

Institution name: Middlesex University London

Date of submission: 15 May 2026



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2029

CODE OF PRACTICE

MAY 2026

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Glossary of acronyms and terms

CKU	Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding, one of the three assessment elements of REF 2029, which accounts for 55% of the overall quality profile
CONFTE	HESA field identifying the percentage of a full-time equivalent year worked by staff on a contract
CoP	Code of Practice
DDRKE	Deputy Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange
DirRKE	Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange
ECR	Early-Career Researcher
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
E&I	Engagement and Impact, one of the three assessment elements of REF 2029, which accounts for 25% of the overall quality profile
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ICS	Impact Case Study
MCR	Mid-Career Researcher
PVC(ESE)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience
PVC(RKE)	Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research and Knowledge Exchange
REFQUALCON	HESA field identifying contracts eligible for the REF 2029 Volume Measure
REFUOA2029	HESA field identifying the UoA associated with contracts contributing to the REF 2029 Volume Measure
SPRE	Strategy, People and Research Environment, one of the three assessment elements of REF 2029, which accounts for 20% of the overall quality profile
SRR	Significant Responsibility for Research
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RI	Research Independence
RKEC	Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee
UCU	University and Colleges Union
UoA	Unit of Assessment
UET	University Executive Team
VC	Vice Chancellor

Part 1: Introduction

1. Each Higher Education Institution (HEI) intending to make a submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice (CoP) detailing how staff and associated outputs will be selected for inclusion in their REF submissions. These will be assessed and approved by HEIs' funding body (for Middlesex University: Research England), with input from the REF 2029 People and Diversity Advisory Panel (PDAP) and Research Diversity Advisory Panel (RDAP). Approved up-to-date CoPs will be published on HEIs external websites with unrestricted access, with final CoPs published on the REF website.

2. This document outlines Middlesex University's processes and procedures to ensure equality of opportunity in the inclusion of staff, and selection of outputs for REF 2029. To this end, this CoP sets out the management approaches of the processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (SRR), for determining research independence (RI), for allocating contracts to Units of Assessment (UoAs), and for selecting outputs for submission to REF 2029, taking into account the published REF 2029 criteria and legislative framework.

1.1 How the CoP supports the principles of Robustness, Transparency and Equity and Inclusion

3. Three over-riding principles have been established as fundamental to REF 2029: Robustness, Transparency, and Equity and Inclusion (see REF 2029 Code of Practice Guidance, paras. 1.0.3 and 12.1.1). These principles will guide all our preparations. Their application in every stage in the REF 2029 process will be overseen by the university's REF Steering Group (see CoP Part 2, paras. 36-38 and CoP Appendix B: REF Governance and Terms and Conditions):

I. Robustness: We are committed to generating a robust REF 2029 submission that can stand up to public scrutiny and reflects the quality of research at our institution. We do this by establishing clear REF 2029 governance structures, which will ensure the consistent application of this CoP across the University in identifying staff with SRR and RI, and allocating contracts to UoAs. In addition, the implementation of this CoP safeguards that the evaluation and assessment of our research outputs is evidence based, following clear assessment criteria, applied in a rigorous and equitable manner across all UoAs. The university will maintain records of decisions taken at every stage in the process leading up to REF 2029, which may be subject to both internal and external audits.

II. Transparency: We are committed to being open and transparent about our processes, criteria and decision-making concerning REF 2029. We will achieve this by engaging Middlesex University staff in open consultations

on this CoP, communicating regularly with staff, maintaining records of decisions taken in accessible formats, and ensuring that mechanisms are in place to offer staff the opportunity to give feedback on processes and procedures, and receive feedback concerning their SRR/RI status, contractual allocation to UoAs, and their research outputs. Where review or evaluation processes are undertaken, we will clearly communicate the approach used (e.g., whether reviews are anonymised or attributed), how outcomes will be shared with individuals and, where appropriate, how aggregated findings will be reported to the wider community. Any sharing of information will comply with data protection legislation, including GDPR, through appropriate anonymisation and secure data handling. We will also ensure that research evaluation and assessment criteria are transparent and aligned with REF quality definitions for research.

III. Equity and Inclusion: We will ensure that processes leading up to our REF 2029 submission are fair, equitable and inclusive, and that they will reflect the diversity of research undertaken in our institution. We will do this by ensuring that our CoP is aligned with Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles, whose application will be overseen by our REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Panel (see CoP Part 2, paras. 39-40 and CoP Appendix B: REF Governance and Terms and Conditions). All staff with advisory and decision-making responsibilities for REF 2029 are required to undertake REF-specific training, such as EDI training as outlined in this CoP, provided by Advance HE and Middlesex University. In advance of implementing any practices and procedures related to REF 2029 we will conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). These will ensure that our REF 2029 submission will reflect the breadth of research disciplines and groups. In addition, throughout the preparation of the REF 2029 submission, including the approval process for this CoP, the university is committed to engaging with the recognised Trade Unions and the staff diversity networks operating across the institution, which support the embedding of diversity and inclusion into all aspects of our community. These include LGBT+, Gender, Anti-Racism, Inter Faith, Parents & Carers and Disability Networks. The University currently holds an Athena SWAN Bronze award and is working towards achieving Silver. It is also a holder of the Race Equality Charter and is involved with the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, with a Gold Award in 2023. The University is also a disability confident employer with Level 3 Leader status.

How the Code Was Developed and Communicated to Staff

4. Preparation for this CoP began in January 2025, led by the Provisional REF 2029 Steering Group in collaboration with the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). The Provisional REF Steering Group served as a custodian of our REF preparations, operating in accordance with the principles, terms and conditions outlined in our REF 2021 CoP, corroborated and aligned with available REF 2029 Guidance.

5. In October 2025 the University's RKEC approved the REF 2029 Governance Structures and the Terms of Reference for the REF 2029 Steering Group. The Group holds decision-making power and will be responsible for

the strategic leadership, development and implementation of the University's REF 2029 submission. It is supported by a number of advisory panels and groups, including the REF Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) Panel, REF EDI Panel, Faculty REF Committees, and UoA Working Groups (see Appendix B: REF Governance and Terms and Conditions). Membership for the majority of these panels, groups and committees was finalised in February 2026, following open calls for Expressions of Interest. The REF SPRE Panel constitutes an exception, with its membership scheduled to be finalised in July 2026 following an equivalent appointment process of non-ex-officio members. The composition, duties and responsibilities of the REF groups and panels draw on lessons learned through an internal review of Middlesex' preparations for REF 2021, which identified opportunities to strengthen effectiveness of submission processes. This governance framework ensures that the University has a robust structure through which it can initialise, organise and implement processes for REF 2029.

6. This CoP has been developed by the University REF Manager in consultation with the Directors of Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Postgraduate Research Studies, Faculty Deputy Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange (DDRKEs), the HR Head of Shared Service, Reporting and Systems, the Research Information Manager and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, all of whom are members of the REF Steering Group and will play an important role throughout the period of preparation for REF 2029. Until September 2026 executive oversight is provided by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Knowledge Exchange (PVC(RKE)), who also serves as Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). From September 2026, a Faculty Dean was appointed by the Vice-Chancellor (VC) as the new chair of the RKEC and the REF Steering Group. The appointment followed an Expressions of Interest process open to Faculty Deans, all of whom are members of the University Executive Team (UET).

7. A final draft of this Code of Practice was approved by the University RKEC in January 2026. It was subsequently placed on the REF page on the University Intranet and made available to all academic staff. This was followed by a month-long REF CoP staff consultation (28 January-27 February 2026), which included a series of activities that provided opportunities to discuss the structure and intent of this REF 2029 CoP and matters arising from it, as well as the overall University approach to REF 2029. These included two university wide all-staff meetings, consultation meetings with university stakeholders including representatives of trade unions, and an online consultation process, through which staff were invited to propose amendments to all elements of this CoP.

8. Amendments to the CoP were submitted via an internal online form (see Appendix C: Code of Practice Amendments Proforma). Feedback was gathered by the REF Manager and shared with the REF Steering Group, who developed a series of proposed revisions to the Draft, for consideration by the Chair of the University RKEC. The CoP was further considered and given final approval by the VC, the Academic Board, and the UET.

9. Materials used at consultative meetings have been placed on the REF page on the University Intranet and thus made available for any staff not able to attend the meetings in person and by way of a permanent record of this element of the process. Staff on parental and sick leave continued to have access to the to the CoP version hosted on the intranet, as well as to the Amendments proforma, which ensured that they were fully included and able to participate in the consultation process.

10. A report to the University's Board of Governors, detailing the CoP consultation process and overall REF 2029 preparations, is scheduled for June 2026, and the Board will be updated at regular intervals thereafter on REF preparations, until the submission date in December 2028.

11. The timetable below outlines the programme of communication and consultation associated with the development of the CoP:

	Milestone	Actions	Responsibility	Date/Period
DRAFT	First Draft of CoP written	Circulate first draft of CoP to REF Steering Group	REF Manager	19/09/2025
	REF Steering Group first draft feedback	Approve draft and suggest changes	REF Steering Group	30/09/2025
	Second Draft of CoP written	Circulate second draft of CoP to REF Steering Group	REF Manager	28/11/2025
	REF Steering Group second draft feedback	Approve draft and suggest changes	REF Steering Group	19/12/2025
	Third Draft of CoP written	Circulate third draft of CoP to University RKEC	REF Manager	14/1/2026
	University RKEC third draft approval	Approve CoP draft for consultation	RKEC/PROVC(RKE)	22/01/2026
CONSULTATION	Staff Consultation went live	Publish draft CoP on the REF page on University Intranet Communicate to all staff, via Faculties that CoP Consultation is open Open REF CoP Amendment Proforma to all staff	REF Manager	28/01/2026
	Consultation events	Organise University-wide all staff consultation meetings Organise meeting with Staff Networks and Trade Union Representatives	REF Manager Director of Research DDRKEs Web Manager	Week beginning 2/02/2026

		Reminders sent from Central Staff Communications to all university employees		
	End of Consultation Period		REF Manager	27/02/2026
	Collation and summary of proposed CoP amendments received via consultation	Circulate a list of amendments to REF Steering Group and Chair of University RKEC	REF Manager	27/03/2026
	March Academic Board feedback	Presentation of CoP to the Academic Board	PVC(RKE)/REF Manager	3/03/2026
	Amendments approved by REF Steering Group and Chair of University RKEC	Approve and integrate CoP amendments	REF Steering Group Chair of University RKEC	5/03/2026
APPROVAL	VC, Academic Board and UET approval of final version	Circulate final version of CoP to VC and UET	REF Manager	27/04/2026
	CoP submitted to REF 2029 for approval	CoP submission to REF 2029	REF Manager	15/05/2026
	CoP (subject to approval) published on REF page on Intranet	Publish university-approved CoP on the Intranet	REF Manager	06/2026
	Report on CoP development and REF preparations received by Board of Governors	Circulate REF report to Board of Governors	REF Manager	18/06/2026
	CoP approved by REF			08/2026
	Approved CoP published on REF page on Intranet and University corporate website	Publish REF approved version of CoP on university (external) website	REF Manager	09/2026
	CoP circulated to all staff	Circulate REF approved version of CoP to all staff	REF Manager	09/2026

Table 1. Code of Practice communication and consultation programme

12. In the lead-up to REF 2029, periodic global emails from the central Staff Communications team and Faculties will be sent to all academic staff employed by the University, providing regular updates and communications at key stages throughout the process. Additionally, a REF 2029 Intranet mini-site and the internal social networking platform Viva Engage will continue to be used. This will ensure that all staff are kept as fully informed as possible.

13. Further Details on Communication of decisions concerning SRR and RI status, allocation of contracts to UoAs, and selection of outputs, can be found in CoP Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5.

1.2 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

14. The University's inclusive approach for REF 2029 builds on the CoP and strategy that were developed to guide our REF 2021 and REF 2014 submissions. The development of this CoP has been informed by the REF 2029 Guidance on CoP and adheres to the template set out in that document.

15. The CoP is developed in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, to ensure that the University's submission is not impacted by personal characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equalities Act the University has a duty and legal responsibility to eliminate all forms of unfair and unlawful discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity.

16. These duties and responsibilities are formally recognised in the [University's Equality and Diversity Policy](#), which places the achievement of equality of opportunities and inclusion at the heart of the University's mission as a provider of higher education. Our aim is 'to foster and develop a wide range of skills and experience which cannot be found within any single group of students or staff. [...] We seek to create a community in which diversity is valued and which both reflects and services the needs of the broader communities in which we operate'.

17. In addition to the legislation outlined above, the articulation of this CoP has been further informed by Middlesex University's [Ethics Policy Framework](#) and [Research Ethics Policy Framework](#), which ensure that the university operates in an ethical way in every area, including research. It is also underpinned by Middlesex University's [Code of Practice for Research](#), which sets out expectations for those engaged in research to act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity. All REF-related documents published in the period leading up to the REF 2029 submission, whether on the University's external website or the Intranet, will comply with the [Website Accessibility Policy](#) and meet accessibility standards.

18. Middlesex University is a signatory of the *Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)* and is committed to responsible research evaluation. As such, qualitative peer review remains the cornerstone of our assessment

processes, with metrics used solely to support qualitative evaluations of research outputs. Further information is offered in Part 5, paras. 108-110.

1.3 Update on Actions Since REF 2021

19. The University seeks to maintain the highest standards of openness, fairness and equality for all its staff and students. This has become a core principle of our [Middlesex 2031 Strategy](#): Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do. Middlesex University is committed to:

- Building a healthy institution where we all behave responsibly towards people, cultures and the environment and where people can thrive mentally and physically
- Ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our education and all student support activity so that all our students can achieve their potential
- Recognising diversity of thought and talent amongst our students, staff and alumni, and the value this brings to our University.

20. Following the submission to REF 2021 the University commissioned an internal review led by three non-ex-officio members of the REF 2021 Strategy Panel. Its purpose was to capture lessons of the REF 2021 exercise, while their memories were fresh, to support the preparations for REF 2029, and to embed a sustainable research culture within Middlesex's mission and operations in line with its Strategy 2031. The report identified opportunities to begin REF-related planning earlier, integrate REF requirements into annual staff appraisals and Faculty Annual Research Monitoring, and build on the strong collaboration that emerged during the REF 2021 exercise. Key recommendations included implementing new systems for robust data management, strengthening staff development through clear staffing policies and succession planning, and improving internal and external communication channels to support staff's understanding of the REF and celebrate the university's research achievements.

21. In line with the report's recommendations, the university has taken forward the following actions:

- Maintained a caretaker REF Steering Group, to stay informed on REF 2029 developments and ensure continuity of preparations
- Successfully recruited a REF manager (in post since September 2025), to provide strategic leadership and expert project management for the University's REF preparations, drive initiatives to enhance research outputs and impact, and oversee accurate data collection to support the university's long-term research strategy

- Recruited three fixed-term Strategy Theme Directors (Equity and health; Inclusive socio-economic development and culture; Sustainability of communities and environment) to lead thematic research and knowledge exchange areas, foster collaboration across faculties, and ensure that research activities are impactful and aligned with the institutional priorities
- Strengthened the integration between the REF and the KEF, as evidenced by the KEF 3 submission, positioning Middlesex as an anchor institution leading place-based research and regeneration initiatives focused on supporting deprived localities, building collaborative partnerships, and promoting civic participation and public engagement
- Updated key research policies, including those governing research publications, research degree regulations, and integrity standards. The [Research Publications Policy](#) (2024) expanded open access and responsible dissemination of scholarship. Regulations for [Postgraduate Research Study](#) were revised for the 2022-2023 academic year, reinforcing requirements for researcher development, supervisor support, and rigorous evaluation of research progress
- Signed the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA, 2022) and the *Researcher Development Concordat* (2025); these developments are reflected in its updated Integrity policies, which require all researchers to adhere to updated ethical, compliance and conduct standards for responsible research
- Conducted a study of the EDI experience of postgraduate researchers at Middlesex, in collaboration with Advance HE (2024). This resulted in [a report and recommendations](#) that informed the review of processes and procedures, as well as the integration of EDI principles into supervisor training and development
- Invested in a new Central Research Information System (CRIS), which enabled streamlined collection and monitoring of research outputs, public engagement and policy connections, and enhanced reporting, research governance, and the ability for teams to build new interdisciplinary networks and strategic knowledge exchange
- Implemented a new website and Intranet system (2024), which transformed internal and external communications, and made research more visible and accessible. REF-related communications now take place via a redesigned secure Intranet, which enhances collaboration through secure messaging, document sharing and virtual meeting tools. Usage statistics and altmetrics demonstrate that the integration between the new website and the research repository has increased the visibility, accessibility and impact of research outputs and researcher profiles, and provided clearer pathways to publish findings and promote achievements.

22. Middlesex University's REF 2021 Final Equality Impact Assessment (July 2021) acknowledged that, while no negative impact or discrimination had been found in its REF 2021 preparations and submission, further progress was required to strengthen equity and inclusion across its research culture and environment. In particular, it

identified the need for further work to advance gender balance through the university's Athena Swan action plan; recognised that additional support structures were needed to increase the ethnic diversity at senior levels; and acknowledged that broader improvements were necessary to improve the representation and inclusion of staff with protected characteristics. To address these priorities, the university achieved major milestones in advancing its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda, including:

- **Race Equality Charter.** Middlesex University was awarded the 'Bronze Award' in 2023 and launched the Diversifying Leadership Programme in 2024 to support racially minoritised staff into leadership roles. We are currently mid-cycle in our Race Equality Charter journey and are actively preparing for our renewal submission in 2028
- **Athena Swan.** The university was awarded the 'Bronze Award' in 2021 and has made significant progress towards its Athena Swan Action Plan, addressing gender imbalances, particularly in STEM subjects. We are currently in the process of preparing our submission for the 'Silver Award'. Alongside this, we have undertaken a range of impactful initiatives, including updating our parental leave policies and consistently celebrating International Women's Day year on year, including high-profile events that highlighted and celebrated women in STEM
- **Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.** Middlesex achieved 'Gold' status in 2023 and ranked 58th out of 268 organisations (up 45 places since 2022), placing 8th among 30 participating HEIs. In parallel we ran awareness campaigns such as 'Trans Awareness Week' and participated in 'Pride' in London each year
- **Disability Inclusion.** The University successfully achieved re-accreditation of the 'Disability Confident Leader' (Level 3) status, which is the highest ranking available. This achievement publicly recognises our ongoing commitment to supporting staff with disabilities and long-term health conditions. The submission was commended for embedding disability inclusion through initiatives such as training, events, and the development of a Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Passport
- **LGBTQ+ Recognition.** Middlesex won 'University of the Year' at the Queer Student Awards (2023) and received highly commended status in 2024 in two categories ('University of the Year' and 'Role Model of the Year: Education'). In 2025, all five entries were also shortlisted, including nominations for 'Activist of the Year' and 'Role Model of the Year: Educator and Student'. A particular highlight was one of our MDX Academics being recognised as an outstanding role model
- **Good Work Standard.** The university was recognised by the Mayor of London's 'Good Work Standard' in 2024 for excellence in fair pay, wellbeing, skills, progression, and inclusive recruitment
- **Staff Diversity Networks** work closely with the University's Student Union, to create an inclusive and supportive environment that celebrates the diversity of our community. They have partnered with the London Borough of Barnet on interfaith and race events, including the 'Big Iftar' (2025) and 'MDX Iftar' (2026). The University has also actively participated in 'Pride' in London, 'Black Pride' and 'Trans Pride',

with strong staff and student representation, including senior leadership, demonstrating its commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion and authentic self-expression.

- **EDI Training.** The University rolled out an expanded EDI Training Programme from 2023 onwards, including sessions on anti-racism, disability inclusion, mental health, and intersectionality. Over 1,500 staff have now completed mandatory EDI training
- **Workforce Diversity Progress.** By 2025, 36% of staff were from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (well above the UK HE sector average of 12.9%); 47% of senior managers were women; and 7% of staff declared a disability (near sector average)
- **Working Families Benchmark.** We participated in the 2023/24 national benchmark to strengthen family-friendly policies for staff, including carers and parents
- **Staff Development.** Middlesex significantly expanded its leadership pipelines, including targeted programmes to support women and racially minoritised staff into leadership roles. The Coaching & Mentoring Academy was also strengthened, enhancing development opportunities, supporting progression, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive organisational culture
- **Global Majority Mentoring Programme.** Middlesex University took part in the GMMP for its fourth consecutive year since the programme's inception, marking our continued commitment to advancing equity and inclusion across the higher education sector. The GMMP is a cross-institutional mentoring scheme that supports the career progression and development of staff from Global Majority backgrounds within higher education
- **Menopause Campaign.** In line with our Athena Swan action plan, the University launched a series of Menopause Awareness initiatives including a 'Could it be Menopause' poster campaign which successfully increased conversations on campus around symptoms of the Menopause, a virtual social space for staff to connect and share their experiences, and a 'Pause for Menopause' facilitated peer-support group for staff going through the Menopause. This work provides a solid foundation for a cohesive Menopause action plan moving forward.

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

23. REF 2029 will continue to apply the REF 2021 definition of Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR): it is used to identify staff for whom 'explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role' (see REF 2029 Volume Measure Guidance, para. 8.4.1). In line with REF 2029 Volume Measure Guidance, para. 8.7.1, authorship of a research output alone does not automatically confer SRR status under the terms of an employment contract.

2.1 Policies and Procedures

Criteria for SRR

24. At Middlesex, academic staff with SRR are determined according to the distinctions of our existing academic role profiles. Since 2014, Middlesex University has aligned all academic staff on 'Teaching and Research' academic contracts, from Grade 6 (e.g., Associate Lecturer) to Grade 9 (e.g., Associate Professor) and above (e.g. Senior Manager Academics) to one of two pathways: 'Teaching and Research' OR 'Teaching and Professional Practice'. Staff have SRR if they are on the 'Teaching and Research' pathway from Grade 7 and above. This applies to staff designated as 'Senior Manager Academic', a category which includes, for example, Professors, Heads of Department, Deans and Deputy Deans: they may also have SRR. Academic staff on the 'Teaching and Professional Practice' pathway as well as staff below Grade 7 on the 'Teaching and Research' pathway may support research, but do not have SRR. This procedure was revisited during the CoP consultation phase (see Table 1) with staff and trade unions and re-endorsed. No additional procedure is required to identify staff with SRR for the purposes of REF 2029.

25. The two contractual pathways, 'Teaching and Research' (with SRR) and 'Teaching and Professional Practice' (without SRR) reflect individual staff's core responsibilities and career focus. They are essential for workload planning and institutional reporting, and for supporting transparent and equitable progression and promotion opportunities. In addition to statutory HESA staff returns, the University undertakes regular staff data integrity checks within its HR systems and in collaboration with Faculties, to ensure that pathway allocations are accurately recorded and research responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated through the appraisal system and regular conversations with line managers.

26. By default, contracts of all staff who: (1) satisfy criteria for SRR and Research Independence (RI) (see Part 3 of this CoP) and (2) are on the payroll of Middlesex University in the academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27 in at least a 0.2 FTE contract, are considered eligible for inclusion in the REF 2029 Volume Measure.

Decision-Making and Communication

27. Starting with the academic year 2024-2025 the University has aligned staff data integrity checks of contractual pathways with statutory HESA staff returns, which included the new REF-specific fields introduced to support the REF 2029 submission. These checks ensure accurate identification of staff with SRR (see paras. 24-26) and RI (see Part 3 of this CoP) for the purposes of REF 2029. This process is led by the REF Manager and the REF Steering Group and involves verifying contract and pathway allocation against HR records and corroborating data with Faculties to maintain data consistency.

28. SRR status is confirmed each year through the annual appraisal process and work programme planning. For the purposes of REF 2029, formal written confirmation will be sent by email to all eligible staff by the 10 July 2026. Staff on parental, annual and sick leave will also receive written confirmation, by email or letter as appropriate. This confirmation will state their SRR status, confirm their inclusion in the REF Volume Measure, and that their outputs may be considered for submission.

29. Formally, all staff (including staff with SRR) were notified of the University's intention to submit to REF 2029 at the beginning of the consultation period for this CoP (January 2026). New staff joining the University in 2026 and 2027 on 'Teaching and Research' academic contracts AND 'Teaching and Research' pathways will be notified in writing that they have SRR and that their contracts are eligible for inclusion in the REF 2029 Volume Measure.

30. A member of staff may appeal the decision concerning their SRR status. Outcomes of appeals will be communicated to appellants in sufficient time to allow adjustments before the yearly HESA return deadlines. The appeals process is set out in paras. 48-52.

31. A visual representation of procedures for determining SRR is provided in Fig. 1:

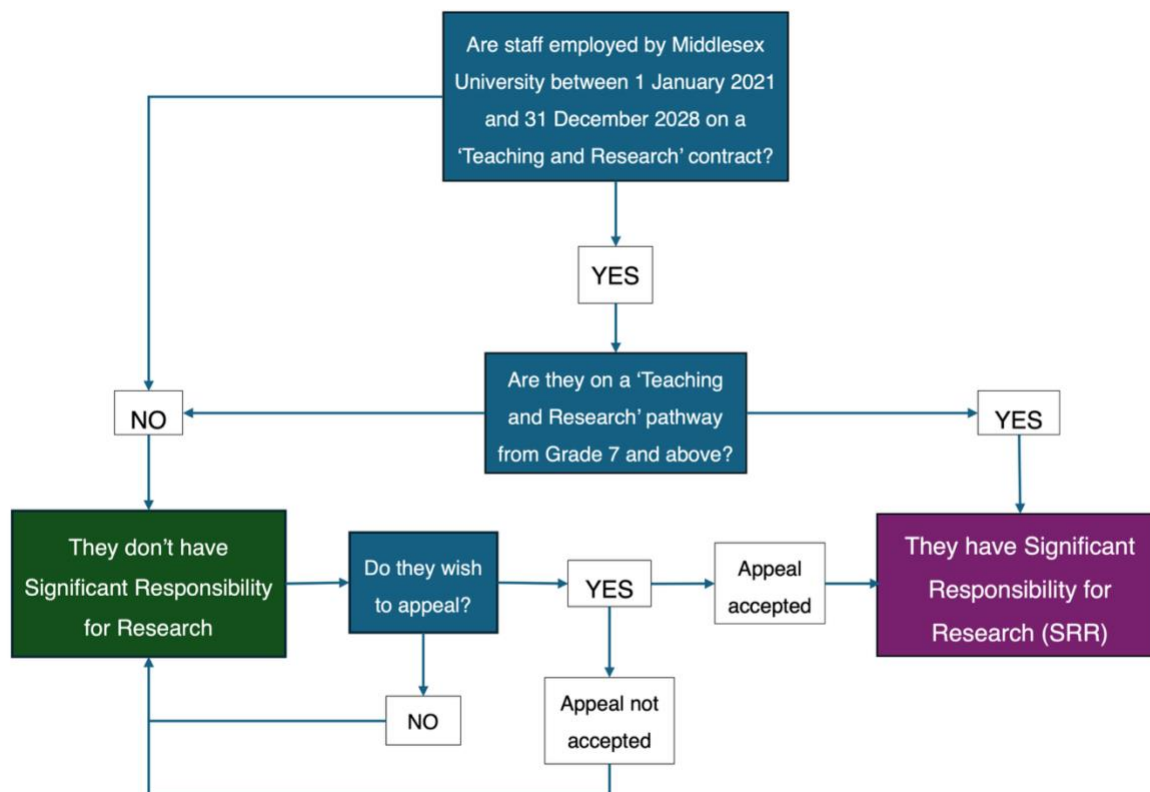


Fig. 1 Procedures for determining SRR at Middlesex University

2.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

Roles and Responsibilities

32. The University will operate through its existing committee structures (Academic Board, RKEC) in addition to REF-specific committees and groups. The REF 2029 Governance structures, which oversee and manage the preparations and final submission to REF 2029, were approved by the University RKEC in October 2025. They comprise University level panels (REF Steering Group, REF Strategy, People, and Research Environment (SPRE) Panel, REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Panel), three Faculty Committees, and Unit of Assessment Working Groups (see Appendix B: REF Governance Structure and Terms of Reference).

33. All REF committees and panels comprise ex-officio members alongside a diverse cross-section of staff with responsibility for research matters and equality, including Senior Academics, Mid-Career (MCRs) and Early-Career Researchers (ECRs) and research-enabling staff on professional services contracts. University-level panels include staff in shadow roles at early and mid-career stages; these non-decisional roles are designed to promote future research leadership. Non-ex-officio members were appointed through open calls for Expressions

of Interest, requiring applicants to demonstrate their knowledge, experience, skills and motivation for the roles they sought. A key criterion for appointing Unit of Assessment Working Group Chairs was the ability to provide leadership within the UoA Group, particularly on EDI matters, based on relevant experience and expertise. All appointments were approved by the REF Steering Group.

34. Calls for Expressions of Interest for non-ex-officio roles were circulated from November 2025 for the University REF Steering Group and REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Panel. Similarly, the Faculty Deans, together with their Faculty DDRKEs, undertook a parallel process to appoint the UoA Working Group Chairs and fill staff representative positions within UoA Working Groups. Membership of these panels and groups was finalised in February 2026. A further call for Expressions of Interest for non-ex-officio roles on the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) Panel will be issued to all staff in June 2026, with final membership to be established by July 2026.

35. Brief summaries of the main function and responsibilities of the various Committees, Panels and Working Groups are provided here; for membership and full Terms of Reference please see Appendix B: REF Governance Structure and Terms of Reference.

University REF Steering Group

36. The University REF Steering Group holds overall responsibility for all decisions related to the University's REF 2029 submission, ensuring that it adheres to the University's strategy and vision, and this CoP. Until September 2026, the Group is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Knowledge Exchange, (PVC(RKE)). From September 2026, this responsibility is undertaken by the Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), appointed by the Vice-Chancellor (VC) through an Expressions of Interest process open to all Faculty Deans. The Group reports to the University RKEC, a sub-committee of the Academic Board.

37. The Group is responsible for overseeing the preparation of the University's REF submission and ensuring best practice. This includes embedding robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion throughout our policies and processes.

38. It will have an important assurance function: the Group is responsible for ensuring that all University procedures pertaining to the REF 2029 submission are designed and followed in accordance with the published framework and associated guidance and for ensuring the integrity of all submitted data. The Group is also responsible for approving the appointment of staff to key roles in the process (e.g., non-ex-officio members of Panels, chairs of UoA Working Group Chairs, external advisors).

University REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Panel

39. The University REF EDI Panel is an independent body that advises the REF Steering Group on all matters relating to equality and diversity in relation to REF 2029. The panel's main purpose is to ensure that equitable, inclusive and transparent procedures are followed in all aspects of preparation for REF. It is chaired by the PVC(ES), who has responsibility for EDI.

40. The Panel will be responsible for ensuring Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are conducted at key points in the REF 2029 preparation process, providing assurance that the University's REF policies and procedures do not have a differential impact on particular groups as identified in the Equality Act 2010. It tracks progress against agreed EDI objectives and monitors the activity of the REF Appeals Committee.

University REF Appeals Committee

41. As part of the REF EDI Panel, the Appeals Committee will be responsible for considering all REF-related appeals. It operates independently from University line management structures and REF UoA Working Group chairs, to ensure impartial and unbiased consideration of all appeals. The Committee comprises a chair (Director of HR) and two members of academic staff, none of whom will be from the same Faculty or UoA as the appellant. A pool of eight independent academic staff (two per Faculty) will be assembled by the Chair, all of whom will receive the same mandatory training as the REF committees, panels and working groups and who will be available throughout the REF submission preparation period to consider appeals.

University REF Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) Panel

42. The University REF Strategy, People and Research Environment Panel will provide an independent body that advises the REF Steering Group on all matters relating to the development, coordination and quality assurance of the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) components within the university's REF 2029 submission. It will operate across both institutional and UoA levels, ensuring that evidence-based narratives and indicators align with REF 2029 guidance, while promoting inclusive and transparent practices in assessing research culture.

REF Operations Panel

43. A sub-unit of the REF Steering Group, this panel will manage the operational delivery of the University's REF 2029 submission, ensuring that all processes are coordinated, quality-assured, and aligned with REF requirements and the University's strategic objectives. The panel translates strategic decisions into actionable plans, oversees operational activities and maintains the 'Road to REF 2029' plan, supports institutional decision-

making through data analysis and modelling, develops training materials for consistent practice across Units of Assessment, and prepares the institution for post-submission audits.

UoA Working Groups

44. UoA Working Groups will be responsible for the detailed preparation of individual UoA submissions. This will include the selection of outputs for the Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU) component, developing ICSs for the Impact and Engagement (E&I) component, and drafting SPRE unit-level statements. UoA Working Groups ensure compliance with REF 2029 criteria and this CoP, maintaining transparency and fairness in decision making. They will report to Faculty REF Committees.

Faculty REF Committees

45. Faculty REF Committees will oversee and guide the detailed preparation of individual UoA submissions within their remit. They supervise preparation activities for individual UoAs, implementing policies and procedures approved by the REF Steering Group, and keeping faculty staff informed about REF developments, timelines and expectations. Faculty Committees will be chaired by DDRKEs. UoA Working Group Chairs will play a key role and where UoAs span more than one Faculty, the relevant UoA Chair will be a member of each relevant Faculty REF Committee.

46. The unreserved Minutes of all the above Panels and Committees will be available on the Staff Intranet. These will include details of attendance, summaries of decisions and actions, and the datasets used to inform decisions. All personal data will be handled and stored in compliance with GDPR Legislation.

Training

47. All staff with REF responsibilities, including members of panels, groups and committees confirmed by the REF Steering Group, completed REF-specific EDI training delivered between February 2026 and April 2026. The training will be repeated at regular intervals to ensure that staff appointed to REF-related roles at later stages are appropriately supported. In addition to EDI training, targeted training covering responsible assessment, self-assessment, and impact has been delivered since December 2025 and will continue to be provided in the period leading up to the REF submission. Training activity is coordinated by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office in collaboration with the REF Operations Panel and the REF EDI Panel. Details of the training provided can be found in Table 2:

REF EDI Training

Training Activity (2025-2026); repeated annually	Delivered by	Date	Purpose of Training	Outcomes
Introduction to REF 2029	REF Manager	10/12/2025	All staff introductory session on REF 2029 updates	Participants are aware of the key REF 2029 updates and understand their implications for their own research, and research outputs.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion / Unconscious Bias / Equality Assessment	MDX HR (online modules)	February-March 2026	Compulsory for all members of Panels, Committees and Groups; provides a refresher on the University's approach to EDI and unconscious bias	Participants are able to recognise EDI issues and mitigate unconscious bias and structural/procedural barriers in their decision-making
EDI in the REF	Advance HE	March 2026 Repeated for any new members of panels, groups or committees	Builds on MDX EDI/Unconscious Bias/EA training. Compulsory for all members of Panels, Committees and Groups; includes: (1) EDI Frameworks; (2) Inclusive Research Culture; (3) Output selection, representativeness of submission and managing bias; (4) Codes of Practice and Equality issues; (5) Equality impact assessment in the REF	Participants develop a detailed understanding of EDI in research culture, purpose of EIAs for REF 2029, and institutional research culture and ways to improve it
REF Appeals: Principles, Processes and Good Practice	Director of HR and EDI Manager	June 2026	Compulsory for all eight academics who will be involved in dealing with REF appeals, includes: (1) EDI principles in appeals processes; (2) Valid grounds for appeal under institutional policy; (3) Case examples illustrating good practice	Participants are able to handle Appeals cases consistently in line with recognised good practice

Additional REF-related training

Training Activity (2025-2026); repeated annually	Delivered by	Date	Purpose of Training	Outcomes
Research (Self)Assessment	REF Manager and DDRKEs	December 2025-June 2026	Compulsory for all members of Panels, Committees and Groups and open to all academics, includes: (1) Understanding REF assessment criteria; (2) Assessing outputs submitted to REF 2021	This training is delivered in each Faculty; participants are able to interpret REF assessment criteria and apply them consistently when reviewing research outputs, including their own.
Research Diversity in the REF	REF Manager	April 2026	Available to all staff, includes: (1) submitting 'non-traditional' outputs for the REF; (2) Writing 300-word research statements; (3) Formats for research evidence	Participants are able to present non-traditional outputs for REF submission, write clear 300-word research statements, and select appropriate formats to evidence their research and dissemination of outputs.
Impact in the REF	Research Director	February 2026	Available to all staff, includes: (1) Underpinning research in ICS; (2) Building evidence in ICS; (3) Writing an ICS	Participants are able to understand the relation between impact and underpinning research, how to build robust impact evidence, and how to apply effective writing techniques for developing REF-ready ICSs.

Table 2. REF 2029 training at Middlesex University delivered in the 2025-2026 academic year and repeated annually

2.3 Appeals

48. Appeals concerning SRR can be submitted only on the ground that the process for identifying SRR was not conducted appropriately (see paras. 24-31) and/or that significant evidence of SRR had been omitted or misrepresented. Before initiating the REF Appeals Process, staff may first seek an informal discussion with their

line manager, Unit of Assessment (UoA) Lead, or Faculty DDRKEs. Staff may also choose to consult their UCU representatives for advice. Appeals can be made using the proforma included in Appendix D: REF 2029 Appeals Proforma.

49. An SRR-related REF appeal must be made in writing and addressed to the Chair of the REF 2029 Appeals Committee. The appeal must be received by 12 pm on 31 July 2026. The Committee will convene within 15 working days of receiving the appeal form (on 21 August 2026) and will consider the written statements and any other relevant materials. The Committee will then invite the appellant and any other parties they may consider relevant (e.g., representative of UCU) to a hearing, to discuss the case (24 August 2026). The Committee may also seek other expert opinion, both from within the University and externally, to help inform their decision. The appellant may call upon others to support their case should that be appropriate to the situation.

50. The Appeal Committee will prepare a report detailing the outcome, normally within 7 days of the appeal hearing. The Chair of the Appeals Committee will inform the Chair of the University REF Steering Group and the Chair of the REF EDI Panel, of the outcome, (no later than 31 August 2026).

51. Copies of the Appeal report will be made available to the appellant (no later than 31 August 2026), subject to any considerations of confidentiality, together with notification of the outcome. The decision is final and there is no further right of appeal, but individuals have 10 working days in which to seek clarification, if required.

52. The same process will be used for appeals on the basis of RI (as outlined in Part 3). A visual representation of REF Appeals procedures is provided in Fig. 2 below:

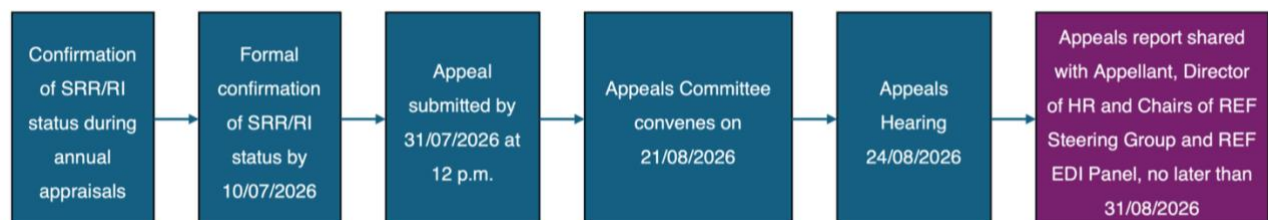


Fig. 2 REF 2029 appeals procedures at Middlesex University

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

53. An EIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of our processes designed to evaluate their impact and, in particular, to understand if those processes are likely to have a differential impact on one or more of the groups

protected characteristics. EIAs will be conducted at various key stages throughout the REF 2029 preparation cycle and remain standing items on the agenda for REF Steering Group meetings.

54. During the consultation phase of this CoP, an EIA was carried out and examined four core areas:

- (1) Identification of Staff with SRR and RI
- (2) Managing appeals processes
- (3) Allocating eligible contracts to UoAs
- (4) Selecting outputs.

55. Core Area 1 focused on the provisional determination of staff who have SRR (and RI, see section 3). The primary purpose of this element of the EIA was to establish if:

- Discrimination may be inherent within Middlesex's procedures for identifying SRR for REF purposes
- There is a positive inherent impact in one or more of the protected characteristics groups
- There is an opportunity to revise the procedure, which could result in a positive impact.

56. The outcome of this assessment is shown in Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment, which indicates a broad proportional alignment between REF-eligible staff (on ACEMPFUN 3 contracts) and staff with SRR anticipated to be submitted in the REF Volume Measure. However, several areas of potential disparity will require continued monitoring throughout the REF 2029 cycle. Key observations include:

Gender Balance

Compared to REF 2021 Middlesex University has improved the gender balance among staff with SRR (48% female and 52% male in the current dataset, compared with 45% female vs 55% male in REF 2021). However, only 44% of females on 'Teaching and Research' contracts would be submitted to the REF volume measure as having SRR, compared with 49% male. Disaggregated analysis at Faculty level indicates that this gender imbalance is primarily associated with the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, a female-dominated Faculty whose composition reflects [wider sector demographics](#) (e.g., as of 2025, around 76% of NHS staff identify as women). The University recognises and values the industry expertise of these staff primarily on the Teaching and Professional Practice pathway and continues to be committed to offering opportunities for staff to move to the more research-intensive Teaching and Research pathway, where this aligns with their career aspirations.

Race and Ethnicity

Aggregated data indicates that the procedures for identifying staff with SRR do not have a negative impact on Ethnically Diverse staff overall. However, disaggregated data reveals a disparity for Black staff: only 26% of Black

staff on 'Teaching and Research' contracts (ACEMPFUN 3) would be submitted to the REF Volume measure as having SRR, compared to over 50% in every other ethnic group. As with the gender-balance analysis above, Faculty-level disaggregation indicates that this disparity is primarily associated with the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education. The same contextual considerations apply, reflecting sector-wide workforce patterns and the concentration of staff on Professional Practice pathways within this Faculty.

Core Area 1 of the Equality Impact Assessment further identified some emerging differences in representation relating to staff under 35 (potentially indicating lower representation of ECRs), part-time and fixed-term staff (lower representation), and nationality (higher representation of international staff).

In response to the emerging patterns identified in Core Area 1, the University will implement a programme of ongoing monitoring and review. This will include an annual proportionality review of SRR (and RI) identification outcomes, disaggregated by sex, ethnicity (with a specific focus on Black staff), age, and contract type, including part-time and fixed-term status. In parallel, the University will monitor the progression and retention of staff under 35 and, in particular, ECRs, into SRR- and RI-eligible roles contributing to the REF Volume Measure, aligned to existing targeted researcher development and support programmes delivered through the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office. Together, these actions will support continued oversight of equity, transparency and proportionality as REF-related processes develop.

57. Core Area 2 of the EIA examines the management of appeals processes. As noted in Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment, no relevant REF appeals data is currently available for analysis because the appeals window for the 2025–2026 academic year has not yet opened. Nevertheless, the procedures outlined in paras. 48–52 have been designed to minimise potential barriers to accessibility and participation. Once data becomes available, the University will monitor the characteristics of appellants to identify any disproportionate patterns and to assess whether any equality related barriers may be present. Any issues identified will inform revisions to the appeals process to ensure that it remains fair, transparent, and accessible for all staff.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

58. REF 2029 will continue to apply the REF 2021 definition of Research Independence (RI): it refers to individuals who 'undertake self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme' (see REF 2029 The Volume Measure Guidance, para. 9.1.3).

3.1 Policies and Procedures

Criteria and Evidence

59. All staff on 'Teaching and Research' academic contracts AND 'Teaching and Research' pathways, from Grade 7 and above, are considered to have significant responsibilities for research (SRR) (see Part 2, paras. 24-26) and considered independent researchers (RI). Staff who are receiving active supervision of their research (e.g., PhD research), either at Middlesex University or another HEI, are not regarded as self-directed, independent researchers according to the REF definition. However, staff undertaking a research degree by Public Works mode will necessarily, as part of their admission requirements, have completed a significant body of prior independent research, and will be deemed independent researchers and considered REF-eligible.

60. In determining RI status for staff on 'Research-Only' academic contracts (e.g., Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow, at Grades 7 and 8), the University aligns closely with REF guidelines and applies indicators of independence recognised as appropriate by all main panels. These include:

- Currently leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project
- Currently holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement (see Appendix E: List of Research Fellowships demonstrating research independence for REF 2029 Volume Measure)
- Currently leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package in a funded research project
- Where research independence is an inherent expectation of a contract
- For UoAs 13-34 this may also include:
 - 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

61. By default, staff on 'Research-Only' contracts who (1) satisfy criteria for RI and (2) are on the payroll of Middlesex University in the academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27 in at least a 0.2 FTE contract are considered eligible for inclusion in the REF 2029 Volume Measure.

Decision-Making and Communication

62. Starting with the academic year 2024-2025 the University has aligned staff data integrity checks of contractual pathways with statutory HESA staff returns, which included the new REF-specific fields introduced to support the REF 2029 submission. These checks ensure accurate identification of staff with SRR (see CoP Part 2) and RI (see paras. 59-60) for the purposes of REF 2029. This process is led by the REF Manager and the REF Steering Group and involves verifying contract and pathway allocation against HR records and corroborating data with Faculties to maintain data consistency. Additional validation will be provided by Faculty REF Committees and UoA Working Groups, who will confirm the evaluation of RI, based on criteria indicated in para. 59 and the three (or five) indicators mentioned in para. 60.

63. RI status is confirmed each year through the annual appraisal process. For the purposes of REF 2029, formal written confirmation will be sent by email to all eligible staff by the 10 July 2026. Staff on parental, annual and sick leave will also receive written confirmation, by email or letter as appropriate. This confirmation will state their RI status, their inclusion in the REF Volume Measure, and that their outputs may be considered for submission.

64. Formally, all staff (including staff with RI) were notified of the University's intention to submit to REF 2029 at the beginning of the consultation period for this Code of Practice (January 2026). New staff joining the University in 2026 and 2027 on 'Research-Only' academic contracts at Grades 7 and 8 will be notified in writing that they have RI and that their contracts are eligible for inclusion in the REF 2029 Volume Measure.

65. A member of staff may appeal the decision concerning their RI status. Outcomes of appeals will be communicated to appellants in sufficient time to allow adjustments before the yearly HESA return deadlines. The appeals process is set out in paras. 67-68 below and in this CoP's Part 2, paras. 48 - 52.

66. A visual representation of procedures for determining RI is provided in Fig. 3:

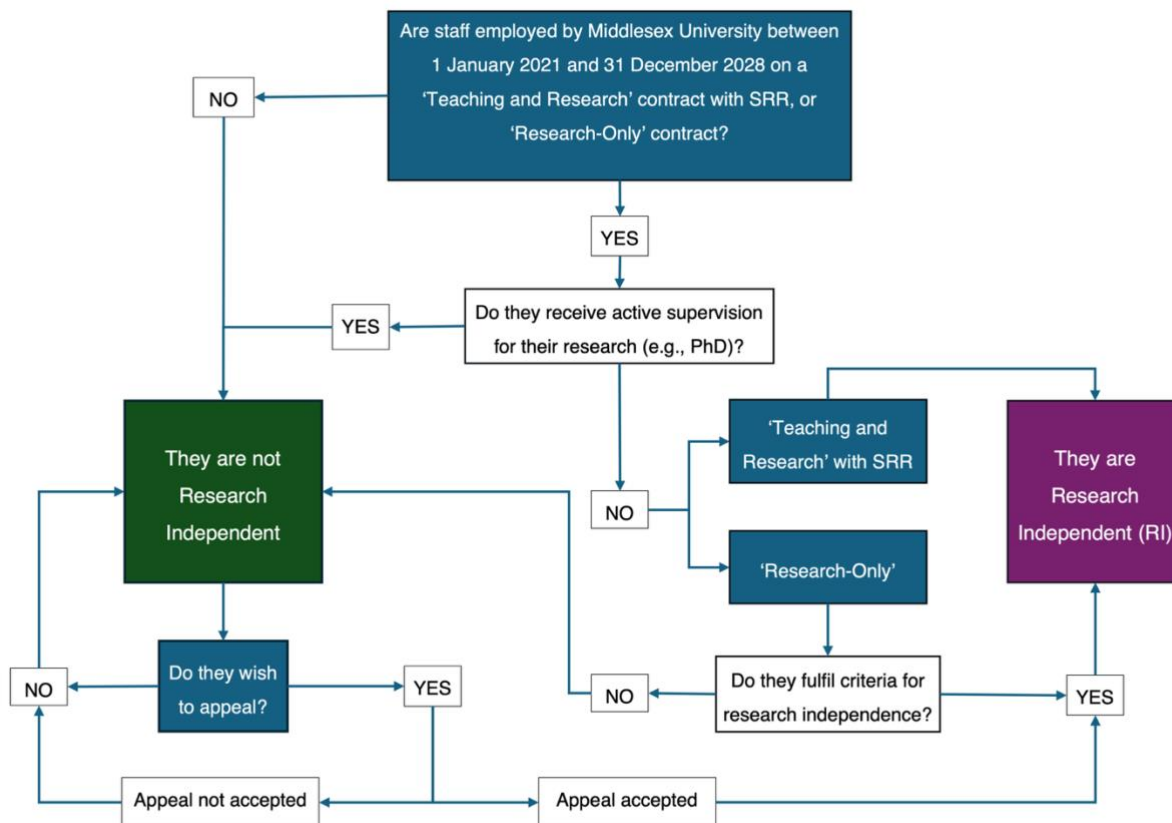


Fig. 3 Procedures for determining RI at Middlesex University

3.2 Staff, Committees, Training and Appeals

67. The responsibilities of staff and committees, the required training, and the appeals process for determining research independence are the same as those described in this CoP, Part 2, paras 32-52.

68. Appeals concerning RI can be submitted only on the ground that the process for identifying RI was not conducted appropriately (see paras. 62-66) and/or that significant evidence of RI had been omitted or misrepresented. Before initiating the REF Appeals Process, staff may first seek an informal discussion with their line manager, Unit of Assessment (UoA) Lead, or Faculty DDRKEs. Staff may also choose to consult their UCU representatives for advice. Appeals can be made using the proforma included in Appendix D: REF 2029 Appeals Proforma.

3.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

69. Core Area 1 of the EIA also focused on the provisional determination of staff who have RI. The primary purpose of this element of the EIA was to establish if:

- Discrimination may be inherent within Middlesex's procedures for identifying RI for the REF purposes
- There is a positive inherent impact in one or more of the protected characteristics groups
- There is an opportunity to revise the procedure, which could result in a positive impact.

70. Middlesex University has a very small population of staff on 'Research-Only' contracts: 16 staff fall into this category, of whom only 13 have been identified as having RI and would be returned in the REF Volume Measure. Given the limited numbers, the dataset is too small to determine whether any statistically significant impact exists in relation to protected characteristics. The considerations outlined in paras. 56-57 regarding Core Area 1 (Identification of staff with SRR) and Core Area 2 of the EIA (Management of Appeals Processes) are also relevant to the procedures used for identifying staff with RI.

Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

71. A key difference from REF 2021 is that for the purpose of calculating Volume Measure, which is used to determine the number of outputs and ICSs for each UoA submission, REF 2029 no longer uses a single census date when staff lists are submitted. Instead, REF 2029 will capture information relating to staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI) directly from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) during the academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27. The Volume Measure will be calculated based on the percentage of a full-time equivalent year (CONFTE) of 'Research-Only' (Contract.ACEMPFUN 2) and 'Teaching and Research' (Contract.ACEMPFUN 3) contracts that have SRR and RI (see Ref 2029 Guidance, Section 3: Volume Measure, paras. 4.0.1 – 4.0.7).

72. A visual representation of procedures for determining staff eligibility for inclusion in the REF Volume Measure at Middlesex University is provided in Fig. 4 below.

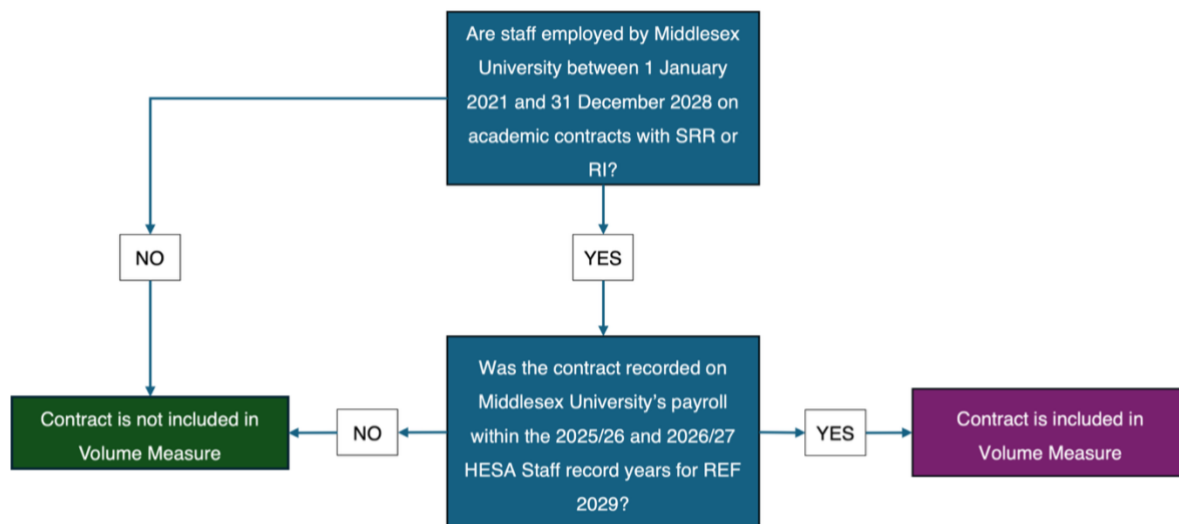


Fig. 4 Staff eligibility for REF 2029 Volume Measure

73. During the academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27 Middlesex University will be required to submit contractual data in three REF-specific HESA Fields:

- **Contract.CONFTE:** represents the percentage of a full-time equivalent year worked by staff on the contract
- **Contract.REFQUALCON:** identifies contracts eligible for the REF 2029 Volume Measure
- **Contract.REFUOA2029:** identifies the UoA associated with contracts contributing to the volume measure.

74. Middlesex University will be solely responsible for mapping CONFTE to UoAs for the purpose of determining REFUOA2029. This process will be led by the REF Manager in collaboration with the HR Head of Shared Service, Reporting and Systems, based on recommendations from UoA Working Groups and Faculty REF Committees, and overseen by the REF Steering Group. Each eligible contract will be linked to the UoA to which it is primarily associated (see REF 2029 Guidance, Section 3: Volume Measure, para. 12.1.1)

4.1 Policies and Procedures

Criteria and Evidence

75. Eligible staff who will be returned by Middlesex University for REF 2029 Volume Measure linked to specific UoAs will evidence ALL of the following criteria:

- Meet the criteria for SRR and RI
- Have an employment contract with Middlesex University of 0.2FTE or greater for at least 12 months continuous
- Have a substantive research connection with the submitting Unit.

76. An employment contract of 0.2FTE or greater for 12 months continuous constitutes an indicator of REF 2029 eligibility and demonstrates a substantive link to outputs (see CoP Part 5; REF 2029 Guidance, Section 4: Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU), para. 6.3.1).

77. At Middlesex, a 'substantive research connection with the submitting Unit' will be demonstrated through:

- Contractual alignment (e.g., where research responsibilities in job title/job description suggest a natural alignment with the UoA)
- Research fit (e.g., where research activity and outputs indicate an alignment with a UoA)
- Where applicable, previous REF alignment (e.g. UoAs to which staff were returned in RAE2001/ RAE2008/ REF2014/ REF2021).

Decision-Making and Communication

78. Identification of potential UoAs began in January 2025, under the leadership of the Provisional REF Steering Group, and will continue throughout the first half of 2026. The final confirmation of UoAs will be aligned with the schedule of the 2025-2026 HESA returns and made in accordance with the following criteria:

- Evidence of units' research strength and trajectory, as demonstrated through internal evaluations

- Compliance with REF requirements for Impact and Engagement (i.e. the ability to submit at least one impact case study)
- The strength and coherence of the unit's research culture as evidenced in the unit-level Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) narrative
- Alignment with the University's strategic priorities, institutional objectives, and longer-term research investment plans
- Assessment of administrative and operational implications, including resource requirements and the feasibility and sustainability associated with a UoA submission over the full REF cycle
- Consideration of equality and diversity impacts, to ensure that decisions do not result in disproportionate or unintended effects on staff.

79. Faculty REF Committees will have principal responsibility for determining how contracts in their respective schools and departments will be linked to UoAs. As Chairs of Faculty REF Committees, DDRKEs will send to each concerned staff an UoA allocation letter/email, outlining the proposed UoA and the rationale behind this decision. This rationale will consider key research strengths in the Unit, alignment with university strategic priorities, and the administrative implications of a UoA submission.

80. Following this, where requested, one-to-one meetings will be held between staff and UoA Working Groups to discuss the allocation and provide staff the opportunity to provide a case for being allocated to an alternative UoA. Following discussion, a brief report will be prepared by the UoA Coordinator, shared with the researcher, and submitted to the relevant Faculty REF Committee for consideration and approval. The Committee will consider cases for alternative UoA allocation and will make final decisions based on Unit, Faculty and University strategy, and compliance with REF requirements.

81. UoA contractual allocations will be reviewed annually to capture new hires, leavers, and other career changes.

4.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

82. The responsibilities of staff and committees, and the required training are the same as those described in Part 2, paras. 32-47.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

83. Core Area 3 of the EIA examines the processes used to allocate contracts to Units of Assessment. The primary purpose of this element of the EIA was to establish if:

- Discrimination may be inherent within Middlesex's procedures for allocating contracts to UoAs
- There is a positive inherent impact in one or more of the protected characteristics groups
- There is an opportunity to revise the procedure, which could result in a positive impact.

At this stage, it is not possible to draw meaningful conclusions, as decisions on UoA allocations have not yet been finalised and there is insufficient data at UoA level to enable a robust or reliable analysis. Decisions on the allocation of contracts to UoAs will be taken well in advance of the 2025-2026 HESA return, which will allow the University to generate UoA-level data to support assessment of any differential impacts on staff. This area will therefore remain subject to ongoing monitoring as allocation decisions are developed and implemented. Key actions will include undertaking a UoA-level EIA of contract allocations by protected characteristic, once the University's UoA portfolio for REF 2029 has been confirmed, and reviewing UoA allocations annually to account for new starters, leavers, and changes in career pathways.

Part 5: Selecting outputs

84. The over-riding principle that underpins our preparation for REF 2029 is that the University will select outputs adjudged to be of highest quality in terms of their Originality, Significance and Rigour. The University's single touchstone will be the quality of the outputs when judging what might be included in any final submission, subject to the requirement to submit a total number of outputs per UoA equivalent to 2.5 times the combined FTE of staff in the unit, rounded to the nearest whole number (see REF 2029 Guidance, Section 3: Volume Measure, para. 5.2.1). ICSs will be developed to demonstrate the Reach and Significance of each unit's work.

85. All outputs that will be included in the REF 2029 submission must:

- Fulfil the REF definition of research: '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 the same period
- Have a substantive link to Middlesex University
- Where applicable, be within scope and meet the requirements of the REF Open Access Policy (see Appendix F: Excerpt from the REF 2029 Open Access Policy).

86. A visual representation of procedures for determining output eligibility for inclusion in the REF submission at Middlesex University is provided in Fig. 5 below.

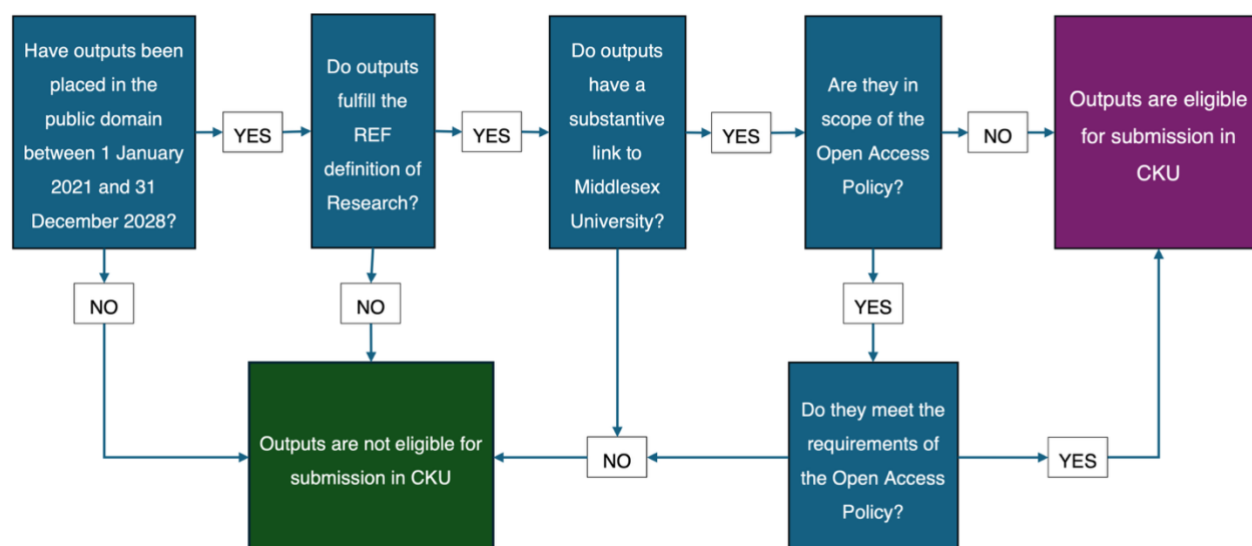


Fig. 5 Output eligibility for submission to REF 2029

5.1 Policies and Procedures

Identifying substantive link to outputs

87. A key change in REF 2029 is the complete decoupling of individual staff members and outputs. This effectively separates the contracts used to calculate the Volume Measure from the specific outputs selected for inclusion in the REF 2029 submission. This implies that: (1) eligible research outputs do not have to be authored by individuals whose contracts contribute to an institution's overall submission volume; (2) these outputs do not need to be submitted to the UoA associated with an author's volume-contributing contract. However, Middlesex University must be able to demonstrate a substantive link to any submitted output, which describes the relationship between the university and research (See REF 2029 Guidance, Section 4: Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU), paras. 3.1.1; 3.3.1-3.3.2).

88. At Middlesex University, a substantive link will be demonstrated through an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent). Eligible employment relationships will have to meet all of the following criteria:

- A minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment
- The role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity within the role of any staff member who undertakes, enables or supports research.
- This expectation is met through appointment to 'Teaching and Research' contracts AND 'Teaching and Research' pathways (signifying SRR); to 'Research-Only' contracts (with RI); or to any other contract type where the job description indicates an explicit expectation of research.

89. This means that outputs of all staff (full-time, part-time, fixed term, retired, etc.) who are or were employed on a 'Teaching and Research' academic contract AND a 'Teaching and Research' pathway (signifier of SRR), or on a 'Research-Only' contract with RI, with a minimum of 0.2 FTE, from Grade 7 and above, will be eligible for selection. Outputs of staff who are or were employed on other contract types, also at a minimum of 0.2 FTE (e.g., technicians, professional services staff), where the job description indicates an explicit expectation of research, will likewise be eligible. This includes outputs of staff who left the university through redundancy, severance, retirement or expiration of contracts, provided the following conditions are met:

- Their employment fulfilled REF's criteria for eligibility
- A substantive link between the University and their outputs can be demonstrated
- Where an author was subject to compulsory redundancy, only outputs made publicly available during their period of employment will be eligible (see REF 2029 Guidance, Section 4: Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU), para. 6.7.2).

90. An eligible employment relationship must have occurred either at the point at which the submitted output was first made publicly available or before the submitted output was first made publicly available, when the research resulting in the output was carried out, except in cases where authors were subject to redundancy, as outlined in para. 89.

91. The responsibility for identifying substantive links within a UoA's output pool rests with the UoA Working Groups, supported by the Research Information Manager, the HR Head of Shared Service, Reporting and Systems and the REF Operations Panel. The process to identify substantive links to outputs will involve systematic review of outputs, cross-referencing with authors' employment records, and documenting decisions for audit purposes. Identifications of substantive links will be signed off by the REF Steering Group before submission to REF 2029.

Exceptions

92. In exceptional circumstances, a UoA may propose for submission outputs that are sole-authored by individuals employed on contracts that do not include an explicit expectation of research activity (e.g., Teaching-only or Honorary Emeritus contracts). Such outputs will only be considered where there is clear and documented evidence that the University has provided substantive support to produce the output, for example through the allocation of time, funding, or other material research support. In these circumstances, the Chair of the UoA Working Group must submit a formal request to the relevant Faculty REF Committee, accompanied by evidence of institutional support. Faculty REF Committees will consider each request and make a recommendation to the REF Steering Group for approval. Where approval is granted, the REF Manager will seek final clearance from the REF Director prior to submission.

Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

93. The outputs of staff who left the University during the REF 2029 period but were formerly employed on eligible contracts will also be eligible for inclusion in the submission. This includes staff who left through compulsory redundancy, voluntary redundancy or severance, retirement, and expiration of fixed term contracts. These outputs must be publicly available on the University Repository and must have been placed in the public domain:

- While their authors were employed by the University on an eligible academic contract
- After their authors left the University, provided that the research leading to the output was carried out during their period of employment on an eligible academic contract, except in cases where authors left due to compulsory redundancy.

94. Evidence of a substantive link, as defined in paras. 88-90, between former staff and their outputs will be held by the REF Steering Group, drawing on information from HR records. A concise summary of this evidence, including period of continuous employment, FTE, and role descriptors, will be provided to the relevant UoA Working Groups to support decisions on the inclusion of outputs in the submission. All data will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.

95. If outputs produced by staff who have left the university are selected for submission, in line with procedures described in paras. 97-107, and provided these outputs are held in the University's Research Repository, UoA Working Group Chairs will normally attempt to inform the concerned authors in writing. To ensure transparency, former staff will be provided with clear information on how their outputs will be used in the REF, including internal assessment processes, submission procedures, and whom to contact for any queries or concerns.

96. Outputs from staff who have left the University will be assessed against the same quality criteria as those produced by current staff when considered for inclusion in the output pool.

Assigning outputs to UoAs

97. Once the University's UoA portfolio has been finalised (see Part 4, para. 78), research outputs will be allocated to UoAs based on their alignment with REF UoA descriptors. This will include consideration of fit with UoA subject areas, disciplines and sub-disciplines, methodological breadth, and types of outputs expected within each unit. Consideration will also be given to the coherence and balance of the overall UoA submission. Output allocation will be undertaken by the UoA Working Groups and will be conducted independently of the allocation of individual staff contracts to UoAs (see also para. 106).

98. If a proposed UoA does not go forward, outputs may be included for submission in another UoA, provided that they fall clearly within the scope of that UoA's descriptors.

99. The university will consider outputs that are interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary in nature, where this can be facilitated without unjustified complexity or administrative burden. Such outputs will normally be considered within the UoA where they make their primary intellectual contribution. To be eligible for cross-unit consideration, an output must align meaningfully with disciplinary scope defined by the descriptors of each relevant UoA. Where this condition is met, the UoA Working Group Chair will liaise with the relevant counterpart(s) in other UoAs to facilitate informed consideration of the output. Researchers should be aware that the same output may be evaluated differently across different UoAs.

Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

100. In previous REF cycles, Middlesex University has fully embraced the diversity of research output formats (see [REF 2021, Guidance on Submissions, Annex K](#)). In addition to traditional outputs such as authored books, book chapters, and journal articles, the University has submitted reports, physical artefacts, exhibitions, performances, compositions, and digital and visual media. Middlesex also supports the development of practice research outputs, which are frequently disseminated in non-traditional formats within the public domain. The University remains committed to enabling the submission of a wide and diverse range of outputs, provided they meet the REF definition of research and satisfy internal quality thresholds.

101. In REF-related all-staff meetings and internal communications, staff will be regularly reminded of the diverse forms that research can take. They will be encouraged to self-nominate outputs presented in non-traditional formats and will receive guidance and training (see Part 2, para. 47 and Table 1) in preparing these outputs for internal assessment.

102. The procedures described in paras. 103-107 apply to research outputs in both traditional and non-traditional formats. Inclusion in the final output pool will solely be determined by the quality (in REF terms) of the submitted output.

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

103. REF 2029 requires that each UoA submits a pool of outputs that equitably represents the unit's research strategies and structures and reflects the diversity of subject areas and research practices that are pursued within the UoA. UoA Working Groups will hold primary responsibility in meeting this requirement. In defining the research areas that constitute the scope of the UoA, UoA Working Groups will appreciate the disciplinary, methodological and structural specificities of the UoA, and that these may vary across the University's UoA submission portfolio. In some units, research areas may be constituted through the activity of established research groups and centres, while in others they may be articulated through thematic clusters or strategic areas of research focus. UoA Working Groups will be responsible for clearly defining and documenting these research areas.

104. Strategically, UoA Working Groups will prioritise their strongest outputs for submission. At the same time, they will ensure that through the final selection of outputs no research area is systematically overlooked or rendered invisible (see Fig. 6).

105. The selection of outputs and assignment to UoAs will be made primarily within UoAs, following a multi-tiered process, described in the following:

a) Current staff will be invited to provide a ranked list of outputs they consider appropriate for REF submission, based on REF quality criteria of Originality, Significance and Rigour. For each output, authors must include a brief narrative explaining and justifying their selection. All nominated outputs must have been placed in the University Research Repository and meet the Open Access eligibility criteria.

b) UoA Working Groups will review outputs, including current author narratives. The review will cover outputs from current staff as well as outputs from staff who left the University during the REF period.

c) UoA Working Group Chairs will co-ordinate an internal peer review process. To ensure a robust evaluation, each output will be assessed by at least two independent reviewers. Where there are significant differences in reviewers' scoring, UoA Working Group chairs will take appropriate action to adjudicate (e.g., through the use of an additional reviewer).

(d) UoA Working Groups will agree quality scores for each nominated output and rank them in order of quality, ensuring that they fit within the UoA descriptors and main Panel criteria, and that the units meet submission requirement of 2.5 x Total FTE.

(e) UoA Working Groups will calibrate the final selection of outputs, ensuring that each researcher submits a maximum of five outputs (unless a clear rationale is provided for submitting more) and that the UoA submission demonstrates output diversity and represents the breadth of the research undertaken within the unit.

106. A visual representation of the output selection process for REF purposes at Middlesex University is provided in Fig. 6:

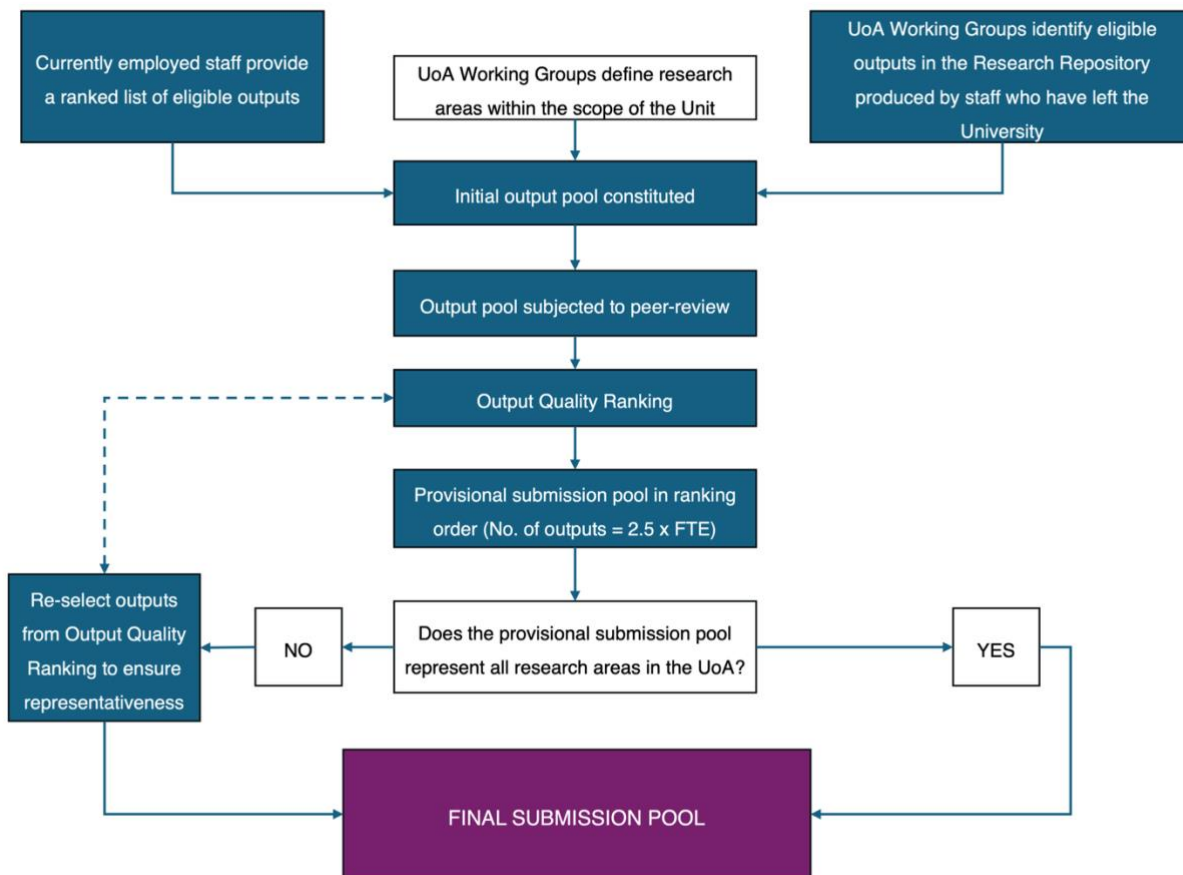


Fig. 6 Output selection processes for REF 2029 purposes at Middlesex University

107. A parallel process will be used for the selection of ICSs. UoA Working Groups will hold primary responsibility for identifying, evaluating and selecting the strongest ICSs for submission, ensuring alignment with REF 2029 criteria for Reach and Significance. Current staff will be invited to provide proposals for ICSs, and in parallel UoA Working Groups will identify potential ICSs from staff who left the university under the conditions described in paras. 93-96. UoA Working Groups will review ICS proposals and assess the robustness of their underpinning research and the strength of evidence of impact. The final ICS selection will reflect the unit's research profile and comply with the requirement to submit a number of ICSs commensurate with the unit's FTE volume.

Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

108. The processes and procedures outlined in paras. 103-107 are underpinned by the principle that qualitative peer review remains central to Middlesex University's assessment processes. All outputs from a unit's initial output pool will undergo internal evaluation and will be assessed by a minimum of two independent assessors to

ensure fairness, rigour, and consistency. This approach aligns with the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), of which Middlesex University is a signatory.

109. Middlesex University acknowledges disciplinary differences in research assessment and recognises that, in some fields, research metrics may play a supportive role. In UoAs where citation metrics are relevant (e.g., in establishing the significance or rigour of outputs) these metrics will be used with caution. Where applied, they will serve to inform expert judgment, not replace it. Citation metrics may be used to:

- Corroborate peer-review quality rankings of an output
- Support decisions concerning the final composition of a UoA's output pool, particularly in borderline cases where two or more outputs have received identical internal quality scores.

110. UoA Working Groups will be responsible for making these judgements, based on their area of expertise and knowledge of REF criteria. All UoA Working Group members will receive training (see para. 47 and Table 1) and will be guided and supported by the REF EDI Panel and the REF Steering Group.

Use of GenAI in the REF

111. Middlesex University recognises the increasing relevance of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) across the higher education sector and has established an AI Working Group, led by the Chief Operating Officer, to advise on the responsible integration of GenAI across teaching and learning, research, and knowledge exchange. In October 2025, the University adopted its [Use of Generative AI in Learning, Teaching and Assessment](#) Policy and is currently developing a complementary policy for research and knowledge exchange aligned with the Research and Knowledge Exchange strategy and its commitments under the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. For REF purposes, the University may use GenAI to support with administrative and preparatory tasks such as drafting narratives, analysing large datasets, and identifying potential gaps in evidence. All REF-related judgements and decisions, including the assessment of research quality and the final selection of outputs and ICSs, will remain the responsibility of human reviewers and decision-makers operating through the University's established REF governance structures. GenAI will not replace internal peer review, academic judgement, or formal institutional decision-making at either University or UoA level. This approach mitigates potential risks associated with GenAI, including inaccuracy, bias, lack of transparency, and over-reliance on automated systems and ensures that REF processes remain fair, accountable, transparent, and consistent with the University's commitments to research integrity.

Assessment and Selection of Outputs in Languages other than English

112. As a matter of principle, research outputs produced in languages other than English (including outputs in Welsh and British Sign Language) will be assessed against the same REF quality criteria as those produced in English when considered for inclusion in a UoA output pool. Where appropriate linguistic expertise exists within a UoA Working Group, such outputs will be peer-reviewed, assessed and quality-ranked internally, following procedures described in paras. 103-107. Where such expertise is not available, UoA Working Groups will make recommendations to REF Faculty Committees and REF Steering Group, which will identify and make use of appropriately qualified external assessors to support the fair and robust evaluation and ranking of these outputs. The identification of suitable expertise and assessment may be facilitated by short English-language abstracts (max. 100 words), retrieved where possible from the University Research Repository or provided by authors. Abstracts will not form part of the assessment but may assist in contextualising the work under review.

5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

113. The staff and committee responsibilities and the required training are the same as those described in Part 2, paras. 32-47.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

114. Core Area 4 of the EIA examined the processes used for the selection of outputs for the REF 2029 submission. The primary purpose of this element of the EIA was to establish if:

- Discrimination may be inherent within Middlesex's procedures for output selection
- There is a positive inherent impact in one or more of the protected characteristics groups
- There is an opportunity to revise the procedure, which could result in a positive impact.

As of February 2026, Middlesex University has not yet conducted a full institutional internal mock REF. Consequently, there is currently insufficient data to assess how output selection within each UoA may impact staff with protected characteristics. This remains a key area for ongoing monitoring as preparations for REF 2029 progress. Nevertheless, the EIA identifies a small number of potential risks, including: (1) Possible inequalities in access to authorship, which may affect who has outputs to contribute; (2) Potential over-reliance on quantitative metrics, which may disadvantage certain types of research outputs or disciplines; (3) Potential for selection processes to favour certain staff groups, whether intentionally or unintentionally; (4) Risks related to the recognition of outputs produced in recognised languages requiring specialist assessment.

The University's response to these risks is grounded in responsible research assessment, robust governance and active monitoring. Output evaluation will be based primarily on qualitative peer review in line with the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA; see paras. 108-111), supported by multiple independent assessors and the application of output limits to promote a balanced representation. A key action will be to conduct dedicated UoA-level Equality Impact Assessment following the first internal mock REF, focusing explicitly on output selection patterns and the representation of research activity across staff groups and disciplines. In addition, the Research Repository will be used to flag outputs produced in recognised languages, enabling early review and the identification of appropriate internal or external assessment expertise. Oversight of these processes will be provided by UoA Working Groups, Faculty REF Committees, the EDI Panel and the REF Steering Group, ensuring that output selection remains fair, equitable, transparent, and robust as REF preparations progress.

Part 6: Appendices

Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment

Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	REF 2029 Code of Practice
Council/department/project team	MDX REF Steering Group
Name(s) of those undertaking the Equality Analysis	REF EDI Panel
Aims and objectives of the activity	The EIA will consider the following four core areas of the REF Code of Practice: (1) Identification of Staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI) (2) Managing appeals processes (3) Allocating eligible contracts to Units of Assessment (4) Selecting outputs
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	1. Staff involved in the Implementation of the Code of Practice

	i) Academic Board ii) Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) iii) REF Steering Group iv) REF Operations Panel v) REF Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) Panel vi) REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Panel vii) Faculty REF Committees viii) UoA Working Groups ix) REF Appeals Committee x) Human Resources xi) University Executive Team (UET) 2. Staff directly affected by the Code of Practice i.e. those staff on REF-eligible academic contracts, typically 'Teaching and Research' and 'Research-Only'
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	3. Board of Governors
Is this a new or existing activity?	All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are required to develop, document and apply a REF Code of Practice (CoP) in accordance with the published guidance. In addition, each HEI must produce an accompanying Equality Impact Assessment for the procedures described in the CoP. This EIA has been prepared specifically to support the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice submission.
Who is responsible for approving it?	REF Steering Group
What data and consultation have you used?	The data used to evaluate Core Area 1 (Identification of staff with SRR and RI) assesses inclusion over the entire population of REF-eligible staff, typically staff on 'Teaching and Research' (ACEMPFUN 3) and 'Research-Only' (ACEMPFUN 2) academic contracts. The analysis will compare between volume-contributing and non-volume-contributing populations across these types of contracts. All data used in this analysis are derived from University HR records. As activity in Core Areas 2, 3 and 4 (Managing Appeals Processes; Allocating Contracts to Units of Assessment; and Selecting Outputs) has not yet commenced or has only recently begun, the data available at this stage are insufficient to support any meaningful conclusions in these areas. All-staff information sessions on the changes to REF 2029 were held during the final quarter of 2025. A draft REF CoP was approved by the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) in January 2026 and subsequently released for a month-long staff consultation, which ran from 28 January to 27 February 2026. During this period, all staff were invited to submit comments and propose amendments

	to the CoP via an online form accessible through the REF page on the University Intranet. The consultation also included engagement with a range of university stakeholders, including the recognised trade unions.
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CORE AREA 1: IDENTIFICATION OF STAFF WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESEARCH (SRR) AND RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE (RI)

Summary of Criteria and Decision-Making Processes (as described in the REF CoP, Section 2 paras. 24-31 and Section 3 paras. 59-66)

At Middlesex staff have SRR if they are on a 'Teaching and Research' academic contract AND 'Teaching and Research' pathway from Grade 7 and above. Academic staff on 'Teaching and Research' academic contracts AND 'Teaching and Professional Practice' pathway as well as staff below Grade 7 on the 'Teaching and Research' pathway may support research, but do not have SRR.

Contracts of all staff who (1) satisfy criteria for SRR and (2) are on the payroll of Middlesex University in the academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27 in at least a 0.2 FTE contract are considered eligible for inclusion in the REF 2029 Volume Measure.

All staff who have SRR are considered independent researchers (RI). Staff who are receiving active supervision for their research (e.g., PhD research), either at Middlesex University or another HEI, are not regarded as self-directed, independent researchers according to the REF definition. However, candidates undertaking a research degree by Public Works mode will necessarily, as part of their admission requirements, have completed a significant body of prior independent research, and will be deemed independent researchers and considered REF-eligible.

In determining RI status for staff on 'Research-Only' contracts (e.g., Research Fellow, Senior Research Fellow, at Grades 7 and 8), the University aligns closely with REF guidelines and applies indicators of independence recognised as appropriate by all main panels. These include:

- Currently leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project
- Currently holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement (see Appendix E: List of Research Fellowships demonstrating research independence for REF 2029 Volume Measure)
- Currently leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package in a funded research project
- Where research independence is an inherent expectation of a contract
- For UoAs 13-34 this may also include:
 - 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

Staff on 'Research-Only' contracts who (1) satisfy criteria for RI and (2) are on the payroll of Middlesex University in the academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27 in at least a 0.2 FTE contract are considered eligible for inclusion in the REF 2029 Volume Measure.

Starting with the academic year 2024-2025 the University has aligned staff data integrity checks of contractual pathways with statutory HESA staff returns, which included the new REF-specific fields introduced to support the REF 2029 submission. These checks ensure accurate identification of staff with SRR and RI for the purposes of REF 2029. SRR and RI status is confirmed each year through the annual appraisal process. For the purposes of REF 2029, formal written confirmation will be sent by email to all eligible staff by the 10 July 2026.

Impact analysis of processes used for identification of staff with SRR/RI in relation to protected characteristics

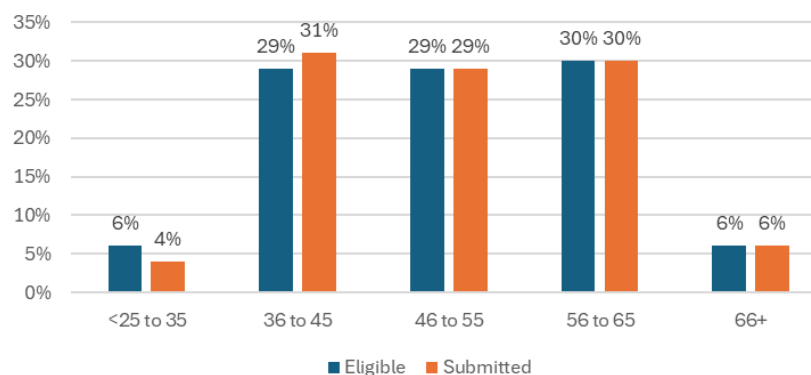
Note: The dataset reflects headcount (not FTE) valid as of 22 January 2026 and covers the following characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Sex

Data relating to Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Religion or Belief, and Sexual Orientation are available but have not been analysed due to sensitivity, confidentiality, and the potential risk of individual identification. Data on Pregnancy and Maternity is not available on the dataset.

Protected Characteristic	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit (Blank if there is no impact or unknown)	Negative impact (Blank if there is no impact or unknown)	Please explain the impact or why there is no impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible). Detail how you plan to measure the relevant outcomes and outputs of your activity.
Age	☐	☐	Significant Responsibility for Research - Anticipated submitted staff based on workload data only	No significant adverse impact has been identified. The proportion of submissions from staff aged under 25 to 35 (33%) is notably lower and may suggest a

Age Profile of Eligible Staff vs Age Profile of Submitted Staff

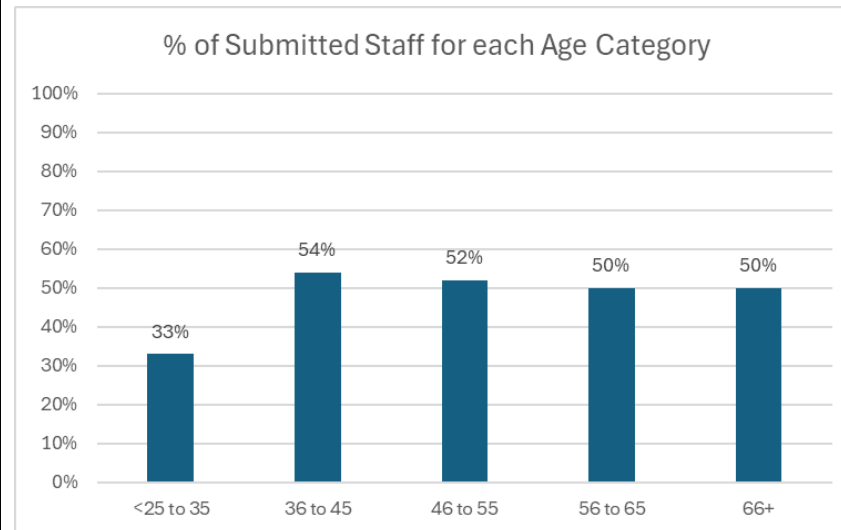


Age	Eligible Headcount	Eligible%	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %
<25 to 35	30	6%	10	4%
36 to 45	157	29%	85	31%
46 to 55	157	29%	81	29%
56 to 65	165	30%	83	30%
66+	34	6%	17	6%
Total	543	100%	276	100%

disproportionate impact on younger staff. Further analysis against a complete dataset is required to determine whether this constitutes a statistically significant adverse impact.

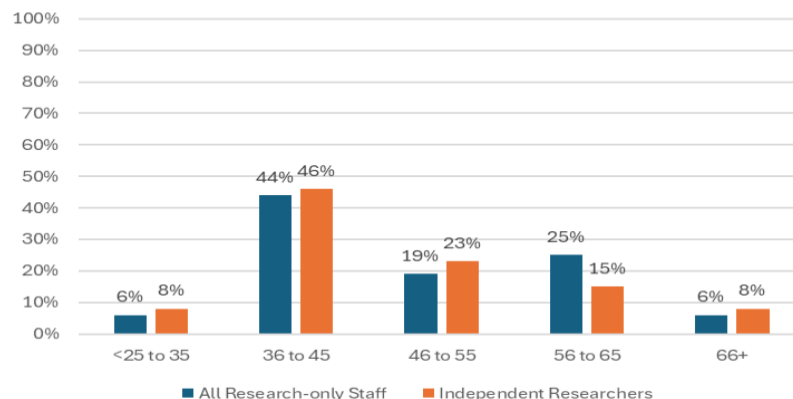
The largest percentage of staff who would be submitted to the REF Volume Measure are between age 36 to 65. The overall profile of staff to be submitted broadly aligns with the age profile of eligible staff.

Reviewing each age band shows that broadly half (50%) of staff who will be submitted to the Volume Measure fall within the age band of 36 to 66+. By comparison, only 33% of staff between <25 and 35 would be submitted to the Volume Measure. This lower level of representation may indicate a potential adverse impact for younger staff; however, as the dataset is incomplete, no definitive conclusions can be drawn at this stage.

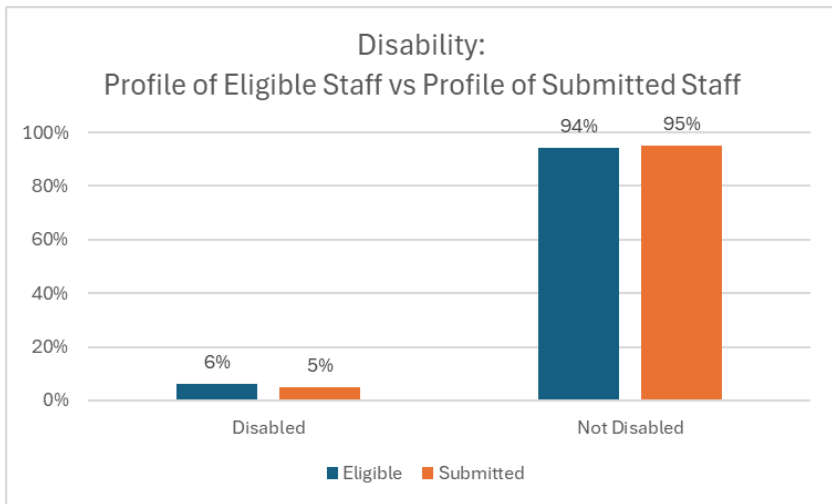


			33% of the eligible staff aged <25 to 35 would be submitted to the Volume Measure 54% of the eligible staff aged 36 to 45 would be submitted to the Volume Measure 52% of the eligible staff aged 46 to 55 would be submitted to the Volume Measure 50% of the eligible staff aged 56 to 65 would be submitted to the Volume Measure 50% of the eligible staff aged 66+ would be submitted to the Volume Measure Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only contracts as independent	
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Age Profile of All Research-only Staff vs Age Profile of Independent Researchers

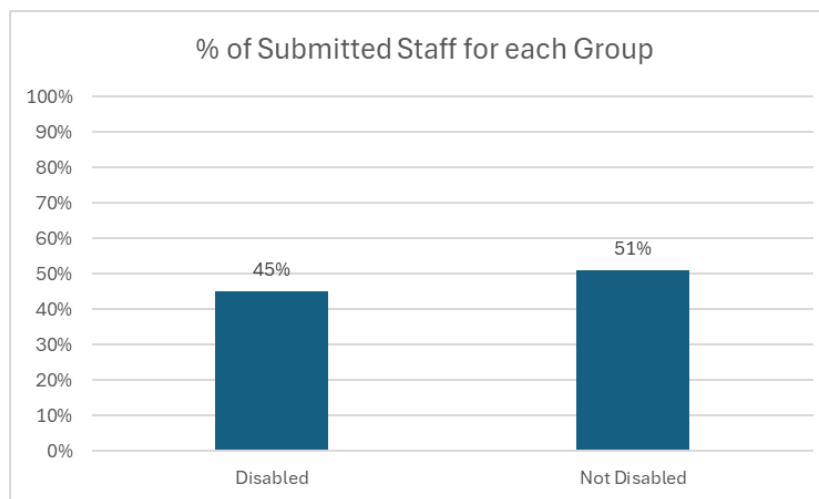


Age	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
<25 to 35	1	6%	1	8%
36 to 45	7	44%	6	46%
46 to 55	3	19%	3	23%
56 to 65	4	25%	2	15%

			<table><tr><td>66+</td><td>1</td><td>6%</td><td>1</td><td>8%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>16</td><td>100%</td><td>13</td><td>100%</td></tr></table> The impact of applying the criteria is that 16 staff will be eligible, and 13 would be submitted to the Volume Measure. The figures are too low to draw any conclusions on impact.	66+	1	6%	1	8%	Total	16	100%	13	100%	
66+	1	6%	1	8%										
Total	16	100%	13	100%										
Disability	☐	☐	Significant Responsibility for Research – Anticipated submitted staff based on workload data only Disability: Profile of Eligible Staff vs Profile of Submitted Staff <table><thead><tr><th>Category</th><th>Eligible (%)</th><th>Submitted (%)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Disabled</td><td>6%</td><td>5%</td></tr><tr><td>Not Disabled</td><td>94%</td><td>95%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Category	Eligible (%)	Submitted (%)	Disabled	6%	5%	Not Disabled	94%	95%	No adverse impact has been identified.	
Category	Eligible (%)	Submitted (%)												
Disabled	6%	5%												
Not Disabled	94%	95%												

Disability Group	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %
Disabled	31	6%	14	5%
Not Disabled	512	94%	262	95%
Total	543	100%	276	100%

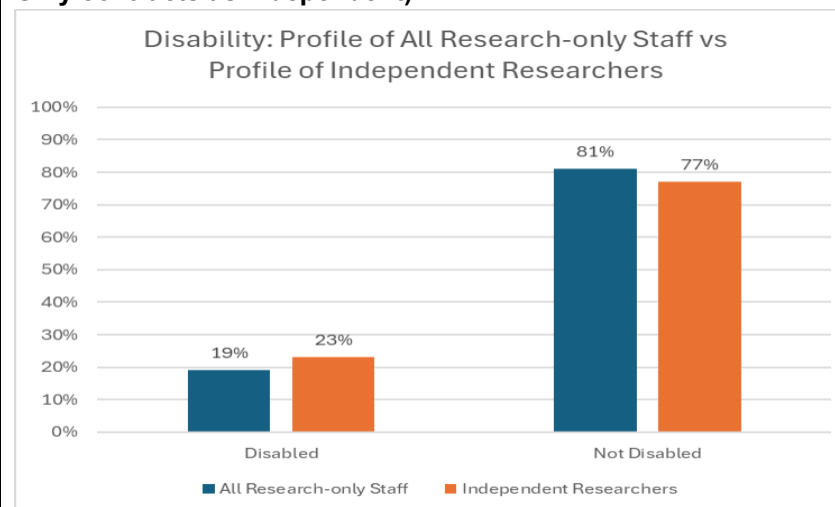
6% of the eligible staff consider themselves disabled compared to 94% staff who have declared themselves as 'Not Disabled'.



45% of the eligible staff who have declared a disability would be submitted to the Volume Measure

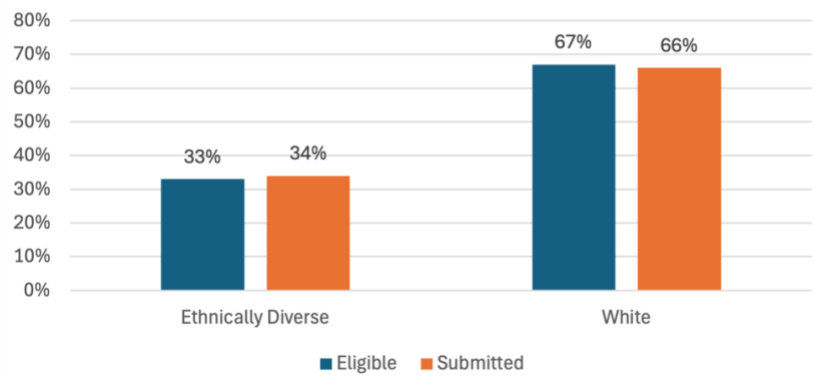
51% of the eligible staff who have not declared a disability would be submitted to the Volume Measure

Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only contracts as independent)

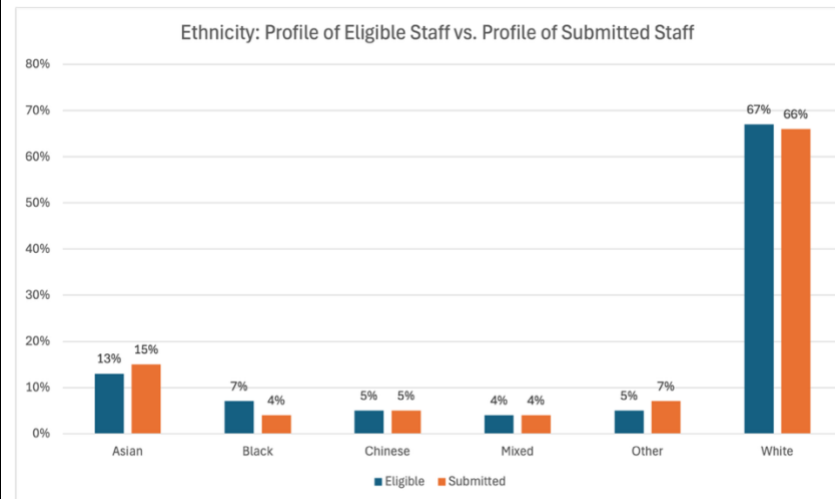


Disability Group	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
Disabled	3	19%	3	23%

			<table> <tr> <td>Not Disabled</td><td>13</td><td>81%</td><td>10</td><td>77%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td>16</td><td>100%</td><td>13</td><td>100%</td></tr> </table> When applying this criterion, no significant impact is identified because the numbers are too low (positive impact for staff who have declared a disability).	Not Disabled	13	81%	10	77%	Total	16	100%	13	100%	
Not Disabled	13	81%	10	77%										
Total	16	100%	13	100%										
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☐	N/A - not analysed due to sensitivity, confidentiality, and the potential risk of individual identification.	N/A										
Marriage or civil partnership	☐	☐	N/A - not analysed due to sensitivity, confidentiality, and the potential risk of individual identification.	N/A										
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☐	N/A - not analysed due to sensitivity, confidentiality, and the potential risk of individual identification.	N/A										
Race	☐	☒	Significant Responsibility for Research – Anticipated submission of staff based on workload data only	No significant adverse impact identified with Ethnically diverse vs White staff. However, further analysis shows that Black staff may experience a disproportionate adverse impact.										

			Ethnicity: Profile of Eligible Staff vs Profile of Submitted Staff  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethnicity Group</th> <th>Eligible Headcount</th> <th>Eligible %</th> <th>Submitted Headcount</th> <th>Submitted %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Ethnically Diverse</td> <td>180</td> <td>33%</td> <td>95</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White</td> <td>363</td> <td>67%</td> <td>181</td> <td>66%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>543</td> <td>100%</td> <td>276</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> As per the above chart and table, there appears to be no significant impact on Ethnically diverse staff. Ethnically diverse staff are not negatively impacted.	Ethnicity Group	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %	Ethnically Diverse	180	33%	95	34%	White	363	67%	181	66%	Total	543	100%	276	100%	Additional faculty-level analysis suggests that this disparity is primarily associated with the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education. Mitigation needs to be taken into consideration to ensure staff from the Black ethnic category are afforded equitable opportunity and due consideration in REF-related processes. Positive impact shown for Asian and Other category staff. Disparity is shown when applying the Research Independence criteria – however, the
Ethnicity Group	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %																				
Ethnically Diverse	180	33%	95	34%																				
White	363	67%	181	66%																				
Total	543	100%	276	100%																				

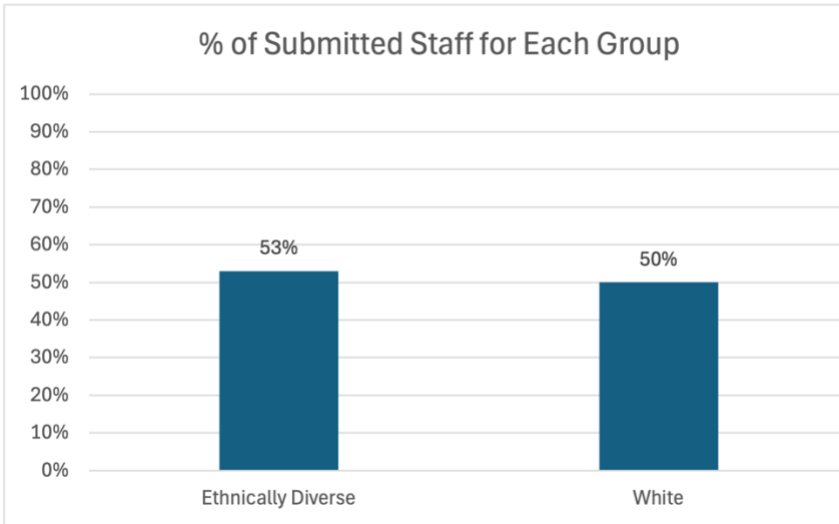
However, further disaggregation reveals that Black staff would be impacted negatively:



Ethnicity Group	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %
Asian	68	13%	42	15%
Black	38	7%	10	4%
Chinese	26	5%	14	5%
Mixed	20	4%	11	4%
Other	28	5%	18	7%
White	363	67%	181	66%
Total	543	100%	276	100%

numbers are very low to draw any meaningful conclusion.

Note: incomplete dataset, this will be reviewed throughout the REF 2029 process.

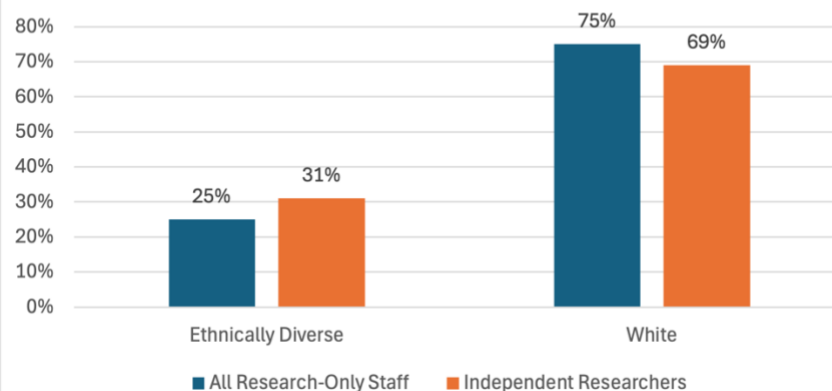
			<i>*Percentages have been rounded up</i> Reviewing the ethnicity group, it shows that 53% of staff from the Ethnically diverse category would be submitted to the Volume Measure compared to 50% from the White group.  53% of the eligible Ethnically diverse staff would be submitted to the Volume Measure 50% of the eligible White staff would be submitted to the Volume Measure	
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			% of Submitted Staff for each Group <table><thead><tr><th>Group</th><th>% of Submitted Staff</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Asian</td><td>62%</td></tr><tr><td>Black</td><td>26%</td></tr><tr><td>Chinese</td><td>54%</td></tr><tr><td>Mixed</td><td>55%</td></tr><tr><td>Other</td><td>64%</td></tr><tr><td>White</td><td>50%</td></tr></tbody></table> 62% of eligible staff in the Asian category would be submitted to the Volume Measure 26% of eligible staff in the Black category would be submitted to the Volume Measure 54% of eligible staff in the Chinese category would be submitted to the Volume Measure 55% of eligible staff in the Mixed category would be submitted to the Volume Measure	Group	% of Submitted Staff	Asian	62%	Black	26%	Chinese	54%	Mixed	55%	Other	64%	White	50%	
Group	% of Submitted Staff																	
Asian	62%																	
Black	26%																	
Chinese	54%																	
Mixed	55%																	
Other	64%																	
White	50%																	

		64% of eligible staff in the Other category would be submitted to the Volume Measure 50% of eligible staff in the White category would be submitted to the Volume Measure Further disaggregation of the data for Black staff by faculty highlights marked differences in representation. Ethnicity (Black Staff): Eligible vs Submitted Staff by Faculty <table><thead><tr><th>Faculty</th><th>% of Total Eligible</th><th>% of Total Submitted</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>ACI</td><td>3%</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>BAL</td><td>18%</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>HSCE</td><td>45%</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>S&T</td><td>34%</td><td>80%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Faculty	% of Total Eligible	% of Total Submitted	ACI	3%	0%	BAL	18%	10%	HSCE	45%	10%	S&T	34%	80%	
Faculty	% of Total Eligible	% of Total Submitted																
ACI	3%	0%																
BAL	18%	10%																
HSCE	45%	10%																
S&T	34%	80%																
		The Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education accounts for 45% of all Black staff on Teaching and Research academic contracts; however, only 10% of Black staff included in the REF volume-contributing population are drawn from this faculty. By contrast,																

		the Faculty of Science and Technology comprises 34% of the overall Black staff population on Teaching and Research contracts, yet accounts for 80% of Black staff identified as having Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and included in the Volume Measure. <table><tr><th>Faculty</th><th>Eligible Headcount</th><th>Eligible %</th><th>Submitted Headcount</th><th>Submitted %</th></tr><tr><td>Arts and Creative Industries (ACI)</td><td>1</td><td>3%</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>Business and Law (BAL)</td><td>7</td><td>18%</td><td>1</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>Health, Social Care and Education (HSCE)</td><td>17</td><td>45%</td><td>1</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>Science and Technology (S&T)</td><td>13</td><td>34%</td><td>8</td><td>80%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>38</td><td>100%</td><td>10</td><td>100%</td></tr></table> Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only contracts as independent)	Faculty	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %	Arts and Creative Industries (ACI)	1	3%	0	0%	Business and Law (BAL)	7	18%	1	10%	Health, Social Care and Education (HSCE)	17	45%	1	10%	Science and Technology (S&T)	13	34%	8	80%	Total	38	100%	10	100%	
Faculty	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %																													
Arts and Creative Industries (ACI)	1	3%	0	0%																													
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Science and Technology (S&T)	13	34%	8	80%																													
Total	38	100%	10	100%																													

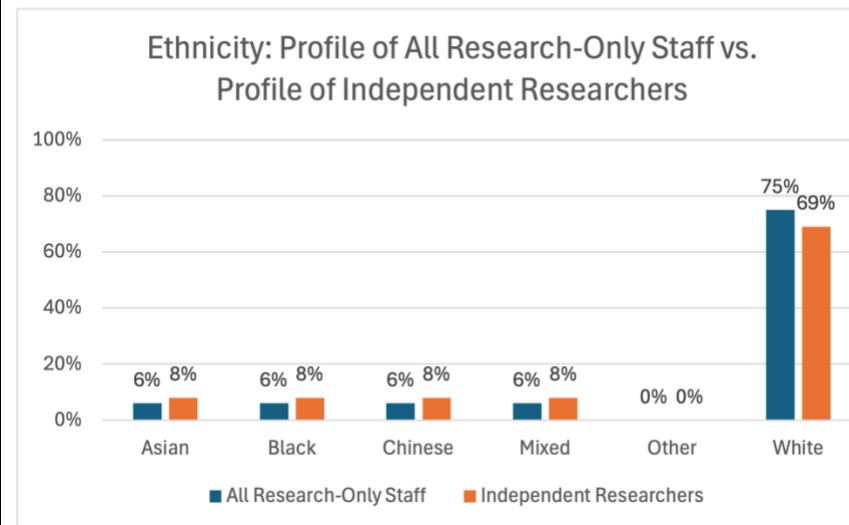
Ethnicity: Profile of All Research-Only Staff vs. Profile of Independent Researchers



Ethnicity Group	All Research - Only Staff Headcount	All Research - Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
Ethnically Diverse	4	25%	4	31%
White	12	75%	9	69%
Total	16	100%	13	100%

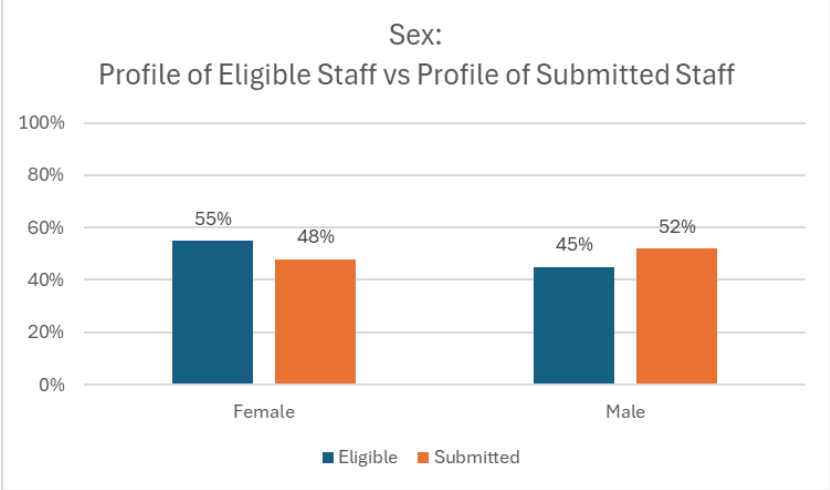
Although the numbers are very low, there appears to be a difference when applying this criterion as noted in the above chart/table. All

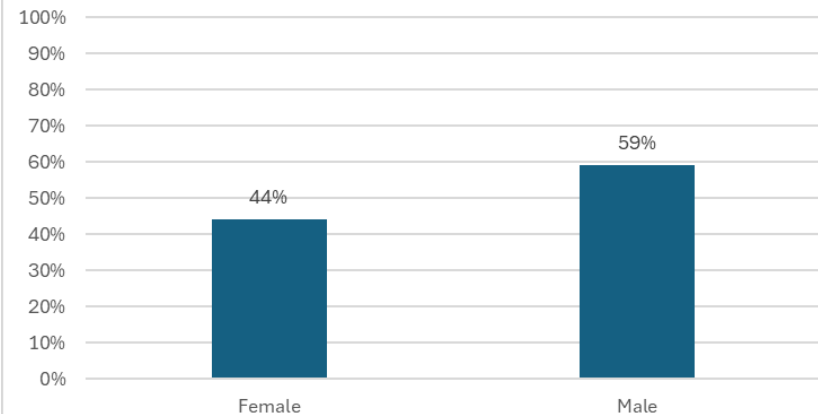
eligible Ethnically diverse staff would be submitted compared White staff.

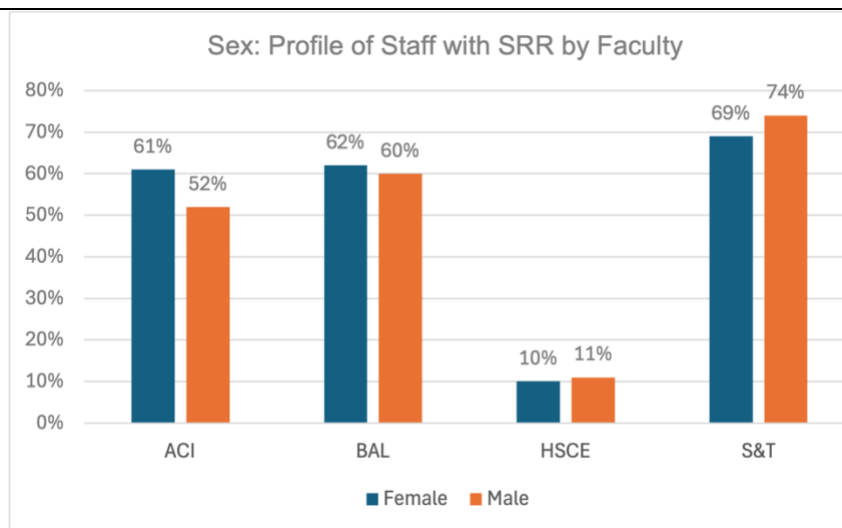


Ethnicity Group	All Research – Only Staff Headcount	All Research – Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
Asian	1	6%	1	8%
Black	1	6%	1	8%
Chinese	1	6%	1	8%
Mixed	1	6%	1	8%

			<table> <tr> <td>Other</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr> <td>White</td><td>12</td><td>75%</td><td>9</td><td>69%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td>16</td><td>100%</td><td>13</td><td>100%</td></tr> </table> Further analysis of ethnicity (by applying this criterion to Research Independence), shows no significant adverse impact.	Other	0	0%	0	0%	White	12	75%	9	69%	Total	16	100%	13	100%	
Other	0	0%	0	0%															
White	12	75%	9	69%															
Total	16	100%	13	100%															
Religion or belief	☐	☐	N/A - not analysed due to sensitivity, confidentiality, and the potential risk of individual identification.	N/A															
Sexual orientation	☐	☐	N/A - not analysed due to sensitivity, confidentiality, and the potential risk of individual identification.	N/A															
Sex	☐	☐	Significant Responsibility for Research – Anticipated submitted staff based on workload data only	A potential review of academic staff with SRR who qualify for REF submission, to eliminate disparities and put measures in place to ensure female staff are not disadvantaged.															

			Sex: Profile of Eligible Staff vs Profile of Submitted Staff  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sex</th> <th>Eligible Headcount</th> <th>Eligible %</th> <th>Submitted Headcount</th> <th>Submitted %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>299</td> <td>55%</td> <td>133</td> <td>48%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>244</td> <td>45%</td> <td>143</td> <td>52%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>543</td> <td>100%</td> <td>276</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 55% of the eligible staff are Female compared to 45% staff who are male. The dataset indicates that 44% of female staff would be submitted compared to 59% of male staff (below chart). This differential may indicate a potential adverse impact on female staff.	Sex	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %	Female	299	55%	133	48%	Male	244	45%	143	52%	Total	543	100%	276	100%	Aggregated data indicate a potential adverse impact on female staff when assessed at institutional level. However, disaggregated analysis shows that this apparent disparity is largely attributable to the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education. This faculty has a historically high proportion of female staff, many of whom are engaged primarily in professional practice, which is reflected in lower representation within
Sex	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %																				
Female	299	55%	133	48%																				
Male	244	45%	143	52%																				
Total	543	100%	276	100%																				

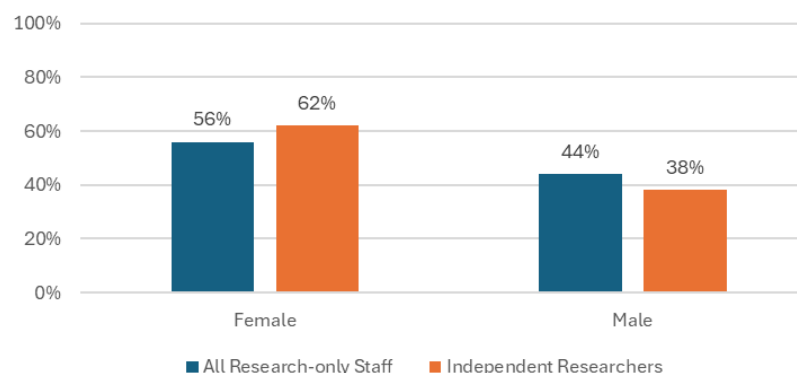
			% of Submitted Staff for each Group <table><thead><tr><th>Group</th><th>% of Submitted Staff</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Female</td><td>44%</td></tr><tr><td>Male</td><td>59%</td></tr></tbody></table> 44% of eligible staff who are female would be submitted to the Volume Measure 59% of eligible staff who are male would be submitted to the Volume Measure Further disaggregation of the data, taking into account the proportion of eligible staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) included in the Volume Measure at faculty level, clarifies the source of these disparities.	Group	% of Submitted Staff	Female	44%	Male	59%	the REF volume contributing population. Note: incomplete dataset, this will be reviewed throughout the REF 2029 process.
Group	% of Submitted Staff									
Female	44%									
Male	59%									



A positive impact for female staff is observed within the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries (+9% females), alongside their under-representation within the Faculty of Science and Technology (-5% females). The apparent potential adverse impact on female staff at institutional level is largely attributable to the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, where 10% of eligible female staff are identified as having SRR and are included in the Volume Measure, mirroring the proportion of eligible male staff (also 11%) included within this faculty.

			Faculty	Eligible Female (Headcount)	Eligible Male (Headcount)	Submitted Female (Headcount)	Submitted Male (Headcount)	
			ACI	31	42	19	22	
			BAL	82	78	51	47	
			HSCE	104	27	10	3	
			S&T	74	95	51	70	
			Unaffiliated	8	2	2	1	
			Total	299	244	133	143	
			Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only contracts as independent)					

Sex: Profile of All Research-only Staff vs Profile of Independent Researchers



Sex	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
Female	9	56%	8	62%
Male	7	44%	5	38%
Total	16	100%	13	100%

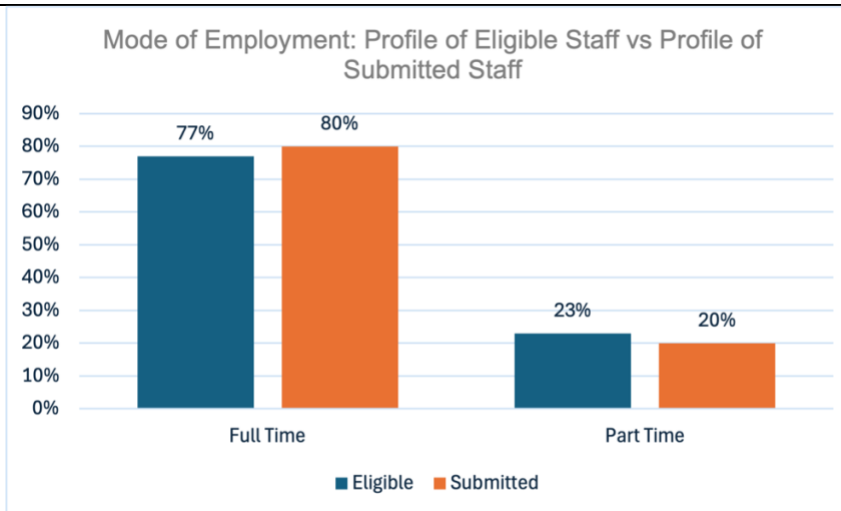
The impact of applying the criteria shows that only 13 staff would be submitted – no significant adverse impact identified (numbers are too low to draw any conclusions).

Impact analysis of processes used for identification of staff with SRR/RI in relation to additional characteristics

In addition to the protected characteristics, we have also considered:

- Mode of Employment (Part-time or full-time)
- Occupancy (permanent or fixed-term contracts)
- Nationality

Additional Characteristics	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit (Blank if there is no impact or unknown)	Negative impact (Blank if there is no impact or unknown)	Please explain the impact or why there is no impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible).
Mode of Employment (Part-time or full-time)	☒	☐	Significant Responsibility for Research – Anticipated submitted staff based on workload data only	No significant adverse impact identified. A potential review of academic staff with SRR who

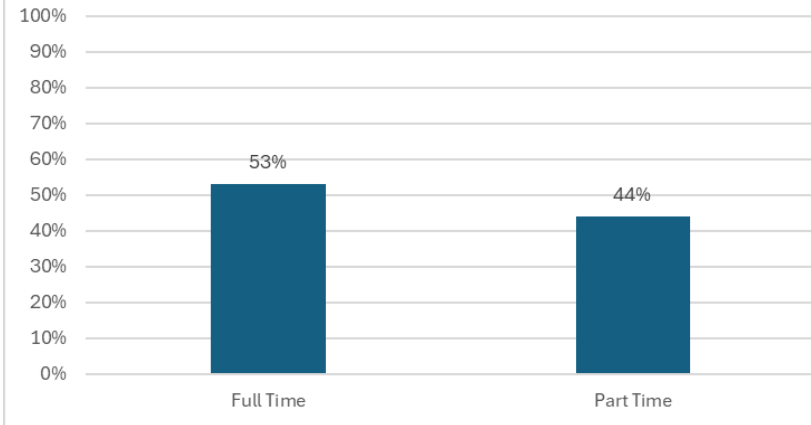


Mode of Employment	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %
Full Time	420	77%	222	80%
Part Time	123	23%	54	20%
Total	543	100%	276	100%

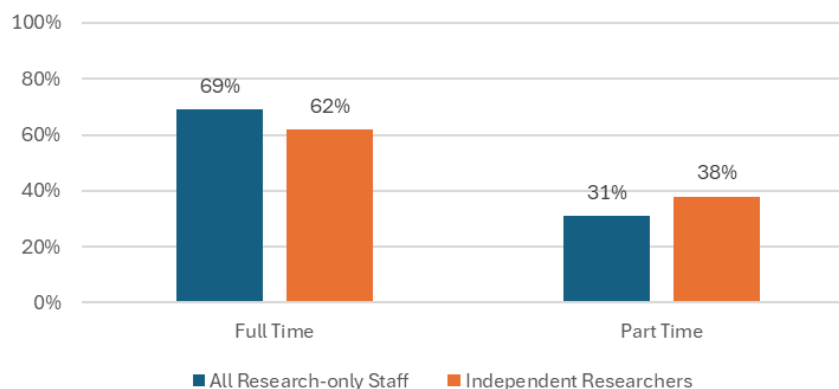
77% of eligible staff work full-time and 23% work part-time. While this broadly aligns with the distribution, part-time staff are proportionally less represented in submissions, which may indicate a potential differential impact.

qualify for REF submission, to eliminate disparities and put measures in place to ensure part-time staff are not disadvantaged.

Note: incomplete dataset, this will be reviewed throughout the REF 2029 process.

			% of Submitted Staff for each Group <table><thead><tr><th>Group</th><th>% of Submitted Staff</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Full Time</td><td>53%</td></tr><tr><td>Part Time</td><td>44%</td></tr></tbody></table> 53% of eligible staff who work full-time would be submitted to the Volume Measure 44% of eligible staff who work part-time would be submitted to the Volume Measure Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only contracts as independent)	Group	% of Submitted Staff	Full Time	53%	Part Time	44%	
Group	% of Submitted Staff									
Full Time	53%									
Part Time	44%									

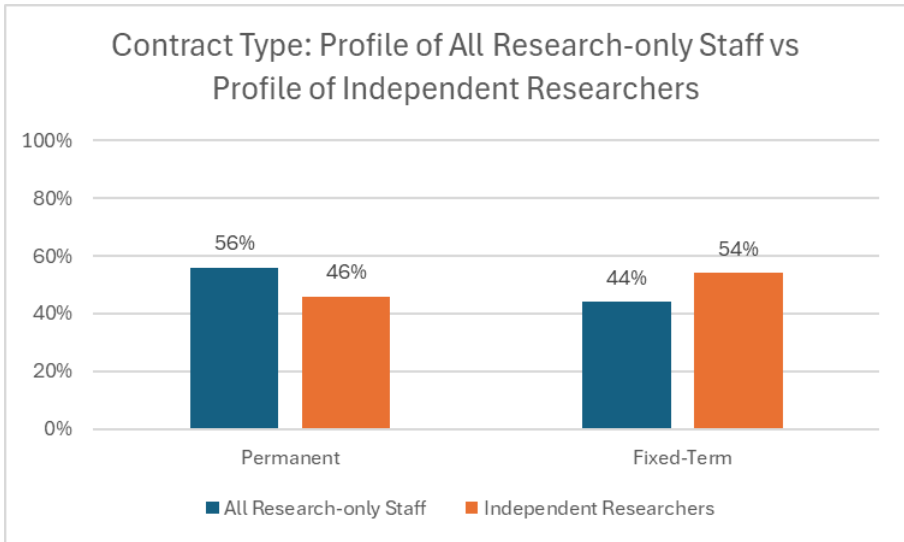
Mode of Employment: Profile of All Research-only Staff vs Profile of Independent Researchers



Mode of Employment	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
Full Time	11	69%	8	62%
Part Time	5	31%	5	38%
Total	16	100%	13	100%

			The impact of applying the criteria is that only 13 staff would be submitted. The data suggest that there is no negative impact on those who work part time (numbers are too low to make any inference).																														
Occupancy (permanent or fixed term contracts)	☐	☒	Significant Responsibility for Research – Anticipated submitted staff based on workload data only Contract Type: Profile of Eligible Staff vs Profile of Submitted Staff <table><thead><tr><th>Contract Type</th><th>Eligible %</th><th>Submitted %</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Permanent</td><td>93%</td><td>97%</td></tr><tr><td>Fixed-Term</td><td>7%</td><td>3%</td></tr></tbody></table> <table><thead><tr><th>Contract Type</th><th>Eligible Headcount</th><th>Eligible %</th><th>Submitted Headcount</th><th>Submitted %</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Permanent</td><td>506</td><td>93%</td><td>268</td><td>97%</td></tr><tr><td>Fixed-Term</td><td>37</td><td>7%</td><td>8</td><td>3%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>543</td><td>100%</td><td>276</td><td>100%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Contract Type	Eligible %	Submitted %	Permanent	93%	97%	Fixed-Term	7%	3%	Contract Type	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %	Permanent	506	93%	268	97%	Fixed-Term	37	7%	8	3%	Total	543	100%	276	100%	The data demonstrates a substantial differential by contract type, with permanent staff significantly more likely to be submitted than fixed-term staff (53% compared with 22%), which may warrant further review. Note: incomplete dataset, this will
Contract Type	Eligible %	Submitted %																															
Permanent	93%	97%																															
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Contract Type	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %																													
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Total	543	100%	276	100%																													

		93% of eligible staff are employed on permanent contracts and 7% are on fixed-term contracts. The above chart/table shows permanent staff would be slightly overrepresented for submission. This indicates a disproportionate differential by contract type, with fixed-term staff significantly less likely to be submitted. % of Submitted Staff for each Group <table><tr><th>Contract Type</th><th>% of Submitted Staff</th></tr><tr><td>Permanent</td><td>53%</td></tr><tr><td>Fixed-Term</td><td>22%</td></tr></table> The data indicates a significant difference in submission rates by contract type, with permanent staff more than twice as likely to be submitted compared to fixed-term staff (53% vs 22%). 53% of eligible staff on permanent contacts would be submitted to the Volume Measure	Contract Type	% of Submitted Staff	Permanent	53%	Fixed-Term	22%	be reviewed throughout the REF 2029 process.
Contract Type	% of Submitted Staff								
Permanent	53%								
Fixed-Term	22%								

			22% of eligible staff on fixed-term contracts would be submitted to the Volume Measure Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only contracts as independent) Contract Type: Profile of All Research-only Staff vs Profile of Independent Researchers <table><thead><tr><th>Contract Type</th><th>All Research-only Staff</th><th>Independent Researchers</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Permanent</td><td>56%</td><td>46%</td></tr><tr><td>Fixed-Term</td><td>44%</td><td>54%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Contract Type	All Research-only Staff	Independent Researchers	Permanent	56%	46%	Fixed-Term	44%	54%	
Contract Type	All Research-only Staff	Independent Researchers											
Permanent	56%	46%											
Fixed-Term	44%	54%											

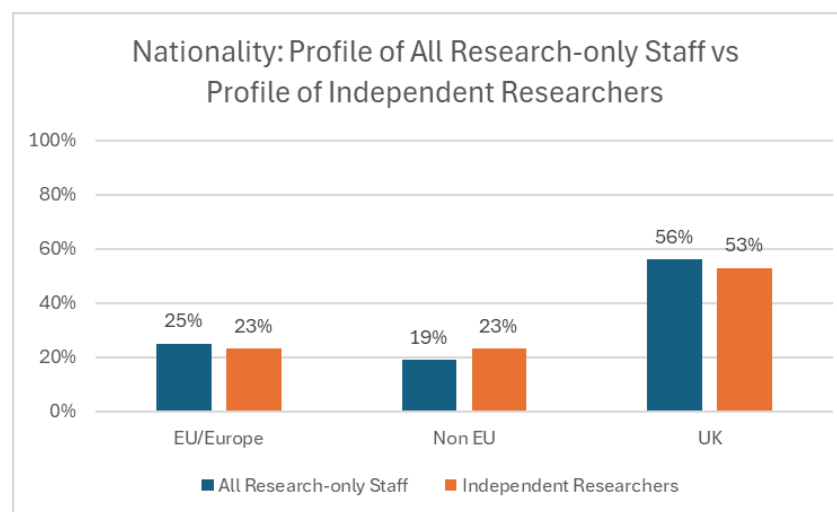
			<table> <tr> <th>Contract Type</th><th>All Research-Only Staff Headcount</th><th>All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible</th><th>Independent Researchers Headcount</th><th>Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted</th></tr> <tr> <td>Permanent</td><td>9</td><td>56%</td><td>6</td><td>46%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Fixed-Term</td><td>7</td><td>44%</td><td>7</td><td>54%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td>16</td><td>100%</td><td>13</td><td>100%</td></tr> </table> The impact of applying the criteria is that only 13 staff would be submitted to the Volume Measure. Given the small sample size, the data is insufficient to determine whether there is a statistically significant impact.	Contract Type	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted	Permanent	9	56%	6	46%	Fixed-Term	7	44%	7	54%	Total	16	100%	13	100%	
Contract Type	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted																				
Permanent	9	56%	6	46%																				
Fixed-Term	7	44%	7	54%																				
Total	16	100%	13	100%																				
Nationality	☒	☐	Significant Responsibility for Research – Anticipated submitted staff based on workload data only	Staff submission rates show differences by nationality, positively impacting staff from EU/Europe and Non-EU																				

		Nationality: Profile of Eligible Staff vs Profile of Submitted Staff <table><thead><tr><th>Nationality</th><th>Eligible %</th><th>Submitted %</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>EU/Europe</td><td>18%</td><td>23%</td></tr><tr><td>Non EU</td><td>16%</td><td>24%</td></tr><tr><td>UK</td><td>66%</td><td>53%</td></tr></tbody></table> <table><thead><tr><th>Nationality</th><th>Eligible Headcount</th><th>Eligible %</th><th>Submitted Headcount</th><th>Submitted %</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>EU/Europe</td><td>101</td><td>18%</td><td>64</td><td>23%</td></tr><tr><td>Non EU</td><td>86</td><td>16%</td><td>66</td><td>24%</td></tr><tr><td>UK</td><td>356</td><td>66%</td><td>146</td><td>53%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>543</td><td>100%</td><td>276</td><td>100%</td></tr></tbody></table> Based on the data analysis, 18% of eligible staff are EU/European nationals, 16% are non-EU nationals, and 66% are UK nationals. The chart shows that while UK staff make up the majority of eligible staff (66%), they are	Nationality	Eligible %	Submitted %	EU/Europe	18%	23%	Non EU	16%	24%	UK	66%	53%	Nationality	Eligible Headcount	Eligible %	Submitted Headcount	Submitted %	EU/Europe	101	18%	64	23%	Non EU	86	16%	66	24%	UK	356	66%	146	53%	Total	543	100%	276	100%	Note: incomplete dataset, this will be reviewed throughout the REF 2029 process.
Nationality	Eligible %	Submitted %																																						
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Total	543	100%	276	100%																																				

			underrepresented in submissions (53%), whereas EU/Europe and Non-EU staff are higher relative to their eligibility. There is a notable variation by nationality: 77% for Non-EU staff, 63% for EU/Europe staff, and 41% for UK staff, demonstrating a clear nationality-based difference. 63% of eligible staff who are of EU/European nationality would be submitted to the Volume Measure 77% of eligible staff who are of Non-EU nationality would be submitted to the Volume Measure	
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41% of eligible staff who are of UK nationality would be submitted to the Volume Measure

Research Independence – Anticipated staff submitted as Independent Researchers (data showing the effect of applying the proposal to define only staff at Grade 7 and above on Research-Only Contracts as independent)



Nationality	All Research-Only Staff Headcount	All Research-Only Staff % of Total Eligible	Independent Researchers Headcount	Independent Researchers % of Total Submitted
EU/Europe	4	25%	3	23%
Non EU	3	19%	3	23%

			UK	9	56%	7	53%	
			Total	16	100%	13	100%	
			The impact of applying the criteria is that only 13 staff would be submitted. The data indicates a potential disparity affecting non-EU staff; however, the small sample size means the figures are too limited to draw any robust conclusions.					

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	The Core Area 1 assessment indicates that, overall, most protected characteristics show broad proportional alignment between the eligible population and staff anticipated to be submitted to the REF Volume Measure. However, a small number of emerging patterns have been identified which warrant continued monitoring and review across the REF 2029 cycle. This is particularly relevant for staff on ACEMPFUN 3 (Teaching and Research) contracts, while the sample size for staff on ACEMPFUN 2 (Research-Only) contracts remains too small to support meaningful analysis. Within the ACEMPFUN 3 population, the data suggest areas where representation is lower for some groups, including female staff, black staff, younger staff (under 35), part-time staff, and staff on fixed-term contracts, who are less likely to be included in the Volume Measure. These patterns highlight areas where ongoing monitoring will be considered throughout the REF cycle: • Sex (Male vs Female): Aggregated data at institutional level indicate a potential adverse impact on female staff. However, disaggregated analysis shows that this apparent disparity is largely attributable to the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education. This faculty has a historically high proportion of female staff, many of whom are engaged primarily in professional practice, which is reflected in lower representation
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within the REF volume-contributing population. This pattern broadly mirrors wider sector demographics (for example, as of 2025, [approximately 76% of NHS staff identify as women](#)). The University recognises and values the industry expertise and professional practice contribution of staff on Teaching and Professional Practice pathways and remains committed to providing opportunities for eligible staff to move to the more research-intensive Teaching and Research pathway, where this aligns with individual career aspirations and institutional needs. Ongoing monitoring will be undertaken as REF-related processes continue to develop.

- **Ethnicity (Black Staff):** While aggregated ethnicity data indicate no overall disadvantage for ethnically diverse staff compared with white staff, further disaggregated analysis highlights a marked under-representation of Black staff, which, when considered at institutional level, may present an equity risk. However, as with the analysis above, faculty-level disaggregation shows that this disparity is primarily associated with the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education. The same contextual factors apply, reflecting sector-wide workforce patterns and the concentration of staff on Professional Practice pathways within this Faculty. Ongoing monitoring will be undertaken as REF-related processes continue to develop.
- **Staff under 35:** The data indicate a lower representation of staff aged under 35 compared with those aged 36–65 and above (33% versus 50%). Staff in the under 35 age group are typically Early-Career Researchers (ECRs). While this pattern does not in itself demonstrate adverse impact, it identifies a potential area of risk that warrants ongoing monitoring, given the importance of supporting progression and retention at early career stages. The University has a strong ethos of nurturing ECRs through their inclusion in research groups and clusters, participation in research bids as co-investigators, and involvement in PGR supervisory teams. In addition, the University has an established programme of training, development and targeted support for ECRs, delivered through the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office, aimed at strengthening the ECR community, support career development, and encourage sustained engagement within academia.

	• Part time and fixed-term staff: The analysis indicates that permanent and full-time staff are slightly under-represented within the REF Volume Measure. While this does not in itself constitute evidence of adverse impact for part-time or fixed-term staff, it identifies an area for continued monitoring. The University will keep this under review as REF-related activity progresses, ensuring that eligibility and inclusion decisions remain transparent and proportionate. • Nationality: Disaggregated analysis by nationality highlights a strong representation of EU and non-EU staff within the REF Volume Measure, reflecting the University's internationally diverse research workforce. While UK nationals are proportionally less represented within the submitted population, this pattern points to the breadth and global reach of the University's research community and will be kept under review to ensure continued proportionality across all nationality groups.
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CORE AREA 2: MANAGING APPEALS PROCESSES

Summary of the Process (as described in the REF COP, paras. 48-52)

For the purposes of REF 2029, all eligible staff will receive written confirmation of SRR/RI status by email no later than 10 July 2026. Staff on parental, annual and sick leave will also receive written confirmation, by email or letter as appropriate. This confirmation will state their SRR/RI status, confirm their inclusion in the REF Volume Measure, and that their outputs may be considered for submission. REF Appeals can be submitted only on the ground that:

(1) the processes for identifying SRR/RI were not conducted appropriately and/or

(2) significant evidence of SRR/RI had been omitted or misrepresented.

Before initiating a formal Appeal, staff may first seek an informal discussion with their line manager, Unit of Assessment (UoA) Lead, or Faculty DDRKEs. Staff may also choose to consult their UCU representatives for advice. Appeals must be submitted in writing using the proforma included in Appendix D:

REF 2029 Appeals Proforma and addressed to the Chair of the REF 2029 Appeals Committee. The appeal must be received by 12 pm on the 31 July 2026.

Appeals will be reviewed by the REF Appeals Committee within 15 working days of receipt. The Committee operates independently from University line management structures and REF UoA Working Group chairs, to ensure impartial and unbiased consideration of all appeals. The Committee comprises a chair and two members of academic staff, drawn from a pool of eight independent academic staff (two per Faculty), all of whom receive appropriate training, including EDI and unconscious-bias training.

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups ? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	In Core Area 2 no relevant REF-appeals data is currently available for analysis, as the Appeals window for the 2025-2026 academic year has not yet opened. However, the procedures outlined above were designed to minimise potential barriers to accessibility and participation. Once data becomes available, the University will monitor the characteristics of appellants to identify any disproportionate patterns and assess whether any equality-related barriers may exist. Any issues identified will inform revisions to the appeals process to ensure fairness, transparency, and accessibility for all staff.
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CORE AREA 3: ALLOCATING ELIGIBLE CONTRACTS TO UNITS OF ASSESSMENT

Summary of Criteria and Decision-Making Processes (as described in the REF CoP, paras. 75-81)

Eligible staff who will be submitted by Middlesex University for REF 2029 Volume Measure linked to specific UoAs will evidence ALL of the following criteria:

- Meet the criteria for SRR and RI
- Have an employment contract with Middlesex University of 0.2FTE or greater for at least 12 months continuous

- Have a substantive research connection with the submitting Unit

A 'substantive research connection with the submitting Unit' will be demonstrated through:

- Contractual alignment (e.g., where research responsibilities in job title/job description/ suggest a natural alignment with the UoA)
- Research fit (e.g., where research activity and outputs indicate an alignment with a Unit of Assessment)
- Where applicable, previous REF alignment (e.g. Units of Assessment to which staff were returned in RAE2001/ RAE2008/ REF2014/ REF2021)

In defining its portfolio of Units of Assessment (UoAs) for the REF 2029 submission, Middlesex University has adopted an approach that begins with the reconstitution of the UoAs submitted in REF 2021. Calls for Expressions of Interest have been issued to staff to support the recruitment of UoA Working Groups members and chairs. Throughout the 2025–26 academic year, UoA Working Groups will assess the feasibility, coherence and strategic value of submission for each proposed UoA, with final confirmation aligned to the timetable for the 2025–26 HESA returns. Decisions will take account of unit research strength and trajectory, REF eligibility requirements (including Impact and Engagement), the quality of unit-level Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) narratives, alignment with institutional strategy, operational feasibility and sustainability, and equality and diversity considerations. Faculty REF Committees will be responsible for allocating staff contracts to UoAs, with proposed allocations communicated to staff and opportunities for consultation provided. Final decisions will be made following consideration of individual representations, and UoA allocations will be reviewed annually to reflect staffing changes.

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	For Core Area 3, as decisions on allocation of contracts to Units of Assessment (UoAs) have not yet been finalised, there is currently insufficient UoA-level data to support detailed analysis. However, the allocation process described above has been designed to promote equality of participation and to ensure that all staff are provided with fair, transparent and consistent opportunities to engage with REF 2029 preparation activities. This area will remain subject to ongoing monitoring as allocation decisions are progressed.
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CORE AREA 4: SELECTION OF OUTPUTS

Summary of criteria and decision-making processes (as described in the REF CoP, paras. 87-112)

Eligibility of Outputs

Research outputs of all staff (full-time, part-time, fixed term, retired, etc.) who are or were employed on a 'Teaching and Research' academic contract AND a 'Teaching and Research' pathway (signifier of SRR), or on a 'Research-Only' contract with RI, with a minimum of 0.2 FTE, from Grade 7 and above, will be eligible for selection. Outputs of staff who are or were employed on other contract types, also at a minimum of 0.2 FTE (e.g., technicians, professional services staff), where the job description indicates an explicit expectation of research, will likewise be eligible. This includes outputs of staff who left the university through redundancy, severance, retirement or expiration of contracts, provided the following conditions are met:

- Their employment fulfilled REF's criteria for eligibility
- A substantive link between the University and their outputs can be demonstrated
- Where an author was subject to compulsory redundancy, only outputs made publicly available during their period of employment will be eligible

All outputs that will be included in the REF 2029 submission must:

- Fulfil the REF definition of research: '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 the same period
- Have a substantive link to Middlesex University
- Where applicable, be within scope and meet the requirements of the REF Open Access Policy (see Appendix F: Excerpt from the REF 2029 Open Access Policy)

Substantive Link

Middlesex University must be able to demonstrate a substantive link to submitted outputs, which describes the relation between the university and research. A substantive link will be demonstrated through an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent). Eligible employment relationships will have to meet all of the following criteria:

- A minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment
- The role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity within the role of any staff member who undertakes, enables or supports research.
- This expectation is met through appointment to 'Teaching and Research' contracts AND 'Teaching and Research' pathways (signifying SRR); to 'Research-Only' contracts (with RI); or to any other contract type where the job description indicates an explicit expectation of research.

Allocation of outputs to UoAs

Once the University's portfolio of Units of Assessment (UoAs) has been finalised, research outputs will be allocated to UoAs on the basis of their alignment with REF UoA descriptors. This will include consideration of fit with subject areas, disciplines and sub-disciplines, methodological approaches, and the types of outputs appropriate to each UoA. Consideration will also be given to the overall coherence and balance of each UoA submission. Output allocation will be undertaken by UoA Working Groups and will be conducted independently of the allocation of individual staff contracts to UoAs.

Strategic Selection of Outputs

Strategically, UoA Working Groups will prioritise the highest-quality outputs for submission. At the same time, they will ensure that the final output selection reflects the breadth of research activity within the Unit, such that no research area is systematically overlooked or rendered invisible within the overall submission.

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups ? What actions will you take to	For Core Area 4 , as of February 2026, Middlesex University has not yet conducted a full institutional internal mock REF and therefore does not currently hold sufficient evidence to assess the potential equality impacts arising from the selection of outputs within individual Units of Assessment. This remains an important area for continued
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increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	monitoring as preparations for REF 2029 progress. Nevertheless, four potential areas of risk have been identified at this stage and are outlined below. 1. Inequalities in access to authorship that affects who has outputs to contribute As set out in the summary above, only outputs authored by staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), Research Independence (RI), or by staff on contracts where the job description includes an explicit expectation of research, will be considered for submission. For such staff, dedicated time and resources are available to support independent research activity, which forms an expected component of their role. Any inequalities arising from decisions relating to SRR or RI, as identified in the Equality Analysis for Core Area 1, therefore also apply to access to authorship and remain relevant at this stage of the REF process. The University does not currently hold sufficient data on potential inequalities in access to authorship for staff on other contract types where research expectations are explicit, and this will remain an area for monitoring. An internal mock REF exercise to be conducted in late 2026 and early 2027 will provide further evidence to help identify any potential adverse impacts in this area and to inform appropriate mitigation where required. 2. Over-reliance on metrics that disadvantage types of research or disciplines As a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), Middlesex University is committed to principles of responsible research assessment. Accordingly, any use of metrics will serve solely to inform expert judgement and support decision-making, and will not replace qualitative peer review, which remains central to the University's evaluation approach. In practice, all outputs will undergo internal evaluation and will be assessed by a minimum of two independent reviewers to ensure fairness, rigour and consistency.
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3. Practices that may favour certain staff groups

The University is committed to submitting its highest-quality research while ensuring that no research area is systematically overlooked or rendered invisible. It is recognised that some staff groups may, unavoidably, have a higher proportion of outputs included in the final submission. To mitigate this risk, the University will apply the maximum limit of five outputs per researcher and will conduct a dedicated Equality Impact Assessment alongside the output selection process. This will support a fair, transparent and inclusive approach to the construction of the final output pool within each submitting Unit of Assessment.

4. Outputs produced in recognised languages

As of April 2026, the University's Research Repository contained no research outputs produced in Welsh, British Sign Language, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Irish or Irish Sign Language. Should any such outputs be deposited in the Repository on or before 31 December 2028, the University is committed to ensuring their equitable treatment. This will include identifying relevant outputs at an early stage in the publication process and seeking appropriate expertise, whether internal or external, to determine their alignment with Units of Assessment and to assess their quality in accordance with REF criteria. Ongoing oversight will be provided by UoA Working Groups, which will notify Faculty REF Committees and the REF Steering Group as such outputs emerge and advise on suitable mechanisms to support fair, transparent and robust assessment and ranking.

Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will proceed .	☒	In Core Area 1, although broad proportional alignment is apparent, the disparities identified for specific groups will require ongoing monitoring. As activity in Core Areas 2, 3 and 4 (Managing Appeals Processes; Allocating Contracts to Units of Assessment; and Selecting Outputs) has not yet begun/has only recently begun, the data available at this stage is insufficient to support any meaningful conclusions. The activity will continue.
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	☐	
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	☐	

4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	☐	
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Review and Sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	The Equality Impact Assessment of the procedures set out in this Code of Practice will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the REF 2029 preparation cycle. The EIA will remain a standing consideration for the REF EDI Panel, Faculty REF Committees and the REF Steering Group. As additional data become available, particularly following the finalisation of Unit of Assessment allocations and internal mock REF exercises, further analysis will be undertaken to identify any emerging differential impacts on staff with protected characteristics. Where potential risks or areas of disproportionality are identified, these will be reviewed by the REF EDI Panel and proportionate mitigation or remedial action will be considered.
Next review date:	October 2026

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes, the final agreed EIA will be published together with the REF 2029 Code of Practice.
Point of contact	REF EDI Panel
Signed off by (name and date):	Chair of the EDI Panel, 13 April 2026

Action plan

Core Area	Action	Timescale	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is/will be the impact/outcome?
1	1.1 Undertake an annual proportionality review of SRR and RI identification outcomes, disaggregated by sex, ethnicity (with specific focus on Black staff), age, and contract type (part-time/fixed-term).	Annual review, aligned to HESA staff returns	REF EDI Panel	Annual EIA update paper reported to the REF Steering Group	Early identification of emerging disproportionality and assurance that SRR/RI decisions remain equitable and transparent.
	1.2 Monitor the retention and progression of ECRs (staff under 35) into SRR and RI-eligible roles eligible for REF volume	Annual review, aligned to HESA staff returns	REF EDI Panel RKEO	Annual EIA update paper reported to the REF Steering Group	Support equitable inclusion of ECRs in the REF

	measure, in alignment with targeted staff development programmes				
2	2.1 Monitor the characteristics of appellants and appeals outcomes by protected characteristic and contract type to identify any disproportional patterns	Annual review, aligned with REF appeals window	REF Appeals Committee REF EDI Panel	Post-appeals EIA report	Ensure the appeals process operates as intended and does not create barriers to participation
3	3.1 Conduct UoA-level EIAs of allocations of contracts by protected characteristic, once the University's UoA portfolio for REF 2029 is finalised	June-November 2026, aligned to 2025-2026 HESA staff return	REF EDI Panel REF Steering Group	UoA-level EIA report	Assurance that allocation processes have not resulted in unintended differential impacts
	3.2 Review UoA allocations annually to account for new starters, leavers, and career pathway changes	Annually, aligned to HESA staff returns	Faculty REF Committees REF EDI Panel	Annual UoA-level equality commentary	Maintain equitable participation as staff profile change
4	4.1 Conduct UoA-level EIAs following the first internal mock REF focusing on output selection patterns and research representation	January-April 2027	UoA Working Groups	UoA-level EIA report	Identify and address emerging inequities in the output selection process

			Faculty REF Committees EDI Panel		
	4.2 Flag outputs produced in recognised languages within the Research Repository, enabling early review and identification of appropriate assessment expertise	Annually, on an ongoing basis	Research Information Manager REF UoA Working Groups	Research repository report to REF Steering Group	Assurance that outputs produced in recognised languages are treated equitably and assessed robustly

Appendix B: Governance Structures: Panels and Committees

In October 2025, the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) approved the REF 2029 Governance Structures. These build on the framework established for REF 2021, incorporating lessons learned from the previous submission process, while addressing the new elements introduced by REF 2029. The REF 2029 Governance model provides a strong foundation for decision-making and advisory functions, ensuring effective support for the University's REF 2029 preparations.

Within this structure, the REF Steering Group holds a strategic leadership role. Operational delivery will be supported by university-level panels focusing on Strategy, People, and Research Environment and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, alongside Faculty-level committees and Unit of Assessment Working Groups.

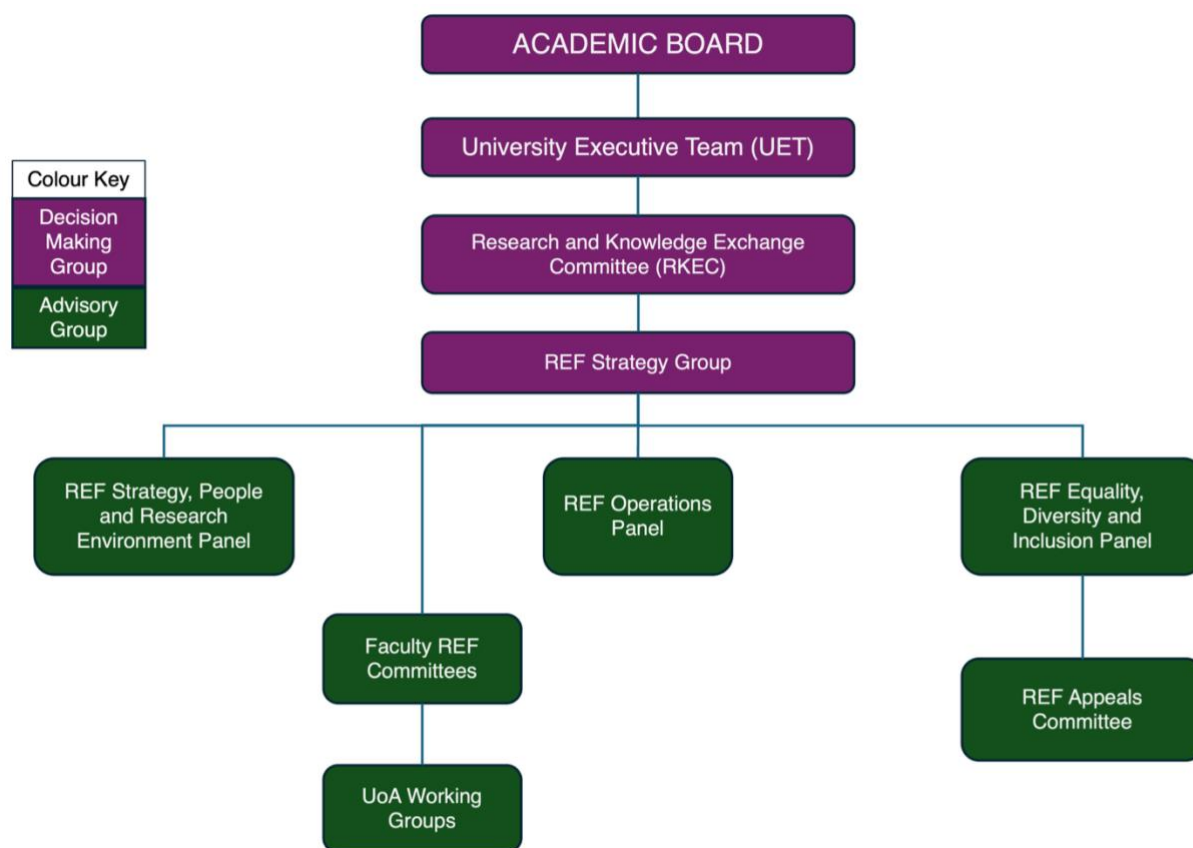


Fig. 7 Middlesex University's Governance Structures for REF 2029

University REF Steering Group

Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The REF Steering Group is responsible for the strategic leadership, development, and implementation of the University's REF 2029 submission. The Group holds responsibility for all REF 2029 decision-making in strict accordance with the provisions of the University's REF Code of Practice.

REPORTING

The REF Steering Group is constituted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange, under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor. It reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee which is a subcommittee of the Academic Board.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Monthly from October 2025

QUORACY

A meeting shall be deemed quorate when at least 50% plus one of its members are present. If the meeting is not quorate, the Chair may allow proceedings to continue on an informal basis.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To develop a REF Code of Practice including procedures for determining:

- Staff with significant responsibility for research (SRR)
- Staff with research independence (RI)
- Allocation of staff to units of assessment
- Appeals
- Selection of outputs
- REF related training and appeals
- Data coordination and compliance with submission procedures

2. To implement a programme of communications to disseminate the REF Code of Practice and related consultations, and provide clear explanation of all associated processes
3. To oversee the implementation of the Code through Equality Impact Assessments
4. To develop and implement a REF 2029 structure of governance and approve the appointment of staff to key roles
5. To establish a university-wide REF preparation timetable, and monitor and report on progress to the RKEC
6. To ensure that all individuals and groups involved in the REF 2029 structure of governance receive appropriate and timely training including on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
7. To organize cycles of assessment (mock REFs) to prepare for the REF 2029 submission
8. To evaluate results of mock REFs and advise the RKEC about selection of research to be submitted for REF 2029
9. To provide feedback to Faculty Committees and UoA working groups, and make recommendations based on outcomes of mock REFs
10. To map and evaluate progress and change across REF cycles against sector benchmarks
11. To manage REF-related queries and coordinate with Research England

KEY DECISIONS

12. Responsible for all REF 2029 decision-making, ensuring that the provisions of the REF Code of Practice are successfully met
13. Responsible for aligning staff identified as SRR and RI to Units of Assessment
14. Responsible for evaluating the quality profiles for UoA submissions, in line with the agreed REF timeline, to guide recommendations to the university RKEC

KEY ADVISORY ROLES

15. Make recommendations to the RKEC about the UoAs to be returned in the REF 2029 exercise
16. Keep the RKEC informed about emerging REF 2029 proposals, criteria, and submission requirements
17. Advise the RKEC on the University's alignment with mission groups (University Alliance and UUK) in relation to REF strategic positioning

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the REF Steering Group includes senior staff and representatives drawn from all faculties. During preparations for submission to REF 2029 the Group will have the authority to appoint additional members, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure alignment with the University's strategic and governance requirements.

Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange or nominee (Chair) until September 2026; replaced by Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee from September 2026

Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange

REF Manager

HR Head of Shared Service, Reporting and Systems EDI Manager

Research Information Manager

Faculty Deputy Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange

Academic staff (One per Faculty)

One Early-Career Researcher

Designated REF Main Contact

Early and Mid-Career Academics in shadow roles

Additionally: two Academics from overseas campuses in shadow roles (one from Mauritius and one from Dubai)

Other members may be co-opted as required

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and alignment with University strategy and updated REF 2029 guidance.

University REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Panel Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The REF EDI Panel is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Middlesex University's EDI policy and strategy in relation to its REF 2029 submission. The Panel has an advisory role. It ensures that all REF-related processes, decisions and documentation comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and align with the University's institutional EDI commitments.

REPORTING

The REF EDI Panel is constituted by the PVC with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange, under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor. The panel reports to the University's REF Steering Group, providing assurance that equality and diversity considerations are embedded across all aspects of REF 2029 delivery.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Bimonthly, with additional meetings convened as required during key stages of the REF cycle.

QUORACY

A meeting shall be deemed quorate when at least 50% plus one of its members are present. If the meeting is not quorate, the Chair may allow proceedings to continue on an informal basis.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To advise the University REF Steering Group on matters relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion within the context of REF 2029, ensuring compliance with Equality Act 2010

2. To commission, review, and approve REF Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)
3. To ensure that actions identified in EIAs are implemented, monitored, and reported to the REF Steering Group.
4. To oversee the design, delivery, and monitoring of REF-specific EDI training for staff involved in REF processes
5. To monitor progress against agreed EDI objectives and provide regular updates to the REF Steering Group.
6. To monitor the activity of the REF Appeals sub-panel at key stages during the REF process

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the REF EDI Panel includes senior staff and representatives drawn from all faculties. During preparations for submission to REF 2029 the Panel will have the authority to appoint additional members, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure alignment with the University's strategic and governance requirements.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience or nominee (Chair)

HR Head of Shared Service, Reporting and Systems EDI Manager

REF Manager

EDI Manager

Chair of University Research Ethics Committee

Two Academic Staff Representatives: one with Significant Responsibility for Research and one without Significant Responsibility for Research

Two Early-Career Researchers

One Academic in a shadow role

Additionally: two Academics from overseas campuses in shadow roles (one from Mauritius and one from Dubai)

Other members may be co-opted as required

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and alignment with University strategy and updated REF 2029 guidance.

Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) Panel Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The REF SPRE Panel is responsible for overseeing the development, coordination, and quality assurance of the SPRE components of Middlesex University's REF 2029 submission. This includes both institutional-level and Unit of Assessment (UoA)-level contributions. The Panel has an advisory role.

REPORTING

The SPRE is constituted by the PVC with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange, under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor. The panel reports to the University's REF Steering Group.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Bimonthly, with additional meetings convened as required during key stages of the REF cycle.

QUORACY

A meeting shall be deemed quorate when at least 50% plus one of its members are present. If the meeting is not quorate, the Chair may allow proceedings to continue on an informal basis.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To provide strategic oversight of the SPRE components of the university's REF 2029 submission, ensuring alignment with REF 2029 guidance and sector best practice
2. To advise, commission and support the development of robust, evidence-based narratives and indicators, drawing on sector guidance and outcomes from the PCE Pilot exercise

3. To promote inclusive, transparent, and reflective practices in assessing research culture and environment
4. To develop and review the structure and content of SPRE statements at both institutional and UoA levels, ensuring alignment with the university's strategic priorities and values
5. To support capacity building and awareness-raising around research culture and environment across the institution.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the REF SPRE Panel includes senior staff and representatives drawn from all faculties, reflecting diversity of disciplines, and career stages. During preparations for submission to REF 2029 the Panel will have the authority to appoint additional members, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure alignment with the University's strategic and governance requirements.

Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange or nominee (Chair)

REF Manager

UoA Working Group Chairs

Three Academics with Significant Responsibility for Research and/or Research Independence (one senior academic/researcher, one mid-career academic/researcher, one Early-Career Academic/Researcher)

One academic in a shadow role

Additionally: two Academics from overseas campuses in shadow roles (one from Mauritius and one from Dubai)

Other members may be co-opted as required

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and alignment with University strategy and updated REF 2029 guidance.

University REF Appeals Committee

Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The REF Appeals Committee is established to provide a fair, transparent, and confidential process for reviewing appeals related to decisions made during the REF2029 submission process. This includes appeals concerning staff eligibility, Significant Responsibility for Research, Research Independence, and inclusion in the REF Volume Measure.

REPORTING

The REF Appeals Committee operates under the oversight of the REF 2029 EDI Panel and will report on a bi-annual basis. An annual anonymised summary of appeals and outcomes will be shared with the EDI Panel and the REF Steering Group to support institutional learning and transparency.

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The Committee will:

1. Receive and assess appeals submitted through the University's formal REF Appeals process
2. Review evidence provided by appellants and by relevant decision-making bodies
3. Ensure confidentiality, impartiality and sensitivity in the handling of all appeal cases
4. Make determinations on whether original decisions should be upheld or reconsidered, based on procedural fairness, consistency and alignment with REF 2029 guidance, University policies, and the REF Code of Practice
5. Report outcomes to the REF EDI Panel, including anonymised summaries to support monitoring, assurance and organisational learning
6. Identify and recommend improvements to procedures where systemic issues or risks are identified.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee will include:

Director of Human Resources (Chair)

Academic staff representatives (two from each Faculty): staff not involved in the original decisions relating to Significant Responsibility for Research and Research Independence status.

QUORACY

Each appeal will be considered by a quorum of three members, comprising the Committee Chair and two independent academic staff representatives. Academic members must not have been involved in the original decision and must be drawn from faculties other than the appellant's home faculty. Where a declared conflict of interest arises, an alternative independent member will be appointed.

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually or in response to changes in REF 2029 guidance or institutional policy.

University REF Operations Panel

Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The REF Operations Panel, a sub-unit of the REF Steering Group, is responsible for overseeing the operational aspects of delivering a successful REF Submission. Its role is to ensure that Middlesex University's REF 2029 submission is developed, coordinated and quality-assured, in line with the University's strategy and REF 2029 requirements.

REPORTING

The REF OP is constituted by the chair of the REF Strategy Panel under the instruction of the PVC with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange. The panel reports to the University's REF Steering Group.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Every trimester, with additional meetings convened at key stages of the REF cycle.

QUORACY

A meeting shall be deemed quorate when at least 50% plus one of its members are present. If the meeting is not quorate, the Chair may allow proceedings to continue on an informal basis.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To translate REF Steering Group's decisions into clear operational procedures and implementation plans.
2. To oversee the planning and execution of operational activities required for a successful REF submission
3. To develop and maintain the university's Road to REF 2029 plan and associated milestones
4. To ensure that REF-related data is accurate, complete, audit-ready, and compliant with REF 2029 requirements
5. To ensure the timely delivery of all REF Submission components
6. To support data information analysis and modelling to inform institutional decision making
7. To develop and disseminate internal guidance, templates, and training materials to support consistent practice across UoAs.
8. To provide progress updates, assessments and reports to the REF Steering Group and advise accordingly
9. To support post-submission institutional preparedness for REF Audits and contribute to the evaluation of REF outcomes

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the REF Operations Group will consist of staff with direct operational responsibility. During preparations for submission to REF 2029 the Panel will have the authority to appoint additional members, where necessary and appropriate, to ensure alignment with the University's strategic and governance requirements.

REF Manager (Chair)

Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange

One Deputy Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange

Research Information Manager

HR Head of Shared Service, Reporting and Systems EDI Manager

RKEO REF Contact

Additional members may be co-opted as needed.

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and alignment with University strategy and updated REF 2029 guidance.

REF 2029 REF UoA Working Group

Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The REF 2029 Units of Assessment (UoA) Working Groups are responsible for leading and coordinating the development of all materials relevant to the REF 2029 submission within their designated Units of Assessment, ensuring quality, compliance and alignment with institutional and national REF guidance. The UoA Working Groups have an advisory role.

REPORTING

The REF UoA Groups are established by the Deputy Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange in each Faculty, under the mandate of the University REF Steering Group. They report to Faculty REF Committees, the University REF Steering Group and, as appropriate, to the People, Culture and Environment Panel and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Panel.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Monthly from January 2026, with additional meetings convened as required during key stages of the REF cycle.

QUORACY

A meeting shall be deemed quorate when at least 50% plus one of its members are present. If the meeting is not quorate, the Chair may allow proceedings to continue on an informal basis.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To prepare all submission materials for the UoA, including:

- Selection of research outputs in the Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding component
- Development of ICSs in the Impact and Engagement component
- Drafting of the UoA-level Strategy, People and Research Environment statements

2. To ensure compliance with REF 2029 criteria and guidance at UoA level

3. To adhere to the university's REF Code of Practice (CoP) at an individual UoA level, ensuring transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in all decision-making processes

4. To engage with Faculty and University REF Committees and Panels, reporting, receiving input and responding to feedback

5. To maintain records of decisions and rationales for audit and review purposes

MEMBERSHIP

The size of each UoA Working Groups will be determined with regard to the size and complexity of the submitted Units of Assessment. Membership will reflect disciplinary expertise, diversity of career stages, and commitment to an inclusive research culture. Membership will include

UoA Coordinator (Chair)

Senior academics and researchers (e.g., Professors, Associate Professors)

Mid-career academics and researchers (e.g., Senior Lecturers, Senior Research Fellows)

Early-Career Academics/Researchers (e.g., Lecturers, Research Fellows)

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and alignment with University strategy and updated REF 2029 guidance.

REF 2029 Faculty Committee Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

The Faculty REF Committees are responsible for overseeing and guiding the preparation of REF 2029 submissions at Faculty level, ensuring quality, consistency, and compliance with institutional REF policies and national REF guidance. The Committees have an advisory role.

REPORTING

The REF Faculty Committees are established by the Deputy Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange, under the mandate of the REF Steering Group, to which they report. The Committees will also report, as appropriate, to the REF People, Culture and Environment Panel, the REF Operations Panel, and the REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Panel.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Bimonthly from January 2026, with additional meetings convened as required during key stages of the REF cycle

QUORACY

A meeting shall be deemed quorate when at least 50% plus one of its members are present. If the meeting is not quorate, the Chair may allow proceedings to continue on an informal basis.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To oversee and guide preparation activities for individual Units of Assessment (UoAs)
2. To inform, implement, and ensure compliance with policies and procedures as advised by University panels and approved by the University REF Steering Group

3. To keep Faculty staff informed of REF developments, timelines, and expectations through regular communications and engagement activities

4. To prepare and refine UoA submissions in collaboration with UoA Working Groups, ensuring alignment with institutional strategy and REF 2029 guidance.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of a Faculty REF Committee will reflect disciplinary diversity, career stage representation, and commitment to an inclusive research culture.

Faculty Deputy Dean for Research & Knowledge Exchange (Chair)

Unit of Assessment (UoA) Working Group Chair(s)

One Senior Academic/Researcher (e.g., Professor, Associate Professor)

One Mid-Career Academic/Researcher (e.g., Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Fellow)

One Early-Career Academic/Researcher (e.g., Lecturer, Research Fellow)

Other members as appropriate

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and alignment with University strategy and updated REF 2029 guidance.

Appendix C: Code of Practice Staff Feedback and Amendments Proforma

The purpose of this form is to record staff feedback on the draft REF Code of Practice (CoP) and to provide an auditable record of proposed amendments. Comments should relate only to the draft REF Code of Practice.

Notes to help you complete the form

- Complete your name (1), Faculty/School (2), Role/Grade (3), and Email Address (4).
- Identify the CoP section and paragraph you consider needing amendment (5)
- Explain why and how the paragraph in question should be amended (6-8)

Following the end of the REF CoP consultation period on 27/02/2026, the REF Manager will collate and analyse all proposed amendments and submit a report to the REF Steering Group for consideration. Approval of any amendments will be subject to compliance with REF 2029 requirements and University research-related policies and commitments. A summary of accepted and rejected amendments, with rationale, will be shared with staff via the REF 2029 intranet site.

1. Name	
2. Faculty and School	
3. Role/Grade	
4. Email Address	
5. Please identify the Code of Practice section, subsection and paragraph number to be amended	
6. Please summarise the issue or concern you have	
7. Please provide a clear rationale for the proposed amendment. Where possible, include details on its expected impact on staff, any relevant EDI considerations, and any implications for REF eligibility	
8. Please propose new wording, if possible	

Appendix D: REF 2029 Appeals Proforma

The purpose of this form is to record all appeals related to the REF 2029 processes and procedures. It does not cover other HR or academic-related grievances. It should be used in conjunction with the University's REF Code of Practice by staff who have received a written notification of the decisions listed below:

(a) You do/do not hold significant responsibility for research (SRR)

(b) You are/are not an independent researcher (RI)

Before initiating the REF Appeals Process, you may wish to first seek an informal discussion with your line manager, Unit of Assessment (UoA) Lead, or Faculty Deputy Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange. You are also encouraged to consult with your UCU representatives for advice.

Notes to help you complete the form:

1. Complete your name (1), Faculty and School (2), Role/Grade (3), and Email Address (4)

2. Complete the Date (5) and Identifier of Decision (6)

3. Identify the Decision Being Appealed (7) and Grounds for Appeal (8)

4. Make your case for the appeal (9) (500 word maximum). Please include:

(a) Summary of the decision and why you believe it is incorrect/unfair

(b) Relevant evidence for your claim

(c) Outcome you are seeking.

5. If you have additional evidence to support your claim, this should be sent along with your form before or by the deadline of **31 July 2026**. Acceptable formats: pdf and jpg.

6. Information submitted through the appeals process is protected under GDPR and will only be shared with those directly involved in the process.

The appeals process is described in Middlesex University's REF Code of Practice, Part 2, paras. 48-52. Please complete the form overleaf and send it to the **Chair of the Appeals Committee** before or by **12 p.m. on 31 July 2026**.

Outcome

The Committee will convene within 15 working days of receiving your appeal form and will consider the written statements and any other relevant materials. You will then be invited to a hearing. The Committee will prepare a report detailing the outcome (received by the appellant), normally within 7 days of the appeal hearing. The Committee's decision is final.

1. Name	
2. Faculty and School	
3. Role/Grade	
4. Email Address	
5. Date of Decision Being Appealed	
6. Identifier of Decision (eg. letter/email)	
7. Decisions Being Appealed	☐ You do not hold Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) ☐ You are not an Independent Researcher (RI)
8. Grounds for Appeal (tick all that apply)	☐ The decision process was not conducted appropriately, in accordance with criteria, policies and procedures described in the REF Code of Practice ☐ Significant evidence had been omitted or misrepresented ☐ Other (please specify)
9. Case for Appeal (500 words maximum) Please explain the reason for your appeal and provide supporting evidence for your claim. Signed (appellant):	
9. Decision of the REF Appeals Committee Signed (Chair of the REF Appeals Committee/Director of HR): Signed (Chair of the REF EDI Panel): Signed (Chair of the REF Steering Group):	

Appendix E: Research Fellowships demonstrating research independence

Source: [REF Publications](#)

This list identifies competitive research fellowships that inherently require or support research independence, as confirmed by the respective funders. It serves as a reference for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) when determining which staff meet the criteria for research independence under REF 2029, in line with guidance in [section 9.2.1 of the Volume Measure Guidance](#). Fellowships listed here are considered indicative of research independence and may support the classification of contracts as REFQUALCON/ (volume-contributing).

The list is presented alphabetically by funder and includes fellowships that either require independence from the outset or support the transition to independence (marked with an asterisk*). It is not exhaustive and does not include all relevant schemes, such as those funded directly by HEIs

AHRC

- AHRC Leadership Fellowships – Early Career Researchers
- AHRC Leadership Fellowships

BBSRC

- BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships
- BBSRC Discovery Fellowships

British Academy

- BA/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships
- British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowships
- JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowships
- Mid-Career Fellowships
- Newton Advanced Fellowships
- Newton International Fellowships
- Wolfson Research Professorships

British Heart Foundation

- BHF-Fulbright Commission Scholar Awards
- Career Re-entry Research Fellowships

- Clinical Research Leave Fellowships
- Intermediate Basic Science Research Fellowships
- Intermediate Clinical Research Fellowships
- Senior Basic Science Research Fellowships
- Senior Clinical Research Fellowships
- Springboard Award for Biomedical Researchers
- Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers

Cancer Research UK

- Advanced Clinician Scientist Fellowship
- Career Development Fellowship
- Career Establishment Award
- Senior Cancer Research Fellowship

EPSRC

- EPSRC Early Career Fellowship
- EPSRC Established Career Fellowship
- EPSRC Postdoctoral Fellowship*

ESRC

- ESRC Future Cities Catapult Fellowship
- ESRC Future Leaders Grant
- ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship*
- ESRC/Turing Fellowships
- ESRC/UKRI Early Career Researcher Innovation Fellowships

European Research Council

- ERC Advanced Grants
- ERC Consolidator Grants
- ERC Starting Grants

Health Education England

- Integrated Clinical Academic Programme Clinical Lectureship*
- Integrated Clinical Academic Programme Senior Clinical Lectureship

Leverhulme Trust

- Early Career Fellowship
- Emeritus Fellowship
- International Academic Fellowship
- Major Research Fellowship
- Research Fellowship

MRC

- MRC Career Development Awards*
- MRC Clinician Scientist Fellowships*
- MRC New Investigator Research Grants (Clinical)*
- MRC New Investigator Research Grants (Non-clinical)*
- Senior Clinical Fellowships
- Senior Non-Clinical Fellowships

NC3R

- David Sainsbury Fellowship
- Training fellowship

NERC

- Independent Research Fellowships
- NERC/UKRI Industrial Innovation Fellowships
- NERC/UKRI Industrial Mobility Fellowships

NIHR

- Advanced Fellowship*
- Career Development Fellowship
- Clinical Lectureships*
- Clinician Scientist*
- Post-Doctoral Fellowship*
- Research Professorships
- School for Primary Care Post-Doctoral Fellowships*
- Senior Research Fellowships

Royal Academy of Engineering

- Industrial Fellowships
- RAEng Engineering for Development Research Fellowship
- RAEng Research Fellowship
- RAEng Senior Research Fellowship
- UK Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Royal Society

- Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship*
- JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship
- Newton Advanced Fellowship
- Royal Society/Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship
- Royal Society Wolfson Fellowship
- University Research Fellowship*

Royal Society and Wellcome Trust

- Sir Henry Dale Fellowship*

Royal Society of Edinburgh

- RSE Arts & Humanities Awards (for permanent staff)
- RSE Personal Research Fellowship
- RSE Sabbatical Research Grants (for permanent staff)

Sêr Cymru

- Recapturing Talent*
- Research Chairs
- Research fellowships for 3-5 year postdocs
- Rising Stars

STFC

- CERN Fellowships
- Ernest Rutherford Fellowship
- ESA Fellowships
- Innovations Partnership Scheme Fellowships
- Returner Fellowships
- RSE/STFC Enterprise Fellowships

- Rutherford International Fellowship Programme

UKRI

- UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships
- UKRI Innovation Fellowships

Wellcome Trust

- Intermediate Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical Medicine
- Principal Research Fellowships
- Research Award for Health Professionals
- Research Career Development Fellowship
- Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social Science
- Senior Research Fellowship

Appendix F: Excerpt from the REF 2029 Open Access Policy

Policy Summary and Key Terms and Definitions

Source: [REF Guidance, Section 5, Open Access Policy](#)

Section 3: Summary

3.1. Requirements

3.1.1 For REF 2029 there will continue to be an open access requirement for journal articles and conference proceedings.

3.1.2 There is no open access requirement in REF 2029 for any other output types (e.g. long-form outputs, including monographs, book chapters and scholarly editions).

3.1.3 Other types of outputs, including but not limited to, datasets, code, protocols or artistic creations are welcomed as submissions to REF 2029. Although these fall outside of the scope of this policy, the funding bodies encourage that they are made available as open access, where appropriate.

3.1.4 It is not expected that researchers and institutions will be required to incur additional open access publication costs (such as through payment of an article processing charge) in order to meet REF 2029 open access policy requirements.

3.2 In-scope and out of scope outputs

3.2.1 Outputs in-scope for the open access policy are journal articles and conference contributions that have an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) and were published between 01 January 2021 and 31 December 2028.

3.2.2 In-scope outputs are required to be made open access to be eligible for submission in REF 2029, subject to any allowed exceptions and tolerance allowance for non-compliance.

3.2.3 Outputs published by a journal or conference proceedings which do not require peer review are within the scope of this policy.

3.2.4 The outputs should be published and/or deposited (as relevant), discoverable, and free to read, download and search within, by anyone with an internet connection.

3.2.5 The funding bodies recommend that institutions fully consider the extent to which authors currently retain or transfer the copyright of works published by their researchers, as part of creating a healthy research environment.

3.2.6 Pre-print articles or any other output types without an ISSN, are not subject to these open access requirements for submission.

3.2.7 Pre-reviewed articles published through open publication platforms, will also meet open access requirements by default. Examples of this would include, but are not limited to, [F1000Research](#), [Wellcome Open Research](#) and [eLife](#). Research outputs published on open publication platforms, including, but not limited to, [Protocols.io](#), [Octopus.ac](#), or the [Open Science Framework](#) and not falling within the in-scope output criteria at [3.2.1.](#), are welcomed as submissions to REF 2029 and fall outside of the scope of this policy.

3.2.8 For all in-scope outputs submitted to REF 2029 published between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2025, the open access policy requirements for REF 2021 applies, updated to the REF 2029 context and subject to one further agreed exception. These are summarised out below in [paragraph 5](#).

3.2.9 Revised open access policy requirements for REF 2029 will come into force for all in-scope outputs from 01 January 2026 these are set out below in [paragraph 7](#).

3.3 Changes to the submission requirements

3.3.1 Several changes to the submission requirements have been made from the REF 2021 open access policy requirement which will come into effect on 01 January 2026.

3.3.2 Deposit: outputs subject to a post-publication embargo which are shared through institutional repositories (“Green” open access) are required to be deposited on publication rather than on acceptance for publication, which was the case in REF 2021.

3.3.3 Licensing: Outputs should be shared as openly as possible; the funding bodies’ strong preference is for licensing as CC-BY or other licence formats meeting this standard of openness. However, licensing outputs at CC-BY-NC or CC-BY-ND (including CC-BY-NC-ND) or licences meeting an equivalent standard of openness are also permitted. For the period 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028 outputs shared by deposit (AAM), where subject to terms of a publication agreement limiting sharing and/or use of downloaded materials will not need to fully meet these licensing standards. They will however need to meet all other conditions for deposit, discovery

and access. Application of an exception will not be required. From 1 January 2029 all future in-scope outputs will need to fully meet open licensing standards, subject to any permissible exceptions.

3.3.4 Embargo: allowable embargo periods are:

- for outputs submitted to main panels A and B: six months, reduced from 12 months
- for outputs submitted to main panels C and D: 12 months, reduced from 24 months

3.4 Policy exceptions

3.4.1 A number of policy exceptions have been agreed. Where one or more of these exceptions applies, the output concerned will be exempt from the open access requirements.

3.4.2 Deposit exceptions: the following exceptions apply where the output is unable to meet the deposit requirements. In these cases, the output will not be required to meet any of the open access criteria (deposit, discovery or access requirements).

- It would be unlawful to deposit, or request the deposit of, the output or to otherwise make this available.
- The publication actively disallows open access deposit in a repository and was the most appropriate publication for the output.
- Subject to delay in securing the final peer-reviewed text for deposit – for instance, where a paper has multiple authors.

3.4.3 Access exceptions: the following exceptions apply where deposit of the output is possible, but there are issues to do with meeting one or more of the accessibility, embargo and /or licensing requirements. Outputs will be exempt from the relevant requirements, but still be required to meet all other open access policy requirements.

The publication requires an embargo period that exceeds the stated maxima and was the most appropriate publication for the output. Outputs will not need to meet the embargo requirements in this case.

Third-party content was included for which licences could not be obtained at a reasonable cost. The output will not need to meet access and/or licensing requirements (as relevant) in this case.

3.4.4 Technical exceptions: the following exceptions deal with cases where an output is unable to meet the criteria due to a technical issue. In the following cases, the output will not be required to meet the open access criteria (deposit, discovery or access requirements).

- Output has a demonstrable and substantive connection to the submitting institution but was published following the end of the author's period of employment, and it has not been possible to determine compliance with the criteria.
- Outputs were authored in whole by one or more staff who are or were ineligible to be included in the volume measure for REF 2029. The funding bodies have agreed this exception across the publication period for REF 2029 in order to support submission of a wide range of eligible outputs.

3.4.5 Further exception: "other" exception should be used where criteria beyond the control of the higher education institution (HEI) (including but not limited to: personal circumstances of the author, industrial action, closure days and software issues) prevent compliance. If 'other' exception is selected, the output will not need to meet the open access criteria (deposit, discovery or access requirements).

3.4.6 These exceptions replace those in effect up to 31 December 2025, which are set out fully in [paragraph 6](#).

Section 4. Key terms and definitions

4.0.1 Date of acceptance means the date given in the acceptance letter or email from the publisher to the author as the 'firm' accepted date.

4.0.2 Date of publication means the date that the final 'version of record' (VOR) is first made publicly available (such as on the publisher's website). This will usually mean that any 'early online' date, rather than the print publication date, should be taken as the date.

4.0.3 Author's accepted manuscript (AAM) refers to the final peer-reviewed text which may otherwise be known as the 'author manuscript', which may also be called 'final author version' or 'post-print'. Pre-print versions of outputs other than where these are the AAM do not meet the requirements of this policy.

4.0.4 Outputs that have been provisionally accepted for publication, under the condition that the author makes revisions to the manuscript that result from peer review, are not considered as the final text.

4.0.5 Appropriate platforms for deposit (where applicable) include:

- an institutional repository
- a repository service shared between multiple institutions
- a subject repository
- a preprint server (provided that the version posted is the AAM of VOR)

Appendix G: List of Main Panels and Units of Assessment

Main Panel	UoA	Unit of Assessment
A	1	Clinical Medicine
	2	Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
	3	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
	4	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
	5	Biological Sciences
	6	Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences
B	7	Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
	8	Chemistry
	9	Physics
	10	Mathematical Sciences
	11	Computer Science and Informatics
	12	Engineering
C	13	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
	14	Geography and Environmental Studies
	15	Archaeology
	16	Economics and Econometrics
	17	Business and Management Studies
	18	Law
	19	Politics and International Studies
	20	Social Work and Social Policy
	21	Sociology
	22	Anthropology and Development Studies
	23	Education
	24	Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
D	25	Area Studies
	26	Modern Languages and Linguistics
	27	English Language and Literature
	28	History
	29	Classics
	30	Philosophy
	31	Theology and Religious Studies
	32	Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
	33	Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies
	34	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management