

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

Institution name: University of Portsmouth

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1 Introduction

All UK Higher Education Institutions wishing to submit to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 are required to develop a Code of Practice, setting out their approach to: i) identification of 'teaching and research' contracts with 'significant responsibility for research', (Section 2); ii) identification of research contracts with research contracts with 'research independence' (Section 3); iii) allocating contracts to Units of Assessment (UoAs) (Section 4); iv) selection of research outputs (Section 5). This Code of Practice outlines the University of Portsmouth's policies for these processes, the way in which the core principles of Robustness, Transparency, and Equity and Inclusion are embedded throughout the development and implementation of these processes, as well as the staff appeals process.

The policies and processes set out in our REF 2029 Code of Practice build upon those that were developed in a robust, transparent, equitable and inclusive way for REF 2021. Our REF 2021 Code of Practice was developed with engagement from the Women's Staff Network, Multicultural Staff Network, Parents' and Careers' Network, LGBTQ Network, Athena SWAN Champions, Race Equality Charter team, Academic Staff Association, Support Staff Association, Researchers' Network and the University and College Union, and included six Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) considering a range of characteristics during its development and subsequent implementation.

However, in light of the [REF 2029 guidance](#), this new Code of Practice has undergone a number of revisions to meet the new guidance requirements. Therefore, as part of our REF 2029 Code of Practice development we undertook further consultation with staff representative groups through our Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) team and University and College Union representatives, undertook additional EIA, and widely shared our REF 2029 Code of Practice within our academic and researcher community to ensure that the University of Portsmouth REF 2029 Code of Practice is fit-for-purpose.

1.1 Principles for REF 2029

1.1.1 Robustness

The processes described in this REF 2029 Code of Practice provide a clear and consistent framework under which the University (and its constituent faculties and schools) will make key decisions relating to the University's REF 2029 submission. The individual roles and specific committees involved in key REF 2029 advisory and decision-making processes are clearly defined within this Code of Practice. All staff involved in decision-making processes relating to REF 2029 submission will be expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules (see Section 1.1.3).

To ensure the consistent application of this Code of Practice, the processes detailed will be disseminated to staff in advisory and decision-making roles that have the potential to influence the: i) identification of 'teaching and research' contracts with 'significant responsibility for research'; ii) identification of 'research' contracts with 'research Independence'; iii) allocation of contracts to UoAs; iv) selection of research outputs.

Data informing key decisions (e.g., identification of contracts with 'significant responsibility for research' or 'research independence', UoA allocation, identification of substantive link) will be drawn from appropriate sources (e.g., HR records; workload allocation system). Workload will be allocated in accordance with the University's Workload Allocation Model, which provides a framework to balance workloads in an equitable manner, as well as allowing planning of academic staff time to support Institutional strategies for research, education, impact, and innovation. Robust decision-making will be supported by a clear appeals process enabling staff to seek a review of decisions relating to identification of contracts with 'significant responsibility for research' (see Section 2.3), and 'research independence' (see Section 3.3).

Output quality will be assessed in accordance with our commitment to responsible research assessment. Outputs will be reviewed by internal and/or external reviewers in accordance with the REF criteria for outputs assessment and in the event of significant disagreement between reviewers will be arbitrated by the UoA coordinator, who may seek further internal or external review. Individuals assessing outputs will have sufficient expertise to make an academic judgement of output quality and output UoA assignment in accordance with the REF criteria. UoA coordinators will be expected to provide training exercises, to support robust internal review processes.

All REF 2029 committees have Terms of Reference that outline their membership and objectives (see Appendix 1 [note these may be periodically reviewed and updated as personnel and needs evolve]). Minutes and/or decision logs for key REF 2029-related meetings will ensure a clear record of advice and decision-making.

1.1.2 Transparency

We are committed to ensuring that all REF 2029 decision-making is transparent. During the development and consultation phase, in addition to the staff consultation detailed above, we hosted a REF 2029 Code of Practice consultation Q & A session, with in-person and virtual attendance options and invited feedback via a dedicated REF email address (ref@port.ac.uk). The resulting REF 2029 Code of Practice clearly describes our decision-making policies.

Our Code of Practice uses plain English and minimises jargon as far as possible. A glossary of key terms and abbreviations used in this Code of Practice has been provided to support accessibility and understanding (see Appendix 2). We have provided the REF 2029 Code of Practice information in various formats, including a large font format to support access for visually impaired staff, we have also used, as standard, a sans serif (Arial) font size 12, minimised the use of underlining and italics (using bold for emphasis) and used left alignment without justification, in accordance with the recommendations of the British Dyslexia Association. Key decision-making processes are also summarised in graphical format.

The REF 2029 Code of Practice has been made available via an internal link and shared via an all-staff email communication, thereby ensuring communication with staff who may be based outside of the UK. To support engagement with individuals on leave of absence, Heads of School/Line Managers have been requested to share the Code of Practice with such staff

where it is appropriate to do so. Heads of School manage communication with colleagues who are on long-term absence, including sharing the opportunity to engage in consultation activities. This is to ensure communication is appropriate and proportionate to each individual's circumstances and is handled sensitively.

[A REF 2029 webpage](#) has been developed within the University's research web pages to further support staff understanding. The final REF 2029 Code of Practice will be published internally for staff after it is submitted to Research England, and publicly on our website once it has been approved. This will be accompanied by an executive summary, graphical information and a larger font option to further support staff understanding and accessibility.

1.1.3 Equity and inclusion

Where possible, we have extended the approaches previously described in our REF 2021 Code of Practice, which was developed in a fully consultative manner with multiple EIAs considering a range of characteristics. Our REF 2029 Code of Practice was revised with an ongoing commitment to recognising and supporting the diverse lived experiences of our staff, addressing structural barriers, and ensuring that inclusive practice is sustained across all aspects of our REF preparations. Throughout the development of our REF 2029 Code of Practice we engaged colleagues from the University's EDI team to ensure representation from diverse staff voices and active collaboration with staff networks such as: Multicultural Staff Network, LGBTQ+ Staff Network, Disability Staff Network, Neurodiverse Staff Network, Parent and Carer Staff Network, and Women's Staff Network. The Code of Practice was also shared with Union representatives from the University and College Union, enabling them to engage fully in the development of our REF 2029 Code of Practice.

As a result of this inclusive consultation, we have developed clear, objective and inclusive processes for the fair and impartial determination of: i) 'significant responsibility for research' (see Section 2 for details); ii) 'research independence' (see Section 3 for details); iii) assignment of contracts to UoAs (see Section 4 for details); iv) final outputs selection (see Section 5 for details). The proposed processes detailed in this REF 2029 Code of Practice are centred on ensuring quality in our returned research outputs whilst valuing and supporting diverse research contributions. They champion inclusive approaches to research quality assessment, building on the University's commitment to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), and encourage the inclusion of non-traditional outputs.

The criteria for each of the processes described in this Code of Practice will be applied consistently and equitably for all. Individuals in decision-making roles will be expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules. To evaluate whether there is any direct or indirect discrimination inherent within these processes a new EIA has been undertaken to evaluate the impact of the proposed processes on a range of protected characteristics, using provisional data for academic year 2024/2025 as well as data from previous EIA where more recent data is not yet available. EIA has gone beyond compliance and has also included (where possible) intersectional analysis. EIA summaries have been shared internally to promote transparency and shared learning.

The EDI team will maintain oversight of emerging risks through the REF 2029 period and will report regularly to the REF Strategy Group and through University EDI governance reporting pathways. Where potential inequalities are identified (e.g., during REF audit exercise or similar), mitigation and support (e.g., workload re-distribution, coaching, or additional development support) will be offered via clear pathways (e.g., through the Head of School, EDI team, or HR as appropriate). If changes are required to the Code of Practice, Research England will be contacted, and any approved changes will be clearly documented and widely disseminated.

1.2 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

This REF 2029 Code of Practice sits within the framework of the [University's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement](#). This is supported by underlying policies and guidance notes covering: Equality Objectives; Religion and Belief; Gender Identity Expression; Dignity and Respect; Anti-bullying and Harassment.

Equity, diversity and inclusivity are embedded with the University of Portsmouth's '[University Strategy 2030](#)' core values of 'Responsible' ('We act with integrity for the greater good; We respect and celebrate diversity and equal opportunity through an inclusive culture'), 'Open' ('We work consultatively and collaboratively to benefit from new perspectives') and 'Ambitious' ('We inspire and support staff and students to achieve their potential and meet the challenges of society').

This is further enforced through the University Strategy 2030 objectives of 'Enhancing our Research Culture' ('Connecting and inspiring our colleagues and students in an ambitious and inclusive research community. Building critical mass and resilience in our identified areas of strength by attracting, developing and retaining excellent researchers and by further embedding nationally recognised good practice') and 'Supporting our People' ('Promoting diversity and inclusion and empowering our people to develop in their careers...').

Our 'People Strategy 2030' advances EDI by embedding inclusivity across all themes, including: recruitment; leadership; reward; and development. It commits to fair representation, robust data analysis, inclusive decision-making, and creating a safe culture where inappropriate behaviours are challenged. By integrating EDI into governance, staff engagement, and workforce planning, the strategy ensures equality, diversity, and inclusion are central to the University's overall mission. We also have internal equity and diversity related networks to enable staff to support one another. These include: LGBTQ+ Staff Network; Disability Staff Network; Multicultural Staff Network; Neurodiverse Staff Network; Parent and Carer Staff Network; Women's Staff Network.

Our commitment to EDI is further shown through our sustained engagement and commitment to national and international programmes.

The University of Portsmouth has been a member of the Athena SWAN Charter since 2011, receiving an institutional Athena SWAN Bronze Award in November 2014, which was retained

under the new, wider scope in April 2018. We subsequently received and have held a university-level Athena SWAN Silver Award since 2024. At a local level, we are the recipients of two Silver and eight Bronze awards, across our schools.

Since 2015 we have had the accessibility of our buildings for people with physical or other disabilities audited by AccessAble, helping us improve access for all. We have made a public declaration of our commitment to supporting the mental health of staff, signing the Mindful Employer Charter for Employers Positive About Mental Health in 2024 and are Disability Confident Committed.

We have been a member of the Race Equality Charter since 2018 and earned a Bronze Award in 2021. Together, this demonstrates our commitment to tackling race inequality for staff and students, through long-term institutional culture change.

The University is a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme and is committed to taking steps to advance sexual orientation and gender identity equality in the workplace.

In 2020, the University of Portsmouth signed up to the [DORA](#). We embrace the general recommendations for institutions and our commitment to these principles is further evidenced in our approach to the selection of research outputs (see Section 5).

In 2025 we became institutional members of the UK Reproducibility Network, which is supported locally through an institutional lead and several local network leads. The University complies with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK) and has adopted the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) Code of Practice for Research as its own.

The University is committed to improving the employment and support for researchers and their subsequent careers and has held the HR Excellence in Research Award for over 10 years. We are also signatories to the Concordat to Support Career Development of Researchers and have pledged to ensure visibility, recognition and career development for technicians by joining the Technician Commitment in 2023. The associated institutional action plans were developed through consultation with the relevant communities and include targeted support for fixed-term and part-time staff, including contract research staff. These plans acknowledge the specific challenges faced by these groups and reflect the University's strong commitment to equality and diversity as it applies to them.

Our institutional research culture is supported by the University of Portsmouth's Enhancing Research Culture programme. The project is delivered through several core themes, covering: Strategy and Leadership; Open Research; Research Integrity; Ethics and Governance; EDI in Research; Supporting and Developing Researchers; Engagement and Collaboration; Postgraduate Researchers; Environmental Sustainability.

1.3 Update on Actions Since REF 2021

Two final EIAs were undertaken to review the staff and outputs in the final submission made to REF 2021. The first EIA (completed October 2020) was undertaken once the final cohort of 'submissible Category A staff' were confirmed, so that the institution could consider whether this process impacted the protected characteristics of the final group. Comparing individuals submitted to REF 2021 with the entire academic and research staff base, there were no differences in the proportion of individuals with protected characteristics associated with sex, ethnicity, disability, age and full-time/part-time contract type. The only significant difference was a slightly greater proportion of individuals on a permanent contract in the group to be submitted to REF 2021 (84.1%) compared to the entire academic staff pool (74.3%). Comparing staff submitted to REF 2021 with those submitted to REF 2014, there were significant increases in the proportion of females (39.8% vs. 32.9%), individuals with self-declared disability (5% vs. 1%) and a reduction in the proportion under 36 years of age (16.7% vs. 26.5%). There were no differences in the proportion of staff of different ethnic groups.

The second EIA (completed July 2021) sought to determine whether the inclusion of individuals and associated outputs submitted to REF2021 impacted on a range of protected characteristics. The EIA demonstrated that there were no differences in the proportion of individuals of a particular characteristic (sex; ethnicity; self-declared disability; age; full-time / part-time employment; permanent / fixed term employment) and the proportion of the total number of outputs that this grouping represents. Although not statistically analysed, data on the number of selected outputs for each individual showed that for Category A staff for whom 4 or 5 outputs were submitted there was a reduced proportion (-12%) of individuals aged >55 years who had 5 outputs submitted. For all other comparisons, the difference in the characteristics of individuals who had 4 or 5 outputs submitted did not exceed 5%. Finally, when comparing the proportions of the characteristics of individuals associated with selected outputs for REF2021, compared to those selected for REF2014, a greater proportion of outputs were from females (+8%); individuals of black and minority ethnicity (+4%), and self-declared disability (+4%), as well as a significantly lower proportion (-12%) of fixed-term staff in the group of submitted staff.

More generally, since REF 2021 our university-wide EDI committee has been refreshed to further represent the voices of staff and union groups, and our University EDI governance structure has been enhanced following review, with all faculty EDI committees and Staff Networks updating their Terms of Reference, and Action and Communication plans. Significant ongoing EDI training continues to take place across the institution, with 400+ staff completing the iLEAD Inclusive Leadership Programme, ~1,000 colleagues trained in Positionality and Intersectionality, and 80 colleagues participating in the Aurora leadership program for women.

In addition, the EDI team has facilitated ~125 EDI-related events and training sessions (e.g., Inclusive Research Culture; Inclusive Design of Spaces; Supporting Staff with Disabilities; Black History Month; Equality Impact Assessment). Bespoke EDI workstreams have been developed for PhD supervisors and for the South Coast Doctoral Training Programme and an

EDI considerations checklist has been introduced to add further assurance to the EIA process and support staff when developing new policies and strategies. The University's Job vacancies URL is routinely shared with local diverse organisations for further dissemination and diverse recruitment panels have been introduced for all roles at grade 7 and above.

2 Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research

For REF 2029 all eligible 'teaching and research' (HESA Academic Employment Function (ACEMPFUN) 3) contracts with 'significant responsibility for research' will be included in the REF 2029 volume measure. Contracts with 'significant responsibility for research' are defined as 'those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of the job role.' (see REF 2029 guidance: [Section 3 - Volume Measure Guidance; 8.4.1](#)).

The University of Portsmouth has developed a process to identify which 'teaching and research' contracts have 'significant responsibility for research'. Where possible within the revised REF 2029 guidance, we have extended the approach that was developed for our REF 2021 Code of Practice, which was produced with appropriate consultation and EIA, and has since become embedded within institutional practice.

2.1 Policies and Procedures

2.1.1 Criteria for Significant Responsibility of Research

Contracts that are identified as 'Teaching and Research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 3) within the HESA staff record have research as 'an expectation of the job role'.

To identify the volume of 'teaching and research' contracts that have 'explicit time and resources' to undertake research the University of Portsmouth uses the research workload recorded within the workload allocation system. Our Workload Allocation Model was developed through a process that involved consultation with staff and University and College Union representatives. It was piloted in 2015/16 and introduced fully in 2016/17. The system was fully reviewed in 2024/25 to reduce the number of categories, further standardise allocations within workload categories, and support reporting requirements, with the revised system being introduced in 2025/26. The Workload Allocation Model provides a framework to balance workloads in an equitable manner, as well as allowing planning of academic staff time to support institutional strategies for research, education, impact, and innovation.

Research workload is recorded across the following seven categories:

- i) Institution own-funded research: Research (outputs);
- ii) Institution own-funded research: Research (other);
- iii) Externally funded research: Research councils;
- iv) Externally funded research: other UK Government Departments (OGDs);
- v) Externally funded research: European Union (EU) government bodies including the European Commission;
- vi) Externally funded research: UK charities;
- vii) Externally funded research (industrial, commercial, EU other and other overseas grants and contracts).

Workload hours are set by the 'home' school of the individual and are recorded and reported on an annual basis. Institution own-funded research workload allocations cover the time for 'research (outputs)' and 'research (other)'. Externally funded research hours are calculated based on the time that is recorded against the project funder within the workload allocation system (typically taken from the project costing template). An individual's research workload allocation is defined as the total number of hours recorded across the two institution own-funded and five externally funded (i.e., seven in total) research workload categories in the workload allocation system.

All 'teaching and research' contracts with a research workload allocation of 20% or more of the contracted Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) hours are identified as having 'explicit time and resources' to undertake research. For a 1 FTE contract, this equates to at least 317 hours of research workload per academic year. To ensure that part-time and fractional contracts are considered fairly and on an equal basis with full-time colleagues, this proportional approach is applied pro-rata to all 'teaching and research' contracts where the contract FTE is ≥ 0.2 . Consistent with our REF 2021 approach, where the 'teaching and research' contract FTE is < 0.2 , the contract will be identified as not meeting the criteria for having 'explicit time and resources' to undertake research and will not be eligible for inclusion within the volume measure for REF 2029.

All staff on 'teaching and research' contracts at the University of Portsmouth are:

- i) eligible to apply for external research funding as the lead or co-applicant;
- ii) eligible to apply for research leave or sabbaticals in accordance with the University's sabbaticals policy;
- iii) eligible to become members of research centres or institutes within the University of Portsmouth.

Therefore, continuing the approach employed in our REF 2021 Code of Practice, the ability to 'engage actively in independent research' will be demonstrated by an expectation that the individual would have self-directed research goals, or objectives, as part of the individual's annual Performance and Development Review, or through another equivalent local regular review process. However, the contents of Performance and Development Reviews (or equivalent) are confidential and will not be accessed at any time; fulfilment of these criteria will be demonstrated by the expectation that annual goals for self-directed research are set, not whether goals are set.

The processes for identifying contracts meeting the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research' are summarised in Figure 1.

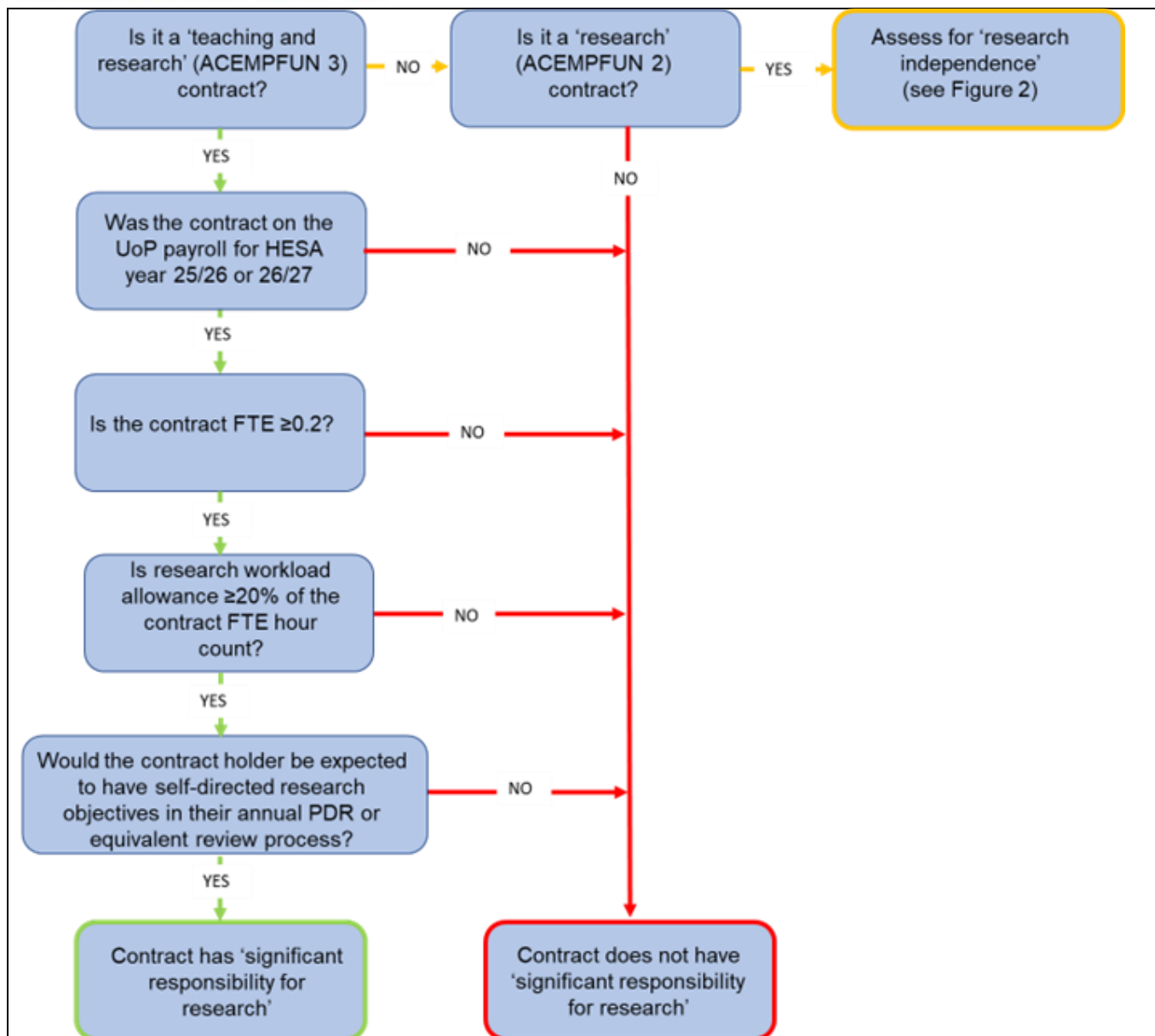


Figure 1: Summary of the processes for identifying 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) contracts meeting the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research'.

2.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

To verify that a contract meets the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research', lists of staff with 'teaching and research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 3) contracts on the University of Portsmouth payroll for the relevant HESA year (taken from HR records), as well as the associated contract FTE (taken from HR records), recorded research workload allocations (taken from workload allocation system) and UoA (taken from HR records) will be shared with appropriate Heads of School (or equivalent, e.g., where an individual does not sit within an academic school) to confirm the accuracy of the research workload (and make corrections

where it is found to be inaccurate) and thus, whether the contract has ‘explicit time and resources’ to undertake research. On the rare occasion where an individual does not appear in the research workload system, or data have not been inputted, the Head of School (or equivalent) will be consulted to provide the research workload allocation for that contract holder. Where a member of staff is on maternity leave within a given HESA year (data taken from HR system) they will retain the previous year’s research workload allocation.

The Head of School (or equivalent) will also confirm whether the individual meets the criteria to ‘engage actively in independent research’. Where a contract is identified as meeting all the stated criteria it will be identified as having ‘significant responsibility for research’.

Individuals holding ‘teaching and research’ contracts will be contacted, typically at least 1 month prior to the HESA return deadline within the relevant census year, and informed whether their contract meets the ‘significant responsibility for research’ criteria as defined in the REF 2029 Code of Practice. This will enable time for staff to appeal any decision in accordance with the appeal process as detailed in Section 2.3. Note that where the staff member has left the University of Portsmouth during a given census year it will not be possible to inform them of this decision.

2.1.3 Multiple Processes

Consistent with our principles of Equity and Inclusion, the same process for identifying contracts with ‘significant responsibility for research’ will be applied uniformly and consistently within each school and across all UoAs at the University of Portsmouth.

2.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

2.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of School (or equivalent) is accountable for school resourcing and has ultimate decision-making responsibility for identifying ‘teaching and research’ contracts with ‘significant responsibility for research’, for staff within their school. Associate Deans/Heads of Research and Innovation (or equivalent) may support this process in an advisory capacity where necessary.

2.2.2 Training

Individuals in decision-making roles relating to ‘significant responsibility for research’ will be expected to undertake the University’s core EDI training modules.

2.3 Appeals

Appeals may be submitted by ‘teaching and research’ contract holders in relation to errors in the data or failure to follow the process as articulated in the REF 2029 Code of Practice for identifying contracts with ‘significant responsibility for research’. Appeals may not relate to decisions about an individual’s allocation of workload, classification for HESA reporting purposes, or their Performance and Development Review or other regular review process. The appeals process consists of two stages, an informal stage, through which it is hoped that

the most appeals can be addressed, and a formal stage for appeals that cannot be resolved through the informal route. The full details of the appeal process are provided in Appendix 3.

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment

In accordance with the recommendations of the University's EDI team, an initial 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Considerations Checklist' for the REF 2029 Code Practice, including the processes for identifying 'teaching and research' contracts with 'significant responsibility for research' was undertaken in summer 2025, to support the meaningful integration of EDI considerations into the early stages of developing the Code or Practice. This was followed by an EIA, including a quantitative analysis of provisional data on 'significant responsibility for research' from the 2024/2025 academic year and data on protected characteristics (where recorded). As detailed in Section 3, due to potential for individual staff identification, as well as the use of a common process for identifying contracts with 'research independence' for both contract types we elected to combine this analysis with the equivalent analysis of 'research' contracts. This enabled us to compare the proportion of staff with protected characteristics between all REF volume contributing contract holders and the total pool of REF-submissible contract holders. We also undertook additional intersectional analysis considering sex and race. In each instance the difference between groups was less than 5%, suggesting that individuals with protected characteristics were not disproportionately represented in the REF volume contributing contract pool (see Appendix 4). We will repeat this analysis periodically (e.g., following REF audit) to investigate potential inequity in our processes and make amendments to the Code of Practice (informing University of Portsmouth staff and Research England) where it is identified that they are required.

3 Determining Research Independence

For REF 2029 all eligible 'research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 2) contracts with 'research independence' should be included in the REF 2029 volume measure. Contracts with 'research independence' are defined as those where 'the staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme' (see REF 2029 guidance: [Section 3 - Volume Measure guidance; 9.1.3](#)).

3.1 Policies and Procedures

3.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

All 'research' contracts where the contract FTE is ≥ 0.20 will be assessed for 'research independence'. In accordance with the REF 2029 Guidance (see [Section 3 - Volume Measure guidance; 9.2.1](#)), contracts for [research fellowships requiring independence](#) will be identified as meeting the criteria for Research Independence.

For other 'research' contracts, and in accordance with the process that was developed for our REF 2021 Code of Practice, 'research independence' will be demonstrated by an expectation that the individual would have self-directed research goals or objectives as part of the individual's annual Performance and Development Review (or another equivalent local regular review process). However, the contents of Performance and Development Reviews (or equivalent) are confidential between the line manager and staff member and will not be accessed at any time. Therefore, 'research independence' will be demonstrated by the expectation that annual goals for self-directed research are set, not whether goals are set.

In accordance with the REF 2029 guidance (see: [Section 3 - Volume Measure guidance; 9.5.1-2](#)), it is not expected that Research Assistant contracts (or equivalent) will meet the above definition, unless in exceptional circumstances. In such circumstances, 'research independence' for these contracts will be assessed using the aforementioned criteria (i.e., by an expectation that the individual would have self-directed research goals or objectives as part of the individual's annual Performance and Development Review, or through another equivalent local regular review process).

The processes for identifying 'research' contracts with 'research independence' are summarised in Figure 2.

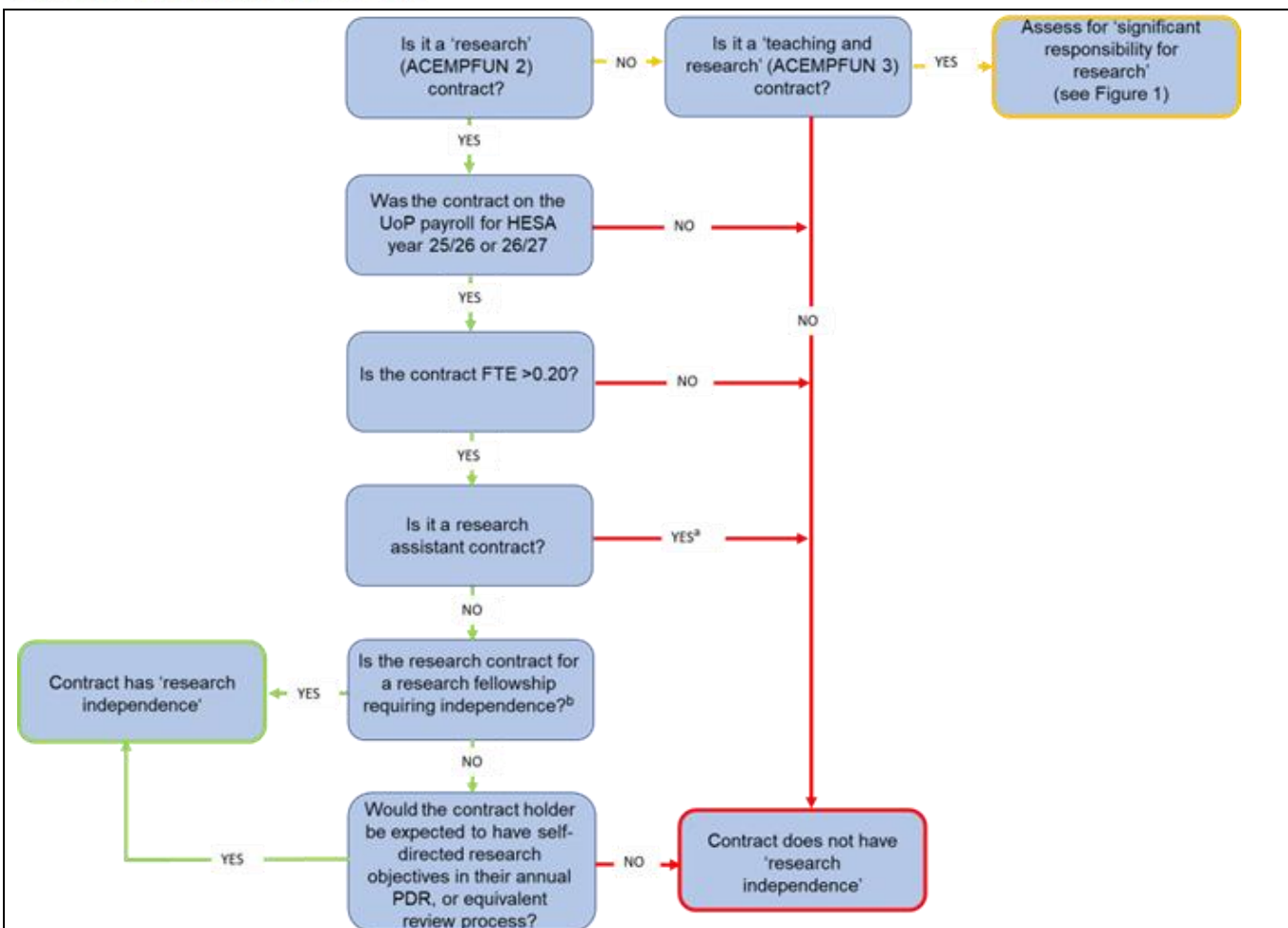


Figure 2: Summary of the processes for identifying 'research' (ACEMPFUN 2) contracts meeting the criteria for 'research independence'. ^aIt is not expected that Research Assistant contracts, or equivalent, will meet the above definition, unless in exceptional circumstances. ^bA link to a list of [research fellowships requiring independence](#) can be found in the REF 2029 guidance (see [Section 3 - Volume Measure guidance; 9.2.1](#)).

3.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

To verify that a contract meets the criteria for 'research independence', lists of staff holding 'research' contracts (HESA ACEMPFUN 2) on the University of Portsmouth payroll for the relevant HESA year, as well as the associated contract FTE, and UoA (obtained from HR records) will be shared with appropriate Heads of Schools (or equivalent, e.g., where an individual does not sit within an academic school). The list will also identify Research Assistant contracts and contracts for [research fellowships requiring independence](#), obtained from the University's finance records of research funders. The Head of School (or equivalent) will then indicate whether the individual associated with that staff contract meets the stated criteria. Where a contract is identified as meeting the stated criteria it will be identified as having 'research independence'.

Individuals holding 'research' contracts will be contacted, typically at least 1 month prior to the HESA return deadline within the relevant census year, and informed whether their contract meets the 'research independence' criteria as defined in the REF 2029 Code of Practice. This will enable time for staff to appeal any decision in accordance with the appeal process as detailed in Section 3.3. Note that where the staff member has left the University of Portsmouth during a given census year it will not be possible to inform them of this decision.

3.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

3.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of School (or equivalent) has the ultimate decision-making responsibility for identifying 'research' contracts with 'research independence' within their school. However, where this individual is not the Line Manager of the contract holder, the Line Manager of the contract holder may support this process in an advisory capacity where necessary.

3.2.2 Training

Individuals in decision-making roles relating to 'research independence' will be expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules.

3.3 Appeals

Appeals may be submitted by 'research' contract holders in relation to errors in the data or failure to follow the process as articulated in the REF 2029 Code of Practice for identifying contracts with 'research independence'. Appeals may not relate to an individual's classification for HESA reporting purposes, or an individual's Performance and Development Review or other regular review process. The appeals process consists of two stages, an informal stage, through which it is hoped that the most appeals can be addressed, and a formal stage for appeals that cannot be resolved through the informal route. The full details of the appeal process are provided in Appendix 3.

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment

In accordance with the recommendations of the University's EDI team, an initial 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Considerations Checklist' for the REF 2029 Code Practice, including the processes for identifying 'research' contracts with 'research independence' was undertaken in summer 2025, to support the meaningful integration of EDI considerations into the early stages of developing the Code or Practice using the University of Portsmouth template). This was followed by an EIA, including a quantitative analysis of provisional data on 'research independence' from the 2024/2025 academic year and data on protected characteristics (where recorded). Because the number of 'research' contracts provisionally identified as REF volume contributing was small (with potential for individual identification) and the process for identifying contracts with 'research independence' is common to both contract types, analysis of 'teaching and research' and 'research' contracts was combined to compare the proportion of staff with protected characteristics between REF volume contributing contract holders and the total pool of REF-submissible contract holders. We also undertook additional intersectional analysis considering sex and race. In each instance the

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difference between groups was less than 5%, suggesting that individuals with protected characteristics were not disproportionately represented in the REF volume contributing contract pool (see Appendix 4). We will repeat this analysis periodically (e.g., following REF audit) to investigate potential inequity in our processes and make amendments to the Code of Practice (informing University of Portsmouth staff and Research England) where it is identified that they are required.

4 Allocating Contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedures

Since REF 2021 the University of Portsmouth has continued to maintain critical mass, supporting infrastructure and underpinning research strategy across the 16 UoAs to which a submission was made in REF 2021 and where volume contributing contracts are assigned for REF 2029.

The assignment of contracts to one of these 16 UoAs is primarily based on the home school of the contract holder, with the research of schools (or equivalent) typically aligned with the descriptors of one or two (and occasionally three) UoAs. Within schools, the contract is allocated to the UoA based on the 'fit' of the contract holders primary research interest within the relevant UoAs boundaries, considering institutional priorities, UoA strategy and supporting structures (e.g., research groups etc). However, where it is identified that the work of the contract holder does not fit within the boundaries of UoAs associated with the home school of the contract holder, and/or there is an alternative UoA available among the UoAs to which the University of Portsmouth is submitting, the contract may instead be assigned to this alternative UoA.

4.1.1. Criteria and evidence

Information about the contract holder's home school and current UoA will be sourced from the University's HR records. The contract holder's research focus will be assessed by examining the primary nature of their work, supported by data from the University's research data base or other relevant sources (e.g., Pubmed; Scopus), to ensure it aligns with the UoA(s) associated with their school. If, based upon academic judgement of the fit of the work to the UoA descriptor, the research does not clearly fit within those UoA boundaries, and/or there is an alternative UoA that aligns with the work of the contract holder, the contract may be reassigned to another UoA.

4.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

To ensure appropriate assignment of contracts to UoAs a provisional list of contract holders and their UoAs will be shared with UoA coordinators on an annual basis. These individuals will review these lists to ensure that the contracts are associated with an appropriate UoA. Where, in their academic judgement, this is felt to not be the case, and/or there is an alternative UoA that aligns with the work of the contract holder, this recommendation will be provided to the REF Strategy Group as advisory; the members of this group may also make recommendations for change of UoA on the same basis.

Thereafter, the REF Strategy Group will review any recommendations for change and make a final decision on UoA, considering institutional priorities and UoA strategy and supporting structures (e.g., research groups, etc). The REF Strategy Group includes the Associate Deans Research and Innovation (or equivalent) from each faculty and is therefore able to provide the appropriate level of within- and between-faculty oversight for UoA allocation decisions; it also includes a member of the University's EDI team to provide oversight.

4.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

4.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The REF Strategy Group (see Appendix 1 for Terms of Reference) has the ultimate decision-making responsibility for allocating contracts to UoAs. UoA coordinators support this process in an advisory capacity.

4.2.2 Training

Individuals in decision-making roles relating to UoA allocation will be expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment

In accordance with the recommendations of the University's EDI team, an initial 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Considerations Checklist' for the REF 2029 Code Practice, including the processes for allocating contracts to UoAs was undertaken in summer 2025, to support the meaningful integration of EDI considerations into the early stages of developing the Code or Practice. As part of a subsequent EIA (Appendix 4) we used preliminary HESA academic year 24-25 data to examine the relationship between the individual's home school and the UoA to which their contract is allocated. This analysis demonstrated that <1% of the FTE of all REF eligible contracts, irrespective of whether the contract was provisionally identified as REF volume contributing, was assigned to a UoA outside of the primary research focus of their home school. These small numbers preclude comparison of the distribution of protected characteristics of this cohort to the larger pool of contracts aligning with school's research focus without risking anonymity. However, these data clearly show that the UoA allocation process is primarily based on home school of the contract holder and indirectly indicate that this process is not determined by any protected characteristics of the contract holder. We will repeat this analysis periodically (e.g., following REF audit) to investigate potential inequity in our processes and make amendments to the Code of Practice (informing University of Portsmouth staff and Research England) where it is identified that they are required.

5 Selecting outputs

5.1 Policies and Procedures

The core principle of the University's approach to selection of outputs is to identify the highest quality eligible outputs whilst giving representation of the range of research undertaken in each UoA. Our selection processes reflect the principles of robustness, transparency, and equity and inclusion, as well as our commitment to the DORA.

Staff who are currently employed at the University of Portsmouth will be asked by the UoA coordinator of the UoA to which their contract is assigned to propose outputs for review where they have made a significant research contribution (see [Section 4 – Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding guidance; 8.0.1-8.1.1](#)) and where a substantive link to the output can be demonstrated (see [Section 4 – Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding guidance; 6](#)). To enhance representativeness and help identify high-quality outputs from diverse groups - including from groups who may underestimate the value of their own work, or those on long-term leave of absence - outputs may also be nominated for review by: i) the UoA Coordinator; ii) the Associate Dean of Research and Innovation (or equivalent) within the relevant faculty; or, iii) any listed co-authors (or equivalent). To support the identification and review of outputs produced by staff who have previously held an eligible employment relationship, UoA coordinators will also identify potential outputs of former staff previously associated with that UoA. In each case, the individual proposing the output for review will also identify the appropriate UoA for review, whether the output has the potential for assignment to multiple UoAs (see Section 5.1.3), and whether the output should be considered for double weighting.

The process for assessing output quality will be coordinated by the UoA coordinator and is based on academic judgement with subject contextualisation, developed through a combination of internal peer-review, and (for a subset of outputs) external expert review. It is expected that all proposed outputs will have a minimum of two reviewers (which may be conducted through a peer-review college), and where there is significant disagreement between reviewers there will be arbitration by the UoA coordinator, which may include seeking further review of the output. During the assessment process the reviewers will also provide their opinion on whether outputs are: i) assigned to the appropriate UoA (and recommend re-assignment where required); ii) have the potential for return in multiple UoAs e.g., inter-disciplinary research or research spanning UoA boundaries (and notify the relevant UoA coordinator where required); iii) appropriate for double weighting.

This process will be used by the UoA co-ordinator to produce a ranked list of potential outputs for submission that is sufficient to meet the volume requirements for that UoA, as well as a list of reserve outputs. This process may be supported by the UoA REF committee (or equivalent) and/or a panel of reviewers. Output selection will be primarily based on quality assessment, but where outputs are assessed of being of equal quality the final ranking list will also consider, in order: i) the representation of subject structures, research groups and research activity to support the capture of the full scope of research activity within the UoA and considering guidance on the number of outputs associated with a single substantive link; ii)

the diversity, demographics and career stages of the substantive link to the assessed outputs; iii) the output type, to support the submission of non-traditional outputs.

Thereafter, the list of ranked outputs will be checked to verify the presence of a 'substantive link', that open access policy requirements are met at the UoA level, and that any other eligibility requirements are met. Where these requirements are not achieved the required number of reserve outputs will be selected for potential submission; reserve outputs will also be identified for articles where double weighting is to be requested, or where output publication has been delayed.

The process for the selection of outputs is summarised in Figure 3.

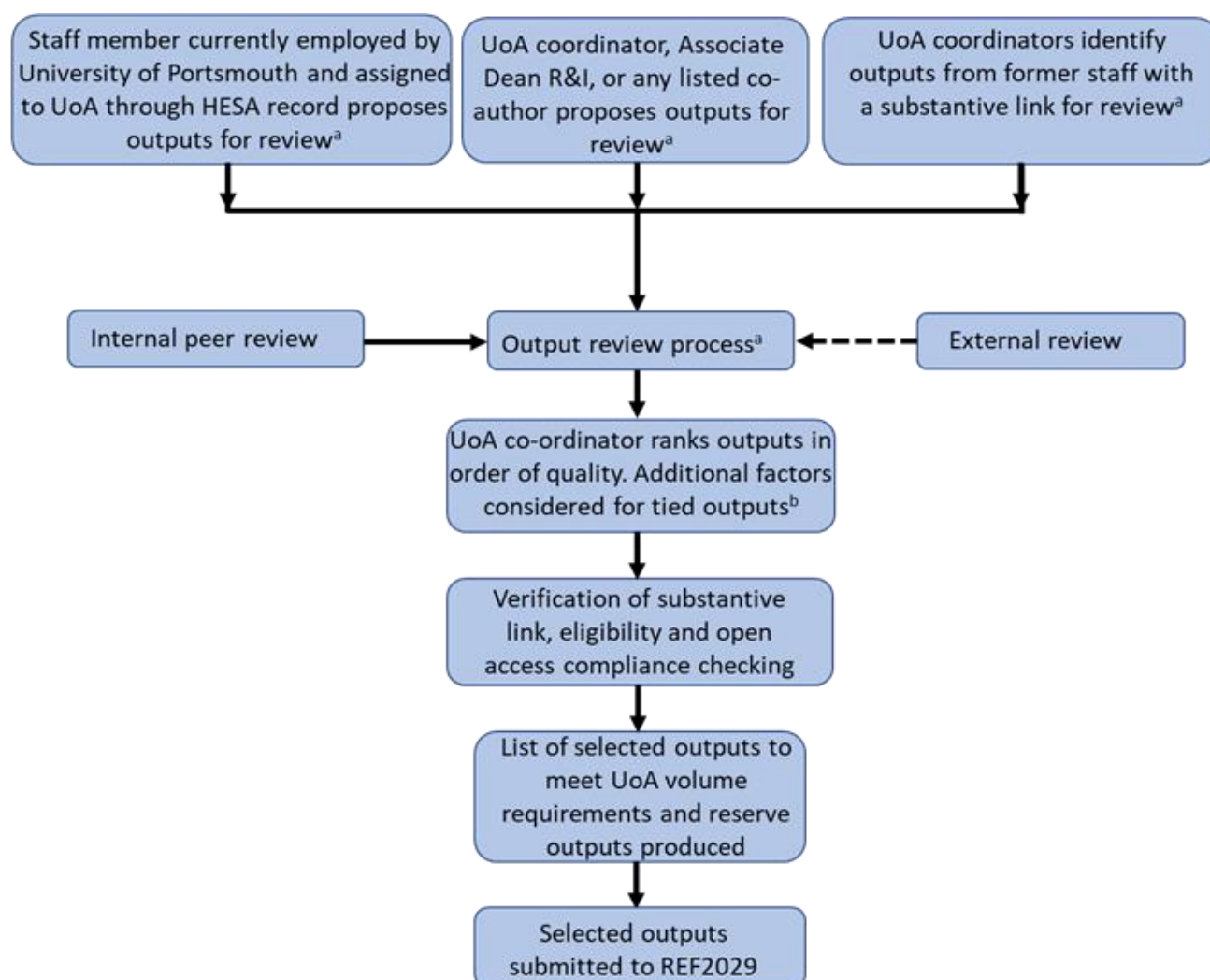


Figure 3: Summary of the processes for identifying, reviewing, ranking and selecting outputs for return to REF 2029. ^a During the nomination and assessment process the reviewers will also verify whether outputs are: assigned to the appropriate UoA (and recommend re-

assignment where required); have the potential for return in multiple UoAs; appropriate for double weighting. ^b Where outputs are assessed of being of equal quality the ranking list will also consider, in order: the representation of subject structures, research groups and research activity within the UoA; the diversity, demographics and career stages of the substantive link to the outputs; the output type, to support the submission of non-traditional outputs.

5.1.1 Identifying Substantive Link to Outputs

For REF 2029, eligible research outputs do not have to be authored by individuals whose contracts contribute to an institution's overall submission volume. However, any outputs included in the University of Portsmouth submission must meet the requirement that the research leading to the output was enabled by the institution and first made publicly available during the REF period. This is demonstrated through a 'substantive link', which must be evidenced by an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent) who has made a significant research contribution to the output.

REF 2029 guidance (see [Section 4 – Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding guidance; 6.3.1](#)) defines an eligible employment relationship as :

- i) a minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment (as defined by Section 210 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996) or the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996) by the HEI making the submission. Continuous employment may be demonstrated by a sequence of consecutive contracts AND;
- ii) the role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity (as distinct from scholarship) within the role.

Eligible employment relationships must have occurred either at the point at which the output was first made publicly available (at any point during the eligible employment relationship), or before the submitted output was first made publicly available, when the research resulting in the output was carried out. For most outputs this time-limited period will have occurred between January 2021 to December 2028 but may be extended prior to January 2021 providing that the output was published during the REF publication period. The time-limited period during which research resulting in the output was carried out is: i) two years for most outputs; ii) five years for long-form and extended process outputs.

At the University of Portsmouth, individuals recorded as 'research' in the HESA record have research as the primary function of their role. Similarly, 'teaching and research' roles at grades 7–9 align with Academic Role Profiles levels 2–4 and include an expectation of research activity, whilst 'teaching and research' staff promoted to grade 10+ must evidence academic leadership and citizenship across multiple attributes, including research. Therefore, individuals employed by the University of Portsmouth on an eligible 'research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 2) or 'teaching and research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 3) contract when the output was first made publicly available, or when the research was conducted (within the time limited period), are considered to have an explicit expectation of research activity within their role. In situations where the sole University of Portsmouth contributing author was not employed on an eligible 'teaching and research' or 'research' contract, but their contract meets all of the

other aforementioned criteria, their role descriptor will be reviewed by the REF Strategy Group to verify if it includes an explicit expectation of research activity (including enabling, undertaking, or supporting research), as distinct from scholarship. Additionally, outputs authored by individuals while on an excluded contract will be eligible for submission if the individual subsequently moved to an eligible 'teaching and research' or 'research' contract during the REF period, subject to the following conditions:

- i) the contracts were both held at the University of Portsmouth and meet the definition of continuous employment (as defined by Section 210 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996) or the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996);
- ii) all other eligibility criteria for an eligible employment relationship are met within the REF period (1 January 2021 to 31 December 2028).

Eligible employment relationships that occur after the point at which an output was first made publicly available cannot constitute a substantive link. However, an exception applies to long-form and/or extended process outputs (see REF 2029 guidelines: [Section 4 – Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding guidance; 6.10](#)). Where a researcher is employed on a contract that constitutes an eligible employment relationship at an institution at the point a REF submission is made, long-form and/or extended process outputs published before this contract commenced will be eligible for submission if: i) they were first made publicly available during the REF period (January 2021 to December 2028), and ii) the staff member's eligible employment relationship with the submitting institution commenced within 5 years of the output first being made publicly available.

Finally, outputs sole authored by, or where the only substantive link to the institutions is through postgraduate research students (including PhD theses), visiting or honorary staff, a teaching only contract, academic or other contracts with no explicit expectation of research within the job role, or a technical teaching or support only contract, are not eligible for submission. Individuals on teaching-only, honorary emeritus contracts, or other non-research contracts do not routinely receive allocated time and funding to support their research activity, and the University of Portsmouth does not, therefore, intend to apply for exceptional circumstances to return outputs sole authored by, or where the only substantive link is through staff belonging to these groups.

To ensure consistency, oversight and audit trail, the process of verifying the presence of a substantive link, or appropriate exception, will be coordinated by the REF team in Department of Research and Innovation. For all outputs provisionally selected for return to REF 2029 information on the date when outputs were first made publicly available will be obtained from the output metadata in PURE or, where this information is not available in PURE, from another auditable source (e.g., a letter from the publisher). Employment data (e.g., dates of employment, contract type, role, FTE, role descriptor where the contract is not ACEMPFUN 2 or 3, HESA staff identifier) will be sourced from the University's HR records to confirm that an eligible employment relationship occurred within the appropriate time-limited window for the relevant output type. For contracts that are not identified as 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) or 'research' in the HESA staff record (ACEMPFUN 2) the REF Strategy

Group will review the role descriptor and make the final decision on whether the role descriptor includes a specific expectation of research activity. Where a substantive link or appropriate exception is demonstrated, the output will be eligible for REF 2029 selection on a fair and equal basis alongside other outputs.

5.1.2 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

To support the identification of outputs where the substantive link is via former staff, UoA coordinators will be asked to identify potential outputs of former staff previously associated with that UoA. Where required, this will be enabled through the provision of a list of former staff with an eligible previous employment relationship (using University HR records) and the University's research repository (currently PURE), as well as other commonly used research databases (e.g., Pubmed, Scopus, Scholar, etc.). Where the UoA coordinator identifies such outputs, they may be proposed for review and will be reviewed for selection for REF 2029 on a fair and equal basis alongside other outputs.

Where the substantive link to an output occurred before the submitted output was made publicly available, it will not be eligible for submission if the author was subject to compulsory redundancy by the University of Portsmouth (verified through the University's HR records). However, where a substantive link is evident via other named authors, or the substantive link was evident at the point at which the output was made publicly available and the author was subsequently subject to compulsory redundancy, the output will remain eligible for submission. Similarly, outputs authored by staff who have taken voluntary redundancy or severance, retirement, or where their fixed term contract has expired will remain eligible, subject to the output meeting all other eligibility criteria.

5.1.3 Assigning outputs to UoAs

The process of allocating contracts to UoAs, as detailed in Section 4.1 provides the initial process for supporting the correct assignment of outputs to UoAs. Thereafter, the outputs review process detailed in Section 5.1 is the second mechanism for ensuring that outputs are assigned to the appropriate UoA, and for identifying outputs that have the potential for assignment to multiple UoAs. If during the University's outputs review process the author(s), individual proposing the output for review, or output reviewer(s), identifies that an output's subject matter either: i) does not align with the UoA disciplinary area; or, ii) has the potential for assignment to other UoAs (e.g., inter-disciplinary research or research spanning UoA boundaries), they will highlight this to the relevant UoA coordinator. The UoA coordinator will exercise their judgement as to whether, or not, the output fits within the identified UoA boundaries; they may seek further guidance from disciplinary experts where it is required.

Where it is decided that the output fits within the identified UoA boundaries, it will be considered for REF 2029 submission on a fair and equal basis with other potential outputs within that UoA. However, where it is decided that the output does not fit within the UoA boundaries, or the output has the potential for assignment to other UoAs, this will be highlighted to other relevant UoA coordinators. If a relevant UoA is identified, the corresponding UoA coordinator will be informed that the output should be considered as

eligible for return in their UoA and that it should be considered for potential REF 2029 submission on a fair and equal basis with other outputs within their UoA.

In situations where it is judged that an output does not conceivably fit within the disciplinary boundaries of any UoAs to which the University returns volume contributing contracts, and the output has a high likelihood of being awarded an unclassified score due to 'unsubstantiated assignment to a UoA' (see REF 2029 guidance: [Section 4 – Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding; 25.3.1](#)), a recommendation may be made to exclude that output from the pool of eligible outputs.

5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

The University of Portsmouth values a wide range of scholarly contributions including traditional outputs such as journal articles and monographs, non-traditional forms including creative works, digital artefacts, policy reports, and practice-research, and outputs using British Sign Language.

Unit of Assessment coordinators will ensure that individuals associated with their UoA through the HESA staff record are aware of the wide range of scholarly contributions that are eligible for REF submission and that they can be nominated for review. Where appropriate, they will provide support and advice to help researchers effectively prepare and present non-traditional output types and will be responsible for ensuring that the assessment of these outputs will be undertaken by individuals who have received relevant training to enable their assessment in accordance with the REF quality assessment criteria and on a fair and equal basis to traditional output types. In the case of former staff, UoA coordinators will ensure that they consider all types of outputs on University's research repository (currently PURE), or other research repositories, during the process of identifying outputs for potential review.

During the review process, where suitable expertise cannot be located in-house, appropriate external expertise will be sought to support the training of internal reviewers and/or to undertake quality assessment of any non-traditional outputs, or outputs using British Sign Language.

As detailed in Section 5.1.5, the final selection of outputs for submission will be primarily based on academic quality assessment, but where outputs are judged to be of equal quality the final selection may also be informed by output type to support the representation of non-traditional output types within the final submission.

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

The core principle of the selection of outputs is identifying the highest quality outputs, irrespective of output type, to give the best representation of the diversity of research conducted in each UoA. Accordingly, all individuals associated with the UoA through the HESA staff record will be invited to propose outputs for review and UoA coordinators will be asked to identify potential outputs for review from former staff associated with that UoA.

To enhance representativeness and help identify high-quality outputs from diverse groups, including from groups who may underestimate the value of their own work or those on long-term leave of absence, outputs may also be nominated for review by: i) the UoA Coordinator; ii) the Associate Dean of Research and Innovation (or equivalent) within the relevant faculty; or, iii) any listed co-authors (or equivalent).

Assessment of the quality of outputs will be based primarily on academic judgement, developed through a combination of internal peer review, and external expert review (see Section 5.1.6). The final composition of the institution's output submission will seek to maximise the quality of the body of research submitted to each UoA.

Where outputs are assessed of being of equal quality the final selection will also consider (in order):

- i) the representation of subject structures research groups and research activity to support the capture of the full scope of research activity within the UoA as described in the Statement of Representation (see REF 2029 guidance: [Section 7 – Strategy, People and Research Environment \(SPRE\) guidance; 3.51](#)) and considering guidance on the number of outputs associated with a single substantive link;
- ii) the diversity, demographics and career stages of the substantive link associated with the assessed outputs (where this information is available and does not result in individual staff identification);
- iii) the output type, to support the submission of non-traditional outputs as produced within that UoA.

5.1.6 Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

The University of Portsmouth has been a signatory to the DORA since 2020 and has adopted eight principles that govern our approach in this area. These principles are reflected in our approach to the quality assessment and subsequent selection of research outputs. However, to support inclusivity and the identification of outputs for review from staff groups who may under value the quality of their research, as well as the identification of high-quality outputs from former staff, UoA coordinators may choose to use output citation data during the output nomination phase.

As outlined in Section 5.1 the quality assessment of research outputs will be based on academic judgement developed through a combination of internal peer review, and external expert assessment. The quality assessment will not be based on journal impact factor or journal ranking. Citations will only be used to inform and support judgement of output quality in UoAs where this approach is also used by the assessment panel but will not supplant peer review and expert judgement.

Where citation data are used, they will be from an appropriate trusted source (e.g., Scopus or similar) and variations due to the disciplinary field and date of publication will be considered alongside these data. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, or other similar emerging

approaches will not be used as part of the process for assessing the quality of research outputs.

5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Decision making responsibility for the output selection process will reside with the UoA coordinator, who is responsible for appointing reviewers and for using the outcomes of assessments to rank and select outputs for return to REF 2029 within that UoA. This process may be supported in an advisory role by the UoA REF committee (or equivalent) and/or a panel of reviewers. Where such groups are utilised, it is expected that the representativeness of their constitution is considered.

For contracts that are not identified as 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) or 'research' in the HESA staff record (ACEMPFUN 2) the REF Strategy Group will review the role descriptor and make the final decision on whether the role descriptor includes a specific expectation of research activity.

5.2.2 Training

Individuals in decision-making roles relating to output selection, as well as whether the role descriptor includes a specific expectation of research activity (where this decision is required) will be expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules. Unit of Assessment coordinators will also ensure that all internal and external reviewers have sufficient expertise to provide an accurate assessment of output quality, including the assessment of diverse and non-traditional outputs, where they are allocated these types of output for assessment (see Section 5.1.4). Unit of Assessment coordinators will ensure that all reviewers are familiarised with the requirements of the output review process as detailed in this Code of Practice, and particularly our commitment to responsible research assessment as well as the REF outputs rating criteria. Unit of Assessment coordinators are also expected to organise training and/or calibration exercises, or similar, to support consistency in outputs assessment.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An initial 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Considerations Checklist' for the REF 2029 Code Practice, was undertaken in summer 2025 using the University of Portsmouth template to support the meaningful integration of EDI considerations into the early stages of developing the Code or Practice. This was subsequently followed by an EIA (Appendix 4). Because we are at the early stages of our output review and selection cycle for REF 2029, data from this REF cycle are not available for formal analysis. However, our intended process largely mirrors that employed in REF 2021. Using data from the EIA conducted following REF 2021 indicated that the distribution of protected characteristics (disability, race, sex, age) was not statistically different (using two-tailed Z-test) between the number of individuals with protected characteristics associated with selected outputs and the proportions of individuals with protected characteristics of the staff pool selected for submission to REF2021. This analysis will be repeated at the earliest opportunity using provisional selection of outputs for REF 2029 and data on protected characteristics of the individuals linked to those outputs through the

HESA ID. If inequalities are identified they will be investigated, supported by the University's EDI Team. Where this process identifies that changes are required to the Code of Practice Research England will be informed.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

REF Strategy Group (RSG): Terms of Reference

Membership

Head of Research (Chair): Decision making

DVC R&I: Decision making

PVC R&I: Decision making

Research Culture Lead: Decision making

Associate Dean R&I (or equivalent) SAH: Decision making

Associate Dean R&I (or equivalent) TEC: Decision making

Associate Dean R&I (or equivalent) CCI: Decision making

Associate Dean R&I (or equivalent) BAL: Decision making

Associate Dean R&I (or equivalent) HSS: Decision making

REF & Environment Manager: Advisory

Co-opt as necessary

Research Information and Systems Manager: Advisory

Impact Manager: Advisory

Strategy People and Research Environment Manager: Advisory

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team representative: Advisory

Senior Research Outputs Officer: Advisory

Other members of faculty (e.g. representative of UoA leads, RIS team, or professional services as required for specific items): Advisory

In attendance: Support Officer- To provide support for the meeting to take note of key agreements, decisions and actions, assist with draft agenda, & support the group as required.

Scope

University level strategic planning and progress monitoring for REF 2029 preparation and submission

Duties

- To develop University-level strategic plans for coordination and submission to REF 2029 that optimise the University's submission.
- To monitor progress on institutional REF preparations and receive reports from relevant groups (e.g., Impact Working Group, and Strategy People and Research Environment Working Group, DRI REF team, HESA REFQUALCON Working Group, Open Access compliance report)
- To collate and respond to announcements and intelligence relating to REF processes and to support dissemination of this information to faculty channels.
- To coordinate and provide responses to REF consultation exercises or similar.
- To develop and make recommendations with respect to the REF Code of Practice.
- To manage the University's REF appeals process.

- To consider interactions between UoAs and faculties and make decisions regarding assignment of contracts to UoAs, particularly where these span school and/or faculty boundaries.
- To make decisions relating to substantive link (where required).

Frequency of meetings

Initially every six to eight weeks, increasing in frequency as the submission deadline approaches.

Requirements for notes/minutes/actions and reporting

Record agreements, decisions and actions only.

REF Steering Committee (RSC): Terms of Reference

CONSTITUTION, MEMBERSHIP, AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC) is the body which approves the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference of the REF Steering Committee. The Committee reports directly to the University Research & Innovation Committee. All posts are ex-officio unless otherwise stated.

Membership

Head of Research (Chair)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation
Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation
Associate Deans Research and Innovation (SAH, TEC, CCI, BAL, HSS)
Dean's Representative
Research Culture Lead
Impact Manager
Strategy People and Research Environment Manager
Research Manager (REF & Governance)
Unit of Assessment Coordinators

Co-opted Members (as required)

Accountant, Finance & Procurement
Equality and Diversity Manager
Senior Research Outputs Officer
Research Information and Systems Manager

Observers

Union representatives

In attendance: Support Officer- To provide support for the meeting to take note of key agreements, decisions and actions, assist with draft agenda, & support the group as required.

as required.

Terms of Reference

Advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) and the University Research & Innovation Committee on all aspects of preparation for the next REF submission, including criteria for inclusion, submission guidelines and any emerging management issues.

1. Enable information exchange between DRI, faculties and Units of Assessment as it pertains to the REF.
2. Monitor potential Units of Assessment (UoAs) against stated Strategy People and Research Environment and Impact plans (templates or strategies as appropriate).
3. Monitor progress towards REF submission e.g. through audit exercise or similar.
4. Discuss and disseminate emerging guidance and criteria from Research England.
5. Ensure that effective and appropriate institutional action is undertaken to support REF submission.

NOTES

1. The normal term of office for Committee members does not apply to REF Steering Committee since the focus of this committee is the strategic preparation and submission to the Research Excellence Framework in 2029. UoA coordinators support the REF planning and submission process and are appointed by faculties until further notice or until a submission is successfully completed and a new coordinator appointed.
2. The committee may from time to time co-opt members to the committee for a time-limited period or specific purpose, as the committee sees appropriate to fulfil its Terms of Reference.
3. The quorum is 40% of overall membership.
4. The values of the University mean that all committees within the University's Academic Committee Structure are expected to be conducted within a context of an inclusive and ethical environment.

Unit of Assessment REF Committee: Terms of Reference

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

		ToR agreed: April 2026	Review date: April 2029
GOVERNANCE	TERMS OF REFERENCE	ADMINISTRATION	
Chair: UoA Coordinator (or ADRI where appropriate e.g. where UoA committees are combined within a faculty)	Purpose: Responsible for the unit-level REF2029 preparations for UoA (INSERT UNIT NUMBER)	Frequency / length: - As required but typically 3 times a year; may increase nearer to REF submission - Length as required	
Membership: - UoA Coordinator - UoA Deputy coordinator (where appointed) - Head(s) of School - AD(s)(R&I) of relevant faculty(ies) - AH(s)(R&I) of relevant school(s) - Impact Lead - SPRE Lead (where appointed) - DRI representative - EDI representative - Other co-opted members where local needs dictate Supported by: Faculty/ School Administrator	Objectives: - Monitor, report and provide advice to the UoP REF Steering Committee and Faculty Research and Innovation Committee on all aspects of unit level preparations (Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding [CKU], Engagement and Impact [E&I], unit level Strategy People and Research Environment [SPRE]) and any other emerging management or operational issues. - Ensure the timely delivery, to the highest standard, of all required elements (CKU, E&I, unit-level SPRE) for the Unit of Assessment (INSERT UNIT NUMBER) REF 2029 submission. - Coordinate and oversee Unit level arrangement for University/Faculty REF audit(s) including internal and external reviews, reporting outcomes and feedback to the UoP REF Steering Committee, Faculty Research and Innovation Committee and/or other stakeholders where appropriate, agreeing and implementing actions to address any issues arising. - Recommend to the UoP REF Steering Committee or Faculty Research and Innovation Committee where an effective and appropriate University, or Faculty, action is needed to support the REF submission. - Receive, discuss and interpret emerging REF guidance and criteria from Research England and internal channels (e.g. UoP REF Steering Committee and Faculty Research and Innovation Committee), where appropriate, develop local strategy for its effective implementation. - Consider and monitor the equality and diversity implications of the Research England REF guidance, University of Portsmouth REF processes and local REF related processes as it relates to the UoA, supporting Equality Impact Assessment monitoring and any actions arising through this process. - Support and encourage the sharing of good practice across UoAs and across the faculties as required. - Act as a conduit of communication for addressing staff concerns relating to REF 2029.	Quoracy: 40% of members	
Reports to: - UoP REF Steering Committee - Faculty Research and Innovation Committee Delegates authority to: N/A		Standing agenda items: - Previous actions and decisions - UoA Coordinator update - ADR&I update - Annual HESA return - CKU update - E&I update - SPRE update - AoB Record keeping: Actions and decision table	
		Communications: Action and decisions table distributed to attendees	
		Chair(s) to report to: - UoP REF Steering Committee - Faculty Research and Innovation Committee	

Note: For reasons of efficiency, where the membership of different UoAs consists largely of the same individuals (e.g., where multiple UoAs are located within a single school/faculty) a single meeting may be held to cover the UoAs, subject to the agreement of the UoA coordinators.

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

ACEMPFUN 1 - HESA Academic Employment Function 1 'teaching'

ACEMPFUN 2 - HESA Academic Employment Function 2 'research'

ACEMPFUN 3 - HESA Academic Employment Function 3 'teaching and research'

CoP - Code of Practice

DORA - San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment

EIA - Equality Impact Assessment

EDI - Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

FAQ - Frequently Asked Question

FTE - Full Time Equivalent

HESA - Higher Education Statistics Agency

HR - Human Resources

LGBTQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning

REF - Research Excellence Framework

R&I - Research and Innovation

UEB - University Executive Board

UoA - Unit of Assessment

Appendix 3: Appeals Process

Stage 1 (Informal Investigation): Any person seeking to appeal the incorrect identification of their contract as either meeting, or not meeting, the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research' or 'research independence', as articulated in the REF 2029 Code of Practice, is to raise the concern informally with the relevant Head of School/Line Manager responsible for making the decision. They may be able to address any issues or explain the reasons for the outcome. If the Head of School is unable to assist, the appeal may be escalated to an informal query to the most relevant Associate Dean (Research and Innovation, or equivalent). The Associate Dean (Research and Innovation) or Head of School may request assistance from the REF Team in the Department of Research and Innovation at any point in the informal process, if required. If at all possible, concerns should be addressed through these informal steps.

Stage 2 (Formal Investigation): If the concern cannot be addressed through informal investigation, or if the individual is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal process, a formal appeal may be submitted to the Chair of the University's REF Strategy Group. Formal appeals must be submitted in writing to ref@port.ac.uk.

A formal appeal must state:

- i) the name and UoA of the individual to whom the concern relates;
- ii) an explanation of the nature of the concern;
- iii) evidence to support the concern, particularly that it has potential to materially and significantly impact the correct identification of their contract as either meeting, or not meeting, the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research', or 'research independence', for REF 2029;
- iv) confirmation that the informal process has been completed, or a justification if it has not.

Confirmation of receipt will be provided to all appellants. Receipt of appeals will be formally logged in the reserved section of the minutes of each REF Strategy Group meeting and will be discussed as a standing item at each meeting. If insufficient information is provided, the REF Strategy Group will request further detail from the appellant. If this cannot be provided, the appeal will be considered withdrawn and will not proceed.

The REF Strategy Group will commission an Appeals Panel to consider appeals submitted to the Group. The Appeals Panel will be wholly independent of any other REF processes and will typically consist of an Associate Dean (other than an Associate Dean Research; e.g., Associate Dean Academic) who is not from the appellant's faculty; a Head or Director or Deputy Head or Deputy Director of a Professional Service, other than the Department of Research and Innovation; and a senior HR representative. The Panel will be advised on technical aspects of REF and the University's Code of Practice by the REF Team in the Department of

of Research and Innovation. The Appeals Panel may request further investigation by the REF Team in the Department of Research and Innovation, REF Strategy Group, or other colleagues if appropriate. Appeals will be assessed on the basis of:

- i) whether there is evidence of any error in the information used to assess the contract as either meeting, or not meeting, the criteria for 'significant responsibility for research', or 'research independence' as articulated in the REF 2029 Code of Practice;
- ii) whether any identified errors were material and significant in their impact on the assessment of the contract;
- iii) whether processes described in the REF 2029 Code of Practice were not followed correctly.

Where errors are identified, the Appeals Panel will recommend steps to offer redress. These will include, as a minimum, correcting the inaccurate data or information at source, and re-assessing the contract status as it pertains to 'significant responsibility for research', or 'research independence', for REF 2029.

The Appeals Panel will provide REF Strategy Group with a brief report detailing each appeal considered and the Panel's findings. The REF Strategy Group will act on the Panel's recommendations unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so, in which case the chair of the REF Strategy Group will provide a written justification for their response to the Appeals Panel and the appellant.

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	<i>University of Portsmouth (UoP) draft REF 2029 Code of Practice</i>
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<i>All UK Higher Education Institutions wishing to submit to Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 are required to develop a Code of Practice describing the processes that underpin key decisions. This includes the processes to:</i> <i>i) identify REF volume contributing contracts that have 'significant responsibility for research' (for contracts identified as 'teaching and research' within the HESA record [HESA ACEMPFUN 3]) or 'research independence' (for contracts identified as 'research' only within the HESA record [HESA ACEMPFUN 2])</i> <i>ii) allocate contracts to Units of Assessment</i> <i>iii) select research outputs</i> <i>This equality impact assessment examines these processes to ensure that the Code of Practice is clear, fair and does not discriminate against any protected groups.</i>
3. What involvement and consultation has	<i>We have extended, where possible within the new REF 2029 guidance, the processes that were employed in our REF 2021 Code of</i>

been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<i>Practice. The REF 2021 Code of Practice was developed with engagement from the Women's Staff Network, Multicultural Staff Network, Parents' and Careers' Network, LGBTQ Network, Athena SWAN Champions, Race Equality Charter team, Academic Staff Association, Support Staff Association, Researchers' Network and the University and College Union, and included six Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) considering a range of characteristics and processes during its development and subsequent implementation.</i> <i>In refining our Code of Practice for REF 2029 we have involved the University 's Equality Diversity and Inclusion team from the start and in line with their recommendations, undertook an initial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations checklist during the early stages of revising the Code of Practice. This checklist provides a structured approach to embedding EDI from the outset of this project. During the next phase of development, and in parallel with this Equality Impact Assessment, we are widely sharing our draft REF 2029 Code of Practice within our academic and researcher community. This will include undertaking further consultation with staff representative groups through our Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity team, and the University and College Union.</i>
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<i>The REF 2029 Code of Practice primarily affects academic staff currently employed at the University of Portsmouth as well as those previously employed during the REF-eligible period. Specifically:</i> <i>i) All Individuals employed on 'teaching and research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 3) or 'research' (HESA ACEMPFUN 2) contracts during the census period (currently defined as AY 25/26 and 26/27) are affected by the approaches for determining 'significant responsibility for research' or 'research independence', respectively. Contracts that are identified as having a significant responsibility for research, or research independence, will be identified in the HESA record for that year as REFQUALCON and will determine the University's REF volume measure. Staff employed in 'teaching' only roles, or other roles, are not eligible for inclusion within the volume measure.</i> <i>ii) All 'teaching and research' or 'research' contracts holders, irrespective of whether they are volume contributing, must also be allocated to a Unit of Assessment.</i> <i>Finally, subject to meeting certain eligibility criteria, research outputs produced by 'teaching and research' or 'research' contract holders are eligible for submission to REF 2029. Outputs sole-authored by staff employed in research enabling roles (e.g., technical support role, or similar) may also be eligible for submission where their role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity. Outputs sole-authored by individuals while on an excluded contract type may also be eligible for submission if the individual subsequently moves to an eligible 'teaching and research' or 'research' only contract during the REF period. In exceptional circumstances, outputs sole-authored by an individual on 'teaching' contract may also be eligible for selection.</i>

	<i>Outputs authored within the REF-eligible time by staff previously employed by UoP may also be selected for return to REF 2029, subject to meeting certain eligibility criteria.</i>		
What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<i>An analysis conducted using the data sources that are currently available has been undertaken to inform this initial Equality Impact Assessment (see Annexe 1). As the REF 2029 Code of Practice is fully implemented we intend to monitor on an annual basis, supplemented by data from future institutional REF audit exercises or similar (where available), to monitor and review the actual impact of the processes within the Code of Practice until REF submission (and beyond if appropriate). We will also maintain and monitor an email address (ref@port.ac.uk) where staff will be able to provide their ongoing feedback on issues relating to REF 2029, including the Code of Practice. Where potential inequalities are identified (e.g., during future REF audit exercise or similar), mitigation (e.g. policy review) and support (e.g., workload re-distribution, coaching, or additional development support) will be offered via clear pathways (e.g., through the Head of School, EDI team, or HR as appropriate). If it is identified that changes are required to the Code of Practice, Research England will be contacted, and any resulting changes will be widely communicated within UoP.</i>		
Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used ¹	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	<i>Individuals with a reported disability may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within:</i> <i>i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts;</i> <i>ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School;</i> <i>iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>The analysis presented in Annexe 1 suggests the processes described in the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice do not result in discrimination on the basis of disability.</i>	<i>No further action is required at this stage. Data are to be periodically monitored and reviewed until REF 2029 submission, and beyond if appropriate.</i>
Gender reassignment	<i>Individuals proposing to undergo, undergoing, or having undergone gender reassignment may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within:</i> <i>i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts;</i> <i>ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School;</i> <i>iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>Data were not available to objectively evaluate whether the proposed processes discriminate against individuals proposing to undergo, undergoing, or having undergone gender reassignment. However, the processes detailed in Annexe 1 embed EDI considerations in each of the proposed processes. Moreover, our quantitative analysis for other protected characteristics do not indicate that the proposed processes discriminate against these protected characteristics and we cannot identify a</i>	<i>i) To explore with the University's EDI team the potential for collecting staff data on gender reassignment to inform future equality impact assessment</i> <i>ii) To engage in further consultation with staff representative groups to identify if there are other opportunities to embed EDI best practice within the proposed processes.</i>

		<i>plausible reason why the proposed processes would specifically discriminate against the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, but not other protected characteristics.</i>	
Marriage or civil partnership	<i>Individuals in a marriage or civil partnership may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>Data were not available to objectively evaluate whether the proposed processes discriminate against individuals in a marriage or civil partnership. However, the processes detailed in Annexe 1 embed EDI considerations in each of the proposed processes. Moreover, our quantitative analysis for other protected characteristics with available data do not indicate that the proposed processes discriminate against these protected characteristics and we cannot identify a plausible reason why the proposed processes would specifically discriminate against the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership, but not other protected characteristics.</i>	<i>i) To explore with the University's EDI team the potential for collecting staff data on marriage or civil partnership to inform future equality impact assessment ii) To engage in further consultation with staff representative groups to identify if there are other opportunities to embed EDI best practice within the proposed processes.</i>
Pregnancy and maternity	<i>Individuals who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>Data were not available to objectively evaluate whether the proposed processes discriminate against Individuals who are pregnant or on maternity leave. However, the processes detailed in Annexe 1 embed EDI considerations in each of the proposed processes. Moreover, our quantitative analysis for other protected characteristics with available data do not indicate that the proposed processes discriminate against these protected characteristics and we cannot identify a plausible reason why the proposed processes would specifically discriminate against the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity leave, but not other protected characteristics.</i>	<i>i) To explore with the University's EDI team the potential for collecting staff data on pregnancy or maternity leave to inform future equality impact assessment ii) To engage in further consultation with staff representative groups to identify if there are other opportunities to embed EDI best practice within the proposed processes.</i>
Race	<i>Individuals from certain ethnic groups may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>The analysis presented in Annexe 1 suggests the processes described in the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice do not result in discrimination on the basis of race.</i>	<i>No further action is required at this stage. Data are to be periodically monitored and reviewed until REF 2029 submission, and beyond if appropriate.</i>

Religion or belief	<i>Individuals from certain religions or with certain beliefs may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>The analysis presented in Annexe 1 suggests the processes for identifying volume contributing contracts and assigning contracts to unit of assessment described in the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice do not result in discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. Further data is needed to quantitatively examine the output selection process. Nevertheless, our quantitative analysis for other protected characteristics with available data do not indicate that the output selection process discriminates against these protected characteristics and we cannot identify a plausible reason why this process would specifically discriminate against the protected characteristic of religion or belief, but not other protected characteristics.</i>	<i>To explore with the University's EDI team the potential for collecting staff data on religion or belief to inform future equality impact assessment of output selection process. Other processes are to be periodically monitored and reviewed until REF 2029 submission, and beyond if appropriate.</i>
Sexual orientation	<i>Individuals with a particular sexual orientation may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.</i>	<i>The analysis presented in Annexe 1 suggests the processes for identifying volume contributing contracts and assigning contracts to unit of assessment described in the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice do not result in discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Further data is needed to quantitatively examine the output selection process. Nevertheless, our quantitative analysis for other protected characteristics with available data do not indicate that the output selection process discriminates against these protected characteristics and we cannot identify a plausible reason why this process would specifically discriminate against the protected characteristic of sexual orientation but not other protected characteristics.</i>	<i>To explore with the University's EDI team the potential for collecting staff data on sexual orientation to inform future equality impact assessment of output selection process. Other processes are to be periodically monitored and reviewed until REF 2029 submission, and beyond if appropriate.</i>
Sex	<i>Individuals of a particular sex may be disproportionately under-represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return</i>	<i>The analysis presented in Annexe 1 suggests the processes described in the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice do not result in discrimination on the basis of sex.</i>	<i>No further action is required at this stage. Data are to be periodically monitored and reviewed until REF 2029 submission, and beyond if appropriate.</i>
Age	<i>Individuals of a particular age may be disproportionately under-</i>	<i>The analysis presented in Annexe 1 suggests the processes described in the draft</i>	<i>No further action is required at this stage. Data are to be periodically monitored and</i>

	represented or over-represented within: i) the pool of REF volume-contributing contracts; ii) Units of Assessment that are not associated with their home School; iii) the pool of outputs identified for REF 2029 return.	REF 2029 Code of Practice do not result in discrimination on the basis of age.	reviewed until REF 2029 submission, and beyond if appropriate.
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Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	No – the processes described and analysis detailed in Annexe 1 indicate that the proposed policy does not discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed .	✓	
You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias		
Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required	The final EIA will be published
Date completed:	12.01.2026
Review date (if applicable):	TBC after consultation

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Jo Corbett	12/01/2026	1	N/A

Annexe 1: Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity considerations in developing the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice

The draft REF 2029 Code of Practice provides the full details of the proposed processes for:

- i) identifying REF volume contributing contracts that have ‘significant responsibility for research’ (for contracts identified as ‘teaching and research’ within the HESA record [HESA ACEMPFUN 3]) or ‘research independence’ (for contracts identified as ‘research’ only within the HESA record [HESA ACEMPFUN 2])
- ii) allocating contracts to Units of Assessment
- iii) selecting research outputs

As a starting point for development, the draft REF 2029 Code of Practice extends, where possible within the new REF guidance, the processes that were employed in our REF 2021 Code of Practice. These were developed with engagement from the Women’s Staff Network, Multicultural Staff Network, Parents’ and Careers’ Network, LGBTQ Network, Athena SWAN Champions, Race Equality Charter team, Academic Staff Association, Support Staff Association, Researchers’ Network and the University and College Union, and included six Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) considering a range of characteristics during its development and subsequent implementation.

In refining our Code of Practice for REF 2029 we have involved the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team from the outset, and in line with their recommendations, undertook an initial ‘Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion considerations checklist’ during the early stages of revising the Code of Practice. This checklist provided a structured approach to embedding EDI from the outset of this project. We subsequently undertook the initial Equality Impact Assessment detailed below on the resultant draft REF 2029 Code of Practice, prior to undertaking broader staff consultation, including with staff representative groups. As highlighted in the REF 2029 guidance, this approach aligns with legal precedent (for example, Bracking) which requires that equality considerations be built into decision-making **before and at the time decisions are taken**, rather than after the fact. The Equality Impact Assessment is a live document and, as such we will revisit it following the consultation period to evaluate whether any changes introduced during the consultation have the potential for positive or negative impact on any protected characteristic group, as well as when further data becomes available (e.g. following REF audit).

Identifying REF volume contributing contracts

In accordance with our REF 2021 Code of Practice, we propose to use a research workload threshold of ≥20% of contracted FTE within the process for identifying contracts with ‘significant responsibility for research’. This threshold was employed as it was previously shown to not

discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics. We will continue to employ this threshold pro-rata (for all contracts ≥ 0.2 FTE) to ensure that groups who are more likely to have fractional roles are not treated unfairly. Research workloads are set within the annual planning and review cycle and are the total of externally funded and institution own-funded research hours. Workloads are allocated according to the University's Workload Allocation Model (WAM), which provides a consistent framework for allocation. Externally funded research workloads are based on the hours recorded on the project costing form. Institution own-funded research workloads should be allocated based on a forward-planning process within the annual review cycle to support future achievement across a range of research-related activities (including outputs, impact, income, citizenship and profile). This forward-focused approach that considers a range of activities is intended to reduce potential biases that may arise from allocation models that focus on past-performance (*i.e.* where those that have been in a role for a longer period or had greater previous support could have unfair advantage), whilst valuing a broad range of research contributions. The policy also includes specific additional institution own-funded research workload allocations to support early career researchers develop their career trajectory and re-starting research allowances, to support individuals returning to work after a period of long-term absence for reasons of maternity, pregnancy, adoption, shared parenting, caring, disability, gender reassignment or any other extended absence relating to protected characteristics to restart their research.

Our proposed process for identifying 'teaching and research' contracts with 'significantly responsibility for research' also requires that the contract holder is an independent researcher, as was the case for REF 2021. This is determined by the expectation that the contract holder would be expected to set self-directed research goals, or objectives, as part of the individual's annual Performance and Development Review, or through another equivalent local regular review process. This identical approach is also used to determine 'research independence' for 'research' contract holders. Individuals involved in decision making roles that set workload and/or determine research independence (*e.g.* Heads of School/Line Managers) are expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules. In addition, staff will be informed of the appeals process, which may be used where there has been a failure to follow the process as articulated in the REF 2029 Code of Practice, or where there are errors in the data.

To investigate if there is any evidence of discrimination within our proposed REF 2029 Code of Practice for identifying volume contributing contracts we undertook a quantitative analysis of data that the University holds on protected characteristics of staff (where data are held and/or numbers are sufficiently high to negate potential individual identification) alongside data compiled from an initial assessment of REF volume contributing contracts compiled on 31.06.2025 (Table 1). Because the number of research contracts is small (with potential for individual identification) and the process for identifying staff with research independence is also included in the assessment of significant responsibility for research, we have combined the analysis of teaching and research and research only contracts to compare the proportion of staff with protected characteristics between REF volume contributing contract holders (headcount=550) to the total pool of REF-submissible contract holders (headcount=880). We also undertook additional intersection analysis considering sex and race. In each instance the

difference between groups was less than 5% and suggests that individuals with protected characteristics are not disproportionately represented.

Table 1: Comparison of protected characteristics of staff holding (provisional) REF volume contributing contracts and the total REF eligible contract pool.

Protected characteristic group		REF volume contributing contract (%)	Total REF eligible contract pool (%)	Difference (%)
<i>Disability</i>				
	Disabled	10	11	-1
	Non-disabled	78	76	2
	Unknown	11	13	-2
<i>Race</i>				
	Global majority	20	21	-1
	White	73	71	2
	Unknown	7	8	-1
<i>Religion/belief</i>				
	Buddhist	0	0	0
	Christian	17	17	0
	Hindu	1	1	0
	Jewish	0	0	0
	Muslim	5	5	0
	Sikh	0	0	0
	Any other	5	5	0
	No religion	27	27	0
	Unknown	44	43	1
<i>Sexual orientation</i>				
	LGBTQ+	4	4	0
	Heterosexual/Straight	52	52	0
	Prefer to self-describe	0	0	0
	Unknown	43	43	0
<i>Sex</i>				
	Female	41	42	-1
	Male	59	58	1
<i>Age</i>				
	<36 years	11	14	-3
	36-55 years	66	62	4
	>55 years	23	24	-1
<i>Inter-sectional</i>				
	Female global majority	7	7	0
	Female white	32	32	0
	Female unknown ethnicity	3	3	0
	Male global majority	13	13	0
	Male white	41	40	1
	Male unknown ethnicity	4	5	-1

Allocating contract to Units of Assessment

At present it is anticipated that all contracts will be assigned to a Unit of Assessment to which the University intends to make a REF 2029 return (*i.e.* we do not currently intend to apply for any small-unit exemptions). We also do not view any Unit of Assessment more favourably than others. Accordingly, the assignment of contracts to Units of Assessment is primarily based on the home school of the contract holder, with the research of school's (or equivalent) typically aligned with the descriptors of one or two (and occasionally three) Units. Initial allocation of contracts to a Unit of Assessment is made by the Unit of Assessment co-ordinators based on the best 'fit' of the contract holder's primary research interest to the relevant Unit descriptor and considering Unit of Assessment strategy and supporting structures (*e.g.* research groups etc). Unit of Assessment coordinators are appointed through open and transparent processes and are expected to undertake the University's core EDI training modules.

Unit of Assessment coordinators review contracts associated with their Unit on an annual basis to ensure that the contract association remains appropriate. Where a change is recommended, or it is identified that the research focus of the contract holder does not fit within the boundaries of Units associated with the home school of the contract holder, and a more appropriate Unit is available among those to which the University of Portsmouth intends to make a REF 2029 submission, the Unit of Assessment coordinator will make a request that the REF Strategy Group assign the contract to an alternative Unit of Assessment, who will have ultimate decision making responsibility for Unit assignment. To ensure cross-faculty representation this group includes the Associate Deans R&I from each faculty (each appointed through open and transparent processes and expected to undertake all core EDI training) and includes a member of the University's EDI team to provide oversight. Staff will be informed of the appeals process, which may be used where there has been a failure to follow the process as articulated in the REF 2029 Code of Practice, or where there are errors in the data.

The strong relationship between the individual's home school and the Unit of Assessment to which their contract is allocated is evidenced by the data shown in Table 2 which uses preliminary HESA academic year 24-25 data. This analysis shows that <1% of the FTE of all REF eligible contracts, irrespective of whether not they are volume contributing are assigned to Units outside of the primary research focus of their home school. These small numbers preclude comparison of distribution of protected characteristics of this cohort to the larger pool of contracts aligning with school's research focus. However, these data clearly show that the Unit of Assessment allocation process is primarily based on home school of the contract holder and indirectly evidences that this process is not impacted by any protected characteristics of the contract holder.

Table 2: Provisional assessment of home school and Unit of Assessment of all REF-eligible FTE contracts. Data presented as: FTE of REF volume contributing contracts (FTE of REF eligible contracts *not* identified as volume contributing)

School \ UoA	3	7	14	4	24	9	10	11	12	17	18	20	25	27	32	33	TOTAL FTE
SMPBS	27.6 (4.5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27.6 (5.5)
SDHCP	8.96 (4.6)	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.46 (4.6)
SELS	10.6 (6.0)	28.7 (5.0)	11.8 (2.3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51.1 (13.3)
SPSHS	0	0	0	36.5 (3.2)	22.8 (5.8)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59.3 (9)
ICG	0	0	0	0	0	17 (33)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17 (33)
SMAP	0	0	0	0	0	6 (3)	16 (5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22 (8)
SC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39.3 (16.8)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39.3 (16.8)
SCES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.8 (24.2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.8 (24.2)
SEME	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	31 (15.54)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32 (15.54)
SOSP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15.1 (16.4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	15.1 (16.4)
SAEF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31.8 (12.5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	31.8 (12.5)
SSMI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26.3 (12.8)	0	0	1	0	0	0	27.3 (14.8)
SL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.5 (9.6)	0	1	0	0	0	13.5 (10.6)
SCCJ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0.22)	37 (14.77)	0.4 (0.33)	0	0	0	37.4 (15.32)
SASSHPL	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36.4 (7.6)	6.8	0	0	43.6 (7.6)
SELL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 (10)	5.5 (7.54)	0	0	9.5 (18.54)
SAAD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26 (9.52)	2	28 (9.52)
SFMCCT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4.8 (3)	4.8 (13.4)	16.5 (7.8)	28.1 (24.2)
OTHER	0 (2.8)	1 (1)	1 (0.3)	0.5	1 (1)	0.4	0	1.5	2 (0.4)	2.4 (7.2)	2.5 (2)	1.2 (1)	2 (0.5)	0.7 (1)	2.6 (2)	1	19.8 (19.2)
TOTAL FTE	47.56 (17.9)	29.7 (6)	12.8 (2.6)	37 (3.2)	24.3 (6.8)	23.4 (36)	16 (5)	41.8 (16.8)	39.8 (41.14)	75.6 (48.9)	15 (11.82)	38.2 (16.77)	46.8 (20.43)	17.8 (11.54)	33.4 (25.92)	19.5 (7.8)	518.66 (278.62)

Selecting research Outputs

The University's approach to output selection aims to identify the highest-quality eligible outputs that best represent the range of research in each UoA. Our proposed process extends that developed for REF 2021 and enables output to be nominated for review by: i) any listed author; ii) the UoA Coordinator; or iii) the Associate Dean of Research and Innovation (or equivalent) within the relevant faculty. UoA coordinators may also choose to use citation data during the output nomination phase to identify outputs for review; this is a departure from our REF 2021 Code of Practice, but together with the wide range of individuals able to nominate outputs, is intended to further enhance representativeness and help identify high-quality outputs from diverse groups - including those who may underestimate the value of their own work, or individuals on long-term leave of absence.

Quality assessment will involve academic judgment developed through self-assessment, internal peer review, and external review (for a sample of outputs). Each output should receive at least two reviews by individuals with sufficient expertise to make an evaluation of the output content, with arbitration for disagreements. Where suitable expertise cannot be located in-house, appropriate external expertise will be sought to support the training of internal reviewers and/or to undertake quality assessment of any non-traditional outputs, or outputs using British Sign Language.

To ensure consistency and fairness, Unit of Assessment coordinators are expected to organise training and/or calibration exercises, or similar, to support consistency in outputs assessment. Unit of Assessment coordinators have decision making responsibility for output selection and are expected to undertake core EDI training. Where outputs are judged to be of equal quality, selection will also consider diversity of authorship alongside the representation of subject areas and representation non-traditional outputs.

Because we are at the early stages of our output review and selection cycle for REF 2029, data from this REF cycle are not available for formal analysis. However, our intended process largely mirrors that employed in REF 2021. Equality Impact Analysis conducted following REF 2021 indicated that the distribution of protected characteristics was not statistically different (using two-tailed Z-test) between the number of individuals with protected characteristics associated with selected outputs and the proportions of individuals with protected characteristics of the staff pool selected for submission to REF2021 (Table 3). This analysis will be repeated at the earliest opportunity using provisional selection of outputs for REF 2029 and data on protected characteristics of the individuals linked to those outputs through the HESA ID.

Table 3: Analysis of the protected characteristics of authors associated with outputs selected for REF 2021 compared to the protected characteristics of the Category A total staff pool selected for submission to REF2021.

Protected group	characteristic	Outputs submitted to REF 2021 (n(%))	Staff returned to REF 2021 (n(%))	Difference (%)	P value
<i>Disability</i>	Disabled	67(5.0)	(30)5.0	0.0	0.96
	Non-disabled	1101(82.7)	503(83.4)	-0.7	0.70
	Unknown	163(12.2)	70(11.6)	0.6	0.69
<i>Race</i>	Global majority	201(15.1)	91(15.1)	0.0	0.99
	White	1013(76.1)	464(76.9)	-0.8	0.69
	Unknown	117(8.8)	48(8.0)	0.8	0.54
<i>Sex</i>	Female	498(37.4)	240(39.8)	-2.4	0.32
	Male	833(62.6)	363(60.2)	2.4	0.32
<i>Age</i>	<36 years	235(17.7)	101(16.7)	1.0	0.62
	36-55 years	861(64.7)	387(64.2)	0.5	0.83
	>55 years	235(17.7)	115(19.1)	-1.4	0.45