

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment – Full Assessment

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Title of Policy, Procedure or Function: Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF Submission Process	
School/Department: Research & Innovation	
Author/Position: Marlis Barraclough, Research Policy and REF Manager	Date created: 30/04/2021
1. Aims and purpose of Policy, Procedure or Function: The Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity in the REF Submission Process has been prepared to expand on the University's overarching policies on Equality and Diversity and set these in the context of the REF. It guided the work of all those involved in the preparation of submissions and the selection of staff for inclusion. It also reaffirmed our commitment to equality of opportunity and to the adoption and maintenance of best practice. It describes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How we complied with the guidance, panel criteria and working methods for REF set out by the funding councils• How we established eligibility in accordance with the REF2021 guidance, including research independence;• How we assigned eligible staff to units of assessment;• How we selected outputs for submission• How we assigned outputs to researchers (where there is more than one eligible co-author); and• How we manage and use the data and information around research that we collect in the course of our REF preparations	
2. Stakeholders: All academic staff Academic line managers within the University Trades Union representatives University Court REF Steering Group members School REF committee members/School research committee members	

3. Institutional Context

In order to deliver on the University's ambitious Equality Outcomes and to meet the legislative requirements under the **Equality Act 2010**, we have strengthened the governance structure for equality and diversity by setting up the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC)**. We approved a new **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** in 2019.

We routinely monitor our processes against the protected characteristics that we record: **gender, age, disability and ethnicity**. We have started to record and monitor **sexual orientation** and **religious belief** as part of our overall monitoring of protected characteristics. However, the number of researchers who decline to share this type information remains too high for us to draw any robust conclusions.

The assessment of whether the REF processes impacted adversely on researchers with any protected characteristics, or part time employees or early career researchers was undertaken through a series of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), each focusing on a different aspect of the preparations – **eligibility, selection of outputs** and **attribution of outputs**. While the data obtained for those EIAs shows that gender and ethnicity remain issues which continue to require institutional intervention and support to ensure proportionate representation, comparison with REF2014 data confirms that some progress has been made.

The University successfully renewed its **Bronze Athena Swan Award**, with all 12 Schools achieving a Bronze Award by 2018/19, and the School of Psychology gaining the first departmental **Silver award**. We are aware that, along with the UK sector, female researchers are underrepresented at senior grades, and our **Equality Impact Assessments** around REF and research performance have pointed to particular pressure on part time, early to mid-career women in research. Policy making is informed and reviewed in partnership with a number of networks that represent groups with protected characteristics or with particular interests/characteristics. There are networks for parents and carers, a new Women's Development Network, disability, menopause, staff and postgraduate LGBT+. Networks report into the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee

2018 saw the launch of a support system to tackle gender-based violence: an online tool that enables staff and students to report concerns and incidents of gender-based violence and access relevant support. This is a joint project between the University and Aberdeen University Student Association, and part of the **Equally Safe in HE Campaign** which aims to eradicate gender-based violence in higher education.

We established a **Race Equality Strategy Group** and signed the **Race Equality Charter**, the **BMA Charter on Racial Harassment** and the **Advance HE Declaration on Race**. A four phased race equality training programme is being rolled out in 2021. We have developed a Tackling Racial Harassment Action Plan to address the recommendations of the Equality and Human Rights Commission report *Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged* and the Universities UK report *Tackling Racial Harassment in HE*.

Between 2018 and 2019 the University climbed 111 places in the 2019 **Stonewall Workplace Equality Index**. We have procured **Transgender Awareness training** from the Scottish Trans Alliance which is being piloted in the School of Social Sciences and a Transgender Equality Policy approved in January 2020.

Since REF2014, we have introduced **Unconscious Bias** awareness-raising with uptake and feedback positive. Key decision-makers (e.g. staff on promotion panels, involved with recruitment or REF panels) routinely undertake Unconscious Bias training. All members of the REF Steering Group and Appeals panel, Heads of School, School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment Leads as well as supporting administrative staff undertook training around the institutional Code of Practice, focusing equality aspects of the selection and decision making process, referring to varying types of unconscious bias and pointing to strategies on how to combat them.

The monitoring process showed early on in the preparations where individual researchers or groups of researchers had an insufficient number of outputs for submission, and enabled

academic line managers and Schools or Institutes to take **supportive action** to enable the publication of high quality outputs.

We issued guidance for internal and external reviewers by Main REF Panel, which instructed the review of outputs strictly as directed by the REF guidance, and regardless of author contribution. For co-authored outputs, attribution was not finalized until spring 2021. Discussions around selection and attribution of outputs were informed by data on protected characteristics, primarily on gender and ethnicity.

4. Consultation on Code of Practice

Organisation/person consulted or involved	Date, method and by whom	Location of consultation records
School Directors of Research/Unit of Assessment Leads	First draft November 2018	Research & Innovation
REF Steering Group	First draft December 2018	Research & Innovation
University Management Group	First draft December 2018	Directorate of Planning
Senate	First draft January 2019	Registry
Court	First draft 28 March 2019	Directorate of Planning
Consultative meeting with campus unions	9 April 2019	Human Resources
Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity	23 April 2019	Human Resources
Consultation with academic community (for details, see Training and Communications Plan)	Launched by Vice Principal Research 1 April, comments/views sought by 26 April 2019	Research & Innovation
PNCC (includes union representation)	8 May 2019	Human Resources
Senate	15 May 2019	Registry
Court	By circulation	Directorate of Planning
Scottish Funding Council	7 June 2019	Research & Innovation
REF Steering Group (responding to SFC comments on draft submitted June 2019)	9 September 2019	Research & Innovation
Senior Management Team	9 September 2019	Secretary's Office
Scottish Funding Council	12 September 2019	Research & Innovation
REF Steering Group (updating Code of Practice in light of Covid restrictions/mitigations)	10 September 2020	Research & Innovation
Senior Management Team	30 September 2020	Secretary's Office
Scottish Funding Council	7 October 2020	Research & Innovation
Research Policy Committee (Dissemination of revised Code of Practice)	2 November 2020	Research & Innovation
Senate	2 December 2020	Registry
Discussion of draft final Equality Impact Assessment		
REF Steering Group	6 May 2021	Research & Innovation
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee	12 May 2021	Research & Innovation
Research Culture Task and Finish Group	15 June 2021	Research & Innovation
Research Policy Committee	16 June 2021	Research & Innovation
Senior Management Team	8 July 2021	Research & Innovation

<p>a) Brief summary of results of consultation indicating how this has affected the Policy, Procedure or Function</p>
<p>The consultation with internal stakeholders resulted in –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of the Code of Practice and the processes it governs within the academic community • Clarification around the criteria for eligibility of research assistants and fellows • Confirmation that specific disciplinary/School approaches will be accommodated in the identification and selection of outputs for submission • Inclusion of Covid-related personal circumstances among the circumstances which may qualify a researcher for a reduction of outputs expected for submission (August 2020)
<p>5. Monitoring</p>
<p>a) Detail method of monitoring of the Policy, Procedure or Function and by whom</p>
<p>The progress of the REF2021 preparations and their impact on researchers with protected characteristics that the University of Aberdeen records were monitored through the REF Steering Group. Summary reports were shared with the Research Policy Committee on which all School Directors of Research are represented, the Senior Management Team and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (previously Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity).</p> <p>Regular reports to Senate and Courts included summaries around any changes to the Code of Practice, along with headline messages on how the protected groups are represented in the eligible/submitted population, and how their output contributed to the overall submission. Compliance with the institutional Code of Practice at unit of assessment level was reviewed at each formal internal REF Review, held in November 2018, November 2019 and November 2020.</p> <p>At final selection stage, selections and narratives for each unit of assessment were reviewed, typically by the Dean of Research with oversight of the preparations under the appropriate Main REF panel and the institutional REF Manager. Notes of these meetings were provided to the REF Steering Group for review.</p> <p>Responsibility for monitoring rests with the REF Steering Group; reports and data are compiled by the REF Team within Research & Innovation.</p>

b) Detail how monitoring results will be utilised to develop the Policy, Procedure or Function

The processes governed by the institutional Code of Practice concerned the identification of eligible members of staff for submission to REF2021, the identification and selection of outputs and impact case studies for submission, enabling the application of reductions to the number of outputs expected for submission by individual members of staff, the application for reductions of the number of outputs to be submitted at unit of assessment level and governing the appeals processes associated with REF2021. With the REF2021 now completed, these processes no longer apply.

We are currently reflecting on the processes and the Code of Practice as part of lessons learnt in our REF preparations and provide feedback to external bodies as appropriate. This is led by the REF Steering Group and includes discussions at Research Policy Committee, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee as well as the Research Culture Task and Finish Group, a sub-group of the Research Policy Committee. Data collected on our REF preparations during this assessment period, as well as data from REF2014 and RAE2008, point to issues around gender and, to a lesser degree, around ethnicity. Analyses in the run up to submission to REF2021 focused on these issues, and were complemented by general analyses around research performance and how the Covid-related restrictions may have impacted on researchers with protected characteristics.

The discussions are also likely to inform the full implementation of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment across the institution.

c) Timescale of monitoring including proposed dates

We monitored the impact of the processes in our Code of Practice throughout the preparations for REF2021, chiefly through the REF Steering Group.

The REF Steering Group received an update on individual staff circumstances at each meeting once applications had been received. The REF Steering Group also received notes of the unit of assessment meeting documenting their compliance with the institutional Code of Practice and how equality and diversity issues were taken into account in the final selection and attribution decisions.

In addition, it considered and discussed the following:

- Initial EIA (part of the Code of Practice submitted to the funding councils), February 2019
- Further data derived from cross-sectional analysis, establishing baseline data around eligibility and number of eligible outputs associated with each researcher, May 2019
- Data around eligibility decisions, December 2019
- Number of outputs/predicted grades and protected characteristics, February 2020 (also discussed at the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in March 2020)
- Final attribution and distribution of submitted outputs across the eligible population, May 2020

The data we have generated around inclusion in the REF submission and associated outputs inform the development of support and institutional policy to ensure that our research environment is enabling and supportive of all researchers. We are able to monitor progress against comparable data derived for REF2014. The analyses have been provided for consideration to the Research Culture Task and Finish Group which has a remit to review and, where possible, improve the research environment for researchers with protected characteristics, as indicated by the data generated through our monitoring of REF preparations. The Group is expected to report by the end of this calendar year.

5. Impact assessment

a) Detail any potential or actual difference of impact of the Policy, Procedure or Function in each equality strand

Race:

We monitored the representation of staff who have declared a BAME background in the REF eligible population compared to all academic appointments, and the number and predicted quality of outputs that they contributed to our REF submissions.

Representation of BAME staff in the REF eligible population is slightly higher than that in the wider academic community. Further analysis shows that earlier career stages for REF eligible staff are ethnically more diverse than mid/late career stages. At Professorial level, staff with BAME background are underrepresented; 7.2% of the Professoriat has declared a BAME background, compared to 16.5% overall and 22.5% at earlier career stages (Lecturer/Research fellow). As a result, the average number of outputs associated with BAME researchers is, at 2.13, below the overall average for the submitted population.

Disability:

The number of researchers with a declared disability is low. At 2.1% it is lower than that recorded for the overall academic population at the University of Aberdeen (2.5%) and that recorded for the UK sector (4.3%) by HESA for 2018/19 (most recent figures available). On average, researchers with a declared disability submitted 2.8 outputs to REF2021 which is higher than the overall average.

Due to relatively small numbers it is difficult to draw any robust conclusions from the data.

Gender:

As was the case for REF2014, the analysis of REF2021 data made visible the gap in representation between female and male researchers among the eligible population and in terms of number of attributed outputs and predicted grades. Although there has been a slight increase in the proportion of eligible women since REF2014, women are less likely to be employed on eligible contracts than men. Women who are included are, on average, submitted with fewer outputs than their male colleagues and the average number of predicted 4* outputs associated with researchers is lower for women than it is for men.

There is a higher number of female researchers at earlier career stages (Lecturer/Research fellow), but the differential in the average number of attributed papers persists at all career stages. A quality profile using predicted grades for men and women shows a lower percentage of outputs predicted to achieve 4* grades than that for men.

There is no evidence that the processes we have employed to identify eligible researchers and outputs for REF2021 directly discriminate against women, however, the analysis of REF data shows that gender differences persist and emphasise the need for continued action to address this.

Age:

Analysis of the submitted staff and outputs by age shows that staff in younger age groups, who are more likely to be at earlier career stages, are returned to REF2021 with fewer outputs, and are less likely to be associated with 4* outputs than staff in older age groups. This is as expected.

Sexual Orientation:

The data available included a large proportion of 'not known/refused' and no robust conclusions could be drawn from it.

Religion and Belief:

The data available included a large proportion of 'not known/refused' and no robust conclusions could be drawn from it.

Gender Reassignment

The data available included a large proportion of 'not known/refused' and no robust conclusions could be drawn from it.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The REF2021 rules enabled applications from individual researchers who have experienced personal circumstances that have had a significant impact on their ability to undertake research within the assessment period to have that impact taken into account when preparing REF submissions. Individual researchers were able to cite family related reasons for their reductions, including maternity/paternity/adoption leave, and any caring responsibilities during the assessment period. Overall, we received 26 and approved 25 applications to have family related leave taken into account.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

There was insufficient data available on marriage and civil partnership.

b) Is there evidence that the Policy, Procedure or Function could be directly or indirectly discriminatory? Is there a genuine occupational requirement (this would need to be explained)?

There is no evidence that the processes in the Code of Practice are either directly or indirectly discriminatory. The underlying issues around research performance across gender, and the under representation of women and researchers of BAME background are longstanding and complex. Making them visible through the REF processes and providing an evidence base for discussion and policy development will be helpful in continuing to address and eliminate inequalities in our research environment.

c) Does the Policy, Procedure or Function promote equality of opportunity or have the potential to do so?

The Code of Practice, and the associated EIAs help to make visible inequality and contribute to the evidence base at institutional level, informing our actions to eliminate inequality.

d) How is the Policy, Procedure or Function likely to promote good relations between people with different protected characteristics?

The Code of Practice itself does not directly promote good relations between individuals or groups with different protected characteristics. However, by clearly articulating the criteria for eligibility and selection for REF2021 it helps to avoid misinformation and misunderstanding on how we prepare for REF.

e) How is the Policy, Procedure or Function likely to promote positive attitudes towards others and encourage their participation in University or public life?
n/a
6. Amendments/modifications
a) Detail any amendments or modifications that may eliminate identified negative impacts or increase positive impacts of the Policy, Procedure or Function with timescales
n/a
7. Publication
a) Provide details of arrangements to publish full assessment: The initial EIA on the institutional Code of Practice was published on our institutional webpages and by the Scottish Funding Council. The final EIA will also be published on our pages as well as the SFC pages.
8. Review Date: none required
9. Action Plan Section 3 of this document sets out some of the actions we have taken to eliminate, as far as possible, inequalities in our research environment. The REF2021 data on how protected characteristics are represented in our submissions has emphasised that we need to take further action to ensure gender and race equality in particular.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently working on a Gender Equality Action Plan which will include research specific sections within the context of the overall approach and commitment to gender equality. We are developing dedicated resources/training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision makers within a research context. • Building on the work of the Race Equality Strategy Group, and the initial race equality training we provided in the first half of 2021, offer further race awareness and training opportunities • We have set up a Research Culture Task and Finish Group which will look at our wider organisational research culture, including work/life balance, gender balance in leadership and decision making and gender equality in recruitment and career progression. • We have signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and as part of our implementation of the principles enshrined in DORA will be reviewing how research performance is reviewed for the purposes of recruitment, promotion, funding and external research assessment exercises. • We will complete a longitudinal study which will examine our recruitment, retention and promotion and the experience of researchers with protected characteristics

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9. Date of submission to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee:	
12 May 2021	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Approval Yes	No

Annex – REF2021 Data Analysis

1 Eligibility

1.1 Under the institutional Code of Practice, all staff employed on an ‘academic teaching and research’ contract who meet the criteria set out in paragraphs 117ff in the Guidance on Submissions were eligible and submitted to REF2021. In addition, all staff employed on ‘academic related - research only’ contracts who meet the criteria set out in paragraphs 128ff of the Guidance on Submissions were eligible and submitted. Their eligibility status was considered and confirmed by the institutional REF Steering Group. Overall, 77 research only staff met the eligibility criteria. Staff appointed or promoted on ‘academic teaching and scholarship’ contracts were not eligible.

1.2 We completed an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) while developing our institutional Code of Practice to establish baseline data, and undertook a further EIA in December 2019, looking at how researchers with protected characteristics were represented in the eligible population compared to a baseline of all staff on academic contracts (‘teaching and research’, ‘teaching and scholarship’ and ‘research only’). At that point, the numbers suggested that relatively fewer women were eligible than men, with a baseline gender split of 46% female and 54% male, and in the eligible population at that time 38% female and 61% male. Other protected characteristics were represented broadly proportionately in the eligible and baseline populations.

1.3 Researchers in HESA age group 34 or younger were also underrepresented in the eligible population compared to the baseline population. The majority of this age group are at early career stages and employed on ineligible ‘research only’ contracts.

Baseline (all academic appointments)		REF2021 census date		REF2014 census date	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
46.1%	53.9%	36.4%	63.6%	34.5%	65.5%
Disability declared	No disability declare/unknown	Disability declared	No disability declare/unknown	Disability declared	No disability declare/unknown
3.4%	96.6%	2.1%	97.9%	2.4%	97.6%
BAME	White/unknown	BAME	White/unknown	BAME	White/unknown
15.5%	84.5%	16.5%	83.5%	9.6%	80.4%
Part-time	Full-time	Part-time ¹	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time
30.3%	69.7%	10.0%	90.0%	13.9%	86.1%
		ECR	Not ECR	ECR	Not ECR
		16.5%	83.5%	13.9%	86.1%

2 Selection of outputs

2.1 Protected characteristics were also monitored in the eligible population throughout the preparations for REF2021, to establish which groups had, at various stages in the process, not achieved the required minimum of one output for submission, and how outputs with high predicted grades following internal and external review were distributed across the eligible population.

2.2 A detailed analysis early in 2020 showed that female researchers were more likely, at that point, to have either no outputs identified for submission (26% of all female researchers compared to 17% of male researchers) or have one output for submission (24% of female

¹ The part-time figures for REF2021 and REF2014 include fractional appointments (0.2FTE). Excluding those, the percentage of part-time researchers for REF2021 was 7.1% and 8.1% for REF2014.

researchers compared to 18% of male researchers). At the time, 65% of women were associated with fewer than the required 2.5 outputs, compared to 56% of men.

2.3 Throughout the process Schools were tasked with supporting researchers in completing outputs for submission. This was achieved through annual review that put in place support plans for individual researchers where required.

3 Attribution of Outputs

3.1 The analysis of attributed outputs presents a partial picture, as it does not take account of co-authorship or of the overall productivity of any individual researcher. The analysis is presented here because these REF data will inform the funding councils' thinking and policy development.

3.2 Final attributions across the units of assessment were discussed with School Directors of Research/unit of assessment leads. The discussions referred to the statistics around protected characteristics for the submitting unit and modelled the representation of each group with a protected characteristic in the submission; for larger units of assessment this also included intersectional analysis (typically gender/ethnicity; gender/seniority). Units of assessment aimed, where outputs of equal quality were available, to represent the diversity of the submitting unit as much as possible.

3.3 The average number of attributed (i.e. with which researchers were submitted) across all submissions was 2.38 by headcount or 2.48 by FTE. Attributed output shares were as follows:

	Staff	%age of papers attributed
Female	36.4%	31.5%
Male	63.6%	68.5%
All		
Disability declared	2.1%	2.4%
No disability declared	94.4%	93.7%
Refused/unknown	3.6%	3.9%
34 or younger	9.6%	8.3%
35 to 49	47.5%	47.8%
50 to 65	39.0%	39.8%
66 or older	4.0%	4.0%
Research Fellow	7.54%	5.89%
Senior Res Fellow	3.02%	2.31%
Lecturer	27.85%	23.54%
Senior Lecturer	24.14%	22.56%
Reader	5.21%	5.37%
Professor	32.24%	40.33%
White	79.0%	80.6%
BAME	16.5%	14.8%
Refused/unknown	4.5%	4.6%

ECR	16.5%	14.0%
Not ECR	83.5%	86.0%

3.4 It appears that female and BAME researchers are underrepresented in terms of number of attributed papers. Age/Seniority/Career Stage show that, as one would expect, younger researchers, those at lower grades/early career stages have fewer outputs attributed than those at mid-career stages and senior career stages. In considering these numbers, it should be noted that gender and ethnicity are not evenly distributed throughout the submitted population. At earlier career stages (lecturer and research fellows), there is more ethnic diversity than at later career stages:

Mid/later career stages		Earlier career stages	
BAME	Other	BAME	Other
62	409	58	200
13.2%	86.8%	22.5%	77.5%

3.5 At earlier career stages, the average number of attributed outputs for both BAME and White/Other researchers is 2; at later career stages, the average number of outputs attributed to White/Other researchers is 3. As the table above has shown, Professors contribute an average of almost 3 outputs to the submissions. Out of the 235 Professors submitted, 17 or 7.2% identify as BAME. An average of 3 outputs was attributed to them.

3.6 Similarly, gender splits at earlier career stages differ significantly from those at mid- and later career stages:

Mid/later career stages		Earlier career stages	
Female	Male	Female	Male
153	327	112	146
31.9%	68.1%	43.4%	56.6%

3.7 At earlier career stages, an average of 2.18 outputs is attributed to male researchers, while female researchers are submitted with an average of 1.7 outputs. At mid/later career stages, female researchers are represented with an average of 2.32 outputs, while men have an average of 2.72. Some of the variance in the average number of outputs at mid/later career stages can be attributed to the relatively low number of women represented at Professorial level – 27.7% of the Professors included in the submission are female. However, at professorial level, female researchers are submitted with an average of 2.58 while male researchers have 3.12.

3.9 The proportion of staff working part time in the REF2021 submission is relatively low, and lower at earlier career stages than at mid/later career stages. The minimum requirement of 1 output for each submitted researcher means that any researcher with an FTE below 0.4 will be a 'net contributor' to the REF submission by the time they meet the minimum requirement of 1 output.

With that in mind, expressed as FTE, the figures below show the contribution of part-time researchers to the REF submissions:

	Staff	Outputs			%age staff	%age outputs	Average number of outputs
Part time	35.16	126		Part time	5.0%	7.3%	3.58
Full time	663	1607		Full time	95.0%	92.7%	2.42
Total	698.16	1733					

4 Further information

4.1 Further information is available from Marion Campbell, m.k.campbell@abdn.ac.uk, Liz Rattray, e.rattray@abdn.ac.uk or Marlis Barraclough, m.barraclough@abdn.ac.uk

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