

REF 2021 Code of Practice

Part 1: Introduction

1. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the system for assessing research in UK HEIs. It was first conducted in 2014 and replaced the previous Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).
2. The primary purpose of REF 2021 is to produce assessment outcomes based on research quality profiles for each Unit of Assessment (UoA) submission made by institutions. These outcomes deliver the wider threefold purpose of the exercise, as follows:
 - a. The four HE funding bodies (including Research England) intend to use the assessment outcomes to inform the selective allocation of their grant for research to the institutions which they fund, with effect from 2022–23.
 - b. The assessment provides accountability for public investment in research and produces evidence of the impact and benefits arising from this investment.
 - c. The assessment outcomes provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks for each discipline, for use within the HE sector and for public information.
3. Research England has stated in their REF2021 Guidance on Submissions document that each institution making a submission to the REF is required to develop, document and apply a code of practice governing their processes for determining research independence and for selecting outputs. Certain institutions are also required to include processes for determining significant responsibility for research; this does not apply to the College as it has opted to submit all of its eligible staff to the REF.

Purpose of the Code of Practice

4. Decisions about which research outputs to select for submission into the REF are at the discretion of the College (and all HEIs making submissions to REF). These decisions will be taken for the benefit of the College, when viewed as a whole. Additionally, the College has discretion over the interpretation of Research England's guidance on which staff are research independent (and are therefore eligible to the REF). The purpose of this document, therefore, is to ensure that staff and those making decisions are aware of the context in which REF decisions are made. Hence our Code of Practice is intended to:
 - a. Provide transparency on all aspects and stages of the processes involved in determining research independence of staff and selecting outputs for submission into REF2021;
 - b. Provide accountability by defining the bodies and individuals that are accountable for, or involved in, the determination of research independence of staff, and the selection of research outputs for the REF;
 - c. Be inclusive, by ensuring that research by all eligible staff are considered for submission;
 - d. Ensure that all decisions are, consistent, justifiable and are not discriminatory;
 - e. Ensures that these REF decisions comply with current equalities legislation;
 - f. Takes place at various levels and stages – a multi-layered approach;
 - g. Reflects the College's mission for high-quality research and research excellence.
5. Where necessary and appropriate, the document will evolve in light of any changes to equalities legislation, practice and the Funding Councils' REF Guidance.

Context for the Code

The College Mission

6. The College Mission states that: “Our mission is to achieve enduring excellence in research and education in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society”.

The College Strategy

7. Underpinning our mission, the College Strategy states that:
 - a. We will continue to specialise in science, engineering, medicine and business
 - b. We will maintain world-class core academic disciplines
 - c. We will encourage multidisciplinary research
 - d. We will embed our educational experience in a vibrant, research-led, entrepreneurial environment
 - e. We will build a supportive, inclusive and highly motivated staff community across all disciplines, functions and activities
 - f. We will strengthen collaboration with business, academia, and non-profit, healthcare and government institutions across the globe

The College Equalities Framework

8. The College is fully committed to equality and this is embedded throughout the organisational structure. The Council, which is the College’s governing body, requires the College to be proactive, exemplary where possible, and monitors the College’s progress regularly against equality objectives.
9. On 11 Oct 2018 Imperial College published its new strategy for a re-invigorated approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It explains why the College aims to position EDI at the centre of everything it does and outlines priorities and the practical steps that will be taken to achieve these aims. Stated aims of relevance to the REF are:
 - a. To integrate equality, diversity and inclusion into all management processes
 - b. To take positive action to improve the opportunities and experiences of underrepresented groups, especially women, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, LGBTQ+ and disabled staff and students
 - c. To reduce the incidence of bullying and harassment
 - d. To gather and publish data to monitor progress
 - e. To collaborate internally and externally to develop good practice
 - f. To be open to dialogue and challenge on our work on equality, diversity and inclusion
10. Since its submission to REF 2014, the College has reaffirmed its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated by the appointment of Imperial’s first Assistant Provost (EDI); the establishment of an executive EDI Strategy Group, headed by the Provost; and the establishment of an EDI Forum with a broad and representative membership. These two new bodies work closely together to promote the integration of the values of equality, diversity and inclusion within the whole organization that are envisaged in the College’s EDI strategy.
11. The creation of the post of Assistant Provost (EDI), along with the EDI Strategy Group and the EDI Forum provide a new prominence and focus for EDI matters within the College leadership, helping to create an organisational culture in which consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion is central to all decision-

making processes.

12. The College's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Centre (EDIC) are a team of experts who listen and talk to staff across the College and work towards mainstreaming EDI. The EDIC is led by a HR Professional and reports directly into HR. The EDIC Centre works with individuals, teams, and departments to provide help and advice. The EDIC deliver training, programmes and initiatives and work with HR colleagues on policies and processes. The main responsibilities of the EDIC include:
 - a. Working in collaboration to promote EDI and to eliminate all forms of discrimination
 - b. Influencing and advising on best practice, specifically ensuring compliance with EDI legislation and the College's own policies and procedures
 - c. Providing a variety of training courses for members of the College, as well as development programmes
 - d. Working with the College's diversity staff networks facilitating two-way communication, and ensuring year-on-year progress
 - e. Building collaborative working relationships with appropriate community groups, professionals and sector-wide peers
13. The College's REF Code of Practice has been informed by, and is aligned to, College equality policies.

Communicating the REF Code of Practice

14. A rolling programme of briefing sessions on the Code of Practice will be organised and attendance will be compulsory for staff with membership of the REF decision-making bodies outlined in Annexes 1-3. These briefings will focus on making decision-makers fully aware of the Code of Practice and its requirements and on preparing them to answer questions from staff members concerning it, ensuring a consistent approach across the College.
15. We have developed a communications plan that incorporates regular updates to staff members about the REF and the Code at regular intervals. For example, when the Code of Practice is approved by Research England, it will be launched formally to all staff using a variety of the College's channels, including, for example, the College website, "Staff Briefing" email bulletin and social media channels such as Yammer. We will also cascade communications through faculties' and/or academic departments' through the College's network of communicators. To ensure that staff who are on long term leave or absent from work are aware of the Code of Practice, hard copy letters informing staff of the Code and the REF processes will be sent to the home addresses of these staff.
16. Staff members who have questions or want to discuss concerns are able to raise them with a variety of contacts, including departmental contacts, the College-wide HR staff hub, faculty office, and the Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion.
17. The Code of Practice will be made available on dedicated REF webpages. The webpages will also be drawn to the attention of staff on leave, with a link to these pages included in the letters being sent to staff absent from work. This site will also explain the processes and timelines for REF and will contain a set of FAQs for staff.

The decision-making framework

Context

18. The decision-making framework for the College's REF submission is shaped by the College's academic organisational structure, comprising 4 Faculties (Engineering, Medicine, Natural Sciences and the Business School), and their constituent departments.

College-level bodies

19. The Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise) (VPR) has ultimate responsibility for the delivery of an accurate and timely REF submission, which aims to achieve the best outcome for the College. The VPR is advised by a REF Strategy group, with representatives from each of the 4 Faculties. The Director of Strategic Planning has overall responsibility for the preparation of the College's submission to the REF, acting as the main source of specialist advice for the College on REF policies and procedures. The full membership and terms of reference of the REF Strategy Group are available in Annex 3.
20. Detailed decisions on the submissions to individual UoAs will be made by the Faculties, and their constituent departments. In some, but not every, instance the College's organisational structure matches that of the REF Unit of Assessment. Each Department and Faculty is responsible for the REF Units of Assessment (UoAs) which most closely match their academic and research profile.
21. The REF Equality committee has responsibility for equality related issues within all UoAs, including the process of assessing the impact on the REF of staff circumstances affecting research productivity and for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments at key points throughout the process. The group is chaired by the Assistant-Provost (EDI) and, in order to ensure objectivity, membership is distinct from the REF Strategy Group and any decision-making bodies within individual Faculties, and their constituent departments. This committee will work closely with both the REF Strategy Group and Faculty decision making bodies to provide advice on Equality and Diversity related issues affecting the REF. This committee will review, on an ongoing basis, the equality and diversity of the membership of the key REF decision making bodies at a College and Faculty/Departmental level. The full membership and terms of reference are available in Annex 2.

Faculty/Departmental-level bodies

22. Each of the four Faculties has an overall leading committee overseeing the REF submission to UoAs within their Faculty, as outlined in Table 1 below. These committees will manage the initial decisions about: whether research-only staff are, based on an agreed set of College-wide criteria, independent for the purposes of the REF and therefore eligible for the REF; to which UoA within the REF structure staff are submitted, and which outputs are selected for submission to the REF. Membership of these committees is comprised of senior Faculty staff and senior Departmental staff, encompassing the Units of Assessment within the remit of the Faculty. Departmental staff typically, but not necessarily, includes the Head of Department.
23. Membership of the leading Faculty committees are chosen on the basis of:
 - a. Having sufficient subject knowledge and subject expertise to make a judgement about the quality of research outputs during the REF assessment period (i.e. since 1 January 2014);
 - b. Having sufficient knowledge about indicators of research independence, in order to consider the research independence of staff;
 - c. An awareness of all relevant equal opportunities legislation and good management practice so that their decisions can be informed by this.

24. The Faculty Committees will work closely within existing structures within Faculties responsible for management and research decision (for example Faculty Management committees). The full details of the REF decision-making structure is detailed in Annex 1.

Table 1 – UoA responsibility by Faculty Committee

Faculty Committee	Unit of Assessment (UoA)
Imperial College Business School REF Committee & Imperial College Business School Management Board	17 – Business and Management Studies
Faculty of Engineering REF Advisor Group & Faculty of Engineering REF Planning Group	11 - Computer Science and Informatics 12 - Engineering
Faculty of Medicine REF Committee	1 – Clinical Medicine 2 – Public Health, Health Services Primary Care 4 - Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
Faculty of Natural sciences REF Committee	5 - Biological Sciences 8 – Chemistry 9 - Physics 10 - Mathematical Sciences 14 - Geography and Environmental Studies

Ensuring full awareness of Equality and Diversity

25. All individuals involved with making decisions must be aware of their personal responsibility for fairness and equality of opportunity. Compulsory attendance at briefing and training sessions on Equality and Diversity and Unconscious bias is required by members of the REF Strategy Group, and the leading Faculty REF committees to ensure that all are aware of existing equalities legislation, the impact of unconscious bias, and, in particular, the issues specific to REF selection.
26. In addition, the REF Equality Committee will be charged with a specific equality remit. Its role will be to provide a level of extra scrutiny and to challenge and question decisions made to ensure that they have been made with due regard to equality and fairness. This will be achieved through reports to the REF Strategy Group at key stages throughout the process e.g. the identification of research independent staff and the selection and attribution of outputs to staff.
27. All decision-makers involved in the College’s REF submission will be working within this framework and Code to ensure that all decisions are informed by current equalities legislation and good management practice informed by the determination embodied in the new EDI strategy to place EDI at the core of all deliberations.

Part 2: Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research

28. This part is not applicable to the College as it has opted to submit 100% of its eligible staff to the REF.

Part 3: The process for identifying Research Independence

Context

29. The interpretation of research independence within the REF process is specific to the REF and will be applied only for the purposes of producing the College’s REF submission. As such, the REF interpretation of research

independence may differ from judgements of research independence in other contexts and no inferences from the REF research independence can be drawn for other contexts.

30. In particular the College will not take into account judgements around REF research independence in any future promotion, remuneration, career progression, extension of contract or performance management considerations.
31. In accordance with guidance issued by Research England, for the purposes of the REF, all staff on a teaching and research contract will be regarded as independent.
32. Research-only staff at Research Assistant Level within the Academic and Research Family are regarded as not independent, because they represent the entry level for those staff expected to train and/or develop to take on a more senior research or academic role; roles at Research Assistant Level are concerned either with assisting a research team or group by carrying out analyses and tests where the method and purpose are clear.
33. All other Research-only staff, will form a pool of potentially independent Research-only staff, comprised of:
 - a. Staff at the Research Associate Level and above within the Academic and Research Job Family
 - b. Staff on Clinical Academic Roles, who are not Research Assistants
34. The pool of potentially independent Research only staff will require a judgement to be made on their independence for the purposes of the REF. This judgement will be made by consideration of the following indicators of research independence:
 - a. Leading or acting as a Principal Investigator on a material externally funded grant\award on the REF census date or has done so at some point over the REF reporting period. Materiality will ordinarily be determined by the grant\award having a value of at least £50,000. This will be identified using College award data.
 - b. Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement. A list of Fellowships that the College considers to meet this requirement are included in Annex 4. Where an external funder has confirmed that a scheme indicates independence then this implies that such staff are eligible for the REF, however, it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, and other fellowships not included on this list may also indicate research independence, for example industry-funded Fellowship schemes. The College considers that, generally, if a Fellowship scheme is funded by a body included in Annex 4, but the specific scheme is not, then the scheme would not signify research independence in the absence of any other indicators. Exceptions may however apply, if for example, a Fellowship scheme is funded by a body included in Annex 4, but the award process is devolved to the College. Holding a Fellowship not included on the list (for example Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships funded by the European Commission) does not necessarily imply that a member of staff is not independent, if other indicators of independence apply.
 - c. Leading a research group or specialised research package.
 - d. For staff submitted to main panel C, being named as a Co-I on a material externally funded research grant\award at some point over the REF reporting period. Materiality will ordinarily be determined by the grant\award having a value of at least £50,000. This will be identified using College award data. For staff submitted to main panel C having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of research.

This process is illustrated diagrammatically in Annex 9.

35. Each leading Faculty committee will be responsible for initially reviewing their own staff and considering whether staff are independent and therefore eligible to be submitted to the REF, based on the criteria in paragraph 33. In making its decision, the leading Faculty committee will be informed by the independence indicators specified above.
36. The REF Strategy Group will adjudicate on the REF independence status of any staff where it is unclear from the criteria and will make the final decision on the REF research independence of all staff on research only grades.
37. The REF Equality Committee will have responsibility for ensuring that decisions around research independence are made with due regard to equality and diversity, including in relation to where staff have appealed the decision around their REF research independence.

Notification to affected staff

38. The Head of Department, or an appropriate staff member acting on their behalf, will communicate the decision around REF research independence to all Research-only staff within the pool of potential independence during autumn 2019, following which staff will be provided with an opportunity to appeal the decision. A second independence decision making process and related appeals process will run during autumn 2020, for those staff within the pool of potential independence and who were not captured during the autumn 2019 process (for example any new starters). All decisions around REF research independence will be finalised prior to the submission date of 31 March 2021 [previously 27 November 2020, then revised to take account of the effects of COVID-19] and communicated to affected staff. In these communications due regard will be given to providing the reassurance embodied in paragraphs 28-29 above.
39. The notification to staff will confirm that the interpretation of Research Independence within the REF process is specific to the REF, applied only to the REF and the College will not take into account judgements around REF research independence in any future promotion, remuneration, career progression, extension of contract or performance management considerations.

Appeals (Research Independence)

40. The provision of an appeals procedure is integral to the process for determining research independence. The details of the appeals process will be communicated to staff alongside the decision around their research independence.
41. The principles which govern the appeals procedure for the REF are that:
 - a. The REF is a process in which judgements are made about the research independence of individual members of staff, based on a mix of objective and subjective criteria as set out in paragraph 33. Judgements⁶ are not based on the quality of any research outputs that the member of staff has authored throughout the REF reporting period.
 - b. Any grounds for appeal must focus on why the individual believes that he or she has, unjustly, judged to be an independent researcher, or not an independent researcher, for the purposes of the REF. It would thus be appropriate for an appeal to be made on the grounds of:
 - i. Unfair discrimination
 - ii. Process (including if it is felt that procedure has not been followed)
 - iii. Previously unavailable evidence

42. Disagreement with the decision alone would not be appropriate grounds for an appeal.

43. Please see Annex 5, for the full details of the appeals process.

Equality Impact Assessment

44. In accordance with guidance provided by Research England, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to compare and analyse the protected characteristics (where data is available) of research-only staff identified as being independent compared to the pool of all research-only staff who are not Research independent.

45. The results of this analysis will be provided to the REF Equality Committee, who will then advise the REF Strategy Group as appropriate. Where there is a significant underrepresentation of staff with protected characteristics within the pool of staff identified as research independent for the REF, the potential reasons for this will be explored further. This may be caused by:

- a. a bias within the REF procedures for determining the research independence of research-only staff. In this case, alternative procedures for determining REF research independence will be explored, potentially resulting in a re-categorisation of staff as independent or not.
- b. an underrepresentation of research-only staff with protected characteristics, within the pool of research-only staff holding one or more of the markers for independence listed in paragraph 33. This could potentially indicate a more fundamental issue of restricted opportunity for support within the research environment within a UoA, which would be outside of the remit of the REF code of practice. Such cases will be referred to the EDI Strategy Group for further investigation and action.

46. Protected characteristics considered are those outlined in Annex 6, where this data is held by the College.

Part 4: The process for selecting outputs for submission

Principles

47. The fundamental over-riding criterion for selecting outputs for submission to the REF and attributing those outputs to staff will be one of quality of the output, and maximising the quality profile of the outputs sub-profile within a UoA. This means that, in general, those outputs which are considered to be the highest quality will be submitted, subject to the Research England parameters of attributing between 1 to 5 outputs to each eligible staff member within a unit, and submitting the overall required number of outputs (generally 2.5 x staff FTE).

48. The final selection of outputs and attribution of outputs to individual staff will be obtained by viewing the UoA submission as a whole, and making a strategic decision about how the unit should best be presented to optimise the outcome in terms of the overall quality profile for the unit and the College as a whole. This will include a consideration of how the research environment of a submission may be assessed and, as such, may mean that the final pool of outputs selected for submission within a UoA may not necessarily coincide with the pool of outputs felt likely to achieve the best assessment within the outputs sub-profile alone.

49. The REF assesses the quality of a unit submission as a whole – the quality of individual staff members is not assessed. No inferences can be drawn on the quality of individual staff from the final selection and attribution of outputs to staff and these will not be published by Research England or the College. The attribution of outputs to staff within a REF submission will not be used for any other purpose beyond the REF. In particular the College will not take into account the attribution of outputs to staff within a REF

submission in any future promotion, remuneration, career progression, extension of contract or performance management considerations.

Process

50. Each leading Faculty Committee will be responsible for initially reviewing outputs within their UoA and determining which outputs will be submitted in line with the parameters within the REF guidance and the principles described above. In making its decision, the leading Faculty committee may be informed by an assessment of the quality of outputs by departmental REF lead(s) most relevant to the UoA.
51. The Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise), advised by the REF Strategy Group, will have the ultimate responsibility for the final decision on output selection, considering the best possible REF profile for the College, and for a given UoA.
52. The REF Equality Committee will have responsibility for ensuring that decisions around the selection of research outputs are made with due regard to equality and diversity, including in relation to where staff have voluntarily declared circumstances affecting their ability to research productively over the REF reporting period.

Detailed process for selecting outputs

53. Once the total number of outputs to be submitted within a UoA is known, the leading Faculty committee will select outputs for submission by the process outlined below.
54. All eligible staff will be invited to self-select for consideration to be submitted to the REF the one output they have authored over the REF submission period which they consider to be the highest quality, and to optionally put forward any further outputs which they consider to be of high quality, subject to a maximum number which will be set by the individual UoA.
55. Drawing from the pool of eligible outputs self-selected for consideration to be submitted by staff, each eligible member of staff, will initially be attributed to one eligible output¹. These will be attributed to staff in such a way that maximises the overall output quality sub-profile for the unit as a whole; the attribution of outputs to staff will not necessarily coincide with the self-selection of outputs by staff, nor will it necessarily result in each eligible staff member being attributed to the highest quality output they have put forward for submission.
56. The remaining outputs needed to obtain the total number of outputs to be submitted within a UoA will then initially be formed by the highest quality outputs which have not yet been attributed to staff via the process outlined in paragraph 54. These will be selected from the remaining pool of self-selected eligible outputs and attributed to staff in such a way that maximises the overall output quality sub-profile for the unit as a whole, subject to the maximum of 5 outputs that may be attributed to any one staff member who is REF eligible on the census date of 31 July 2020; the attribution of outputs to staff will not necessarily coincide with the self-selection of outputs by staff.
57. The final pool of outputs for submission will be formed, by additionally taking the following outputs into consideration:

¹ Except in Research England approved cases where staff have circumstances meaning they have 0 outputs – see paragraphs 62-75.

- a. Eligible outputs from employed staff who are REF eligible on the census date of 31 July 2020, but which have not been self-selected for submission consideration by any member of staff.
 - b. Eligible outputs from employed staff who are not REF eligible on the census date of 31 July 2020 but have been employed as REF eligible at some previous point over the REF reporting period.
 - c. Eligible outputs from staff who are not employed on the census date of 31 July 2020 but have been employed as REF eligible at some previous point over the REF reporting period. This may include outputs from staff not employed on 31 July 2020, but who have been previously employed as REF eligible on a fixed-term contract, which ended prior to 31 July 2020. Outputs will not be considered for submission from staff not employed on 31 July 2020, who were previously employed as REF eligible, but have subsequently been made redundant as a result of restructuring. Outputs may be considered from staff formerly on a fixed-term contract which has ended by the census date.
58. In forming the final pool of outputs, outputs from any of the three pools described in paragraph 56 may be added to or replace outputs from the pool initially obtained via the process outlined in paragraph 54-55. Such additions and/or replacements will take place where one or both of the following criteria are satisfied:
- a. Quality. An addition/replacement increases the overall output quality sub-profile of the submission as a whole
 - b. Strategic. An addition/replacement enhances the presentation of the overall submission considered across the entire UoA, or for the College as a whole, such that the overall quality profile (including taking into account the environment sub-profile) is optimised.
59. Additions/Replacements must keep the overall output pool within the parameters of the attribution of outputs to REF eligible staff on the census date of 31 July 2020, specified within the Research England Guidance on Submission i.e. 1-5 outputs attributed to each REF eligible staff member².
60. In all cases, judgements of quality will be formed by a combination of internal peer review, external expert review as considered appropriate, and committees responsible for REF decision making (see Annexes 1-3).
61. In accordance with the College being a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), no reference will be made to journal-based metrics such as Journal Impact Factors when forming judgements on the quality of research outputs. Where available and appropriate, citation data will be considered as an indicator to inform judgements on output quality, for submissions to units of assessment, or for outputs likely to be cross-referred to units of assessment; where the sub-panels have confirmed that they will make use of citation data in their assessment (This applies to all sub-panels within Main Panel A, the following sub-panels within Main Panel B: 7 – Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences, 8 – Chemistry, 9 – Physics and 11 – Computer Science and Informatics and sub-panel 16 – Economics and Econometrics, within Main Panel C).

Appeals (output selection)

62. The REF assesses the quality of a unit submission as a whole and individual staff members are not assessed. No inferences will be drawn on the quality of individual staff from the final selection and attribution of outputs to staff and these will not be published by Research England or the College. Therefore, and in accordance with guidance issued by Research England, there will be no appeals process on the selection of outputs, or the attribution of outputs to individual staff members within a submission.

² Except in Research England approved cases where staff have circumstances meaning they have 0 outputs – see paragraphs 62-75.

Staff circumstances

63. The College recognises that a range of individual circumstances may have had a material impact on the quantity of research outputs that staff have produced over the REF census period and does not expect every eligible staff member to contribute equally to the volume of outputs submitted.
64. All staff will be invited to self-select for consideration to be submitted to the REF the one output they have authored over the REF submission period which they consider to be the highest quality, and to optionally put forward any further outputs which they consider to be of high quality. Although staff will be encouraged to provide more than the minimum of one output, and it is thought likely that many will choose to do so, there is no expectation for staff, regardless of their individual circumstances, to self-select for consideration to be submitted to the REF, more than the minimum of 1 output.
65. Staff will be given the opportunity to voluntarily and confidentially disclose any circumstances which they believe have constrained their ability to work productively throughout the REF census period, in particular if this means that, exceptionally, they have not authored any outputs over the REF census period. Some staff may however prefer to keep this information confidential and the College respects absolutely, their right to privacy over personal information.
66. For staff wishing to disclose circumstances, this will be via a confidential online or paper form (Annex 8) regarding any circumstances for submission to the Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion. Staff can also request a confidential 'surgery' with their Faculty HR representative to discuss any complex special circumstance.
67. The form is collected by the College for REF purposes only. Staff are in no way obliged to complete the form or disclose any circumstance if they do not wish to do so. By completing the form, the individual will be providing their written consent for the information to be considered, on a confidential and sensitive basis, by the College's REF Equality Committee and the College central REF team.

Summary of applicable circumstances

68. In accordance with guidance issued by Research England, the following equality-related circumstances, in isolation or together, may significantly constrain the ability of staff to produce outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period.
- a. Straightforward circumstances:
 - i. Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher ECR; that is having become an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016
 - ii. Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
 - iii. Qualifying periods of family-related leave
 - iv. Part-time working
 - v. Junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 July 2020.
 - b. More complex circumstances with an equivalent effect to absence, that require a judgement:
 - i. Disability
 - ii. Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions
 - iii. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of those covered by 68a
 - iv. Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member)

- v. Gender reassignment
- vi. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics listed in Annex 6, or relating to activities protected by employment legislation

69. In accordance with Research England guidance, the following criteria may mean that staff have been unable to produce any eligible outputs over the REF assessment period:
- a. an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to one or more of the circumstances set out in paragraph 68 (such as an ECR who has only been employed as an eligible staff member for part of the assessment period)
 - b. circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research, where circumstances set out in paragraph 68 apply (such as mental health issues, caring responsibility, long-term health conditions) or two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave, as defined in Annex 7.
70. The information on staff circumstances will be considered by the REF Equality Committee who will then advise the relevant Faculty and Department of the total reduction in outputs which could be applied for within a UoA submission, making use of the algorithms provided by Research England (see Annex 7) for staff with straight-forward circumstances, and forming a judgement on more complex circumstances. This will be considered alongside the total pool of outputs collected and a decision made over whether to seek approval from Research England of any reduction in the required number of outputs to be submitted in a unit. The REF Equality Committee will also advise the relevant Faculty and Department on any staff for whom a request may be made to Research England for them to be submitted with 0 outputs, without the relevant UoA receiving a penalty score of 'unclassified' for 1 output.
71. The decision to seek reductions in the overall number of outputs submitted within a UoA will be subject to the final approval of the REF Strategy Group. Requests for reductions will generally only be considered where a unit has a critical mass of staff who have declared circumstances meaning that they have produced less than the average number of outputs required within a unit. In accordance with Research England guidance, reference will also be made to the total number of eligible outputs that may be submitted within the Unit of Assessment.
72. Where an overall reduction in the number of outputs to be submitted within a UoA has been approved by Research England as a result of staff circumstances, the number of outputs attributed to the relevant staff with circumstances will not be greater than the overall average number of outputs per staff within a UoA (or zero, where reductions have been approved for individual staff to be submitted with zero outputs).
73. Applications to Research England to reduce outputs attributed to individual staff below the minimum of 1, will generally be made if staff have disclosed circumstances meaning they meet the criteria specified in paragraph 68, and there are no eligible outputs over the REF submission period that may be attributed to them.
74. Decisions over applications for reduced outputs will only take into account information on individual circumstances which have been voluntarily declared by staff via the process outlined in paragraphs 64-66. No consideration will be given to information on individual staff circumstances disclosed or otherwise known outside of this process. Where staff have voluntarily declared circumstances affecting their research productivity, which the REF Equality Committee agrees meet the criteria set out in paragraphs 68-69, the College will adjust its expectations on their contribution to the output pool, regardless of whether this leads to a successful application to Research England to reduce the number of outputs within a UoA.
75. The expectation on such staff will be adjusted as follows:

- a. For staff who have voluntarily declared circumstances but have produced at least one eligible output, it will not generally be necessary to adjust expectations as the default expectation on all staff is that a minimum of one output be self-selected for consideration to be submitted to the REF. However, for such staff, the Head of Department will re-confirm to the staff member that they are expected to contribute no more than the minimum of one output.
- b. For staff who have voluntarily declared circumstances and have produced no outputs, the Head of Department will confirm to the staff member that they are not expected to contribute any outputs for submission to the REF.

Adjustments to expectations will be made regardless of whether voluntarily declared circumstances lead to a successful application to Research England to reduce the number of outputs within a UoA.

Appeals (Staff Circumstances)

76. Staff who have voluntarily declared circumstances which have affected their ability to research productively over the REF assessment period may appeal if they feel that these circumstances have not been correctly taken into account in the expectations upon their contribution to the overall output pool within a unit of assessment submission.
77. Any grounds for appeal must focus on why the individual believes that, having voluntarily declared circumstances affecting their ability to research productively, he or she has, unjustly, been asked to contribute a minimum number of outputs to a submission. It would thus be appropriate for an appeal to be made on the grounds of:
 - a. Unfair discrimination
 - b. Process (including if it is felt that procedure has not been followed)
 - c. Previously unavailable evidence
78. Disagreement with the decision on the contribution to the output pool alone would not be appropriate grounds for an appeal.
79. Since the general expectation on all staff is that they contribute a minimum of one output to a submission, appeals would normally only be valid in cases where staff have voluntarily declared circumstances meaning that they do not have any outputs to contribute to a submission within a unit of assessment (in accordance with paragraph 68). However, appeals may also be valid if an individual who has voluntarily declared circumstances affecting their ability to research productively believes that they have expectations placed upon them to contribute more than the general minimum of one output.
80. See Annex 5 for the details of the appeals process.

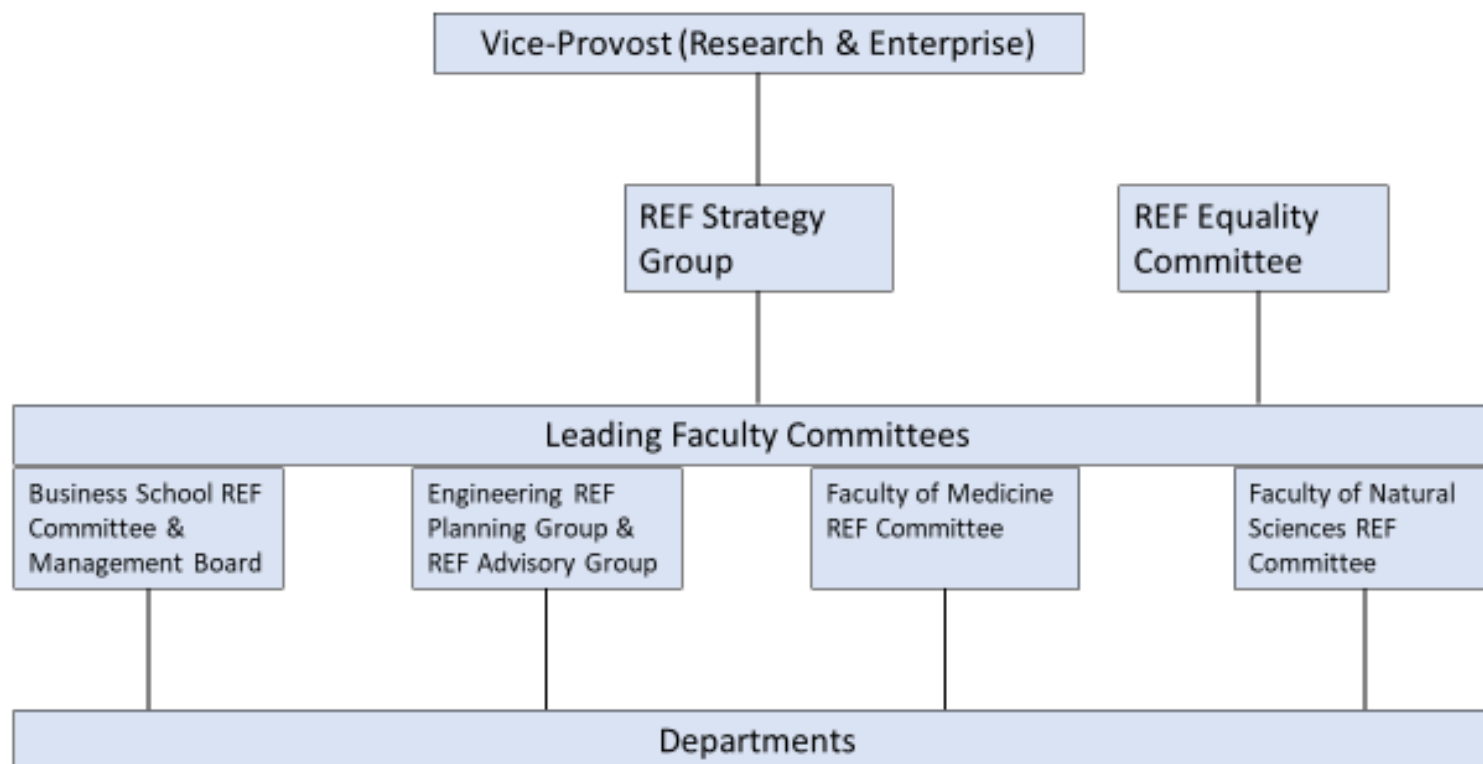
Equality Impact Assessment

81. In accordance with guidance provided by Research England, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to compare and analyse the protected characteristics (where data is available) of staff falling into each of the 6 pools determined by the number of outputs attributed (5,4,3,2,1 or 0). The results of this analysis will be provided to the REF Equality Committee, who will then advise the REF Strategy Group as appropriate. Where there is a significant underrepresentation of staff with protected characteristics within the selected output pool, the potential reasons for this will be explored further. This may be caused by:

- a. a bias within the REF procedures for selecting outputs from the overall output pool produced over the REF submission period. In this case, alternative procedures for selecting outputs will be explored, potentially resulting in a reselection of outputs.
- b. an underrepresentation of outputs from staff with protected characteristics in the overall output pool produced over the REF submission period. This could potentially indicate a more fundamental issue of restricted opportunity for support within the research environment within a UoA, which would be outside of the remit of the REF code of practice. Such cases will be referred to the EDI forum for further investigation.

82. Protected characteristics considered are those outlined in Annex 6, where this data is held.

Annex 1 – REF Decision Making Structure



Annex 2 – Imperial College REF Equality Committee

REF Equality Committee

Membership

Membership of this group are distinct from membership of the REF Strategy Group:

- Assistant-Provost Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Chair)
- Associate Professor of Economics, former Chair of the Business School Diversity Committee (2016-2019)
- Head of Experimental Solid State Physics, former Consul for the Faculty of Natural Sciences (2016-2019)
- Professor of Biofluid Mechanics & Director of the Graduate School, former Consul for the Faculty of Engineering and the Business School (2016-2019)
- Professor of Experimental Medicine, Senior Consul for the College
- Deputy Director Organisational Development and Inclusion (HR)
- Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Centre (EDIC)

Terms of reference

The Equality Committee will undertake the following responsibilities to:

- Ensure that all decisions are informed by current equalities legislation and good management practice in line with the College's REF Code of Practice.
- Oversee the implementation of the Code of Practice within the College and handle any equalities related issues if, and as, they arise.
- Consider appeals raised by staff over decisions determining Research independence and advise the REF Strategy Group accordingly.
- Consider consistently and confidentially all cases where staff have disclosed circumstances constraining their ability to research productively across the REF reporting period ('circumstances'); in light of equalities legislation, advice from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (EDIC), and Research England guidance to determine whether and how they may be handled.
- Advise REF decision-makers on the number of staff who have disclosed circumstances in each submitting unit, and the reduction in outputs that may be applied for within that unit, including where less than the minimum of 1 output may be attributed to staff without penalty.
- Oversee Equality Impact Assessments undertaken at key points throughout the REF submission process.

Meeting frequency

Approximately termly. More frequent meetings are likely to be scheduled as the REF deadline draws nearer.

Annex 3 – REF Leading Committees

REF 2021 Strategy Group

Membership

- Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise) (Chair)
- REF Lead – Business School
- REF Lead – Faculty of Engineering
- REF Lead – Faculty of Medicine
- REF Lead – Faculty of Natural Sciences
- A representative from the Faculty Ambassadors for Women.
- Director of Strategic Planning
- REF Manager

Terms of Reference

- a. The REF Strategy Group will have ultimate responsibility and accountability to the Provost Board for the delivery of an optimal, accurate and timely REF 2021 submission.
- b. The Group will provide management and oversight of the preparation of the College's REF 2021 submissions including decisions on issues of strategic importance. To include the provision of:
 - i. Advice on the configuration of units of assessment (including which UoAs to make submissions to, which staff and research groups should be presented in each submission etc).
 - ii. Input to strategic choices which will inform the College's submission (including guidance to inform submission decisions about outputs).
 - iii. Guidance to inform the preparation of aspects of the Environment sections of each submission (including research strategy, institutional-level Environment, enabling impact, supporting collaboration, structures to support interdisciplinary research and open research).
 - iv. Guidance to inform the preparation of Impact in the REF submission, including on cross-departmental/multidisciplinary case studies.
 - v. Input to, and overview of external consultations on REF 2021.
 - vi. Review and sign-off of the College's REF submissions.
 - vii. Reports to Provost Board as appropriate.

Meeting frequency

Approximately termly. More frequent meetings are likely to be scheduled as the REF deadline draws near.

Imperial College Business School REF Committee

Membership

- REF Lead Business School (Chair)
- Head of the Management Department
- Professor of Financial Economics
- Head of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Department
- Research Support Manager
- Associate Dean of Faculty and Research
- Head of the Finance Department
- Head of Research Support
- Professor of Entrepreneurship

Terms of Reference

- To deliver a maximum REF return on behalf of the Business School

- To oversee REF activity across the School (including research outputs, environment, and impact), set targets where appropriate (with the Dean's office) and recommend interventions to the Research Committee and Management Board when concerns arise.
- To advise the Research Committee and Management Board on School REF strategy and its implementation.
- To promote the impact of School research on policy and practice.
- To respond to changes in the research assessment environment and ensure compliance
- To manage engagement with College strategies and processes in preparing submission data

Meeting frequency

Twice per year (in the first instance, increasing as submission nears).

Imperial College Business School Management Board

Membership

- Dean of Imperial College Business School
- Associate Dean of Faculty and Research
- Associate Dean of Programmes
- Associate Dean of UG Programmes and Education
- Head of Department, Finance
- Head of Department, Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Head of Department, Management
- Chair of the Diversity Committee
- Director of Executive Education
- Faculty Operating Officer
- Faculty Finance Officer
- Strategy and Planning Manager
- EA to the Deans Office

Terms of Reference

- To set overall strategy for the School
- To oversee the implementation of the School's strategic plan
- To ensure that resources are deployed effectively to deliver the School's objectives
- To ensure that effective management, governance and legal compliance structures are in place within the School
- To hold budget-holders to account for delivery of their plans and budgets
- To ensure that Research Centres are delivering their strategic objectives and plans effectively and efficiently. And that these are in line with the School strategy, by receiving annual reports
- To approve and track major projects and to assign responsibility for these where appropriate
- To respond to major external opportunities and threats
- To develop recommendations requiring College approval
- Accountability for School health and safety and risk management processes
- To ensure effective internal and external communication of School activities
- To ensure and nurture relationships which will enhance the reputation, image and funding of the School
- To review its terms of reference and membership annually.

Meeting frequency

Once a term.

Faculty of Engineering REF Advisory Group

Membership

- Associate Dean REF (Chair)
- Vice Dean Research
- Faculty REF Impact Lead
- Associate Dean Enterprise
- Head of Research Strategy & Development
- Faculty REF Manager

Terms of Reference

- The group was established in Feb 2019
- The purpose of the group is to provide strategic direction and advice on the Faculty's REF submission and advise on output selection and optimization strategies, the development of the Impact Case Studies and preparation of the Environment templates;
- The group reports and makes recommendations to the Faculty Management Committee on the Faculty's REF submission and contributes to the College REF Strategy Group with regard to all aspects of the REF submission at the College level. The advice and comments from this group will be relayed onto the members of the Faculty REF Planning Group which is responsible for the operational aspects of the REF submission preparations at the Department/UoA level.

Meeting frequency

Bimonthly from February 2019.

Faculty of Engineering REF Planning Group

Membership

- Associate Dean REF (Chair)
- Vice-Dean Research
- FoE REF Impact Lead
- Department REF Lead in each of the ten Departments
- Head of Research Strategy Development
- Faculty REF Manager

Terms of Reference

- To take ownership and oversee preparations of the REF2021 submission within the Departments of the Faculty.
- To ensure a shared understanding of the Research England and College REF submission requirements.
- To share information and establish best practices in preparing the REF submission.
- To advise the Associate Dean for REF and the Faculty Management Committee on the strategies for the REF submission, identify any issues and develop solutions.
- To advise on the identification, development, selection and review of the REF outputs, Impact Case Studies and Environment Templates.
- To advise on decision-making for all aspects of the Faculty's REF submission subject to final approval by the Faculty Management Committee.
- To ensure that the Faculty's submissions are consistent with the College's REF Code of Practice.

Meeting frequency

Bi-monthly from Dec 2018 to May 2019 and monthly from June 2019 onwards.

Faculty of Medicine REF Committee

Membership

- Faculty REF Lead (Chair)
- Chair in Infectious Disease Epidemiology
- Vice-Dean Institutional Affairs
- Edmond and Lily Safra Chair and Head of Brain Sciences
- Chair in Oncology
- Vice-Dean (Research)
- Professor of Endocrinology
- Professor of Immunology
- Director of Research Strategy
- Faculty REF Manager (Secretariat)

Terms of Reference

- To evaluate the Faculty's REF submission in terms of data concerning staff, outputs, impact and environment
- To contribute to the formulation of statements required for the submission (ie. Impact and Environment)
- To review the progression of the submission against targets
- To be responsible for the collection and interpretation of data for the REF submission – liaising with SIDs where necessary
- To provide recommendations about the REF submission to the Faculty Board, to which it reports
- To support the Faculty in meeting both internal and external deadlines

Meeting frequency

6 times a year.

Faculty of Natural Sciences REF Committee

Membership

- Dean (Chair)
- Vice Dean (Research) & Faculty REF Lead
- Faculty Operating Officer
- Faculty REF Champion
- Faculty REF Co-ordinator
- Faculty Strategy Research Manager
- Heads of Departments
- Departmental REF Leads (Outputs, Impact and Environment)

Terms of Reference

To oversee departmental preparations of the REF submission within the Faculty, namely:

- To provide a forum for discussion between Departments regarding all aspects of the submission
- To establish and share best practice in the preparation of submissions.
- To ensure that Research England guidance and the College strategic steer are well understood, and to advise departments on any uncertainties they have.
- To discuss and implement a Faculty strategy for REF2021.
- To communicate College-level REF activity to Department leads, including activity within the REF Steering Group.
- To provide input to Research England consultations on REF2021.
- To ensure that all decisions are informed by current equalities legislation and good management practice in line with the Colleges REF Code of Practice.

Meeting frequency

Termly in 2019, increasing to bi-monthly in 2020.

Annex 4 – Independent Research Fellowships

Table 1

Funder	Fellowship scheme
AHRC	AHRC Leadership Fellowships – Early Career Researchers
AHRC	AHRC Leadership Fellowships
BBSRC	BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships
BBSRC	BBSRC Future Leader Fellowships (from 2018 known as BBSRC Discovery Fellowships)
British Academy	BA/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships
British Academy	British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowships
British Academy	JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowships
British Academy	Mid-Career Fellowships
British Academy	Newton Advanced Fellowships
British Academy	Newton International Fellowships
British Academy	Wolfson Research Professorships
British Heart Foundation	Career Re-entry Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Clinical Research Leave Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	BHF-Fulbright Commission Scholar Awards
British Heart Foundation	Intermediate Basic Science Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Intermediate Clinical Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Senior Basic Science Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Senior Clinical Research Fellowships
British Heart Foundation	Springboard Award for Biomedical Researchers
British Heart Foundation	Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers
Cancer Research UK	Advanced Clinician Scientist Fellowship
Cancer Research UK	Career Development Fellowship
Cancer Research UK	Career Establishment Award
Cancer Research UK	Senior Cancer Research Fellowship
EPSRC	EPSRC Early Career Fellowship
EPSRC	EPSRC Established Career Fellowship
EPSRC	EPSRC Postdoctoral Fellowship*
ESRC	ESRC Future Cities Catapult Fellowship
ESRC	ESRC Future Leaders Grant
ESRC	ESRC/Turing Fellowships
ESRC/URKI	Early Career Researcher Innovation Fellowships
European Research Council	ERC Advanced Grants
European Research Council	ERC Consolidator Grants
European Research Council	ERC Starting Grants

Health Education England	ICA Clinical Lectureship
Health Education England	ICA Senior Clinical Lectureship
Imperial College London	Imperial College Research Fellowship (ICRF)
Imperial College London	Chapman Fellowship
Imperial College London	Safra UK DRI Fellowships
Leverhulme Trust	Early Career Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	Research Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	Emeritus Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	Major Research Fellowship
Leverhulme Trust	International Academic Fellowship
MRC	MRC Career Development Awards*
MRC	MRC New Investigator Research Grants (Non-clinical)
MRC	MRC New Investigator Research Grants (Clinical)*
MRC	MRC Clinician Scientist Fellowships*
MRC	Senior Non-Clinical Fellowships
MRC	Senior Clinical Fellowships
NC3R	David Sainsbury Fellowship
NC3R	Training fellowship
NERC	Independent Research Fellowships
NERC/UKRI	Industrial Innovation Fellowships
NERC/UKRI	Industrial Mobility Fellowships
NIHR	Advanced Fellowship
NIHR	Career Development Fellowship
NIHR	Clinical Lectureships
NIHR	Clinical Trials Fellowship
NIHR	Clinician Scientist
NIHR	Development and Skills Enhancement Award
NIHR	Knowledge Mobilisation Research Fellowship
NIHR	Post-Doctoral Fellowship
NIHR	Research Professorship
NIHR	School for Primary Care Post-Doctoral Fellowships
NIHR	Senior Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	RAEng Engineering for Development Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	Industrial Fellowships
Royal Academy of Engineering	RAEng Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	RAEng Senior Research Fellowship
Royal Academy of Engineering	UK Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoctoral Research
Royal Society	Royal Society Wolfson Fellowship
Royal Society	Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship*
Royal Society	JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship

Royal Society	Newton Advanced Fellowship
Royal Society	Royal Society/Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship
Royal Society	University Research Fellowship*
Royal Society and Wellcome	Sir Henry Dale Fellowship*
Royal Society of Edinburgh	RSE Arts & Humanities Awards (for permanent staff)
Royal Society of Edinburgh	RSE Personal Research Fellowship
Royal Society of Edinburgh	RSE Sabbatical Research Grants (for permanent
Sêr Cymru	Research Chairs
Sêr Cymru	Rising Stars
Sêr Cymru	Recapturing Talent*
Sêr Cymru	Research fellowships for 3 -5 year postdocs
STFC	CERN Fellowships
STFC	Ernest Rutherford Fellowship
STFC	ESA Fellowships
STFC	Innovations Partnership Scheme Fellowships
STFC	Returner Fellowships
STFC	RSE/STFC Enterprise Fellowships
STFC	Rutherford International Fellowship Programme
UKRI	UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships
UKRI	UKRI Innovation Fellowships
Wellcome Trust	Intermediate Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical
Wellcome Trust	Principal Research Fellowships
Wellcome Trust	Research Award for Health Professionals
Wellcome Trust	Research Career Development Fellowship
Wellcome Trust	Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social
Wellcome Trust	Senior Research Fellowship

*Those asterisked support the transition to independence. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to become independent and the award enables them to become so. It could be argued those at the start of an award are not 'independent' yet, but those well in the award may be.

Annex 5 – Appeals process

1. **Research Independence.** If a member of staff on a research-only contract who is otherwise eligible for the REF, believes that he/she has grounds for an appeal based on paragraph 38 of the Code of Practice, then the action in paragraphs 3-13 should be taken as soon as possible after he/she has been informed of his/her likely independence status.
2. **Staff Circumstances.** If any member of staff who is eligible for the REF believes that he/she has grounds for an appeal based on paragraph 70-75 of the Code of Practice, then the action in paragraphs 3-13 should be taken as soon as possible.

Head of Department's Stage

3. The individual should request a meeting with his/her Head of Department (or the nominee who is responsible for REF matters in the department). In preparation for the meeting, the individual should identify what he/she believes to be the potential grounds for appeal. It would be helpful if these representations were put in writing, although it is recognised that an individual may choose not to. The individual may bring a Trade Union representative or work colleague to the meeting if he/she chooses. The Head of Department may also choose for a work colleague to be present and they should notify each other if either are to be accompanied.
4. Following receipt of the request and/or written complaint, the Head of Department (or nominee) should meet with the individual, normally within 10 working days of receipt of the letter, to discuss the matters that the individual has raised.
5. After the meeting and following full and proper consideration of the matters raised, the Head of Department (or nominee) will write a formal response. The response will be issued within 7 working days of the meeting.

College Panel Stage

6. If the individual continues to believe that he/she has grounds for complaint, formal written notification should be submitted to the Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion (HR) stating what action has been taken to date and the reasons why he/she remains dissatisfied. The notification should be received not later than 7 working days after the receipt of the Head of Department's (or nominee's) formal response. Following receipt of the letter, the Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion will arrange for a REF Equality Committee to meet. The meeting will be convened at the earliest opportunity to ensure that each case is considered as quickly as possible.
7. The individual may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague. A representative from HR will assist.
8. The Head of Department, or nominee, will be asked to attend the meeting to answer questions and this will be in the presence of the individual and the person who is accompanying him/her if this is the case.
9. The Chair may choose to ask the relevant Faculty Dean to attend to answer questions. This will also be in the presence of the individual and his/her companion.
10. After the meeting, and following full and proper consideration, the Chair will write a formal response which will normally be issued within 7 working days after the meeting.

11. Appeals will be dealt with as expediently as possible. The early communication of decisions is intended to ensure that all appeals will be completed before the final submission is made.
12. This concludes the appeals process.

Annex 6 – Summary of equality legislation

Age	All employees within the HE sector are protected from unlawful age discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment under the Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or if they are associated with a person of a particular age group. Age discrimination can occur when people of a particular age group are treated less favourably than people in other age groups. An age group could be, for example, people of the same age, the under 30s or people aged 45-50. A person can belong to a number of different age groups. Age discrimination will not be unlawful if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. However, in the context of the REF, the view of the funding bodies is that if a researcher produces excellent research an HEI will not be able to justify not selecting their outputs because of their age group. It is important to note that early career researchers (ECRs) are likely to come from a range of age groups. The definition of ECR used in the REF (see 'Guidance on submissions', paragraphs 148 to 149) is not limited to young people. HEIs should also note that, given developments in equalities law in the UK and Europe, the default retirement age has been abolished from 1 October 2011 in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
Disability	The Equality Act 2010, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) (Northern Ireland only) and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 prevent unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment relating to disability. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to have a disability or if they are associated with a person who has a disability (for example, if they are responsible for caring for a family member with a disability). A person is considered to have a disability if they have or have had a physical and/or mental impairment which has 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Long-term impairments include those that last or are likely to last for at least 12 months. Cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis and progressive/degenerative conditions are disabilities too, even if they do not currently have an adverse effect on the carrying out of day-to-day activities. An impairment which is managed by medication or medical treatment, but which would have had a substantial and long-term adverse effect if not so managed, is also a disability. The definition of disability is different in Northern Ireland in that a list of day-to-day activities is referred to. There is no list of day-to-day activities for England, Scotland and Wales but day-to-day activities are taken to mean activities that people generally, not a specific individual, carry out on a daily or frequent basis. While there is no definitive list of what is considered a disability, it covers a wide range of impairments including:

	• sensory impairments • impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis, depression and epilepsy • progressive impairments, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, HIV and cancer • organ specific impairments, including respiratory conditions and cardiovascular diseases • developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders and dyslexia • mental health conditions such as depression and eating disorders • impairments caused by injury to the body or brain It is important for HEIs to note that people who have had a past disability are also protected from discrimination, victimisation and harassment because of disability. Equality law requires HEIs to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and make reasonable adjustments for them. Failure to make a reasonable adjustment constitutes discrimination. If a researcher's impairment has affected the quantity of their research outputs, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of outputs (see 'Guidance on submissions', Part3, Section 1, 'Staff circumstances').
Gender reassignment	The Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 protect from discrimination, harassment and victimisation of trans people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change their sex. Staff in HE do not have to be under medical supervision to be afforded protection because they are trans and staff are protected if they are perceived to be undergoing or have undergone related procedures. They are also protected if they are associated with someone who has proposed, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment. Trans people who undergo gender reassignment will need to take time off for appointments and, in some cases, for medical assistance. The transition process is lengthy, often taking several years, and it is likely to be a difficult period for the trans person as they seek recognition of their new gender from their family, friends, employer and society as a whole. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gave enhanced privacy rights to trans people who undergo gender reassignment. A person acting in an official capacity who acquires information about a person's status as a transsexual may commit a criminal offence if they pass the information to a third party without consent. Consequently, staff within HEIs with responsibility for REF submissions must ensure that the information they receive about gender reassignment is treated with particular care. If a staff member's ability to work productively throughout the REF assessment period has been constrained due to gender reassignment, the unit may return a reduced number of research outputs (see 'Guidance on submissions', Part 3, Section 1, 'Staff circumstances'). Information about the member of staff will be kept confidential as described in 'Guidance on submissions', paragraph 195.

	HEIs should note that the Scottish government recently consulted on, and the UK government is currently consulting on, reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which may include streamlining the procedure to legally change gender.
Marriage and civil partnership	Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 as amended, individuals are protected from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership status. The protection from discrimination is to ensure that people who are married or in a civil partnership receive the same benefits and treatment in employment. The protection from discrimination does not apply to single people. HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not inadvertently discriminate against staff who are married or in civil partnerships.
Political opinion	The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protects staff from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of political opinion. HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not inadvertently discriminate against staff based on their political opinion.
Pregnancy and maternity	Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 women are protected from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to pregnancy and maternity. Consequently, where researchers have taken time out of work, or their ability to work productively throughout the assessment period has been affected, because of pregnancy and/or maternity, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of research outputs, as set out in 'Guidance on submissions', paragraphs 169 to 172. In addition, HEIs should ensure that female researchers who are pregnant or on maternity leave are kept informed about and included in their submissions process. For the purposes of this summary it is important to note that primary adopters have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave.
Race	The Equality Act 2010 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation connected to race. The definition of race includes colour, ethnic or national origins or nationality. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular race. HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their race or assumed race (for example, based on their name).
Religion and belief, including non-belief	The Equality Act 2010 and the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to religion or belief. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or are associated with a person of a particular religion or belief. HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their actual or perceived religion or belief, including non-belief. 'Belief' includes any structured philosophical belief with clear values that has an effect on how its adherents conduct their lives.
Sex (including breastfeeding and	The Equality Act 2010 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to sex.

additional paternity and adoption leave)	Employees are also protected because of their perceived sex or because of their association with someone of a particular sex. The sex discrimination provisions of the Equality Act explicitly protect women from less favourable treatment because they are breastfeeding. Consequently, the impact of breastfeeding on a woman’s ability to work productively will be taken into account, as set out in ‘Guidance on submissions’, Part3, Section1, ‘Staff circumstances’. If a mother who meets the continuity of employment test wishes to return to work early or shorten her maternity leave/pay, she will be entitled to shared parental leave with the father or her partner within the first year of the baby’s birth. Partners may also be eligible for shared parental leave or pay. Fathers/partners who take additional paternity or adoption leave will have similar entitlements to women on maternity leave and barriers that exist to taking the leave, or as a result of having taken it, could constitute unlawful sex discrimination. Consequently, where researchers have taken additional paternity and adoption leave, the submitting unit may return a reduced number of outputs, as set out in ‘Guidance on submissions’, Annex L. HEIs need to be wary of implementing procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 that would be easier for men to comply with than women, or vice versa. There are many cases where a requirement to work full-time (or less favourable treatment of people working part-time or flexibly) has been held to discriminate unlawfully against women. HEIs should note that there are now requirements under UK and Scottish legislation for public authorities (including HEIs) to report information on the percentage difference amongst employees between men and women’s average hourly pay (excluding overtime).
Sexual orientation	The Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 protect HEI staff from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to sexual orientation. Individuals are also protected if they are perceived to be or associated with a person who is of a particular sexual orientation. HEIs must ensure that their procedures and decision-making processes in relation to REF 2021 do not discriminate against staff based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation.
Welsh language	The Welsh Language Act 1993 places a duty on public bodies in Wales to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis. This is reinforced by the provisions of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards (No6) Regulations 2017. The arrangements for the assessment of outputs in the medium of Welsh by the REF panels are set out in ‘Guidance on submissions’, paragraphs 284 and 285.

Annex 7 – Reductions for staff circumstances

- Given the reduced output requirement for 2021, the tariffs for the defined reductions differ from those set in REF 2014. This is to ensure that a broadly equivalent reduction is given in the context of the submitted output pool, and to ensure that panels receive a sufficient selection of research outputs from each submitted unit upon which to base judgements about the quality of that unit's outputs.

Early Career Researchers

- ECRs are defined in the 'Guidance on submissions' (paragraph 148). Table L1 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment that HEIs may request for ECRs who meet this definition.

Table L1: Early career researchers: Permitted reduction in outputs

Date at which the individual first met the REF definition of an ECR:	Output pool may be reduced by up to:
On or before 31 July 2016	0
Between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017 inclusive	0.5
Between 1 August 2017 and 31 July 2018 inclusive	1
On or after 1 August 2018	1.5

Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks

- Table L2 sets out the permitted reduction in outputs without penalty in the assessment that HEIs may request for absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside of the HE sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

Table L2: Secondments or career breaks: Permitted reduction in outputs

Total months absent between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020 due to a staff member's secondment or career break:	Output pool may be reduced by up to:
Fewer than 12 calendar months	0
At least 12 calendar months but less than 28	0.5
At least 28 calendar months but less than 46	1
46 calendar months or more	1.5

- The allowances in Table L2 are based on the length of the individual's absence or time away from working in HE. They are defined in terms of total months absent from work.
- As part-time working is taken account of within the calculation for the overall number of outputs required for the unit (which is determined by multiplying the unit's FTE by 2.5), reduction requests on the basis of part-time working hours should only be made exceptionally. For example, where the FTE of a staff member late in the assessment period does not reflect their average FTE over the period as a whole.

Qualifying periods of family-related leave

6. The total output pool may be reduced by 0.5 for each discrete period of:
 - a. Statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020, regardless of the length of the leave.
 - b. Additional paternity or adoption leave³ or shared parental leave⁴ lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020.
7. This approach to reductions for qualifying periods of family-related leave is based on the funding bodies' considered judgement following consultation in the previous REF exercise that the impact of such a period of leave and the arrival of a new child into a family is generally sufficiently disruptive of an individual's research work to justify the specified reduction.
8. While the above reduction of outputs due to additional paternity or adoption leave is subject to a minimum period of four months, shorter periods of such leave could be taken into account as follows:
 - a. By applying a reduction in outputs where there are additional circumstances, for example, where the period of leave had an impact in combination with other factors such as ongoing childcare responsibilities.
 - b. By combining the number of months for shorter periods of such leave in combination with other circumstances, according to Table L2.
9. Any period of maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave that qualifies for the reduction of an output under the provisions in paragraph 6 above may in individual cases be associated with prolonged constraints on work that justify more than the defined reduction set out. In such cases, the circumstances should be explained in the request.

Combining circumstances

10. Where individuals have had a combination of circumstances that have a defined reduction in outputs, these may be accumulated up to a maximum reduction of 1.5 outputs. For each circumstance, the relevant reduction should be applied and added together to calculate the total maximum reduction.
11. Where Table L1 is combined with Table L2, the period of time since 1 January 2014 up until the individual met the definition of an ECR should be calculated in months, and Table L2 should be applied.
12. When combining circumstances, only one circumstance should be taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously.
13. Where an individual has a combination of circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs **and** additional circumstances that require a judgement, the institution should explain this in the reduction request so that a single judgement can be made about the appropriate reduction in outputs, taking into account all the circumstances. The circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs to be requested should be calculated according to the guidance above (paragraphs 2 to 10).

Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1-6

14. In UOAs 1–6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to one, without penalty in the assessment, for Category A submitted staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified

³ 'Additional paternity leave or adoption leave' refers to leave of up to 26 weeks which is taken to care for a child where the person's spouse, partner or civil partner was entitled to statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave, and has since returned to work. The term 'additional paternity leave' is often used to describe this type of leave although it may be taken by parents of either gender. For the purposes of the REF, we refer to this leave as 'additional paternity or adoption leave'.

⁴ 'Shared parental leave' refers to leave of up to 50 weeks which can be shared by parents having a baby or adopting a child. This can be taken in blocks, or all in one go.

academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 July 2020.

15. This allowance is made on the basis that the staff concerned are normally significantly constrained in the time they have available to undertake research during the assessment period. Where the individual meets the criteria in paragraph 14 and has had significant additional circumstances– for any of the other reasons set out in the ‘Guidance on submissions’ in paragraph– the institution can make a case for further reductions in the unit reduction request.

Circumstances requiring a judgement about reductions

16. Where staff have had other circumstances during the period including in combination with any circumstances with a defined reduction in outputs– the institution will need to make a judgement about the effect of the circumstances in terms of the equivalent period of time absent, apply the reductions as set out in Table L2 by analogy, and provide a brief rationale for this judgement.

Annex 8 – Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances

This document is being sent to all Category A staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see ‘Guidance on submissions’, paragraphs 117-122). As part of the College’s commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, the College has put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020), and particularly their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as staff not affected by circumstances. The purpose of collecting this information is threefold:

- To enable staff who have not been able to produce a REF-eligible output during the assessment period to be entered into REF where they have;
 - circumstances that have resulted in an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to equality-related circumstances (see below)
 - circumstances *equivalent* to 46 months or more absence from research due to equality-related circumstances
 - two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
- To recognise the effect that equality-related circumstances can have on an individual’s ability to research productively, and to adjust expectations in terms of expected workload / production of research outputs.
- To establish whether there are any Units of Assessment where the proportion of declared circumstances is sufficiently high to warrant a request to the higher education funding bodies for a reduced required number of outputs to be submitted.

Applicable circumstances

- Qualifying as an ECR (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016)
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Junior clinical academics who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of training by 31 July 2020
- Disability (including chronic conditions)
- Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of the standard allowances
- Caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment
- COVID-19

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the above circumstances, you are requested to complete [this online form](#).

Further information can be found in paragraph 160 of the Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01). Completion and return of the form is voluntary, and individuals who do not choose to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information if they do not wish to do so. This form is the only means by which the College will be gathering this information; we will not be consulting HR records, contract start dates, etc. You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the associated information.

Ensuring confidentiality

If you wish to disclose any circumstances, please submit the online form which will be sent to the Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion. You may also request a confidential ‘surgery’ with their Faculty HR representative to discuss any complex special circumstance.

This form is collected by the College for REF purposes only. Staff are in no way obliged to complete the form or disclose any circumstance if they do not wish to do so. By completing the form, you will be providing your written consent for the information to be considered, on a confidential and sensitive basis, by the College’s REF Equality

Committee and the College central REF team. No further use will be made of this form, and this will not be seen by anyone other than members of the REF Equality Committee and the College central REF team.

If the College decides to apply to the funding bodies for either form of reduction of outputs (removal of ‘minimum of one’ requirement or unit circumstances), we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the ‘Guidance on submissions’ document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted.

Submitted data will be kept confidential to the REF team, the REF Equality Committee, the Research England REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The REF team will destroy the submitted data about individuals’ circumstances on completion of the assessment phase.

[Changes in circumstances](#)

The College recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the census date (31 July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should contact the Deputy Director Organisational Development and Inclusion to provide the updated information.

Below is a Word doc version of the online form available on the [College's website](#). If you decide to use the form below instead of the online form, this will have to be sent via email to the College's Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion. Should you have any issues, please contact the College's [Deputy Director, Organisational Development and Inclusion](#)

Name and Surname: [Click here to insert text.](#)

Department: [Click here to insert text.](#)

Do you have a REF-eligible output produced between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstance (see Annex 8, Code of Practice) which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es). Please note that as of September 2020 COVID-19 is a declarable special circumstance option.

Circumstance	Time period affected
Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016). <i>Date you became an early career researcher. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter a date.
Junior clinical academic who has not gained Certificate of completion of Training by 31 July 2020.	Tick here ☐
Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector. <i>Dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
Family-related leave; - statutory maternity leave - statutory adoption leave - Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more. <i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
Disability (including chronic conditions) <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Mental health condition <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.

Ill health or injury <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance <i>To include: Type of leave taken and brief description of additional constraints, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Caring responsibilities <i>To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Gender reassignment <i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.
COVID-19 <i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement. <i>To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months. If possible, briefly state the impact this had on your research activity.</i>	Click here to enter text.

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

- The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below
- I realise that the above information will be used for REF purposes only and will be seen by the College's REF Equality Committee and REF team.
- I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs.

I agree ☐

Name: Print name here

Signed: Sign or initial here

Date: Insert date here

☐ I give my permission for an HR partner to contact me to discuss my circumstance/s, and my requirements in relation this /these.

☐ I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to the relevant contact within my department/faculty/centre. (Please note, if you do not give permission your department may be unable to adjust expectations and put in place appropriate support for you).

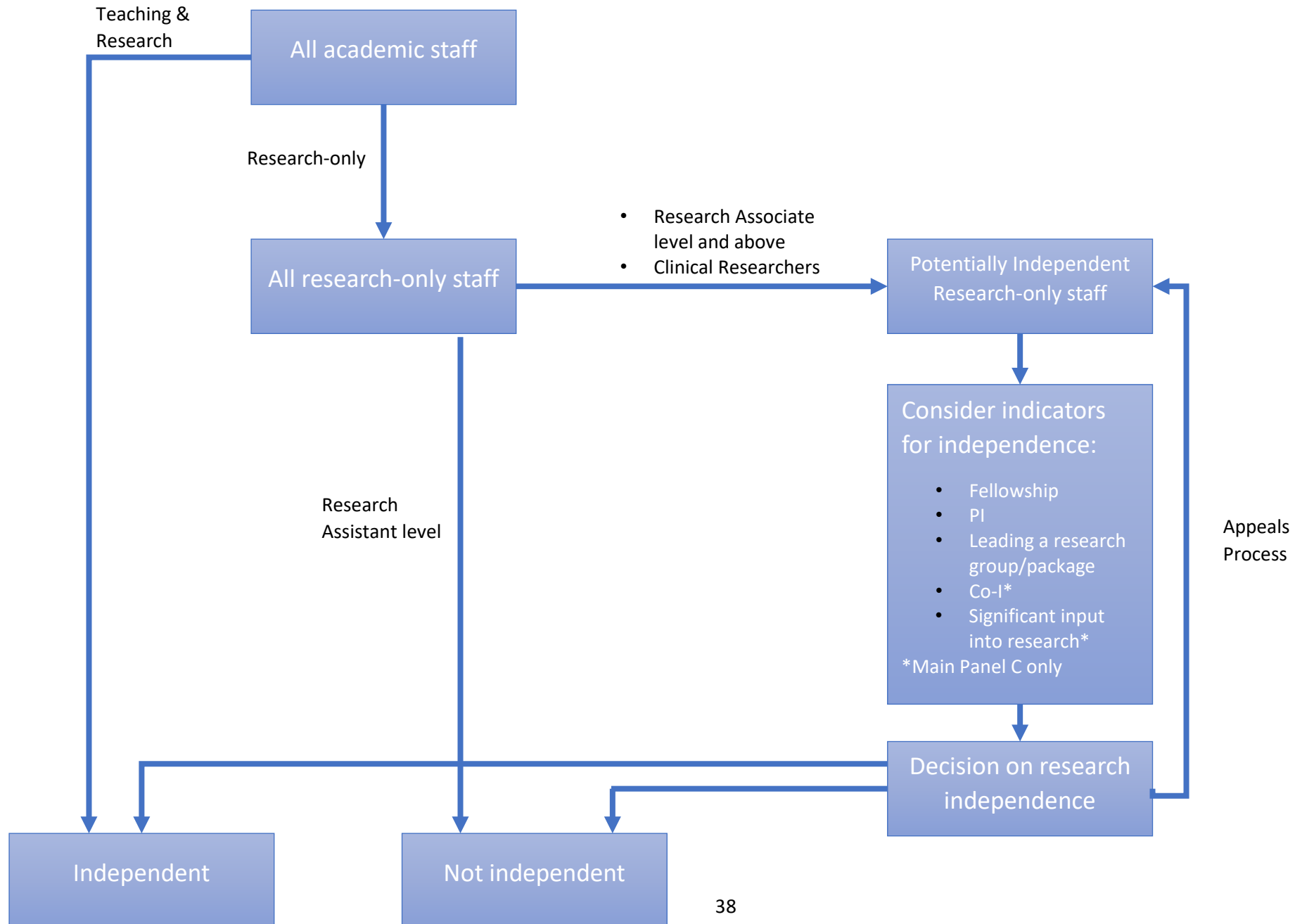
☐ I agree that information declared related to the COVID 19 circumstance may be used anonymously for internal purposes, beyond the REF exercise, to evaluate the broader impact of COVID-19 within the College.

I would like to be contacted by:

Email ☐ Insert email address

Phone ☐ Insert contact telephone number

Annex 9 – Process for determining Research Independence



Annex 10 – Glossary of REF terms

Eligible staff – Defined for REF as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater and on the payroll of the submitting HEI on the census date (31 July 2020), and whose primary employment function is to undertake either ‘research only’ or ‘teaching and research’ and who have a substantive connection to the College, and are an independent researcher.

Equality Assessments – A thorough and systematic analysis to determine whether the institution’s policies for the REF may have a differential impact on particular groups.

Early Career Researcher – Those staff who are eligible staff on the census date, and who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.

HEI – Higher Education Institution

REF – Research Excellence Framework. A process of expert review which provides authorised and comprehensible ratings for research in all disciplines to inform UK Higher Education funding bodies’ allocation of grants for research – the results of REF 2021 will inform Research England QR funding for 2022-23 onwards.

Research England – Research England is responsible for funding, engaging with and understanding English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 established Research England as a Council of UK Research and Innovation, alongside the other existing Councils (the seven Research Councils and Innovate UK), by forming from the Research and Knowledge Exchange functions of the former Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). This includes oversight of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF).

Research England QR Funding – Quality-related research funding. It is allocated according to research quality (as judged by expert review in REF), and the volume of staff submitted to the exercise.

Research Outputs – defined for the REF as the product of research (the process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared), first brought into the public domain during the publication period of 1 January 2014 - 31 December 2020.

UoA – Unit of Assessment. Used in the REF to define subject areas.