

Sheffield Hallam University - REF 2021 Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

REF 2021

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions. The threefold purpose of the REF is: i) to provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment, ii) to provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks, for use within the HE sector and for public information, and iii) to inform the selective allocation of funding for research. The REF is a process of expert review, carried out by expert panels, made up of senior academics, international members and research users.

Purpose

The purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is principally to identify whether there was an imbalance in terms of gender, disability, ethnicity, age, working pattern and occupancy between all Category A Eligible Staff and Category A Submitted Staff, as defined in the REF Guidance on Submissions. This is the 'outcome data' of ongoing initiatives to ensure the University's REF submission is as representative of the overall academic population as possible.

Historic trends of under-representation have been monitored, and interventions have sought to reduce any significant gaps. This EIA presents these trends and identifies both a generally positive direction of travel, and any remaining areas of imbalance. A significant marker of the progress made in this area is that **female staff make up 47% of our REF 2021 submission** compared with 41% in 2014, while **our submission is comprised of 15% BME staff** compared with 8% in 2014.

Responsibilities

The REF governance and management structures are set-out in Appendix 1 of the University's REF Code of Practice (www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/research-excellence-framework/code-of-practice). The Dean of Research is ultimately responsible for matters relating to REF, including equality and diversity and this EIA. The Dean of Research is advised by a REF Management Group.

Background

Context

The University is intent on advancing equality and diversity as key features within all its activities, as it believes this to be ethically right and socially responsible. Equality and diversity are essential factors that contribute to the academic and business strengths of the University.

The University believes that excellence will be achieved through recognising the value of every individual. We aim to create an environment that respects the diversity of staff, students and other stakeholders in the University's community and enables them to achieve their full potential, to contribute fully, and to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the University. Through the principle of inclusivity, the talents of all individuals should be utilised to achieve organisational goals.

To this end, the University acknowledges the following basic rights for all members and prospective members of its community:

- to be treated with respect and dignity
- to be treated fairly with regard to all procedures, assessments and choices
- to receive encouragement to reach their full potential

These rights carry with them responsibilities and the University requires all members of the community to recognise these rights and to act in accordance with them in all dealings with fellow members of the University. In addition, the University complies with all relevant legislation and good practice.

As an equal opportunities employer, the University seeks to create conditions whereby staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of gender, race (incorporating colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), age, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstance, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction. Further information on the University's commitment to equality and diversity can be found at: www.shu.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity.

Equality and Diversity in REF Processes

The University's commitments to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), particularly in terms of ensuring fairness in the designation of significant responsibility and the selection of outputs were set out in the University's REF Code of Practice: www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/research-excellence-framework/code-of-practice

The inclusion and performance of staff has been monitored in periodic internal research assessments throughout the REF period. EIAs were produced in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019 to this end. Data-informed recommendations are then embedded into action plans for Athena SWAN (www.shu.ac.uk/about-us/our-values/equality-and-diversity/what-is-athena-swan/athena-swan-at-sheffield-hallam) and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/ethics-and-integrity/the-concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers>).

This report presents the final submission data in the context of continuous monitoring and interventions, compiling six datasets over the seven-year period (using the 2014 return data as a baseline).

EDI has been a fundamental consideration in all aspects of REF preparation and management. All key decision-makers, including members of Unit of Assessment (UoA) reading groups, have received appropriate general EDI, unconscious bias and REF-specific E&D training.

Interventions 2014-2020

Internal research assessment exercises (known as Mini-REFs and later Draft REFs) were explicitly inclusive. Every member of staff with a research output published during the prior 18-month census period was pro-actively encouraged to submit it for review and feedback. It was communicated as a development exercise, where everyone would receive constructive feedback on enhancing the quality of future outputs. The later introduction of the Elements publication management system, with its automated harvesting functionality, also ensured the outputs of any researchers lacking confidence to put forward their work would also be brought to the attention of their UoA reading group.

An embedded policy to ensure the responsible use of research metrics and signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) mandated that all recruitment and promotion processes are based on first-hand qualitative assessment of samples of research quality. The selection of outputs for the REF submission was also undertaken solely on the basis of peer review by UoA reading groups (more than one reviewer for each output, plus external moderation).

Introduction of mandatory equality essentials training and unconscious bias training for staff across the University, with those in management roles or responsible for recruitment being required to also complete a second module in unconscious bias. (2014 EIA recommendation)

University-wide mentoring is provided by a hub of more than 100 mentors. Professors and readers mentor junior colleagues as part of their leadership roles. Female researchers can also access the internal Aspire scheme, developed by the University's Women Professors' Group, or the Aurora scheme, run by AdvanceHE - to help address gender imbalance in senior roles. (2014 EIA recommendation)

A comprehensive researcher development programme (SHaRD) has now been embedded, running courses for Early Career Researchers to introduce them to the fundamentals of producing quality research, and includes related concepts such as research impact and publication strategies. Since 2018, an annual University-wide Creating Knowledge conference has also supported researchers' development and incorporated specific strands for ECRs (2014 EIA recommendation).

The REF Code of Practice actively addresses issues of part-time staff by setting the Significant Responsibility for Research time allocation threshold as a percentage, rather than a fixed hour time allocation or decimal FTE. The Code of Practice committed that: "It is the capability of being able to produce high quality research that is being recognised by the allocation of research time... 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... 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."

The Code of Practice also introduced the concept of 'representativeness' to the criteria for selecting outputs, specifically that: "Output selection decisions will be evidence-based and will refer back to the fundamental criteria of first, research quality and second representativeness of the community (both in terms of demographics/diversity profile and research themes)."

During 2018/19 we introduced a 'Career Kickstart' fund, where gold open access Article Processing Charges (APC) funding was targeted specifically at parental leave returners and ECRs. Since its introduction, 26% of our total open access funds have supported Career Kickstart.

A university-wide ECR Network was launched in 2018, with funding to facilitate collaborative and developmental initiatives (e.g. research cafes, poster sessions, writing for publications events). The Network is inclusive and covers all new or returning researchers. ECR representatives are embedded throughout our governance structures, providing a voice in decision-making, ensuring two-way communications with researchers.

Since 2018, £1.3million has been invested across seven funding streams to support researchers at all stages of their career to stimulate research and impact activities. Three of the schemes, the Chancellor's Fellowship Fund, the Platform Challenge Fund and the Strategic Investment Fund, were designed to pump-prime activity; the others were focused on developing international collaborations, cluster funds to support research networks, and impact funding. 86 awards were made. A proportion of funding was ring-fenced for the development and support of ECRs.

We hold an institutional Athena SWAN Award (bronze) and gender equality work is recognised at discipline levels: Nursing/UoA 3 (bronze), Psychology/UoA 4 (bronze), Bioscience/UoA 5 (silver), Engineering/UoA 12 (bronze) and Built Environment/UoA 13 (bronze). We are members of the AdvanceHE Race Equality Charter, the Women's Higher Education Network, hold the DWP's Disability Confident Leader status and are a Stonewall Diversity Champion. We have university-wide infrastructures to support diverse communities, through our LGBT+, race, disability, parent/carer and genders networks. We have also held the HR Excellence in Research Award throughout the entire REF census period.

Scope

This EIA is reviewing the outcomes of commitments set-out in the University's 2014 REF EIA, four interim EIAs, and the institutional REF Code of Practice.

In terms of the specific REF procedures, the Code of Practice details how:

- Significant responsibility for research was determined by either: role, a time allocation threshold or role descriptor/PDR objectives, depending on the job title/grade of staff.
- Separate determination of research independence was only applicable to research-only grade 7 staff and depended on individuals actively demonstrating they were meeting the REF guidance criteria.
- Selection of outputs was determined by two basic criteria: i) quality and ii) representativeness of the UoA.

The submission data, particularly comparison between the eligible and submitted population, will be used to analyse the outcomes of these procedures.

The EIA covers the four principal protected characteristics - gender, disability, ethnicity, age; plus working pattern and contract type. These are the characteristics for which comprehensive data is collected and that allows robust analysis to be undertaken. The primary focus will be on the final REF submission data with reference to analyses of earlier interim EIAs: 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019 (University committee paper reference numbers: RIC 1/16/7, RCOG 3/17/5, RCOG 3/19/1 and RCOG 3/19/2). The full interim EIAs are all appended.

For the purposes of REF and HESA returns, the definition of staff is as follows:

- Category A eligible staff are defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'teaching and research' or 'research only'.
- Category A submitted staff are those from the Category A eligible staff pool who, through appropriate process as set out in the University's Code of Practice, are determined to have both significant responsibility for research and be an independent researcher. All Category A submitted staff were returned in the REF.

It should be noted that since the Stern Review and adoption of the concept of significant responsibility for research, the traditional grouping of individuals into 'eligible', 'considered' and 'submitted' categories in our earlier interim EIAs has been superseded, with the 'considered' category now obsolete.

Analyses

Methodology

Tables present the number and percentage of staff from the respective equality groups, for both submitted and eligible staff. Where an equality group is seen to be 5% below the average, and with a sizable sample, this gap is considered 'significant'; and worth further comment and/or investigation. Please note this is not a statistical significance measure.

The data is all based on headcount rather than FTE. The final REF submission data showed that of a total pool of 1,557 category A eligible staff, 500 (32%) were classified as having significant responsibility for research (SRfR), and were therefore category A submitted staff.

Gender

1. In the total eligible staff pool the percentage of females to males was almost equal, with a slighter higher proportion of female staff. The submitted pool consists of 47% of females compared to 53% males. This meant that 30% of eligible females were included in the

submission compared to 35% of males. This gap however remains within 5% of the mean, so is not considered significant.

Gender	Eligible	Submitted	Submitted as proportion of eligible
Female	798 (51%)	236 (47%)	30%
Male	759 (49%)	264 (53%)	35%
Total	1557	500	32%

Table 1. Number of eligible staff and staff with significant responsibility for research (SRfR) by gender for the final REF submission. Data in parentheses show female and male staff as a proportion of the total for each pool.

2. Impact Case Study (ICS) authors: Data on ICS authors by gender has been included in this EIA, in addition to overall staff inclusion. This data is based on all individuals who were listed as authors across the University's 45 REF3 submissions. Interim EIAs from 2017 onwards had included data analysis of 'lead' authors only, so this submission-based analysis is a richer data set. 59% of ICS authors were male, compared to 41% female.
3. Of particular note is that five of the 45 principal authors took periods of maternity leave during the REF census period, which is potentially an encouraging indication of the support provided to them upon their returns.

Gender	Eligible	ICS Authors	Authors as proportion of eligible
Female	798 (51%)	41 (41%)	5%
Male	759 (49%)	58 (59%)	8%
Total	1557	99	6%

Table 2. Number of eligible staff who were contributors to impact case studies submitted to REF 2021. Data in parentheses show female and male staff as a proportion of the total for each pool.

4. Research Independence: 49 individuals were eligible to be considered under the independence criteria (grade 7 research-only staff). There is a significant gap between eligible and independent pools, with females being more likely to be independent. This particularly shows disciplinary difference: whereas the majority of staff were determined to be independent, this was not the case in Panel B, where only 27% of staff were; and 100% of the eligible grade 7 staff in Panel B were male. In terms of meeting the independence criteria, it was felt that in general more junior staff are less likely to be making independent grant applications and leading their own work programmes in physical sciences than other disciplinary areas. If Panel B is excluded, the proportion of eligible males submitted increases to 61%.

Gender	Eligible	Independent	Submitted as proportion of eligible
Female	24 (49%)	16 (55%)	67%
Male	25 (51%)	13 (45%)	52%
Total	49	29	59%

Table 3. Number of eligible staff who were submitted as independent to REF 2021. Data in parentheses show female and male staff as a proportion of the total for each pool.

5. Selection of Outputs. The proportion of category A submitted staff and the total number of outputs selected for these staff by gender are identical - 47% female and 53% male - indicating there was no bias at all present in the selection of outputs.

Gender	Submitted Staff	Submitted Outputs
Female	236 (47%)	496 (47%)
Male	264 (53%)	550 (53%)
Total	500	1046

Table 4. Number of submitted staff compared to outputs selected for these staff by gender for the final REF submission.

Disability

- In the eligible pool 85% of staff declared as non-disabled and 5% declared themselves disabled. 33% of the eligible pool of declared non-disabled staff and 29% of the total declared academic disabled staff were included in the submission. This gap however remains within 5% of the mean, so is not considered significant.

Disability	Eligible	Submitted	Submitted as proportion of eligible
No	1330 (85%)	433 (87%)	33%
Yes	85 (5%)	25 (5%)	29%
Unknown	142 (9%)	42 (8%)	30%
Total	1557	500	32%

Table 5. Number of eligible staff and staff with significant responsibility for research (SRfR) by disability. Data in parentheses show non-disabled, disabled and unknown staff as a proportion of the total for each pool.

Age

- All age profiles of staff included in the submission were within 5% of the average or higher than the average; with the exception of the 55-59 age group where 26% of the total academic pool of staff were included; and the 21-24 age group where the sample size was too small to indicate any imbalance.
- The 55-59 age group has also been under-represented in previous EIAs (see appendices), and this is believed to relate to the increase of managerial roles at that career stage.

Age	Eligible	Submitted	Submitted as proportion of eligible
21-24	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
25-29	18 (1%)	5 (1%)	28%
30-34	126 (8%)	44 (9%)	35%
35-39	211 (14%)	84 (17%)	40%
40-44	243 (16%)	91 (18%)	37%
45-49	235 (15%)	71 (14%)	30%
50-54	296 (19%)	81 (16%)	27%
55-59	233 (15%)	61 (12%)	26%
60+	194 (12%)	63 (13%)	32%
Total	1557	500	32%

Table 6. Number of eligible staff and staff with significant responsibility for research (SRfR) by age. Data in parentheses show each age band as a proportion of the total for each pool.

Ethnicity

9. The majority of staff in the eligible academic staff pool were white, which was also observed for the SRfR pool. Due to the small sample sizes across all other ethnic groups limited granular analysis could be undertaken. However, examination of these groups combined found that the total submitted rate of staff from all minority ethnic groups combined was, 41% compared to 31% of white staff (White British and White Other).
10. Overall, 15% of submitted staff are BME (all groups except White British and White Other; excluding not knowns). This compares with 12% of the eligible group and the UK population of 14% (2011 Census).

Ethnicity	Eligible	Submitted	Submitted as proportion of eligible
Arab	9 (1%)	3 (1%)	33%
Asian Or Asian British - Bangladeshi	10 (1%)	2 (0%)	20%
Asian Or Asian British - Indian	28 (2%)	11 (2%)	39%
Asian Or Asian British - Pakistani	9 (1%)	4 (1%)	44%
Black Or Black British - African	21 (1%)	7 (1%)	33%
Black Or Black British - Caribbean	5 (0%)	1 (0%)	20%
Chinese	34 (2%)	17 (3%)	50%
Mixed - White And Asian	10 (1%)	2 (0%)	20%
Mixed - White And Black African	2 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
Mixed - White And Black Caribbean	2 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
Other Asian Background	33 (2%)	16 (3%)	48%
Other Black Background	2 (0%)	2 (0%)	100%
Other Ethnic Background	6 (0%)	3 (1%)	50%
Other Mixed Background	12 (1%)	7 (1%)	58%
Other White Background	87 (6%)	40 (8%)	46%
White	1181 (76%)	356 (71%)	30%
Not Known	106 (7%)	29 (6%)	27%
Total	1557	500	32%

BME (combined)	183 (12%)	75 (15%)	41%
White (combined)	1268 (81%)	396 (79%)	31%
Not Known	106 (7%)	29 (6%)	27%
Total	1557	500	32%

Table 7. Number of eligible staff and staff with significant responsibility for research (SRfR) by ethnicity. Data in parentheses show both ethnicity as a percentage of the pool total.

Working Pattern

11. 79% of eligible staff worked full-time compared to 21% of staff who worked part-time. This proportion was similar for the included (SRfR) staff pool. There was no evidence of bias in terms of working pattern, as 32% of full-time and 31% of part-time staff were included in the submission. Examination of these data by gender showed that a greater number of females (66%) worked part-time relative to males (34%) and there were similar proportions in the included (SRfR) staff pool. However, only 29% of females who worked part-time were included in the submission compared to 36% of males who worked part-time; although figures are not beyond the significance threshold.

Working pattern	Eligible	Submitted	Submitted as proportion of eligible
Full-time	1235 (79%)	399 (80%)	32%
Female	584 (47%)	174 (44%)	30%
Male	651 (53%)	225 (56%)	35%
Part-time	322 (21%)	101 (20%)	31%
Female	214 (66%)	62 (61%)	29%
Male	108 (34%)	39 (39%)	36%
Total	1557	500	32%

Table 8. Number of eligible staff and staff with significant responsibility for research (SRfR) by working pattern. Data in parentheses show both working pattern and gender as a percentage of the relevant pool total.

Contract Type

12. In the total eligible pool 94% held permanent contracts and 6% held fixed-term contracts; this proportion was similar for the included (SRfR) pool. When examining the data by gender, 30% of female staff on permanent contracts and 20% of female staff on fixed-term contracts were submitted, compared to 35% of male staff on permanent contracts and 33% of male staff on fixed-term contracts included.

13. The proportion of female fixed-term staff submitted was significantly below the mean.

Contract Type	Eligible	Submitted	Submitted as proportion of eligible
Permanent	1457 (94%)	473 (95%)	32%
Female	749 (51%)	226 (48%)	30%
Male	708 (49%)	247 (52%)	35%
Fixed-term	100 (6%)	27 (5%)	27%
Female	49 (49%)	10 (37%)	20%
Male	51 (51%)	17 (63%)	33%
Total	1557	500	32%

Table 9. Number of eligible staff and staff with significant responsibility for research (SRfR) by contract type. Data in parentheses show both permanent and fixed-term staff and gender as a percentage of the relevant pool total.

Historic Trends: 2014-2020

Comparisons of eligible and included staff have been undertaken at approximately 18-month intervals as part of research assessment exercises, considering gender, age, disability, ethnicity, working pattern and contract type (2014-20 data is at 18-month intervals). For the purposes of this report, staff 'included' in REF exercises that took place between 2015 and 2018 nominated themselves by submitting outputs for review. Data for 2019 showed the level of staff with SRfR as a proportion of the eligible population (as per the 18-19 HESA return). Data analysis in 2014 and 2020 showed the percentage of staff actually included in the REF submission.

14. *Gender:* The percentage of both male and female staff being included in the REF has increased since REF 2014. The drop between 2018 to 2019 reflects a change from self-nomination to formal designation of SRfR. The gap between males and females reduced from 6% to 5% across the period.

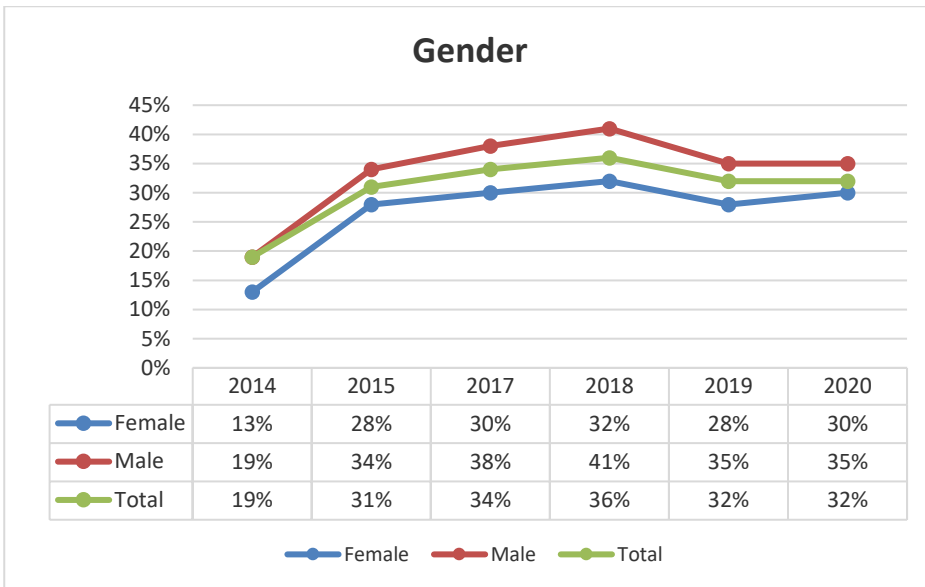


Figure 1. Percentage of eligible and included staff by gender.

15. *Disability*: The percentage of disabled and non-disabled staff being included in the submission has increased since REF 2014. The percentage of disabled staff being included fluctuates because of the small sample size, but was generally within the 5% from mean tolerance level.

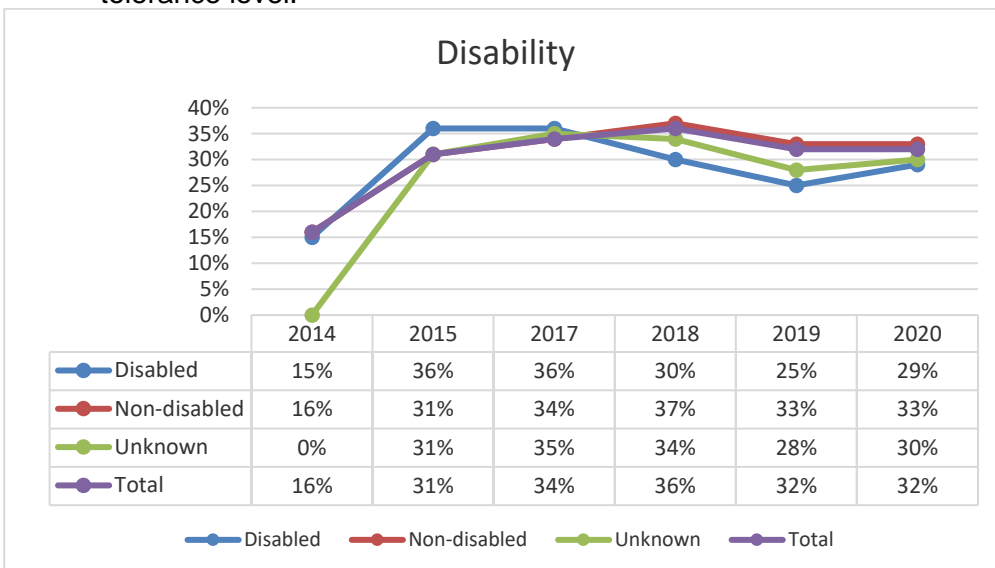


Figure 2. Percentage of eligible and included staff by disability.

16. *Age*: The percentage of staff being included has increased in all age groups since REF 2014. The 55-59 age group has remained relatively low throughout the period.

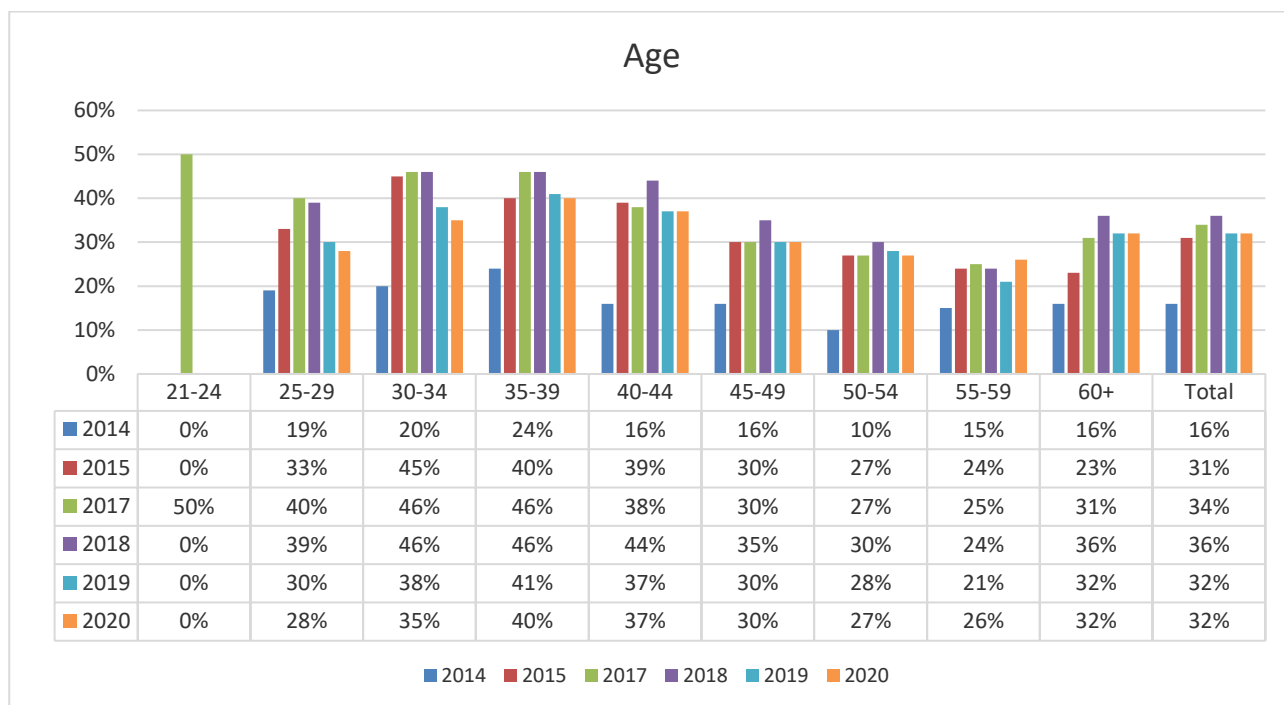


Figure 3. Percentage of eligible and included staff by age.

17. *Ethnicity*: Some groups did not have sizeable samples <10, making it difficult to identify gaps or trends. Of ethnic groups with sizeable samples all those included had increased since REF 2014, with some fluctuations noted during draft exercises between 2015 and 2018. None of these groups were greater than 5% below the mean average (32%) in 2020: Asian or Asian British – Indian (39%), Black or Black British – African (33%), Chinese (50%) and Other Asian Background (48%). On examination of the data comparing the combined White groups and combined BME minority groups, the percentage of staff from BME groups included was 41%, compared to 31% of staff from white groups.

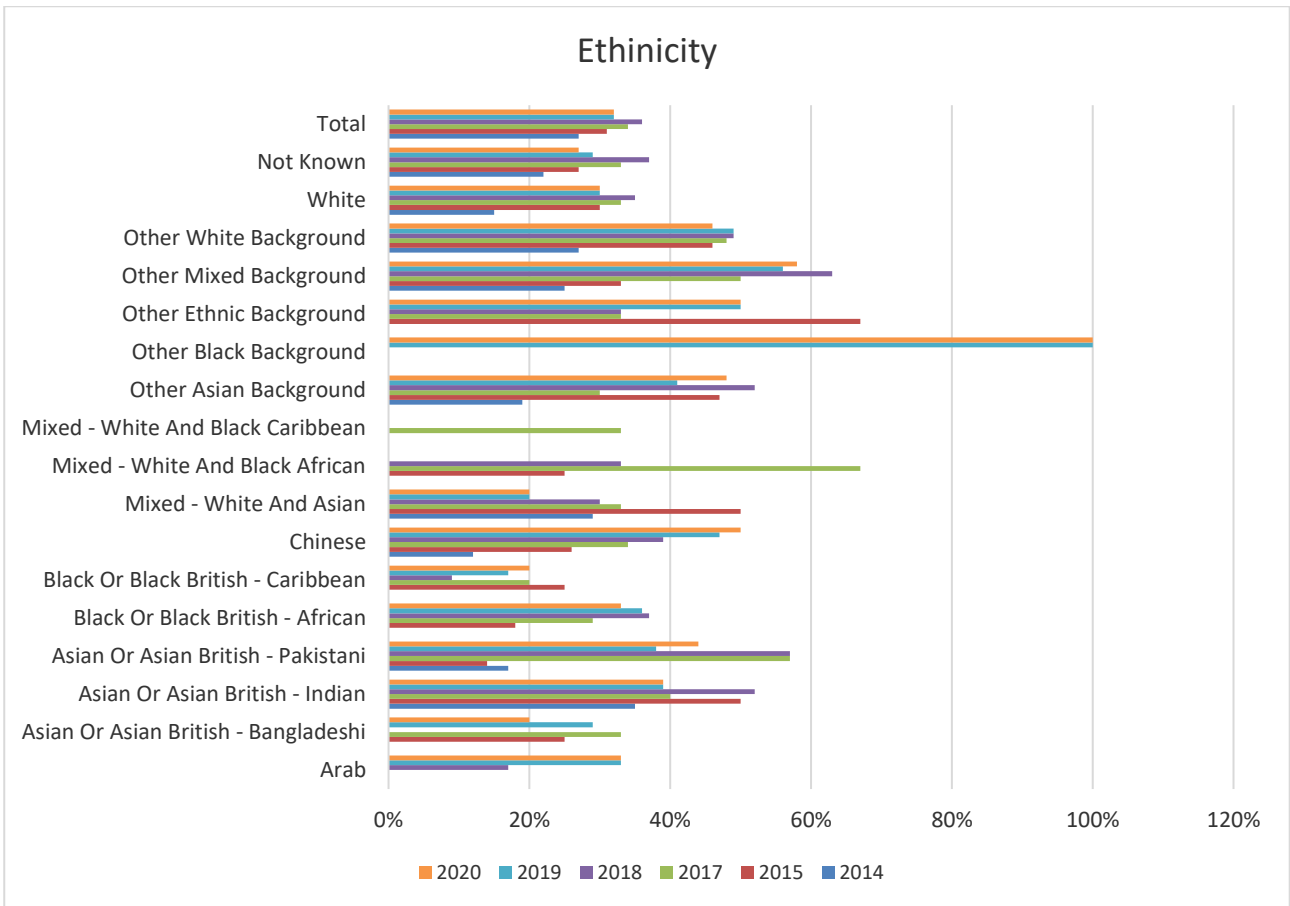


Figure 4. Percentage of eligible and included staff by ethnicity.

18. *Working Pattern*: Since REF 2014 the number of full-time staff included increased to 32% and the number of part-time staff included increased to 31%.

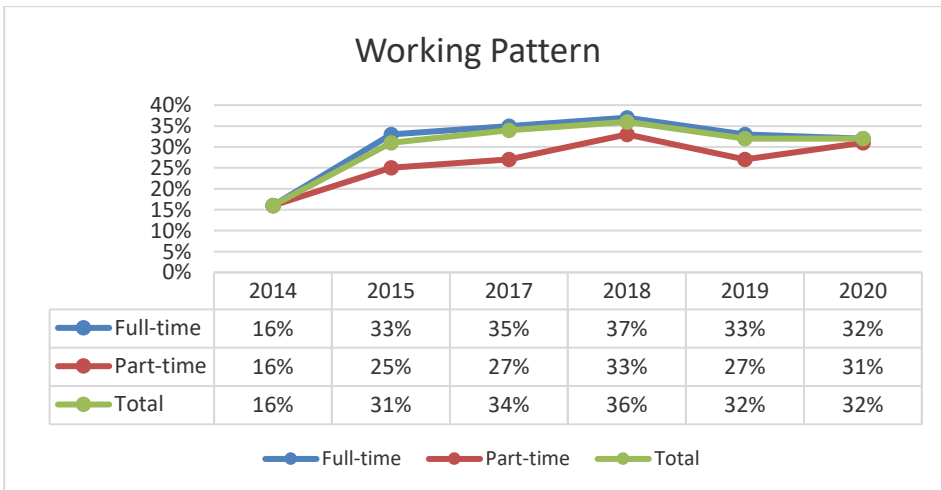


Figure 5. Percentage of eligible and included staff by working pattern.

19. *Contract Type*: The percentage of permanent staff included has increased (32%) in line with the mean since REF 2014. The percentage of fixed-term staff included had decreased to 23% in 2018 and 2019, though increased back up to 27% in 2020. On examination of these data by gender, the percentage of female staff included on fixed term contracts appears to be much lower than male staff on fixed term contracts. However, due to a small sample size it is not possible to identify any gaps or trends. It should also be noted that due to frequent regularisation schemes, the University has a very low overall number of fixed-term contracts (c.100 in total, which is c.6%).

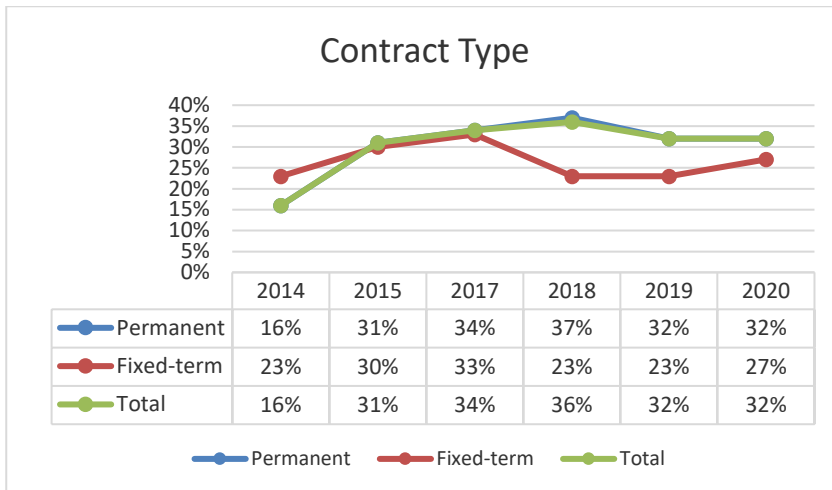


Figure 6. Percentage of eligible and included staff by contract type.

Conclusions

Significant Responsibility for Research

Overall, the submitted pool was highly representative of the eligible pool, indicating that the SRfR process introduced no biases. The only groups found to be outside the tolerance level were:

- Staff aged 55-59
- Female staff on fixed-term contracts

Of these the former is an established trend and likely to relate to managerial appointments at that career stage. The latter is of concern but relates to a relatively small sample size (49 individuals; the inclusion of three more would have brought it within tolerance).

Research Independence

The independence process appeared to favour female staff. However more granular breakdown of the data revealed disciplinary differences, with Panel B grade 7 staff less likely to be independent than their counterparts. As the Panel B eligible pool was entirely male, this translated to the equality data. The REF definition of independence could be adjusted in future exercises to account for this, if this is observed to be a wider trend.

Selection of Outputs

The staff and output profiles were identical, indicating that the output selection process created no biases.

Action Plan

- 1) Continue to monitor EDI at all future internal research assessment exercises and address any arising concerns accordingly.
- 2) Effective implementation and monitoring of institutional action plans aligned to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and to Athena Swan.
- 3) Deliver the UoA people strategies, as set out in REF5a documents.
- 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.

- 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.
- 6) Continue to engage with our research community through surveys (e.g. CEDARs and institutional staff surveys), focus groups and other engagement activities to ensure a two-way dialogue and institutional responsiveness to need.
- 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.