



## Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqlA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqlA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqlA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment)

EqlA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

### A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description):

The Research Excellence Framework 2021 (hereafter referred to as REF 2021) is the system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions in the UK. The purpose of the exercise is to assess the quality of UK research and inform the selective allocation of research grants to institutions by the four UK higher education funding bodies with effect from 2022-23. This exercise in the University of Edinburgh was guided by a Code of Practice, accepted by the Scottish Funding Council. REF require that a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 outputs must be attributed to each member of staff, with an average of 2.5 outputs per FTE included in the University's REF submission.

#### Submission of staff to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 exercise through academic significant responsibility for research

- 1) The decision was made to take an inclusive approach to REF submission i.e. everyone with significant responsibility for independent research and therefore eligible was included within the REF submission. This meant that everyone with a job segment of Teaching and Research (e.g. lecturer, reader or professor) was automatically included. Academics with a Research-only job segment (e.g. research fellow, post-doctoral research associate) were assessed to determine whether they were conducting independent research. The criteria for the determination was detailed in our Code of Practice.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) The REF guidance on Codes of Practices requests that this EqlA show the final analysis of data comparing the characteristics of those determined to be independent researchers, with an appropriate comparator pool. In this instance we have used the university's academic body, the Research-only job segment as a whole, and the Teaching and Research job segment so as to indicate the major driver of any changes in representation of protected characteristics through selection.
- 3) The culture of inclusivity and principles of fairness within the exercise mean that the University agreed that no decision about an individual's career trajectory will be taken on the basis of the REF 2021 assessment cycle. This is written into our Code of Practice.<sup>1</sup> To help ensure this no Head of School was allowed to be a Unit of Assessment coordinator, so that the person in a school most responsible for academic promotions was not privy to contributions details to REF.

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<sup>1</sup> Our Code of Practice can be found online. Research independence criteria for Research-only staff can be found in Appendix E, page 24. The agreement that REF 2021 contributions have no effect on an individual's career trajectory can be found in paragraph 2. [https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1538/university-of-edinburgh\\_ref2021-code-of-practice.pdf](https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1538/university-of-edinburgh_ref2021-code-of-practice.pdf)

This final EqlA is in two parts, this part reviewing the submission of academics to the REF 2021 exercise and another reviewing output policies. Therefore this EqlA should be read alongside the outputs selection EqlA to give a complete overview of the EDI assessment of the REF exercise. These follow on from EqlAs conducted during the process (published separately):

- on the mock REF conducted in 2018 that is an appendix to the Code of Practice.
- at the end of the staff circumstances process which identified staff with a case for a reduction in the number of attributed outputs (see below).
- on the submitted staff populations, of eligible staff.
- on the same staff populations (Teaching and Research and Research-only) the year before the census date to look at how the staff decisions made changed these populations.

**B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason):**

- Proposed new policy/practice
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice **yes**
- Other (please state):

**C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:**

Name: Pauline Manchester

Job title: Interim Director of Strategic Planning

School/service/unit: Strategic Planning

**D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:**

- affects primary or high level functions of the University
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)?
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA?

Yes to all of these points. There are consequential funding implications from the results of the REF 2021 exercise for the university, affecting a primary function of conducting research at the university. REF is historically seen as relevant to the career progression of academics; while we have stressed that REF should not be part of these deliberations, the potential continued perception means that we need to continue to be actively alert to the potential EDI implications from REF. It is an exercise where we were required to have conducted an EqlA by the funding councils.

**E. Equality Groups**

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

- Age
- Disability
- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex

- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership<sup>2</sup>

While the policy is relevant to all equality groups, the policy of no decision about an individual's career trajectory being taken on the basis of the REF 2021 assessment cycle means that individuals should be protected from any consequences to selection and submission to REF 2021.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:
- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:  
There are significant data gaps from self-declarations on protected characteristics. For example 2,343 of the 2,714 submitted staff have not provided disability information to the University, so limited analysis can be done within this characteristic group. As data related to protected characteristics of religion/belief, sexual orientation and disability have an over 50% non-disclosure rate this has not been reported here due to the limited insight the data provides.  
No data was available within the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity or marriage or civil partnerships. Prior EqlAs have shown that the paucity of data also apply to gender reassignment and relationship data. Pregnancy and maternity data is not held in a format that can be analysed. Both family related leave and gender reassignment periods were possible activities to be disclosed in the staff circumstances exercise as events that may have affected an academic's ability to conduct research or conduct research productively; however this data is a non-representative snapshot so cannot be used to carry out analysis.
- If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:  
One driver behind the decision to include all staff whose contracts met REF eligibility definitions was to demonstrate the value that the University places on the research carried out by all its eligible academic staff and to combat any perception that decisions about the REF should affect academic career progression or opportunities. This was positively received in discussions with trade unions and staff.
- If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?  
Other groups within the circumstances declarations process were Early Career Researcher (ECR) and Junior Clinical Academic (JCA) status, as these would likely have fewer outputs to contribute from the 2014-2020 period. The staff circumstances EqlA details the engagement with the circumstances declarations process.
- How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?  
The Code of Practice was communicated to each academic member of staff once the document was accepted by the Scottish Funding Council in the Summer of 2019, and in advance of the research independence determination exercise commencing. It is available on the University website, internal REF 2021 SharePoint site, and the Research England website for the exercise.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

- Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:  
The Code of Practice is intended to ensure that no link is made between submission of material associated with an academic to the REF, and their career progression within the University. We have ensured that this is applied consistently by limiting access to information on the number of outputs included in the exercise against each academic staff member as described in the companion equality impact assessment on the selection of outputs process.

## F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision

**Option 1:** No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

**Option 2:** Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.

**Option 3:** Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated/or justified

**Option 4:** Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.

Option 1. This is the EqIA of the REF2021 submission to the funding councils, so that submitted material can not be changed. The assessment shows that in the majority of cases, the submitted REF population is driven by the teaching and research population. There are uneven distributions of staff within both populations, and this should continue to be the subject of equality and diversity processes and cultural improvements across the academic spectrum. However, we are satisfied that the REF processes in and of themselves do not appear to be driving unequal staff protected characteristic distributions.

The policy decisions were 1) to have an inclusive approach to submission, and 2) that REF submission does not affect career progression, meaning that, where the data shows bias within protected characteristics, the REF 2021 exercise has no effect on the individual academics.

## G. Action and Monitoring

- Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).

The EqIA will be shared with the Research Strategy Group, and the Research Culture group. These leadership groups will consider what policy changes should be requested from the UK-wide Future Research Assessment Programme<sup>3</sup>. These committees are also best placed to monitor the research culture and equitable academic career progress within the University and can act as a gateway to other University committees. This should include the practice of judging research independence for research-only staff based on agreed criteria.

- When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?

While the next Research Excellence Framework is an unknown date in the future, the practice of ensuring our Research-only staff are correctly adjudicated on their

<sup>3</sup> <https://re.ukri.org/research/future-research-assessment-programme/>

independence criteria (both on employment and regularly updated) should be an ongoing exercise. This will be reviewed in three years' time to ensure this activity has continued. The policy of REF submission and research output contributions not being part of an individual's career progression can be monitored best within schools.

#### H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? ~~Yes~~/No

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:  
The REF EqIA will be published in July 2021 after confirmation by Research Strategy Group.

#### I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Dr Susan Cooper, Dr Charlotte Brady

Accepted by (name): Pauline Manchester

Date: 15 June 2021

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to [equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk](mailto:equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk)

## Data summary

REF Main Panels are the grouping of Unit of Assessments into similar disciplines. These are REF Main Panel A Medicine, health and life sciences, REF Main Panel B Physical sciences, engineering and mathematics, REF Main Panel C Social sciences, and REF Main Panel D Arts and humanities.

All of these data indicate that further analysis to consider intersections with protected characteristics, as well as with employment characteristics such as mode of employment (PT/FT), contract type (fixed term/ open ended) and grade may be warranted.

## Gender

Table 1: Percentage splits of self-disclosed gender in the academic groups relevant to selection in REF 2021

	Academic body	R-only	R-only Independent	T&R	REF1A population
Female	45%	50%	46%	36%	37%
Male	55%	50%	54%	64%	63%

Females are proportionally under-represented in the REF submitted population. This under-representation appears to come from the existing under-representation in the T&R population which were wholly included in the REF exercise.

Table 2: Percentage splits within panel of gender

	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
Female	38%	19%	50%	46%
Male	62%	81%	50%	54%

## Age

Table 3: Percentage splits of age groups in the academic groups relevant to selection in REF 2021

	Academic body	R-only	R-only independent	T&R	REF1A population
30 yrs and under	12%	25%	4%	1%	1%
31 to 40 years	38%	53%	56%	27%	31%
41 to 50 years	25%	15%	30%	35%	34%
51 to 60 years	17%	6%	9%	24%	22%
61 to 65 years	5%	1%	2%	8%	7%
66+ years	3%	1%	1%	5%	4%
Average Age	42	36	40	47	46

Academics under 41 years old are proportionally under-represented in the REF-submitted population. This under-representation appears to come from the T&R population which were wholly included in the REF exercise. This may be because it takes until later in an academic's career to take up a teaching and research post, which is more likely to be an open-ended role. The R-only exercise to determine research independence also showed preference for older age. As age correlates strongly with career development and research independence this is to be expected.

Table 4: Percentage splits within panel of age groups

	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
30 yrs and under	1%	2%	1%	2%
31 to 40 years	28%	36%	33%	26%
41 to 50 years	35%	31%	35%	39%
51 to 60 years	24%	22%	19%	24%
61 to 65 years	8%	6%	7%	7%

66+ years	5%	3%	5%	3%
Average Age	47	45	46	47

Table 4 shows that Panels A and D slightly favour older academics (29% and 28% under the age of 51 respectively), while Panels B and C slightly favour younger academics (38% and 34% under the age of 51 respectively). Though the average age is very similar in each panel.

### Early Career Representation in REF

Please note that this is the HESA/REF-definition of ECR and therefore automatically means they are REF-eligible and conducting independent research. This definition does not necessarily correlate with age. ECRs are defined as members of staff who meet the definition of Category A eligible on the census date of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 (i.e. are in the REF1a population), and who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016.

*Table 5: Percentage splits within panel of ECRs*

	REF1A population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
ECR	17%	17%	20%	19%	13%
Not ECR	83%	83%	80%	81%	87%

### Race (Ethnicity)

Please note that with 14% of the REF1A population preferring to not disclose their ethnicity limited insight can be taken from these data.

*Table 6: Percentage splits of disclosed ethnicities in the academic groups relevant to selection in REF 2021*

	All academics	R-only	R-only independent	T&R	REF1A population
BAME	15%	21%	13%	13%	13%
White	69%	60%	66%	75%	74%
Information not provided	16%	19%	22%	12%	14%

Proportionately fewer BAME research only staff were identified as independent (13%) than non-BAME research only staff (21%). In comparison to the overall academic body of the university the REF submission appears to under-represent staff disclosing BAME characteristics, though it is very similar proportions to the Teaching and Research population.

Table 7: Percentage splits within panel of disclosed ethnicity

	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
BAME	9%	14%	17%	11%
White	74%	74%	73%	76%
Information not provided	18%	12%	10%	13%

Panel A under-represents staff disclosing BAME characteristics from the average, and Panel D over-represents staff disclosing white ethnicity. However, with the preference of non-disclosure, limited insight is available here.

## Race (nationality)

Table 8: percentage splits of nationality in the academic groups relevant to selection in REF 2021

	All academics	R-only	R-only independent	T&R	Submitted
EU27 and EEA	25%	29%	26%	22%	23%
International	19%	24%	16%	18%	17%
UK	56%	47%	58%	60%	60%

Academics from the UK are proportionally over-represented in the REF submitted population. This over-representation appears to come from the T&R population which were wholly included in the REF exercise.

Table 9: Percentage splits within panel of Nationality

	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
EU27 and EEA	20%	29%	23%	20%
International	11%	21%	23%	16%
UK	70%	50%	54%	64%

Panel A particularly over-represents UK nationals from the submission average.





## Equality Impact Assessment Template

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EqlA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

### **A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description):**

The Research Excellence Framework 2021 (hereafter referred to as REF 2021) is the system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions in the UK. The purpose of the exercise is to assess the quality of UK research and inform the selective allocation of research grants to institutions by the four UK higher education funding bodies with effect from 2022-23. This exercise in the University of Edinburgh was guided by a Code of Practice, accepted by the Scottish Funding Council. REF require that a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 outputs must be attributed to each member of staff, with an average of 2.5 outputs per FTE included in the University's REF submission.

### **Selection of outputs for return to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 exercise and attribution to academics**

- 1) All REF-eligible (and therefore submitted as "REF1a") academics were required to be attributed against a minimum 1 and maximum of 5 outputs, making up to 2.5 outputs per FTE in a Unit of Assessment (UoA) pool. Eligible academics were invited to nominate outputs for potential REF submission. Each UoA formed an internal panel to conduct reviews and assign predicted grades. Graded outputs then made up the output pool that was submitted. All internal panel members for output scoring were required to complete both a general course on unconscious bias, and a REF-specific course on biases. The output selection for submission process was that the forecast quality rating was the primary determinant, but beyond that there should be equal consideration of both the strategy across the UoA sub-disciplines and also equality, diversity and inclusion. Guidance on scoring outputs was provided at college and university level.
- 2) This REF exercise sought to decouple outputs submitted from the staff submitted- to ensure that the focus of the exercise was on assessing the University, not the individuals. While there is still some necessary output attribution to individuals within a unit's submission, the University agreed to not release the output attribution lists within schools, with the attributions being kept to the Unit of Assessment coordinator (academic lead) and administrator (professional services lead). Additionally a Head of School was not allowed to be the UoA coordinator so that the person in a school most responsible for academic promotions was not privy to the details of individuals' contributions to REF.

This final EqlA is in two parts, this part reviewing output policies and another reviewing the submission of academics to the REF 2021 exercise. Therefore this EqlA should be read alongside the staff inclusion EqlA to give a complete overview of the EDI assessment of the

REF exercise. These follow on from EqlAs conducted during the process (published separately):

- on the mock REF conducted in 2018 that is an appendix to the Code of Practice.
- at the end of the staff circumstances process which identified staff with a case for a reduction in the number of attributed outputs (see below).
- on the submitted staff populations, of eligible staff.
- on the same staff populations (Teaching and Research and Research-only) the year before the census date to look at how the staff decisions made changed these populations.

The staff circumstances exercise, as referenced throughout this document, was designed and implemented for academic staff, so they could detail their personal and professional circumstances that had affected them in the REF period (January 2014 to July 2020), and therefore may have consequences to their contribution to output selections. This would then be fed into the unit's decision making on outputs.

**B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason):**

- Proposed new policy/practice
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice **yes**
- Other (please state):

**C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:**

Name: Pauline Manchester

Job title: Interim Director of Strategic Planning

School/service/unit: Strategic Planning

**D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:**

- affects primary or high level functions of the University
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)?
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqlA?

Yes to all of these points. There are consequential funding implications from the results of the REF 2021 exercise for the university, affecting a primary function of conducting research at the university. REF is historically seen as relevant to the career progression of academics. While we have stressed that REF should not be part of these deliberations, the potential continued perception means that we need to continue to be actively alert to the potential EDI implications from REF and therefore the promotion of equality within the organisation to ensure fairness. It is an exercise where we were required to have conducted an EqlA by the funding councils.

**E. Equality Groups**

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

- Age
- Disability

- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership<sup>1</sup>

While the policy is relevant to all equality groups, the policy of no decision about an individual's career trajectory being taken on the basis of the REF 2021 assessment cycle means that individuals should be protected from any consequences from output selection and submission to REF 2021.

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:  
There are significant data gaps from self-declarations on protected characteristics. For example 2,343 of the 2,714 submitted staff have not provided disability information to the University, so limited analysis can be done within this characteristic group. As data related to protected characteristics of religion/belief, sexual orientation and disability have an over 50% non-disclosure rate this has not been reported here due to the limited insight the data provides.  
No data was available within the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity or marriage or civil partnerships. Prior EqlAs have shown that the paucity of data also apply to gender reassignment and relationship data. Pregnancy and maternity data is not held in a format that can be analysed. Both family related leave and gender reassignment periods were possible activities to be disclosed in the staff circumstances exercise as events that may have affected an academic's ability to conduct research or conduct research productively; however this data is a non-representative snapshot so cannot be used to carry out analysis.
- If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?  
Other groups eligible within the circumstances declarations process were Early Career Researcher (ECR) and Junior Clinical Academic (JCA) status, as these would likely have fewer outputs to contribute from the 2014-2020 period. The staff circumstances EqlA details the engagement with the circumstances declarations process.
- How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?  
The Code of Practice and declarations process (designed to support staff with personal and professional circumstances that may have affected their research productivity in the period of 2014-2020) were communicated to each academic member of staff once the Code of Practice was accepted by the Scottish Funding Council in the Summer of 2019, and in advance of the research-independence determination exercise commencing. It is available on the University website, internal REF 2021 SharePoint site, and the Research England website for the exercise. More information on the research-independence determination exercise and therefore inclusion in the REF1a population of Research-only conducting academics can be found in the staff inclusion EqlA and also the Code of Practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

- How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?  
An analysis of the protected characteristics of the staff involved with REF preparations was undertaken in 2019, both academic and non-academic. The characteristics were representative of the corresponding UoE wide population.  
A gap has been noted that it is unknown how many members of staff EDI networks participated in output scoring. Engagement with EDI networks for future assignments could include encouraging the EDI networks to participate in any internal output scoring within units of assessment. In the REF 2021 exercise the internal panels for output scoring were required to undertake courses on biases. However, the panels of scorers were not reviewed for protected characteristics and it is unknown whether they were representative of the units of assessment as a whole.
- Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:  
The Code of Practice is intended to ensure that no link is made between submission of material associated with an academic to the REF, and their career progression within the University. We have ensured that this is applied consistently by limiting access to information on the number of outputs included in the exercise against each academic staff member as described in paragraph 2A above.

#### F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision

**Option 1:** No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

**Option 2:** Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.

**Option 3:** Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated/or justified

**Option 4:** Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.

Option 1 and 2. This is the EqIA of the REF2021 submission to the funding councils, so that submitted material cannot be changed. For this exercise, the practices cannot be changed. However, the results have implications for future exercises which need to be considered. The results show that there are some inequities in the distribution of outputs across different protected characteristics. This means that there will need to be further consideration of this in the planning and preparation for the next exercise as well as in relation to wider research culture at the university.

More work is needed to identify whether the lower submission of outputs by female academics and (to a perhaps lesser extent) ethnic minority groups is representative of lower *volume* of production of outputs, lower *attribution* of outputs where co-authors are both employed at the university, or lower perceived or actual quality of outputs. More commentary on this is given below Table 2 (gender), Table 4 (age), Table 8 (ethnicity) and Table 10 (nationality). These underlying issues may all be apposite and intersecting. These steps would require resourcing not currently available within the REF team and further work from across the university to make any necessary changes. Broader issues of research culture at this university and elsewhere would also be most likely behind these issues and would require more work to overcome.

However the policy decisions were 1) to have an inclusive approach to submission, and 2) that REF submission does not affect career progression, meaning that where the data shows

bias within protected characteristics, the REF 2021 exercise has no effect on the individual academics.

#### **G. Action and Monitoring**

1. Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).  
The EqIA will be shared with the Research Strategy Group, and the Research Culture group. These leadership groups will consider what policy changes should be requested from the UK-wide Future Research Assessment Programme<sup>2</sup>. These committees are also best placed to monitor the research culture and equitable academic career progress within the University and can act as a gateway to other University committees. They are also able to commission a review into whether more outputs could have been attributed to people with minority protected characteristics without penalty to the university if they deem it necessary.
2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?  
While the next Research Excellence Framework is an unknown date in the future, the analysis of the outputs spread will be reviewed as part of the REF 2021 results analysis, after they are released in Spring 2022.

#### **H. Publication of EqIA**

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? No

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:

This EIA is subject to confirmation by Research Strategy Group, and may be published after that confirmation, expected 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

#### **I. Sign-off**

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)): Dr Susan Cooper, Dr Charlotte Brady

Accepted by (name): Pauline Manchester

Date: 15 June 2021

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to [equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk](mailto:equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk)

## **Data summary**

Note, that while the average outputs per FTE is 2.5, the average outputs (including double weighting where appropriate) per headcount for the University is 2.37.

This analysis focusses only on outputs associated with REF1a staff submitted (i.e. current eligible staff on the census date of July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020). This is because every REF1b staff member (former or formerly eligible on the census date) will have been included only because of the specific outputs which reflect the contribution of the university to research while this member of staff was working at the university. We do not necessarily have up to

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<sup>2</sup> <https://re.ukri.org/research/future-research-assessment-programme/>

date protected characteristics data for these staff. Including their outputs could potentially skew any results.

REF Main Panels are the grouping of Unit of Assessments into similar disciplines. These are REF Main Panel A. Medicine, health and life sciences, REF Main Panel B. Physical sciences, engineering and mathematics, REF Main Panel C. Social sciences, and REF Main Panel D. Arts and humanities.

All of these data indicate that additional analysis to consider intersection of protected characteristics with employment characteristics such as mode of employment (PT/FT), contract type (fixed term/ open ended) and grade is warranted.

## Gender

Table 1: Output contributions to pool by disclosed gender within panels (headcount percentage in brackets)

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
Female	33% (37%)	32% (38%)	15% (19%)	47% (50%)	41% (46%)
Male	67% (63%)	68% (62%)	85% (81%)	53% (50%)	59% (54%)

Table 2: Av. REF output contributed per headcount by gender and panel

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
Female	2.11	1.91	1.93	2.22	2.37
Male	2.53	2.54	2.43	2.48	2.81

Across all panels the outputs of self-declared female academics, relative to headcount, are under-represented relative to those of male academics. Female academics represent 38% of Panel A's return but are under-represented in the submitted outputs at 32%, a 6% shift. Female academics represent 19% of Panel B's return and 15% of the associated outputs (a 4% shift).

Further investigation into this would be needed to understand the cause of this under-representation. There could be several contributing factors, which are not mutually exclusive, including:

- Deliberate and appropriate adjustment of output volume to take into account staff circumstances reporting. If this took place based on declaration of circumstances affecting academics' ability to conduct research productively, this would show that the staff circumstances process achieved an expected result.
- Lower volume of publication of outputs during the period by female academics than by males. This would imply that the distribution is representative of authorship,

though would raise further questions regarding the opportunities for publication by female academics. This would imply a much more significant, culture related piece of work which would be of sectoral importance as well as University of Edinburgh consideration. That there are gender differences in publication rate is well known. UKRI diversity data published in 2021<sup>3</sup> shows that the proportion of female academics who are the recipients of fellowships or make successful grant applications is steadily improving from which it would be expected that more female-led outputs would follow but more work is needed.

- Lower volume of attribution of co-authored outputs to females than males in the submission. This could be a consequence of unconscious (or conscious) biases. Investigating this fully would be challenging: no university system holds complete data on the gender of each author on outputs in the submission; nor is there a formulaic way to join output data (held in Pure, the university's research information system) with protected characteristics staff data held within People and Money. It would theoretically be possible to do so, but would need very significant analytical time.
- Lower perceived quality of outputs by reviewers and attributors. This could be because of actual lower quality, which would need addressed as a cultural issue; or because of biases, which again would require cultural improvements, but could also potentially be addressed through better training or (possibly) anonymisation of author on outputs. The latter would have challenges but might merit further investigation. It is difficult to disentangle these two issues, as quality assessment is a subjective process. The implementation of a University responsible metrics policy which is an ongoing task is hoped will assist with this process; however, it is noted that more work is clearly necessary in awareness raising, as UoAs were asked to make sure their output assessors were aware that in 2019 University committed itself to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment.

Each of these would merit extra work to understand whether more could be done to increase the representativeness of female attribution of outputs – however there would be quite significant resource implications of doing so which would need careful consideration. We recommend that these issues are considered by the Research Culture sub-group of Research Strategy Group, and by the EDIC Gender sub-group.

## Age

Table 3: Output contributions to pool by age group within panels (headcount percentage in brackets)

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
30 yrs and under	1% (1%)	0% (1%)	2% (2%)	1% (1%)	1% (2%)
31 to 40 years	31% (31%)	27% (28%)	37% (36%)	31% (33%)	30% (26%)
41 to 50 years	35% (34%)	36% (35%)	32% (31%)	35% (35%)	40% (39%)

<sup>3</sup> UKRI Diversity data for research funding <https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-publishes-latest-diversity-data-for-research-funding/>

51 to 60 years	22% (22%)	24% (24%)	21% (22%)	21% (19%)	21% (24%)
61 to 65 years	7% (7%)	7% (8%)	5% (6%)	7% (7%)	7% (7%)
66+ years	4% (4%)	5% (5%)	3% (3%)	6% (5%)	3% (3%)

*Table 4: Av. REF output contributed per age group headcount and panel*

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
30 yrs and under	1.79	1.29	2.33	1.44	1.63
31 to 40 years	2.38	2.22	2.41	2.20	2.98
41 to 50 years	2.42	2.36	2.41	2.32	2.67
51 to 60 years	2.35	2.33	2.31	2.54	2.24
61 to 65 years	2.2	2.14	1.88	2.43	2.39
66+ years	2.48	2.46	1.96	2.88	2.50

In panel D 31-40 years old represent 26% of the submission and are returning 30% of the associated outputs. Also in panel D 51-60 years old represent 24% of the submission and are returning 21% of the associated outputs.

Some differential representation of staff by age might be expected given the career stage of academics, and there is some loose association with age. Further analysis of outputs by grade and looking at this alongside the ECR data below could shed more light on this. It is interesting to note that staff in the oldest age bracket have the largest proportion of outputs. This could potentially be due to the mature stage of a PI's research group allowing for more of their time dedicated to writing outputs, than developing their group and/or laboratory.

It is possible that there may be intersections between the protected characteristics of age and pregnancy/maternity which may also account for a drop in outputs, if time has been taken for family related leave.

### Early Career Representation in REF

Please note that this is the REF/HESA-definition of ECR and does not necessarily correlate with age. ECRs are defined as members of staff who meet the definition of Category A eligible on the census date of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 (i.e. are in the REF1a population), and who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.

*Table 5: Output contributions to pool by ECRs within panels (headcount percentage in brackets)*

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
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ECR	15% (17%)	15% (17%)	19% (20%)	15% (19%)	11% (13%)
Not ECR	85% (83%)	85% (83%)	81% (80%)	85% (81%)	89% (87%)

*Table 6: Av. REF output contributed per ECR headcount and panel*

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
ECR	2.09	2.09	2.29	1.85	2.12
Not ECR	2.43	2.34	2.35	2.46	2.68

By definition ECRs are at the start of their career as independent researchers, therefore it is to be expected that ECRs will have a smaller body of outputs from which outputs of the top quality could be chosen relative to academics who are more established.

It is possible that there may be intersections between the ECR characteristics with other employment characteristics such as contract type (fixed term or open-ended) which may have limited an academic's ability to conduct research, as well as the protected characteristics here.

## Race (Ethnicity)

Please note that with 14% of the REF1a population preferring to not disclose their ethnicity limited insight can be taken from these data.

*Table 7: Output contributions to pool by disclosed ethnicity within panels (headcount percentage in brackets)*

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
BAME	12% (13%)	8% (9%)	16% (14%)	14% (17%)	12% (11%)
White	73% (74%)	73% (74%)	72% (74%)	74% (73%)	74% (76%)
Information not provided	14% (14%)	19% (18%)	12% (12%)	12% (10%)	14% (13%)

*Table 8: Av. REF output contributed per ethnicity disclosure and panel*

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
BAME	2.32	2.21	2.57	1.94	2.84
White	2.35	2.26	2.29	2.40	2.56

Information not provided	2.54	2.49	2.38	2.67	2.70
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In panel A staff disclosing BAME characteristics are under-represented from the average and have fewer outputs associated with them. In panel C those declaring as BAME represent 17% of the submission and are returning 14% of the associated outputs.

The differences in distribution from the staff population are relatively small but still may be worth investigating further, in a similar way to the issues identified for gender. Such analysis will have to take account of the fact that at a greater level of granularity the number who chose not to disclose an answer may obscure the results.

## Race (nationality)

Table 9: Output contributions to pool by nationality within panels (headcount percentage in brackets)

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
EU27 and EEA	23% (23%)	21% (20%)	30% (29%)	23% (23%)	20% (20%)
International	18% (17%)	11% (11%)	23% (21%)	22% (23%)	18% (16%)
UK	59% (60%)	68% (70%)	47% (50%)	55% (54%)	62% (64%)

In panel B UK nationals represent 50% of the submission and are returning 47% of the associated outputs.

Table 10: Av. REF output contributed per headcount by nationality and panel

	REF1a population	Panel A	Panel B	Panel C	Panel D
EU27 and EEA	2.42	2.43	2.40	2.36	2.54
International	2.49	2.31	2.60	2.24	3.01
UK	2.32	2.26	2.20	2.39	2.53

Despite UK nationals making up the majority in each panel, for panels A and B the average contribution to the output total was less than the average contributions from International and EU27 and EEA nationals. This may reflect differences in the career stage at which non UK academics are appointed bringing with them a body of outputs.

Table 11: Analysis of outputs within the International category of Nationality

OECD Official Development Assistance category <sup>4</sup>	People	Outputs	Av. REF output contributed per headcount
High income countries	64%	70%	2.69
Upper Middle income countries	23%	20%	2.15
Lower Middle income countries	12%	10%	2.05
Low and Lowest income countries	1%	1%	2.00

Within the submitted international population, the outputs of people from high-ODA category countries are over-represented. It is likely that there are intersections between this characteristic and ethnicity, age and certain employment characteristics correlating with career stage but more research would be needed to gain insight into this trend.

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<sup>4</sup> This data is for the international category only, but UK and EU27 and EEA countries would also be considered 'High income'. For more information on The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Official Development Assistance please visit <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm>