EQUALITY SCREENING PRO - FORMA

Policy Title: REF2029 Code of Practice

Decision: Screen out (with mitigation)

Contact: Natalie Dallat

Date of Completion: 05 October 2026

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

REF2029 Code of Practice

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

The Code of Practice is a revision of the REF2021 Code of Practice and reflects the new processes for REF2029.

What is it trying to achieve? (For example, intended aims and outcomes)

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK-wide system used to assess the quality and impact of research in universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs). The outcomes influence the distribution of approximately £2 billion per year of public research funding across the UK. The next REF is REF2029.
It is a requirement from the UK funding bodies that HEIs wishing to submit to REF2029 must develop and implement robust processes around the identification of staff with significant research responsibility (SRR) and outputs for inclusion in the REF submission.

The purpose of the Code of Practice (CoP) is to ensure that the processes for identifying staff with SRR and selecting outputs for inclusion in REF2029 adhere to the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusion.
The processes detailed in this CoP have been designed to ensure inclusion and to maximise participation by ensuring that ALL eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029 regardless of protected characteristics.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, explain how below.

Note: The Section 75 categories are:

- religious belief
- political opinion
- racial group
- age
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- sex (men and women generally)

- disability
- dependants

We do not expect any category in particular to benefit from the REF CoP, as it sets out to afford equality of opportunity for **all** research active staff, regardless of their S75 categories. The principles governing the REF2029 processes are equity, equality and transparency.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (PVCR), together with the Research Leadership Team (RLT) initiated the revision of the REF2021 CoP to reflect the new requirements for REF2029. The draft was written by the Head of Research Performance and Systems in conjunction with the PVCR and Associate Deans for Research and Impact (ADRIs).

Who owns and implements the policy?

The PVCR owns the CoP. The REF2029 Steering Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, has oversight of the REF2029 submission and oversee the implementation of the REF CoP. Research Directors and Heads of School are responsible for implementing the processes within the CoP.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to or weaken the intended aim or outcome of the policy?

Yes

If yes, are they financial, legislative or other?

Financial: Dependent on funding from the Department for the Economy (DfE)
Other: Changes to the REF2029 Guidance

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy

- Staff
- Other public sector organisations (DfE)
- Trade Unions

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Policy: Research Strategy
Policy owner: PVCR

Policy: PURE and Open Access Policy
Policy owner: Head of Research Performance and Systems

Policy: Rights Retention Policy for Scholarly Works
Policy owner: Open Research Manager

Policy: Equal Opportunities Policy
Policy owner: Chief People Officer

Policy: People, Place and Partnership – Delivering Sustainable Futures for All Strategy
Policy owner: Vice-Chancellor

Available evidence

What evidence or information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories below.

The following data is based on our total cohort of Staff, our total cohort of Academic Staff, our cohort of Eligible Academic Staff (that is: Teaching and Research) and our profile of Academic Staff with Significant Research Responsibility (SRR), drawn from the pool of Eligible Academic staff. All the data above came from our PeopleXD system.

Religious Belief

On 6 February 2026:

- our overall staff profile was 42.9% Catholic, 36.7% Protestant and 20.4% Not Determined;
- our Academic staff profile was 41.6% Catholic, 28.3% Protestant and 30.1% Not Determined;
- the profile of our Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) staff pool was 40% Catholic, 26.6% Protestant and 33.4% Not Determined;
- our SRR Academic staff profile was 39.6% Catholic, 30.8% Protestant and 29.6% Not Determined.

Political Opinion

The University does not collect information on Political Opinion or make assumptions regarding Political Opinion based on Community Background.

Racial Group

On 6 February 2026:

- our overall staff profile was 92% White and 8% Minority Ethnic (BME);
- our Academic staff profile was 88.6% White and 11.4% Minority Ethnic (BME);
- the profile of our Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) staff pool was 83.8% White and 16.2% BME;
- the profile of our SRR Academic staff was 85.8% White and 14.2% BME.

Our BME profile suggests that we are twice as diverse as the local population, as the Northern Ireland Census 2021 suggests that 3.4% of the NI population is BME.

Age

On 6 February 2026:

- the profile of our overall staff for each age band was 17.3% Age 26-35; 26% Age 36-45; 29.7% Age 46-55 and 25.2% Age 56+;
- the profile of our Academic staff for each age band was 10.8% Age 26-35; 28.2% Age 36-45; 32.3% Age 46-55 and 28.6% Age 56+;
- the profile of Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) staff for each age band was 15.3% Age 26-35; 29.3% Age 36-45; 29.2% Age 46-55 and 21.6 % Age 56+;
- the profile of our SRR Academic staff for each age band was 7.7% Age 26-35; 27.6% Age 36-45; 32.5% Age 46-55 and 26.8 Age 56+.

Marital Status

On 6 February 2026:

- 55.1% of overall staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership';
- 60.3% of Academic staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership';
- 55.9% of our Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership';
- our SRR Academic staff profile showed that 59.8% were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership'.

Sexual Orientation

On 6 February 2026:

- 75.5% of overall staff were 'Heterosexual'; 5% were 'LGBT+' and 19.5% were 'Not Known'.
- 71.3% of Academic staff were 'Heterosexual'; 4.7% were 'LGBT+' and 24% were 'Not Known';
- our profile of Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) staff was 69.8% Heterosexual'; 4.8% 'LGBT+' and 25.4% 'Not Known';
- our profile of SRR Academic staff was 68.1% 'Heterosexual'; 4.3% 'LGBT+' and 27.6% 'Not Known'.

Men and Women generally

On 6 February 2026:

- 58% of overall staff were Female;
- 49.7% of Academic staff were Female;
- 46.2% of our Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) were Female;

- 41.3% of our SRR Academic staff were Female.

Disability

On 6 February 2026:

- 7.2% of overall staff declared a disability;
- 7% of Academic staff declared a disability;
- 6.2% our Eligible Academic; (that is, Teaching and Research) staff pool declared a disability
- 6.5% of our SRR Academic staff declared a disability.

Our disability declaration rate is lower than expected, compared with the local population. The NI Census (2021) found that 24% of the NI population stated that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a long-standing health problem or disability.

Dependants

On 6 February 2026:

- 43.4% of overall staff had dependants;
- 48.2% of Academic staff had dependants;
- 43.8% our Eligible Academic (that is, Teaching and Research) staff had dependents; and
- 48.8% of our SRR Academic staff had dependents.

Needs, experience and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy or decision? (Please specify for each of the Section 75 categories below the needs, experiences and priorities)

Religious Belief

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning community background.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect staff with protected characteristics and limits opportunities for exclusion of any particular group.

Political Opinion

None identified.

Racial Group

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning racial group.

Since 2021 the University has received the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award from Advance HE which recognizes the University's commitment to tackling racial inequalities and building a more inclusive environment for staff, further demonstrating our commitment to EDI.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect staff with protected characteristics and limits opportunities for exclusion of any particular group.

Age

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning any particular age band. Younger researchers and early career academics were less represented among SRR staff and this was partly linked to career stage and the requirement for research independence which tends to favour more established academics.

Since REF2021 the University has secured membership of the Age-Friendly University Global Network (AFUGN) which recognizes our commitment to promoting positive and healthy ageing, and to enhancing the lives of older members of the community.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect Early Career Researchers and limits opportunities for exclusion of any particular age group. By detaching individual researchers from specific output selections, this protects early-career and late-career staff from targeted output pressures.

Criteria around research independence and responsibility must be applied fairly across all age demographics.

Marital Status

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning marital status.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect staff with protected characteristics and limits opportunities for exclusion of any particular group.

Sexual Orientation

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning sexual orientation.

Since REF2021 the University has established a LGBT+ network, which is a vehicle to promote and enhance equality and inclusion across the University.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect staff with protected characteristics and limits opportunities for exclusion of any particular group.

Men and Women generally

National analysis undertaken for REF2021 found that women were better represented among submitted staff than in previous exercises and that the gap between men and women who participated narrowed.

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning gender. For SRR Academic staff there was a higher selection rate for male staff (60.9%) compared with female staff (39.1%). Of the total number of ECRs submitted (82), 41.5% were female and 58.5% male. For 2029 to date there remains a lower selection of female staff (41.3%). The REF2021 national findings were that women remained under-represented in the submitted REF population relative to men although this largely reflected existing inequalities in the senior academic workforce rather than REF selection decisions alone.

Our commitment to the principles of the Athena Swan Charter is recognised through the achievement of a distinguished Athena Swan Silver institutional award which recognises and celebrates good employment practice for supporting the development and inclusion of women working in higher education and all aspects of university life.

As part of our Athena Swan Charter, a Women's network has been established as a vehicle to promote and enhance equality and inclusion across the University. The University continues to fund staff to participate in the Aurora Leadership Development Programme which is specifically designed to encourage women to think of themselves as future leaders and actively engage in developing their leadership potential.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect staff with protected characteristics and limits opportunities for exclusion of any particular group. The REF rules allow adjustments and unit reductions for absences related to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption, and family care.

Disability

Our equality screening for REF2021 demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning disability. A small number of staff in the eligible Academic T&R pool (4.1%) had declared a disability and this equated with the proportion of disabled Academic SRR staff (4.1%) – however both these figures represent a decrease when compared with the overall academic pool where 5.3% declared a disability.

For 2029 a small number of staff in the eligible Academic Teaching and Research pool (6.2%) had declared a disability and this increased slightly with the proportion of disabled Academic SRR staff (6.5%). Both these figures represented a fractional decrease when compared with the overall academic pool where 7% declared a disability.

Our REF2021 equality screening also indicated the potential for positive impact for those with a declared disability as the CoP clearly outlined the University's commitment to supporting and promoting EDI. Our REF2029 CoP refers to our 'Disability Positive AAA* accreditation which recognizes the work the University has undertaken in implementing a wide array of practical measures to attract and retain employees and service users with disabilities.

Disabled staff (Panel Members) may require reasonable adjustments to the REF process in order to participate fully.

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect disabled staff. The new rules for REF2029 limit opportunities for exclusion of any particular groups.

Dependants

Our REF2021 equality screening demonstrated there was no disproportionate impact for staff selected concerning dependants. Instead, it indicated the potential for positive impact for staff with or without dependents as the CoP clearly outlined the University's commitment to supporting and promoting EDI and the measures in place to support this.

Since REF2021 the University has established a Returning Carers' scheme (RCS) to support individuals affected by periods of leave for caring responsibilities. In March 2026, a Carers' Network was established, to encourage members to connect, share experiences and strengthen support for those with caring responsibilities

The REF2029 rules do not require a minimum of one output attributed to each member of SRR staff which reduces any pressure that may disproportionately affect staff with dependents or caring responsibilities. The new rules for REF2029 limit opportunities for exclusion of particular groups. The REF2029 decouples staff from outputs, but guidelines require institutions to factor individual circumstances (such as career breaks or caring responsibilities for dependants) into output expectations through the CoP.

Consultation

Consultation with relevant groups, organisations or individuals about the policy can provide useful information about issues or opportunities which are specifically related to them (that is evidence to inform the policy).

Please indicate whether you carried out or intend to carry out any consultation exercises prior to equality screening?

Yes, the following were consulted during the development of the CoP:

- Associate Deans for Research and Impact and Research Directors who represent the research community were asked to provide feedback on each of the sections/processes within the CoP.
- Members of the Senate, Research and Innovation Committee and REF2029 Steering Committee also provided feedback.
- The PVCR also consulted with UCU.

Part 2: Screening questions

Introduction

The answers to the following screening questions will assist the University in making a decision whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment on the policy. The following information is provided to help you to identify and comment on the level of likely impact of the policy in question 1 to 4.

Select 'major' impact if:

a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;

b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there are insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;

c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;

d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;

f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Select 'minor' impact if:

a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;

b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;

c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunities for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations;

e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Select 'none' if:

a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;

b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Taking into account the evidence presented in Part 1, please complete the screening questions (Question 1 to 4).

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 categories?

   Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**
   The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

   What is the level of impact?
   Minor

   Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**
   The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

   Level of impact
   Minor

   Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

   The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

   Level of impact
   Minor

   Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**

   The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

   Level of impact
   Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**

The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

Level of impact
Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**

The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

Level of impact
Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women generally**

The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

Level of impact
Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**

The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

Level of impact
Minor

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**

The CoP is likely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group as it sets out to ensure that all eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029, regardless of protected characteristics.

Level of impact
Minor

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2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Religious Belief
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Political Opinion
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Racial Group
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Age
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Marital Status
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Sexual Orientation
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Men and Women generally
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Disability
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

Dependants
No, this CoP sets out to provide equality of opportunity for all colleagues regardless of Section 75 category.

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3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief
Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**
The CoP is likely to impact on good relations for this category; it sets out to encourage good relations in regard to religious belief.

Level of impact
Minor

Political Opinion
Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**
The CoP is likely to impact on good relations for this category; it sets out to encourage good relations in regard to political opinion.

Level of impact
Minor

Racial Group
Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**
The CoP is likely to impact on good relations for this category; it sets out to encourage good relations in regard to racial group.

Level of impact

Minor

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4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief
No, the CoP sets out to promote good relations, regardless of religious belief.

Political Opinion
No, the CoP sets out to promote good relations, regardless of political opinion.

Racial Group
No, the CoP sets out to promote good relations, regardless of racial group.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

5. Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities? (For example, disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men, and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Yes

Please specify the relevant Section 75 categories concerned below.
Provide details of the policy impact and data which describes the policy impact.

All. Taking into account the University's commitment to and measures for supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, there is potential for positive impact for people with multiple identities which include, for example:

- men and women generally
- staff with a declared disability or
- staff with dependents.

Disability Duties

6. Does the policy provide an opportunity to encourage disabled people to participate in University life?

   Yes, given the University's commitment to and measures for supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, there is potential to encourage disabled staff to participate fully in the REF.

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7. Does the policy provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

   Yes, given the University's commitment to and measures for supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, there is potential to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people throughout the REF process.

Part 3: Screening decision

Based on the evidence considered and outlined in Part 1 and the responses to the screening questions (Part 2), please indicate the screening decision for this policy.

Note: The University should take particular care not to screen out policies that have a procurement aspect if there is potential to promote equality of opportunity through the procurement of services.

☐ **Screen in** the policy (that is, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **major** in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

☐ **Screen out** the policy without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **none** in respect of all of equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

☒ **Screen out** the policy and **mitigate the impacts on equality** by **amending or changing the policy**, or by **developing an alternative policy or action** (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen in' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out'

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), and mitigate the impacts on equality of opportunity by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action, please provide reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

The likely impact is minor in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories, however this impact is likely to be positive.

The purpose of the Code of Practice (CoP) is to ensure that the processes for identifying staff with SRR and selecting outputs for inclusion in REF2029 adhere to the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusion.

The processes detailed in this CoP have been designed to ensure inclusion and to maximise participation by ensuring that ALL eligible members of staff are given the opportunity to contribute to REF2029 regardless of protected characteristics.

We will review and update (monitor) EO data at key stages of the implementation of the REF. This will enable us to identify and assess any emerging disproportionate impact on those with protected characteristics prior to submission.

Timetabling and prioritising

If the policy had been **'screened in'** for an equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on equality of opportunity and good relations:

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of social need

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on people's daily lives

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of relevance to the University's functions

Not applicable

Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its quarterly Screening Reports.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Not applicable

Approval and authorisation



Screened by:
Position or Job Title: Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research
Date screened: 01 October 2026



Approved by:
Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer
Date approved: 05 October 2026

Review

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 05 October 2028