

Code of Practice

Institution name: University of the West of Scotland

Date of submission: 8 June 2026

Executive Summary

This Code of Practice (CoP) sets out UWS's approach to REF 2029, ensuring fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. It explains how we identify Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), determine Research Independence (RI), allocate contracts to Units of Assessment (UoAs), select outputs, and conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). Operational details are provided in appendices.

Part 1: Introduction

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to ensuring that its participation in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is underpinned by principles of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. In line with UK funding body requirements, UWS has developed a REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) that sets out the institutional approach to key decisions, including the identification of volume-contributing contracts and the selection of research outputs. The CoP is a mandatory component of REF 2029 and must be approved by the funding bodies prior to submission. It serves not only as a procedural guide but also as a framework for embedding equity and consistency across all REF-related activities. By adopting this CoP, UWS affirms its commitment to supporting a diverse research community and maintaining confidence in the integrity of its submission.

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to ensuring that its submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2029 (REF 2029) is conducted in a manner that reflects the university's values and strategic priorities as outlined in [Strategy 2030](#). The CoP therefore supports UWS's strategic goals of:

- Creating and applying new knowledge
- Maximising our students' success
- Growing our global impact

The University's core values of Integrity, Respect, Inclusivity, and Accountability guide how we work together. Our core purpose of driving social inclusion and reducing inequalities through our education, research, and knowledge exchange aligns with and underpins our approach to REF 2029.

On 10 December 2025, the UK funding bodies lifted the REF 2029 pause and confirmed several policy refinements that frame institutional decision-making for this CoP. In summary:

- The environment element has been reconfigured and renamed Strategy, People & Research Environment (SPRE), with the overall weighting reduced to 20%. Contributions to Knowledge & Understanding (CKU) will now be weighted at 55%, and Engagement & Impact (E&I) remains 25%.
- The CKU element has been simplified and clarified; the assessment of impact has been broadly retained from REF 2021 and unit-level statements have been removed from both these elements. The recommended maximum of five outputs per researcher has been reinstated and the requirement for a minimum of one output has been removed. Disciplinary level statements will not be introduced for REF 2029.

These updates do not change the scope of the CoP. The CoP and the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) element of REF 2029 are distinct but complementary aspects of the exercise. While they share a common goal of promoting positive and inclusive cultures, they have a different focus and serve different purposes within the REF. Guidance for REF 2029 will be formally finalised in 2026; UWS will monitor updates and make any minor adjustments required.

Key Updates Since REF2021

The processes outlined in this CoP reflect several changes related to REF 2029 and distinguish it from the approach used in previous assessment exercises. These include:

- Decoupling of individuals and outputs: We are no longer required to submit individual staff information to REF 2029 or list outputs against individual staff members. Instead, each output is provided with a single HESA ID related to one author on the output to evidence a substantive link to UWS.
- Volume measure based on HESA data: Output requirements are calculated using HESA Staff Record data, removing the need for staff lists.
- Removal of individual staff circumstances processes: As outputs are not linked to individuals, the requirement to consider individual circumstances has been removed.
- Integration with the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE): While distinct from the CoP, the SPRE preparations complement it by promoting inclusive research cultures and environments.

1.1 Supporting the Principals of Robustness, Transparency, and Equity and Inclusion

1.1.1 Robustness

The University of the West of Scotland is committed to ensuring that its REF 2029 submission is guided by the principles of robustness, transparency, and equity and inclusion. Central to this is the accurate identification of contracts that contribute to the volume measure, ensuring they reliably reflect Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI).

The volume measure is derived from HESA staff records, mapped to those Units of Assessment (UOAs) to which UWS will make a return via institutional cost centres. To ensure this measure accurately reflects staff responsibilities, the University has implemented a structured, evidence-based process supported by internal HR systems and academic oversight. This includes:

- Clear and consistent criteria for determining SRR, aligned with contractual expectations, workload allocation, and associated research activity.
- Annual reviews of contract data and cost centre mappings, overseen by our REF Steering Group.
- A data verification process that creates the opportunity for staff to review and query their contract information and UoA mapping prior to submission.

These policies and processes are detailed in Part 2: Identifying Staff Contracts with SRR and Part 3: Determining Research Independence, which set out how validated HESA data and institutional records are used to assess eligibility. All decisions are documented with clear audit trails, ensuring consistency, transparency, and alignment with sector-wide standards.

This CoP is a living document, developed through consultation with staff, staff representatives, and equality and diversity leads, with oversight from the REF Steering Group. It will be subject to an EIA and published on the UWS website following approval. Training and support will be provided to ensure consistent implementation across the institution.

1.1.2 Transparency

UWS is committed to ensuring that the REF 2029 CoP is communicated clearly, consistently, and is accessible to all relevant staff, regardless of location, contract type, or working pattern. An up-to-date

version of the CoP will be published externally on the UWS website to ensure public accountability and sector-wide transparency and will also be available internally via the staff intranet with secure off-campus access for those on leave, secondment, sabbatical, or working off campus.

To support understanding and engagement, the University will provide:

- A dedicated REF 2029 intranet page (Connect) containing guidance documents, timelines, decision-making criteria, and FAQs.
- Annual briefings and drop-in sessions, both in-person and online, to ensure staff across all campuses and working arrangements can participate.
- Training and guidance for managers and Unit of Assessment (UoA) leads to support consistent messaging and application of the CoP.

Planning and preparations for REF 2029 are overseen on behalf of the Vice Chancellor's Executive (VCE) by the REF Steering Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation). This group maintains a rolling governance approach established during REF 2021, evolving to reflect key changes in external policy and institutional priorities. Academic oversight of the CoP is provided through the University Senate, with the Research & Innovation Committee playing a key role in shaping research strategy and monitoring REF-related developments.

The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between staff, committees, and governance bodies involved in REF 2029 preparations. Additional information on the remit of the REF governance is provided as Appendix 2.

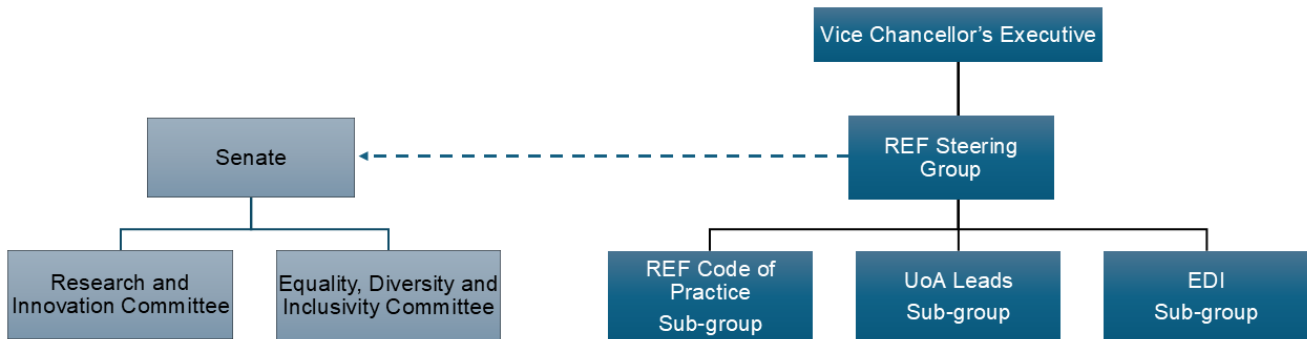


Figure 1. Structure of REF 2029 governance at UWS, illustrating the roles, reporting lines, and oversight mechanisms supporting transparent and consistent decision-making.

Implementation of the CoP is overseen by the REF Steering Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), to ensure that all REF-related processes are documented and applied consistently, with clear roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms for appeal.

The CoP has been developed by a dedicated sub-group of the REF Steering Group and shared widely across the University for consultation. In line with the expectations for broad, transparent and inclusive consultation under REF 2029, feedback and endorsement have been sought in the following chronological order:

Drafting began in Summer 2025 with internal review by the University REF Steering Group and the University REF EDI Sub-group, ensuring early integration of equality considerations consistent with REF 2029 CoP guidance.

The developing draft was then shared and shaped with staff via email and a series of three meetings (online and in-person, 17 October, 30 October and 14 November 2025) to gather both general and discipline specific feedback.

A draft was considered by the Research and Innovation Committee on 5 November 2025 and following further development was subsequently considered by the Vice Chancellor's Executive on 25 November 2025 before progressing through formal governance.

The draft CoP was reviewed and approved for wider consultation by University Senate on 10 December 2025 with a change log listing any required updates to the CoP following the REF 2029 announcement also on 10 December.

After Senate approval of the draft for consultation, further stakeholder engagement took place, including:

- Staff Consultation Feedback Survey via MS Form link to collect feedback from the wider staff community from 17 December 2025 to 17 January 2026.
- Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) – draft review on 16 December 2025 with staff consultation feedback provided for 29 January 2026.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee – review of the draft Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on 17 December 2025.
- Vice Chancellors Executive on 3 February 2026.

1.1.3 Equity and Inclusion

The REF 2029 CoP at UWS embeds equity and inclusion at every stage, ensuring decisions are fair, impartial, and reflective of the diversity of people and research across the University. This commitment supports a wide range of roles, disciplines, and career pathways, recognising that a healthy research culture and environment values varied contributions.

Decisions on Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI) are based on consistent, transparent criteria and overseen by panels that include trained EDI representatives. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are conducted at key stages to identify and address any unintended bias.

For output selection, UWS applies REF 2029 guidance to ensure inclusivity. Outputs are not attributed to individual staff members and are chosen for quality and disciplinary relevance. This decoupled approach enables contributions from a diverse range of research and research-enabling roles—including technicians, research managers, research librarians, and staff on fractional or fixed-term contracts—where a substantive link to UWS can be evidenced. Processes are robust, transparent, and aligned with UWS's commitments as a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA) and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment. (CoARA).

Inclusive decision-making is supported through:

- Mandatory EDI and unconscious bias training for all staff involved in REF decisions, with additional guidance provided to managers and UoA leads.
- Oversight by the REF EDI Subgroup, which advises on inclusive practices, reviews EIAs, and monitors implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

This approach ensures that REF processes reflect UWS's institutional values and promote an equitable, inclusive research culture.

1.2 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

The UWS REF 2029 CoP is embedded within the University's strategic and ethical framework, reflecting its commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion, and responsible research assessment. It aligns with Strategy 2030, which emphasises inclusive growth, integrity, and global impact through research and education.

As a signatory to DoRA and a member of CoARA, UWS ensures that research outputs are assessed on their intrinsic merit rather than journal-based metrics or publication venue prestige. These principles are operationalised in the CoP through transparent criteria that recognise diverse outputs, including datasets, software, public engagement, and interdisciplinary work.

The CoP complements UWS's work on the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) element of REF 2029, supporting a collegial research culture where contributions from all career stages and contract types are valued. It is informed by institutional policies such as the Code of Research Practice and Research Ethics, the Academic Career Development Framework, the Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Code, and policies on staff development, wellbeing, and responsible metrics. All policies are publicly accessible via the University's Policies and Guidance webpages.

In addition, the CoP aligns with UWS's commitments under the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (HR Excellence in Research Award) and the Concordat for Research Integrity, supported through annual integrity statements. Together, these frameworks ensure that REF processes are not only compliant with national requirements but also reflect UWS's mission to reduce inequalities and foster a vibrant, diverse research culture.

UWS supports equality, diversity and inclusion through our [HR policies and procedures](#), such as our family friendly policies, flexible working procedure, returners scheme, menopause guidance, and dignity and respect code. UWS ensures these policies support all staff, including those on part-time and fixed-term contracts. UWS complies with the Part-time Workers Regulations 2000 and Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002 to protect staff on part-time or fixed-term contracts from being treated less favourably than comparable full-time staff. Part-time and fixed-term staff are fully included in the research environment and REF processes, with equitable access to opportunities, development, and support throughout their employment, including appropriate consultation and support as contracts approach their end. Our commitment to delivering an inclusive research environment is embedded throughout this CoP, with detailed Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) conducted for each procedure within the CoP.

Our high ratio of early career researchers to senior research leadership, strong teaching focus alongside our growing research intensity, and substantial number of second-career academics are UWS-specific circumstances that are considered within this CoP and within our wider research activity to ensure processes, policies and practices support the whole research community. In addition, UWS faces the same challenges as institutions across the sector in relation to underrepresentation of academic staff from marginalised backgrounds, need to build and sustain staff equity literacy, and difficulties in robustly collating equalities data to track the impact of inclusive practices. These factors directly inform the design, monitoring and review of REF-related processes, and are explicitly assessed through Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), with mitigations implemented where potential inequalities or risks are identified.

1.3 Update on Actions Since REF 2021

Following the final Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for REF 2021, UWS implemented a series of actions to address identified issues and strengthen equity, diversity, and inclusion across REF-related processes and the wider research environment. Key actions include:

- **Governance and Oversight:** Retention of the REF EDI Sub-Group to advise on inclusive practices and monitor implementation of the REF 2029 CoP.
- **Process Improvements:** A review of REF 2021 EIA outcomes informed enhancements to staff identification, output selection, and disclosure procedures. A decoupled output selection process has been adopted for REF 2029, aligned with sector guidance, ensuring outputs are assessed on quality rather than individual attribution.
- **Embedding EDI in Strategy:** EDI principles have been integrated into the institutional research strategy and Strategy 2030, reinforcing UWS's values of Integrity, Respect, Inclusivity, and Accountability.
- **Responsible Research Assessment:** UWS remains a signatory to DoRA and is preparing its first institutional action plan under CoARA's 10 principles (publication planned July 2026).
- **Career Development:** Introduction of the Academic Career Development Framework (ACDF) in 2023/24, providing inclusive pathways for progression across Teaching & Learning, Research & Innovation, and Strategy & Impact and therefore further enhancing the opportunity for research-enabling contributions to be recognised.
- **Data and Monitoring:** Enhanced capacity to monitor equality data across contract types, career stages, and protected characteristics, enabling targeted interventions.
- **Sector Commitments:** Retention of the Athena Swan Bronze Award; continued compliance with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the Concordat for Research Integrity, supported by annual integrity statements and anonymised ethics review pilots.
- **Open Research:** Updated Research Data Management Procedure (2023) reflects UWS's commitment to the Concordat on Open Research Data.

Together, these actions demonstrate UWS's commitment to learning from REF 2021, addressing EIA recommendations, and fostering an inclusive, responsible, and transparent research culture.

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

2.1 Policies and Procedures:

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) does not assume that all staff on Teaching and Research (T&R) contracts automatically have Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR). Therefore, an annual process is required to identify which T&R contracts (HESA field Contract.ACEMPFUN = 3) will form part of the REF volume measure calculation.

Note: The policies and procedures for Research Only contracts (Contract.ACEMPFUN = 2) are detailed in Part 3 of the CoP.

The administrative process begins each year in line with HESA Staff Record preparations. Eligible contracts are determined from HR system data and flagged using the HESA field Contract REFQUALCON. This stage is a joint administrative function performed by HR/Payroll and the central REF team. The process is repeated annually and is designed to ensure consistency, fairness, and auditability.

For each staff member, evidence is recorded to justify the decision. In line with the REF 2029 guidance, the decisions are made solely in relation to explicit time and resources being made available to engage actively in independent research in a context where there is an expectation of research in the job role. Procedures follow the steps outlined in the REF Volume Measure Contributing Contracts Diagram (Appendix 3). An indicative timetable for completing the HESA Staff Record is provided in Appendix 4.

2.1.1 Criteria for Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)

Staff on Contract.ACEMPFUN = 3 are expected to meet **at least one** of the following indicators:

- **Research time allocation >10%** (pro-rata for part-time contracts)
- **Principal Investigator** on a grant during the HESA reporting year

Note: Staff undertaking a PhD or similar are **not** considered independent researchers.

Evidence to justify SRR decisions may include:

- Grant award documentation
- Records in the Research Information Management System
- TRAC data or workload allocation models
- Research plans
- Activity plans
- Confirmation from line manager or Head of Division

2.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

The annual process commences in February for each HESA Staff Record cycle:

- **Data Extraction:** HR provides contract data for staff on T&R contracts (Contract.ACEMPFUN = 3).
- **Initial Review:** Central REF team maps evidence against SRR criteria (Section 2.1.1).
- **School Review:** Lists are sent to Schools for confirmation and a second administrative check.

- **Resolution of Uncertainty:** A member of the School Leadership Team nominated by the Dean liaises with staff or line managers to agree the position and source evidence.
- **Final Determination:** Decisions are evidence-based and cross-checked by the REF team. A change log is maintained.
- **Communication:** Staff on eligible contracts are informed of their SRR status by email.
- **Audit:** Evidence to support decisions will be retained until the publication of REF results in case of audit.

2.2 Staff, Committees and Training

2.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

- **Central REF Team:** Oversees process, evidence collation, and compliance.
- **HR/Payroll:** Provides contract data and ensures accuracy of HESA fields.
- **School Leadership Team:** Reviews determinations, resolves uncertainties.
- **REF Steering Group:** Decision-making role on CoP policy interpretation and consistency.

2.2.2 Training

Required Training for All Staff

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):
All UWS staff complete annual EDI training, including:

- **Fostering UWS Inclusive Culture**
- **Psychological Safety in our learning and workspace.**

This ensures staff understand and contribute to an inclusive, respectful environment, in line with UWS's Dignity and Respect at Work guidelines.

REF-Specific Training for Decision Makers within Governance Structure

Staff who hold formal decision-making responsibilities within the REF 2029 governance structure (as outlined in Appendix 2: UWS REF 2029 Governance Structure) must complete additional REF-specific training to include:

- **Responsible Research Assessment:**
Principles aligned with DoRA and the Leiden Manifesto, focusing on fair, transparent evaluation of research outputs.
- **EDI in Research Assessment:**
Guidance on mitigating bias and promoting equity in REF-related decisions.
- **Research Independence and SRR Criteria:**
Ensuring consistent interpretation and application of SRR and Research Independence definitions.

External advisors and reviewers will be informed of the REF 2029 CoP and required to uphold EDI principles, though they will not participate in SRR or RI decisions.

Delivery and Monitoring

- Training delivered via online modules, live workshops, and scenario-based exercises.
- Completion monitored and recorded; refresher sessions provided annually.

2.3 Appeals

Any staff member wishing to appeal the Significant Responsibility or Research Independence decision relating to the eligibility of their contract of employment can provide evidence within one month of receipt of the decision email. This evidence will be considered by an Appeals Panel comprising a Dean and an ADRI who were independent from the initial decision, a member of the HR and Payroll Team and the central REF team. The panel will be chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or their nominee.

Emails communicating SRR status to staff, with their line manager in copy, will clearly state:

- The purpose of the determination for the HESA staff return and REF 2029 Volume Measure.
- The criteria for SRR used for the determination.
- Their ACEMPFUN code.
- Their UoA.
- Their SRR determination (Yes/No).
- A statement of rationale for the determination.
- An evidence table noting what evidence has been used against each criterion and the file name of any accompanying documentation, where appropriate.
- The timeframe and process for appeals.

Any staff member wishing to appeal their SRR determination, or highlight inaccuracies in the HESA data, can use the link to a dedicated MS Forms provided in the email. This enables them to submit supporting evidence within one month of receipt of the decision email.

The MS Form is owned and monitored by the UWS REF Team, with the REF Manager receiving notification of all submissions and associated evidence.

Any queries about the appeals process can be directed to UWSREF2029@uws.ac.uk. Where HESA data inaccuracies are identified, a member of the HR/Payroll team, who have ultimate responsibility for HESA data, will also be notified.

Outcomes will be communicated back to the individual by email.

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Equality Impact Assessment informed the development of the process for identifying staff contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research by ensuring that equity, transparency, and inclusivity were embedded throughout. The assessment highlighted potential disadvantages for staff sharing protected characteristics, including disabled staff, minority ethnic staff, LGBTQ+ staff, and those with caring responsibilities, due to being underrepresented in all UWS contracts. In response, the process embedded inclusive decision-making through interventions such as mandatory training as outlined in 2.2.2 to combat individual biases, and the use of multiple evidence sources and multiple decision-

makers to mitigate against systematic biases. These actions, combined with wide consultation and transparent communication, strengthen confidence in the integrity and inclusivity of the process.

Appeals processes are designed to avoid discrimination and support staff with protected characteristics or individual circumstances. Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted on appeals outcomes annually to monitor fairness and inclusivity.

Please refer to the Appendices to view the full Equality Impact Assessment on identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research.

The REF EDI Subgroup supported the development of the Code of Practice and will monitor implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. All Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes.

An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the processes outlined in the Code of Practice.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

3.1 Policies and Procedures

UWS applies a structured, evidence-based process to determine Research Independence for staff on 'research only' contracts (ACEMPFUN 2). The process is repeated annually and is designed to ensure consistency, fairness, and auditability.

In line with section 9.1.3 of the REF 2029 Guidance, a 'research only' contract is considered to demonstrate research independence if the staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out research prescribed as part of another individual's research programme. Further, in line with section 9.6.1 of the REF 2029 Guidance, the determination of research independence will not be based solely on being named on research outputs. Lastly, in accordance with REF 2029 Guidance, once research independence is established, it is treated as persistent and will only be removed in exceptional circumstances where new, verifiable evidence is provided.

This section does not apply to 'teaching and research contracts' (ACEMPFUN 3), which are dealt with under Part 2 of the CoP.

3.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

In each case, the following criteria will be applied to assess if Research Independence is warranted:

- Acts as lead applicant (PI) on externally funded research projects
- Holds an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence. The university will reference the published REF 2029 list of competitive research fellowships when considering this indicator.
- Leads a research group or a substantial/specialised work package with autonomy over research direction and resources.
- For UoAs 13-34 additional consideration will be given to:
 - being named as a co-applicant on an externally funded research grant/award
 - having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.

In each case, research independence will be assessed by drawing on a combination of the indicators outlined above. No single indicator will necessarily be sufficient to demonstrate independence, and expectations may vary by discipline and Unit of Assessment. Where appropriate, multiple forms of evidence will be considered together to determine whether an individual has demonstrated autonomy in setting research direction, leading research activity, and making substantive intellectual contributions.

3.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

Annual review exercises will be carried out in line with the HESA Staff Record preparation timetable to determine which research-only contracts meet the criteria for research independence and should be flagged as REFQUALCON for inclusion in the volume measure.

Stage 1: Data Review

- Data from institutional systems (HR and PURE) will be used to identify staff on research-only contracts (ACEMPFUN 2).
- Initial checks will assess whether these contracts meet the research independence criteria set out in Section 3.1.1.

- Information on eligible contracts and the application of criteria will be shared with School Leadership Teams to review and confirm. In cases of uncertainty, the School Leadership Team will liaise directly with the staff member or their line manager to agree the position.

Stage 2: Individual Review

- Individuals on ACEMFUN2 contracts are advised of the decision outcome by email.

Audit: Evidence to support decisions will be retained until the publication of REF results in case of audit.

3.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

This information is set out in Section 2.2

3.3 Appeals

Appeals relating to research independence may be submitted on the following grounds:

- Inaccuracy of data used to apply the research independence criteria.
- Additional evidence presented for consideration.

Emails communicating research independence status to staff, with their line manager in copy, will clearly state:

- The purpose of the determination for the HESA staff return and REF 2029 Volume Measure.
- The criteria for research independence used for the determination.
- Their ACEMPFUN code.
- Their UoA.
- Their research independence determination (Yes/No).
- A statement of rationale for the determination.
- An evidence table noting what evidence has been used against each criterion and the file name of any accompanying documentation, where appropriate.
- The timeframe and process for appeals.

Any staff member wishing to appeal their research independence determination, or highlight inaccuracies in the HESA data, can use the link to a dedicated MS Form provided in the email. This gives them the opportunity to provide evidence within one month of receipt of the decision email. The MS Form is owned and monitored by the UWS REF Team, with the REF Manager receiving an email notification of any appeals lodged and the evidence provided. Any queries about this process should be directed to UWSREF2029@uws.ac.uk.

This evidence will be considered by a Panel comprising a Dean and an ADRI who were independent from the initial decision, the Head of Research, and a representative from the UWS EDI committee. The panel will be chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or their nominee. Where HESA data inaccuracies are flagged, a member of the HR/Payroll team, who have ultimate responsibility for the HESA data, will also be notified.

Outcomes will be communicated back to the individual by email.

All outcomes will be documented in a secure change log maintained by central REF team. This log will include the rationale, evidence considered, and the outcome of each determination.

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) informed the development of the process for determining research independence by embedding measures to ensure fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. The assessment identified similar risks as the process for Significant Responsibility for Research in potential underrepresentation among disabled staff, minority ethnic staff, LGBTQ+ staff, and those with caring responsibilities, as well as potential disadvantages for female staff due to maternity leave. To mitigate these risks, the process incorporates multiple decision-makers to reduce individual bias, mandatory training on responsible research assessment and EDI principles, and clear, consistent interpretation of research independence criteria. These actions, combined with wide consultation and transparent communication, strengthen confidence in the integrity and inclusivity of the process.

Appeals processes are designed to avoid discrimination and support staff with protected characteristics or individual circumstances. Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted on appeals outcomes annually to monitor fairness and inclusivity.

Please refer to the Appendices to view the full Equality Impact Assessment on determining research independence.

The REF EDI Subgroup supported the development of the Code of Practice and will monitor implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. All Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes.

An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the processes outlined in the Code of Practice.

Part 4. Allocation of Units of Assessment (UoAs)

4.1 Policies and Procedures

UWS is committed to ensuring that all UoA allocation decisions are made in a manner that is fair, transparent, consistent, and aligned with REF expectations. The process described below is designed to ensure that decisions are evidence-based, procedurally robust and applied equitably across all staff groups.

In line with HESA requirements, all staff employed on Academic or Research contracts are linked via the University's HESA Staff Return field (REFUOA 2029) to a Unit of Assessment (UoA) that UWS intends to submit for REF 2029, regardless of whether they meet the criteria for independent researcher status.

For administrative purposes, the central REF Team will continue to apply an initial mapping to UoA for new staff with eligible contracts based on the HESA Cost Centre for new staff. Annually, the UoA Leads will oversee a more detailed review of evidence to ensure the alignment across their UoA is reflective of the substantive connection between the individual's research activity and the Unit of Assessment descriptor. Allocation to a UoA does not restrict the submission of outputs to other UoAs and staff may contribute outputs to any UoA in accordance with REF rules, irrespective of their HESA-linked UoA allocation.

UWS will continue to use the REF 2021 UoA list and descriptors for discipline alignment and internal mapping until such time as updated REF 2029 information is available.

4.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

- Primary Criterion: The individual's research outputs, projects, and impact activity align with the scope of the UoA descriptor.
- Secondary Considerations: Contribution to the research environment (e.g., doctoral supervision, research income, research leadership).

4.1.2 Interdisciplinary Researchers

Where a staff member's research spans multiple disciplinary areas and could reasonably be returned to more than one UoA, annual adjustments to the HESA Staff Record submission may be required. This could result in a situation whereby an individual is not assigned to the same UoA in consecutive years. This approach will remain in place pending any future solution from HESA that allows fractional alignments across more than one UoA within a single HESA Staff Record.

All recommended changes must include a clear, auditable rationale explaining why the allocation was chosen, referencing evidence such as research outputs, grant activity, and alignment with future UoA descriptors. This rationale should be documented and submitted to the REF Steering Group for endorsement.

4.1.3 Decision-making and Communication

Allocation decisions follow a structured process to ensure transparency and consistency. All decisions will be documented, with rationale recorded for audit purposes.

- **Roles and Responsibilities**
 - Initial mapping is undertaken by UoA Leads and Associate Deans (Research and Innovation) using HESA cost centre data, staff profiles and other evidence of research activity including published outputs.

- Interdisciplinary cases are jointly reviewed by at least two UoA Leads, with all requests and recommendations for changes considered by the REF Steering Group for final decision.
- Annual reviews of HESA Staff Record data allow UoA Leads to propose changes, supported by a written rationale.
- Decisions are ratified by the REF Steering Group to ensure consistency across UoAs.
- **Timelines**
 - UoA allocations are reviewed annually as part of the HESA Staff Record cycle.
 - Updates on UoA allocation are communicated to staff alongside notifications of SRR (see Part 2) and RI (see Part 3) status.
- **Communication**
 - Staff are informed of their UoA allocation by email from the central REF team and are invited to provide feedback.
 - Staff may discuss their allocation with any UoA Lead and, if a change is suggested, it will be considered by the UoA Leads and presented for a final decision to the REF Steering Group.

An indicative timeline for preparation of the HESA Staff Record each year is provided as Appendix 4.

4.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

Please refer to Part 2 section 2.2.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Equality Impact Assessment identified no adverse effects on people who share protected characteristics in the process for the allocation of Units of Assessment. Please refer to the Appendices to view the full Equality Impact Assessment on the allocation of Units of Assessment.

The REF EDI Subgroup supported the development of the Code of Practice and will monitor implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. All Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes.

An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the processes outlined in the Code of Practice.

Part 5: Selecting outputs

5.1 Policies and Procedures

This section outlines the principles and procedures UWS will follow to ensure that output selection is fair, transparent, and consistent with REF 2029 guidance. Our approach is designed to maximize the strength of the submission while upholding the twin aims of ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion and that the submission is representative of the UoA.

Outputs will be submitted to the most appropriate UoA(s) based on intellectual content and panel criteria and not on the staff affiliation process detailed in part 4 of this CoP, which is used to calculate the volume measure.

The selection of outputs for REF is not linked to any performance management or promotion process. Decisions are made solely for the purpose of optimising the institutional submission to REF 2029.

In line with REF 2029 guidance, the final selection of outputs will be based on eligibility and excellence, ensuring that UWS presents the strongest possible submission which is representative of the UoAs concerned.

The REF 2029 period spans research activities and outputs from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2028. To be eligible for submission, each output must:

- be the product of research, briefly defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.
- have first been brought into the public domain during the publication period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2028 or, if a confidential report, lodged with the body to whom it is confidential during this same period.
- have a substantive link to the HEI making the submission.
- where outputs are within scope of the Open Access policy, meet the requirements of that policy.

For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared. REF 2029 guidance at [Section 4, paragraph 5.3-5.5](#) details what this includes and excludes.

5.1.1 Identifying substantive link to outputs

In line with REF 2029 guidance, UWS will submit research outputs for which the University can demonstrate a clear and substantive link.

A substantive link describes the relationship between an HEI and research, submitted in the form of an output. For each submitted output, UWS must have enabled the research leading to the output that is first made publicly available during the REF 2029 output eligibility period. A substantive link must be evidenced through an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent) who has made a significant research contribution to the output.

In line with REF 2029 guidance, the University will not submit individual staff information, other than the HESA ID which demonstrates a substantive link to the HEI.

Eligible employment relationships are defined as:

- 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**

- The role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity (in line with the REF definition of research) within the role. 'Research activity' is not restricted by profession and an eligible employment relationship may be with any staff member who undertakes, enables or supports research.

For each output selected for submission, the Unit of Assessment Lead will be assisted by the REF Central Team working with the HR Systems and Payroll Team to verify the eligible employment relationship via one of the following routes detailed in the REF 2029 guidance.

- At the point the submitted output was first made publicly available; or
- Before first public availability, when the research resulting in the output was carried out. For most outputs, this time limited period will sit within Jan 2021–Dec 2028; it may extend prior to Jan 2021 provided the output itself is published within the REF publication period. The time-limited period will be longer for long-form or extended process outputs.

The final selection of outputs will reflect the expectation that no more than 5 outputs are associated with a single substantive link within a submission at UoA level.

Eligible employment relationships and the point outputs are made publicly available

UWS will establish a *substantive link* to a submitted output via an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent) who made a significant research contribution to that output.

An eligible employment relationship is ≥ 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months' continuous employment (including consecutive contracts) in a role with an explicit expectation of research activity (in line with the REF definition of research); this may include staff who undertake, enable or support research.

An eligible employment relationship must have occurred either:

- At the point the output was first made publicly available; or
- Before publication, during the research period that produced the output (see "Time limited research period" below). Employment that begins after publication does not constitute a link, except for the longform exception noted below.

For outputs first made publicly available during the REF publication window (1 Jan 2021–31 Dec 2028), the period in which the underpinning research may have been conducted (and during which the eligible employment can occur) is defined as:

- Two years prior to the publication date for the majority of outputs; and
- Five years prior to the publication date for longform or extended-process outputs. This research period may extend before January 2021, provided the output itself is published within the 2021–2028 publication period.

Longform exception (employment after publication). Where a researcher holds an eligible UWS contract at the point of REF submission, longform / extended-process outputs published before that contract began are eligible if: (a) they were first made publicly available in 2021–2028, and (b) the researcher's eligible UWS employment started within five years of the output's publication. Where this exception is requested, a 100-word justification of long-form/extended-process designation will be required and assessed by panels.

No further indicators are required to evidence a substantive link beyond the eligible employment relationship. UWS may, for internal assurance only, collect additional justification information to support output selection and audit readiness; these are not eligibility conditions.

Exclusions

Outputs sole-authored by, or where the only substantive link to the institutions is through the following groups, will not be eligible for submission:

- Postgraduate research students (including PhD theses)
- Visiting or honorary staff
- Staff on teaching only contracts (that is, those returned to the HESA Staff record as ACEMPFUN.01)
- Individuals employed on academic or other contracts with no explicit expectation of research within the job role, technical teaching or support only contract

5.1.2 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

UWS may include outputs from former staff in its REF 2029 submission if a substantive link to the University can be demonstrated (see Section 5.1). To ensure transparency and fairness, the following principles apply:

General Principle

Outputs may be submitted even if the author has left UWS.

Restrictions

In line with REF 2029 guidance (Section 6.7.2), outputs will not be eligible for submission where the author was subject to compulsory redundancy.

Conditions for Other Leaver Categories

Other Leaver Categories may include: voluntary severance, retirement, end of fixed-term contract, resignation, death in service.

Outputs may be submitted only if all the following conditions are met:

- The staff member held an eligible contract (minimum 0.2 FTE with an explicit expectation of research) for at least 12 months of continuous employment, including consecutive contracts.
- The output was first made publicly available during employment, or the underpinning research was conducted during that period.
- There is evidence of the substantive link.

5.1.3 Assigning Interdisciplinary outputs to multiple UoAs

In line with REF 2029 CKU guidance on output selection and interdisciplinary research, UWS will assign each output to the most appropriate UoA based on the intellectual content and alignment with the UoA descriptors.

Where an output spans multiple disciplines, UoA Leads will jointly review the case to ensure the output is assessed fairly and submitted to the UoA that best reflects its primary contribution. Interdisciplinary cases will follow a clear governance route which starts with a joint recommendation by relevant UoA Leads, provides for advisory input from the REF CoP Sub-Group as required and with final approval being provided by the REF Steering Group.

In instances where an output demonstrably meets the criteria for more than one UoA, UWS may submit that output to multiple UoAs. In such cases, each proposing UoA Lead will provide a short-written justification, citing the relevant UoA descriptors and the REF Steering Group will confirm the final allocation to UoAs in order to ensure coherence across the institutional submission. This process supports UWS's commitment to fair and inclusive handling of interdisciplinary research whilst also ensuring alignment with current REF assessment expectations.

5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

UWS is committed to ensuring that the selection of outputs for REF 2029 reflects the full diversity of research contributions across disciplines and output types. This approach aligns with responsible research assessment principles and supports equality, diversity, and inclusion.

UWS will adopt a procedure that supports diversity of outputs and aligns with responsible research assessment principles, ensuring that no decisions are based solely on quantitative indicators or journal metrics. Decisions will be considered on their intrinsic quality and contribution to knowledge, not on impact factors or citation counts. To enable this, all UoA leads have received training on output eligibility rules and on the content of this CoP, which emphasised the eligibility of all output types and highlighted the support for research diversity in REF 2029. Output reviewer training similarly includes explicit instruction on the value of diverse outputs and the need to be aware of and mitigate against the introduction of biases in reviews. Emerging trends related to output types and output reviews will be monitored as part of periodic review of the EIA.

To review of a diverse range of outputs, including diverse output types and diverse researcher/staff groups, the following routes will be employed:

1. Data-Informed Discovery (Not Metrics-Driven)

- Use responsible analytics to identify outputs across the REF period, focusing on completeness rather than ranking.
- These tools will serve as a discovery aid only.
- Outputs identified this way will always undergo expert qualitative review before any decision.

2. Staff Self-Selection

- Staff will continue to have the opportunity to propose their own outputs.

3. Peer Proposals

- Research Groups, Unit of Assessment leads and other colleagues may propose outputs authored by others within their unit where this helps surface work that might otherwise be missed.

To ensure all eligible staff and contributors are able to put forward outputs for selection, UWS will provide multiple submission routes. In addition to PURE, staff may propose outputs, either their own or those of colleagues, via alternative mechanisms, including a dedicated Microsoft Form and the central REF inbox (UWSREF2029@uws.ac.uk). These routes will support participation from staff who do not routinely engage with PURE, including those in research-enabling and teaching-focused roles.

UWS recognises that research outputs may be produced in languages other than English, including British Sign Language (BSL), Scottish Gaelic, Scots, and Welsh, and is committed to ensuring that such outputs are assessed fairly and without disadvantage. Where required, the University will provide appropriate support to enable equitable assessment, which may include the use of translation or transcription services and/or the identification of suitably qualified reviewers with the relevant language expertise. UoA leads should highlight to the UWS REF Team where these additional services may be

required to enable review. This ensures that outputs are evaluated on their intrinsic quality in line with REF principles, irrespective of the language in which they are produced.

Academic and Professional Services staff in research enabling roles with eligible or potential contributions to REF outputs will receive targeted communications inviting output proposals. Guidance will emphasise the eligibility of a wide range of output types, including practice-based, policy, digital, and collaborative outputs and the inclusiveness of the substantive link criteria, reinforcing the University's commitment to diverse research contributions.

UWS will utilise systems including PURE and Figshare to support the capture, visibility, and long-term accessibility of diverse outputs. The implementation of Figshare in 2026 will enable the hosting and dissemination of non-traditional outputs (e.g. datasets, software, multimedia, and creative works), ensuring these can be identified and considered alongside more traditional outputs.

The value of diverse output types will be embedded in guidance for Research Groups, UoA leads, and researcher development provision, ensuring they are encouraged and recognised throughout the research lifecycle. Through training, communication, and review processes, UWS will reinforce that all eligible output types are equally valued and assessed on intrinsic quality. The range of outputs proposed and selected will be monitored through REF preparations and equality impact assessment to ensure that diversity is actively encouraged and realised in practice.

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

UWS will submit the highest-quality research while ensuring that each Unit of Assessment (UoA) represents the subject range and diversity of research activity undertaken during the REF 2029 cycle. The extent to which the submission is representative will be evidenced within the UoA-level Statement of Representation, as part of the SPRE UoA statement. For the purposes of this Code of Practice, a submitting UoA comprises the collection of subject structures, research groups, and research activities within UWS that collectively contribute to all or part of the institutional submission to a given UoA; UoA submissions may span multiple internal structures.

Roles and responsibilities

UoA Leads will coordinate and draft the Statement of Representation for REF Steering Group approval prior to submission. The statement will:

- Outline alignment: show how the submitted outputs and associated reserve list align with the context, research strategies, subject structures and any organisational changes set out for the unit.
- Evidence breadth and diversity: explain the extent to which the outputs and reserve list collectively represent the range and diversity of research activity and output types across the unit.
- Provide rationales:
 - a. where more than five outputs associated with a single substantive link is exceeded, provide a short justification; and
 - b. for any area of research activity not represented, set out the relevant circumstances/strengths/changes in scale, and explain any disproportionately low concentration of outputs relative to the unit's context and strategy (e.g., timelines for new areas growing, maturing, restructuring, divestment which may have affected capacity during the period).

Where the submitted outputs and reserve list do not fully demonstrate diversity across the unit's activity, the statement will explain the reasons and mitigations (e.g., selection approach, interdisciplinary UoA assignment, forward plans, etc.).

UoA Leads will maintain an evidence pack comprising: a mapping of outputs to subject structures/specialisms and output types, a distribution summary (including a reserve list), a log of any >5 outputs per substantive link with rationale, a brief note of organisational changes affecting representativeness and, as necessary once the panel criteria and methods are available, to demonstrate that a significant research contribution made by an author with an eligible employment relationship to UWS, in cases of multi-author outputs.

Where the submitted outputs and associated reserve list do not fully demonstrate the diversity of activity, the statement will explain the reasons and how this is mitigated (e.g., selection approach, interdisciplinary alignment, plans for future cycles).

Outputs will only be submitted to units where there is genuine alignment with UoA descriptors. Where submission to the most appropriate UoA requires specialist input from another disciplinary area, the REF Steering Group may authorise a request for 'cross-referral' and will record the justification and evidence alongside the decision.

For each output, the HESA ID of an author employed at UWS must be provided to evidence a substantive link via eligible employment relationship. In line with REF 2029 guidance, it is expected that each individual author's HESA ID will be used a maximum of 5 times, except in exceptional cases. In the case of outputs with multiple UWS co-authors, decisions on which author's ID to use will be based on:

- maximising the quality of the submission by enabling the highest internally rated outputs to be included and
- evenly distributing substantive links to HESA IDs to showcase the representativeness of the submission. Linking co-authored outputs to a single author is purely administrative, as required by REF 2029 guidance, and does not indicate a judgement about comparative contributions of co-authors.

5.1.6 Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

UWS is committed to responsible research assessment, guided by its commitments under the Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA) and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). All outputs will be assessed on their originality, significance, and rigour, in line with REF panel criteria:

- Decisions will not rely on journal impact factors, citation counts, or other proxy indicators of quality.
- Inclusion or exclusion of outputs will not influence career progression or performance evaluation.
- All processes will be transparent, fair, and inclusive.

Procedures

- Outputs must meet REF eligibility requirements, including evidence of a substantive link to UWS and compliance with the REF Open Access policy (subject to the limited output based exceptions permitted under REF 2029).
- Selection will be based solely on research quality, irrespective of output type.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Peer and Substantive Link Reviewers (Advisory)
 - Conduct internal peer review of outputs and evidence packs; make recommendations to UoA Leads.
- Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads (Decision-making)
 - Confirm final pool and reserve list of outputs; detail the rationale for the alignment of each output to the disciplinary areas defined by the UoA descriptors and set out in the Panel Criteria. and compliance with Open Access and substantive link requirements.
 - Consider outputs for double-weighting and present rationale to REF Steering Group for approval ensuring that a reserve output is proposed for any instance where the panel does not accept the case for double-weighting.
 - Prepare the list of “reserve” outputs in priority order for REF Steering Group approval.
 - Consider outputs for cross-referral and present rational to the REF Steering Group for approval.
- REF 2029 Steering Group (Institutional Decision-making)
 - Resolve UoA assignment disputes; assure consistency across UoAs; oversee EDI compliance and risk; approve the final institutional portfolio.

This governance structure ensures transparency, robustness, and equity, as required by REF guidance.

5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

In line with the REF 2029 governance structure outlined in Part 1 and Appendix 2, UWS has established clear roles and responsibilities for the review and selection of outputs. These arrangements ensure transparency, robustness, and equity throughout the process.

5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

- Peer Review and Substantive Link Reviewers (Advisory)
 - Conduct internal peer review of outputs and evidence packs.
 - Review statements detailing substantive link and associated documentation.
 - Make recommendations to UoA Leads.
- Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads (Decision-making)
 - Confirm the final pool and reserve list of outputs.
 - Ensure representativeness and compliance with Open Access and substantive link requirements.
 - Oversee internal review processes within their UoA.
- REF 2029 Steering Group (Institutional Decision-making)
 - Resolve disputes regarding UoA assignment.
 - Assure consistency across UoAs and compliance with Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements.

- Approve the final institutional portfolio for submission.

This governance structure is supported by the REF team, which maintains audit trails and monitors adherence to the CoP.

5.2.2 Training

Training for REF 2029 decision-making roles is detailed in Section 2.2.2 of this CoP. All staff with responsibilities for identifying Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), determining Research Independence (RI), and making decisions on staff eligibility must complete the mandatory training outlined there. This includes:

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
Annual training for all staff, including unconscious bias awareness and fostering an inclusive culture.
- Responsible Research Assessment
Principles aligned with DoRA and CoARA, focusing on fair, transparent evaluation of research outputs.
- REF-Specific Criteria
Consistent interpretation and application of SRR and RI definitions.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) informed the development of the process for selecting outputs by identifying potential disadvantages for staff from underrepresented groups, including those with protected characteristics such as disability, race, sex, and caring responsibilities. To mitigate these risks, the process incorporates multiple safeguards: self-selection and peer review to embed agency and collaboration; qualitative review of outputs identified through data-driven methods to reduce metric-based bias; and involvement of multiple decision-makers to limit individual bias. Mandatory EDI training, racial literacy sessions, and consultation with staff networks ensure awareness of systemic barriers and promote equitable decision-making.

Please refer to the Appendices to view the full Equality Impact Assessment on selecting outputs.

The REF EDI Subgroup supported the development of the Code of Practice and will monitor implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. All Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes.

An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the processes outlined in the Code of Practice.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

<p>Decision, Policy, or Practice - new or changed</p>	<p>Research Excellence Framework 2029 Code of Practice – Part 2: Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)</p>
<p>Owner</p> <p>Dean, Director, Head or Executive Lead</p>	<p>PVC Research & Innovation</p> <p>Head of Research</p>
<p>Who is affected?</p>	<p>Staff in eligible contracts for REF 2029</p>
<p>Purpose of the Decision, Policy, or Practice</p> <p>It will help to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are the policy or decisions needed? • What do we hope to achieve by it? • How will we ensure that it works as intended? 	<p>The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to ensuring that its participation in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is underpinned by principles of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. In line with UK funding body requirements, UWS has developed a REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) that sets out the institutional approach to key decisions, including the identification of volume-contributing contracts and the selection of research outputs. The CoP is a mandatory component of REF 2029 and must be approved by the funding bodies prior to submission. It serves not only as a procedural guide but also as a framework for embedding equity and consistency across all REF-related activities. By adopting this Code, UWS affirms its commitment to supporting a diverse research community and maintaining confidence in the integrity of its submission.</p> <p>An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.</p>

<p>Consultation and Evidence</p> <p>What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this decision, policy, or procedure and what were the results?</p> <p>Identify what evidence is available and set it out a summary here. This includes data and evidence from involvement and consultation.</p>	<p>Consultation on the Code of Practice has been undertaken with and feedback incorporated from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University REF Steering Group • University REF EDI Sub-group • University Research and Innovation Committee • University Vice- Chancellors Executive • University Senate • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee • Unit of Assessment Leads • UWS Ebulletin • All Staff Meetings • Survey to collect feedback from the wider staff community • JNCC <p>At this stage limited equalities monitoring data on staff in REF-eligible contracts is available for consideration in this EIA. Therefore, data has been drawn from UWS's REF 2021 submission and final EIA, alongside feedback from staff with lived experience and external research (referenced where used), to develop this EIA. To support annual review of this EIA and monitoring of REF 2029 preparations, the EDI Sub-group will map data availability and actively advocate for enhanced data gathering. As data availability develops, additional data sources will be incorporated into this EIA and referenced as appropriate.</p>

Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice have an adverse effect on people sharing the following protected characteristics? (Please tick relevant box)			
Protected Characteristic and/or equality priority	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		x	
Disability	x		
Gender Reassignment		x	
Marriage or Civil Partnership		x	

Pregnancy and Maternity	x		
Race	x		
Religion or Belief		x	
Sex	x		
Sexual Orientation	x		
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.	x		

Details of the adverse effect and how you will mitigate this:

Disabled staff, minority ethnic staff, LGBTQ+ staff, staff who are carers are all underrepresented in UWS contracts which are eligible for SRR. Flexible, part time and sessional working is more common for female employees than males at UWS. Female staff at UWS are also more likely to be carers and more likely to be off on long-term parental leave such as maternity leave. Although not caused directly by the process used to identify staff contracts with SRR, there are systematic disadvantages faced by staff with these protected characteristics in relation to this underrepresentation. Therefore, this process could uphold or validate these existing disadvantages.

Mitigations are embedded in the process for identifying staff contracts with SRR through embedding inclusive decision-making and equitable practice to ensure the process does not have adverse effects on people who share protected characteristics.

Inclusive decision-making in the SRR process is supported through:

- Multiple decision-makers (Central REF Team, School Leadership Team, REF Steering Group) mitigates against individual biases impacting decision-making.
- Mandatory training for all staff involved in REF decisions, specifically on:
 - Responsible Research Assessment: Principles aligned with DoRA and the Leiden Manifesto, focusing on fair, transparent evaluation of research outputs.
 - EDI in Research Assessment: Guidance on mitigating bias and promoting equity in REF-related decisions.
 - Research Independence and SRR Criteria: Ensuring consistent interpretation and application of SRR and Research Independence definitions.
- Input into the REF Steering Group from the REF EDI Subgroup, which advises on inclusive practices, reviews EIAs, and monitors implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Ensuring criteria on research time allocation in contracts is pro-rata for part time contracts, mitigating biases related to the protected characteristics of sex and disability

which are over-represented in part time contracts.

- The use of multiple sources of evidence to demonstrate SRR, mitigating against single-source biases.
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be conducted on appeals outcomes annually to monitor fairness and inclusivity.

The appeals process carries the following risks:

- Risk 1: Risk of individual bias impacting the appeals process related to unconscious bias and underrepresentation of protected characteristics within the membership of Appeals Panel.
- Mitigation 1: Member of REF EDI Subgroup present on panel, all panel members will have undertaken EDI training on mitigating biases outlined above.
- Risk 2: Staff who are on extended leave such as maternity or long-term sick leave may miss the period of appeals or opportunity to validate their information.

Mitigation 2: Where possible, line managers will hold discussion with staff member before planned leave to identify mitigating options and utilise “keeping in touch” days to cascade relevant information on all aspects of REF, including appeals procedure. It is not deemed proportionate to individual’s privacy and wellbeing to send letters to staff on sick leave about REF related activity or appeals. Instead, line managers will manage this locally in respect to an individual’s preferences and needs whilst on sick leave.

Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice promote or **advance** equality of opportunity for people sharing the following protected characteristics. (Please tick relevant box)

Protected Characteristic	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Gender Reassignment		X	
Marriage or Civil Partnership		X	
Pregnancy or Maternity		X	
Race		X	
Religion or Belief		X	

Sex		X	
Sexual Orientation		X	
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.		X	
<p>Details of the positive effect:</p> <p>N/A</p>			

In what way does, or could, the decision, policy or practice foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?

<p>The process for identifying contracts with significant responsibility for research is clearly communicated in the Code of Practice. Consultations open to all staff were held over multiple dates and times to allow anyone with concerns or feedback to share these directly with the PVC Research & Innovation, the REF 2029 subgroup Chair. Consultations with specific stakeholders were carried out as demonstrated above to further embed transparency. Inclusive decision-making is outlined as a key priority in the Code of Practice. This emphasis on equity, inclusion and transparency throughout the Code of Practice builds confidence in the process for staff who share protected characteristics.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Identify the range of options to address the impact. Remember to consider each of the general duties. There are three possible options:</p> <p>Identify the option(s) chosen and document the reasons for this.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjust the decision/policy. 2. Continue with the decision/policy. 3. Withdraw the decision/policy. 	<p>Continue with the decision/policy</p>
<p>Actions</p> <p>Please detail the actions you have taken to mitigate the impact of your decision, policy or practice(s)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on COP with wide-ranging stakeholders • Inclusive decision-making and equitable practice embedded in process to mitigate against adverse effects on people who share protected characteristics. • EDI training will be delivered to all staff involved in REF decision-making as outlined above. • EIAs will be carried out annually on appeals outcomes 	
<p>Monitoring and Review</p> <p>Set out the arrangements for reviewing the actual impact of a decision or policy once it has been implemented.</p>	

Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes.

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.

Approved by:	EDI Specialist
Date:	15/05/2026

Decision, Policy, or Practice - new or changed	Research Excellence Framework 2029 Code of Practice – Part 3: Determining Research Independence
Owner Dean, Director, Head or Executive Lead	PVC Research & Innovation Head of Research
Who is affected?	Staff in eligible contracts for REF 2029
Purpose of the Decision, Policy, or Practice It will help to ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are the policy or decisions needed? • What do we hope to achieve by it? • How will we ensure that it works as intended? 	<p>The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to ensuring that its participation in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is underpinned by principles of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. In line with UK funding body requirements, UWS has developed a REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) that sets out the institutional approach to key decisions, including the identification of volume-contributing contracts and the selection of research outputs. The CoP is a mandatory component of REF 2029 and must be approved by the funding bodies prior to submission. It serves not only as a procedural guide but also as a framework for embedding equity and consistency across all REF-related activities. By adopting this Code, UWS affirms its commitment to supporting a diverse research community and maintaining confidence in the integrity of its submission.</p> <p>An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.</p>

<p>Consultation and Evidence</p> <p>What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this decision, policy, or procedure and what were the results?</p> <p>Identify what evidence is available and set it out a summary here. This includes data and evidence from involvement and consultation</p>	<p>Consultation on the Code of Practice has been undertaken with and feedback incorporated from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University REF Steering Group • University REF EDI Sub-group • University Research and Innovation Committee • University Vice- Chancellors Executive • University Senate • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee • Unit of Assessment Leads • UWS Ebulletin • All Staff Meetings • Survey to collect feedback from the wider staff community • JNCC <p>At this stage limited equalities monitoring data on staff in REF-eligible contracts is available for consideration in this EIA. Therefore, data has been drawn from UWS's REF 2021 submission and final EIA, alongside feedback from staff with lived experience and external research (referenced where used), to develop this EIA. To support annual review of this EIA and monitoring of REF 2029 preparations, the EDI Sub-group will map data availability and actively advocate for enhanced data gathering. As data availability develops, additional data sources will be incorporated into this EIA and referenced as appropriate.</p>
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Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice have an adverse effect on people sharing the following protected characteristics? (Please tick relevant box)			
Protected Characteristic and/or equality priority	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		x	
Disability	x		
Gender Reassignment		x	

Marriage or Civil Partnership		x	
Pregnancy and Maternity	x		
Race	x		
Religion or Belief		x	
Sex	x		
Sexual Orientation	x		
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.	x		

Details of the adverse effect and how you will mitigate this:

Disabled staff, minority ethnic staff, LGBTQ+ staff, staff who are carers are all underrepresented at UWS. Flexible, part time and sessional working is more common for female employees than males at UWS. Female staff at UWS are also more likely to be carers and more likely to be off on long-term parental leave such as maternity leave. Although not caused directly by the process used to determine research independence, there are systematic disadvantages faced by staff with these protected characteristics in relation to this underrepresentation. Therefore, this process could uphold or validate these existing disadvantages.

Mitigations are embedded in the process for determining research independence through embedding inclusive decision-making and equitable practice to ensure the process does not have adverse effects on people who share protected characteristics.

Inclusive decision-making in the research independence process is supported through:

- Multiple decision-makers (Central REF Team, School Leadership Team, REF Steering Group) mitigates against individual biases impacting decision-making.
- Mandatory training for all staff involved in REF decisions, specifically on:
 - Responsible Research Assessment: Principles aligned with DoRA and the Leiden Manifesto, focusing on fair, transparent evaluation of research outputs.

- o EDI in Research Assessment: Guidance on mitigating bias and promoting equity in REF-related decisions.
 - o Research Independence and SRR Criteria: Ensuring consistent interpretation and application of SRR and Research Independence definitions.
- Input into the REF Steering Group from the REF EDI Subgroup, which advises on inclusive practices, reviews EIAs, and monitors implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be conducted on appeals outcomes annually to monitor fairness and inclusivity.

The appeals process carries the following risks:

- Risk 1: Risk of individual bias impacting the appeals process related to unconscious bias and underrepresentation of protected characteristics within the membership of Appeals Panel.
- Mitigation 1: Member of REF EDI Subgroup present on panel, all panel members will have undertaken EDI training on mitigating biases outlined above.
- Risk 2: Staff who are on extended leave such as maternity or long-term sick leave may miss the period of appeals or opportunity to validate their information.
- Mitigation 2: Where possible, line managers will hold discussion with staff member before planned leave to identify mitigating options and utilise “keeping in touch” days to cascade relevant information on all aspects of REF, including appeals procedure. It is not deemed proportionate to individual’s privacy and wellbeing to send letters to staff on sick leave about REF related activity or appeals. Instead, line managers will manage this locally in respect to an individual’s preferences and needs whilst on sick leave.

Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice promote or **advance** equality of opportunity for people sharing the following protected characteristics. (Please tick relevant box)

Protected Characteristic	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		x	
Disability		x	
Gender Reassignment		x	
Marriage or Civil Partnership		x	

Pregnancy or Maternity		X	
Race		X	
Religion or Belief		X	
Sex		X	
Sexual Orientation		X	
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.		X	
<p>Details of the positive effect:</p> <p>N/A</p>			
<p>In what way does, or could, the decision, policy or practice foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?</p>			

<p>The process for determining research independence is clearly communicated in the Code of Practice. Consultations open to all staff were held over multiple dates and times to allow anyone with concerns or feedback to share these directly with the PVC Research & Innovation, the REF 2029 subgroup Chair. Consultations with specific stakeholders were carried out as demonstrated above to further embed transparency. Inclusive decision-making is outlined as a key priority in the Code of Practice. This emphasis on equity, inclusion and transparency throughout the Code of Practice builds confidence in the process for staff who share protected characteristics.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Identify the range of options to address the impact. Remember to consider each of the general duties. There are three possible options:</p> <p>Identify the option(s) chosen and document the reasons for this.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjust the decision/policy. 2. Continue with the decision/policy. 3. Withdraw the decision/policy. 	<p>Continue with the decision/policy</p>
<p>Actions</p> <p>Please detail the actions you have taken to mitigate the impact of your decision, policy or practice(s)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on COP with wide-ranging stakeholders • Inclusive decision-making and equitable practice embedded in process to mitigate against adverse effects on people who share protected characteristics. • EDI training will be delivered to all staff involved in REF decision-making as outlined above. • EIAs will be carried out annually on appeals outcomes 	
<p>Monitoring and Review</p> <p>Set out the arrangements for reviewing the actual impact of a decision or policy once it has been implemented.</p>	

Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes.

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.

Approved by:	EDI Specialist
Date:	15/05/2026

<p>Decision, Policy, or Practice - new or changed</p>	<p>Research Excellence Framework 2029 Code of Practice – Part 4: Allocation of Units of Assessment (UoAs)</p>
<p>Owner</p> <p>Dean, Director, Head or Executive Lead</p>	<p>PVC Research & Innovation</p> <p>Head of Research</p>
<p>Who is affected?</p>	<p>Staff in eligible contracts for REF 2029</p>
<p>Purpose of the Decision, Policy, or Practice</p> <p>It will help to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are the policy or decisions needed? • What do we hope to achieve by it? • How will we ensure that it works as intended? 	<p>The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to ensuring that its participation in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is underpinned by principles of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. In line with UK funding body requirements, UWS has developed a REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) that sets out the institutional approach to key decisions, including the identification of volume-contributing contracts and the selection of research outputs. The CoP is a mandatory component of REF 2029 and must be approved by the funding bodies prior to submission. It serves not only as a procedural guide but also as a framework for embedding equity and consistency across all REF-related activities. By adopting this Code, UWS affirms its commitment to supporting a diverse research community and maintaining confidence in the integrity of its submission.</p> <p>An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.</p>

<p>Consultation and Evidence</p> <p>What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this decision, policy, or procedure and what were the results?</p> <p>Identify what evidence is available and set it out a summary here. This includes data and evidence from involvement and consultation.</p>	<p>Consultation on the Code of Practice has been undertaken with and feedback incorporated from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University REF Steering Group • University REF EDI Sub-group • University Research and Innovation Committee • University Vice- Chancellors Executive • University Senate • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee • Unit of Assessment Leads • UWS Ebulletin • All Staff Meetings • Survey to collect feedback from the wider staff community • JNCC <p>At this stage limited equalities monitoring data on staff in REF-eligible contracts is available for consideration in this EIA. Therefore, data has been drawn from UWS's REF 2021 submission and final EIA, alongside feedback from staff with lived experience and external research (referenced where used), to develop this EIA. To support annual review of this EIA and monitoring of REF 2029 preparations, the EDI Sub-group will map data availability and actively advocate for enhanced data gathering. As data availability develops, additional data sources will be incorporated into this EIA and referenced as appropriate.</p>
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Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice have an adverse effect on people sharing the following protected characteristics? (Please tick relevant box)			
Protected Characteristic and/or equality priority	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		x	
Disability		x	
Gender Reassignment		x	

Marriage or Civil Partnership		X	
Pregnancy and Maternity		X	
Race		X	
Religion or Belief		X	
Sex		X	
Sexual Orientation		X	
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.		X	
<p>Details of the adverse effect and how you will mitigate this:</p> <p>No adverse effects on people who share the above protected characteristics have been identified for this process.</p>			

Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice promote or advance equality of opportunity for people sharing the following protected characteristics. (Please tick relevant box)			
Protected Characteristic	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Gender Reassignment		X	
Marriage or Civil Partnership		X	
Pregnancy or Maternity		X	
Race		X	
Religion or Belief		X	
Sex		X	
Sexual Orientation		X	
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.		X	
Details of the positive effect:			
N/A			

<p>In what way does, or could, the decision, policy or practice foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?</p>	
<p>The following steps are outlined in the Code of Practice to ensure that the process for the allocation of units of assessment supports fairness and inclusivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff are invited to give feedback on their allocation, embedding transparency and providing an opportunity for changes to be considered if appropriate. • Decisions follow a structured process with all decisions documented with rationale recorded, ensuring transparency and consistency. • To support staff with multidisciplinary research, annual adjustments to the HESA Staff Record are possible, demonstrating flexibility. <p>The process for the allocation of units of assessment is clearly communicated in the Code of Practice. Consultations open to all staff were held over multiple dates and times to allow anyone with concerns or feedback to share these directly with the PVC Research & Innovation, the REF 2029 subgroup Chair. Consultations with specific stakeholders were carried out as demonstrated above to further embed transparency. Inclusive decision-making is outlined as a key priority in the Code of Practice. This emphasis on equity, inclusion and transparency throughout the Code of Practice builds confidence in the process for staff who share protected characteristics.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Identify the range of options to address the impact. Remember to consider each of the general duties. There are three possible options:</p> <p>Identify the option(s) chosen and document the reasons for this.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjust the decision/policy. 2. Continue with the decision/policy. 3. Withdraw the decision/policy. 	<p>Continue with the decision/policy.</p>
<p>Actions</p> <p>Please detail the actions you have taken to mitigate the impact of your decision, policy or practice(s)</p>	

- Mandatory training for all staff involved in REF decisions, specifically on:
 - Responsible Research Assessment: Principles aligned with DoRA and the Leiden Manifesto, focusing on fair, transparent evaluation of research outputs.
 - EDI in Research Assessment: Guidance on mitigating bias and promoting equity in REF-related decisions.
- Input into the REF Steering Group from the REF EDI Subgroup, which advises on inclusive practices, reviews EIAs, and monitors implementation to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Monitoring and Review

Set out the arrangements for reviewing the actual impact of a decision or policy once it has been implemented.

Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.

Approved by:	EDI Specialist
Date:	15/05/2026

<p>Decision, Policy, or Practice - new or changed</p>	<p>Research Excellence Framework 2029 Code of Practice – Part 5: Selecting Outputs</p>
<p>Owner Dean, Director, Head or Executive Lead</p>	<p>PVC Research & Innovation Head of Research</p>
<p>Who is affected?</p>	<p>Staff in contracts eligible for REF</p>
<p>Purpose of the Decision, Policy, or Practice</p> <p>It will help to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are the policy or decisions needed? • What do we hope to achieve by it? • How will we ensure that it works as intended? 	<p>The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) is committed to ensuring that its participation in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is underpinned by principles of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. In line with UK funding body requirements, UWS has developed a REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) that sets out the institutional approach to key decisions, including the identification of volume-contributing contracts and the selection of research outputs. The CoP is a mandatory component of REF 2029 and must be approved by the funding bodies prior to submission. It serves not only as a procedural guide but also as a framework for embedding equity and consistency across all REF-related activities. By adopting this Code, UWS affirms its commitment to supporting a diverse research community and maintaining confidence in the integrity of its submission.</p> <p>An EIA will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.</p>

<p>Consultation and Evidence</p> <p>What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this decision, policy, or procedure and what were the results?</p> <p>Identify what evidence is available and set it out a summary here. This includes data and evidence from involvement and consultation.</p>	<p>Consultation on the Code of Practice has been undertaken with and feedback incorporated from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University REF Steering Group • University REF EDI Sub-group • University Research and Innovation Committee • University Vice- Chancellors Executive • University Senate • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee • Unit of Assessment Leads • UWS Ebulletin • All Staff Meetings • Survey to collect feedback from the wider staff community • JNCC <p>At this stage limited equalities monitoring data on staff in REF-eligible contracts is available for consideration in this EIA. Therefore, data has been drawn from UWS's REF 2021 submission and final EIA, alongside feedback from staff with lived experience and external research (referenced where used), to develop this EIA. To support annual review of this EIA and monitoring of REF 2029 preparations, the EDI Sub-group will map data availability and actively advocate for enhanced data gathering. As data availability develops, additional data sources will be incorporated into this EIA and referenced as appropriate.</p>
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Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice have an adverse effect on people sharing the following protected characteristics? (Please tick relevant box)			
Protected Characteristic and/or equality priority	Yes	No	Unknown
Age			x
Disability	x		
Gender Reassignment			x

Marriage or Civil Partnership		x	
Pregnancy and Maternity	x		
Race	x		
Religion or Belief		x	
Sex	x		
Sexual Orientation			x
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.			x

Details of the adverse effect and how you will mitigate this:

Staff from any groups who are underrepresented in REF eligible contracts may face disadvantage as their research outputs are less likely to be selected than their peers who do not share underrepresented characteristics. For some characteristics potential impacts are unknown due to gaps in data available at this stage in the REF Process.

Risk 1: Staff who have been on extended leave such as maternity or long-term sick leave may have had less time to produce research outputs in comparison to their peers.

Mitigations: UWS Returners Scheme is available for all staff returning from maternity leave. However, there is a low uptake on the use of the Returner's Scheme due to lack of awareness amongst staff. There is also a limited amount of funding for this scheme, so depending on how many staff apply, the amount may not be sufficient to conduct the research.

Risk 2: A disabled staff member may not have produced research outputs at the same rate as non-disabled staff due to barriers such as:

- Inaccessible workplace environment e.g. building with no lift, lack of accessible transport options to campus,
- Research shows absence rates may be disproportionately higher for disabled individuals

(Sickness absence in the UK labour market: 2023 and 2024, ONS)

Mitigations:

- Consult staff disability consultation group to understand barriers faced when conducting research.
- Disability/neurodiversity training for reviewers.

Risk 3: Minority Ethnic staff are significantly underrepresented in REF eligible contracts, which means they are less likely to be chosen for outputs. They also face barriers such as attitudinal bias and systematic racism, which may also affect whether their contributions are chosen (Reid 2020). This disempowers Minority Ethnic staff from progressing in their research careers (Rees 2020). The EIA on UWS REF 2021 Code of Practice highlighted that more needed to be done to include Minority Ethnic groups into the process.

Mitigations:

- Mandatory EDI Racial Literacy training for all staff involved in REF. Follow-up reflective sessions to sustain conversations around equity. UoA Leads liaise with and co-create where possible with BME Staff network.
- UWS BME Staff Network provides racial affinity space to support staff

Risk 4: Research indicated women's sickness absence rate is higher than men's in all age groups (Sickness absence in the UK labour market: 2023 and 2024, ONS), this could mean female staff may not have produced research outputs at the same rate as male staff

Mitigation: Consultation with appropriate staff networks, eg. HighHER, Menopause Network, Carer's Network to support research efforts.

Risk 5: Female staff over-represented in part-time contracts, therefore may not have produced research outputs at same rate as those with full-time contracts.

Mitigation: Consultation with appropriate staff networks, eg. HighHER, to support research efforts.

Risk 6: Outputs produced in languages other than English such as BSL, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Welsh may be at risk of poorer scoring due to lack of suitable reviewers.

Mitigation: UWS will provide paid-for translation services to support fair and unbiased assessment.

Risk 7: Outputs produced in diverse formats such as film/audio may be at risk of poorer scoring than written outputs, due to reviewer inexperience.

Mitigation: UWS will procure external reviewers with experience and expertise relevant to the output format to support fair and unbiased assessment, or seek advice from other internal reviewers in other UoAs with more experience of the format.

Does, or could, the decision, policy or practice promote or advance equality of opportunity for people sharing the following protected characteristics. (Please tick relevant box)			
Protected Characteristic	Yes	No	Unknown
Age		x	
Disability		x	
Gender Reassignment		x	
Marriage or Civil Partnership		x	
Pregnancy or Maternity		x	
Race		x	
Religion or Belief		x	
Sex		x	
Sexual Orientation		x	
Others which may include:- care experienced students, BSL users, military veterans' asylum seekers, those living in poverty, those with caring responsibilities, those estranged from family.		x	
Details of the positive effect: N/A			

<p>In what way does, or could, the decision, policy or practice foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?</p>	
<p>The Code of Practice outlines procedures for selecting outputs which give due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-selection of outputs which embeds agency into process. • Peer selection of outputs demonstrates a culture of support and collaboration in the process. • Outputs identified through data-informed discovery go through second phase of qualitative review by assessors to mitigate against any potential metric-driven biases. • Multiple decision-makers mitigates against individual biases impacting decision-making <p>The process for selecting outputs is clearly communicated in the Code of Practice. Consultations open to all staff were held over multiple dates and times to allow anyone with concerns or feedback to share these directly with the PVC Research & Innovation, the REF 2029 subgroup Chair. Consultations with specific stakeholders were carried out as demonstrated above to further embed transparency. Inclusive decision-making is outlined as a key priority in the Code of Practice, <u>section 5.1 clearly highlights the process for Selecting Outputs is “designed to maximize the strength of the submission while upholding the twin aims of ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion”</u>. This emphasis on equity, inclusion and transparency throughout the Code of Practice builds confidence in the process for staff who share protected characteristics.</p>	
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Identify the range of options to address the impact. Remember to consider each of the general duties. There are three possible options:</p> <p>Identify the option(s) chosen and document the reasons for this.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjust the decision/policy. 2. Continue with the decision/policy. 3. Withdraw the decision/policy. 	<p>Continue with the decision/policy.</p>

Actions
Please detail the actions you have taken to mitigate the impact of your decision, policy or practice(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation on COP with wide-ranging stakeholders• Inclusive decision-making and equitable practice embedded in process to mitigate against adverse effects on people who share protected characteristics.• EDI training will be delivered to all staff involved in REF decision-making as outlined above.• EIAs will be carried out annually on appeals outcomes
Monitoring and Review
Set out the arrangements for reviewing the actual impact of a decision or policy once it has been implemented.
Equality Impact Assessments on the Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to monitor and respond to any changes A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out post-REF 2029 to analyse the impact of the equity-based, inclusive practices outlined in the Code of Practice.

Approved by:	EDI Specialist
Date:	15/05/2026

Appendix 2: UWS REF 2029 Governance Structure

The following table summarises the governance structure supporting REF 2029 at UWS, including decision-making and advisory responsibilities.”

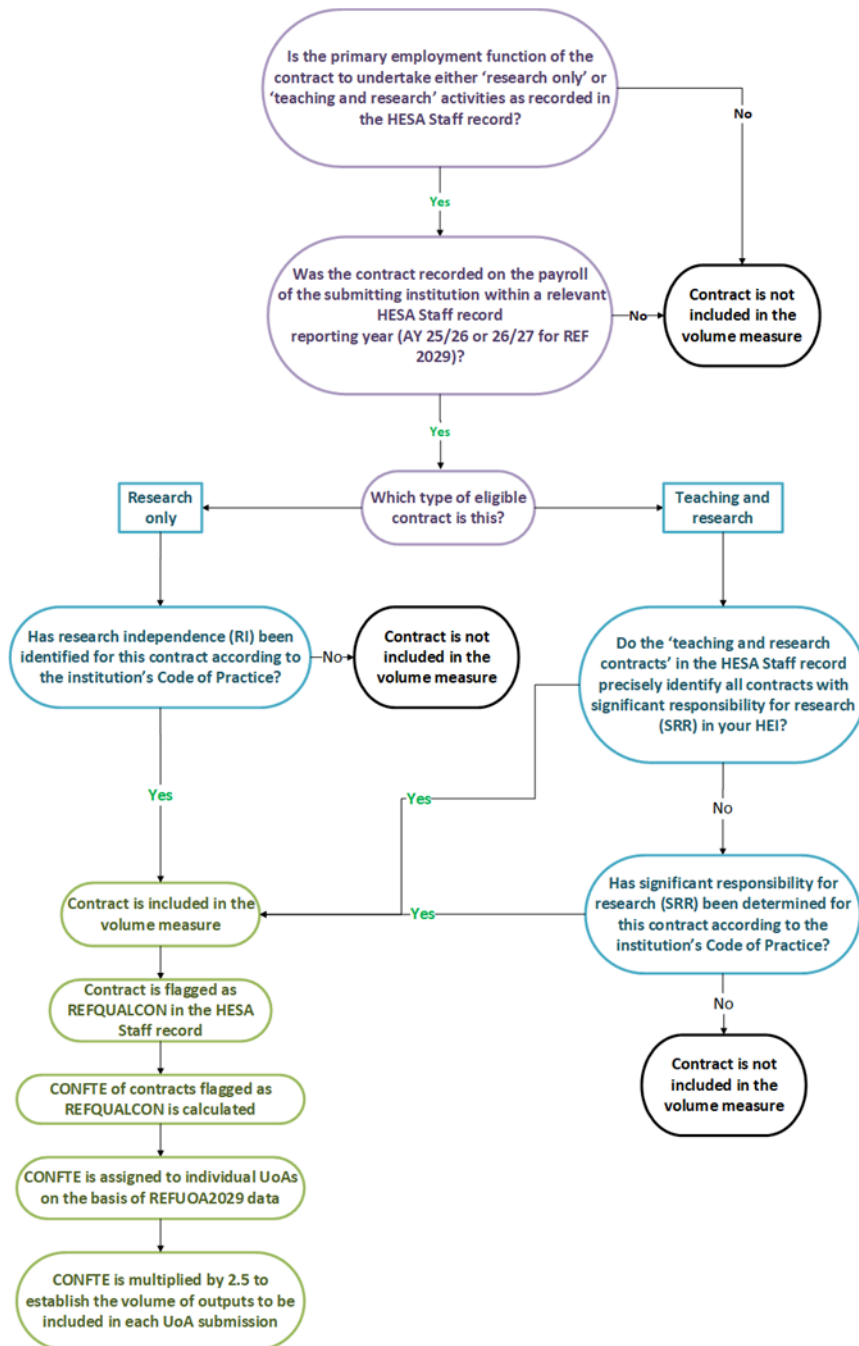
Role	Responsibilities
Vice Chancellor's Executive	Decision-Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional accountability for REF compliance and risk oversight. • Receive and approve final recommendations on the institutional submission from the REF Steering Group. • Ensure appropriate governance structures and resources are in place.
REF Steering Group:	Decision-Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee REF strategy, compliance, and alignment with UWS strategic goals. • Set the internal timetable and monitor progress across all submission components. • Make final recommendations to VCE on the shape and content of the institutional submission. • Ensure decisions (e.g. SRR, RI, output selection) are transparent, inclusive, and auditable. • Oversee UoA-level planning and risk management.
REF Code of Practice Sub-Group:	Advisory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, review, and maintain the REF Code of Practice. • Ensure transparency, fairness, and consistency in REF processes. • Facilitate consultation with academic and professional services stakeholders. • Support the completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).
UoA Leads Sub-Group:	Decision-Making and Advisory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead planning and coordination of REF submission components at UoA level including selection of outputs. • Advise on staff assignment to UoAs. • Escalate risks or issues relating to the submission. • Ensure consistency in approach across UoAs and share best practice. • Monitor progress and report to the REF Steering Group.
UoA Leads	Decision-making and Advisory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide academic leadership for the preparation of the Unit of Assessment submission in line with REF guidance and the UWS Code of Practice. • Oversee the fair and transparent identification and selection of outputs, ensuring decisions are evidence-based and auditable. • Contribute to staff eligibility and UoA assignment decisions in accordance with institutional processes. • Lead preparation of UoA-level narratives and support impact and environment development. • Ensure inclusive engagement and adherence to equality, diversity and inclusion principles • Monitor progress and risks, escalating issues to the REF Steering Group as required.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Group	Advisory <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advise on inclusive practices and EDI training.• Conduct and review Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).• Ensure REF processes are aligned with institutional EDI policies and legal obligations.
Appeals Panel	Decision-Making <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review appeals and ensures decisions are fair, evidence-based, and consistent with the REF 2029 Code of Practice.

Communities of Practice

Each Unit of Assessment (UoA) Lead meets regularly with their Associate Leads to coordinate submission planning. In addition, thematic sub-groups have been established for Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU), People, Culture and Environment (PCE), and Engagement and Impact, forming Communities of Practice that promote cross-UoA collaboration. These groups share best practice, support consistency in operational processes, and help ensure alignment with the REF Code of Practice. While they do not hold formal decision-making authority, they are an integral part of the REF governance framework, providing advisory input and fostering a collaborative approach to preparation.

Appendix 3: REF 2029 Volume measure contributing contracts diagram (from REF 2029 Guidance)



Appendix 4: Indicative Timeline for HESA Staff Record Preparation

Stage	Activity	Indicative Timing
Preparation	Review HESA coding manuals and REF guidance for updates and specification changes.	November – January
Data Coordination	Identify and align internal data sources (HR, research systems). Prepare the staff lists for all academic staff on teaching and research and research only contracts for School leadership teams to review data relating to SRR and RI status and UoA leads to review UoA allocation.	January – February
Academic school Validation	Test and refine data. Commence the confirmation of SRR status, RI status and UoA allocation. Communicate SRR status, RI status and UoA allocation to staff.	March – April
System Access	Access HESA Data Collection System for testing and submission.	May – August
Initial Submission	Submit draft data file to HESA.	July – August
Commit Phase	Formal commit of data.	September – October
Quality Assurance	Review and respond to HESA data quality queries.	October – November
Sign-Off	Final institutional sign-off of submission.	November