Code of Practice for the Selection of Staff –

Research Excellence Framework 2014

Updated 20th March 2013

1   Background

1.1 The purpose of this Code of Practice (CoP) is to detail the processes put in place by the University to ensure that staff selection meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the legislation referenced in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions[1], and the required principles of Transparency, Consistency, Accountability and Inclusivity. Details of the University's appeals process are also given.

1.2 As the REF is a mechanism to allocate funding for research, in some cases the University will need to make strategic decisions with the aim of maximising future research income. Teesside University is a research focussed institution. The University does not expect to return the majority of staff to the REF, and its approach to the REF is therefore based on optimising quality profiles within a select number of Units of Assessment (UoA) aligned to areas of research strength.

1.3 The University will submit to a UoA only if it is confident of receiving a relatively high score, to match and preferably improve upon overall performance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008). The aim is to support the 'delivering excellence' component of the University's mission statement[2]. When making a decision as to whether a return will be made to a particular UoA, consideration will be given to the strength and depth of research in the potential submission, and the infrastructure and research environment.

1.4 In considering whether a member of staff will be returned to REF, the specific criteria of the UoA will be considered, alongside the following:

   (i)   the quality of the member of staff's research outputs, based on the number required according to their individual circumstances;
   (ii)   relevance of their research to the submission more broadly, and the contribution of this work to its overall strategy;
   (iii) research-based indicators of esteem.

   Assessment of research output quality will account for 65% of each submission's quality profile, therefore the greatest emphasis will be placed on output quality and the relevance and fit of the member of staff's research with that of the submitting unit.

1.5 It is intended that the University's submission will contain a balanced profile of staff whose outputs are expected to be assessed at a minimum quality rating of 2.5 'points' per output (where a 4* rating equate to 4 points, a 3* rating to 3 points, etc.). The University would not wish to submit outputs where there is a risk of them being graded as unclassified.

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[1] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/, pp. 36 – 38
[2] http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/about/mission.cfm

1.6 The University is committed to returning all staff who are conducting excellent research. For the relatively small number whose work does not fit within a UoA to which the University will make a submission, the following options will be considered:

(i) Developing a joint submission with another institution. Investigation will be undertaken by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Business Engagement), the Dean of the Graduate Research School and the Assistant Dean (Research) of the relevant School, in discussion with the member(s) of staff concerned. It should however be noted that there are a number of practical difficulties with this approach, which may prove insurmountable.

(ii) Return a member of staff in a submission made by another University, although this may also involve significant practical difficulties and the need for specific agreements.

1.7 The CoP will be reviewed in light of mock REF exercises.

2 Principles of the selection process

2.1 The University has taken the following steps to ensure that its staff selection processes adhere to the principles outlined in the REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions:

2.2 _Transparency_ – The CoP will be made available to all members of staff who are eligible for submission to REF via the University's intranet. Awareness will be raised through email notification, inclusion in internal newsletters, a number of briefing events to which all eligible members of staff will be invited (these will be held at different days and times to increase opportunities for part-time members of staff to attend), and local research meetings in Schools. The availability of the CoP will also be disseminated at a monthly University networking event for researchers. A summary will be prepared of the aims of REF, the University's selection processes and the purpose and content of the CoP.

Details of members of staff who are absent from work at the time of the CoP's publication will be provided by the HR Department, and information will be posted to them in hard copy.

2.3 _Consistency_ – The selection of staff to be submitted to all UoAs will continue to be based on the criteria set out in paragraphs 1.3 to 1.5. To date, senior members of staff who are leading UoA submissions have reviewed the quality and quantity of the outputs of research-active members of staff, and their research plans. This has led to the preliminary identification of staff who may be submitted to REF. It is anticipated that this review process will continue as REF submissions are prepared.

2.4 *Accountability* – Recommendations on staff selection and the content of UoAs more broadly will be made at UoA level, and considered by a single, central body, the REF Steering Group.

The remit of this Group is to come to a view on the UoAs to which the University will submit, the staff to be submitted (also using the criteria in paragraphs 1.3 to 1.5 as well as UoA level recommendations), and the content and strategy to be followed. Group discussions will remain confidential. It is likely that the performance of individual members of staff will be examined in their absence, in which case the Steering Group will be made aware if they are affected by individual circumstances, but will not be given details.

The process by which individual circumstances will be disclosed is described in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.9 and will minimise the need for further disclosure of sensitive information.

The REF Steering Group reports to the University's Research Policy Committee, which is responsible for the overall research strategy of the institution and in turn reports to Academic Board. The Terms of Reference of these committees are provided in Appendix B. Membership of the REF Steering Group comprises:

- Chair: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Business Engagement);
- Dean, Graduate Research School;
- Assistant Deans (Research) and Research Institute Directors (often the same person fulfils both roles for a given academic School and Institute). They are responsible for research direction and management within their discipline areas, including the preparation of UoA submissions;
- Other nominated senior members of staff with responsibility for leading submissions to additional UoAs if and when they are identified;
- Secretary, to maintain records of agreements and action points.

Terms of reference for the Group will be made available on the University's Intranet. Alongside the reporting mechanisms outlined above, final approval of the University's REF submission will be given by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, the team of senior managers which is responsible for the development and management of the University as a whole.

The rationale for this arrangement is to maintain a compact but representative Steering Group with a close understanding of the University's research community and the ability to receive recommendations made at UoA level, and share progress and lessons learned across UoAs. The Group is integrated into the institution's research policy framework and overall management structure.

Equality and Diversity training, tailored to the REF process, will be provided to all of those involved in selection decisions including the Steering Group and the members of the appeals panel (see paragraph 3.9). This will make use of Equality Challenge Unit training materials.

2.5 *Inclusivity* – The relatively small size of the University's research community and the integration of Institute Directors and Assistant Deans (Research) into the management teams of academic Schools, allows the identification of all staff who may be eligible for submission to REF. Efforts to sustain an inclusive environment focus on supporting those who will likely or potentially be submitted to REF, and continuing to encourage the development of the broader research community.

3   Staff selection and feedback

3.1 The staff selection process will be dynamic as members of staff leave or are recruited, and will continue near to the deadline as outlined in section 5. This is in recognition that important outputs may not yet be available for consideration, as there is no intention to prematurely exclude staff who could be submitted. As a consequence members of staff will be categorised under the following headings during the selection process:

(i)   Definitely to be submitted to REF in a Teesside UoA;
(ii)   Possibly to be submitted to REF in a Teesside UoA;
(iii)   Possibly to be submitted to REF if an appropriate route can be identified;
(iv)   Not to be submitted to REF.

3.2 All members of staff who are eligible for submission to the REF (defined as meeting the definition of category A staff given in the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions[3]) will be advised in writing of their preliminary categorisation following an initial exercise to be completed by October 2012. Members of staff whose categorisation subsequently changes will be updated following exercises in April and September 2013, when new members of staff will also be advised of their categorisation.

3.3 All members of staff, including *fixed-term and part-time staff*, will be assessed against the same criteria for submission (paragraph 1.4), with reference to the number of outputs required by HEFCE depending on their circumstances. All members of staff, regardless of contract type, will continue to be considered on an equal basis for receipt of research allowances, mentoring and guidance from senior colleagues, eligibility to apply for internal development funding, and other support.

3.4 *Disclosure of individual staff circumstances.* The REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions sets out the circumstances under which a member of staff may submit fewer than four outputs. These are broken down into clearly defined circumstances and those which are more complex[4]. For clearly defined

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[3] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/, p17
[4] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/, paragraphs 90 – 100, pp. 20 – 21.

Clearly defined circumstances:
-   Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009);
-   Part-time employment;

circumstances, each REF main and sub-panel will apply criteria showing the reduction in required outputs; complex circumstances will require a judgement from the submitting institution, to be considered for all UoAs by the REF Equality and Diversity Panel (EDAP). It is recognised that members of staff may be affected by a combination of clearly defined and complex circumstances.

3.5 If a member of staff has clearly defined circumstances, the REF submission will include a description of up to 200 words, which will be shared with the REF team at HEFCE and the relevant REF sub-panel. For complex circumstances, the limit is 300 words, and this will be shared with the REF team, EDAP and main panel chairs, from whom confidentiality will be required. Sub-panels will be informed only that there are complex circumstances, along with confirmation of the number of outputs required from the member of staff in question.

3.6 Any member of staff who feels that they may be affected by clearly defined or complex circumstances will be able to declare these in confidence by 27th July 2012. All eligible members of staff will be invited to complete a form detailing their circumstances, to be returned to the Graduate Research School[5]. These will be considered by a panel comprising the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Business Engagement), the Dean of the Graduate Research School, an HR Manager and the University's Equality and Diversity Advisor, working with the relevant UoA submission lead. The panel's decisions and action points will be recorded.

3.7 Details of new members of staff will be provided by Human Resources to the Graduate Research School each month, and the Graduate Research School will alert these members of staff of the opportunity to disclose their circumstances. Additional meetings of the panel will therefore be held as necessary to allow disclosure by new members of staff and notifications of changes in circumstances to be considered.

- Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research;
- Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters).

More complex circumstances:
- Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue);
- Ill health or injury;
- Mental health conditions;
- Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare in addition to periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken. This could include for example, pregnancy related illness and health and safety restrictions in laboratory and field work;
- Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative);
- Gender reassignment;
- Other circumstances, not including teaching and administration.

[5] See http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/ref-materials/staff-disclosure-of-individual-circumstances for the template form and covering letter to be adapted.

3.8 If applicable, the appeals panel (see section 3.11) will be notified of whether a member of staff is felt to be affected by individual circumstances, and the appropriate reduction in required outputs.

3.9 All completed forms and associated records of decisions and action points will be stored in accordance with the HR Department's usual secure systems in order to protect confidentiality and adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.10 The University will strive to support any member of staff who discloses circumstances for the first time. Support will be offered by the Human Resources Department using their usual confidential systems. Options will be discussed with the member of staff concerned and further support arranged subject to their agreement.

3.11 *Feedback and appeals* – Procedures will be put in place to provide feedback to members of staff who are not selected for submission, and for the University to receive and consider appeals. When staff are informed of their categorisation (see section 3.1), they will be alerted to the possibility of seeking feedback. They may take the opportunity to contact their Assistant Dean (Research) or UoA submission lead and, if appropriate, the Dean of their School to discuss their case. In the case of members of staff who are considering making an appeal, this is intended to allow informal dialogue, but they may be accompanied by either their union representative or a colleague.

3.12 It will be possible to make appeals based on procedural grounds including the assessment of a member of staff's individual circumstances, but not against assessments of research quality.

3.13 The appeals process will be held before staff selections are finalised. An appeals panel will be convened for this purpose and will comprise:

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships and Standards);
The Director of Human Resources;
Two members of the University's Professoriate, who have been confirmed as being submitted to REF, but who have not been involved in the staff selection process.

The members of the appeals panel have not been involved in the selection process, and will receive equality & diversity training as detailed in section 2.4.

3.14 The appeals panel will consider a short written submission from the appellant and feedback from their Assistant Dean (Research) and/or the relevant UoA submission lead. They will be notified by the panel described in section 3.5 of whether the member of staff was judged to be affected by individual circumstances, and any reduction in the number of outputs required. The panel will provide each appellant with written notification of the outcome of their appeal within ten working days of the appeal panel's meeting. The decision of the appeal panel will be final.

4   Equality impact assessment

Equality impact assessments will be undertaken with the support of the University's Equality and Diversity Advisor, at key points in the selection process as detailed below.

5   Timetable

The timetable of the staff selection process is outlined below. The information in italics is taken from the HEFCE timetable.

Activity	Deadline	Responsibility
Initial Equality Impact Analysis	8th June 2012	E&D Advisor
Deadline for initial disclosure of circumstances	27th July 2012	All eligible staff
Preliminary list of UoAs from Teesside	1st Oct 2012	REF SG
Initial staff categorisation	5th December 2012	REF SG, UoA leads
Confirmation to HEFCE of which UoAs intend to submit to	*December 2012*	*REF SG, GRS*
First phase of appeals process completed	11th March 2013	Appeals panel, GRS
Initial analysis of staff to be submitted in terms of equality & diversity characteristics	1st April 2013	HR, GRS, REF SG
Updated Equality Impact Analysis	1st May 2013	E&D Advisor
Revised staff categorisation	1st July 2013	UoA leads, REF SG
End of assessment period for research impact / environment, doctoral completions & income	*31st July 2013*	
Second phase of appeals process completed	30th September 2013	GRS, Appeals panel
Revised analysis of staff to be submitted in terms of equality & diversity characteristics	1st October 2013	HR, GRS, REF SG
Census date for staff eligible for selection	*31st Oct 2013*	
Closing date for submissions	*29th Nov 2013*	*GRS, REF SG*
Cut-off point for research outputs & outputs underpinning impact case studies	*31st Dec 2013*	
Publication of outcomes by HEFCE	*December 2014*	
Publication of submissions, panel reports	*Spring 2015*	

Appendix B: Terms of Reference for Academic Board, University Research Policy Committee and the REF Steering Group

1.1   TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC BOARD [REVISED AT THE MEETING OF UAB HELD 05-05-2010]

1.1.1   Terms of Reference [*extract from Articles of Governance*]

UAB is responsible:

(a)   for considering the development of the academic activities of the University and the resources needed to support them, and for advising the Vice-Chancellor and the Board of Governors thereon;

(b)   for advising on such matters as the Board of Governors or the Vice-Chancellor may refer to UAB;

(c)   subject to the requirements of validating and accrediting bodies, for general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University, including:

   i.   criteria for the admission of students
   ii.   the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners
   iii.   policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students
   iv.   the content of the curriculum
   v.   academic standards and the approval and review of courses
   vi.   the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles
   vii. the procedures for the expulsion of students for academic reasons.

1.1.2   Membership (30) [revised by the Board of Governors on 16 January 2009]

   - Vice-Chancellor (who Chairs the Board)
   - Deputy Vice-Chancellors (3)
   - University Secretary & Registrar
   - Deans of Schools (6)
   - Senior Academic Manager (1) [elected by the Senior Academic Manager constituency]
   - Representatives of School Academic Staff (6) [elected by the Academic Staff of each School]
   - The President and another Representative of the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers (2)
   - Support Staff (2) [elected by all Support Staff of the University]
   - Academic Staff Representative (1) [elected by the Academic Staff of the University]

- Director of Library & Information Services [L&IS]
- Director of Student Services
- Director of Educational Partnerships
- Director for Learning Development
- Director of Academic Enterprise
- Dean of the Graduate Research School
- Member of the Higher Education Business Partnership (co-option)

1.1.3 Lead Officers

- Director for Quality & Governance
- Deputy Director (Quality & Standards)

1.1.4 Reporting

To Board of Governors

1.2 Research Policy Committee [RPC]

1.2.1 Terms of Reference [approved by UAB on 24-02-10]

(a) To review the research strategy on an annual basis and advise on changes and amendments.

(b) To review research performance and advise on any action necessary.

(c) To monitor the implementation of the research strategy at institutional and School level.

(d) To advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Business Engagement) [DVC(R&BE)] on external issues which have a research component and assist in the preparation of responses to consultation documents.

(e) To advise the DVC(R&BE) on matters related to research investment.

(f) To recommend and approve Composition and Terms of Reference of Sub-Committees of the RPC:

    i. University Research Ethics Sub-Committee [URESC]
    ii. Research Institutes' Sub-Committee [RISC].

(g) To receive minutes and items for discussion from School Research & Development Committees, URESC and RISC.

(h)　To advise the DVC(R&BE) about the strategy and processes to be adopted for the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

(i)　To advise choice of Unit of Assessment [UoA] leads and arbitrate on matters associated with staff to be returned in specific UoAs.

(j)　To offer independent advice on documentation prepared for the REF.

(k)　To review and advise on matters related to postgraduate students not covered by URDSC. To receive a regular report from the Dean of GRS.

(l)　To advise the DVC(R&BE) on matters related to research infrastructure.

(m)　To advise the DVC(R&BE) on any research matters associated with the enterprise agenda.

(n)　To advise the DVC(R&BE) on any matters relating to the URESC.

1.2.2　<u>Lead Officer</u>

- Dean, Graduate Research School

1.2.3　<u>Membership (16) [approved by UAB on 05-05-10]</u>

- Chair appointed by UAB on the nomination of the Chair UAB
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Business Engagement)
- One representative from each School (Deputy Director, Assistant Dean or Institute Director, responsible for Research) (6)
- Chair of URDSC
- Chair of URESC
- Elected Members: 2 Professors, 1 Reader, 1 Post Doctoral staff, 1 Research Student
- One member of the Academic Board elected from amongst the elected members of the Board

(*Members who are unable to attend may send alternatives, subject to notification to the Secretary*)

Co-options:

- Up to 4 Co-opted members nominated by the DVC(R&BE) and approved by the URPC

1.2.4　<u>Reporting</u>

To UAB

1.3   REF Steering Group

1.3.1   <u>Terms of Reference [approved by URPC on 20-06-12]</u>

1.3.2   There shall be a Teesside University REF steering group.

1.3.3   The membership of the group shall be:

- Chair (Deputy VC (Research & Business Engagement)
- Dean, Graduate Research School
- Research Institute Directors
- Assistant Dean (Research), Teesside University Business School
- Additional nominated members of staff with responsibility for leading submissions to REF Units of Assessment
- Secretary

1.3.4   The responsibilities of the group shall be:

a)   To develop the University's REF strategy, to be adopted by University Research Policy Committee (URPC)

b)   To make recommendations to URPC on the content of the University's submission to REF, based on recommendations made at Unit of Assessment level

c)   To share good practice

d)   To consider REF policy issues and make recommendations to URPC

e)   To consider REF operational issues and recommend actions to appropriate Schools and departments

f)   To consider guidance on impact as it emerges, and to support the selection of impact case studies

g)   To steer mock REF exercises

h)   To develop and implement the REF Code of Practice for the selection of staff to be submitted