, backgrounds and identities; and to identify ways to promote equality of opportunity. An EIA document library helps to promote and share good practice</p>

Final updates will be reported in the SPRE returns for REF 2029.

2 Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)

2.1 Policies and Procedures:

- **Criteria for SRR:** Clearly define the criteria, based upon job role expectations, not past performance. Consider providing examples for consistent interpretation.
- **Decision-Making and Communication:** Describe the process, roles, and timelines.
- **Multiple Processes (if applicable):** If different processes are used for different UoAs, outline each and justify any differences.

The following processes have been embedded and operating annually since early 2019.

Criteria

Research England guidance states that: "staff with significant responsibility for research are those for whom:

- a. 'Explicit time and resources are made available'.
- b. 'To engage actively in independent research'.
- c. 'And that is an expectation of their job role'.

The University applies this in the following way:

Senior Academics (Professors and Associate Professors)

- All Professors and Associate Professors whose focus is research excellence have a significant responsibility for research
- These Professors and Associate Professors are expected to lead a significant programme of high-quality original research, sustaining an extensive track record of research outputs to maintain and enhance their reputation in their own discipline
- The University's progression pathway to Professor and Associate Professor provides for staff whose focus is in: Research and Innovation, Teaching and Learning and/or External and Professional Engagement. Staff who achieve Professor or Associate Professor status through a progression pathway that does not including Research and Innovation can be clearly evidenced through their promotion route and/or PDR objectives. These individuals would not normally be deemed to have significant responsibility for research and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis

Academic Contracts (Senior Lecturers, Lecturers)

- The approach to identifying staff with significant responsibility for research is based on a threshold allocation of time for specific and agreed research objectives, as part of academic work planning, PDR and academic development
- The thresholds are based on a percentage of the full FTE contract (1576 hours), pro rata. All staff have a Research and Scholarly Activity (RSA) allocation of 10.8% (170 hours) of that 1576 hours, pro rata. Further research and/or development allocations are additional to RSA
- The RSA allocation of 10.8% covers a range of general activities associated with research and/or scholarly activity, which may or may not be linked to specific research objectives
- The standard 10.8% RSA allocation does not, on its own, constitute a significant responsibility for research
- Additional research time allocation will be used to identify significant responsibility for research. This additional allocation will be set against specific research expectations, and will be based on individual RIKE plans for the next year, set against track record and trajectory (as evidenced by a Narrative CV or equivalent)

- This will be implemented via the work planning process, which allows for discussion and agreement of the research objectives, along with expectations of support and the resultant outcomes
- RIKE plans should be developed with support from the line manager, as part of the annual PDR cycle
- The mechanism for agreeing additional time, as part of the work planning process, involves discussions between the staff member and at least two research leads (typically the School/Institute RIKE Lead in co-ordination with the UoA Co-ordinator; but other arrangements, including local RIKE leadership committees/panels, are common), based on individual RIKE plans, as part of the PDR cycle. All SRR decisions will be referred to the UoA Co-ordinator for final sign off, to ensure quality and fit with the UoA strategy
- Such Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) allocations are distinct from any additional time allocated for Significant Research Potential (SRP) or Academic Development (AD); to support staff who are developing their academic profile through, for example, undertaking research skills development, specific innovation and knowledge exchange activity, or undertaking a staff doctorate
- The specific overall threshold for identifying significant responsibility for research has been determined to be equal to or greater than 10% SRR time allocation (in addition to the 10.8% RSA)
- Individuals undertaking staff doctorates can have significant responsibility for research, if they have a separate additional research allocation equal to or greater than 10%, with associated staff research objectives, in addition to any resource being provided to enable the completion of their doctorate

Atypical Staff

- Approximately 180 academic staff across the University do not have standard professor, associate professor, research or academic roles (as determined by 'Job Title' field on the PeopleXD HR system not being professor, associate professor, principal research fellow, senior research fellow, research fellow, researcher, research assistant, senior lecturer or lecturer)
- These include those in senior management roles: vice-chancellor, deans, heads of school, associate heads, heads of centres, directors etc. These may exceptionally have significant responsibility for research where undertaking research is an explicit objective of their role, as evidenced by explicit research objectives in their role descriptor, PDR and/or RIKE plan. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis
- Other staff on academic contracts include: learning and teaching CPD roles, student evaluation roles, employability-related roles, business development managers, gallery managers, learning technologists, industrial designers etc. The default will be that these staff do not have significant responsibility for research, unless they can demonstrate undertaking research is an explicit objective of their role, as evidenced by explicit research objectives in their role descriptor, PDR and/or RIKE plan

Technicians

- In response to REF 2029 Volume Measure guidance paragraph 8.2.1, it is felt that ACEMPFUN 3 does not precisely identify all contracts within the University with significant responsibility for research
- Occasionally technicians can meet the criteria laid out in section 8.4, in that they are given time and resources to undertake independent research, and it is an expectation of their role
- Consistent with ACEMPFUN 3 and ACEMPFUN 2 staff, grade 7 and grade 8 staff are deemed to be independent, whereas grade 6 (and 5) staff are not
- Most technicians will not however have expectations in their role to undertake independent research. Those that do, will exceptionally be able to evidence it through explicit independent

research objectives in their RIKE plan and/or PDR. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis

Part-Time Staff

- All time allocation thresholds will be percentages, rather than fixed hour time allocations or decimal FTEs
- It is the capability of being able to produce high quality research that is being recognised by the allocation of research time, not different levels of volume. So staff are facilitated to contribute research at a pro-rated rate
- This may create cases where staff on fractional contracts with significant responsibility for research have fewer actual hours for research than some full-time staff without significant responsibility for research; but this is consistent with the principles of the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Explicit expectations will be built into PDR objectives that the timeframe for part-time staff to produce research outputs is pro-rated. This adjusted expectation of output production rate is also recognised in progression criteria
- It is a recommendation that research time provided should normally be blocked into whole days, and this is particularly to be applied to part-time staff

Summary

Staff Group	Status
Senior Academics	
Professors and Associate Professors	All have significant responsibility for research; other than exceptionally those whose progression pathway has not included research & innovation, i.e. a teaching & learning plus external & professional engagement route
Research Staff	
Principal Research Fellows (G9), Senior Research Fellows (G8), Research Fellows (G7)	All have significant responsibility for research; other than exceptionally those with a specific knowledge exchange/consultancy focus
Research Assistants/Researchers (G6)	Grade 6 staff are not on REF qualifying contracts/are not independent
Academic Staff	
Senior Lecturers (G8), Lecturers (G7)	Research and Scholarly Activity (RSA) time (10.8%) does not, on its own, constitute a significant responsibility for research Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) time (+ ≥10%), in combination with RSA, and allocated against agreed RIKE plans, constitutes a significant responsibility for research
Atypical Staff (including Associate Heads)	Do not have significant responsibility for research; except those with explicit research objectives in their role descriptor, PDR and/or RIKE plan
Technicians	
Technicians (G8), Technicians (G7)	Do not have significant responsibility for research; except those with explicit independent research objectives in their RIKE plan and/or PDR
Technicians (G6), Technicians (G5)	Are not independent

Work Planning Categories

Counts towards Significant Responsibility for Research	Does not count towards Significant Responsibility for Research
Research and Scholarly Activity (RSA) 10.8% (fixed for all staff)	Significant Research Potential (SRP)
Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) (historically also called Additional Research) ≥10% (in addition to RSA)	Academic Development (AD)
Externally-Funded Research	

Sabbatical time will be captured within these categories as appropriate.

2.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Define roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees, distinguishing between advisory and decision-making roles.
- **Training:** Detail training provided.

Decisions on SRR applications are made by at least two research leads (typically the School/Institute RIKE Lead in co-ordination with the UoA Co-ordinator; but other arrangements, including local RIKE leadership committees/panels, are common). Decisions are intellectual ones, made solely on the basis of the quality and viability of the RIKE plan, factoring the track record and trajectory of the individual. At least two individuals confirm every decision, with specific arrangements made where the School/Institute RIKE Lead and UoA Co-ordinator are the same individual (if not otherwise a committee set-up).

SRR decisions are devolved to Schools/Institutes. The REF Management Group and other University-level committees (Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Committee; Research Leadership Group) have no decision-making role, beyond setting out and approving the processes in this Code.

All members of staff at the University are required to complete two online equality and diversity modules - 'Equality Essentials' and 'Unconscious Bias 1'. In addition, all staff who are in a management role (including all SRR decision makers like RIKE Leads and UoA Co-ordinators) or have responsibility for recruitment must also complete a third module - 'Unconscious Bias 2'. These must all be renewed every two years.

2.3 Appeals

- **Clearly outline how staff can appeal decisions about SRR, with appropriate links and contact details.**

Appeals against SRR decisions for the forthcoming academic year can be made by the end of May to the relevant Head of School/Institute. A single panel - consisting of the three College Associate Dean for RIKE and three UoA Co-ordinators (one from each College) - will meet and consider any appeals in mid-June. Ad-hoc cases will be considered at later dates in the case of any staff on long-term leave (parental leave, sick leave) during the dedicated window.

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- **EIA Integration:** Demonstrate how EIA informed SRR identification and policy/procedure development. Provide information on data, findings, and actions taken.

EDI data has been monitored throughout the REF assessment period; notably in advance of SRR decisions being made in February/March 2026 for 2026/7, RIKE Leads and UoA Co-ordinators were provided with their SRR EIA data at a UoA-level, based on the 2024/25 HESA return (the most recently available data and the REF pilot year). The institution-level data is presented here; the UoA-level data was in the same format. The ambition is to minimise (at least $\leq 5\%$) any discrepancy in SRR populations as a proportion of eligible staff for each protected characteristic. Data is not provided for characteristics that are held by fewer than five individuals, which means disability figures are not provided to many UoAs. Due to sensitivity and sample size, more granular religion and sexual orientation data is not provided to UoAs.

	2025 HESA Return (31/7/25 census)			REF 2021 (31/7/20 census)		
	SRR	All Eligible Staff	SRR as proportion of eligible staff	SRR	All Eligible Staff	SRR as proportion of eligible staff
Female	233 (48%)	763 (52%)	31%	236 (47%)	798 (51%)	30%
Male	251 (52%)	691 (48%)	36%	264 (53%)	759 (49%)	35%
Minority Ethnic	98 (20%)	272 (19%)	36%	75 (15%)	183 (12%)	41%
White	356 (74%)	1080 (74%)	33%	396 (79%)	1268 (81%)	31%
Unknown	30 (6%)	98 (7%)	31%	29 (6%)	106 (7%)	27%
Disability	39 (8%)	141 (10%)	28%	25 (5%)	85 (5%)	29%
No Disability	402 (83%)	1183 (81%)	34%	433 (87%)	1330 (85%)	33%
Unknown	43 (9%)	130 (9%)	33%	42 (8%)	142 (9%)	30%
21-24	0 (0%)	<5 (0%)	0%	0 (0%)	<5 (0%)	0%
25-29	11 (2%)	45 (3%)	24%	5 (1%)	18 (1%)	28%
30-34	27 (6%)	93 (6%)	29%	44 (9%)	126 (8%)	35%
35-39	74 (15%)	198 (14%)	37%	84 (17%)	211 (14%)	40%
40-44	90 (19%)	254 (17%)	35%	91 (18%)	243 (16%)	37%
45-49	98 (20%)	263 (18%)	37%	71 (14%)	235 (15%)	30%
50-54	70 (14%)	217 (15%)	32%	81 (16%)	296 (19%)	27%
55-59	67 (14%)	228 (16%)	29%	61 (12%)	233 (15%)	26%
60+	47 (10%)	149 (10%)	32%	63 (13%)	194 (12%)	32%
Religion	141 (29%)	473 (33%)	29%	No data	No data	No data
No Religion	166 (35%)	479 (33%)	35%	No data	No data	No data
Unknown	172 (36%)	497 (34%)	35%	No data	No data	No data
LGBTQ+	26 (5%)	90 (6%)	29%	No data	No data	No data
Heterosexual	298 (62%)	889 (61%)	34%	No data	No data	No data
Unknown	155 (32%)	470 (32%)	33%	No data	No data	No data

In this table, the figures in parentheses give the percentage of staff with that characteristic against the total of all staff in that pool (either SRR or All Eligible Staff). For example, in the 2025 SRR group there are 233 females of the total 484 staff with SRR (233 female + 251 male), which is 48%.

In advance of SRR decisions being made in February/March 2027 for 2027/8, RIKE Leads and UoA Co-ordinators will be provided with their SRR EIA data at a UoA level, based on the 2025/26 HESA return. The purpose of providing this data is primarily to provide awareness and understanding, but there will

also be an ask of units to consider progress against actions plans and to consider revisions needed to meet the University's ambitions.

A further development, to help address remaining discrepancies, is that the existing EDI training provision for SRR decision makers (outlined in Section 2.2) will be expanded during 2026, and those individuals will also be encouraged to take the REF-specific training being provided for those making decisions on output selections (detailed in Section 5.2). This will help to raise awareness of the REF-specific context, particularly for the selection of outputs.

The University was particularly proud of its highly representative submission to REF 2021 (47% female and 15% staff of minority ethnic origin, by both staff return and output authors). Subsequent data analysis shows that staff with SRR continue to be broadly representative of both the 'all eligible staff' pool and the overall UK population in terms of gender and ethnicity, and the 'all eligible staff' pool for disability and age. This data is periodically monitored to ensure any movement in SRR numbers does not skew towards any particular protected characteristic.

3 Determining Research Independence

3.1 Policies and Procedures

- **Criteria and Evidence:** Clearly outline criteria and evidence used to assess research independence, particularly for 'research only' (ACEMPFUN 2) contracts.
- **Decision-Making and Communication:** Describe the process, roles, and timelines.

Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Contracts (Principal Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows, Research Fellows, Researchers, Research Assistants)

- Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange-only (ACEMPFUN 2) staff at grade 9 (Principal Research Fellows), 8 (Senior Research Fellow) and 7 (Research Fellow) are deemed to be research independent by virtue of their job descriptions and expectations in the University's [Academic Careers Framework](#)
- Exceptionally, some staff on Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange-only contracts (at grades 9, 8 and 7) may have a specific focus on consultancy/knowledge exchange, rather than research. These staff will be deemed to not have significant responsibility for research. This consultancy/knowledge exchange focus can be evidenced by explicit objectives in their role descriptor, PDR and/or RIKE plan
- Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange-only (ACEMPFUN 2) staff at grade 6 (researchers/research assistants) are deemed to be research assistants (RESAST), and not to be independent researchers by virtue of their job description

As research independence is determined by grade, there is no REF-related decision-making at person level.

3.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

- *If this section is the same as Part 2, please just refer to the earlier text.*
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Define roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees, distinguishing between advisory and decision-making roles.
- **Training:** Detail training provided.

As research independence is determined by grade, there is no REF-related decision-making at person level.

3.3 Appeals

- **Clearly outline how staff can appeal decisions about research independence, with appropriate links and contact details.**

As research independence is determined by grade, there is no REF-related decision-making at person level.

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- **EIA Integration: Demonstrate how EIA informed research independence determination and policy/procedure development. Provide information on data, findings, and actions taken.**

As research independence is determined by grade, there is no REF-related decision-making at person level.

4 Allocating Contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedures

- **Criteria and Evidence: Clearly outline criteria and evidence used to allocate contracts to UoAs**
- **Decision-Making and Communication: Describe the process, roles, and timelines.**

The University has supported the same 14 UoAs since 2018 (three new UoAs were established between 2014-18) and all have highly consistent membership. These UoAs have grown in size during this period and the REF Management Group keeps under review emerging disciplinary areas, to ensure the units continue to represent the University's intellectual base.

Staff continued to be allocated to UoAs every year between REFs 2021 and 2029 internally as part of the HESA staff return process, even though this data was not required/submitted. UoA alignment of staff, derived from the previous year's HESA return, is publicly displayed as a filter on the University's [staff profiles website](#).

A high-level level mapping occurs for the HESA return, whereby internal units (Schools/Institutes/Centres/subject groups) are mapped by HR and Research and Innovation Services to one of the 14 UoAs. Exceptionally these defaults are overwritten for an individual where it is judged their 'best intellectual fit' is to another UoA than that their organisation unit is aligned to.

Best intellectual fit for an individual is the sole criteria employed for UoA alignment. Practically, researchers on the boundary between two UoAs are actively encouraged to engage with multiple units, and establish their best intellectual fit through that interposition.

4.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

- **Roles and Responsibilities: Define roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees, distinguishing between advisory and decision-making roles.**
- **Training: Detail training provided.**

The decision to move a member of staff from one UoA to another will be taken by the UoA Co-ordinators of the two relevant units. They will both read examples of the individual's work and agree between them the 'best intellectual fit' for the work. The researcher's view can also be taken into account if they have an opinion. A College-level Associate Dean for RIKE will arbitrate on cases where there is not a clear-cut answer.

Decisions on UoA alignment can be considered at any point within the annual cycle, usually prompted by a new member of staff joining the institution, but are only formalised annually each August/September as part of the HESA staff return.

UoA Co-ordinators and Associate Deans for RIKE all complete all three online equality and diversity modules - 'Equality Essentials', 'Unconscious Bias 1' and 'Unconscious Bias 2'.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

EIA Integration: Demonstrate how EIA informed allocation of contracts to UoAs and policy/procedure development. Provide information on data, findings, and actions taken.

Decisions are made at organisational unit level or on a very small number of individual cases. As the University perceives no value differential between UoAs, and decisions on staff alignment to a UoA are based on intellectual fit, the institution's EIA is focused on the allocation of SRR and so the purpose of an EIA for this aspect is extraneous.

5 Selecting Outputs

5.1 Policies and Procedures

- **Identifying substantive link to outputs**
- **Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff:** covering compulsory redundancy, voluntary redundancy or severance, retirement, expiration of fixed term contracts
- **Assigning outputs to UoA/s:** Considering interdisciplinary research and submitting an output to multiple UOAs.
- **Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs**
- **Procedures for ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken within the submitting unit during the REF period:** Outlining the processes that will be undertaken to ensure that submitted outputs are reflective of the research strategies and structures, the diversity of research outputs, and contributions, collaborations and partnerships of the submitting unit and the unit's research strategies.
- **Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice**

The University has embedded a corpus-based approach to outputs, where outputs and authors are decoupled as much as possible, particularly concerning output review and decision-making on selection. However, these are still tracked by REF-supporting teams to ensure links to eligible contracts.

The University's output management system (Symplectic Elements) drives a bottom-up approach, whereby all outputs within scope of the REF open access policy in the University's corpus are automatically harvested from a wide-range of international databases. This removes the possible

equality concerns inherent in opt-in approaches. Outputs outside the scope of the REF open access policy (creative portfolios, monographs, book chapters etc.) do need to be manually added to Elements; it is the responsibility of the lead author, supported by the UoA, to ensure this is undertaken. The University is an active member of the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN), and designated Open Research Champions and Research Support Librarians lead to promote and embed good open research practices, including expanding of the use and submission of non-textual outputs. As an institution with a strong tradition in creative disciplines, the University has confidence in, and a proud track record of, including and valuing a diverse output portfolio within submissions.

Since REF 2014, UoA reading groups have periodically reviewed outputs in their corpus against REF criteria and awarded them ratings on the 1-4* scale (more details of the REF 2021 criteria and scoring system can be found [here](#); changes to this are not expected for REF 2029). Following the change in REF policy and the decoupling of staff and outputs, all REF-eligible outputs are reviewed from all staff on a REF-eligible contract types. In UoAs where authors tend to produce large numbers of outputs, to help with capacity, authors can be asked to nominate only their 'best' outputs for review.

All outputs are reviewed by at least two members of the UoA reading group, and moderated within the unit. UoA reading groups are typically made up of all professors, associate professors and principal research fellows within the unit. Mid and early career researchers are also encouraged to join reading groups for career development; these will work to review outputs in pairings with senior researchers. Samples are also sent to external reviewers to assist with internal calibration; external reviewers do not though make decisions on output scores or selection.

The University has a policy on the [responsible use of metrics](#) and is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). All outputs are assessed using expert qualitative judgement, and metrics are never used as a proxy for that.

As an institution with a strong tradition in all REF Main Panels, the University is experienced at submitting a range of output types - beyond textual ones - and values all output types equally. Online creative portfolios are established practice for UoA 32 submissions and are also utilised by other researchers in Panel D units. Datasets and similar outputs are supported through data repositories. Furthermore, with the University's strength in contract research, there is also confidence in submitting practice-facing reports, alongside traditional articles and books.

When the output target is fixed after the second volume measure census period, UoA Co-ordinators will rank their outputs according to the star rating assigned to each output during their review processes. The UoA Co-ordinator will then select their best quality outputs up to the target number.

To aid interdisciplinarity and enact decoupling, outputs will be shared for internal review across cognate disciplines - to see where there may be overlap in terms with their UoA descriptors. In such cases where the descriptors are aligned, high quality outputs will be considered for submission to multiple UoAs.

While research quality is the primary criterion for the selection of outputs, assessment will also be made on the representativeness of the research portfolio across the UoA in the submission. This will look at the distribution of outputs against the research themes that will be set out in UoAs' SPRE narratives. The representativeness of the UoA will play a particular role in deciding between outputs that have been assigned the same quality rating by the UoA reading group.

Decision-making on the selection of outputs will be based on the following chronological criteria:

- i. Eligibility (REF eligible output with a substantive link to a REF-qualifying contract)

- ii. Quality on the 1-4* scale, as set out in the REF guidance
- iii. Open access eligibility (with consideration of the tolerance threshold)
- iv. Representativeness of UoA research themes

Internal research assessment exercises have been taking place since 2015. The University is taking a developmental approach, with authors being provided with the ratings of their own outputs and feedback on how they might potentially achieve greater originality, significance and rigour with future outputs. Reviews are ratified by the UoA reading group, with consolidated ratings and feedback given to individuals on behalf of the UoA reading group.

The same broad approaches are applied to the selection of impact case studies. Feedback to potential impact case study authors is however more formative, and often includes both a current and potential rating. A similar formative approach is taken with portfolio-based outputs in creative disciplines.

The University does not have a formal expectation of any staff member's contribution to the output pool. However, all individuals with SRR are expected to perform their role as per the expectations set out for the Research & Innovation section, consummate with their grade, on the University's [Academic Careers Framework](#).

Leavers:

- Outputs of individuals who resigned or retired during the REF period will be considered for submission
- Outputs of staff whose fixed-term contracts ended during the REF period will also be considered, ensuring compliance with the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
- The outputs of staff who left the University through a Voluntary Severance Scheme will be considered for submission
- Outputs of staff who have taken voluntary redundancy will be considered for submission
- The University will not include in its submission outputs produced by any member of staff who has been made compulsorily redundant during the REF period. Where there has been internal co-authorship, outputs naming staff made compulsorily redundant may still appear in the corpus
- Outputs produced by any member of staff dismissed on grounds of research misconduct will not be included. Where there has been internal co-authorship, and the integrity of the outputs have not been brought into question in misconduct hearings, outputs naming staff dismissed for this reason may still appear in the corpus

Conditional on the above, outputs produced by leavers within the 2/5-year window following their leave date, as outlined in CKU Guidance paragraph 6.5.1, will be considered for submission, as well as those from within their employment period.

Where the University submits more than five outputs with substantive links to a staff member within a UoA, it will explain the rationale within the required statement of representativeness in the SPRE narrative.

5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

- *If this section is the same as Part 2 or 3, please just refer to the earlier text.*
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Define roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees, distinguishing between advisory and decision-making roles.

- **Training:** Detail training provided.

All UoA Co-ordinators and members of UoA reading groups, who are responsible for research assessment and the selection of outputs, are required to have completed all three modules detailed in Section 2.2 prior to assessing, advising or making decisions relating to REF 2029 outputs.

The University will also provide access to third party REF-specific training for these groups, e.g. DORA's 'Responsible Research Assessment' or Pearn Kandola's 'Fairness in Research Assessment'. This enhanced training will be mandatory for those making final decisions on output selection, and going forward will be rolled-out to all those undertaking output reviews. Staff involved in SRR decision making will also be encouraged to undertake this REF-specific training, in addition to that which is mandatory for them, set out in Section 2.2.

A detailed schedule of training records will be verified by Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and Human Research and Organisation Development (HR&OD), to ensure all those with designated output responsibilities have undertaken this mandatory training. The REF Management Group will have oversight of this compliance.

All external reviewers have agreed terms stating they have 'undertaken recent (since the introduction of the Equality Act 2010), appropriate training'. They have also been offered access to the University's eLearning modules, if they had not received such training via their own institution.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

EIA Integration: Demonstrate how EIA informed the selection of outputs and policy/procedure development. Provide information on data, findings, and actions taken.

As selection of outputs is decoupled, it would be contrary to that ethos to undertake a data analysis of output selection.

However, in terms of broader policy development, REF processes regarding output selection have been positively influenced by equality-related considerations, including:

- The review and constructive feedback provided to staff since 2015, to help them understand originality, significance and rigour, and to improve their future outputs
- The introduction of open research champions and joining of the UKRN, to help embed open research practices and improve compliance
- The signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in 2019, to fix clear expectations around the responsible use of research metrics
- Highlighting the need for REF-specific training for those making decisions on output selection

All of these - along with the other measures set out in this section - will help ensure that potential effects of policies on different groups are understood, that decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning, and that any adverse impacts are identified and actions identified to remove or mitigate them.

6 Appendices

6.1 Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	REF 2029 Code of Practice
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	To codify the processes for identifying staff with SRR and for selecting outputs for REF 2029
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	Produced by a working group of stakeholders from across the University (representatives of the research community, Research and Innovation Services, Human Resources, and the EEDI team) and in partnership with UCU. Also held all-staff engagement events
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	All staff on REF qualifying contracts (c.1450 individuals)
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	EIAs will be conducted following HESA staff returns and following the final REF submission. Reports will be presented via institutional governance committees including RIKE Committee and Academic Board, and local College Research Leadership Groups; with clear recommendations, actions and action owners

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Positive	<p>Disability profile (SRR vs all eligible staff) to be highlighted in advance of SRR decisions and action plans to be in place to address any imbalance.</p> <p>If adjustments and flexible working necessitates reduction in working, proportionate adjustments and support can be established knowing there is no set expectation of any staff member's contribution to the output pool (Section 5.1)</p>	

Gender reassignment	While we do collect this data, response rates are very low, with the vast majority of staff not returning this information		
Marriage or civil partnership	While we do collect this data, response rates are very low, with the vast majority of staff not returning this information		
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	If maternity leave and flexible working necessitates reduction in working hours, proportionate adjustments and support can be established knowing there is no set expectation of any staff member's contribution to the output pool (Section 5.1)	
Race	Positive	UoA race profile (SRR vs all eligible) to be highlighted in advance of SRR decisions (Section 2.4) and action plans to be in place to address any imbalance	
Religion or belief	Neutral	Institutional data presented in Section 2.4. Due to sensitivity and sample sizes, more granular data will not be provided to UoAs	
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Institutional data presented in Section 2.4. Due to sensitivity and sample sizes, more granular data will not be provided to UoAs	
Sex (gender)	Positive	UoA gender profile (SRR vs all eligible) to be highlighted in advance of SRR decisions (Section 2.4) and action plans to be in place to address any imbalance	

Age	Neutral	Age profile (SRR vs all eligible) to be in highlighted in advance of SRR decisions (section 2.4) and action plans to be in place to address any imbalance	
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	Part-time workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRR thresholds are percentages • RIKE plans assessed on pro-rated basis • Blocking of research hours as whole days (Section 2.1) 	
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	Career stage	Peer review of outputs throughout the assessment period as a developmental opportunity through the provision of constructive feedback to enhance originality, significance and rigour (Section 5.1)	
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	Parents and carers	If parental/carers' leave and flexible working necessitates reduction in working hours, proportionate adjustments and support can be established knowing there is no set expectation of any staff member's contribution to the output pool (Section 5.1)	

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	There are always potential unintended consequences, but the ambitions of the Code are actively to promote transparency, robustness, equity and inclusion	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed .	✓	
2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the		The policy cannot stop due to Research England requirements; however, there is the potential to revisit the Code

data shows bias towards one or more groups		throughout the REF cycle as the REF policy intention is that this is a living document; this might necessitate re-approval via Research England post the agreed approval deadline of May 2026
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	✓	There is the potential to revisit the Code throughout the REF cycle as the REF policy intention is that this is a living document; this might necessitate re-approval via Research England post the agreed approval deadline of May 2026
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	✓	

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	May 2026
Review date (if applicable):	REF 2037 EIA

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change

6.2 Referenced Material in the CoP

The document is self-contained or has embedded URLs.