

Code of Practice template

Institution name: Teesside University

Date of submission: 14th May 2026

Part 1: Introduction

1. How your CoP supports the principles of:

- **Robustness**

The University's academic staff base is divided into the following types of contract: (i) teaching and research (mapping to academic employment function 3 in the HESA staff record); (ii) teaching-only (academic employment function 1); and (iii) research-only (academic employment function 2). Staff who hold a teaching-only contract (internally categorised as teaching, scholarship and professional practice contracts) are not expected to deliver research activity. Other staff hold administrative, professional, technical or senior management contracts, which also carry no expectation of research delivery, although these staff may support research activity in various ways and (especially in the case of technical staff) contribute to research outputs. In some circumstances and to reflect changing responsibilities, staff may move from a teaching-only to a teaching and research contract; their outputs will be considered for submission to REF 2029 as set out in part 5.

At 31st July 2025 (the end of the last HESA staff record reporting period), 579.4 FTE held a teaching and research contract, 124.7 FTE a teaching-only contract and 50.9 FTE a research-only contract. Staff who hold a teaching and research, teaching-only or research-only contract are identified using HR data. These data are shared as required with Unit of Assessment leads, who are responsible for leading Unit-level REF submissions as set out in part two below. This provides a single, accurate source of information on staff contracts and responsibilities.

The processes set out in parts two and three below are used to ensure that contracts identified as contributing to the volume measure reflect staff responsibilities, i.e., that staff who hold a teaching and research contract contribute to the volume measure if they are identified as having significant responsibility for research, and staff with a research-only contract do so if they are identified as independent researchers. The same framework is used across all Units of Assessment.

The University has five academic Schools, each of which encompasses a number of academic departments. Each School has an Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange) or Associate Dean (Research and Innovation) and each academic department has a Head and Deputy Head of Department. These staff oversee the allocation of research workloads for staff with teaching and research contracts, which as outlined in part two forms the basis of whether these staff are identified as having significant responsibility for research. Workloads are published on the University's Academic Workload System and staff can view their workload at any time.

As detailed in part three, the Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) is responsible for determining which research-only staff are independent researchers, working with consistent criteria and supported by the central Research and Enterprise Office. As above, research-only staff represent a relatively small proportion of the University's research community, which along with the ability to request input from principal investigators and research centre leads ensures that this process is manageable and applied consistently.

○ Transparency

The Code of Practice has been communicated to staff at open briefings, comprising two hybrid sessions and one online session held via Teams. The sessions were held on different days and at different times to give the opportunity for staff with varying working patterns and responsibilities to attend. The registration form for the briefings gave staff the option to raise a question without attending a session and to request further details of the Code of Practice and the University's approach to the REF 2029 submission. Invitations to the briefings were included four weeks in advance of the first session in University Update, a regular newsletter which is sent to all staff, and were circulated within each School and to the University's equality focus group chairs (see section 2 below).

A SharePoint page is accessible to all staff and PhD students, and contains an overview of REF 2029, a summary of the University's approach to managing the REF submission, contact details and a draft of the Code of Practice.

Following consultation with Heads of Department, information on the Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified as on long-term absence from work (for any reason) during the consultation period. This information includes details of the open briefing sessions and confirmation that staff are encouraged (separately to the briefing sessions and at a time which suits them) to raise queries, ask for further information or request an opportunity to discuss the REF 2029 submission by contacting the Research and Enterprise Office.

No 'teaching and research' academic, research-only or research-enabling staff are based outside of the UK.

The University has consulted on its REF processes with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Teesside University branch of the University and College Union (UCU) as the trade union recognised as representing academic and research staff. This includes processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research and independent researchers, allocating staff contracts to Units of Assessment in the HESA staff record and selecting outputs for submission.

More generally, a session on REF 2029 is provided twice a year as part of the University's ENRICH research and enterprise development programme. The aim is to ensure that staff and PhD students can access information about REF 2029 and the University's submission plans. Sessions have also been provided to individual Schools, to senior researchers as part of broader leadership development programmes and as part of Open Access Week in 2026 (focusing on REF 2029 open access requirements; the Code of Practice open staff briefings were also promoted at this session).

The Code of Practice will be made available externally at [Research Excellence Framework \(REF\) | Research | Teesside University](#).

○ Equity and inclusion

The University has put in place a number of measures to ensure that decisions about the submissions are fair and impartial:

1. Separation of roles and responsibilities. Decisions about submissions are taken separately to decisions on the allocation of research workloads (which as set out in part two determines

whether a member of staff with a teaching and research contract has significant responsibility for research) and whether staff meet the criteria of being an independent researcher. The REF Operations Group makes recommendations based on the advice of Unit of Assessment teams on the development of Unit of Assessment submissions, including the selection of outputs. This group reports progress to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group, which in turn reports to the University Executive Team, Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Academic Board. This is set out in part two.

2. The use of Pure as a single source of information on research outputs. The Research and Enterprise Office provides reports on research outputs to Unit of Assessment teams from the Pure system, which includes the University's institutional research outputs repository. This ensures a consistent approach. Pure is well established within the University (having been in use since 2018) and the importance of adding outputs to Pure is emphasised at staff induction, by research theme, centre and group leads, and as part of sessions within the ENRICH research and enterprise development programme and Open Access Week. Staff are also reminded to add outputs to Pure as part of preparations for internal REF 2029 output reviews.
3. The selection of outputs is informed by reading groups for each Unit of Assessment to ensure a diversity of research expertise and perspectives. Further details are provided in part two. External reviewers review samples of outputs as a calibration exercise and to provide internal reading groups with an experienced, independent opinion to inform their reviews.
4. Submissions are underpinned by the University's policy framework, including the Equality and Inclusion Policy and the Responsible Research Assessment Policy. Both policies will continue to be used in the training provided to those involved in the REF submissions as set out in part two.

2. Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The University's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is set out in the Equality and Inclusion Policy¹, which outlines the University's commitment to:

- Mutual respect and sensitivity.
- Equality of access to the organisation, equality of esteem and equality of opportunity within the organisation.
- Continuous improvement of individuals stemming from a culture of ongoing review, development and enhancement.
- Satisfaction of individual needs via supportive and flexible working/learning environments.
- Encouragement of diversity of views, perspectives, values and issues, but opposition to and eradication of prejudice, unfair barriers and discrimination.
- Transparency, equity, responsiveness and accuracy of procedure and process.

The policy sets out the University's commitment to meeting its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and signposts to related policies on dignity at work, occupational health, reasonable adjustments, grievances and disciplinary procedures, as well as the institutional values and behaviours framework.

The Equality and Inclusion Committee monitors progress against the University's equality objectives, with operational support provided by five focus groups covering: (i) gender; (ii) disability; (iii) faith and belief; (iv) LGBT; and (v) ethnic and cultural diversity. Membership is open to all staff and includes research leaders and those at an earlier stage of their career. Information on the Code of Practice and staff briefing sessions has been circulated to group chairs and further discussions of the REF 2029 submission will take place with the groups as appropriate.

The University is committed to supporting all members of staff, including staff on part-time or fixed-term contracts. The Equality and Inclusion Policy confirms adherence to the principle of equal opportunity for all and does not identify specific groups. The Flexible Working Policy commits to supporting all members of staff to achieve their full potential and ensuring that all staff benefit from equal access to opportunities. The Fixed-Term Contracts Policy outlines that fixed-term staff are provided with the same benefits as permanent staff, including comparable terms and conditions of employment, equal access to induction and training, and redeployment and redundancy rights. The Academic Careers Framework confirms that all applicants for promotion are measured against the same criteria and that no quotas or restrictions apply to staff irrespective of contractual status.

1. [Equality and Inclusion Policy](#)

Research culture and environment

The University's research and knowledge exchange strategy to 2027 sets out five key objectives:

1. Continuing to enhance research capacity and capability by investing in leadership, staff, facilities and equipment.
2. Partnering with stakeholders and communities to ensure that our research meets local and global needs.
3. Fostering a responsible and inclusive research culture which ensures the highest academic standards.
4. Creating a vibrant research environment by providing time, space and resources for ideas generation, networking, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity.
5. Ensuring the sustainability of research by investing in talent and increasing research income generation.

The University's current research culture action plan, which is assessed externally for the HR Excellence in Research award², runs from November 2023 to November 2026 and is based on the following priorities:

1. Increasing the visibility of research, leading to high awareness and positive perceptions of the institution's research culture.
2. Ensuring that high value is placed on research, resulting in positive perceptions of workload, development review processes and career opportunities.
3. Ensuring that all researchers and research-enabling staff feel included in a diverse research community.

4. Supporting high quality and impactful research to ensure external recognition of the quality and benefits of the University's research.
5. Nurturing research talent amongst an engaged and well-supported research community.

The Code of Practice supports these aims by providing continuity of the processes put in place for REF 2021 in the context of a changing external landscape and its internal implications. The Code of Practice also links to several key actions within the research culture action plan, including:

- (i) Supporting professors and associate professors to take research leadership roles, including leading Unit of Assessment submissions, output reviews and/or reading groups and impact preparations.
- (ii) Preparing guidance for reviewers and reviewees on developing research objectives within the annual professional development plan and review (PDPR) process. This links to the identification of staff with significant responsibility for research as set out in part two.
- (iii) Supporting the growth of the institution-wide early-career researcher forum and the instigation of a mid-career researcher forum to encourage peer support.
- (iv) Implementing a structured research mentoring scheme across the University to support research planning and help staff to make progress against their research objectives.
- (v) Recognising the role of diverse research contributions, including from technicians and research-only staff.
- (vi) Supporting the adoption of open research practices and a culture of fostering research impact and engagement. This supports the emphasis within the University's mission statement on building meaningful, mutually significant partnerships with communities and stakeholders.

The Research Culture and People Sub-Committee oversees the development of the research culture action plan and progress towards its delivery, and has been consulted on the University's approach to the Code of Practice.

2. [HR Excellence Award action plan](#)

Responsible research assessment

The University's approach to research assessment is set out in its Responsible Research Assessment Policy³, which was developed in 2026 as an update to the Policy on the Use of Quantitative Indicators in Research Evaluation (first developed in 2018).

The principles of the Responsible Research Assessment Policy are:

1. The University values all research outputs in recognition of the breadth of work undertaken across the institution and does not privilege any form of output over another.
2. The University places primary value on the quality, rather than the quantity, of all research undertaken.

3. It should be clear to all relevant parties when and why research quality is assessed.
4. Staff and other stakeholders should consider a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators when presenting their research for assessment or assessing research quality.
5. Peer review is central to research assessment at the University, prioritising the content of outputs over publication metrics. Journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, should not be used as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles due to the risks of introducing bias into research assessment.
6. Similarly, publication-based metrics, such as the H-index, should not be used in isolation when evaluating a researcher's work. This is due to the biases of the H-index and similar metrics towards certain disciplines, those at a more senior career stage and those who have not taken career breaks.
7. Research assessment should prioritise the input of those with disciplinary expertise and an understanding of disciplinary norms and expectations.
8. All research assessment is partial and to a varying extent subjective. There are limitations to all ways of assessing research quality. These limitations must be made clear to all concerned in the assessment of the University's research.

The policy sets out the points at which research quality is assessed in the University. These are: (i) during staff recruitment; (ii) as part of the academic promotions process; (iii) to support the allocation of internal funding or to assess which applications are submitted for external funding opportunities; and (iv) as part of preparations for REF. The policy confirms that, although research quality is also discussed as part of the annual professional development plan and review (PDPR) process and as part of research mentoring, the purpose of these interactions is developmental. They are therefore not considered to represent points at which research quality is formally assessed.

The policy also provides details of the purpose of the assessment undertaken at each of these four points, the timing of the assessment, who is involved and how the outcomes of the assessment are used. For REF preparations, the policy clarifies that: the purpose is to assess the quality of research within REF units of assessment; assessment is carried out throughout the REF cycle with increasing frequency and depth towards the middle and end; those involved are as set out in part two below; and quality assessment informs the selection of outputs alongside the other criteria provided in part five.

There are no formal expectations that staff produce a certain number of outputs in any given period. The PDPR process provides the flexibility to agree research objectives for the year ahead based on the priorities of each member of staff, the balance of their commitments and responsibilities and the needs of their academic School and department.

The Responsible Research Assessment Policy underpins training provided to Unit of Assessment teams and guidance for reading groups, internal reviewers and external reviewers. Unit of Assessment leads, output leads and research centre leads have discussed the policy at briefing sessions and how it relates to the Code of Practice and the University's approach to the REF 2029 submission. A summary of the Responsible Research Assessment Policy has been prepared to sit alongside other guidance (for example, on developing research collaborations) as part of ENRICH, the University's hub for research and knowledge exchange development activities, to ensure that it is

accessible to all staff. The briefing material will also be shared with all external reviewers (some of whom are yet to be appointed) throughout the preparation of the REF submission.

The policy's practical implications for the selection of outputs for submission are set out in part five.

School REF Groups may choose to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to support the preparation of the REF submission, but all judgements (including on the assessment of research quality) must be made in accordance with the University's Responsible Research Assessment Policy, including the primacy of peer review. School REF Groups will document any use of AI tools and will ensure that these tools are used appropriately and securely in support of interim and final decision making by those responsible for the preparation of the University's REF submission as set out below.

3. [Responsible Research Assessment Policy](#)

3. Update on Actions Since REF 2021

39% of the University's eligible staff were identified as having significant responsibility for research and submitted to REF 2021. The Equality Impact Assessment for REF 2021 identified the following:

- 45% of eligible male staff were identified as having significant responsibility for research, compared to 32% of eligible female staff. 47% of male staff were returned with no more than one output compared to 54% of female staff. The proportion of staff submitted with between two and four outputs was almost identical for both groups, at 35% for male staff and 36% for female staff. 18% of male staff were submitted with five outputs, compared to 10% of female staff.
- The proportion of staff submitted in the lowest and oldest age groups was relatively low (25% of those aged 20 to 29, 28% of those aged 50 to 59 and 28% of those aged 60+). This compared to 54% of those aged 30 to 39 and 42% of those aged 40 to 49. A larger proportion of those aged 20 to 39 and 50+ were submitted with either no more than one output or five outputs, compared to those aged those aged 40 to 49.
- The low number of staff who declared a disability, and low disclosure rates for sexual orientation and to a lesser extent religion and belief, limited the extent to which conclusions could be drawn in terms of these characteristics. An annual call is issued to encourage staff to disclose protected characteristics and explain why this is important. Earlier in the current REF cycle, this was followed up with targeted, personal contact to address queries and key gaps in the data. This process was designed to be supportive and was well-received; it is due to be repeated in 2026.

Since REF 2021, the number of staff with significant responsibility for research has continued to be monitored monthly as a University key performance indicator. The University's Athena SWAN action plan includes a commitment to increase the proportion of women with significant responsibility for research, based on improving understanding of barriers to accessing research support and implementing actions to address them.

Actions taken to date include:

- Developing a sabbaticals programme using QR funding to allow academic staff to focus on their research and/or research impact activities, usually for one semester. Associate Deans (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) work within Schools to encourage applications from women and those at a range of career stages. Fifty-four

sabbaticals have been allocated since the scheme launched in 2022, 28 to male and 26 to female staff. 40 sabbaticals have been allocated to lecturers or senior lecturers, 13 to principal lecturers or associate professors, and one to a member of professional services staff.

- Rolling out a structured research mentoring scheme across the University in 2025/26 following local pilot activity. 211 staff are registered (in April 2026): 113 as mentees, 32 as mentors and 66 as both mentor and mentee.
- Providing greater visibility to research role models and access to peer support across career stages through the work of the early- and mid-career researcher fora and the allocation of research leadership roles to professors and associate professors using a standard part of their workload allocation. Professors and associate professors act as leads for areas including research culture, research mentoring, impact, knowledge exchange, open research, output quality, funding and research communications.

Analysis has been discussed at the Research Culture and People Sub-Committee of staff with significant responsibility for research by gender and role (as an approximation for career stage). The Research Culture and People Sub-Committee reports to the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee so is able to highlight areas of concern for discussion and agreement of actions.

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

1. Policies and Procedures

○ Criteria for SRR

Academic staff with a teaching and research contract are identified as having significant responsibility for research if at least 20% of the total available hours within their workload is allocated to research activities. This represents a continuation of the marker which was agreed for REF 2021 and is based on the following elements of workload:

1. The research element of each staff member's Research and Scholarly Activity Allowance (RSA).
2. Hours which are funded from live externally funded research and research-led knowledge exchange projects. This is based on the time allocated to staff within externally funded project budgets and plans.
3. Personal research allowances, which are allocated as standard to professors and associate professors.
4. Allowances for research and research-led knowledge exchange activities (for staff other than professors and associate professors). These are based on research plans and objectives agreed as part of the annual professional development plan and review (PDPR) process.
5. Research sabbatical hours for staff who have been allocated a research sabbatical.
6. Research degree (PhD or MPhil) student supervision hours.

Total available hours are usually 1,576 for full-time staff (pro-rata for part-time staff), but may change in any given year, for example to reflect additional annual leave allocations which were agreed for 2025/26.

RSA usually comprises 178 hours per year (pro-rata for part-time staff) and is allocated to all staff with a teaching and research contract. The following options indicate what proportion of RSA a member of staff allocates to research:

- Category A: 100% Research
- Category B: 75% Research, 25% Scholarly Activity
- Category C: 50% Research, 50% Scholarly Activity
- Category D: 25% Research, 75% Scholarly Activity
- Category E: 100% Scholarly Activity.

The main 'discretionary' element of research workloads is therefore the allowances for research and research-led knowledge exchange activities at point 4 above. These allowances are based on role expectations and research objectives for the coming year, as agreed within PDPR. The allowances generally roll forward across years to give staff continuity and certainty on the development and delivery of research plans, although some amendments are made as required within workloads and in response to changing objectives and responsibilities.

Examples:

1. An Associate Professor of Public Health works full time and dedicates 75% of their RSA to research. Their workload is:
 - Total available hours: 1,576
 - Research and scholarly activity: $178 \times 75\% = 133.5$ hours
 - Personal research hours: 680 hours (standard workload allocation for associate professors; includes supervision of two PhD students)
 - Total research hours: 813.5; proportion of total workload allocated to research: 51.6%

This member of staff has significant responsibility for research.

2. A Senior Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering works 0.6 FTE, dedicates 100% of their RSA to research and has an allowance for research-led knowledge exchange activities based on the objectives agreed in their PDPR.
 - Total available hours: $1,576 \times 0.6 = 945.6$
 - Research and scholarly activity: $178 \text{ hours} \times 0.6 = 106.8$
 - Research-led knowledge exchange allowance: 120 hours
 - Total research hours: 226.8; proportion of workload allocated to research: 24%

This member of staff has significant responsibility for research.

3. A Principal Lecturer (Learning and Teaching) works full-time, dedicates 50% of their RSA to research and has an allowance for research activities based on agreed objectives in their PDPR. Their role is primarily based on supporting learning and teaching in their department.
 - Total available hours: 1,576
 - Research and scholarly activity: $178 \text{ hours} \times 50\% = 89$
 - Research allowance: 100 hours
 - Total research hours: 189; proportion of workload allocated to research: 12%

This member of staff does not have significant responsibility for research.

- **Decision-Making and Communication**

Element 1. RSA is allocated to every member of staff who holds a contract with teaching and research responsibilities. This time is largely self-managed, but activities and outputs are considered as part of the PDPR process, and the category (from A to E as above) of each staff member's RSA should be discussed and agreed at PDPR.

Element 2. Hours which are allocated to externally funded projects are determined by the project plan and funding arrangements.

Element 3. Standard personal research allowances are allocated to professors and associate professors. The use of these workload allocations is discussed at PDPR, but the number of hours is determined by the staff member holding a professor or associate professor role.

Element 4. The research objectives agreed in PDPR form the basis of staff workload allocations (in addition to RSA) for research and research-led knowledge exchange activities. This applies to staff other than professors and associate professors.

The PDPR process runs from May to August each year and, as set out in the University's PDPR policy and procedure, is a confidential discussion and is not linked to any other HR policies or procedures. An online platform is used to capture a record of the PDPR discussion, comprising: (i) a review of the previous year; (ii) the reviewer's assessment on whether the reviewee has exceeded, met or failed to meet the expectations of their role in the past year; (iii) action planning and objective setting for the year ahead; and (iv) identified learning, development and support. The reviewer and reviewee digitally sign off this record. Interim reviews can be held as required.

Staff are encouraged to develop research plans and objectives in advance of their PDPR, working with their research mentor as applicable.

New members of staff, who join the University outside of the PDPR cycle, agree objectives as part of an initial development plan (IDP), including in relation to research and research-led knowledge exchange activities. Workloads are based on the objectives agreed in the IDP. These staff complete a PDPR during the next available cycle.

Each School's Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) maintains an overview of research and research-led knowledge exchange workload allowances.

Element 5. Sabbatical hours are allocated to staff who successfully apply for a research sabbatical. These are allocated once a year on a competitive basis. Applications are reviewed by a panel comprising the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange), Associate Deans (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) and (acting in an advisory capacity) the Director of the Research and Enterprise Office. Sabbaticals are allocated in March or April to usually commence in January of the following academic year to support research planning and workload processes. Each sabbatical is typically one semester in length. Staff are relieved of teaching and administrative duties for the duration of their sabbatical, but continue to provide doctoral supervision.

Element 6. PhD or MPhil student supervision hours are determined by the number of students each member of staff supervises. Standard workload allocations are provided, as set out in the University's Academic Workload Management Framework.

All workload allocations are recorded in the University's academic workload system and are made available to staff. Indicative workloads are usually agreed in May or June for the forthcoming academic year, then reviewed before the start of semesters one and two and reconciled following the end of the academic year. Staff are able to access information on their workload at each of these points, along with any updates due to changing circumstances and commitments during the year.

Staff will be notified in June 2026 and 2027 of whether they have been identified as having significant responsibility for research for 2025/26 and 2026/27 respectively. Staff will be given the opportunity to appeal against their categorisation as set out below. The timing will ensure that significant responsibility for research is finalised for inclusion in the HESA staff record. Any staff who join the University in June or July on a relevant contract will be identified separately and it will be confirmed via workload processes whether they have been identified as having significant responsibility for research. These staff will also have an opportunity to submit an appeal.

- **Multiple Processes (if applicable)**

Not applicable.

2. **Staff, Committees, and Training**

- **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Vice-Chancellor has overall responsibility for the University's REF 2029 submission including the development of the Code of Practice.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group brings together research leaders, including members of the professoriate and Associate Deans (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation), and representatives from professional services to: (i) oversee progress against the University's research and knowledge exchange strategy; (ii) advise the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange) as group chair, the University Executive Team and Academic Board on any changes to priorities; (iii) and guide and monitor the preparation of the University's REF submission, including the development of the Code of Practice.

This is a senior group taking a decision-making role on the REF submission. Membership is determined by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange) based on the following criteria: research experience; experience of REF; and representativeness in terms of disciplinary coverage and equality, diversity and inclusivity. Members of the group have decision making powers apart from professional staff, who attend in an advisory capacity. This includes the Director of Human Resources Operations and the Director of the Research and Enterprise Office. The group's terms of reference are provided in appendix A.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, which in turn reports to Academic Board. The University's approach to identifying significant responsibility for research was endorsed by Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee in March 2026 and Academic Board in May 2026.

The REF Operations Group is responsible for overseeing the preparation of the REF 2029 submission in a greater level of detail. The REF Operations Group makes recommendations to Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group, based on the advice of School REF Groups, on the selection of outputs and the development of Unit of Assessment submissions. The REF Operations Group therefore takes an advisory role.

The REF Operations Group: (i) contributes to the development of the Code of Practice; (ii) makes recommendations based on advice from School REF Groups on the final selection of outputs and the impact case studies to be submitted to REF 2029; (iii) monitors the representativeness of each Unit of

Assessment's pool of research outputs; and (iv) considers the overall progress of the University's REF 2029 submission.

The REF Operations Group's membership comprises the Director of the Research and Enterprise Office, Unit of Assessment leads and co-leads, leads for outputs, impact and research culture, research centre leads and additional representatives of the Research and Enterprise Office. Its terms of reference were approved by Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group in May 2026 and are provided in appendix B.

School REF Groups are responsible for overseeing the development of Unit of Assessment submissions at a local level. These groups report and make recommendations to the REF Operations Group and Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group, taking an advisory role. The School REF Groups: (i) coordinate and oversee the preparation of the REF submission in relevant Units of Assessment; (ii) monitor staff volume and the required number of outputs and impact case studies; (iii) propose to the REF Operations Group the outputs to be submitted within Units of Assessment; (iv) oversee the preparation of impact case studies and propose to the REF Operations Group the impact case studies to be submitted; and (v) oversee the development of the Unit statements for Strategy, People and Research Environment.

The membership of the School REF Groups typically comprises:

- Unit of Assessment leads, who are responsible for overseeing the development of the Unit of Assessment submission in its entirety.
- Unit of Assessment deputy leads, who support the Unit of Assessment leads in maintaining an overview of overall progress.
- Output leads, who lead the internal review process within their Unit of Assessment and work with the UoA lead to identify outputs for external review.
- Impact leads, who support the development of the impact case studies within their Unit of Assessment, working with case study authors.
- Research culture leads, who instigate and support initiatives to develop the local research culture.
- The Associate Dean (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange)
- Representatives of the Research and Enterprise Office.

The terms of reference for the School REF Groups were approved by Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group in September 2024 and reaffirmed in May 2026. They are provided in appendix C.

Unit of Assessment leads and output leads are responsible for establishing reading groups to deliver internal reviews of research outputs. Membership of the reading groups is determined in consultation with the Associate Dean (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange). Criteria used to inform the membership include: relevant disciplinary expertise; research experience; REF experience; and representativeness in terms of the research undertaken within the unit and equality, diversity and inclusivity. The size of each group depends on the disciplinary breadth of the unit.

School REF Groups will review the outcomes of internal and external reviews to support their recommendations to the REF Operations Group and Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group on the outputs to be submitted to REF 2029.

In terms of identifying significant responsibility for research, other decision makers are the Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) and Heads of Department. The Associate Deans oversee the research and knowledge exchange portfolio within their School and agree with Heads of Department how staff and resources will be deployed to meet associated targets and objectives. The Heads of Department ensure that the full range of departmental priorities remains in balance.

○ **Training**

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group, REF Operations Group and School REF Groups have received briefings and updates on changes to REF and the structure of REF 2029, as well as updates and opportunities to discuss the development of the Code of Practice. In addition, briefings were delivered in April and May 2026 on the final structure and content of the Code of Practice, the principles underpinning it and implications for next steps, including for the initial development of research output pools in the 2026/27 academic year.

In the 2025/26 and early part of the 2026/27 academic year, group members will receive training on equality, diversity and inclusion which is specific to REF. This training will cover: (i) changes to REF, including the emphasis on assessing institutions rather than individuals and implications for staff volume, output pools and the recognition of an increased range of research contributions; (ii) conscious and unconscious bias, including implications for the development of the REF submission; and (iii) consideration of how to minimise the potential for bias in REF decision-making.

The training is in addition to a broader programme on equality, diversity and inclusion, which all University staff are required to complete at least every three years.

3. Appeals

The REF Appeals Group will consider any appeals made by members of staff on whether they have been identified as having significant responsibility for research or as an independent researcher. The REF Appeals Group will communicate decisions to Associate Deans (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation), Unit of Assessment leads and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange) as chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group. Decisions which affect the HESA staff record will also be communicated to HR.

The REF Appeals Group will be chaired by the Executive Director of Human Resources and will also comprise: (i) one other member of the University's senior management team, who has not taken part in the University's REF preparations; and (ii) one member of the University's professoriate, who is not an Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation), Unit of Assessment lead or deputy lead, and who is based in a different School and Unit of Assessment to the staff who have submitted an appeal. This is designed to ensure independence as well as research experience.

Staff will be made aware of the opportunity to submit an appeal in June 2026 and 2027, when they will be notified of whether they have been identified as having significant responsibility for research or as an independent researcher. This will allow the appeals process to conclude before the HESA staff record for 2025/26 and 2026/27 is finalised.

Staff will be encouraged in the first instance to discuss and address any concerns about their categorisation with their Associate Dean (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange). If concerns remain, a member of staff will be able to make an appeal using a standard template, which will include guidance on the types of supporting information they should provide.

Each completed template and any supporting information will be shared with the relevant Associate Dean (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange), who will be asked to confirm whether the staff member's initial categorisation (relating to whether they have significant responsibility for research or are an independent researcher) remains the same or should be changed. If the categorisation is changed at this point, this will be reported to the REF Appeals Group but the appeal template and supporting materials will not be considered. If the categorisation remains the same, the REF Appeals Group will review the submitted template, any supporting information and a written response from the Associate Dean (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange) and make a final decision on the categorisation of the member of staff.

Records relating to appeals will be handled in accordance with the University's standard procedures for dealing with confidential staff information and fulfilling the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

The terms of reference for the REF Appeals Group were approved by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group in May 2026 and can be found at appendix D.

A visual representation of the groups involved in developing and overseeing the University's REF submission is provided at appendix E.

4. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

EIA Integration

An EIA determined that the Code of Practice is a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered, but is not likely to disproportionately affect people who have protected characteristics. There have been no reported issues or complaints during the development of the Code of Practice. The Code of Practice will support the University in meeting the three requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

An analysis by protected characteristic revealed that there may be risks of underrepresentation of staff identified as having significant responsibility for research or research independence based on age, part-time working, disability or sex. These factors will be monitored, along with race, though underrepresentation by race is not anticipated based on REF 2021 data.

The developments set out in part one above (the instigation of a research mentoring programme, the research sabbaticals programme and the peer support provided by the early- and mid-career research forum and research leaders) have been put in place with the aim of improving representation.

Data at 31 July 2025 is included in the EIA on part-time working and sex. These data were considered as part of the decision to continue with REF 2021 marker of significant responsibility for research detailed above, alongside other considerations including of continuity.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

1. Policies and Procedures

○ Criteria and Evidence

The University considers all members of staff with a primary employment function of 'teaching and research' to be independent researchers. None of these staff are employed to deliver another person's programme of research, and none are restricted in terms of their contract of employment from undertaking independent research and from associated indicators such as leading applications for research funding.

Procedures for determining research independence are therefore applied to staff with research-only (ACEMPFUN 2) contracts. Of the 50.9 FTE included as research-only staff in the 2024/25 HESA staff record, 11.8 FTE were independent researchers.

Research independence is based on the following question:

- Does the member of staff direct their own, self-determined programme of research?

The indicators set out in the REF 2029 guidance¹, and previously the guidance from REF 2021², provide a starting point for determining research independence. Some research-only staff, particularly research fellows (see the next section) are employed on the basis that they develop and deliver their own research programme. This includes a group of staff who are employed as part of a VC's research fellows programme to develop their independent research career at the University.

Other indicators of independence include:

- Applying for external research funding as lead applicant and leading the conceptualisation, design and planning of the project.
- Securing research funding as lead applicant, including project grants and research fellowships, and acting as principal investigator for the project.
- Acting as a co-investigator on a research project where this role involves having significant input into the design, delivery and analysis/interpretation of the research.
- Leading a substantial or specialised work package within a larger project.

Evidence is based on funding records (grant applications and awards), descriptions of roles within projects and the input of principal investigators and research centre leads.

¹ Paragraph 9.2.1, [Section 3 – Volume Measure guidance – REF 2029](#)

² Paragraph 132, [Guidance on submissions \(2019/01\) - REF 2021](#)

○ Decision-Making and Communication

The process for determining research independence is a continuation of that used for REF 2021 and is as follows:

- An assessment of whether research-only staff should be considered to be independent researchers is carried out annually as part of the preparations for the HESA staff record. For the purposes of REF 2029 preparations, in June 2026 and 2027, HR will provide the Research

and Enterprise Office with a list of research-only staff who have been in post at the University during the year. This list includes the categorisation (research assistant or independent researcher) of those who were in post the previous year.

- The Research and Enterprise Office applies set criteria to the lists. All staff with the role / job title of Research Assistant (these staff are usually employed on point 12 to 22 on the national pay grades, or grade 4 or 5 on the University's pay scales) are categorised at this point as research assistants. The same is usually true for Research Associates (point 22 to 34; University grades 6 and 7). These members of staff are typically employed to deliver the research programmes of a supervisor or principal investigator. This includes staff who are funded from one or more project grants and whose role is to support project delivery. A small number of Research Associates have previously been identified as independent researchers.
- All Research Fellows (usually point 34 to 44 on the national pay grades; University grades 8a and 8b) are looked at by the Research and Enterprise Office on a case-by-case basis. Those who are employed as part of an externally funded project, or a number of projects, and deliver the research programme of another member of staff, are categorised as Research Assistants. Research Fellows who deliver their own programme of work are categorised as independent researchers. This categorisation is informed by funding records held by the Research and Enterprise Office, including of research, knowledge exchange and Knowledge Transfer Partnership projects, and knowledge of the staff concerned. The indicators set out above are used at this stage.
- In all cases, research independence is considered to be persistent. A member of staff is not categorised as a research assistant if they have previously been classed within the University's HESA staff record as an independent researcher. Therefore, any member of staff who was categorised in the previous year's HESA record as an independent researcher retains this categorisation, regardless of whether their role has changed.
- The Research and Enterprise Office shares the details of all research-only staff and the initial categorisations with the relevant Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation), who is asked to check and verify the data. This will take place in June 2026 and 2027. If required, further information is sought within the School (e.g., from research centre leads or principal investigators) or from the HR and/or Finance departments. This information may include job descriptions or details of externally funded projects. Categorisations are changed as necessary.
- The Research and Enterprise Office collates the updated lists, which are shared with HR for inclusion in the HESA staff record. Staff will be notified of their categorisation and provided with the opportunity to appeal as outlined in part two. This will ensure that the outcomes of appeals are reflected in the HESA staff record for 2025/26 and 2026/27. HR will also share the details of any research-only staff who have joined the University in June or July 2026 or 2027 so that they can be categorised separately and notified of their categorisation and the opportunity to appeal.

2. Staff, Committees, and Training:

○ Roles and Responsibilities

Relevant groups are set out in part 2.

In terms of identifying research independence, the Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) is the main decision maker in this process. Research centre leads and principal investigators take advisory roles, providing information to support the categorisation of research independence. The Research and Enterprise Office provides preparatory work to aid the decision-making process.

Details of independent researchers are shared with School REF Groups, the REF Operations Group and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group.

○ Training

Same as part two.

3. Appeals

Same as part two.

4. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

○ EIA Integration

Risks of underrepresentation have been identified as set out in part two. Initial data analysis, based on staff in post on 31 July 2025, is included in the EIA and formed part of the decision to continue with the processes put in place for REF 2021. Analysis of the pool of independent researchers is limited by small numbers, but will continue to be undertaken and monitored.

Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

1. Policies and Procedures

○ Criteria and Evidence

Staff contracts are allocated to the Units of Assessment to which the University makes a submission; this is the case for staff who are identified as having significant responsibility for research, and those who are not.

Staff contracts are assigned to Units of Assessment within the HESA staff record on the following basis:

1. Discipline area as reflected in each member of staff's academic School and department. By default, for example, all staff within the Engineering department of the School of Engineering, Computing and Digital Technologies are allocated to the Engineering Unit of Assessment.

2. Staff whose research has a better fit with another Unit of Assessment (rather than the Unit of Assessment primarily associated with their School and department) are reviewed case-by-case and a decision is made on which Unit their contract will be allocated to. For example, some staff based in the School of Arts and Creative Industries are allocated to the Social Work and Social Policy Unit of Assessment (rather than Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory) in line with their research activities and interests.

○ Decision-Making and Communication

The Research and Enterprise Office prepares a list of staff and initial allocations to Units of Assessment. This is based on HR data and includes identification of those with significant responsibility for research. Lists are shared with Unit of Assessment leads; any staff falling into the second group above are identified (those whose research may be a better fit with a Unit of Assessment other than the 'default' Unit based on their School and department).

Where the research of staff in the second group may fit better with a Unit of Assessment which is based in the same School, discussion of the optimal Unit of Assessment allocation will be held at the School REF Group (detailed in part two). Where a staff member's research may fit better with a Unit of Assessment which is based in another School, the relevant Unit of Assessment leads and Associate Deans (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation) will hold a discussion, followed by discussion at School REF Groups where necessary, to determine the recommended Unit of Assessment allocation. The final allocation of all staff contracts will be formally agreed by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group.

The allocation of staff contracts to Units of Assessment will be reviewed and finalised as part of the preparation of the HESA staff record in August and September 2026 and 2027. This review will initially be undertaken by the Research and Enterprise Office, working with Unit of Assessment leads. The allocation will be shared for input at School REF Groups, reported to the REF Operations Group and agreed at the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group.

2. **Staff, Committees, and Training**

Same as part 2.

3. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

○ **EIA Integration**

An analysis by protected characteristic predicted no negative impacts of allocating contracts to Units of Assessment, however, the distribution of male and female staff contracts to Units will continue to be monitored.

Part 5: Selecting outputs

1. Policies and Procedures

○ Identifying substantive link to outputs

Lists of eligible outputs are generated using the Pure current research information system, which serves as the University's outputs repository. The reports from Pure show which members of staff are listed as authors of the outputs; "authors" in this case include those who develop practice-based outputs.

These reports are generated by the Research and Enterprise Office and shared with Unit of Assessment leads and output leads. Substantive links are identified by cross-referring the reports with HR data:

- If an output's authors include at least one current member of staff, who holds a relevant contract and has been in post since 1st January 2021, the output is considered to have a substantive link to the University.
- If one or more authors are current members of staff, who hold a relevant contract but joined the University after 1st January 2021, the output is considered to have a substantive link to the University if it was first made publicly available after the relevant member of staff joined the University. This is confirmed by cross-referencing employment dates and publication dates.
- The University may submit a small number of outputs under the exception set out in section 6.10 of the guidance on contributions to knowledge and understanding.¹ These outputs will be identified on a case-by-case basis, working with Unit of Assessment leads, output leads and authors.
- If the output was authored by one or more former members of staff who held a relevant contract at the University, the output is considered to have a substantive link to the University if the output was first made publicly available when the member(s) of staff concerned were in post at the University.

The University's repository only includes outputs which members of staff have deposited during their employment with the University. Outputs which were made publicly available after the author left the University must be identified and considered separately, as set out below.

Relevant contracts are defined as (i) teaching and research contracts (academic employment function 3 in the HESA staff record) and (ii) research-only contracts (academic employment function 2). A small number of staff who were originally employed on a teaching-only contract (academic employment function 1) have moved to a teaching and research contract following evaluation of their role and responsibilities. Their outputs will be identified and reviewed in the same way as all other outputs, as long as the outputs were first made publicly available during their employment at the University (or afterwards in the case of former staff as set out below). The Research and Enterprise Office will work with HR to verify that these staff meet the REF criteria for holding an eligible employment relationship.

The roles of other staff within the University do not include an expectation of research activity, so outputs by these staff would only be considered to have a substantive link if they were co-authored by a member of staff with a teaching and research or research-only contract.

The Research and Enterprise Office carries out checks on employment and publication dates and indicates which outputs have a substantive link. This process has been broken down into stages to support manageable workflows: initially, reports from Pure focus on outputs by current staff who have been identified as having significant responsibility for research or independent researchers, and former staff in the same categories.

Reports will then be provided on outputs by other current and former staff: (i) those who hold a teaching and research contract but do not have significant responsibility for research; (ii) those with a research-only contract who do not meet the definition of an independent researcher; and (iii) a cross-check of outputs by other staff to ensure that these outputs are only identified as having a substantive link if at least one co-author holds a teaching and research or research-only contract at the University and therefore has an expectation of research delivery.

Output reports have been provided periodically and at least annually, with the frequency expected to increase from 2026 onwards.

1. Section 6.10, [Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding \(CKU\) guidance – REF 2029](#)

- **Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff**

In line with REF 2029 guidance, outputs by former staff will be considered to have a substantive link to the University if the outputs were first made publicly available during the staff member's employment at the University, or if they were first made publicly available within two years of the staff member's departure from the University (five years for long-form or extended process outputs). This applies to staff who have left the University due to voluntary redundancy or severance, retirement, expiration of a fixed-term contract or movement to another role. Outputs by staff who were subject to compulsory redundancy will only be considered to have a substantive link if the outputs were first made publicly available during the staff member's employment at the University.

Outputs authored by former staff during their employment at the University will be identified as set out above. The Research and Enterprise Office will work with Unit of Assessment leads to identify outputs which were first made publicly available after the departure of former staff within the periods set out in the REF guidance.

Outputs by former staff will be reviewed internally (and where applicable externally) in the same way as all other outputs, using the criteria below. School REF Groups will decide whether to include these outputs on a case-by-case basis when recommending their final selection of outputs. The Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group will decide whether to include these outputs in the submitted output pools.

- **Assigning outputs to UoA/s**

In the majority of cases, outputs will be assigned to the Unit of Assessment with which their author is associated (via the allocation of their contract to a Unit of Assessment in the HESA staff record as detailed in part four).

The exceptions to this are outputs which could be submitted to more than one Unit of Assessment, or cases where an author could contribute outputs to more than one Unit of Assessment's output pool.

These outputs may result from multi- or interdisciplinary research projects or programmes, or may reflect the research interests and activities of individual staff or research groups. School REF Groups will identify these outputs; this process has already begun as part of internal output reviews and will be formalised as part of the development of initial output pools in 2026/27.

Unit of Assessment leads and School REF Groups will share information on these outputs and carry out internal review within their respective reading groups, and as appropriate external review. Each reading group will review the outputs in the same way as all other outputs, using the criteria below. The outcomes of the reviews will be used to determine the optimal assignment of these outputs to Units of Assessment. This will be discussed at School REF Groups and the REF Operations Group, and a recommendation made to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group, which will determine the final output pools.

As the University plans to submit to a relatively small number of Units of Assessment (submissions were made to five Units of Assessment for REF 2021), there are no plans to submit the same output to more than two Units of Assessment.

- **Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs**

Staff are encouraged to deposit all outputs within the University's outputs repository, which is part of the Pure system. The University's Open Access Policy mandates staff to deposit the publicly available output of their research activity in line with publisher, funder and other external requirements and to meet REF Open Access requirements. This applies to all research outputs.

A diverse range of output types is included in the output reports generated from Pure for Unit of Assessment leads, output leads, School REF Groups and reading groups to review and consider for inclusion in output pools. This includes non-textual and/or practice-based outputs, software, datasets, multi-component outputs, reports, reviews and other output types as applicable, such as those in British Sign Language. All outputs are reviewed using the criteria provided below and in line with the University's policy on responsible research assessment, as detailed below.

As outlined in part two, reading groups are constituted to ensure sufficient expertise to review the range of research outputs produced within each Unit. Additional expertise will be sought by reading groups as required, including internally and from external reviewers. External expertise will be sought if needed to support the review of an output in British Sign Language. Those providing external expertise will be asked to work with reading group members, and as required the School REF Group, to aid the understanding and interpretation of the output. The reading group and the School REF group will retain responsibility for the assessment of the output against the University's criteria.

Staff are encouraged to develop a range of outputs to best meet the needs of their research in recognition of disciplinary differences and expectations, the benefits of diverse and novel approaches to output development and dissemination, and that diverse output types support a range of research activity. This activity includes engagement with external partners and improving the accessibility of research to non-academic audiences. As detailed in part one, this emphasis on partnership working and public and community engagement links to the objectives of the research and knowledge exchange strategy and the research culture action plan, and the University's mission statement of further developing significant, mutually beneficial partnerships with key stakeholders.

- **Procedures for ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken within the submitting unit during the REF period**

The University has three institutional themes (Net Zero, Health and Wellbeing, People and Place) which provide a broad structure to research, impact, engagement and research-based regeneration and development activities.

Units of Assessment sit within these themes and are based upon the work of individual or combined research centres and groups. Research groups are based within research centres, allowing research centre leads to maintain an overview of group activities and expertise.

Research theme and centre leads work with Associate Deans (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange) to develop and implement local research strategies and plans. Research theme and centre leads participate in School REF Groups and the REF Operations Group; they will work with Unit of Assessment and output leads to ensure that research output pools are representative of the staff and research areas within their theme/centre and research groups. Consideration will be given to contributions to research programmes, networks and national or international initiatives.

The REF Operations Group will provide commentary on representativeness when providing progress reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group and making final recommendations on the outputs to be submitted. This commentary will be based on a pre-defined template, developed by the Research and Enterprise Office working with the REF Operations Group. The template will be approved in advance of completion by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group.

- **Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice**

The University's policy on responsible research assessment is outlined in part one. The policy will inform the selection of research outputs and the development of the University's REF submission in the following ways:

- Emphasising the centrality of peer review in research assessment within the University, including the work of reading groups and external reviewers. As set out in the policy, journal-based metrics will not be used as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual outputs.
- Sharing understanding with School REF Groups and reading groups about the use of quantitative indicators in REF assessment. The University recognises the value of the appropriate use of quantitative indicators and supports their responsible use alongside qualitative commentary and peer review. It is understood that several REF 2029 assessment panels, including some to which the University plans to submit, will use citation data as part of output assessment. The Research and Enterprise Office will update relevant Unit of Assessment leads, output leads and reading groups on emerging REF guidance on the use of citation data. Leads and reading groups for other Units of Assessment will be advised that citation data will not be used by their panels.
- Ensuring, via School REF Groups, that reading groups contain an appropriate range of disciplinary expertise.
- Clarifying that the outcomes of REF internal and external output reviews should be shared with individual members of staff (as feedback and to allow staff to reflect on the development of their research practice). The review outcomes should not be used to assess the research

performance of a member of staff or influence discussion of their research objectives at PDPR, other than to support the development of their research.

- Confirming that there is no formal expectation for any member of staff to contribute a specific number of outputs to REF output pools, particularly given the emphasis in the REF 2029 guidance on assessing institutions rather than individuals.
- Emphasising that contributions to the University's research community takes a number of forms and will be recognised in the REF submission in different ways. Examples include engagement and community or partnership development work, which may contribute to an impact case study, or research culture activities, as reflected in Strategy, People and Research Environment statements.

Briefings have been provided on the Responsible Research Assessment Policy and the Code of Practice to Associate Deans (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange), Unit of Assessment leads, output leads and research centre leads, presenting an opportunity to discuss this approach.

Unit of Assessment leads and/or output leads have asked members of staff who currently have significant responsibility for research to nominate what they consider to be their strongest outputs, using reports from Pure as a basis as detailed above. This has informed the initial selection of outputs for review and allowed information on REF reviewing processes to be shared with staff. The process of self-nomination, alongside the use of Pure to support the direct identification of outputs by School REF Groups and reading groups, will continue to be used.

Outputs will be selected for submission based on the following criteria (in order of priority):

1. Research quality in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
2. The output's fit with the relevant Unit of Assessment descriptor.
3. Representativeness in terms of the staff profile and research areas within the Unit.

These criteria will be used by School REF Groups in determining recommended output pools, the REF Operations Group in reviewing the recommendations and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group in finalising the selection of outputs and requesting clarification on output selection as necessary.

2. Staff, Committees, and Training

Same as part two.

3. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

○ EIA Integration

An analysis by protected characteristic revealed that there may be risks of fewer outputs being submitted by authors based on age, significant period of leave (e.g. maternity leave), part-time working, disability, or sex. These factors will be monitored during the development of the University's output pools, along with race, though underrepresentation by race is not anticipated based on REF 2021 data.

Part 6: Appendices

- 1. Equality Impact Assessment**
- 2. Referenced material in the CoP:**
 - **Appendix A: Terms of reference, Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group**
 - **Appendix B: Terms of reference, REF Operations Group**
 - **Appendix C: Terms of reference, School REF Groups**
 - **Appendix D: Terms of reference, REF Appeals Group**
 - **Appendix E: Diagram showing the structure of the REF groups**

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029

Policy Name: REF 2029 Code of Practice

Policy Owner: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)

Policy Author: Head of Quality and Strategy

1 Introduction

This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted in support of Teesside University's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The EIA has been applied to Teesside University's Code of Practice for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029, which describes decision-making processes in four major areas of the University's REF 2029 submission: (i) determining significant responsibility for research (SRR) and research independence; (ii) allocation of eligible contracts to UoA; (iii) selection of outputs; (iv) appeals and review processes.

The eligible populations of staff considered by REF 2029, as described in the Code of Practice, are staff with teaching and research contracts (academic employment function 3 in the HESA staff record) and research-only contracts (academic employment function 2). At 31 July 2025 (the end of the last HESA staff record reporting period), 579.4 FTE held a teaching and research contract and 50.9 FTE a research-only contract.

2 Approach

The University's Policy Framework (approved in March 2024) applies to all University staff developing, reviewing or amending policy documents. The Policy Framework and the associated templates specify how policy documents are to be developed and approved within Teesside University. The Policy Framework has been applied throughout the development and approval of the University's Code of Practice for REF 2029, including at several key stages.

2.1 Stage 1

Teesside University's Policy Framework EIA template was used to consider the Code of Practice and the related decision-making processes holistically against the University's duties under the PSED to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. This consideration was made in advance of the Code of Practice development and throughout the drafting and consultation (see Section 3).

2.2 Stage 2

Once a near-complete draft of the Code of Practice was available, more detailed assessments were made of each of the four major decision-making areas of the Code of Practice against each of the UK's nine protected characteristics. These detailed assessments describe whether potential risks of negative or positive impacts might be anticipated for staff based on their protected characteristics. In case of identified risks, any available evidence of impact is described. Any ongoing or planned actions to manage and mitigate the identified risks are also described (see Section 4).

Evidence used to underpin Stage 2 included the Equality Impact Assessment of REF 2021 and HR data from end of year 2024/25 (31 July 2025). During this stage, information was shared with staff EDI focus group chairs and discussion held at the Equality Inclusion Group (which brings the chairs together). Discussion was held with UCU and all staff were invited to open briefing sessions.

The Code of Practice and EIA will be submitted to Research England for approval at the end of Stage 2 (May 2026).

2.3 Stage 3

Stage 3 will involve analysis of the emerging impacts of the implementation of the Code of Practice and its decision-making processes, focusing on the protected characteristics identified during Stage 2. This analysis will be proportional to the risks identified, while allowing a robust consideration of impacts across protected characteristics. Where relevant, and where numbers allow, intersections of characteristics will also be analysed.

Datasets for analysis will be:

- 2025/26 HESA staff record
- 2026/27 HESA staff record
- Initial output pool in 2026/27
- Final output pool
- Record of appeals and complaints

2.4 Stage 4

In the final stage, the EIA will be completed by documenting any further monitoring or mitigating actions and their outcomes. A final evaluation of the EIA and reflection on the [EIA core questions](#) of unlawful discrimination, equality of opportunity, and good relations will be documented.

3 Teesside University Policy Framework

The following table of the University's Policy Framework was used to consider the Code of Practice and the related decision-making processes holistically against the University's duties under the PSED.

Table 1. Holistic EIA

	Yes/No	Notes
1. Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?	Yes	The Code of Practice describes decision-making in four major areas of the University's REF submission: (i) determining significant responsibility for research (SRR) and research independence; (ii) allocation of eligible contracts to UoA; (iii) selection of outputs; (iv) appeals and review processes. The primary groups affected by this policy are academics (teaching and research) and research-only staff. Other groups that may be affected by the policy include academics (teaching only) and other research-enabling staff, as described in the Code of Practice.

a) Is it likely that this proposal will disproportionately affect people who have protected characteristics, who are employees, students, service users, or the wider community?	No	As detailed in the Code of Practice, steps taken to ensure equity and inclusion in the development and implementation of the policy include (i) separation of roles and responsibilities; (ii) Pure as a single source of information on outputs; (iii) diverse UoA reading groups; (iv) the University's underpinning policy framework.
b) Have there been any reported issues or complaints about this policy in relation to any protected characteristics?	No	During development of the Code of Practice, information has been shared and discussions held with Union representatives, staff EDI focus groups, university committees and UoA teams, in addition to open staff briefing sessions. No complaints or concerns have been raised in relation to any protected characteristics. No complaints were raised about the Code of Practice for REF 2021.
Could this proposal support the university to meet the following three requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?		
a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010?	Yes	The Code of Practice describes separation of roles and responsibilities to ensure that decisions about submissions are taken separately to decisions about research workload allocations and whether staff meet the criteria for research independence. There are no formal expectations that staff produce a certain number of outputs in any given period, and the Responsible Research Assessment Policy confirms the University's position on valuing quality over quantity of research.

		Being identified as SRR/RI or having an output submitted to REF are not considered as part of promotions or any other reward/recognition processes.
b) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups of people?	Yes	The number of staff with significant responsibility for research is monitored monthly as a key performance indicator. The University's Athena Swan action plan includes a commitment to increase the proportion of women with significant responsibility for research, as detailed in the Code of Practice.
c) Foster good relations between different groups of people?	Yes	The principles of robustness, transparency and equity and inclusion embedded in the Code of Practice aim to reassure staff that no groups or individuals will be disadvantaged by the policy and that the policy sits as part of the University's existing policy framework, with explicit links described between the Code of Practice and the University's Equality and Inclusion and Responsible Research Assessment policies.

4 Evidence of potential impacts

The following sections describe the detailed assessments of each of the four major decision-making areas of the Code of Practice against each of the UK's nine protected characteristics.

4.1 Determining Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI)

As set out in the Code of Practice, academic staff with a teaching and research contract (academic employment function 3) are identified as having significant

responsibility for research (SRR) if at least 20% of the total available hours within their workload is allocated to research activities. This represents a continuation of the marker which was agreed for REF 2021.

Use of workload allocation to designate SRR represents an objective, transparent and verifiable approach. Furthermore, being identified as SRR/RI only affects whether the individual's contract contributes to the volume measure and is not considered as part of promotions or any other reward/recognition processes. However, a detailed investigation by protected characteristics will be undertaken to ensure no staff groups are excluded or disadvantaged by the chosen criteria.

The criteria for designating research independence apply to staff on a research-only contract (academic employment function 2) and are similarly set out in the Code of Practice. However, this staff group is significantly smaller, therefore detailed analysis is less likely to be possible.

Table 2. SRR/RI by protected characteristic.

Protected characteristic group	Is there potential for positive or negative impact?	Evidence and consultation	Actions to manage or mitigate negative impact
1. Age	Potential negative impact	Individuals who are earlier in their career may be less likely to be identified as SRR/RI, which may correlate with age. In REF 2021, the proportion of staff submitted in the lowest and oldest age groups was relatively low (25% of those aged 20 to 29, 28% of those aged 50 to 59 and 28% of those aged 60+). This compared to 54% of those aged 30 to	All staff, including early career researchers, have access to a research mentoring scheme, where mentors support individuals to grow their research portfolio and define research objectives. The annual Professional Development Planning and Review (PDPR) process, as detailed in the Code of Practice, is an opportunity for all academic and research

		39 and 42% of those aged 40 to 49. The Chairs of the Early Career Researcher (ECR) and Mid-Career Researcher (MCR) staff fora sit on University committees where the approach to the Code of Practice was considered and no concerns were raised.	staff to agree research objectives, which feed into individual workload allocations for research. The ECR and MCR fora provide advice, support and networking for researchers earlier in their career. These groups are available to all researchers and academic staff who self-identify with those career stages. Age will be considered as a factor for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
2. Gender reassignment	No impact anticipated	There is no evidence from REF 2021 as this characteristic was not analysed. Information was shared with the chairs of the university's LGBTQ+ and Gender staff focus groups during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
3. Marriage and civil partnership	No impact anticipated	There is no evidence from REF 2021 as this characteristic was not analysed.	
4. Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative impact	Individuals who are pregnant or returning from maternity leave may be more likely to work part-time or flexibly. There may be intersections with impacts due to sex or (pregnancy-related) disability.	Pregnancy and maternity are supported by the University's Supporting Family Life Policy. As detailed in the Code of Practice, for staff working part-time, the threshold of 20% of workload allocated to research is applied pro-

		At 31 July 2025, 12% of eligible staff worked part-time while 10% of staff with SRR/RI worked part-time. Female staff were more likely than men to work part-time; 75% of eligible part-time staff were female, 70% of part-time staff with SRR/RI were female. There is no evidence from REF 2021 as this characteristic was not analysed. As detailed in the Code of Practice, information on the Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified as on long-term absence from work (for any reason, including maternity leave) during the consultation period. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Gender staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	rata. Part-time and flexible working arrangements are supported by the University's Flexible Working Policy. Individual support and accommodations can be provided through the completion of a Reasonable Adjustments Passport to agree and record any changes to working arrangements needed. Part-time working will be considered as a factor for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
5. Disability	Potential negative impact	Individuals who are disabled may be more likely to work part-time or flexibly. In REF 2021, the low number of staff who declared a disability limited the extent to which	As noted in the Code of Practice, there is a supportive annual process aiming to increase disclosure rates for protected characteristics, including disability.

		conclusions could be drawn. The Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified as on long-term absence from work (for any reason) during the consultation period. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Disability staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	There are several policies that may be relevant to disabled staff, including occupational health policies and guidance, a reasonable adjustments passport, special leave, and the flexible working policy. The Code of Practice notes that for staff working part-time, the threshold of 20% of workload allocated to research is applied pro-rata. Disability and part-time working will be considered as factors for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
6. Race	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, the proportion of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds with SRR was larger than the proportion of eligible staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. Eligible staff comprised 80% from white backgrounds and 19% from ethnic minority backgrounds. Staff with SRR comprised 69% from white backgrounds and 30% from ethnic minority backgrounds. The trend was only reversed in one out of five submitted UoAs.	The University's Dignity at Work policy aims to create an environment free of harassment, bullying and victimisation of all kinds, including racist harassment. For monitoring purposes, race will be considered as a factor for analysis during stages 3 and 4.

		Information was shared with the chair of the university's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
7. Religion or belief	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, the low number of staff who declared a religion or belief limited the extent to which conclusions could be drawn. Small differences were noted between staff declaring different religions, but no significant pattern was observed. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	As noted in the Code of Practice, there is a supportive annual process aiming to increase disclosure rates for protected characteristics, including religion or belief. The University's Dignity at Work policy aims to create an environment free of harassment, bullying and victimisation of all kinds, including based on religion or belief.
8. Sex	Potential negative impact	There has been a longer-term trend for differences in the proportions of male and female staff identified as having SRR, compared to the eligible population. In REF 2014, 71% of staff submitted were male. In REF 2021, 61% of staff with SRR were male. 45% of eligible male staff were identified as having SRR,	There has been improvement in the proportion of female staff identified as having SRR. As detailed in the Code of Practice, increasing the proportion of women with SRR is a commitment in the University's Athena Swan action plan, which also notes that women are more likely to work part-time.

		compared to 32% eligible female staff. At 31 July 2025, 58% of staff with SRR were male, compared to 52% male in the eligible population of teaching and research staff. Conversely, 54% of staff with RI were female, compared to 48% female in the eligible population of research-only staff. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Gender staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	Sex and part-time working will be considered as factors for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
9. Sexual orientation	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, the low number of staff who disclosed their sexual orientation limited the extent to which conclusions could be drawn. The proportions of staff who were heterosexual and non-heterosexual were similar across the eligible pool and those with SRR. Information was shared with the chair of the university's LGBTQ+ staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	As noted in the Code of Practice, there is a supportive annual process aiming to increase disclosure rates for protected characteristics, including sexual orientation.

4.2 Allocation of eligible contracts to UoAs

As set out in the Code of Practice, staff contracts are assigned to Units of Assessment (UoAs) within the HESA staff record primarily based on discipline area, as reflected in the member of staff's academic School and department. Staff whose research has a better fit with another Unit of Assessment are reviewed case-by-case and a decision is made on which Unit their contract will be allocated to.

Use of School/department membership to allocate contracts to UoAs represents an objective, transparent and verifiable approach. Research is reviewed by School REF Groups, UoA leads and Associate Deans, and contracts can be assigned to another UoA outside of the home School/department if a better fit. Furthermore, as described in Part 5 of the Code of Practice, outputs will be submitted to the most relevant UoA (or UoAs) regardless of which UoA a staff member's contract is allocated to.

Which UoA an individual's contract is allocated to is not considered as part of promotions or any other reward/recognition processes. However, a detailed investigation by protected characteristics will be undertaken to ensure no staff groups are excluded or disadvantaged by the chosen approach.

Protected characteristic group	Is there potential for positive or negative impact?	Evidence and consultation	Actions to manage or mitigate negative impact
1. Age	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, there were no notable trends in UoA allocation by age.	
2. Gender reassignment	No impact anticipated	Information was shared with the chairs of the university's LGBTQ+ and Gender staff focus groups during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
3. Marriage and civil partnership	No impact anticipated		

4. Pregnancy and maternity	No impact anticipated	As detailed in the Code of Practice, information on the Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified as on long-term absence from work (for any reason, including maternity leave) during the consultation period. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Gender staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
5. Disability	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, there were no notable trends in UoA allocation by disability, though numbers were small. As detailed in the Code of Practice, information on the Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified as on long-term absence from work (for any reason) during the consultation period. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Disability staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	

6. Race	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, there were no notable trends in UoA allocation by ethnicity. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
7. Religion or belief	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, there were no notable trends in UoA allocation by religion or belief. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
8. Sex	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, UoA 4 had the largest proportion of eligible female staff (71%) and UoA 12 had the largest proportion of eligible male staff (74%). At 31 July 2025, contracts were allocated to 6 UoAs. UoA 4 had the largest proportion of female staff (62% eligible staff and 67% staff with SRR/RI) and UoA 12 had the largest proportion of male staff (74% eligible staff and 73% staff with SRR/RI).	For monitoring purposes, sex will be considered as a factor for analysis during stages 3 and 4.

		Information was shared with the chair of the university's Gender staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
9. Sexual orientation	No impact anticipated	Information was shared with the chair of the university's LGBTQ+ staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	

4.3 Selection of outputs

As set out in the Code of Practice, the University's Pure current research information system acts as a single source of information on outputs and authorship. From this pool of outputs, substantive links are identified through cross-referencing with HR data. In the majority of cases, outputs will be assigned to the Unit of Assessment with which their author is associated.

The initial pool of outputs for review by School REF groups and reading groups will be based in part on self-nomination of their strongest outputs by staff who have significant responsibility for research. The pool of outputs will then be broadened to include other staff groups (focusing on staff who hold a teaching and research contract but do not have significant responsibility for research, and those with a research-only contract who do not meet the definition of an independent researcher).

Outputs will be selected for submission based on the following criteria (in order of priority):

1. Research quality in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
2. The output's fit with the relevant Unit of Assessment descriptor.
3. Representativeness in terms of the staff profile and research areas within the Unit.

Peer review is central to the selection of outputs. While based on transparent criteria, the University's responsible research assessment policy recognises there is always an element of subjectivity in peer review. However, measures are in place, as detailed in the Code of Practice, to ensure no group is disadvantaged in the final output selection. Having one or more outputs selected for submission to REF is not considered as part of promotions or any other reward/recognition processes, and University policies emphasise a focus on quality of outputs over quantity.

A detailed investigation by protected characteristics will be undertaken to ensure no staff groups are excluded or disadvantaged by the processes outlined in the Code of Practice.

Table 4. Selection of outputs by protected characteristic.

Protected characteristic group	Is there potential for positive or negative impact?	Evidence and consultation	Actions to manage or mitigate negative impact
10. Age	Potential negative impact	Individuals who are earlier in their career may have authored fewer outputs, which may correlate with age. In REF 2021, there was a general trend for those in the youngest and older age bands to be submitted with fewer outputs than staff in the middle age band. The Chairs of the Early Career Researcher (ECR) and Mid-Career Researcher (MCR) staff fora sit on University committees where the approach to the Code of Practice was considered	All staff, including early career researchers, have access to a research mentoring scheme, where mentors support individuals to grow their research portfolio and strengthen research outputs. The annual Professional Development Planning and Review (PDPR) process, as detailed in the Code of Practice, is an opportunity for all academic and research staff to agree research objectives, including output generation.

		and no concerns were raised.	Age will be considered as a factor for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
11. Gender reassignment	No impact anticipated	There is no evidence from REF 2021 as this characteristic was not analysed. Information was shared with the chairs of the university's LGBTQ+ and Gender staff focus groups during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
12. Marriage and civil partnership	No impact anticipated	There is no evidence from REF 2021 as this characteristic was not analysed.	
13. Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative impact	Taking a period of leave (e.g. maternity leave) is likely to limit an individuals' opportunity for output generation. Individuals who are pregnant or returning from maternity leave may also be more likely to work part-time. There may be intersections with sex or (pregnancy-related) disability. There is no evidence from REF 2021 as this characteristic was not analysed. As detailed in the Code of Practice, information on the Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified	Pregnancy and maternity are supported by the University's Supporting Family Life Policy. Part-time and flexible working arrangements are supported by the University's Flexible Working Policy. Individual support and accommodations can be provided through the completion of a Reasonable Adjustments Passport to agree and record any changes to working arrangements needed. Part-time working and taking a period of leave (e.g. maternity leave) will be considered as factors

		as on long-term absence from work (for any reason, including maternity leave) during the consultation period. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Gender staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
14. Disability	Potential negative impact	Individuals who are disabled may be more likely to work part-time or flexibly, which could reduce the opportunity for output generation. In REF 2021, the low number of staff who declared a disability limited the extent to which conclusions could be drawn, though there did not appear to be any significant trends. The Code of Practice has been shared with staff who have been identified as on long-term absence from work (for any reason) during the consultation period. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Disability staff focus group during the development of this Code	As noted in the Code of Practice, there is a supportive annual process aiming to increase disclosure rates for protected characteristics, including disability. There are several policies that may be relevant to disabled staff, including occupational health policies and guidance, a reasonable adjustments passport, special leave, and the flexible working policy. Disability and part-time working will be considered as factors for analysis during stages 3 and 4.

		of Practice and no concerns were raised.	
15. Race	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, there were no trends in output submission based on race. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	The University's Dignity at Work policy aims to create an environment free of harassment, bullying and victimisation of all kinds, including racist harassment. Race will be considered as a factor for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
16. Religion or belief	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, the low number of staff who declared a religion or belief limited the extent to which conclusions could be drawn. Small differences were noted between staff declaring different religions, but no significant pattern was observed. Information was shared with the chair of the university's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	As noted in the Code of Practice, there is a supportive annual process aiming to increase disclosure rates for protected characteristics, including religion or belief. The University's Dignity at Work policy aims to create an environment free of harassment, bullying and victimisation of all kinds, including based on religion or belief.
17. Sex	Potential negative impact	In REF 2021, there was a general trend for male staff to be submitted with more outputs than female staff. Information was shared with the chair of the	As detailed in the Code of Practice, increasing the proportion of women with SRR is a commitment in the University's Athena Swan action plan, which also notes that women are

		university's Gender staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	more likely to work part-time. Increasing the proportion of women with SRR will increase the available research time for women, and potentially the quality and quantity of outputs available for review. Sex and part-time working will be considered as factors for analysis during stages 3 and 4.
18. Sexual orientation	No impact anticipated	In REF 2021, the low number of staff who disclosed their sexual orientation limited the extent to which conclusions could be drawn. There were no identifiable trends in output submission based on sexual orientation. Information was shared with the chair of the university's LGBTQ+ staff focus group during the development of this Code of Practice and no concerns were raised.	As noted in the Code of Practice, there is a supportive annual process aiming to increase disclosure rates for protected characteristics, including sexual orientation.

4.4 Appeals and review processes

The REF Appeals Group will consider any appeals made by members of staff on whether they have been identified as having significant responsibility for research or an independent researcher. Staff will be made aware of opportunities to submit an appeal in June 2026 and June 2027 using a provided template and guidance.

The appeals process is open to all staff, and the REF Appeals Group has been designed to ensure independence as well as research experience, as described in the Code of Practice. Records relating to appeals will be handled in accordance with the University's standard procedures for dealing with confidential staff information and fulfilling the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Only two appeals were made during REF 2021, which limits the analyses that can be carried out. One appeal was by a male member of staff and one by a female member of staff. Neither appeal was successful. No other protected characteristics will be analysed due to the risk of identifying the staff members, however, no negative impacts are anticipated due to any protected characteristic.

Information has been shared with the chairs of the staff EDI focus groups and discussion held at the Equality Inclusion Group, with no concerns raised. Information on the Code of Practice has been shared with staff on long term absence.

5 Analysis of impact

In this section, analyses of data will be presented as they become available during the REF cycle. This will include analyses of the 2025/26 and 2026/27 HESA staff records, the initial output pool during 2026/27, and the final output pool. A record of any appeals and complaints will also be presented.

5.1 Contracts identified as having Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI)

Analyses will be presented against the relevant characteristics identified as at risk (i.e., age, disability, race, sex and part-time working). Any issues of access or emerging patterns will be investigated and actions identified as needed.

[Analyses to be presented here.]

5.2 Eligible contracts allocated to UoA

No risks were identified; however, the protected characteristic of sex will be analysed by UoA for monitoring purposes. Any issues of access or emerging patterns will be investigated and actions identified as needed.

[Analyses to be presented here.]

5.3 Selected outputs

Analyses will be presented against the relevant characteristics identified as at risk (i.e., age, disability, race, sex and part-time working). Consideration will be given to whether the selection has been fair, inclusive and appropriately scrutinised. Any actions will be identified as needed.

[Analyses to be presented here.]

5.4 Appeals and review process

Appeal rates and outcomes will be presented by sex and other characteristics, depending on number of appeals. Consideration will be given to whether there are disproportionate patterns in who appeals or how appeals are resolved.

[Analyses to be presented here.]

6 Further actions and outcomes

Any further mitigating or monitoring actions identified through the course of implementing the CoP and the outcome of these will be documented here.

7 Evaluation

The EIA will conclude by demonstrating how due regard has been given to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the development and implementation of the CoP and related policies and processes, reflecting on the core EIA questions.

Appendix A: Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group terms of reference

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group (RKESG) provides advice to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange) on the implementation of the research and knowledge exchange strategy to 2027 and wider preparations for research and knowledge exchange framework exercises.

The group will meet twice per annum, at the beginning of semester one to evaluate the implementation of the strategy and plans for the forthcoming academic year, and at the end of semester two to evaluate progress. Specifically, RKESG's remit is:

- (i) To monitor the implementation of the University and Schools' research and knowledge exchange strategic plans.
- (ii) To discuss and advise on any changes to the University's research and knowledge exchange priorities in the light of changes to national policy.
- (iii) To develop further the University's approach to allocating staff research and knowledge exchange workloads and developing the Code of Practice for the REF 2029 exercise.
- (iv) To act as the senior decision-making group on the development and finalisation of the University's submission to REF 2029.
- (v) To make recommendations on the establishment of new Research Centres and the incorporation of knowledge exchange activities.
- (vi) To receive and consider information received from internal and external reviews of progress on output quality, impact and theories of change plans, and the environment for conducting research and knowledge exchange activities.
- (vii) To advise Associate Deans and research centre leads on approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) including in relation to preparations for REF 2029.
- (viii) To provide progress reports to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team, to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and to Academic Board.

Constitution:

- Pro Vice-Chancellor R&KE (Chair)
- Associate Deans (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange)
- Professor of Climate Change and Sustainable Economic Development (TUIBS)
- Professor of Digital Innovation (SCEDT)
- Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Postgraduate Research School (SSSHL)
- Professor of Respiratory Rehabilitation (SHLS)
- Deputy Head of Department (Engineering) (SCEDT)

- Director, Research and Enterprise Office (REO)
- Deputy Director (Learning, Teaching & Research) (SLS)
- Head of Quality and Strategy (REO)
- Head of Partnership and Business Development (REO)
- Director of HR Operations (HR)
- Senior Policy and Strategy Advisor (LGS)

Additional members to be co-opted as necessary

Appendix B: REF Operations Group terms of reference

The REF Operations Group provides advice to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group. Its remit is:

- (i) To discuss and advise on the University's approach to its REF 2029 submission in the light of latest guidance from Research England.
- (ii) To oversee the University's preparations for its REF2029 submission.
- (iii) To contribute to the development of the University's Code of Practice to identify staff with significant responsibility for research, determine research independence and select research outputs.
- (iv) To make recommendations, based on advice from School REF groups and Unit of Assessment (UoA) leads, on the final selection of outputs to be submitted to REF 2029 and the assignment of outputs to UoAs.
- (v) To make recommendations on the final selection of impact case studies for submission to REF 2029.
- (vi) To oversee development of the institutional Strategy, People and Research Environment statement and support the development of the UoA statements be submitted to REF 2029.
- (vii) To consider information received from internal and external reviews on the progress and readiness of the University's submission to REF 2029.
- (viii) To advise Associate Deans and UoA leads on approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and monitor the representativeness of each UoA's output pool in line with Research England guidance.
- (ix) To make progress reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group, and as required University Executive Team, Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Academic Board.

Constitution

- Director, Research and Enterprise Office (Chair)
- Unit of Assessment leads, co-leads and leads for outputs, impact and research culture
- Research centre and theme leads
- Head of Quality and Strategy, Research and Enterprise Office
- Research Culture and Policy Lead, Research and Enterprise Office

Addition members to be co-opted as necessary.

Appendix C: School REF Groups terms of reference

School REF Groups oversee the development of the University's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in relevant Units of Assessment (UoA) and make recommendations to REF Operations Group.

Terms of Reference:

1. To coordinate and oversee the preparation of the University's submission to the REF in relevant UoA(s) and to make recommendations on UoA configuration to the REF Operations Group.
2. To monitor staff volume and the required number of outputs and impact case studies within the relevant UoAs.
3. To establish reading groups to deliver internal reviews of research outputs and to work with the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) to coordinate external output reviews.
4. To propose to the REF Operations Group the outputs to be submitted at UoA level.
5. To work with the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) to support and oversee the preparation of impact case studies, and to propose to the REF Operations Group the impact case studies to be submitted.
6. To prepare the Strategy, People and Research Environment statement for relevant UoAs with the support of REO.

Constitution:

- UoA or School REF lead (Chair)
- UoA deputy lead
- Associate Dean (Research and Innovation/Research and Knowledge Exchange)
- Output lead(s)
- Impact lead(s)
- Research culture lead(s)
- Other members as appropriate for the scale and scope of the submission
- Representatives of the Research and Enterprise Office

Appendix D: REF Appeals Group terms of reference

Purpose: To review appeals made by eligible members of staff, based on either: (i) their significant responsibility for research categorisation; or (ii) their research independence status.

Terms of Reference:

- To receive appeals made by eligible members of staff.
- To consider appeals based on the information provided by those making an appeal and information provided in response by the relevant School(s), using the REF guidance where applicable.
- To confirm the outcomes of the appeals process to those making an appeal.
- To confirm the outcomes of the appeals process to the relevant Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation), the Unit of Assessment lead and the chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group.

Constitution:

- Executive Director of Human Resources (Chair).
- One other member of the University Senior Management Team who has not taken part in the University's REF preparations.
- One member of the University's professoriate, who is not an Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Exchange/Research and Innovation), Unit of Assessment lead or deputy lead; and who is based in a different School and Unit of Assessment to those submitting an appeal.
- Secretarial support to be provided by the Research and Enterprise Office.

Appendix E: REF 2029 structure

