

**UCL REF CODE OF PRACTICE  
CONSULTATION DRAFT**

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# Part One: Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

1. University College London (UCL) prides itself of its history of inclusivity; UCL was the first university in England to recruit students without regard to their religious affiliations, and to welcome women on equal terms with men. The institution has a reputation as a sector leader in the field of equality, diversity and inclusion, and is continually working to challenge complacency in this area in order to recruit, develop and retain the most talented staff and students. Looking forward, the UCL 2034 Strategy seeks to promote *“a diverse intellectual community, who are engaged with and changing the world for the better; recognised for our thought leadership and critical thinking; and the catalyst for London to be the world’s leading centre of learning, research, innovation and enterprise.”*
2. The spirit of inclusivity permeated UCL’s submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF2014); UCL made not only the largest submission to REF2014, but one of the most inclusive submitting 91% of our eligible staff. UCL considers high standards of research integrity across all of its activities to be of the utmost importance, and these principles are upheld by comprehensive research governance policies and procedures. We are actively advancing the agenda for the responsible use of metrics in research assessment through various initiatives. Professor David Price (Vice Provost for Research) was the inaugural Chair of the Forum for Responsible Metrics. We champion the robustness, humility, transparency, diversity and reflexivity of metrics use as outlined in [The Metric Tide Report](#) and we were one of the first three UK universities to sign the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA). UCL is committed to the assessment of outputs based on scientific and academic content.
3. UCL’s priority is to make an optimal submission that will be of reputational and financial benefit to the institution, its staff and students. The UCL Code of Practice for the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) seeks to embed this aim within a framework of good practice. This means ensuring we submit our best research to REF2021 through a process that is transparent, fair, non-discriminatory and free from unconscious bias.
4. This document is UCL’s Code of Practice, which is required by the UK’s Research Funding Bodies for UCL to make a submission to REF2021. This Code of Practice was co-designed in consultation with our community and it is UCL’s expectation that all stakeholders involved in REF submission will take responsibility for actioning and implementing the policies and procedures laid out in this Code.
5. The Code of Practice sets out UCL’s institutional policies and procedures relating to UCL’s submission to REF2021 in the following three key areas:
  - The fair and transparent identification of staff with significant responsibility for research
  - Determining independent researchers
  - The selection of outputs including staff circumstances
6. The Code of Practice makes specific reference to UCL’s obligations to the principle of fairness when making decisions and, in particular, it references the relevant guidance provided by the UK higher education funding bodies in the publications [‘REF 2021: Guidance on Submissions’](#) (referred to as ‘REF Guidance’ hereafter) and the [‘Panel Criteria and Working Methods’](#) (referred to as ‘REF Panel Criteria’ hereafter) which should be referred to in conjunction with this document.
7. UCL’s Code of Practice was approved by the UCL REF Strategy Group and all staff (including unions and other staff groups) were invited to comment formally on the draft Code. The period of consultation ran between 8 April and 7 May 2019.

## 1.2 Institutional policies and strategies supporting Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- UCL defines 'equality' as the absence of unjust social hierarchy such as those based on age, disability, ethnicity, **gender**, sexual orientation and religion. We define 'diversity' as the presence of different cultural traditions and identities. 'Inclusion' means UCL will be a place where people can be authentic and their unique perspective, experiences and skills are seen as a valuable asset to the institution. Our aim is to facilitate a diverse and inclusive cultural climate where all UCL students and staff can flourish, regardless of their background.

UCL is regarded as a sector-leader on EDI, evidenced by the following:

- UCL is the only University to currently hold an Athena SWAN Silver institutional award, a Bronze Race Equality Charter award, and to be in the Stonewall Top 100 Index of Inclusive Employers.
- We hold 34 departmental Athena SWAN awards (the most of any UK university) and nearly 50 departments in total are actively engaged in the process.

Our strategic approach to EDI is based on:

- Mainstreaming – making inclusion an integral part of the way UCL thinks and functions;
- Intersectionality – true inclusion addresses multiple identities and maximises the impact of any one intervention to all under-represented and marginalised groups;
- Developing and advancing best practice – through innovative and evidence-based initiatives and evaluation.

- As both an employer and a public body, UCL needs to ensure that its REF procedures do not discriminate unlawfully against individuals because of protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or because they are pregnant or have recently given birth. HEIs also need to be mindful that under the fixed-term employee and part-time workers regulations, fixed-term employees and part-time workers have the right not to be treated by an employer any less favourably than the employer treats comparable employees on open contracts or full-time workers.
- The PSED of the Equality Act 2010 requires HEIs, as public sector organisations, to consider and understand the effect of their REF policies on equality. UCL has a strong track record of embracing the spirit of the legislation, as well as ensuring basic compliance, as evidenced in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2015-2020). We are committed to demonstrating how our existing good practice will positively impact on our REF submission, rather than how we are developing good practice because of our REF submission.
- In collaboration with [AdvanceHE](#), the HEFBs' REF team has developed guidance to HEIs on drawing up a Code of Practice that frames the decision-making processes of HEIs on the identification of eligible staff for submission to REF2021 in the context of the principle of equality of opportunity and the relevant legislation. This guidance has informed the development of this Code of Practice.
- The HEFBs have also provided an equality briefing for the implementation of equality measures in the REF and improving the representativeness of REF2021 panels. The published [equality and diversity materials](#) demonstrate a commitment to supporting and promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of research careers.
- UCL's Code of Practice has been drawn up in the context of both the HEFB's commitment to Equality and Diversity and the [2018 UCL Research Strategy](#). The research strategy sets out how UCL will provide an environment in which research careers can thrive with an emphasis on values and principles underpinning capacity building and leadership. Our strategy ensures

that robust processes are in place for the REF2021 submission, including the appropriate consideration of equality issues in all aspects.

### 1.3 Update on actions taken since REF2014

#### 1.3.1 Actions arising from our Equality Impact Assessment

14. Whilst 93% of eligible staff were returned in the last REF, only 82% of disabled staff were returned. Actions arising as a result include strategic focus on disability and specifically, preparing a submission for the Business Disability Standard – a highly regarded charter mark enabling systemic change.

#### 1.3.2 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

15. UCL is proud of its history in promoting EDI. We are the only HEI to have concurrently achieved an Athena SWAN institutional Silver award, a Race Equality Charter award and to be in the Stonewall Top 100 Index. We also hold the highest number of departmental Athena SWAN awards. UCL is developing an ambitious new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to build upon the framework established in the 2015-20 EDI strategy. The Strategy aims to enable a positive and inclusive cultural climate, where all UCL students and staff can flourish.
16. UCL is regarded as a sector leader in the field of equalities and diversity, and yet our staff and student data, and some lived experiences, tell a different story. We cannot afford to be complacent if we are to continue to recruit, develop and retain the most talented staff and students. Thus UCL is, and will continue to be, a leading proponent of 'positive action' and will take bold steps to redress past imbalances.
17. UCL defines 'equality' as the absence of unjust social hierarchy such as those based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion. We define 'diversity' as the presence of different cultural traditions and identities. 'Inclusion' means UCL will be a place where people can be authentic and their unique perspective, experiences and skills are seen as a valuable asset to the institution.

The strategic approach we will take to advancing our goals is through:

- **Mainstreaming** – making inclusion an integral part of the way UCL thinks and functions at all levels;
- **Intersectionality** – true inclusion addresses multiple identities and maximises the impact of any one intervention to all under represented and marginalised groups;
- **Developing and advancing best practice** – through innovative and evidence-based initiatives.

Ensuring that REF2021 contributes to the institution's EDI work is critical in supporting our broader inclusion ambitions and the realisation of our Vision 2034.

#### 1.3.3 UCL Research Strategy

18. The three aims of this strategy describe our aspirations relating to research leadership, crossing boundaries and delivering public benefit.

**Aim 1 – Inspire and empower research leadership:** More than anything, our individual and collective research leadership underpins the contributions that we can make to humanity. We seek to identify, attract, inspire and empower those who demonstrate – or show their potential to develop – research leadership, regardless of their background. Our related objectives are to: support breadth and diversity; nurture, develop and celebrate those engaged with research; and cultivate diverse forms of research leadership.

**Aim 2 – Cross boundaries to increase engagement:** Rarely can the most interesting questions or the most significant societal challenges be adequately addressed by one discipline, one university or one sector alone. While disciplinary excellence is at the heart of everything that we do, to amplify and inform our research we need to cross conventional, but often artificial, boundaries – between disciplines, between communities (disciplinary, academic and otherwise) and between different kinds of activity – in order to increase mutual knowledge and engagement, and develop co-design and co-production approaches to research and complex societal problems. Our related objectives are to: champion cross-disciplinarity; build and support partnerships; and encourage our research to thrive beyond traditional boundaries.

**Aim 3 – Deliver impact for public benefit:** We consider the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake to be a fundamental good and the basis of all our research impact. We also seek to maximise the public benefit resulting from our research, including by furthering academic disciplines and scholarship, enhancing our cultural contribution and engaging in public discourse, growing national and global prosperity, providing policy advice, informing professional practice, contributing to positive environmental change, and improving health and wellbeing. We will support activity of these kinds and the myriad other ways in which our research can deliver public value. Our related objectives are to: champion a broad definition of research impact; foster open and engaged research; and stimulate societal impact through cross-disciplinarity and collaboration.

These aims are complemented by three cross-cutting themes: A – Pursue a responsible research agenda; B – Exert our institutional influence for the greater good; and C – Maintain a global perspective.

#### 1.3.4 Revised Governance

19. Following the REF2014 post-project review, including an Equality Impact Assessment, and feedback from the community UCL has re-configured the governance structure to support REF processes (see section 1.4). This includes the establishment of Main Panel Working Groups.

#### 1.4 Governance

20. Following review and audit of our REF2014 process, an enhanced governance model has been established. The following roles and committees have been appointed to co-ordinate the development of UCL's REF2021 submission.

##### a. Vice Provost (Research)

The REF Project is overseen by the Vice Provost (Research) who sits on the Provost's Senior Management Team and is the Chair of both the Research Governance Committee and the REF Strategy Group (REFSG). The Vice Provost (Research) has oversight of all aspects of the REF process, including the REF timetable, appointments to the REFSG and overall REF preparations, including EDI requirements. The Vice Provost (Research) will be the final arbiter in all REF-related decisions, including those related to UoA allocation and staff eligibility.

The Vice Provost (Research) was appointed through an open process by a recruitment panel consisting of members from a range of academic disciplines and roles including the Provost. The Vice-Provost (Research) was reappointed for two further terms on the recommendation of the Provost and Council. All appointments were made within UCL's Charter and Statutes.

## b. REF Strategy Group

The REF Strategy Group (REFSG) agrees the structure of UCL's REF2021 submission, as well as signing off the list of eligible UCL staff submitted, processes related to determining independent researchers, and the selection of outputs. The membership and terms of reference of the REFSG can be found in Appendix B. The Chair acts as reporting officer to the Provost, Senior Management Team and UCL Council.

## c. Main Panel Working Groups

To enhance governance of the REF process, Main Panel Working Groups (MPWGs) have been established as an intermediary structure between Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads and REFSG. MPWGs have responsibility for: coordinating key REF tasks; ensuring that policies and procedures are implemented consistently across all UoAs; ensuring that subject and discipline-based differences are recognised in all selection processes. MPWGs correspond to each REF Main Panel (A to D) and are chaired by four of UCL's Faculty Deans; UoA Leads and other key professional service stakeholders are members. Indicative membership and terms of reference for MPWGs can be found in Appendix C. Key tasks of MPWGs include: determining submissions to UoAs; overseeing processes of assessing and selecting outputs; ratifying decisions regarding identification of independent researchers; and, overseeing the development and peer review of UoA-level environment submissions. MPWGs meet at least termly. MPWGs may also establish sub-groups with specific responsibility for particular REF components; for example developing the institutional environment statement.

## d. Unit of Assessment Leads

Each UoA submission is led by a nominated academic lead or UoA Lead. In some instances, such as with large units, or units that were formerly split across multiple submissions in REF2014, there may be more than one UoA Lead in a unit. UoA Leads are members of the MPWGs and work in consultation with relevant Heads of Department, Institute/Division Directors, Heads of Research Department and other key roles such as professional services. All leads are nominated by the Deans of relevant faculties and are charged by the Vice-Provost (Research) to oversee preparations for their respective UoA. Leads are responsible for appointing Review and Selection Groups (RSGs), whose decisions are overseen by the MPWGs and REFSG. UoA leads are responsible, working with stakeholders as above, to oversee the process of determining eligible staff and selecting outputs for submission. UoA Leads will provide regular progress reports MPWGs. Role responsibilities are summarised in Appendix D.

## e. Review and Selection Groups

Review and Selection Groups (RSGs) will include those staff with the relevant level of experience to make judgements about academic quality. Wherever possible – and in particular within larger UoAs - groups will include colleagues with previous experience on a REF panel, junior academics, and those who can represent groups with protected characteristics (See Appendix E for Terms of Reference).

## f. Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel

UCL's Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel (SCAP) will take responsibility for considering confidential declarations of individual staff circumstances for eligible staff (see section 4.4. for the procedure for disclosure of staff circumstances). This will include (i) making recommendations to UoAs where staff circumstances will lead to a reduction in the overall output pool; (ii) reviewing those cases where circumstances have affected productivity to the point where an individual has not produced any outputs over the REF period and where a case is to be made to the funding bodies for the removal of the requirement for a minimum of one output for that staff member (iii) considering appeals relating to the determination of eligibility for REF submission according to independent researcher criteria (appeals process described in section 3.6); (iv) considering appeals relating to requests for removal of the minimum requirement of one output due to individual staff circumstances (appeals process described in section 4.5).

The Panel will not be making a distinction between clearly defined and complex circumstances; all types of application will be managed with consistent scrutiny from the panel.

SCAP will consist of: a Chair (Senior Academic Member of Staff at Dean-level), Director of EDI, Disabled staff network representative, Race Equality Steering Group representative, an HR representative, Equalities Champions from across the main panels and the REF Manager. The meeting will be serviced by a member of the UCL REF Team. All information submitted to SCAP will be retained confidentially. The REF Manager will inform UoA Leads of provisional decisions relating to a reduction in the UoA output pool so that this can be adjusted accordingly. In the case of an appeal relating to SCAP's decision on removing the minimum requirement of one output for a staff member, an equalities sub-panel will be convened to consider the appeal. This will consist of at least three senior members of staff that have received the REF-specific EDI training. See Appendix F for SCAP terms of reference. Decisions from the sub-panel will be reported back by the REF Manager to the member of staff in question and to the relevant UoA Lead in instances where the output pool needs to be adjusted. Decisions made by the sub-panel will be final.

#### g. UCL REF Team

The REF Team, based in the Office of Vice-Provost (Research), is responsible for:

- Defining the UCL REF Timetable and ensuring the REF submission is co-ordinated and delivered in a timely fashion
- Developing and recommending policies and procedures (for approval by REFSG)
- Providing administrative support to committees and other groups within the governance structure including REFSG, MPWGs and SCAP;
- Collecting data from across the institution that will constitute our final REF submission; these data may include staff information, publications metadata, disclosures of individual circumstances, research income, doctoral degrees awarded etc.;
- Liaising with the funding bodies and national REF Team;
- Working alongside the Research Impact Curation & Support team on impact case development;
- Testing and implementing the REF submission system and working with UCL Information Services Division in managing the data transfer and final REF submission;
- Working in a way that is mindful at all times of equality, diversity and inclusivity in treating all staff fairly and without bias.

#### h. Other Key Stakeholders

Other members of UCL staff contribute in valuable ways to the development of the REF submission. A non-exhaustive list of these staff includes:

- Divisional Directors and Heads of Research Departments
- Research Impact Curation & Support team
- Department and Faculty Research Managers and Coordinators
- HR staff involved in staff contracts, HESA data, staff data
- Equalities and Diversity staff
- Information Services Division
- Library staff and those involved in Open Access
- Academic staff involved in developing specific components of the exercise (e.g. Environment and Impact submissions)

## 1.5 Principles of Transparency, Consistency, Accountability and Inclusivity

21. UCL is committed to conducting its REF2021 submission in a fair manner that upholds the four principles set out in the funding bodies' guidance:
- **Transparency:** it should be made clear to staff who is eligible to be submitted to the REF, what criteria will be used in selecting outputs, how UCL's REF submission will be carried out (both the processes and timeline), who makes the decisions, and what mechanisms have been put in place to appeal decisions where appropriate;
  - **Consistency:** staff should be confident that the processes and governance structure put in place will ensure that policies and criteria are applied consistently across all UoAs, with due consideration of the disciplinary differences recognised by the variations in policy allowed in REF2021 between the four main panels;
  - **Accountability:** staff should understand who makes the decisions and why, and how these decision-making responsibilities fit into the overall governance structure of the REF process;
  - **Inclusivity:** staff should feel assured that UCL has put in place robust measures to ensure that the submission is inclusive.
22. UCL has put in place a number of measures to ensure that its submission to REF2021 abides by these principles. These include:
- bespoke EDI training designed by the EDI team in the Provost's office and undertaken by all staff involved in developing the university's REF submission (sections 3.5 and 4.3);
  - the use of Equality Impact Assessments at key stages of the REF process to assess how inclusive the submission is (sections 3.7 and 4.6);
  - a governance structure and set of policies for documenting procedures to maximise consistency and accountability (section 1.4);
  - an appeals process managed by UCL's SCAP (section 3.6 and 4.5) that enables staff to petition decisions relating to determination of independent researcher status or decisions relating to staff circumstances applications;
  - technical tools to monitor the consistency of the internal review process (section 4.1).

## 1.6 Communications

23. Throughout the submission period, a programme of communications to UCL researchers will operate. It will ensure that staff are fully aware of this Code of Practice and how it underpins UCL's REF planning timetable and activities.
24. The Code of Practice will be accessible to all UCL staff online at the UCL REF website. Information about where and how to access the code will be disseminated via various communication channels (the Week@UCL Newsletter, UCL REF newsletter, Heads of Department, appropriate professional services staff and UCL REF social media accounts). Dissemination will also take place through other channels including REF training events and fora.
25. UCL's network of Department Managers will liaise with Heads of Department to identify all staff on leave of absence so that they can be contacted individually and referred to the code. This process of communication will take place twice: once the code has been signed off by the funding bodies and again early in 2020 before the census date.
26. The programme of communications will ensure that staff are made aware of the opportunity to disclose individual circumstances and to appeal decisions that they think may have been made in error or where they perceive that they may have been prejudiced against.

## 1.7 Joint submissions with other institutions

27. This Code of Practice applies to all units of assessment (UoAs) submitted by UCL as a single institution. UCL also intends to make joint submissions with two other institutions: Birkbeck, University of London and the Institute of Zoology (IOZ).



28. All those involved in the process of developing the joint submission at each institution will receive REF-specific EDI training.
29. Where UCL submits to a UoA jointly with Birkbeck, the UCL Code of Practice will apply to the submission, with the exception of the appeals process for staff employed solely by Birkbeck: in those cases, the appeals process outlined in Birkbeck's Code of Practice will apply.
30. The IOZ's special funding arrangement with Research England has been managed through partnership with UCL since 2011 and all IOZ staff with responsibility for research are honorary staff at UCL. The IOZ submission will be governed entirely by the processes documented in the UCL Code of Practice. This has been formally approved by the IOZ Director and by Research England's REF Team (Appendix J). IOZ staff have been consulted during the development of the Code.
31. Activities that will be undertaken within IOZ, which are additional to those described in the UCL Code of Practice, are detailed below, with reference to the relevant part of the Code.
- Communication of the Code of Practice (section 1.6): The Code of Practice will be accessible to all IOZ staff online via the ZSL intranet, IOZ newsletter, IOZ's REF manager, UCL REF newsletter and UCL REF social media accounts. Staff on leave of absence at IOZ will be referred to the Code in accordance with UCL's schedule.
  - Communication of the processes for determining independent researchers, disclosing individual staff circumstances and appeals: all communications that will be disseminated to UCL staff will additionally be disseminated to IOZ staff via the IOZ staff newsletter, following the timelines for UCL communications.
  - Policies and procedures relating to determining independent researchers (section 3): IOZ will maintain their own staff list and will work with the relevant UoA Lead to determine research staff that meet the independence criteria and provide supporting evidence. Cross-checking of this evidence will be undertaken by professional services staff at IOZ using IOZ systems. The appeals process relating to determination of independence will apply to IOZ research only staff in the same way as for UCL research only staff.
  - Policies and procedures relating to output selection (section 4.1): IOZ will establish a local panel (a subset of the UoA's RSG) to assess outputs from IOZ staff. Reviews and scores will be calibrated with the rest of the RSG and cross-review will be used to ensure consistency.
  - Policies and procedures relating to staff circumstances (section 4.4): IOZ will establish a local panel to review individual staff circumstances for IOZ staff. All decisions will be communicated to the UCL SCAP.

## Part Two: Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research

### 2.1 UCL and a 100% Submission

32. The REF Guidance states that all 'teaching and research' staff (indicated as those identified to HESA as academic employment function 3 – 'HESA 3') and 'research-only' staff (HESA academic employment function 2 – 'HESA 2') who have '**significant responsibility for research**' comprise 'Category A' staff and should be included in the HEI's submission to REF 2021. The REF Guidance provides the following definition of staff with 'significant responsibility for research' as those for whom:

- Explicit time and resources are made available, to
- Engage actively in independent research, and it is an
- Expectation of the job role that research is carried out

In addition, to be eligible for inclusion in REF2021 staff must be:

- Employed at UCL or IOZ on the 'REF census date', 31st July 2020; and
- Employed on a contract of 0.2 FTE or more

33. All UCL staff coded 'teaching and research' (HESA academic employment function 3) satisfy the Funding Bodies' definition of staff with 'significant responsibility for research'. This group therefore fulfils Category A eligibility requirements for submission to REF2021, meaning that UCL will be making a 100 per cent submission. All UCL Category A eligible staff who are employed at UCL or IOZ on the census date on a contract of 0.2 FTE or more will be included in UCL's submission to REF2021, subject to being able to demonstrate a substantive connection to UCL. The eligibility of staff on 'research-only' (HESA function 2) contracts is covered in Part Three.

### 2.2 Evidencing a Substantive Connection

34. The funding bodies require HEIs to provide a short statement (of up to 200 words) for staff on contracts of between 0.2 and 0.29 FTE evidencing that staff member's connection to the submitting UoA. These statements may include information about the staff member's contribution to administrative, teaching or governance responsibilities within the submitting UoA, or their supervision of staff and/or students. HEIs are not required to submit statements for staff on fractional contracts of between 0.2 and 0.29 FTE for whom any of the following apply:

- The staff member has caring responsibilities
- The staff member has other personal circumstances (e.g. ill health, disability)
- The Staff member has reduced their working hours on the approach to retirement
- Where the fractional appointment reflects normal discipline practice (for example, where joint appointments with industry or practice are typical in the submitted unit).

Individual staff do not need to provide these statements: this process will be led by the UoA Lead in consultation with the individual staff member where required.

## Part Three: determining research independence.

### 3.1 Policies

35. This section details how decisions will be made to include staff in UCL's REF2021 submission on the basis that they qualify as 'independent researchers'. It should be noted that exclusion or inclusion in UCL's REF2021 submission will not be considered as part of appraisal or performance management processes, or in the assessment of a staff member's eligibility for future promotion.
36. The status as an independent researcher will be determined by whether that staff member satisfies the criteria specified in the guidance provided by the Funding Bodies (in particular paragraphs 128-134 of the REF Guidance and 187-188 of the REF Panel Criteria) and outlined below.
37. The policies and procedures relating to independent researchers are only applicable to 'research only' staff (HESA 2): it is accepted that all 'teaching and research' (HESA 3) staff are independent researchers.
38. At UCL, research only contracts cover a wide variety of HR occupation types. These include the post titles detailed in Table 1. Many staff members in these roles will not satisfy the Funding Bodies' definition of an independent researcher, namely someone who 'undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme'.

**Table 1. UCL Research Only Occupation Types**

Research Assistants	Research Fellows
Research Associates	Senior Research Fellows
Senior Research Associates	Principal Research Fellows
Principal Research Associate	Professorial Research Fellows
Professorial Research Associate	Clinical Research Fellows
Clinical Research Associates	Senior Clinical Research Fellow
Senior Clinical Research Associates	Principal Clinical Research Fellows
Principal Clinical Research Associates	Clinical Training Fellow

39. Given that neither contract nor occupation type is a reliable indicator of research independence, staff members on research only contracts will be considered on a case-by-case basis to assess whether they satisfy the indicators of research independence provided in the REF Guidance. Each indicator may not individually demonstrate independence and where appropriate multiple factors may need to be considered. These indicators are:

- Leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project;
- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement (as per the [illustrative list](#) provided on the REF website);
- Leading a research group or a substantial work package;

To recognise differences in the way that researchers work across disciplines, the Funding Bodies provide the following supplementary indicators for staff eligible for submission to UoAs within Main Panels C and D:

- Being named as a Co-I on an externally funded research grant/award
- Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research (PCWM 189).

40. In addition to the above, to be eligible for inclusion in UCL's REF 2021 submission, a staff member must:

- Be employed at UCL on the 'REF census date', 31 July 2020;

- Be employed on a contract of 0.2 FTE or more; and
- In the case of staff employed on a contract of between 0.2 and 0.29, there must be evidence of a substantive connection to the Unit of Assessment they are being submitted to.

41. As per the REF guidance, a member of staff is not deemed to be an independent researcher only on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs.
42. UCL recognises the valuable contribution made by staff on fixed-term, externally funded contracts to its overall research output, and these staff will be included in the university's submission *so long as they satisfy the criteria provided by the Funding Bodies*. UCL will implement procedures to identify eligible staff (see paragraph 40). UCL also recognises that although in many cases where a researcher is a named PI they will be producing independent research, this will not be true in all cases, notably when the researcher is a PI on a small grant or they are an early career researcher.
43. UCL will use a case-by-case approach to determining whether staff qualify as independent researchers (outlined in Table 2). Using staff lists generated by the REF Team, UoA Leads (in consultation with others as specified below) will identify those research only staff that meet the independence criteria. **A brief supporting statement will be generated for each staff member determined to be an independent researcher detailing the evidence on which these judgements are based.** These will be analysed by the REF Team, and any inconsistencies identified in applying independence criteria will be discussed with the UoA Lead. UoA-level summaries of agreed independent researchers will be scrutinised by the MPWGs, which have overall oversight of the process and ratify decisions.
44. Research only staff who have not been determined to be an independent researcher, but who believe they are undertaking independent research and want to be included in the REF exercise, may appeal the decision (see Section 3.6).

### 3.2 Procedures

45. UCL recognises that evidence relating to research independence is often held locally, within the staff member's department, but that central oversight and accountability is required to ensure that eligibility criteria are being applied consistently. Decisions to include staff members in the university's submission as independent researchers are based on nominations by UoA Leads, advised by Heads of Research Departments and other relevant stakeholders who by virtue of working within the same discipline or field as the staff member are well placed to judge their independence as researchers. However, these nominations will also be subject to a process of review outlined below.
46. The process will be managed in two stages as follows:

#### a: Preliminary assessment/overview of eligibility:

From the spring term of the Academic Year (AY) 18/19, the REF team will provide each UoA Lead with a list of staff on 'research only' (HESA 2) contracts. These lists are generated from the university's HR database, ResourceLink.

UoA Leads will be asked to confirm to the REF team, in consultation with the relevant Heads of Department and professional services staff, that the staff list is complete, i.e. that no staff member on a 'research only' contract is missing, and that the HESA employment function codes to which staff have been allocated are correct. Any HESA code queries will be referred to the relevant HR Business Partner.

The UoA Leads will be asked by the REF team to indicate how many staff on 'research-only' contracts are likely to satisfy the indicators outlined in the Funding Bodies' guidance (described above). They should also provide information on research staff who partially meet

the criteria. This preliminary assessment is required to inform other preparations for the REF submission, such as an estimation of FTE to calculate impact case study requirements, and early internal assessment of output quality.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out to assess the representativeness of staff nominated as independent researchers. Before the formal process of identification of REF-eligible independent researchers begins in the autumn of 2019, all staff involved will undergo Equality & Diversity training (see section 3.5).

#### b: Process for identification of independent researchers:

This process is outlined in Figure 1. From the beginning of the AY 19/20, the REF team will provide UoA Leads with updated lists on a monthly basis. This is to ensure that new starters and leavers are not overlooked, and that assessments of eligibility are carried out as early as possible before the census date of 31 July 2020. Heads of Department will be asked to notify the REF team of future appointments and changes in circumstance, such as the award of an independent research fellowship, at the earliest opportunity.

UoA Leads will review the list of research only staff and assess which staff meet the criteria to be determined as an independent researcher. This will be done in collaboration with Heads of Research Departments, other relevant stakeholders, and in consultation with the individual researcher where this is deemed appropriate and practical. UoA Leads (who may delegate as appropriate) will provide a brief summary of which research independence indicators the staff member satisfies and provide evidence thereof, e.g. substantial research grants led as PI (or Co-I in Panels C and D) and competitively-won independent research fellowships held. A supporting statement from the staff member's Head of Department must be provided in instances of staff being nominated on the grounds that they (i) lead a group or substantial work package or (ii) or in Panels C and D have had significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research they are conducting.

The REF team will verify the content of supporting statement (e.g. through identifying the relevant research grants on Worktribe) and coordinate submission of the nominations to the MPWG meetings. MPWGs will scrutinise the decisions to ensure that they have been made in a fair, appropriate and consistent manner. Decisions on whether to approve or reject nominations will be documented in the minutes of these meetings. Where nominations are approved by the MPWG, a recommendation will be made to the REFSG for formal approval.

47. It should be noted that if, as part of the Research England REF audit process, it is judged that a staff member is not an 'independent researcher', the staff member will be removed from the submission together with all of the outputs that have been attributed to them. The total number of outputs required of the submission will be recalculated on the basis of the new FTE and, in cases where the remaining outputs are too few, an unclassified score will be given to each of the 'missing' outputs, and, where the remaining outputs are more than is required, all the remaining outputs will be assessed as part of the submission.

### 3.3 Data management and governance

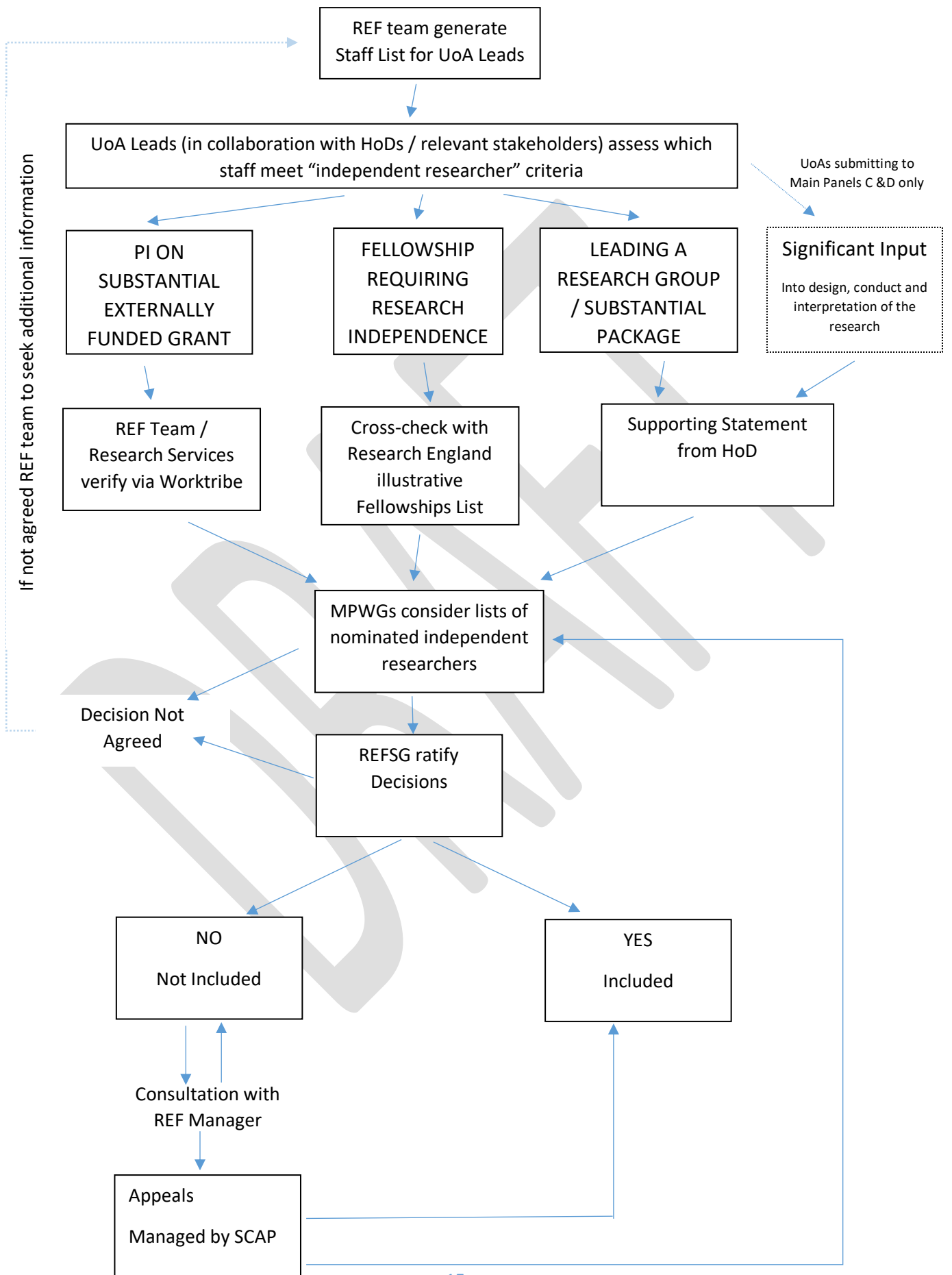
48. UCL recognises the importance of restricting information and documentation pertaining to 'independent researcher' nominations only to key individuals. Only the following people will have access to the nomination paperwork:
- Unit of Assessment Leads
  - Heads of Department, Divisional Directors and Heads of Research Departments
  - Members of the UCL REF Team
  - Members of the Main Panel Working Groups
  - Members of the REF Strategy Group

49. Records (i.e. nomination forms and MPWG / REFSG minutes recording the outcome of approval decisions) will be stored securely for audit purposes until early 2022. UCL's records retention schedule will apply to all REF documentation (written and electronic) and all records management will be compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

### 3.4 Decisions and communications to research only staff, including timescale.

50. At the beginning of the autumn term 19/20 an article will be included in the all staff 'Week@UCL' newsletter announcing that the process of identifying REF2021-eligible independent researchers is underway. The article will detail the timeline (including dates of the MPWG and REFSG meetings and the date by which preliminary selection decisions will have been made), and will also explain the appeals process.
51. Staff will be directed to the UCL REF website for answers to general REF-related questions (the REF team will create and maintain a FAQs page). The website will also provide information on the membership of the various decision-making and advisory groups. The REF team will encourage Faculties to re-circulate the article via suitable newsletters and mailing lists. The article will be published on the UCL REF website and the information reiterated in subsequent REF newsletters.
52. MPWGs will consider UoA-level nominations of current staff determined to be independent researchers starting from the MPWGs scheduled for the autumn term of AY 19/20. Sign off of the MPWG ratified list will be undertaken by REFSG in the meeting immediately following these MPWG meetings. Whilst the determination of research independence will be undertaken for current staff during the first term of AY 19/20, the process will continue on a case-by-case basis throughout the year until the REF census date to account for new starters.
53. UoA Leads will communicate selection decisions within Departments using local Heads as appropriate. The REF team will send out a second notice (disseminated as per the first) confirming that provisional selection decisions have been made and reminding staff of the appeals process. Staff who have not been selected as an independent researcher, but who believe they are REF eligible, will be invited to consult with either the UCL REF Manager or the Chair of SCAP, before being offered the opportunity to formally appeal the decision (see Section 3.6).
54. From this point and until the appeals process closes in July 2020, a brief notice will be included in each 'Week@UCL' newsletter, and in all of the UCL REF Updates published during this period, reminding staff of the deadline to appeal decisions regarding independent researcher status. The REF Team will encourage Faculty and Departmental Communications Officers to include these notices in relevant Faculty/Departmental newsletters. Departments are required to ensure these communications are aimed at research staff and not all academic and other faculty staff.

**Figure 1: Determining status as 'Independent Researcher' Flowchart**



### 3.5 Staff, committees and training

55. Governance of the process for determining research independence is overseen by the formal bodies and staff groups listed in Section 1.4. The initial nomination of staff to be submitted is undertaken by UoA Leads (in consultation with other stakeholders as required). The MPWGs operate within a framework of peer review and support: and act in an advisory as well decision-making capacity. The REF Strategy Group acts as the executive group of the MPWG and is required to scrutinise and ratify its decisions. Record-keeping of both the REFSG and MPWGs is facilitated by the REF Team with data stored on a central secured shared-drive.
56. All staff involved with developing the REF submission and implementing the processes to coordinate the university's submission are required to undertake EDI training, including training in unconscious bias. These materials have been developed by the EDI team in the Provost's Office, and incorporate bespoke material specific to the REF process designed to support fairness and consistency in the identification of staff as independent researchers and the selection of outputs. The training makes use of case studies to illustrate how failure to reflect on the potentially differential impact that REF policies and procedures may have on staff and/or unconscious bias can lead to inadvertent discrimination against identifying staff for inclusion in UCL's REF submission.
57. The purpose of this training is to ensure that staff involved in the selection process are:
- Aware of Equality Legislation and the Funding Bodies' guidance on identifying REF-eligible staff;
  - Understand UCL's policies and procedures; and
  - Feel confident in their ability to apply UCL policy consistently and to recognise when they should seek additional support and advice and from whom.
58. All REFSG members, UOA Leads, MPWG members, RSG members along with members of the UCL REF Team, the RICS team and professional services staff who support the REF will be required to undertake the training. The training will take the form of a mandatory online programme for all those working in a support or advisory capacity and contact-based training for all those in a decision-making capacity. Post-training, all equalities related queries during the selection process should be referred to the EDI team.

### 3.6 Appeals relating to independent researcher criteria

59. As detailed in Section 1.4 and Appendix F, UCL's Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel (SCAP) will consider appeals from staff relating to decisions made regarding their eligibility to be submitted in REF2021 relating to their status as an independent researcher.
60. All information submitted to SCAP will be retained confidentially by the panel. The HR panel representative, if agreed with the panel chair and the individual researcher, will be able contact the individual researcher to ensure that the institution is providing appropriate support, ensuring the researcher is aware of their rights and to propose reasonable adjustments where applicable.

#### 3.6.1 Communicating the appeals process and eligible grounds

61. The appeals process (below) is communicated to staff as part of this Code of Practice. It will also be communicated as part of the REF Communications exercise (via the REF newsletter, REF website and within departments via emails from the UoA Lead and Research Administrators) to all Research Staff.
62. Researchers can make an appeal against the decision that they are not independent researchers, and therefore will not be submitted to the exercise between October 2019 and August 2020 (exact dates to be determined).



63. Individuals considering an appeal will be encouraged to discuss their case with their UoA Lead and / or the REF Manager in advance of submitting a formal appeal to discuss the detail of their case and, if appropriate, to receive information on how best to make an appeal.
64. In instances of an appeal the researcher will be required to complete the appeals form (see Appendix I for draft appeals form) for submission to SCAP. This must include all the information that the SCAP would need in order to reach a consensus.
65. Eligible grounds for appeal may include meeting any of the indicators of research independence provided in the REF Guidance and highlighted in the previous policy section (paragraph 38). It should be noted that, as per REF Guidance, states that each indicator may not individually demonstrate independence and where appropriate multiple factors may need to be considered.
66. The SCAP will formally report their decisions back to the REF Manager. The REF Manager will be charged with informing the individual researcher of the decision by email within five working days of the meeting.

### 3.7 Equality impact assessment

67. The EDI team will undertake equality analyses in advance of the selection phase of the REF as UoA structures are likely to be different from existing department structures. It is important that information on the profile of UoAs is understood and communicated via MPWGs. Where outcome profiles from decision stages such as determining the eligibility of independent researchers or output selection are discrepant with the UoA EIA, information will be passed to REFSG for decision on possible adjustments.

## Part Four: Selection of Outputs

### 4.1 Policies and Procedures

68. This section explains the process by which outputs will be selected for inclusion in UCL's REF2021 submission. Staff should note that the university's REF strategy is to maximise the quality of its submission, and that the REF assessment is not a performance management exercise. Neither the number of outputs attributed to staff in the final submission, nor the scores given to outputs as part of the internal output review process, will be considered in performance management or appraisal processes, or in any assessment of a staff member's eligibility for future promotion.
69. For REF2021, each UoA is required to submit an average of 2.5 outputs per whole FTE of REF-eligible staff, with each staff member submitting a minimum of one output and a maximum of five outputs. Where a REF-eligible staff member has no outputs, an unclassified score will be given for the missing output unless an application to remove the requirement of a minimum of one output is approved by the REF Funding Bodies (see REF Guidance). Given this partial decoupling of outputs from staff, in order to maximise the university's quality profile, some staff will be entered with more/fewer outputs than others. These differences reflect REF strategy and should not be interpreted as an assessment of the differential value of individual contributions to the university's overall research output.

#### 4.1.1 Policies

70. UCL's review and selection procedures for research outputs were developed by the UCL REF Team together with the MPWGs, with oversight and approval from REFSG and the IOZ Director of Science. The rationale for the methodology is based on three principles:
- UCL's submission to REF2021 will include the selection of the university's best outputs;
  - The internal assessment and selection of outputs will be carried out in a fair and consistent way. In particular, UCL's submission will reflect the diversity of our intellectual community, and the process of selection will be conducted in a way that is sensitive to the variety of circumstances that may constrain an individual's ability to undertake research; and
  - Assessments of research quality will be underpinned by robust processes, including rating outputs by quality, conducting reviewer calibration exercises and providing appropriate advice regarding the use of metrics.

UCL's output selection policies incorporate, and supersede, the earlier 'Core Principles for Output Review' which were first received by REFSG in 2018 and which guided the early stages of internal assessment.

71. The key changes to the REF submission process following the recommendations of the Stern Review, namely, the inclusion of all Category A staff and the partial decoupling of outputs from staff, have shifted the focus of assessment in REF2021 from staff to outputs. In UCL's view, there are broadly two ways in which these changes could lead to negative practices in the selection of outputs. Firstly, given that partial-decoupling means that staff will not be submitted with the same number of outputs, there is the potential that the final output selection may fail to reflect the diversity of UCL's research community; and, secondly, the burden of assessing a much larger volume of outputs may encourage reviewers to use short-cuts in making judgements of quality e.g. using journal impact factors and citation counts as surrogates for peer review. UCL's policies on output selection avoid the possibility of both these possible consequences.
72. The selection of outputs in UCL's REF2021 submission will be made on the basis of (i) their eligibility, e.g. compliance with the REF Funding Bodies' open access requirements, and (ii) their research quality, defined in terms of "originality, significance and rigour". Assessments of research quality will be determined by an academic-led exercise of peer review to be conducted within each UoA. Reviewers may use metrics to inform output review so long as they are used responsibly and only as part of an array of applied assessment methodologies.

For example, metrics such as altmetrics might be used to enrich an impact story or to support the assessment of outputs that do not fit neatly into the normal channels of academic research usage. Nevertheless, reviewers will not use journal-based metrics as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles. As a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), UCL is committed to the following objectives:

- The need to eliminate the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, in funding, appointment, and promotion considerations;
- The need to assess research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which the research is published.

73. The inclusiveness of UCL's submission will be monitored through the use of Equality Impact Assessments which will be conducted after the initial assessment and selection of outputs in Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020. If any significant difference is found between the pattern of output attribution and the profile of UCL staff submitted to REF2021, the results will be communicated to the UoA Leads and Head of Department with a view to determining whether an adjustment needs to be made.

74. For managing the submission of outputs of former staff, UoA Leads will be provided with a list of all possibly eligible former members of staff and their eligible outputs (as recorded on UCL Research Publications system (RPS)). UoA Leads will have the opportunity for an initial scrutiny of outputs and to propose those that will be given detailed scrutiny by RSGs. Final decisions on output selections will be made throughout the selection period (December 2019 – July 2020) with decisions ratified by MPWGs.

75. UoA Leads may wish to consider the outputs of all former members of staff who published while at UCL during the REF publications census period. Reasons for departure are not always publicly available, therefore without disclosure of sensitive information, it may not be possible to know if staff left due to redundancy or for other reasons.

76. Output selection decisions will not be subject to an appeals process and this is in-line with the REF Guidance.

77. The change in policy since REF2014, whereby outputs are partially-decoupled' from staff, means that staff submitted to REF2021 are required to submit a minimum of one output. As with the previous REF submission, staff will also be able to disclose personal circumstances where they feel these have constrained their ability to undertake productive research during this REF period.

#### 4.1.2 Procedures

78. The process of assessing and selecting outputs will be managed in two stages:

##### a. Preliminary output review stage

The preliminary review will take place during AY18/19 and will be completed by the end of the AY. The purpose of this stage of the assessment process is to provide an indication of the potential quality profile of each Unit of Assessment's submission; no output selection will be made in this first stage.

UoA Leads will invite all REF-eligible staff to nominate their best outputs. Staff will be made aware of the REF policy on the partial decoupling of outputs from staff. This is to ensure that part-time staff, or staff whose personal circumstances have constrained their research output during the current REF period, do not feel that they are expected to submit five outputs and are aware that only a minimum of one output is required of them. Staff will also be informed that final decisions on output selection will be taken by the MPWG and will be ratified by REFSG in AY19/20.

UoA Leads, with input from Heads of Department or other stakeholders as relevant, will appoint reviewers based on subject expertise to carry out an internal review of the nominated

outputs; where possible, at least one of these reviewers will have previous experience of reviewing outputs for submission to REF. Where UoA Leads feel that their internal reviewers do not have the appropriate expertise to assess interdisciplinary outputs, they will consult with the MPWG Chair and the REF Manager to identify an additional reviewer.

Each output will be evaluated by at least two reviewers, although, with longer form outputs (such as monographs) or practice-based outputs (such as portfolios), an element of sampling may be used as appropriate. Unit of Assessments may use external reviewers as a means of calibration, but their feedback should be used to inform internally determined scores and not as a proxy for an internal review process. Where funding is required to appoint external reviewers, UoA Leads should request this from the relevant Faculty Deans.

Reviewers will rate outputs by quality and provide a score using a scale which mirrors the quality profile to be used by the REF sub-panels, i.e. 4\*, 3\*, 2\*, 1\* or 'unclassified'. UoA Leads may choose to use a more granular scale in their preliminary review assessments (e.g. 4\*, 3.5\*, 3\*, 2.5\* etc.), but they will be asked to agree a final REF-type score during the selection stage. Reviewers may wish to indicate where a score is borderline, and to provide a brief explanation (contextual commentary) for the score given.

UoA reviewers will be encouraged to use the Internal Assessment Module in RPS to manage this process of internal assessment. The use of RPS will be vital for Equality Impact Assessment of the output selection profile, to monitor and review Open Access compliance, and to begin the process of collecting the metadata required for the final REF submission. Given that the RPS assessment module will transition to the REF submission module in due course, usage of the module will eventually become mandatory.

Data stored in the RPS Internal Assessment Module will be accessible only to UoA reviewers, UoA Leads and the REF team. The data will be retained for audit purposes until early 2022, after which it will be permanently deleted.

#### b. Selection stage

Review and Selection Groups (RSGs, as detailed in Section One) will be appointed following completion of the preliminary assessment phase. As these groups (or a subset of them, see Appendix E) are responsible for making the final output selection, the staff involved in selection will receive mandatory REF-specific EDI and unconscious bias training (see below). UoA Leads and MPWG Chairs will receive the same training. Once the training has been completed, the RSGs will undertake an exercise to calibrate reviewers' scores. This exercise will be supported by a tool built by the UCL Information Services Division, which utilises data from the Research Publications System (RPS) to identify patterns of inconsistent scoring.

A further round of internal assessment of outputs will be undertaken (led by UoA Leads and RSGs), taking into account discipline specific differences and updated output selections since the preliminary assessment stage, to nominate a selection of outputs that maximises the quality of the UoA's submission. Specifically, UoA Leads will be asked, for each staff member being submitted to REF2021, to nominate that staff member's best output, and, for the remaining outputs required of the UoA in accordance with its FTE, to nominate the highest quality outputs left in the pool. The UCL REF team will provide UoA Leads with a list of outputs by former staff (as recorded on our Research Publications system RPS), including those that have been made redundant. UoA Leads can nominate outputs by former staff where these significantly add to the quality of the UoA's submission.

## 4.2 Decision and communication to staff, including timelines

79. The timeline for output selection is summarised in Figure 2. During the selection stage (December 2019 – July 2020), a role of the RSGs will be to undertake further quality assessment of new outputs that have been nominated, building upon the quality assessments already completed during the preliminary review stage. The RSGs will submit the final selection of outputs to MPWG for approval with final sign-off of decisions made by REFSG in the final

meeting of the REFSG in AY19/20. Minor amends to the output selection will be made in the months preceding submission; these will be ratified by the final pre-submission meeting of the REFSG or by Chair's action.

80. There is no formal process for notifying staff which outputs have been selected for inclusion in the final submission. Nevertheless, UoA Leads will be encouraged to conduct their internal review process in a consultative manner and, given that the outputs selected as part of UCL's final submission will be published following the assessment phase, to provide staff with appropriate feedback.

#### 4.3 Staff, committees and training

81. UCL's committees and governance structure for managing output selection are outlined in Section 1.4 and Appendices B-F. UoA-level RSGs will assess outputs and make advisory recommendations around selection. Decisions will be agreed by UoA Leads with approval from MPWGs and final ratification by REFSG.
82. As detailed in section 3.5, mandatory EDI training bespoke to the REF will be provided to all colleagues involved in the selection process in mid-late 2019.
83. The REF Team and SCAP will also work with sector-wide E&D colleagues and AdvanceHE to share best practice and exchange ideas.

#### 4.4 Staff Circumstances

84. This section details (i) the process by which staff may voluntarily and confidentially disclose circumstances which they feel have significantly constrained their ability to work productively during the current REF period, and (ii) the circumstances under which UCL can apply to the Funding Bodies for a reduction in the number of outputs required by a submitting Unit of Assessment. It should be noted that consideration of staff circumstances applies to output selection only, and is not relevant to assessments of staff eligibility (i.e. research independence).
85. There are two types of reduction that can be applied for:
1. Unit Reductions: where the effect of staff circumstances cannot be managed by the flexibility afforded by the partial decoupling of outputs from staff, i.e. the fact that only an *average* of 2.5 outputs per FTE is required, submitting UoAs may request a reduction of between 0.5 and 1.5 outputs per staff circumstance.
  2. Removal of the requirement to submit a minimum of one output: where a staff member's circumstances have had an exceptional impact on their ability to produce research within the census period such that they do not have one *eligible* output, an application can be made to remove this requirement.
86. The REF Guidance summarises the applicable circumstances as follows:
- a. Qualifying as an 'Early Career Researcher', defined as having started a career as an independent researcher on or after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016;
  - b. Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside of the Higher Education sector;
  - c. Qualifying periods of family leave, e.g. statutory maternity, paternity or adoption leave taken substantially during the REF period and regardless of the length of the leave taken, or additional paternity, adoption or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more and taken substantially during the REF period;
  - d. For staff submitted to UoAs 1-6, qualifying as a junior clinical academic defined as having not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent.

For circumstances (a) – (d) (previously referred to as ‘clearly defined circumstances’), the REF Guidance (Annex L) provides a list of tariffs for the reductions that can be applied. The guidance allows for circumstances to be combined and the associated reductions to be accumulated.

- e. Circumstances with an equivalent effect on absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs (previously referred to as ‘complex circumstances’), are:
  - i. Disability
  - ii. Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions.
  - iii. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of – or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to – the tariffs provided for (c) above.
  - iv. Caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member) and other circumstances e.g. bereavement.
  - v. Gender reassignment.
  - vi. Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation; or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.

87. Requests for unit reductions. In view of the reduction in output requirement since the previous exercise – from four outputs per person in REF 2014 to an average of 2.5 per FTE in REF 2021 – it is anticipated that, in most cases, UoAs will be able to manage the effect of staff circumstances on overall productivity without seeking reductions at the unit level. Nevertheless, there may be cases where it is not possible for a UoA to submit the required 2.5 outputs per FTE, e.g. where the proportion of staff with circumstances is high and the UoA is small and/or the disciplinary norm is long-form outputs or outputs that have a long lead-time. Where these circumstances apply, UoA Leads should consult the REF Manager about submitting a request to SCAP for a unit reduction. Where SCAP approves a request, the reduction will be calculated in line with the REF Funding Bodies’ worked examples.

88. Requests to submit staff without the minimum of one output: The REF Guidance provides the following eligibility criteria:

1. A REF-eligible staff member has not been able to produce a single eligible output in the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020; and
2. One of the following circumstances applies:
  - i. The staff member has been absent from research for a period of 46 months or more due to circumstances (a) – (d) listed above;
  - ii. In the case of circumstances of type (e), it is judged that the impact is equivalent to 46 months’ absence; or
  - iii. The staff member has had two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.

89. All staff who feel they have experienced personal circumstances that have prevented them from working productively during the REF period are invited to complete a disclosure form irrespective of whether the criteria detailed above apply. Staff who have questions or concerns about whether their circumstances satisfy these criteria are encouraged to consult with the REF Manager or the SCAP Chair, emailing the REF manager in the first instance.

#### 4.4.1 Process for Disclosure of staff circumstances

90. The disclosure of staff circumstances must be initiated by the staff member themselves and not by anyone else involved in the REF submission process. Staff should be assured that any information they disclose will be managed sensitively and confidentially, and that it will only be considered in the context of determining the need for reductions in the number of outputs submitted by UoAs.

91. The process of disclosure of staff circumstances will be managed by SCAP using the process outlined in Figure 3. In September 2019, an All Staff Communication in the 'Week@UCL' will inform staff that the process of disclosure of circumstances for REF2021 is open, and that it will continue through to February 2020 (in order to allow enough time to meet the REF deadline of March 2020 for reduction requests). The REF Staff Circumstances Form (see Appendix H for draft form) will be available on the UCL REF internal website and the REF team will also email the form to all currently confirmed eligible staff. A link to the article will be published on the UCL REF website and distributed via the relevant UCL social media platforms. The REF team will also encourage Faculties, UoA Leads and Heads of Department to disseminate the article via relevant mailing lists.
92. Staff who wish to disclose individual circumstances will be invited to complete the Staff Circumstances Form, and to email the password-protected file to the staff circumstances mailbox. Only members of SCAP and the REF team will have access to these files. Where staff have questions about the process, or concerns about how the information they disclose will be managed, they will be encouraged to consult with the REF Manager or the SCAP Chair. The disclosure form will ask staff if they would like to talk to an HR Representative about support services available, and if they so indicate, a member of the HR team will contact the staff member to follow this up.
93. The SCAP will meet approximately every two months (subject to requirement) during the REF preparations period. The REF Manager will liaise between SCAP and the staff member where necessary, e.g. should SCAP require further information or the staff member has questions or queries about the process. Where SCAP recommends a reduction in UoA output pool as a result of staff circumstances, the REF Manager will inform the relevant UoA Leads so that adjustments can be made accordingly. Where SCAP determine that the staff member's circumstances have had an exceptional impact on their ability to work productively throughout the period and that the requirement that they submit a minimum of one output should be removed, the REF Manager will also communicate the provisional decision to the staff member concerned.
94. In March 2020 the UCL REF Manager will make the reduction requests to the Research England REF Team. Once the decisions have been returned, the REF Manager will contact the relevant UoA Leads so that they can make final adjustments to the number of outputs required in the UoA pool. In instances where a reduction to 0 has been agreed the REF Manager will also contact the researcher confidentially to inform them of the final decision.

#### 4.4.2 Management of circumstances relating to substantive connection

95. As detailed above UCL is not required to submit statements evidencing a substantive connection for staff on fractional contracts of between 0.2 and 0.29 FTE for whom any of the following apply:
- The staff member has caring responsibilities
  - The staff member has other personal circumstances (e.g. ill health, disability)
  - The staff member has reduced their working hours on the approach to retirement
  - Where the fractional appointment reflects normal discipline practice (for example, where joint appointments with industry or practice are typical in the submitted unit).
96. UCL is not obliged to disclose this information as part of its REF submission, but must have the evidence to hand for audit purposes. Therefore, as a precautionary measure, and where applicable, a member of the REF team will contact the staff member to inform them that this information may need to be disclosed, and to explain the reason why. The REF team member will also clarify exactly who has access to the information (i.e. UoA Lead, REF Manager, REFSG).

97. Staff should note that if UCL is asked to disclose information pertaining to any of the circumstances listed above, this information will only be made available to the team carrying out the audit, and will not be passed to the REF sub-panel the staff member has been submitted to.

#### 4.4.3 Data management and governance

98. Digital and hard copies of staff circumstances forms, and minutes recording decisions related to staff circumstances, will be stored securely. They will be retained until the REF audit process is completed in case of queries from panel assessors. Once the audit phase is over, all copies of the forms will be destroyed.

#### 4.5 Appeals related to staff circumstances

99. As detailed in Section 1.4 and Appendix F, UCL's SCAP will consider appeals from staff relating to decisions made regarding the removal of the minimum requirement of one output due to individual staff circumstances. SCAP will not consider appeals relating to recommendations regarding reducing the output pool of a UoA due to staff circumstances.

100. The provisional decision of SCAP will be communicated in confidence to the staff member by the REF Manager. If the decision is not to recommend the output reduction, the staff member will be told of their right to appeal. They will be able to discuss the initial decision with the REF Manager, Chair of SCAP or HR representative. If the staff member decides to appeal the decision, the REF manager will send a request for further information that will be sent to a sub-panel of SCAP for consideration.

101. As the initial decision will have been taken by SCAP, a sub-Panel of SCAP will be convened to consider appeals on the basis of staff circumstances. This will consist of at least three senior members of staff that have received the REF-specific EDI training. Decisions from the sub-panel will be reported back by the REF Manager to the member of staff in question and to the relevant UoA Lead in instances where the output pool needs to be adjusted. Decisions made by the sub-panel will be final.

#### 4.6 Equality impact assessment

102. The spread of outputs across researchers with recorded and protected characteristics will be analysed against the eligible pool of staff. This will be undertaken by the EDI team. If any significant areas of concern are found in output selection rates for particular groups, this will be communicated to the UoA Leads and Head of Department to ascertain whether adjustments need to be made and where these adjustments might be made.

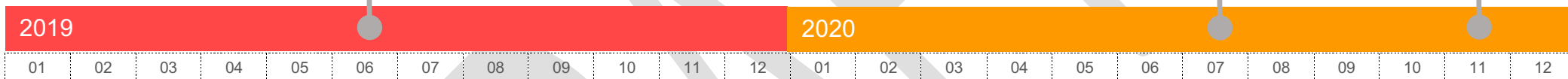


**Figure 2: Process & Milestones for the selection of outputs**

Code of Practice  
7.6.19

Census Date  
31.7.20

Submission Date  
27.11.20



**Internal Output Assessment Phase      E&D Training      Selection Phase      Minor Amends**

First run of to be completed end of AY 18/19  
Ratification by MPWG and approval by REFSG takes place at the end of this phase

Final Review & Selection Groups are appointed who will manage output selection

E&D Training will be undertaken by:

- Review & Selection groups
- UOA Leads
- REF Team

July – December 19

Selection to begin after E&D Training  
Selection Completed by August 20 with minor amends until November  
Ratification by MPWG and approval by REFSG takes place at the end of this phase

← Period for Disclosure of Staff Circumstances & Appeals →

← Selection underpinned by “UCL’s Approved Code of Practice for REF2021” →

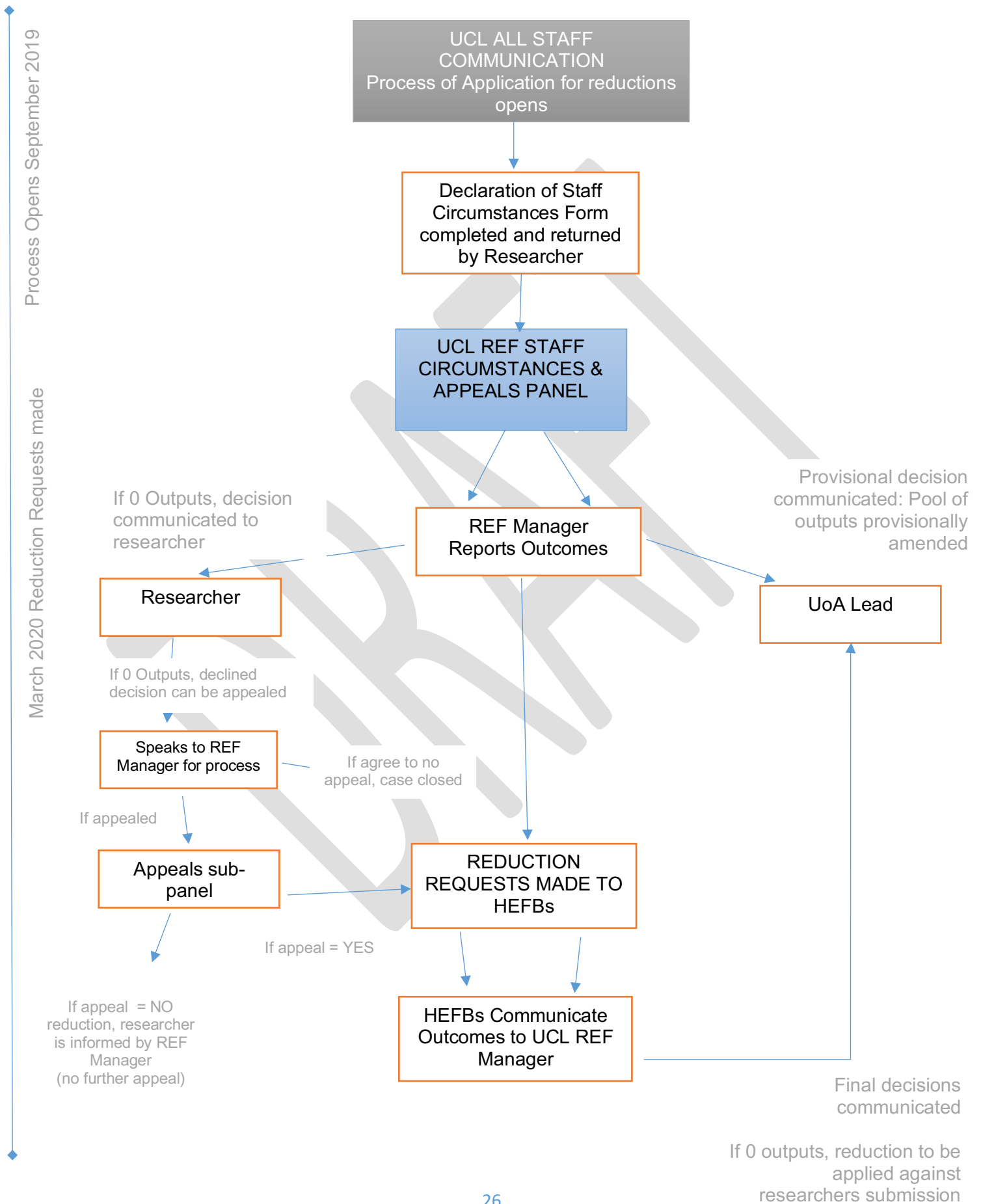
← Initial Reviews underpinned by “Core Principles for Output Review” →

25

← Publication Period 1 Jan 2014 – 31 Dec 2020 →

← OA requirement from 1 April 2016 →

**Figure 3: Staff Circumstances Application and Appeal Process**



## Appendices

**APPENDIX A:** Acronyms & Abbreviations

**APPENDIX B:** REF Strategy Group; Terms of Reference & Membership

**APPENDIX C:** Main Panel Working Groups– Terms of Reference & Membership

**APPENDIX D:** Responsibilities of Unit of Assessment Academic Leads

**APPENDIX E:** REF Review and Selection Groups – Terms of Reference & Membership

**APPENDIX F:** Equalities Diversity and Appeals Panel

**APPENDIX G:** Core Principles for Output Review

**APPENDIX H:** Disclosure of Circumstances Form

**APPENDIX I:** Draft Appeals Form (to follow)

**APPENDIX J:** Research England Letter re IOZ Code of Practice

## Appendix A

### Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ECR</b>	Early Career Researcher
<b>SCAP</b>	UCL's Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel
<b>EDI</b>	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
<b>HEFB</b>	Higher Education Funding Bodies (including Research England, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Scottish Funding Council; Department for the Economy Northern Ireland)
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>HESA</b>	Higher Education Statistics Agency
<b>IOZ</b>	Institute of Zoology
<b>MPWG</b>	Main Panel Working Group
<b>REF</b>	Research Excellence Framework
<b>REFSG</b>	REF Strategy Group
<b>RSG</b>	Review and Selection Groups
<b>UCL</b>	University College London
<b>UoA</b>	Unit of Assessment

## Appendix B

### REF STRATEGY GROUP – Terms of Reference & Membership

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The strategy group exists to lead in all matters related to the UK Higher Education Funding Bodies' next Research Excellence Framework (provisionally known as REF2021) subject to any steer that may be given by the Provost or the Vice Provost (Research).

The REF Strategy group is charged:

1. In leading on agreeing an institutional strategy for REF2021 within the constraints of the national framework, subject to any additional steer as per above;
2. With planning the structure of UCL's submission to the REF in assigning Faculties and Departments to Units of Assessment. This should be arranged and agreed in a way that best meets the needs of the institutional strategy (as per point 1) but should also consider Faculty, Departmental and individual unit of assessment strategies.
3. With agreeing a Governance structure that will manage and deliver the administration of the REF at Faculty level. Bodies within this structure will report back to the REF Strategy Group;
4. In agreeing on all aspects of internal policy and procedure in relation to the next REF and to ensure dissemination of policy within the governance framework;
5. In defining, disseminating and overseeing the implementation of a timetable for REF2021 preparations;
6. To encourage UCL staff to actively engage with the REF process nationally, including the panel appointment process where appropriate.
7. To submit regular reports to Provost's Senior Management Team on the work of the Strategy Group and the progress of UCL's planning and preparations for REF2021;
8. With advising and working with other related groups, such as those dealing with matters around Human Resources, Communications and Marketing, Open Access and Information Services

## REF Strategy Group

### Constitution and Membership

#### *Ex officio*

#### *Vice-Provosts:*

Development  
Enterprise & London  
Education & Student Affairs  
Research [*Chair*]  
Health  
International

Mrs Lori Houlihan  
Dr Celia Caulcott  
Professor Anthony Smith  
Professor David Price  
Professor David Lomas  
Dame Nicola Brewer

Chief Operating Officer

Ms Fiona Ryland

#### *Deans of Faculties:*

Arts and Humanities  
Brain Sciences  
Built Environment  
Engineering Sciences  
Institute of Education  
Laws  
Life Sciences  
Mathematical and Physical Sciences  
Medical Sciences  
Population Health Sciences  
Social and Historical Sciences  
Director of SSEES

Professor Stella Bruzzi  
Professor Alan Thompson  
Professor Alan Penn  
Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker  
Professor Becky Francis  
Professor Piet Eeckhout  
Professor Geraint Rees  
Professor Ivan Parkin  
Professor Mark Emberton  
Professor Graham Hart  
Professor Sasha Roseneil  
Professor Diane Koenker

Director of Research Evaluation  
REF Manager  
Director of Research Strategy & Policy  
Director of Research Strategy & Impact  
Interim Joint Director of HR  
Director of EDI  
EDI representative

Mr Andrew Cooper  
Mr Adam Cresswell  
Ms Sarah Chaytor  
Mr Nicholas Tyndale  
Ms Donna Dalrymple  
Ms Fiona McClement  
Mr Kevin Coutinho

## Appendix C

### UCL MAIN REF PANEL WORKING GROUPS – Terms of Reference & Membership

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The main panel working groups will support UCL's submission to the UK Higher Education Funding Bodies' REF2021 exercise, subject to any steer that may be given by the Provost, the Vice Provost (Research) and UCL's REF Strategy Group. The four working groups exist to manage, govern and administrate functions related to delivering UCL's submission to REF2021 at main panel level.

The Main Panel working groups are charged with:

1. Ensuring the delivery of all data that relates to the submission that meets our institutional strategy for REF2021 within the constraints of the national framework, subject to any additional steer as per above;
2. Defining and establishing a reporting line to REFSG with minutes of each Working Group meeting being passed to REFSG;
3. Establishing an indicative frequency of meetings (e.g. agree to meet on a termly basis);
4. Planning the structure of UCL's submission to the REF in assigning Faculties, Departments and units to REF Units of Assessment. This should be arranged and agreed in a way that best meets the needs of the institutional strategy (as per point 1) but should also consider Faculty, Departmental and individual UoA strategies;
5. Ensuring that all staff with significant responsibility for research are submitted to the REF exercise and in working across the main panels in ensuring that all UCL staff are 'homed' in a UoA which meets the needs of the institutional and individual UoA strategies, with consideration of the fit between the UoA and the individual's research. In instances where there may be more than one 'home' for a researcher the Working Group will determine the most appropriate UoA for submission on strategic grounds;
6. Instigating aspects of internal policy and procedure as agreed by REFSG and in ensuring dissemination of policy within the governance framework;
7. Meeting all deadlines in accordance with the OVPR timetable for REF2021 preparations;
8. Encouraging UCL staff to actively engage with the REF process nationally, including supporting panel related work where applicable;
9. To submit regular reports to the REFSG that will form parts of REFSG reports for Provost's Senior Management Team on progress of UCL's planning and preparations for REF2021;
10. Ensuring all data components of the exercise (outputs, impact and environment) are given appropriate internal scrutiny;

11. Advising and working with other related groups, such as those dealing with matters around Human Resources, Communications and Marketing, Open Access and Information Services.
12. To ensure that there are sufficient resources and appropriate specialist REF expertise in place to support the development of a highly successful submission at institutional and UoA levels.

## **INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUPS**

### **Staff**

- Supporting the REFSG in ensuring that our strategy of making a 100% submission of staff with significant responsibility for research across all panels is achieved;
- Agreeing upon the units of assessment that UCL will make submissions into;
- Recommending strategies for UOA structures and staff inclusion in UOAs that take into account contributing factors such as ensuring that research is submitted in the most appropriate unit or the maximising of QR;
- Ensuring that all staff with significant responsibility for research employed at UCL are submitted to an appropriate UOA and that no staff are left 'homeless'. This will involve a degree of cross panel working;
- Ensuring in a timely fashion that all staff are on the most appropriate contracts. If any staff are on a 'teaching and research' contract but do not have a significant responsibility for research then their contract should be reviewed.

### **Outputs**

- Procedural oversight of the scrutiny of outputs and receiving reports on progress with internal assessment of outputs;
- Maintaining an output selection / scrutiny policy which is in-line with the Core Principles for Output Selection;
- Main Panel Working group leads will liaise regularly with Deans to gain overview of UoAs and decide together with Deans and UoA leads on issues such as sabbaticals.
- To receive Open Access progress reports and to put into place structures to ensure that we are fully compliant for REF.

### **Environment**

- Having oversight of the composition of environment statements;
- Establishing a structure and ensuring resources are allocated appropriately for supporting the environment submission;
- Preparing Environment Data;
- Ensuring that statements are drafted in a timely fashion so that they can be given adequate scrutiny by the group;
- Leading in the peer reviewing of environment statements and providing feedback and scrutiny;
- Ensuring a process is in place for a final 'sign-off' of environment statements before they are passed to the REF team for submission to the REF system.

### **Impact**



- The majority of impact work is being undertaken at departmental/faculty level. The Working Group will be required to review progress on the identification and development of Impact Case Studies.

**Other**

- Providing reports on progress to the REF strategy Group.

**MEMBERSHIP**

<b><i>Dean of Faculty (Chair)</i></b>
UoA Leads (academic staff from departments)
Faculty/UoA Impact Leads (Vice-Deans Research at Faculty level)
REF Manager (Office for Vice-Provost (Research))
Impact Manager (Office for Vice-Provost (Research))
REF Panel Coordinator (Office for Vice-Provost (Research))
HR Business Partner
HR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representative
Administrative representation at Faculty or Department level

## **Appendix D**

### **Responsibilities of Unit of Assessment Academic Leads**

#### **(UoA Leads) for REF2021**

The responsibilities of UoA academic leads in the development of UCL's submissions to REF2021 are suggested as follows:

- i. To successfully deliver the submission to the relevant REF2021 UoA by the given deadline
- ii. To abide by UCL REF Strategy Group (REFSG) decisions notably in relation to strategic direction
- iii. To observe all UCL deadlines as documented in the internal timetable
- iv. To maintain a clear understanding of the general requirements of REF2021 as documented in the guidance on submissions
- v. To maintain a clear understanding of the specific requirements for the UoA as documented in the relevant panel criteria and working methods statements
- vi. To disseminate as appropriate any information received from UCL's central REF Team pertaining to REF2021
- vii. To abide by UCL's Code of Practice on the selection of staff and to undertake training regarding this activity as documented in the Code
- viii. To undertake review and selection activity using applications provided for this purpose
- ix. To liaise, as appropriate, with other UoA leads and UCL's central REF Team regarding strategic fit of the research of individual members of staff
- x. To engage with UCL's central REF Team in monthly progress and monitoring review including Open Access
- xi. To attend REF Panel Working Group meetings

## Appendix E

### REF REVIEW AND SELECTION GROUPS (RSG) – Terms of Reference & Membership

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Review and Selection Groups are charged with:

- Reviewing REF-eligible research outputs to judge quality with regard to originality, significance and rigour;
- Selecting the highest quality outputs to be returned to UCL’s REF submission in each UoA.

The RSGs will:

- Confidentially assess outputs submitted by staff for potential inclusion in the REF (it is not expected that all staff will submit the same number of outputs for consideration by the RSG);
- Assign two assessors to review each output in STEM subjects; in disciplines where long-form outputs such as monographs are common these may only be reviewed by one assessor;
- Establish a calibration exercise to ensure consistency of scoring among assessors;
- Use metrics in accordance with the criteria outlined in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) of which UCL is a signatory; and only where relevant for the UoA according to the REF Guidance and Panel Criteria
- Refer to citation counts where the Research England REF sub-panels have stated that citation information data will be received;

#### MEMBERSHIP

<b><i>Unit of Assessment Lead (Chair)</i></b>
Head of Department, Division/Institute Director, Head of Research Department or other Departmental REF lead as relevant to the UoA structure
Representatives with the relevant level of experience to make judgements about academic quality. To include wherever possible colleagues with previous experience on a REF panel, junior academics, and those who can represent groups with protected characteristics

In some instances, for example in the case of larger UoAs where the number of outputs is high, the role of the RSG may be subdivided amongst members. Thus, a larger group may undertake the review and assessment of outputs, with a sub-group of the RSG responsible for the selection of outputs to be returned in the REF submission.

## Appendix F

### STAFF CIRCUMSTANCES AND APPEALS PANEL (SCAP)

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The UCL Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel is charged with:

- Upholding UCL's aim to operate fair and transparent processes for managing individual staff circumstances and considering appeals as detailed in the Code of Practice;
- Ensuring that UCL avoids discrimination and complies with legislation;
- Ensuring consistency across all disciplines in the consideration of staff circumstances and appeals;

The Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel will:

- Consider staff circumstances at an individual and UoA level and where appropriate make recommendations on:
  - Removal of the minimum requirement of one output for individual staff
  - Reductions to the UoA output pool in accordance with Annex L in the REF Guidance;
- Submit to Research England's REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel UCL's requests for reductions in outputs as detailed in the REF Guidance;
- To consider Appeals from staff in relation to
  - determination of REF eligibility according to independent researcher criteria
  - individual staff circumstances relating to the removal of the minimum requirement of one output for that staff member (appeal considered via a sub-panel)

The Panel will meet approximately every two months from October 2019, depending on the volume of requests, to consider individual staff circumstances and appeals on a case-by-case basis.

#### Membership

<b>Senior academic member of staff at Dean of Faculty level (Chair)</b>
Director of EDI
Disabled staff network representative
Four Equalities Champions from UCL's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Networks from each of the REF Main Panels
REF Manager
SCAP Secretary

*NB. In the case of Appeals the membership maybe adjusted to ensure that a SCAP member is not from the same department/UoA as the appellant*

#### Responsibilities of members:

- Members must not be directly involved in eligible staff identification in any UoA submission;
- Members must maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information;
- Members must receive bespoke EDI training as related to REF

## APPENDIX G

### CORE PRINCIPLES FOR OUTPUTS REVIEW

#### OVERVIEW

With the implementation of outcomes from the Stern Review, and with the move towards the 100% submission of eligible staff, a significant burden for institutions has moved from staff selection to the selection of research outputs.

With the publication of the first set of decisions of staff and outputs, the change in the number of outputs required and the weakening of the link between staff and their publications in the REF, institutions such as UCL will have many more outputs than can be submitted based on output maxima per person coupled with the overall reduction for the average per FTE. For Russell Group institutions this has an obvious strategic benefit, nevertheless the increased volume of outputs to internally assess provides logistical and academic challenges. A tempting obvious short cut in internal assessment might be to, where possible, use journal metrics and citation counts to directly drive our judgement of quality. We believe that this solution would be detrimental to assuring that fair and rigorous academic judgements have been applied. This practice would also go against the important principles that UCL has committed itself related to our use of journal metrics and UCLs bibliometrics policy that is currently being drafted.

The increased emphasis on output selection for REF will also have impact in terms of our drafting of the Code of Practice, the onus of will would move from discussing the practice and behaviours that led to the selection of staff, to the reasoning behind institutions approaches to selecting outputs for publications.

A number of departments have already begun to implement approaches to internally assess their outputs. In support of this, we propose the development of some core principles to guide colleagues in these tasks.

**The following principles have been reviewed by both REFSG and UCL's REF Main Panel Working Groups.**

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## **PRINCIPLES FOR OUTPUT REVIEW**

**Core Principle One:** All eligible staff with significant responsibility for research will be included in our submissions

For REF2021 all staff with significant responsibility for research are returned to the REF, provided they are independent researchers with contractual status used to identify the majority of academic staff who have a significant responsibility for research, particularly in research-intensive universities.

At UCL we should work on the principle that all staff who meet core eligibility criteria as defined by Research England will be submitted to REF2021 with  $\geq 1$  research output. All those who are on 'research only' and 'teaching & research' contracts who are not producing outputs, and have not been required to produce research, may be required to have their responsibilities reviewed by their Department in conjunction with the Human Resources Division before the census date. If additional support is required to help staff in developing at least  $\geq 1$  research output that meets the GPA threshold expected of the submitting department then reasonable adjustments should be agreed with Heads of Departments to help in achieving that goal.

In a small number of cases, staff may agree that it is appropriate for them to change responsibilities and / or contracts to better reflect the work that they are carrying out. This would only be considered if it is felt to be appropriate and any such discussions would be undertaken in conjunction with HR. It should be noted that QR funding is derived from both the quality of work and the FTE submitted to REF and ultimately it is advantageous for UCL to submit all eligible staff.

Colleagues are reminded that REF is not and has never been a tool to assess individuals – it assesses outputs, impact and environment and it should not be mistaken for individual staff appraisal. Everyone on a contract that includes research can contribute to the assessed excellence of their UoA via REF contributions that include outputs, impact case studies, impact outside of case studies and other elements of the Environment statement. But to maximise scores in any REF exercise, some staff will be entered with more and some with fewer outputs. That decision reflects REF strategy, which is not the same thing as UCL's assessment of the value and contribution of any individual's research to the institution. Likewise, UCL's promotions guidelines should specifically bar references in promotion cases to how many of the candidate's outputs had been selected for REF.

The Main Panel Working Groups will have oversight of the process of identifying staff with significant responsibility for research and will report to REFSG on progress. All staff are to be treated fairly and equitably in line with the relevant HR policies and procedures.

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**Core Principle Two: Our strategy should work to maximise output quality within the boundaries of our code of practice**

Everyone on a contract that includes research can contribute to the assessed excellence of their UoA via REF contributions that include outputs, impact case studies, impact outside of case studies and other elements of the Environment statement. But to maximise scores in any REF exercise, some staff will be entered with more and some with fewer outputs. That decision reflects REF strategy, which is not the same thing as UCL's assessment of the value and contribution of any individual's research to the institution.

The breaking of the substantive link between staff and outputs provides a greater opportunity for institutions to submit more widely from their pool of most excellent outputs. While this is in the spirit of the fundamental remit of the Research Excellence Framework, the selection of outputs still needs to be managed in a fair and transparent way, and we need to be assured throughout all aspects of our REF submission that that specific groups of staff have not been marginalised or under-represented within the new system.

Our practice for the final selection of outputs will be documented in the Code of Practice, which will include details of initiatives and behaviours related to equality and diversity. Environment statements will include further details of how practices that support equality, diversity and research ethics are managed and embedded at unit / department level.

**Core Principle Three: We must determine the best quality outputs within specific subject fields**

This principle relies predominantly on academic judgement. The details on how to assess the quality of outputs within a specific field should be left to experts within subject disciplines with the Main Panel Working Groups having oversight of practice taking place within departments. Determining output quality should take into account the other four core principles along with discipline-specific factors.

*Points to consider in determining quality:*

- Departments should make their own decisions on whether gradings from internal assessment be shared with the submitting researcher. Considerations should be taken into account as to whether sharing scores might cause anxieties with the staff being reviewed, particularly for those staff on probation. Nevertheless many departments are happy to share scores; particularly when done so in a supportive and non-hostile way that offers researchers the capacity to provide feedback and ideally the capacity to produce more work of a similar or improved quality.
- Calibration of output scores is required in some but not all departments. Again departments should make a consistent decision based upon the attributes of the subject discipline. For example in stem subjects, and in the reviewing of journal outputs and chapters, it is felt that all outputs should have at least two reviews, and any outputs that sit on the boundaries between scores should also be supplied with some contextual commentary on how they have been graded. Long form outputs such as monographs might only be considered by one reviewer but with a local body such as an output reading group being used to inform the calibration of scores.

- 
- For some outputs it might be appropriate to consider the use of external assessors. Their feedback should be used to inform our internally determined scores rather than used as a proxy.
  - If a UOA does not have a staff member who has assessed outputs in REF2014 then the department should look for someone with previous REF output assessor experience in their discipline to assist with calibration. This external assessor should not be a member of the REF2021 sub-panel.
  - Departments should look to develop an interpretation of the scale which mirrors that of REF sub-panels using the quality profile level. Departments may choose to use a more granular scale in their assessments (eg 4\*, 3.5\*, 3\*, 2.5\* etc) and come to an agreement on a final score at the selection stage.
  - Reviewers should familiarise themselves with the sub-panel reports and use them to inform their reading of the submitted outputs.

#### Core Principle Four: **To use research metrics responsibly**

UCL is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and we have committed ourselves to its principle themes:

- The need to eliminate the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, in funding, appointment, and promotion considerations.
- The need to assess research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which the research is published;

We should not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.

This is not to say that we are entirely dismissive of the uses of all metrics but they should be used with caution. For example, metrics such as altmetrics could be used to enrich an impact story or support the assessment of outputs that do not fit neatly into the normal channels of academic research usage.

We understand that some panels do use a range of metrics in their assessment and selection of outputs. Use of any metrics should be made responsibly as part of a range of applied assessment methodologies.

#### Core Principle Five: **To utilise the systems that support Research data management**

We recommend use of the Internal Assessment Module in RPS for managing the process of internally assessing outputs and collation of metadata that will make up the REF final submission. The RPS assessment module will transition to the REF submission module in due course. As such, usage of the module will become mandatory making it advantageous to all departments to begin early adoption of its functionality; not just for reasons of familiarisation but because the current assessment data will be able to be re-used.

We recommend the responsible use of systems that track research metrics, be it analytic based systems such as InCites from Clarivate or non-traditional metrics approaches such as those recorded by the Altmetrics platform. We support the use of a variety of system tools and metrics to build a narrative and support an output assessment.



DRAFT

## APPENDIX H

### UCL REF Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form

To: All members of UCL staff eligible for return in REF2021  
From: Chair of the Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel (SCAP)  
Subject: REF2021 - consideration of individual staff circumstances

---

This document is being disseminated to all staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see [‘Guidance on submissions’](#), paragraphs 117-122). As part of UCL’s commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF we have put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to voluntarily 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 other staff. 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 included in REF submissions where they have:
  - circumstances that have resulted in an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period (see below)
  - circumstances *equivalent* to 46 months or more absence from research
  - 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

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the circumstances listed above, you are requested to complete the attached form. Further information can be found in paragraphs 160 to 201 of the Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01). Completion and return of the form is entirely on a voluntary basis, and individuals who do not choose to complete and submit a form will not be pressured to declare information if they do not wish to do so. This form is the only means by which we will be gathering this information; we will not be consulting HR records, contract

start dates etc. except to verify, where possible, circumstances declared. 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**

The completed forms will be seen by UCL's REF Equality Panel (SCAP).

If UCL 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 UCL REF team, the 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 university 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 their HR partner to provide the updated information.

**DRAFT- based on HEFB's template**

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

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

Do you have a REF-eligible output published 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 above) which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es).

Circumstance	Time period affected
<p><b>Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).</b></p> <p><i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a></p>
<p><b>Junior clinical academic who has not gained Certificate of completion of Training by 31 July 2020.</b></p>	<p>Tick here <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.</b></p> <p><i>Dates and durations in months.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Click here to enter dates and durations.</a></p>
<p><b>Family-related leave;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• statutory maternity leave</li> <li>• statutory adoption leave</li> <li>• Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more.</li> </ul> <p><i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Click here to enter dates and durations.</a></p>
<p><b>Disability (including chronic conditions)</b></p> <p><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.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a></p>
<p><b>Mental health condition</b></p> <p><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.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a></p>

<p><b>Ill health or injury</b></p> <p><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.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance</b></p> <p><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.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Caring responsibilities</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p> <p><i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement.</b></p> <p><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.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

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 Staff Circumstances and Appeals Panel
- I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the HEFB's 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 circumstances, 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 would like to be contacted by:

Email  Insert email address

Phone  Insert contact telephone number

DRAFT

## APPENDIX J: Research England Letter re IOZ Code of Practice



11 March 2019

Mr Adam Cresswell  
University College London  
BY EMAIL

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8SR

Telephone 0117 931 7468  
Facsimile 0117 931 7203  
[www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk)  
Direct Line 0117 931 7192  
Email [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk)

Dear Mr Cresswell,

In response to your query of 6 February 2019, I am writing to clarify the requirements around submitting codes of practice for REF 2021 where one of the institutions within a joint submission is making only this single submission to REF 2021.

Following consultation of the REF 2021 Steering Group, I can confirm that in these instances, the institutions concerned would be able use a single code of practice for that joint submission. In this particular case, this means that UCL and the Institute of Zoology (IoZ) may submit a single code of practice for REF 2021 under the following conditions:

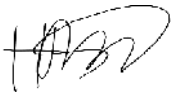
1. Explicit agreement will be required from both UCL and IoZ acknowledging the submission of a single code of practice to cover both institutions.
2. UCL must submit the code of practice on behalf of both institutions with letters of support from the heads of institution of both UCL and IoZ. These letters must be sent to [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk) by noon on 7 June 2019.
3. The code of practice must detail the relevant governance and consultation structures within both HEIs for identification of significant responsibility for research (SRR) (if both institutions are not submitting 100 per cent of Category A eligible staff), identification of research independence, and the selection of outputs.
4. The processes applied to identify SRR and research independence, and to select outputs for submission should be consistent across both institutions,

though we acknowledge that structures may differ slightly between UCL and IoZ. Joint processes must be articulated clearly and must not compromise adherence with other areas of the code of practice that apply to either institution's submission in other UOAs and overall.

We also note that this joint submission to UOA 5 will include Birkbeck College as well as UCL and IoZ. UCL's code of practice may also therefore be used by Birkbeck College for this UOA submission should they wish to do so. The code of practice should therefore also outline where joint decision making has taken place across all three institutions, while ensuring that this does not compromise any one of the institutions from adhering to their respective codes of practice, as outlined in the Guidance on codes of practice (REF 2019/03).

Should you have any queries, please direct these to my colleague Hannah Daisley at [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely,



Helena Mills  
Head of REF Policy

Cc Professor Ken Norris, Institute of Zoology