

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**

**RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2014 (REF2014)**

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE REF2014 SUBMISSION PROCESS**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity for the REF2014 Submission Process has been prepared to expand on the University's overarching policies on Equality and Diversity, and to align with the Equality and Diversity requirements of the REF2014. The REF2014 Equality and Diversity requirements are detailed in the REF2014 Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions document, and in the REF2014 Panel Criteria and Working Methods document, both available via the HEFCE website, with additional information, at the following link:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/equality/>

The University Code of Practice will guide the work of all those involved in the preparation of submissions and the selection of staff for inclusion. It also reaffirms our commitment to equality of opportunity and to the adoption and maintenance of best practice.

The Code has been developed in consultation with the University community, including consideration by the University Management Group, Senate, University Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity, the Partnership and Negotiating Consultative Committee, Senate and the University REF2014 Steering Group. It received approval from the University Court on 05 December 2011. Our thanks go to the Committees and individuals that have contributed to its development.

The University's Equality and Diversity Policy and Code for Staff and Students expressly asserts that no employee will be discriminated against on the basis of any characteristic covered by equality legislation or any other inappropriate distinction. The policy applies to the full employment cycle. There are a number of supporting policies including maternity and flexible working, employment of disabled people and bullying and harassment, as well as a Single Equality and Diversity Scheme which identifies the University's equality objectives and sets out the actions required to achieve them. Further information is available from the University website at [www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/diversity](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/diversity).

Notwithstanding the development of the Code of Practice, the University's current policies on equality and diversity continue to apply in all planning and advance preparations for the REF2014.

## **2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The REF2014 exists to measure the quality of research in Higher Education Institutions. Under the terms of the guidance from the national REF2014 Team, all institutions are encouraged to include all staff who are conducting excellent research. The normal expectation is that up to a maximum of four items of excellent research output will be submitted by those selected for inclusion in our REF2014 return, unless there are individual staff circumstances that have significantly constrained their ability to produce four research outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period.

The national REF2014 Assessment Panels have been instructed to take account of equalities issues that may have a bearing on the volume of research undertaken and published and the University will do the same in considering who and what is to be submitted. Where an individual's volume of research output has been limited for reasons covered by equality legislation, or other circumstances that have significantly adversely affected their ability to contribute to the submission, key University staff and Committees involved in the decision-making process will apply this Code.

The REF 2014 Assessment Panels will also consider institutions' non-academic impact as part of their assessment of the overall quality of research. Institutions are invited to submit impact case studies which illustrate the benefits of excellent research outwith academia. Institutions are invited to submit one case study for every 10 researchers, and a minimum of two case studies for each Unit of Assessment.

The impact case studies can relate to an individual's or a group's research and subsequent activities. There is no expectation that each submitted individual needs to submit or be referenced in a case

study. Institutions may submit impact case studies based on work of researchers who are no longer employed at the University, or who have not been selected for submission to the REF 2014.

The selection of impact case studies will follow the same principles as those for the selection of staff for submission. All impact case studies which are based on excellent research and meet the criteria set out by the REF team in terms of eligibility and evidence will be considered for inclusion. The REF Steering Group will select those impact case studies that best illustrate non-academic impact for the institution as defined by the REF guidance, regardless of current status or possible personal circumstances of the researchers who have undertaken the described research and follow on activities.

Managerial decisions regarding which staff to submit to the exercise are based on the key principle of the research excellence. The framework of equality and diversity legislation and the University's current policies will be applied at each stage of the REF2014 process to ensure equity, transparency and fairness. Submitting institutions are required to show to the REF2014 team that their code of practice for the selection of staff is underpinned by the following principles:

**Transparency:** the code of practice will be drawn to the attention of all staff eligible for submission, and will be accessible on the University web page. It will be brought to the attention of all external reviewers whose advice will inform the University's decision making process. It will be used in training and awareness sessions for staff eligible for inclusion in the submission, and in dedicated mandatory training sessions for staff who will be involved in the selection procedure. Please refer to section 4 for more detailed information.

**Consistency:** the Code will be applied consistently across the University; taking into account particular local circumstances as well as specific guidance supplied by the national REF2014 Assessment Panels in their Criteria and Working Methods statements, as appropriate.

**Accountability:** responsibility for selection decisions rests with the institutional REF2014 Steering Group, chaired by the Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Professor Phil Hannaford. The detailed decision making process is set out in section 4.3.

**Inclusivity:** this code of practice requires the University to consider all staff who are eligible for submission to the REF2014 **and** who produce excellent research, and facilitates their inclusion in the institutional submission in accordance with the rules set out by the REF2014 guidelines.

### 3. RATIONALE FOR THE CODE OF PRACTICE

As well as our specific legal responsibilities in respect of compliance with equality legislation, the University has a commitment to the adoption of best practice. Our commitment goes beyond the legislative requirements and is set out in our Equality and Diversity Policy and Code for Staff and Students (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/uploads/files/95/equality-diversity-policy-and-code-staff-students.pdf>) approved by the University Court which states: "The University of Aberdeen is committed to promoting equality and diversity in all its activities and aims to provide a work, learning, research & teaching environment free from discrimination and unfair treatment".

Setting out our selection process for inclusion in the REF2014 within this Code allows responsibilities to be clearly defined and ensures the consistent application of our selection criteria and fair treatment for all staff regardless of any personal characteristics or inappropriate distinction. Personal circumstances may also be considered (see section 5). In terms of the REF2014, our legal obligations cover all legislation in force (primarily enacted by the Equality Act 2010) at the submission date for the REF2014, 29 November 2013. The University has an obligation to monitor submissions to the REF2014, and the impact of the selection procedure, on the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, where appropriate data are available. These are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

Fixed-term and part-time employees will be treated no differently to a comparable employee on an open ended contract of employment. Following a change in policy since the RAE 2008, the majority of

staff at the University of Aberdeen are now employed on open ended contracts. The only members of staff on fixed-term contracts are those who are employed for a period of 9 months or less.

The University has various policies to ensure the equal and fair treatment of employees who are on fixed term contracts or work part-time. The Policy on the Management of Staff Contracts protects the interests of staff employed on such contracts.[ <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/uploads/files/management-staff-contracts.pdf>] The University's implementation of the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers accords staff on fixed term contracts equal access to career development [<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/training/res-staff/>].

The Statement on Flexible Working Procedures commits the University to engaging in constructive dialogue with members of staff wishing to explore the possibility of flexible working practices to arrive at a mutually beneficial agreement wherever possible [<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/uploads/files/flexible%20working.pdf> ]. This applies to staff wishing to work part time (on a temporary or permanent basis); part year (e.g. term time only); job share; work flexible hours or apply for a career break.

In March 2010, Court approved the Single Equality and Diversity Scheme [<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/index.php?id=159&top=67> ] which sets out the University's vision for equality and diversity and demonstrates how the University will achieve its equality objectives. The document includes an action plan which sets out the requirement to ensure the application of equality and diversity principles to the selection of staff for inclusion in the REF2014. The impact of the policies and procedures will be assessed/ monitored for all staff groups.

#### **4. THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR INCLUSION IN THE REF2014**

This is outlined by a series of questions and answers, provided below:

##### **4.1 Does the University have someone who is the main focal point for queries about the REF2014?**

Yes, Marlis Barraclough, Senior Policy Adviser (Research) is the University's REF2014 Coordinator. She can be contacted on 01224 27 3787 or [m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk) .

##### **4.2 How is the process of coordinating the University's submissions to REF2014 managed?**

A "REF2014 Steering Group" has been constituted to deal with the planning and management of the University's submissions to REF2014. The Group reports directly to the Principal through the University Management Group, and involves the University Committee for Research, Income-Generation and Commercialisation, as appropriate. Its composition includes the Senior Vice-Principal, the Vice Principals for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Heads of College, College Directors of Research, the University Secretary and the REF2014 Coordinator. The Group is chaired by Professor Phil Hannaford, Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange with responsibility for the REF2014 submission.

The composition and remit of the University REF Steering Group was approved by the University Management Group in April 2009 and by Senate in May 2009.

##### **Remit**

To plan, manage and drive all aspects of the Institution's preparations and submissions to the research excellence framework

- (1) To coordinate Institutional responses to the national REF2014 Team, HEFCE or SFC on matters issued for consultation
- (2) To monitor internal data preparation and benchmarking comparisons
- (3) To oversee the preparation and implementation of the University Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF2014 submission process
- (4) To make final decisions on which Units of Assessment to submit to; based on recommendations from Colleges

- (5) To finalise the selection of staff for inclusion in the Institution's submissions; based on recommendations from Colleges
- (6) To receive reports on preparation and planning for REF2014 including progress with data collection, electronic research management and reporting systems, internal reviews of research activity etc
- (7) Review and agree all final submissions prior to onward transmission to the REF2014 Team

The Group will report to the Principal through the University Management Group

#### **4.3 How does the Steering Group operate?**

Operationally, the Steering Group devolves much of the day-to-day management of REF2014 planning activities to the Colleges through the College Directors of Research. The Group retains overall control of the management of the exercise and has the final say on the Units of Assessment we submit to and the staff to be included, taking recommendations from the respective Colleges. At a College level, the Directors of Research oversee REF2014 planning activities. Each College also nominates one (or more) individual(s) to act as the co-coordinating team for individual Units of Assessment.

Colleges have set up their own REF Working Groups, as sub-groups of College Research Committees, to disseminate and put in to practice policies adopted and decisions taken by the REF Steering Group. Remits and membership of the REF Steering Group and the College Groups are at the annex (Supplementary documentation).

#### **4.4 How does the REF2014 fit in with the management of research activities across the University?**

The function of planning and managing the research activities of the University exists notwithstanding the periodic assessment of quality conducted through the national assessments of research. Key senior staff have specific obligations in this regard, including, for example, the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principals for Research and Knowledge Exchange and the College Directors of Research. Job descriptions include planning towards national assessments of research; however this is a subset of their overall research management roles. The University Committee on Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation, a joint committee of Court and Senate as well as College Research and Commercialisation Committees have remits that include preparation for national assessments of research. An individual's research performance and consideration of the quality of their research output is handled through confidential discussion with their Head of School, Research Director or their nominated representative and may involve normal appraisal, probation or promotion procedures.

#### **4.5 On what basis will the decisions on inclusion be made?**

Decisions on which staff to submit to the exercise are based on the key principle of the quality of the research. For the purposes of the REF2014, HEFCE has defined research quality against the following criteria (as outlined in the Guidance on Submissions document, [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02\\_11/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/) )

The criteria for assessing the quality of outputs are 'originality, significance and rigour'.	
Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	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 this assessment.

The University will also take due consideration of the specific guidance supplied by the national REF2014 Assessment Panels in their Criteria and Working Methods statements. The University REF2014 Steering Group makes the final decision about the Units of Assessment that the institution will submit to and the staff to be included, on the recommendation of the respective Colleges.

The overall shape and content of the submissions to the respective Units of Assessment, including, for example, the mix of staff (in terms of career stage), research outputs, impact case studies, the research and impact environments and forward strategy, as well as other factors, have to be taken into consideration to ensure that the University optimises the presentation of its research.

The national REF2014 Assessment Panels are particularly interested in the sustainability and vitality of the research environment the University provides and are looking for evidence of how we support the career development of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) (Category A or C staff who have started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2009) and research students, and how the research environment supports and facilitates the non-academic impact of our research.

#### **4.6 What training on equal opportunities has been provided for those involved in the REF2014 selection process?**

The University will be providing training on equality and diversity issues to all those involved in the selection process, and guidance to all those who may be invited to act as internal or external reviewers to assist in our REF2014 preparations. In addition, the University will make available to all members of staff written and online information on the institutional preparations for the REF2014, and provide open information sessions which will include guidance on equality and diversity issues.

More detailed information will be given in the REF2014 Training Strategy and the REF2014 Communication Strategy which should be read alongside this document. This is included in the annex (Supplementary documentation).

#### **4.7 When will final decisions be made on who will be included in our submissions to the REF2014?**

The REF2014 Steering Group aims to be in a position to make near final decisions on who will be submitted and the choice of research outputs to be included by the end of March 2013, allowing for new starts within 2013 to be considered on an ongoing basis. When the REF2014 Steering Group is considering an individual, it will be advised by the Head of College whether individual circumstances need consideration. Should it be necessary, the Group will be made fully aware of all the facts relating to an individual, subject to the individual's consent regarding personal information. Heads of Colleges, in association with Human Resources, are responsible for ensuring that the Steering Group has the relevant information.

#### **4.8 What happens to the information if I declare a personal circumstance?**

If you are selected for inclusion in the University's REF2014 submissions and have individual circumstances that should be taken into consideration, the University is required to supply the national REF2014 Assessment Panels with sufficient explicit information about *how* the circumstances adversely affect your contribution although not necessarily the detail of *what* the circumstances were. We will seek your consent regarding the information that we provide. All national REF2014 Assessment Panel members and secretaries are bound by and accept confidentiality requirements, as a condition of their appointment to the role. No information relating to an individual's circumstances will be published by the national REF2014 Team. All data collected, stored and processed by the national REF2014 Team will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

#### **4.9 Why does the selection have to be made so early when the submission date isn't until 29 November 2013?**

The process of preparing all the material for a submission to a Unit of Assessment takes time. As well as the numerical information, narrative sections are prepared that describe, for example, the research environment, how it supports and facilitates non-academic impact, arrangements for promoting and developing research staff, the research strategy, and markers of esteem. These texts have to support

the research outputs and impact case studies submitted and must correspond with the numerical information provided. Making near final decisions early in 2013 also allows full consideration to be made of any particular individual circumstances and will allow sufficient time to provide feedback to staff prior to the submission date.

#### **4.10 How will I receive feedback on whether I am being included in the University's REF2014 submissions?**

In the period prior to the final decisions on inclusion in the REF2014 submissions your research and consideration of the quality of your research outputs will have been handled through confidential discussion with your Head of School, Research Director or their nominated representative and may have involved normal appraisal, probation, or promotion procedures. At these discussions you will be invited to bring forward any circumstances that you wish to be taken into consideration. When the final decisions are made, your Head of School or Research Director or their nominated representative will discuss this with you, in confidence, and discuss any staff development or research performance issues which arise.

#### **4.11 What do I do if I am dissatisfied with the decision or want to make a complaint?**

Please refer to Section 7 of this Code that explains the procedure to be followed. All appeals should normally be lodged in writing by 4 May 2013.

#### **4.12 How has this Code of Practice been disseminated across the University?**

The Code of Practice was launched in April 2012 after a process of consultation across the University. An email advising all staff of its existence will be issued in May 2012. The Code of Practice is available to view or download at:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/admin/court/REF2014/>

New staff will be provided with information about the Code through induction material.

#### **4.13 What about work undertaken by external and internal reviewers and advisors as part of the advance planning towards REF2014?**

Individuals acting as external advisors or reviewers as part of our REF2014 preparations will be made aware of the Code and be encouraged to apply its principles in their work, particularly where this involves an advisory role beyond an assessment of the quality of research outputs alone. All University staff asked to undertake a role in the assessment of material in connection with the REF2014 are required to apply the Code of Practice in their work.

### **5. INDIVIDUAL STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES**

The REF2014 guidance published by the funding councils includes a set of clearly defined and more complex circumstances under which fewer than four outputs can be returned for a member of staff without any penalty. Where an individual is submitted with fewer than four outputs and their research is deemed to have not been constrained by circumstances set out below, any 'missing' outputs will be graded as 'unclassified'.

**Clearly defined staff circumstances** include:

- (i) Qualifying as an ECR (i.e. staff who are eligible to be returned as category A or C staff and who started their career as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2009).
- (ii) Absence from work due to working part-time, secondments or career breaks
- (iii) Maternity, paternity or adoption leave (note that maternity leave may involve related constraints on an individual's ability to conduct research in addition to the defined period of maternity leave itself. These cases can be returned as 'complex', please see below)
- (iv) Other circumstances that apply specifically in UoAs 1-6 (relating to Category A junior clinical academics and Category C staff who are employed primarily as clinical, health or veterinary professionals)

The REF2014 team have provided tariffs to determine the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty in the assessment, depending on the duration of the circumstance. These are given below:

### Early Career Researchers

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

### Working part-time, Secondments or Career Breaks

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

Maternity, paternity and adoption leave will not be subject to the tariff. Researchers may reduce the number of outputs in a submission by one, for each period of maternity or statutory adoption leave taken during the REF period. The number of outputs to be submitted may be reduced by one for each discrete instance of additional paternity or adoption leave<sup>1</sup> lasting for four months or more and taken substantially during the period of 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013

**More complex staff circumstances** include (but are not restricted to):

- (i) Disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010
- (ii) Ill health or injury
- (iii) Mental health conditions
- (iv) Constraints related to pregnancy or maternity, in addition to a clearly defined period of maternity leave (These may include, but are not limited to: medical issues associated with pregnancy or maternity; health and safety restrictions in laboratory or field work during pregnancy and breastfeeding; constraints on the ability to travel to undertake fieldwork due to pregnancy or breast feeding)
- (v) Childcare or other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
- (vi) Gender reassignment
- (vii) Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010

The appropriate reduction in the number of outputs to be submitted by members of staff with more complex circumstances is a matter of discretion for the REF2014 manager within the HEFCE REF Team.

The University has to provide the national REF2014 Assessment Panels with information, in confidence, about any individual staff circumstances that have significantly adversely affected their

<sup>1</sup> 'Additional paternity or adoption leave' refers to leave of up to 26 weeks which is taken to care for a child where the person's spouse, partner or civil partner was entitled to statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave, and has since returned to work. The term 'additional paternity leave' is often used to describe this type of leave although it may be taken by parents of either gender. For the purposes of the REF we refer to this leave as 'additional paternity or adoption leave' – see Panel Criteria and Working Methods (REF 01.2012, para 75)



contribution to the submission. We are asked to supply sufficient, explicit information about *how* the circumstances have adversely affected their contribution but not necessarily the detail of *what* the circumstance was. We will provide a broad description of the nature of the circumstances, the timing and duration of the circumstances and the extent of the impact of the circumstances. We are not asked to describe circumstances (for example, a disability) that have had no adverse effect on an individual's capacity to undertake research. All national REF2014 Assessment Panel members and secretaries are bound by and accept confidentiality requirements, as a condition of their appointment to the role. No information relating to individual circumstances will be published by the national REF2014 Team. All data collected, stored and processed by the national REF2014 Team will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## 6. HOW THE CODE IS APPLIED - CASE STUDIES

To help with the application of this Code, a number of case studies have been included below. These case studies were among a number provided by HEFCE, via the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU). A number of additional examples are available via the ECU website at the following link: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/ref-materials/complex-circumstances-examples>

Further guidance on particular circumstances may also be obtained from the University's Equality and Diversity Advisers, Kenneth Stewart or Janine Chalmers on 27(3165).

### Case Studies

*Please note that these case-studies are for illustrative purposes only, and are not based on real life events or real people.*

#### Example 1

##### **Nature and timing of circumstances**

- Dr Monroe took a period of eight months maternity leave from March 2010 to November 2010.
- In November 2010 Dr Monroe returned to work on a 0.5 FTE basis until May 2012.
- Dr Monroe continued to breastfeed her baby between November 2010 and May 2011, which was incompatible with undertaking her research.
- Dr Monroe returned to fulltime work and her research in May 2012.

##### **Effect on research**

In addition to the period of maternity and part-time working, during the first 6 months that Dr Monroe returned to work on a 0.5 FTE basis, she focused on her teaching commitments as breastfeeding was incompatible with her research project that requires frequent travel to South Sudan. She therefore postponed her research until May 2011 when she stopped breastfeeding her child.

##### **Calculation of reduction of outputs:**

- Reduction of 1 output for 1 period of maternity leave
- Reduction of 1 output for:
  - 6 months postponement of research project between November 2010 and May 2011 due to breastfeeding
  - 6 months due to working 0.5 FTE on research between May 2011 and May 2012

**Total:** 1 x period of maternity leave plus 12 months absent from research

**Proposed reduction in outputs: 2**

**EDAP's recommendation, with rationale:**

**The advisory panel recommend to the Main Panel Chair that the case for a reduction of two outputs is accepted.**

Dr Monroe is entitled to a reduction of one output for the period of maternity leave. While this tariff recognises the impact of pregnancy and maternity on women's careers it does not take into account working part-time or incompatibility of research with breastfeeding. In addition to the time spent on maternity leave, Dr Monroe's research has been affected for a period of twelve months during the REF period. This is comparable to the timeframes outlined in the 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods' and consequently the panel agree with the reduction of two outputs.

**Example 2****Nature and timing of circumstances**

- Dr Price developed pre-eclampsia (a complication of pregnancy) and was admitted to hospital on 9 September 2009.
- Dr Price was unable to conduct research while in hospital and her maternity leave commenced on 30 September 2009.
- Her child was born 10 weeks premature on 28 October 2009.
- Dr Price took nine months maternity leave returning to work on 30 June 2010.

**Effect on research**

In addition to her period of maternity leave, Dr Price took a total of 15 days pregnancy related sick leave following her admission to hospital and was unable to conduct her research during this time. Despite the difficult circumstances of her pregnancy and the premature birth of her child, Dr Price and her child were well on her return to work.

**Calculation of reduction of outputs:**

- Reduction of 1 output for 1 period of maternity leave
- Reduction of 1 output for:
  - 0.5 months pregnancy-related illness (calculation based on 30 days per month)

**Total:** 1x period of maternity leave plus 0.5 months

**Proposed reduction in outputs:** 2

**EDAP's recommendation, with rationale:**

**The advisory panel recommends to the Main Panel Chair that the case for a reduction of one output is accepted, but the case for a reduction of two outputs is not accepted.**

Dr Price is entitled to a reduction of one output for the period of maternity leave. A further reduction in output would only be justifiable if the period of additional disruption to research was comparable to the tariff outlined in table 2, part 1 of the 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods'. While the panel took account of the 0.5 months and recognised the disruption caused by preeclampsia and a premature birth, the panel felt it was unlikely to be comparable to a period of 12 months.

### Example 3

#### **Nature and timing of circumstances**

- Dr Cheng is the primary carer of her child, who was diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalopathy (ME) in January 2009.
- Dr Cheng took September 2009 to March 2010 as a period of unpaid leave so that she could devote more time to caring for her daughter.
- Between April 2010 and August 2012 Dr Cheng continued to provide additional care for her daughter while carrying out her academic duties.
- From September 2012 Dr Cheng's daughter's ME improved sufficiently to enable her to resume school. This enabled Dr Cheng to devote more time to her research.

#### **Effect on research**

Dr Cheng's research was affected from January 2009 to August 2012. She took 6 months unpaid leave during this time; between April 2010 and August 2012 the time she could devote to research was restricted due to her caring commitment – Dr Cheng received help from the local authority but only for 2 hours a day and she regularly worked from home in order to ensure her daughter's requirements were met. She also frequently accompanies her daughter to medical appointments, which have now become less frequent following her daughter's improvement. During the affected period Dr Cheng has been unable to conduct research at the rate of her colleagues as she has had to ensure that her daughter's care requirements are met on a daily basis.

#### **Calculation of reduction of outputs:**

Reduction of one output for 6 months unpaid leave and 2 years and 4 months caring commitment

**Total:** 6 months plus additional disruption to research

**Proposed reduction in outputs:** 1

#### **EDAP's recommendation, with rationale:**

**The advisory panel recommends to the Main Chair Panel that the case for a reduction of one output is accepted.**

The panel noted that Dr Cheng's research time was not reduced by 12 months or more during the REF period. However, the panel recognised that in addition to the 6 months unpaid leave taken by Dr Cheng to care for her daughter, Dr Cheng's research time will have been limited due to her being her disabled daughter's carer for period of 28 months or more during the REF period

**Example 4****Description of circumstances:****Nature and timing of circumstances**

- Dr Childs' parents were admitted to a nursing home in January 2007. Her mother has Alzheimer's and was no longer able to care for Dr Childs' father who had a series of strokes in 2006.
- Dr Childs visits her parents regularly and liaises with the home on their care. She is the home's emergency contact and on a number of occasions has had to accompany her parents to appointments or visit the home during working hours should she need to meet with the home manager or her parents' doctor.

**Effect on research**

Dr Childs' contracted hours have not been affected. On a number of occasions Dr Childs has had to accompany her parents to appointments or visit the nursing home during working hours, which has affected her ability to devote time to research.

**Calculation of reduction of outputs:**

Reduction of 1 output for ongoing disruption to research throughout the period due to her caring responsibilities.

**Proposed reduction in outputs: 1**

**EDAP's recommendation, with rationale:**

**The advisory panel recommends to the Main Chair Panel that the case for a reduction of one output is not accepted.**

The advisory panel recognises that caring for old parents can impact on research. However, throughout the REF period, no significant changes in Dr Childs' parents' condition has been reported and they have been receiving 24 hour care in a nursing home. If Dr Childs' parents had not been receiving 24 hour nursing care or if one of Dr Childs' parents' condition had become unstable, the panel may have considered this case differently. The advisory panel did not feel that Dr Child's case was substantially different from the type of circumstances faced by many academics with old parents.

## Example 5

### Nature and timing of circumstances

- Dr Woodrow has mental health difficulties and was absent due to depression for several periods of between two and three weeks during the 2009/2010 academic year, totalling 2.5 months.
- During a period of long term sickness absence from January to June 2011, Dr Woodrow was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and was placed on new medication to help her manage her condition.
- Dr Woodrow found returning to work in June 2011 difficult because a number of relationships with colleagues had been strained due to the symptoms of her condition. In addition, while the medication was effective, it caused unpleasant side effects including thyroid problems and nausea.
- HR records show that it took about 6 months for the right balance of medication to be found and for Dr Woodrow to settle back into her role.

### Effect on research

Dr Woodrow's research was affected from September 2009 until December 2011. Dr Woodrow was not able to conduct research while absent for 8.5 months due to disability related sickness. In addition to this, during the 6 month period following her return to work, the side effects of medication and the impact on Dr Woodrow's relationships with her colleagues severely disrupted her research project and consequently delayed her research findings.

### Calculation of reduction of outputs:

- Reduction of one output for:
  - 8.5 months disability related sickness absence in 2009/10 and between January and June 2011
  - 6 months additional disruption to research from June to December 2011.

**Total:** 14.5 months

**Proposed reduction in outputs:** 1

### EDAP's recommendation, with rationale:

**The advisory panel recommends to the Main Panel Chair that the case for a reduction of one output is accepted.**

The advisory panel recognises that Dr Woodrow was unable to conduct research for a period totalling 8.5 months. A reduced number of outputs would normally be accepted if a researcher is unable to conduct research for a period of 12 months or more during the REF period. However, in this case the panel recognise that Dr Woodrow's ability to conduct research was disrupted for a further 6 months when she had returned to work due to the need for her to rebuild relationships within her team and her adjusting to new medication.

## Example 6

### Description of circumstances:

#### Nature and timing of circumstances

- Dr Tsang was diagnosed with bowel cancer in February 2008 and was off work receiving medical treatment and recovering from surgery until October 2008.
- Dr Tsang returned to work on a 0.4 FTE basis, and was receiving chemotherapy until December 2008.
- In early January 2010, Dr Tsang developed a secondary cancer and again received extensive medical treatment.
- Dr Tsang returned to work in November 2010 on a 0.2 FTE basis, enabling her to resume her research while she continued to regain her health.
- In November 2011 Dr Tsang returned to working on a 0.4 FTE basis.

#### Effect on research

The effect on Dr Tsang's contracted hours were:

- February to October 2008 unable to conduct research due to treatment (8 months)
- October 2008 to January 2010 0.4 FTE (15 month period)
- January 2010 to October 2010 unable to conduct research due to treatment (9 months)
- November 2010 to October 2011 0.2 FTE (11 month period)
- October 2011 to October 2013 0.4 FTE (24 month period)

Additionally, during the time that Dr Tsang was undertaking research in the period, she was receiving medical care and was therefore unable devote as much time to her research as her peers. For example, when she returned to work after her first treatment for cancer she was still receiving chemotherapy, which caused Dr Tsang to experience fatigue and nausea.

#### Calculation of reduction of outputs:

Reduction of 3 outputs for:

- 17 months absence due to treatment for cancer
- 23.4 months due to working 0.4 FTE
- 8.8 months due to working 0.2 FTE
- Disruption to research when undergoing treatment and during recovery

**Total:** 49.2 months, plus disruption

**Proposed reduction in outputs:** 3

### EDAP's recommendation, with rationale:

**The advisory panel recommends to the Main Panel Chair that the case for a reduction of three outputs is accepted.**

The advisory panel note that the impact of two cancers during the REF period will have been significant. In addition, the panel note that Dr Tsang has worked part-time while she regained her

health. The time period affected is also comparable to the tariff outlined in Table 2, Part 1 of the 'Panel Criteria and Working Methods'.

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## 6. MONITORING

To monitor the impact of its Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity on the REF2014 submission process, the University will prepare profiles in terms of age, disability, gender and ethnicity of staff eligible for submission, of those who are selected and those who are not. This will be done at a School level, although we may also undertake this at Unit of Assessment level. We shall prepare this profile around the time we make our submission in November 2013, so that it is available, if requested, by the national REF2014 Team for verification or audit purposes. The profile will be considered by the Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity and will also be made available to staff for information.

## 7. DISAGREEMENTS WITH DECISIONS

In the period prior to the final decisions on inclusion in the REF2014 submission, the quality of research outputs of each member of staff will have been discussed confidentially with their Head of School or Research Director and may have involved normal appraisal, probation, or promotion procedures. At these discussions staff will be invited to bring forward any individual circumstances that they wish to be taken into consideration. Near final decisions on the inclusion of staff will be made by the University REF2014 Steering Group by the end of March 2013 and will be conveyed to staff through their Head of School or Research Director or nominated representative as soon as practicable thereafter.

Anyone who is dissatisfied with the decision should lodge an appeal in writing to the Secretary of the University outlining the reasons for disagreement. All such appeals must be lodged by 4 May 2013, or within three weeks of the decision being conveyed, if this is later than 30 April 2013. Disagreements on the grounds of the assessment made about the quality or excellence of the research outputs will not be considered.

An Appeals Panel of six individuals will be constituted to include three members from the Senate and three from the University Court. An Appeals Committee, convened by a Vice Principal, and drawn from the Appeals Panel, comprising of one Court member and one Senate representative, none of whom have been involved in the decision making process to that point shall be established. The Appeals Committee will limit its consideration to the procedures used in reaching the decision. However, it may be important to highlight a personal characteristic (such as gender or disability), circumstance or a work pattern/absence that the appellant believes has not been fully taken into account. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final and not subject to further appeal. All appeals will be heard by 30 August 2013.

## 8. KEY DATES FOR REF2014

31 October 2013	Census date for staff to be in post
1 January 2008 to 31 December 2013	Publication period
1 January 2008 to 31 July 2013	Data collection period
29 November 2013	Submission deadline
January to December 2014	Assessment by Panels
December 2014	Results published
Financial Year 2015/16	Funding from Funding Body

## 10. USEFUL SITES/CONTACTS

Internal Equality and Diversity website: [www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/diversity](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/diversity)  
 Internal University REF2014 website: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/admin/court/REF2014/>  
 National REF2014 website: [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk)  
 Equality Challenge Unit: [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)



## **11. FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information about Equal Opportunities matters please contact Kenneth Stewart , the University Equality and Diversity Adviser on (27)3165. For information about the REF2014, please contact Marlis Barraclough on (27)3787.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS**

- 1. REF Committees at institutional and College Level**
- 2. Training and Communication Strategy**
- 3. Individual Staff Circumstances – draft communication and template**
- 4. REF Planning Timetable – milestones/dates relevant to the Code of Practice**

### **1. REF Committees at institutional and College Level**

As set out in paragraph 4.4 of the institutional Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF 2014 Submission Process, the planning and preparation for national research quality assessment exercises forms part of the general duties for Vice Principals of Research and Knowledge Exchange, College Directors of Research, Heads of College and Heads of School.

The institutional submission is delivered by the REF Steering Group which will determine the size and shape of the submission, and make decisions on the inclusion of individual members of staff. Membership comprises senior academic staff who have been appointed to managerial roles within the institution by an open appointment process (Vice Principals for Research and Knowledge Exchange, College Directors of Research, Heads of College and Heads of School), or exceptionally been nominated in that role by the Principal of the University in an acting capacity.

The REF Steering Group is supported by the College REF Groups which comprise of academic staff appointed to managerial positions at College level and academic staff nominated by Heads of School and Heads of College as Unit of Assessment leads, based on research and administrative experience. Unit of Assessment leads act in a co-ordinating and advisory role to the College REF Groups. Their task is to compile the documentation required for the REF submission, act as a discipline contact point for the REF, and to assist in informing decisions made by the REF Steering Group on submission strategy, and the shape and size of the submission.

#### **1.1 College of Arts and Social Sciences REF2014 Steering Group**

##### **Remit**

It is the responsibility of the College REF Committee and its members to:

- review progress towards REF for each Unit of Assessment
- review impact case studies and provide feedback and guidance to ensure that they are of a high quality
- receive and respond to feedback and guidance provided by the University REF committee
- follow up on actionable areas raised in Research Activity Reviews
- monitor and review the quality of outputs (in terms of REF criteria) for colleagues within each Unit of Assessment
- provide reports to meetings of the College Research Committee, who will, in turn, relate relevant information to the College Executive Committee
- develop and monitor benchmarking assessments of UoA performance against comparator institutions

##### **Composition**

The Group is chaired by the College Director of Research, and comprises the Unit of Assessment lead for each submitting Unit within the College.

#### **1.2 College of Life Sciences and Medicine College REF Group**

##### **Remit**

- To determine strategy and steer all College preparations for the forthcoming REF2014 exercise
- To ensure that all REF-related deadlines are met.
- To monitor progress of the College Working Groups for each Unit of Assessment, which will report regularly to the College REF Steering Group.
- To report to the University REF Steering Group.

##### **Composition**

The composition of the College of Life Sciences and Medicine REF2014 Steering Group is as follows:

- Head of College (Convenor)
- College Director of Research
- Heads of School (for each School)
- Unit of Assessment Leads
- Staff with national assessment panel experience
- Deputy College Registrar (Clerk)

### **1.3 College of Physical Sciences College REF Group**

#### **Remit**

- To interact with the institutional REF Steering Group;
- To facilitate and co-ordinate the REF preparations for the College across the Disciplines;
- To disseminate REF 2014 information received from HEFCE, from the University or from other sources, efficiently to the disciplines through Unit of Assessment leads;
- To share information on the wider REF 2014 process from internal and external sources
- To determine and make recommendations on the parameters for selection of Outputs and Impact case studies;
- To develop and maintain a consensus on the College approach to the REF submission

#### **Composition**

The Group is chaired by the College Director of Research. The Group includes all Heads of School and Unit of Assessment leads (nominated by the Heads of School) from each Unit of Assessment, ensuring representation all disciplines / Units of Assessment.

## 2. Training and Communication Strategy

The institutional code of practice for the University of Aberdeen was approved through the committee structure towards the end of 2011 and received approval by the University Court at its meeting on 5 December 2011.

In our code of practice we have committed to provide REF specific training to all who are involved in the selection process: Unit of Assessment leads, Directors of Research at College and School/Discipline level (as appropriate), Heads of School and others nominated by their Colleges. This would also include those who may be called upon as a member of an appeals panel, should formal appeals against inclusion decisions arise.

In addition, we plan to run information sessions for all staff on our selection process, our code of conduct and what members of staff can expect during the selection process for the REF.

For RAE 2008, similar training was provided by an external provider. For the 2014 exercise, the Equality Challenge Unit have provided a free Train the Trainer event to enable institutions to run their own training and information sessions. This took place on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and was attended by the institutional Equality and Diversity Advisor and a member of the Policy, Planning and Governance team tasked with co-ordinating our REF submission.

Training sessions for all those involved in the selection process, and drop-in information sessions for all staff will be based on the Train and Trainer event, material provided by the ECU and our own institutional equality and diversity resources. Training events will be held in May/June (see institutional timetable attached).

This will allow for nine months until initial inclusion decisions for current staff have to be communicated formally; and for appropriate periods of time to allow for formal appeals to be heard and completed prior to submission.

### Training and Communication

The timetable below sets out the major action points and dates that arise out of the selection procedure and the code of practice:

#### May/June 2012

- Communication to all staff from Senior Vice Principal announcing the institutional code of practice; including early invitation to notify individual circumstances (by e-mail and web announcement, including to staff who are currently absent from campus, e.g. on maternity leave, field work, long term sick leave, secondment etc)
- Publication of code of practice on institutional REF website, with reminder that it is subject to approval by SFC/Equality Challenge Unit
- Invitation to all staff to submit individual circumstances which may reduce the number of outputs required (including all staff eligible for inclusion but currently absent on leave)
- Invitations to Senate and Court to nominate members for Appeals Panel
- Training workshops for all those involved in REF selection process
- Drop in information session on our selection procedure for all staff
- Develop and launch on-line awareness for REF equality and diversity issues for all staff

#### September 2012

- Reminder to all staff to notify individual staff circumstances; recommendations to REF Steering Group as to number of outputs for each individual who has applied for individual staff circumstances. These will be based on the worked examples provided by ECU, a final recommendation will be agreed by the Convener of the REF Steering Group in consultation

with Heads of College, and documented by the Senior Policy Advisor for Research. Subsequent applications will be considered as submitted.

- Conduct test equality impact assessment alongside REF review sessions, and adjust procedures as required
- If required, further training sessions on the institutional code of practice

**February 2013**

- Inclusion decisions for staff in post to be completed and communicated in one-to-one sessions by end of the month

**May 2013**

- Appeals against inclusion decisions to be lodged by 4 May
- Conduct equality impact assessment on selection decisions

**August 2013**

- Appeals against inclusion decisions to be completed by 30 August

**October 2013**

- Census date 31 October 2013

**November 2013**

- Submission date 30 November

**January 2014**

- Equality impact assessment to be published

Agreed by REF Steering Group at its meeting 02 March 2012

### 3. Individual Staff Circumstances

Communication and template to be sent to staff:

To: All members of academic staff  
 From: Professor Phil Hannaford, Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange  
 Subject: REF 2014, consideration of individual staff circumstances

The University of Aberdeen is committed to ensuring that decisions on selecting staff for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) are made in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. Information on how eligible staff will be selected for submission to the REF can be found in the University of Aberdeen's Code of Practice which can be accessed here:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/ref2014.php#submission-selection> .

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

Decisions on inclusion of individual members of staff will be made by the institutional REF Steering Group which I convene. In determining whether eligible staff may be submitted to the REF with fewer than four research outputs, the REF Steering Group will take the following circumstances into consideration:

- = Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009)
- = Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 [ **note: this applies to specific units of assessment within Panel A** ]
- = Part time employment
- = Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research
- = Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)
- = Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)
- = Ill health or injury
- = Mental health conditions
- = Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare **in addition to** periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken. This could include for example, pregnancy related illness and health and safety restrictions in laboratory and field work.
- = Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)
- = Gender reassignment

If your research output has been affected by other circumstances, not including teaching and administration, that are not listed above, please detail them on this form so that they may be considered.

**In determining the number of outputs staff are required to submit, the university will observe the definitions of individual staff circumstances provided in the published REF 'Panel criteria and working methods' (January 2012) available at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk) under 'Publications'. The tariffs are also explained in our institutional code of practice which is available on**

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/ref2014.php#submission-selection>.

### What action do I need to take?

If you are eligible for REF submission you are encouraged to complete the attached form and return it to Mrs Marlis Barraclough, Senior Policy Advisor (Research) ([m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk); ext 3787), Policy, Planning and Governance, University Office, King's College, Aberdeen AB24 3FX.

If further information is required about any circumstances disclosed, you will be contacted by Mrs Barraclough.

### Who will see the information that I provide?

Within the institutions, the information that you provide will be seen by members of the institutional REF Steering Group, the administrator who supports the Group and human resource staff where appropriate and authorised. Remit and membership of the REF Steering Group is available here:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/ref2014.php#submission-selection>. (section 4.2)

All information will be kept strictly confidential by all relevant staff within the University, by the national REF Team, REF Panel Chairs, REF sub-panel members and the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. It will only be used for the purpose of determining the number of outputs that will be submitted by each member of staff who has identified individual circumstances and will not be published at any time. It will be stored securely and destroyed once it is no longer required for REF purposes or subsequent verification and audit processes.

Information provided on the form may be shared externally for the purposes of evidencing any reduction in the number of research outputs as set out below:

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

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

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

The REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions document ([www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02\\_11/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/)), requires all higher education institutions participating in the REF to ensure appropriate confidentiality in handling individual staff circumstances.

### What if my circumstances change?

The University of Aberdeen recognises that staff circumstances may change before the submission date of 31 October 2013. If your circumstances change please complete a copy of the individual staff circumstances disclosure form and send it to the REF co-ordinator, Marlis Barraclough at the address below. You can download a copy of form at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/ref2014.php>

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me or Marlis Barraclough ([m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk); ext. 3787) if you have any questions or wish to discuss this further.

Kind regards,

Phil Hannaford  
[p.hannaford@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:p.hannaford@abdn.ac.uk)  
01224 737211



### 3.2 Template for completion Individual staff circumstances disclosure form

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Discipline</b>	
<b>Unit of Assessment</b>	

#### Section one:

**Please select one of the following:**

- I have no individual circumstances that I wish to be taken into consideration for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
- I have individual circumstances that I wish to be taken into consideration for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). These are detailed below (Please complete sections two and three)
- In completing this form I am seeking a reduction in research outputs

#### Section two:

**Please select as appropriate:**

- I would like to discuss my staff circumstances and requirements for support further with a member of Human Resources staff. My contact details for this purpose are:

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

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

#### Section three

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

**Please provide information required on relevant circumstance/s and continue onto a separate sheet of paper if necessary:**

<b>Circumstance</b>	<b>Information required</b>
(i) Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009)	Date on which you became an early career research  Please include an up to date CV with this form for auditing and verification purposes
<b>Information</b>	
(ii) Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 <b>[Note: applies to specific units of assessment within Panel A]</b>	Please place a tick in this box if the circumstance applies:
(iii) Part time employee	<b>FTE and duration in months</b>
<b>Information</b>	
(iv) Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector	<b>Dates and duration in months</b>
<b>Information</b>	

(v) Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, or additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)	<b>For each period of leave state which type of leave was taken and the dates and duration in months</b>
<b>Information</b>	
(vi) Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	
(vii) Mental health condition	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	
(viii) Ill health or injury	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	
(ix) Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare <b>in addition to</b> the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken.	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	
(x) Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	
(xi) Gender reassignment	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	
(xii) Other exceptional and relevant reasons, not including teaching or administrative work	Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months
<b>Information</b>	

Please select as appropriate:

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

I recognise that the information provided will be used for REF purposes and will be seen by members of the REF Steering Group.

I realise that it may be necessary to share information with the UK funding bodies' REF team, who may make the information available to REF panel chairs, members and secretaries and/or the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. Where permission is not provided University of Aberdeen will be limited in the action it can take.

Signature: ..... Date: .....  
(Staff member)

**For official use only**

Following consideration of the personal circumstances described above, the REF Steering Group:

- Will progress the staff member's inclusion in the REF submission with [insert number] of research outputs. [Subject to specified institutional criteria]. Rationale for the proposed number of outputs:  
*e.g. this decision is based on the tariffs outlined in the panel criteria.*
- Requires further information of the circumstances described as follows:  
*e.g. please provide information from your occupational health assessment on the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments provided.*
- Does not feel that the staff member meets the criteria outlined within the REF 'Panel criteria and working methods' for submitting fewer than four research outputs. The reason(s) for this decision are:  
*e.g. circumstances detailed are not recognised within the assessment framework and guidance on submissions.*

If [insert name of staff member] wishes to appeal against the decision of the REF Steering Group, they will need to do so by 4 May 2013, or within three weeks of the decision being conveyed, if this is later than 30 April 2013. Details of the appeals process can be found at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/ref2014.php>.

Signature: ..... Date: .....  
([insert name of person/chair of committee responsible for decision])

Signature: ..... Date: .....  
(REF Manager)

#### 4. REF Planning Timetable – dates and milestones relevant to the Code of Practice

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF2014)  
INSTITUTIONAL SCHEDULE FOR PREPARATIONS

HEFCE/REF2014 Timetable (Key Dates and Milestones)	REF Steering Group/PPG	Units of Assessment/Colleges
HEFCE/REF2014 Timetable (Key Dates and Milestones)	REF Steering Group/PPG	Units of Assessment/Colleges
Apri/May I 2012, then ongoing	Encourage all members of staff who may wish to declare individual staff circumstances to come forward	Issue invitation to notify individual staff circumstances and guidance to all staff, including those temporarily absent (e.g. maternity leave, long term sick leave, secondment etc); invite Court and Senate nominations for REF Appeals panel
April/May 2012		All UoA leads, HoS, and all involved in the selection process for REF 2014 to receive training on equality and diversity issues relating to the REF,
		Invite Court and Senate nominations for REF Appeals panel
27 April 2012 Early (optional) deadline for HEIs to submit to SFC their Code of Practice for the Selection of Staff for REF 2014	Submit Code of Practice for approval	
May/June 2012	<p>Training workshops on Equality &amp; Diversity for all those involved in REF selection process</p> <p>Drop in information session for all staff eligible for submission</p> <p>Develop and launch on-line/face to face information sessions to raise awareness of institutional Code of Practice for the selection of staff</p>	<p>Participate in training as appropriate: All members of REF Steering Group All UoA leads Heads of School</p> <p>Appoint members of potential appeal panel and provide training as appropriate</p>
June/July 2012		
7 July 2012 SFC feedback on Code of Practice for the Selection of Staff for REF 2014	PPG to take appropriate action if required	

<b>HEFCE/REF2014 Timetable (Key Dates and Milestones)</b>	<b>REF Steering Group/PPG</b>	<b>Units of Assessment/Colleges</b>
July 2012	Conduct 'test' Equality Impact Assessment alongside REF Review sessions, and adjust procedures if required	Colleges to participate as appropriate
31 July 2012 Final deadline for submission of institutional Code of Practice		
September 2012	First tranche of recommendations on individual staff circumstances to be communicated to staff	
September 2012		If required, further training session on Code of Practice on Selection of Staff
January 2013	Formal process of staff selection through the REF Steering Group.	Colleges invited to make formal recommendations on staff inclusion for the REF
February 2013	Deadline for inclusion decisions by the REF Steering Group (except for new staff)	Inclusion decision for staff in post to be completed and communicated in one-to-one sessions by end of the month
Spring 2013	Re-issue information of institutional appeal process against inclusion decisions	
04 May 2013	Deadline for appeals against inclusion decisions	
May 2013	Conduct Equality Impact Assessment on inclusion decisions taken so far	
Autumn 2013	30 August 2013: Appeals against inclusion decisions to be completed (unless new staff or exceptional circumstances)	
29 November 2013 Closing Date for Submissions	Late October / Early November 2013  University to submit (by internal deadline, not yet set)	

<b>HEFCE/REF2014 Timetable (Key Dates and Milestones)</b>	<b>REF Steering Group/PPG</b>	<b>Units of Assessment/Colleges</b>
31 December 2013  End of Publication Period (cut off point for publication of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies)		
Early 2014	Conduct final Equality Impact Assessment on selection decisions	

Excerpt from detailed planning timetable for REF, agreed by REF Steering Group 02 March 2012