# REF2029 Code of Practice: Health Sciences University (HSU)

**Date of submission: 3 February 2026**

**Date approved by Research England: June 2026**

## Part 1: Introduction

HSU's REF2029 Code of Practice (CoP) sets out the policies and procedures for its preparation and submission for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 in a way that is robust, transparent, equitable, and inclusive. This includes policies and processes for:

- Determining staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR)
- Determining which staff have research independence (RI)
- Allocating staff contracts to units of assessment (UoAs)
- Selecting outputs for submission
- Managing appeals and review processes

HSU has taken account of learning from previous REF Equality Impact Assessments and CoPs. The experience of staff involved in REF2021 at HSU and other universities has informed the development of this CoP. Lessons from previous exercises include taking a team approach to REF, the importance of transparent criteria, robust and fair research assessment processes, early communication, and embedding equality considerations at every stage of preparation. This CoP builds on that learning to strengthen fairness, consistency, and inclusivity in HSU's REF2029 processes. It also reflects HSU's institutional commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), responsible research assessment, and the development of a positive research culture and environment.

HSU will maintain proportionate and auditable records of decisions, procedures, and supporting evidence relating to REF preparations. These records will be retained in accordance with institutional policies on data protection and record management and will be made available for audit by the funding bodies if requested.

A list of acronyms and abbreviations used in this document is available in Appendix 2.

### 1.1 Supporting the principles of robustness, transparency, and equity & inclusion

**Robustness:** The CoP outlines clear, auditable procedures and criteria for determining staff contracts with SRR and RI, allocating staff contracts to UoAs, selecting outputs for submission, and managing appeals and review processes. This ensures the robustness and integrity of our REF preparations and submission, for example, by ensuring that the volume measure reliably reflects staff responsibilities and that a substantive link can be evidenced between HSU and the submitted outputs. These criteria are based on formal records maintained independently of REF preparations and are applied consistently across all eligible contracts. HSU does not use proxies such as metrics or journal/author prestige in the assessment of outputs. Instead, outputs are reviewed through a process of qualitative peer review and external calibration, and are considered based on their intrinsic quality, using REF criteria of originality, significance, and rigour.

**Transparency:** The CoP is communicated to all staff, including those on leave or based outside the UK, through direct email, staff briefings, and dedicated internal REF webpages. Additional guidance documents and information will be available to support staff understanding. Following approval by the funding bodies, this CoP will be published in full on HSU's public website, ensuring unrestricted access for staff, students, and external stakeholders. Alternative formats will be made available upon request. The CoP is clear as to how decisions are made. Staff are informed of provisional decisions and given opportunities to query or appeal, with clear timelines and procedures outlined in the CoP.

**Equity and inclusion:** Decisions about submissions are made through inclusive and impartial processes that value diverse contributions across roles, career stages, people, and research (including disciplines and output types). All eligible outputs are considered, and the selection processes are subject to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to identify and mitigate potential bias. Mandatory training for reviewers and decision-makers includes research-specific unconscious bias awareness and guidance on responsible research assessment. The CoP embeds HSU's commitment to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), ensuring that all research is assessed on its intrinsic quality through a process of qualitative peer review.

## 1.2 Contextualisation within institutional policies

This CoP aligns with HSU's broader institutional policies and procedures including EDI (such as the HSU EDI & Belonging Policy), responsible research assessment, workload planning, and those relating to strategy, people and the research environment. As a signatory to DORA and CoARA and a grant recipient of EU funding to embed the CoARA principles across the University, HSU has integrated responsible research assessment and inclusive practices into its academic framework, personal research planning process, and performance review process. Qualitative peer review is central to all research assessment at HSU, including REF policies and procedures. The CoP reflects these principles by excluding inappropriate metrics and journal or author prestige indicators, supporting diverse output types, and ensuring fair treatment of all staff and research contributions.

The HSU REF Working Group includes several members who also serve on the HSU CoARA Working Group, including the same chair. As a small and specialist institution, there is also limited overlapping membership between the Outputs Review Panels and the CoARA Working Group. This cross-membership supports alignment between REF processes and the principles of responsible research assessment, helping to ensure that REF policies and practices recognise diverse output types and value a broad range of research contributions.

HSU recognises, however, that cross-membership may also introduce risks relating to independence, challenge, and perceptions of concentration of influence. These risks are mitigated through clear advisory remits, conflict of interest management, recusal procedures, independent appeals arrangements, and transparent documentation of decisions. This approach ensures that responsible research assessment principles are embedded while maintaining confidence in the fairness, openness, and robustness of REF-related decision-making.

HSU is committed to ensuring that fixed-term and part-time staff, including contract research staff, are treated equitably and supported to engage fully in research. All eligible staff, regardless of contract type or working hours, are included in REF processes and considered for submission on the same basis as permanent and full-time staff. The structured personal research planning process is available to all academic staff and enables tailored support for research development such as mentoring. Equality Impact Assessments are conducted on all key REF processes, including SRR/RI identification and output selection, to monitor and address any disparities affecting staff on fixed-term or part-time contracts.

## 1.3 Update on actions since REF2021

Since REF2021, HSU has taken several actions to improve inclusivity and strengthen its research culture and environment. These include:

- Introducing a structured Personal Research Planning (PRP) process, linked to workload planning and annual review, to support strategic allocation of research time and ensure staff have access to appropriate research support and development. The process acknowledges individual circumstances that may affect research volume and provides guidance to researchers and reviewers on how to take these into consideration.
- Created opportunities for research mentoring through the PRP process.
- Expanding equality monitoring for REF to include additional protected characteristics, as well as contractual working hours and contract types (permanent / fixed term).
- Conducting detailed EIAs on SRR, RI and output selection, which have directly informed policy development and reviewer guidance.
- Establishing the REF Working Group with diverse representation and shared membership with the CoARA Working Group to embed responsible research assessment principles.
- Committing to DORA and CoARA and securing EU funding to accelerate the integration of CoARA principles across the University.
- Introducing mandatory responsible research assessment training for staff involved in research assessment and/or decision-making for REF.
- Launching a biennial research culture survey to inform the implementation of the HSU Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy and strengthen the University's research culture and environment.
- Ensuring all job adverts reference opportunities for flexible working.
- Enhancing support for part-time and practitioner-educator staff to increase opportunities for engagement with research, including a new policy enabling staff to enrol on doctoral study at HSU, with tailored guidance for part-time staff, and aligned to HSU's Staff Development Policy.

These actions demonstrate HSU's commitment to continuous improvement and to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality research culture.

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

## 2.1 Policies and procedures

This part of the HSU CoP is relevant to staff who hold an employment contract that is recorded as 'teaching and research' in the HESA Staff record. At HSU, these contracts are normally used for Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors, Professors, and some clinical staff.

The REF Guidance defines eligible contracts as those that fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Academic staff:** the contract belongs to an academic staff member whose primary employment function is to undertake 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) or 'research only' (ACEMPFUN 2) activities, as recorded in the HESA Staff record ACEMPFUN field.
- **Payroll and REF period:** the staff member is on the payroll of the submitting institution within the REF period (i.e., academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27 for the relevant HESA Staff record collections).

Contracts deemed to demonstrate SRR are flagged as REFQUALCON in the HESA Staff record and contribute to HSU's volume measure for the REF.

At HSU, 'teaching and research' contracts do not precisely identify all contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR), which is defined as "…those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of the job role." Therefore, we are implementing a process to identify these at HSU.

Under the HSU workload model and academic framework, all academic staff on 'teaching and research' contracts have varying amounts of time and resources made available for responsibilities such as educational delivery, research and knowledge exchange, professional practice, academic citizenship, and leadership and management. Time allocations and workload are reviewed on an annual basis and are subject to change. For research, the allocation of hours for most staff on 'teaching and research' contracts is linked to HSU's personal research planning process and annual review process to ensure that time is provided to support research expectations and responsibilities.

## 2.2 Criteria for SRR

To be considered to have SRR, an eligible contract needs to meet at least one of the criteria in Table 1 in the HESA review year. The criteria are based on clear, measurable factors that can be audited using formal records that are maintained independently from REF preparations. They are based upon the expectations of contracts as a function of employment, and not upon the quality or volume of what has been delivered as a result of that employment function. Meeting a criterion indicates that engagement in research is an expectation of the contract and that time and resources have been made available for research. The criteria are intended to be inclusive and non-discriminatory in that they are applied consistently and fairly across all eligible contracts. The criteria are transparent in that they are communicated clearly and accessible to all staff. Figure 1 presents a flowchart of the process for how the criteria are applied to determine SRR.

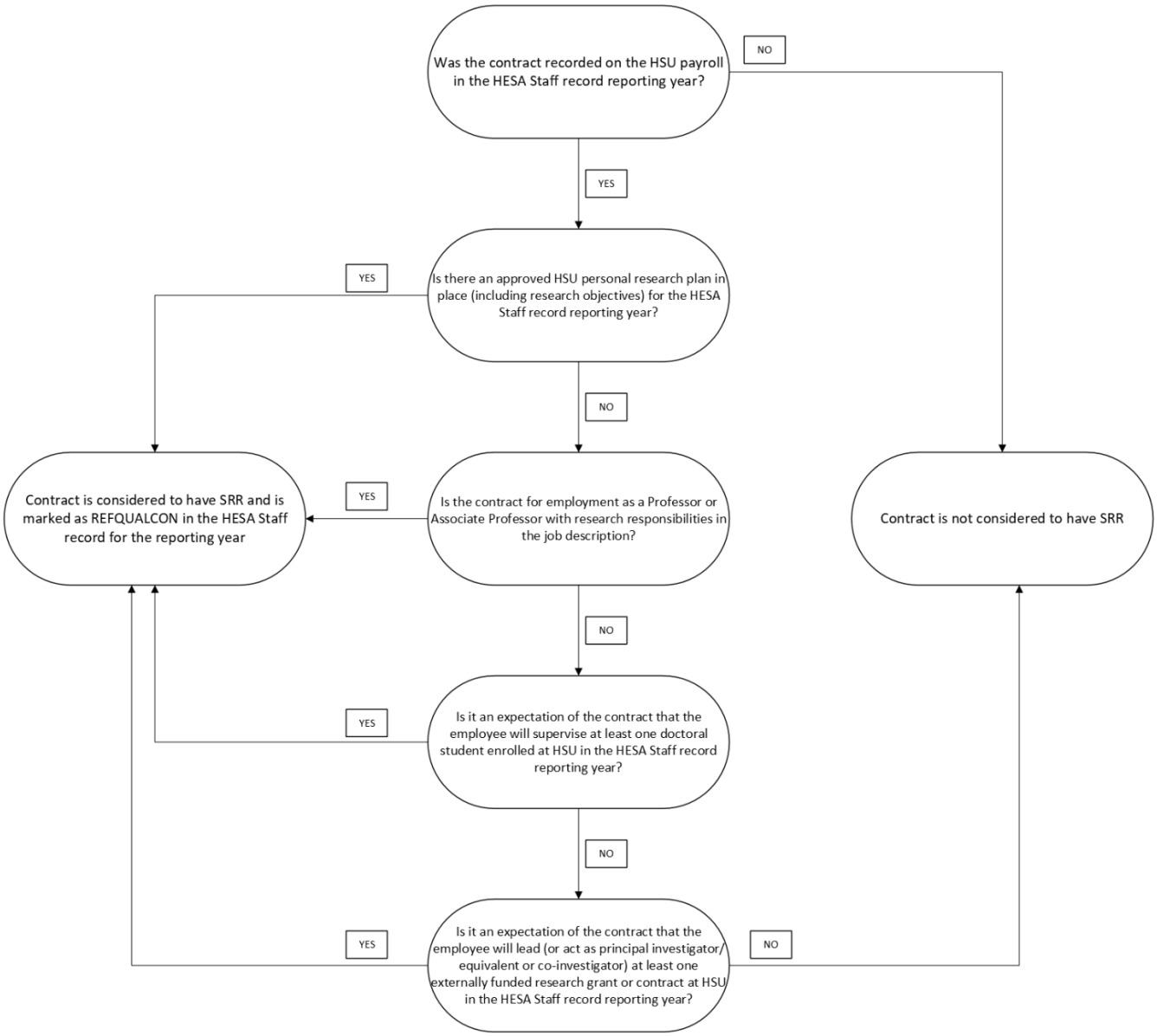
The criteria were applied to the contract data for the HESA Staff record in 2024/25. This was a pilot year, and this data will not inform the volume measure for the REF2029 submission. After the staff engagement exercise on this CoP in autumn 2025, the criteria were finalised and will be applied to the

contract data for the HESA Staff record in 2025/26 and 2026/27. The data from these two years will be used to inform the volume measure for the REF2029 submission.

Table 1: HSU's criteria for determining SRR

| Ref | Criteria | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | There is an approved HSU personal research plan in place including research objectives for the year | Data is taken from HSU's personal research planning and workload planning records.<br>Auditable using documentation such as personal research plans and annual reviews. |
| B | Employed as a Professor or Associate Professor with research responsibilities in the job description | Data is taken from HSU's HR system and personnel files.<br>Auditable using HR records including job descriptions. |
| C | Expectation to be part of the supervisory team at least one doctoral student enrolled at HSU | Data is taken from HSU's student record files.<br>Auditable using formal supervisory team records that are approved by the HSU Research Degrees Sub-Committee and the Southampton Solent Research Degrees Committee. |
| D | Expectation to lead (or act as principal investigator/equivalent or co-investigator) at least one externally funded research grant or contract at HSU | Data is taken from HSU's post-award files.<br>Auditable using sources such as research applications, grant agreements/contracts, project costings, and financial and other project records. |

Figure 1: Flowchart of how criteria will be used to determine whether an eligible ‘teaching and research’ contract has SRR




## 2.3 Decision-making and communication

Eligible contracts that meet at least one of the criteria set out in Table 1 will be recorded as having SRR. Staff contract data is reviewed periodically throughout academic years 2025/26 and 2026/27, with the criteria applied to all eligible contracts. When a contract is identified as having SRR, it is marked as REFQUALCON in the HESA Staff record for that year.

Data checking will take place each year in February and August. SRR data checking will comprise five steps:

1. Evidence and data will be gathered from the sources detailed in Table 1 and will be used to determine whether each eligible 'teaching and research' contracts meets the criteria. Contracts that meet at least one criterion will be provisionally marked as having SRR. Contracts that do not meet any of the four criteria will be provisionally marked as not having SRR.
2. The Director of Research will individually contact all staff members with eligible contracts to confirm whether their contract(s) has been deemed to have SRR. The email will include a link to this CoP, clearly explaining the data that have been used and how they have been considered against the SRR criteria.
3. If the staff member disagrees with the provisional decision, they will have the opportunity to respond. This could include putting forward new information that may be missing, querying the data or its application, or making a case as to why they believe they have (or do not have) SRR when viewed against the criteria set out in this CoP. Any such evidence will be considered by the Director of Research, who will seek expert guidance where appropriate, for example, from the Head of People & Development or Head of School. A decision will be communicated to the staff member within two weeks. Staff members have the right to appeal under the grounds set out in Section 2.5.
4. At the end of the data checking exercise, contracts deemed to have SRR will be confirmed and marked as having REFQUALCON in the HESA Staff record for that year. They will be excluded from any further SRR data checking exercises relating to that year only. However, they will be included in SRR data checking exercises in the following academic year. Contracts not deemed to have SRR will be marked as not having SRR. These contracts will be included in subsequent data checking exercises.
5. HSU will undertake systematic checks of staff data against the HESA Staff record and internal HR system to ensure accuracy and completeness. These checks will be carried out prior to each census point, and any discrepancies will be rectified through established HR data verification procedures.

Anonymised data summarising the number and FTE of eligible contracts deemed to have SRR will be shared periodically with relevant committees and groups, including the REF Working Group and Research & Innovation Committee. This data will also be used to update the EIA (see Section 3).

## 2.4 Staff, committees, and training

### 2.4.1 Roles and responsibilities

Figure 2 presents the governance structure in place at HSU to support REF preparations and submission. Three REF-focused groups have been established – the REF Working Group, two Outputs Review Panels, and an independent REF Appeals Panel (to be established in the event of an appeal).

**REF Working Group:** In 2023/24, HSU's Research & Innovation Committee established the REF Working Group to guide and coordinate all aspects of HSU's preparations for REF2029. The REF Working Group ensures compliance with sector expectations, alignment with institutional strategy, and effective engagement of staff and units throughout the process. It operates in an advisory capacity only. Final decisions relating to REF submissions rest with the Vice-Chancellor as HSU's accountable officer, ensuring appropriate separation between policy development, advisory input, and institutional accountability. REF Working Group membership includes the Director of Research (chair), UoA Leads, Heads of Schools, Head of People & Development, Library & Learning Services Manager, and

Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager. The rationale for the membership of the REF Working Group is provided in Table 2. The terms of reference (including membership) for the REF Working Group are available in Appendix 3. All meetings of the REF Working Group are minuted.

**UoA Leads:** The UoA Leads provide leadership, advice and support on all issues relating to research planning, impact, performance metrics and published guidance relating to their UoA. This is an advisory role. The UoA Leads are appointed through an open competitive process with decisions made based on published criteria. The role descriptor is available in Appendix 4.

**Outputs Review Panels:** The two Outputs Review Panels were established in 2024/25 by the REF Working Group to share good practice in the review of outputs, to review research outputs, and to moderate internal assessments. This ensures consistency, fairness, and rigour across UoAs and contributes to the quality of HSU's REF submission. Membership includes the UoA Lead(s) (chair), HSU internal output reviewers, Director of Research, and Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager. The rationale for the membership of the Outputs Review Panel is provided in Table 2. Potential sensitivities and conflicts of interest are actively managed throughout the output review process. Panel members are required to declare interests, and recusal procedures are applied where appropriate to ensure independence and impartiality in the assessment of outputs. A summary of discussions and final agreed scores for each output are formally recorded.

The panels decide on scores for outputs as part of the output review exercises but otherwise operate in an advisory capacity. A clear distinction is maintained between the advisory role of the Outputs Review Panels and institutional decision-making, and no individual is involved in reviewing their own outputs. HSU seeks to ensure that Outputs Review Panels are diverse and representative of the academic community, including in relation to career stage, contract type, and protected characteristics. Reviewers are appointed through an open and transparent process based on published criteria, and efforts are made to avoid over-representation of any single group or perspective. The role descriptor is available in Appendix 5.

**REF Appeals Panel:** In the event of an appeal, an independent REF Appeals Panel will be established. The REF Appeals Panel will operate independently of the original REF advisory and review processes, and no member of the Appeals Panel will consider an appeal relating to an output or decision in which they have had any prior involvement. This ensures that appeals are considered objectively and independently of earlier assessments.

A senior academic staff member will convene a panel comprising at least two other senior academic staff to review each appeal. Membership of the REF Appeals Panel will be determined on a case-by-case basis to ensure independence from the decision under appeal. Panel members may have undertaken other REF-related roles within HSU, but will not have been involved in the assessment, moderation, advice, or decision-making relating to the specific case under appeal, including at UoA or School level. Where necessary to ensure independence, appropriate expertise, or confidence in the fairness of the process, the Vice-Chancellor may appoint an external academic to serve on the REF Appeals Panel.

In the case of an appeal based on equality and diversity grounds, the Head of People & Development will join the REF Appeals Panel. Diversity and representativeness will be considered when identifying members of the REF Appeals Panel. All meetings of the REF Appeals Panel will be formally minuted.

The REF Appeals Panel is responsible for making decisions on submitted appeals. Its role is to:

- Review and consider all appeals submitted by appraising all documentation pertaining to the decision and the case for appeal.
- Determine the outcome for each case.
- Ensure final decisions are communicated to the Director of Research who will report to the REF Working Group and notify the appellant of the outcome.

The REF Appeals Panel meeting will be supported by a member of staff who has not previously been involved in the REF Working Group. The terms of reference for the REF Appeal Panel are available in Appendix 6. The process for appeals is detailed in Section 2.5.

**Cross-membership, independence and assurance:** As a small and specialist institution, HSU recognises that some individuals hold membership across more than one REF-related group or panel, including the REF Working Group, Outputs Review Panels, the CoARA Working Group, and the Research and Innovation Committee. This cross-membership is intended to support alignment between REF processes and the principles of responsible research assessment, and to ensure consistency in the application of REF guidance, equality legislation, and institutional policy. HSU also acknowledges the potential risks associated with cross-membership, including the concentration of influence, reduced independent challenge, and the perception that decisions may be predetermined. These risks are taken seriously, particularly in light of the Equality Impact Assessment findings, which have identified some structural disparities that require scrutiny and inclusive decision-making.

To mitigate these risks and ensure confidence in the REF process, HSU has implemented a range of safeguards, including clear separation of advisory and decision-making roles, transparent documentation of decisions, conflict of interest management, and independent appeals arrangements. These measures are designed to ensure that REF-related decisions are subject to appropriate challenge, that assumptions are tested, and that all staff can have confidence in the fairness and integrity of the process. Governance arrangements for REF2029 will be kept under review to ensure they remain proportionate, effective, and aligned with REF guidance and equality obligations.

Figure 2: Committee chart showing the formal committees involved in the REF preparation and submission process

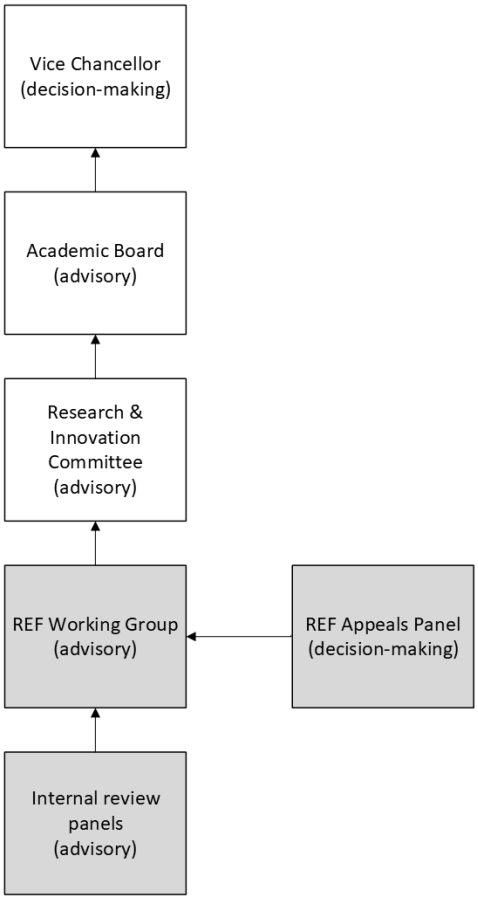



Table 2: Membership of the REF Working Group

| **Role title** | **Role description** | **Rationale for inclusion in the REF Working Group membership** |
|---|---|---|
| Director of Research (chair) | Formal responsibility for research leadership at HSU.<br>Chairs meetings, provides institutional leadership for REF preparations, ensures alignment with strategy and compliance with external requirements. | Senior responsibility for research across HSU and accountability for institutional preparations. |
| UoA Leads | HSU academics with responsibility for leading and coordinating HSU's REF submissions to UoAs.<br>Provide subject-level leadership, coordinate unit-level REF preparations, contribute discipline expertise, and represent their UoA in discussions. | Ensure that all disciplinary areas are represented and their specific needs addressed in REF planning.<br>They are appointed via open competition to promote transparency and inclusivity. |

| Role title | Role description | Rationale for inclusion in the REF Working Group membership |
|---|---|---|
| Heads of School | Responsible for the leadership of HSU's academic schools.<br>Ensure School-level commitment, resourcing, and support for REF activities. Champion REF within their School. | To provide senior leadership, oversight and accountability at School level.<br>Ensure alignment of REF planning with School-level priorities, resources, and strategies |
| Head of People & Development | Responsible for the leadership of HSU's People Department.<br>Advises on HR policies, EDI, and EIAs. | Ensures REF processes comply with employment law and equality legislation. |
| Library & Learning Services Manager | Responsible for the leadership of HSU's Library & Learning Services.<br>Advises on open access compliance, research outputs management, and metadata integrity. | Provides expertise on REF open access policy compliance and research information management systems. |
| Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager (clerk) | Provides operational leadership and coordination of REF preparations.<br>Supports data management, reporting, and communications | Ensures effective coordination, delivery, and monitoring of REF preparations. |

Table 3: Membership of the Outputs Review Panels

| Role title | Role description | Rationale for inclusion in the Outputs Review Panel membership |
|---|---|---|
| UoA Lead (chair) | HSU academic with responsibility for leading and coordinating HSU's REF submissions to UoAs.<br>Chairs the panel, ensures fair and transparent process, leads discussions, and facilitates moderation of output scores. Provides subject expertise for the relevant UoA. Leads calibration exercises. | Provides academic leadership and accountability for the review process within the UoA and ensures panel decisions are consistent with institutional policy and REF requirements.<br>Appointed via open competition to promote transparency and inclusivity. |
| Deputy UoA Lead (deputy chair) | HSU academic with responsibility for supporting the UoA Lead with leading and coordinating HSU's REF submissions to UoAs.<br>Supports the UoA Lead in chairing and facilitating panel meetings, contributes subject expertise, and ensures continuity of leadership if the UoA Lead is unavailable. Participates fully in output review and moderation discussions. | Provides additional capacity and resilience within the panel. ensures consistency of approach, strengthens representation and helps distribute leadership responsibilities.<br>Appointed via open competition to promote transparency and inclusivity. |
| Internal Outputs Reviewers | HSU academic staff who review assigned outputs in advance of panel meetings, provide assessments | To bring disciplinary expertise and diverse perspectives to the evaluation process and to ensure robustness, |

| Role title | Role description | Rationale for inclusion in the Outputs Review Panel membership |
|---|---|---|
| | against REF criteria, and contribute to moderation discussions | consistency and fairness in output assessment.<br>Appointed via open competition to promote transparency and inclusivity. |
| Director of Research | Formal responsibility for research leadership at HSU.<br>Participates in moderation discussions, ensures adherence to HSU's CoP, and provides oversight of EDI considerations. | Provides institutional oversight and assurance that processes align with REF requirements, the PSED, and HSU's commitments to responsible research assessment (CoARA/DORA). |
| Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager | Responsible for the administration of HSU's REF submission.<br>Advises on REF policy, procedural compliance, and institutional consistency. Ensures decisions are formally recorded and supports management of conflicts of interest. | Brings professional expertise in REF processes and equality legislation. Also ensures transparency, governance, and compliance with external audit requirements. |

### 2.4.2 Training

When considering and preparing its submission to the REF, HSU is committed to ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) considerations are actively embedded throughout the process. It is mandatory for all staff with designated REF responsibilities (i.e. members of the REF Working Group, REF Appeals Panel, Outputs Review Panel, and the Vice-Chancellor) to undertake REF-focused EDI training and development.

The primary vehicle for this is the *Bias in Research Assessment* and *Responsible Research Assessment* programmes, delivered by an external supplier. This covers issues such as unconscious bias, stereotyping, and prejudice, is framed around responsible research assessment, and incorporates the Harvard Implicit Association Test to encourage personal reflection.

In addition, all members of committees and panels with designated REF responsibilities will receive training on the REF framework, equality legislation, and HSU's EDI policies. Training will include case studies and good practice examples to support consistent, fair, and transparent decision-making.

Prior to commencing any review work for REF, members of the Outputs Review Panel also participated in a one-day calibration session led by a previous REF Panel Chair, which covered responsible research assessment and EDI in relation to the review of outputs and impact case studies. Staff with designated REF responsibilities additionally receive an annual briefing on their legal obligations regarding EDI.

## 2.5 Appeals

In cases where staff do not think the policies and procedures set out in this CoP were followed, the individual has the right to appeal. Appeals will only be accepted on the following grounds:

- There is evidence of material irregularity in the process by which a decision was reached or in the operation of this CoP such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the outcome would have been different.

- A claim is made that the individual has been prejudiced against, including issues around protected characteristics, in some way as part of the process such as to suggest that, in the absence of the perceived prejudice, the outcome would have been different.

These grounds for appeal are exclusive.

In the first instance, the individual may raise their concerns with the Director of Research (as set out in sections 2.3 and 3.3) to seek clarification and informal resolution. The Director of Research may seek expert advice where appropriate, for example from the Head of People & Development. This stage does not constitute a formal appeal. The outcome of this consideration will be communicated to the staff member within two weeks.

If the individual wishes to raise a formal appeal, they must complete and submit a REF Appeals Form (Appendix 7) within two weeks, demonstrating clearly the issues that form the basis of the appeal and providing sufficient information to allow the circumstances to be understood. The relevant appeal submission deadline will be communicated to the individual by the Director of Research and will follow the deadlines set out in Table 4.

The REF Appeals Panel will review and consider each case, assessing the grounds for appeal and the supporting evidence. The Chair will ensure the Panel reaches a decision on whether the appeal is upheld. Where clarification is required, the Panel may request factual information from relevant individuals, provided this does not compromise the independence of the Panel or involve any individual with prior involvement in the case under appeal. The outcome of appeals will be formally recorded. The Director of Research will notify the REF Working Group that appeals have been concluded, without disclosing confidential or personal details.

The Head of People & Development will contact all appellants to formally notify them of the outcome of the appeal within three weeks of the appeal deadline. All appeals will be considered before the final decisions are made as to the SRR status (for 'teaching and research' contracts) or independent researcher status (for 'research only' contracts) in the HESA Staff record.

In addition to HSU's internal appeals procedure, staff may raise concerns about compliance with this CoP through the REF complaints process administered by the funding bodies. Information about this process will be made available to staff via the internal RKE Hub and on HSU's public website once the CoP is approved.

Table 4: Appeal deadlines

| **Dates for data checking exercises** | **Deadline for communication of provisional decisions to staff** | **Deadline for staff to query provisional decisions** | **Deadline for Director of Research to review and respond to queries** | **Deadline for staff to submit formal appeals** | **Deadline for decisions of REF Appeals Panel to be communicated to staff** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| August 2025 to January 2026 | 27 February 2026 | 13 March 2026 | 27 March 2026 | 24 April 2026 | 15 May 2026 |
| February 2026 to July 2026 | 28 August 2026 | 11 September 2026 | 25 September 2026 | 9 October 2026 | 30 October 2026 |
| August 2026 to January 2027 | 26 February 2027 | 12 March 2027 | 25 March 2027 | 23 April 2027 | 14 May 2027 |
| February 2027 to July 2027 | 27 August 2027 | 10 September 2027 | 24 September 2027 | 8 October 2027 | 2 ctober 2027 |

## 2.6 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

In line with the requirements of the REF2029 guidance and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), HSU has undertaken Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to ensure that the process for identifying staff contracts with SRR is fair, transparent, and inclusive. The EIAs were developed concurrently with the design of our SRR identification procedures and have been embedded throughout the decision-making process. EIA assesses whether our policies and criteria for SRR:

- Align with the three aims of the PSED: eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations.
- Avoid unjustified disadvantage for staff with protected characteristics, including where neutral criteria may have disproportionate impacts.
- Reflect an anticipatory, evidence-informed approach to equality, with consideration of alternative methods that may reduce risk of exclusion.

Using relevant institutional data and equality monitoring information, an EIA was undertaken on the draft criteria in February 2025. This was discussed by the REF Working Group, who requested that alternative options for criteria were modelled through the EIA and that the EIA was broadened to include additional protected characteristics (sexual orientation, age, religion) and contracted hours (full- or part-time). The updated EIA was discussed by the REF Working Group in April 2025 and the draft criteria and process were agreed, as well as actions arising from the EIA. This was shared with staff as part of the CoP engagement exercise in autumn 2025. The EIA was updated with data from the submitted HESA Staff Record 2024/25 and discussed by the REF Working Group when finalising the CoP in January 2026.

The analysis from January 2026 is available in Appendix 1.[1] The assessment evaluates the potential impact of SRR decisions. It includes analysis of how criteria are applied, how decisions are made, and whether the outcomes are consistent across different groups. The EIA indicated:

- **Gender:** The same proportion of men (44%) and women (56%) are represented in the eligible pool of staff contracts and the SRR/RI population.
- **Disability:** The SRR/RI population includes a higher proportion of staff who disclosed a disability, increasing from 12% in the eligible pool to 19% in the SRR/RI pool, a variance of +(+7%). Staff with no disclosed disability are slightly less represented (−1%), and staff with unavailable or undisclosed data decreased notably (−8%).
- **Nationality:** The same proportion of British (79%) and non-British (56%) staff are represented in the eligible pool of contracts and the SRR/RI population
- **Ethnicity:** White staff are more represented in the SRR/RI population, increasing from 75% to 92% (+17%), whilst staff from Global Majority backgrounds show a slight decrease (-2%, from 10% to 8%). No staff contracts with unavailable or undisclosed ethnicity data (15%) were in the SRR/RI population (0%).
- **Sexual orientation:** Staff identifying as gay or lesbian are slightly more represented in the SRR/RI population (+2%, from 6% to 8%), whilst heterosexual staff also show a higher proportion (+17%, from 60% to 77%). Staff with unavailable or undisclosed sexual orientation data decreased from 34% to 15%.
- **Age:** Staff aged 56–65 are more represented in the SRR/RI population, increasing from 21% to 40% (+19%), whilst staff aged 26–35 are less represented, decreasing from 18% to 6% (−12%).

[1] Research-only contracts are reported in the EIA data alongside teaching & research contracts because of the very small number of research-only contracts (fewer than 5).

No SRR/RI cases were identified among staff aged 25 and under or over 65, despite representing 1% and 3% of the eligible pool respectively.

- **Religion:** Staff with no religion (including agnostic and atheist) are more represented (+21%), from 29% to 50% in the SRR/RI population, whilst staff identifying with a religion are slightly less represented (−1%, from 32% to 31%). Staff with unavailable or undisclosed religion data decreased notably, from 39% to 19%.
- **Contracted working hours:** Full-time staff contracts are more represented in the SRR/RI population, increasing from 36% to 71% (+35%), whilst part-time staff contracts are less represented (−35%, from 64% to 29%).
- **Contract type:** Permanent contracts are slightly more represented in the SRR/RI pool (+3%, from 91% to 94%), whilst fixed-term contracts are less represented (−3%, from 9% to 6%).

The EIA highlights several positive patterns from an EDI perspective, including no difference in the proportions of men and women or British and non-British staff in the eligible pool compared with the SRR/RI population. Further positive patterns included higher proportions in the SRR/RI population of staff who disclosed a disability and staff identifying as gay or lesbian. This suggests inclusive recognition of research contributions across these groups.

However, potential adverse impacts with variances greater than 3% were identified in relation to some age groups and contractual working hours. Further analysis indicated that age-related disparities largely reflect career stage, with several younger staff being supported to undertake doctoral study. Analysis of contracted working hours indicated that part-time staff are less represented across all Schools. Discussions with the REF Working Group highlighted that many part-time staff are practitioner-educators with clinical responsibilities and may be less research-active. The Group has agreed to explore further ways to support and engage part-time academic staff in research, building on ongoing efforts to strengthen HSU's research culture and environment.

In response to these findings, the following actions were agreed:

1. Develop targeted support initiatives for part-time academic staff, particularly practitioner-educators, to encourage and enable greater engagement with research.
2. Further embed the personal research planning (PRP) process within workload planning by requiring a completed PRP for any staff requesting additional research hours. This integration, implemented for the 2025/26 academic year, supports strategic allocation of research time and helps ensure staff with SRR are appropriately identified through the SRR criteria, including those who may not have previously engaged with the voluntary PRP process.
3. Continue to monitor SRR/RI identification outcomes by protected characteristics, contract type, and working hours, with periodic reviews to identify and address emerging disparities.
4. Share the EIA data to the Executive Leadership Group (ELG) and Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group (VCAG) to identify and support HSU-wide actions and promote good practice in EDI beyond research.
5. Continue to promote voluntary disclosure of equality data through transparent messaging about its use in supporting fair and inclusive processes, aiming to further improve data completeness.
6. Create and maintain an EIA action plan.

The EIA is a live document and will be reviewed and updated as part of the checking exercises (described in Sections 2.3 and 3.3) and as part of the consideration of appeals (as described in Section 2.5). HSU is committed to embedding equality considerations into all aspects of REF planning and delivery, and the EIA forms part of our broader commitment to responsible research assessment.

# Part 3: Determining Research Independence (RI)

## 3.1 Policies and procedures

This part of the HSU CoP is relevant to staff who hold an employment contract that is recorded as 'research only' in the HESA Staff record. At HSU, these contracts are normally used for Research Assistants, Research Fellows, Postdoctoral Research Fellows, etc. HSU employs very few staff on 'research-only' contracts. As such this section of the CoP is anticipated to be relevant to only a small number of staff.

The REF Guidance defines eligible contracts as those that fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Academic staff:** the contract belongs to an academic staff member whose primary employment function is to undertake 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) or 'research only' (ACEMPFUN 2) activities, as recorded in the HESA Staff record ACEMPFUN field.
- **Payroll and REF period:** the staff member is on the payroll of the submitting institution within the REF period (i.e., academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27 for the relevant HESA Staff record collections).

The REF Guidance requires all institutions submitting to the REF to implement a process to determine if 'research only' contracts demonstrate research independence (RI). A 'research only' contract is considered to demonstrate RI if the staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme. Contracts deemed to demonstrate RI are flagged as REFQUALCON in the HESA Staff record and contribute to HSU's volume measure for the REF.

## 3.2 Criteria and evidence

To be considered to demonstrate RI, an eligible contract needs to meet at least one of the criteria in Table 5. The criteria are based on clear, measurable factors that can be audited using formal records that are maintained independently from REF preparations. Meeting a criterion indicates that the contract demonstrates RI. In line with REF Guidance, RI is considered persistent. The criteria are intended to be inclusive and non-discriminatory in that they are applied consistently and fairly across all eligible contracts. The criteria are transparent in that they are communicated clearly and accessible to all staff. Figure 3 presents a flowchart of the process for how the criteria are applied to determine RI.

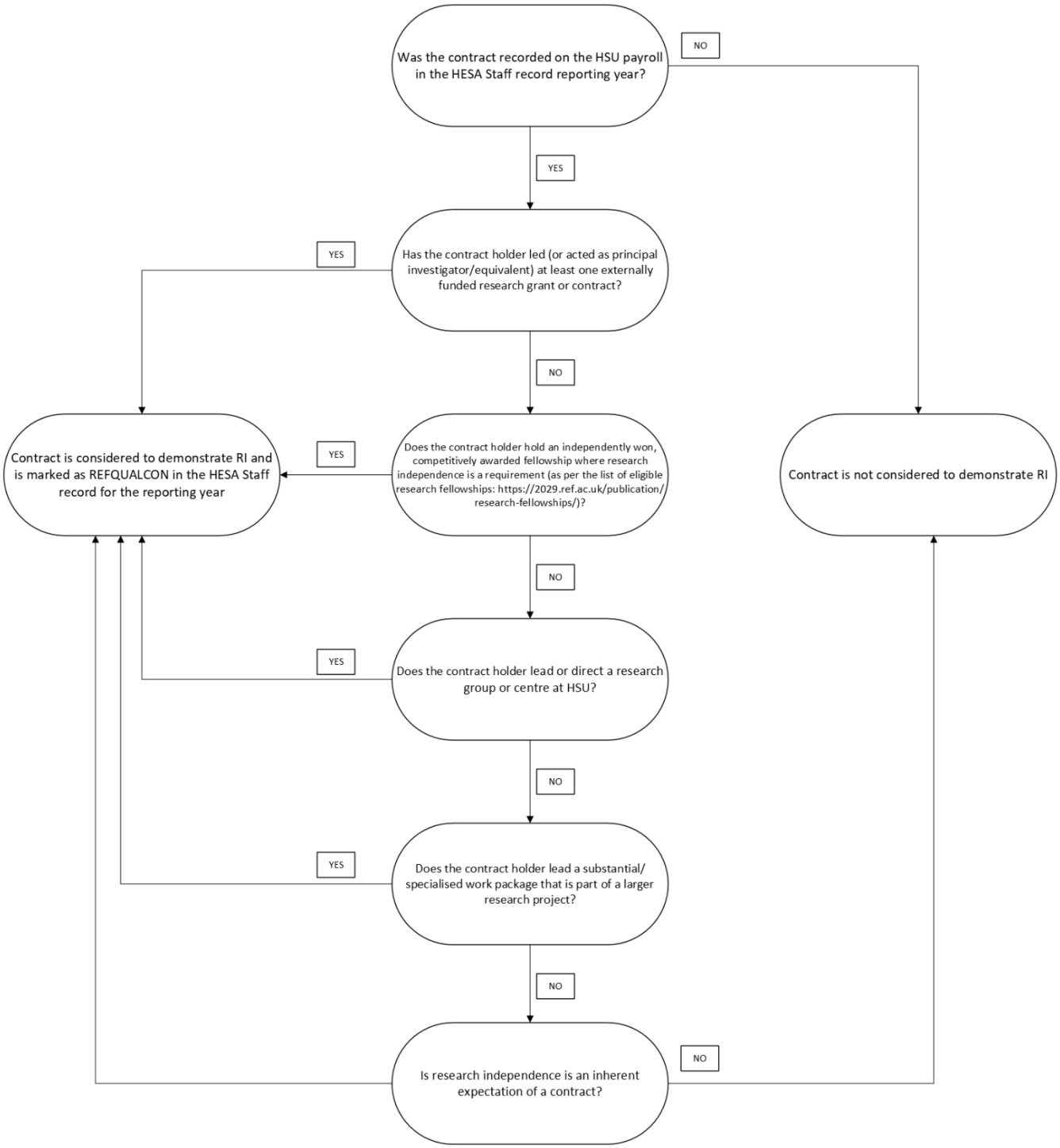
The criteria were applied to the contract data for the HESA Staff record in 2024/25. This was a pilot year, and this data will not inform the volume measure for the REF2029 submission. After the staff engagement exercise on this CoP in autumn 2025, the criteria were finalised and will be applied to the contract data for the HESA Staff record in 2025/26 and 2026/27. The data from these two years will be used to inform the volume measure for the REF2029 submission.

Table 5: HSU's criteria for determining RI

| Ref | Criteria | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| A | Leading or acting as principal investigator on an externally funded research project | Data is taken from HSU's post-award files. Auditable using sources such as research applications, grant agreements/contracts, project costings, and financial and other project records. |

| Ref | Criteria | Data source |
|---|---|---|
| B | Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement (as per the list of eligible research fellowships: https://2029.ref.ac.uk/publication/research-fellowships/) | Data is taken from HSU's post-award files.<br>Auditable using sources such as research applications, grant agreements/contracts, project costings, and financial and other project records. |
| C | Leading or directing a research group or centre at HSU | Data is taken from HSU's Research Centre records.<br>Auditable using approved Research Centre records (these are approved by Academic Board). |
| D | Leading a substantial/specialised work package that is part of a larger research project | Data is taken from HSU's post-award files.<br>Auditable using sources such as research applications, grant agreements/contracts, project costings, and financial and other project records. |
| E | Where research independence is an inherent expectation of a contract | Data is taken from HSU's HR system and personnel files.<br>Auditable using HR records including job descriptions. |

Figure 3: Flowchart of how criteria will be used to determine whether an eligible ‘research only’ contract is considered to demonstrate RI



## 3.3 Decision-making and communication

Eligible contracts that meet at least one of the criteria set out in Section 3.2 will be recorded as demonstrating RI. Staff contract data is reviewed periodically throughout academic years 2025/26 and 2026/27, with the criteria applied to all eligible contracts. When a contract is identified as demonstrating RI, it is marked as REFQUALCON in the HESA Staff record.

Data checking will take place each year in February and August. RI data checking will comprise five steps:

1. Evidence and data will be gathered from the sources detailed in Table 4 and will be used to determine whether each eligible 'research only contract meets the criteria. Contracts that meet at least one criterion will be provisionally marked as demonstrating RI. Contracts that do not meet any of the criteria will be provisionally marked as not demonstrating RI.
2. The Director of Research will individually contact all staff members with eligible contracts to confirm whether their contract(s) has been deemed to demonstrate RI. The email will include a link to this CoP, clearly explaining the data that have been used and how they have been considered against the RI criteria.
3. If the staff member disagrees with the provisional decision, they will have the opportunity to respond. This could include putting forward new information that may be missing, querying the data or its application, or making a case as to why they believe they have (or do not have) RI when viewed against the criteria set out in this code. Any such evidence will be considered by the Director of Research, who will seek expert guidance where appropriate, for example, from the Head of People & Development or Head of School. A decision will be communicated to the staff member within two weeks. Staff members have the right to appeal under the grounds set out in Section 2.5.
4. At the end of the data checking exercise, contracts that demonstrate RI will be confirmed and marked as having REFQUALCON in the HESA Staff record. They will be excluded from any further RI data checking exercises. Contracts that do not demonstrate RI exercise will be marked as not demonstrating RI. These contracts will be included in subsequent data checking exercises.
5. HSU will undertake systematic checks of staff data against the HESA Staff record and internal HR system to ensure accuracy and completeness. These checks will be carried out prior to each census point, and any discrepancies will be rectified through established HR data verification procedures.

Anonymised data summarising the number and FTE of eligible contracts deemed to have SRR will be shared periodically with relevant committees and groups, including the REF Working Group and Research & Innovation Committee. This data will also be used to update the EIA (see Section 3.6).

## 3.4 Staff, committees, and training

This is the same as Part 2. Please refer to Section 2.4.

## 3.5 Appeals

The appeals process is the same as the process documented in Part 2. Please refer to Section 2.5.

## 3.6 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

In line with the requirements of the REF2029 guidance and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), HSU has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that the process for identifying staff contracts that demonstrate RI is fair, transparent, and inclusive. The EIA was developed concurrently with the design of our RI identification procedures and has been embedded throughout the decision-making process. It assesses whether our policies and criteria for RI:

- Align with the three aims of the PSED: eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations.
- Avoid unjustified disadvantage for staff with protected characteristics, including where neutral criteria may have disproportionate impacts.
- Reflect an anticipatory, evidence-informed approach to equality, with consideration of alternative methods that may reduce risk of exclusion.

In June 2025, the modelling of the proposed criteria for identifying RI was applied to the eligible staff population. Due to the very small number of eligible staff (fewer than five), detailed equality breakdowns are not published in this CoP to protect individual confidentiality but have instead been reported in combination with the SRR data in Section 2.6. HSU has reviewed the RI EIA data internally to ensure the process and criteria were applied fairly and consistently.

Whilst the small cohort limits the ability to draw wider conclusions, this outcome provides assurance that the criteria are functioning as intended. We will continue to monitor this process in future cycles to ensure it remains inclusive and equitable.

The EIA was discussed by the REF Working Group in July 2025 and January 2026, who supported the proposed criteria for RI.

The EIA is a live document and will be reviewed and updated as part of the checking exercises (described in Sections 2.3 and 3.3) and as part of the consideration of appeals (as described in Section 2.5). HSU is committed to embedding equality considerations into all aspects of REF planning and delivery, and the EIA forms part of our broader commitment to responsible research assessment.

# Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

## 4.1 Policies and procedures

The REF Guidance states that institutions are responsible for mapping eligible contracts to the UoA to which they are principally associated. At HSU, research is aligned to two UoAs, both of which are planned for submission to REF2029:

- UoA 3: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
- UoA 24: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism

This section outlines the criteria and evidence used to allocate contracts to UoAs.

## 4.2 Criteria and evidence

As part of the data checking exercises described in Sections 2.3 and 3.3, data on all eligible contracts is provided to the Director of Research by the People Department. The Director of Research reviews the contracts using the criteria in Table 6 to produce an initial list of contracts allocated to UoAs. This list is reviewed by the UoA Leads, who use the same criteria to sense check the allocations. Queries are discussed between the UoA Leads and the Director of Research.

When staff are informed about the provisional outcomes from the data checking exercise (i.e. whether 'teaching and research' contracts are considered to have SRR and whether 'research only' contracts are deemed to demonstrate RI), they will also be informed of their proposed UoA alignment to ensure transparency and to allow for any clarifications or queries. There is no right of appeal for the allocation of contracts to UoAs.

The final agreed list will be shared with the People Department and used to update the REFUOA2029 field in the HESA Staff Record. This will take place each February and August in 2026 and 2027.

Anonymised data on the number and FTE of contracts allocated to UoAs will be shared periodically with relevant committees and groups, including the REF Working Group and Research & Innovation Committee. This data will also be used in the equality impact assessments (see Section 4.4).

Table 6: Criteria and evidence for allocating contracts to UoAs

| Ref | Criteria | Indicative approach | Data source |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | Primary academic discipline | Contracts affiliated with the AECC School of Chiropractic and UCO School of Osteopathy will normally be allocated to UoA 3.<br>Contracts affiliated with the other schools/departments may be allocated to UoA 3 or UoA 24 depending on disciplinary focus. | Data is taken from HSU's HR records.<br>Auditable using School affiliation. |
| B | Research and teaching focus | Contracts affiliated with Allied Health Professions, health care systems or Chiropractic will normally be allocated to UoA 3. | Data is taken from HSU's HR records, School records, HSU Research Repository.<br>Auditable using job title, School affiliation, teaching |

| Ref | Criteria | Indicative approach | Data source |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Contracts affiliated with sports, sports psychology or exercise sciences will normally be allocated to UoA 24. | responsibilities, and research outputs and publication records. |
| C | Research Centre membership | Contracts affiliated with the National Centre for Chiropractic Research, National Council for Osteopathic Research, Centre for PAIn Research, the Centre for Osteopathic Research & Leadership, Centre for Workforce Systems & Innovation, and Centre for Preventive Health Care are normally allocated to UoA 3.<br>Contracts affiliated with the Centre for Human Performance Research are normally allocated to UoA 24. | Data is taken from HSU's Research Centre records. Auditable using Research Centre membership records and Personal Research Plans. |

### 4.3 Staff, committees, and training

This is the same as Part 2. Please refer to Section 2.4.

### 4.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The criteria for identifying staff contracts with SRR and RI are applied consistently across all UoAs at HSU. An EIA was conducted on these criteria to ensure they are inclusive and do not disadvantage staff based on protected characteristics, contract type, or working hours (see Sections 2.6 and 3.6).

As UoA allocation is based on disciplinary alignment following SRR/RI identification, the findings of the EIA directly informed this process. The use of consistent criteria across UoAs supports equitable treatment and helps prevent bias that could arise from applying differential standards. Staff consultation and review mechanisms are in place to ensure transparency and to accommodate individual circumstances where appropriate.

As a small and specialist institution, HSU will only allocate staff contracts to UoAs to which it intends to make a formal submission to REF2029. All allocations will be based on disciplinary alignment, research activity, and strategic coherence (as outlined in Table 5), ensuring that each submission reflects a credible, inclusive, and academically grounded research environment.

In line with the REF2029 Guidance, staff contract allocation does not determine the UoA to which their research outputs or impact case studies must be submitted. Outputs and case studies may be submitted to the UoA that best reflects the disciplinary content, regardless of the staff member's contract allocation. This flexibility supports the integrity and quality of submissions while maintaining fairness in staff allocation processes.

# Part 5: Selecting outputs

## 5.1 Policies and procedures

### 5.1.1 Identifying substantive link to outputs

The REF Contribution to Knowledge & Understanding (CKU) Guidance states that institutions "…must be able to demonstrate a substantive link to any submitted output" (paragraph 3.3.1). "A substantive link describes the relationship between an [institution] and research, submitted in the form of an output" (paragraph 6.1.1). This "…substantive link must be evidenced through an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent) who has made a significant research contribution to the output" (paragraph 6.1.3).

Eligible employment relationships are defined as:

- A minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment (as defined by Section 210 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996) or the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996) by the HEI making the submission. Continuous employment may be demonstrated by a sequence of consecutive contracts; and
- The role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity (in line with the REF definition of research[2]) within the role. 'Research activity' is not restricted by profession and an eligible employment relationship may be with any staff member who undertakes, enables or supports research.

An eligible employment relationship must have occurred, either:

- At the point at which the submitted output was first made publicly available (an output may first be made publicly available at any point during the eligible employment relationship); or
- Before the submitted output was first made publicly available, when the research resulting in the output was carried out. For most outputs, the time-limited period between the eligible employment relationship and the publication of the output will be two years. For long-form and extended process outputs,[3] the time-limited period will be five years.

Eligible employment relationships that occur after the point at which an output was first made publicly available cannot constitute a substantive link. An exception to this is in place for long-form and/or extended process outputs only. Where a researcher is employed on a contract that constitutes an eligible employment relationship at HSU at the point the REF submission is made, long-form and/or extended process outputs published before this contract commenced will be eligible for submission if:

[2] REF CKU Guidance (paragraph 5.3.1): "For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared." See paragraphs 5.3.2 to 5.4.1 for further details of what is included and excluded from this definition.

[3] REF CKU Guidance (paragraphs 6.10.8 and 6.10.9): "Long-form outputs are defined as outputs of extended scale or scope." "Extended process outputs are the culmination of a substantial, discrete research endeavour which, due to the nature of the approach or methodology, involved intense activity, sustained over a period of time, usually of five years or longer."

- they were first made publicly available during the REF period (January 2021 to December 2028); and
- the staff member's eligible employment relationship with HSU commenced within 5 years of the output first being made publicly available.

The REF CKU Guidance (paragraphs 6.7.1 to 6.7.3) identifies the following exclusions whereby outputs are not eligible for submission:

- Outputs sole-authored by, or where the *only* substantive link to the institution is through the following groups: postgraduate research students (including PhD theses); visiting or honorary staff; and staff on 'teaching only' contracts (those returned to the HESA Staff record as ACEMPFUN.01); or individuals employed on academic or other contracts with no explicit expectation of research within the job role.
- Outputs where the substantive link occurred before the submitted output was made publicly available, will not be eligible for submission where the author was subject to compulsory redundancy.

In line with REF CKU Guidance (paragraphs 6.8.1 to 6.8.3), HSU has an exceptions process for outputs sole-authored by staff on teaching-only, honorary emeritus contracts, or other non-research contracts (such as individuals employed on clinical contracts) providing the institution has provided allocated time and funding to support the specific research activity. Any such cases will be reviewed by the REF Working Group using a transparent and consistently applied process and will consider evidence of allocated time and funding for the specific research activity. If HSU wishes to submit outputs of this type, clearance to do so will be sought from the external REF Director.

In line with REF CKU Guidance (paragraphs 6.9.1 to 6.9.2), outputs authored by individuals while on an excluded contract may be eligible for submission if the individual subsequently moved to a 'teaching and research' or 'research only' contract during the REF period, subject to the following conditions:

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

Any such cases will be reviewed by the REF Working Group using a transparent and consistently applied process and will consider evidence of allocated time and funding for the specific research activity. If HSU wishes to submit outputs of this type, clearance to do so will be sought from the external REF Director.

At HSU, the Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager will follow the process set out in Figure 4 to identify and evidence the substantive link to outputs proposed for submission. This exercise will be undertaken periodically (at least once per annum) as part of the internal review of outputs. After each exercise, the evidence will be presented to the REF Working Group for assessment. Where the substantive link is unclear, further information and evidence may be sought. A record of the rationale and evidence for each output's inclusion will be maintained by the Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager and will be available for audit purposes and internal assurance.

### 5.1.2 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

HSU may submit outputs from former staff members where a substantive link to the institution can be clearly demonstrated, in line with the REF2029 Guidance. This includes staff who have left due to compulsory redundancy, voluntary redundancy or severance, retirement, or the expiration of fixed-term contracts. The inclusion of such outputs will be based on objective criteria and will be handled sensitively and transparently.

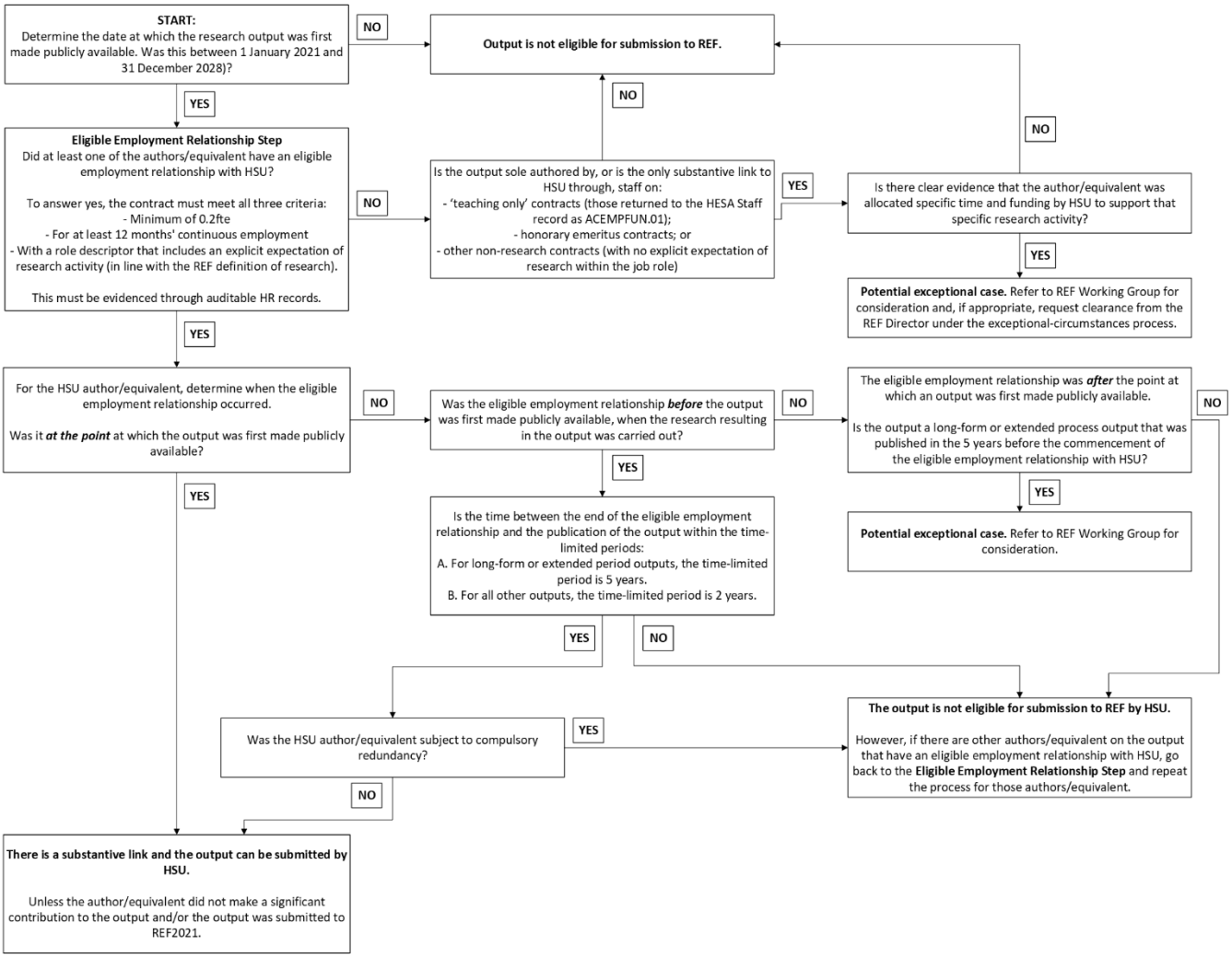
HSU will ensure that outputs from former staff are selected based on quality and relevance, not employment status. Therefore, outputs from former staff members will be included in the exercises to identify and evidence the substantive link to outputs proposed for submission (detailed in Section 5.1.1 and Figure 4). Where a substantive link occurred before an output was made publicly available, outputs will not be eligible for submission if the author was subject to compulsory redundancy.

In cases where HSU proposes to submit outputs that were authored by staff who left the university due to voluntary redundancy or severance (excluding the end of a fixed-term contract), efforts will be made to contact the former staff member to inform them of the proposed inclusion. They will be given the opportunity to request non-submission of their output(s). No response will be taken as an indication that the former staff member has no objection to inclusion. Requests for non-submission must include a justification explaining why the output(s) should not be submitted. These requests will be considered by the REF Working Group, which will assess each case considering the justification provided and the University's investment in the research.

HSU may submit outputs authored by former staff who have retired or whose employment ended due to the natural expiration of a fixed-term contract, provided a substantive link to the institution can be clearly demonstrated. In most cases, this will be evidenced by an eligible employment relationship at the time the output was first made publicly available. Outputs from these staff will be considered on the same basis as those from current staff, with selection based on quality and relevance to the submission. As these types of contract endings are not considered forms of severance or redundancy, HSU will not routinely seek consent for submission but will ensure that all outputs are handled respectfully and in line with REF2029 guidance.

The REF Working Group will make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor, who will make final decisions on the inclusion of outputs from former staff members.

Figure 4: Flowchart of the HSU process for identifying and evidencing the substantive link to outputs




### 5.1.3 Assigning outputs to UoA/s

All eligible outputs are initially screened by UoA Leads and assigned to one or more UoAs based on their alignment with the relevant UoA descriptors. This initial assignment draws on the UoA Leads' disciplinary expertise and knowledge of the output content.

Each output is then reviewed within the assigned UoA(s) by at least two reviewers and moderated by the UoA's Outputs Review Panel. As part of this process, the alignment between each output and the UoA descriptors is critically assessed.

Outputs are decoupled from authors, and reviewers and Outputs Review Panels are not provided with information about the author's contract or UoA allocation. This ensures that output assessment is based solely on content and disciplinary relevance.

If an Outputs Review Panel determines based on evidence and judgement that an output does not meaningfully align with the disciplinary areas defined by the UoA descriptor, it will be removed from consideration within that UoA.

In cases where outputs demonstrate clear interdisciplinary content, they may be considered for submission by HSU to more than one UoA, provided they meet the alignment criteria for each. The decision to submit an output to multiple UoAs will be based on a documented rationale and subject to moderation through the peer review process to ensure consistency and fairness.

The REF Working Group will oversee the process for allocating outputs to UoAs, including cases where an output is being considered for submission to more than one UoA. This group will ensure that decisions are made consistently, transparently, and in line with the REF2029 Guidance. The REF Working Group will review recommendations from UoA Leads and Outputs Review Panels, particularly where interdisciplinary alignment is being considered. Final recommendations on output submission, including UoA alignment, will be made to the Vice-Chancellor, who holds responsibility for approving the final submission.

### 5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

The REF CKU Guidance (paragraph 5.6.2) notes that “Diversity of output forms refers to the representation and recognition in each REF 2029 UoA and main panel of a broad range of research outputs, expressed in the most appropriate way for the research itself and its audiences and partners.” Examples of output types include but are not limited to journal articles, conference papers, monographs and book chapters, reviews and research synthesis, software and code, datasets, policy summaries and analyses, non-textual outputs (e.g., artefacts, audio, visual, multi-modal), reagents, and creative, performance and practice-led outputs.

As a signatory to CoARA and DORA, HSU is committed to recognising and valuing all formats of research output. This is reflected in the HSU Academic Framework and personal research planning and performance review processes and has informed HSU’s REF2021 processes. All forms of research output and research practice will be assessed on a fair and equal basis. No output type is considered inherently superior or inferior to another. All outputs are assessed based on their originality, significance, and rigour, regardless of format, through a process of qualitative peer review.

Those involved in supporting HSU’s REF submission (including internal reviewers, Outputs Review Panels, and the REF Working Group) have undertaken REF-specific training and development on responsible research assessment. This includes guidance on recognising diverse forms of research and avoiding bias toward traditional output formats. Reviewers are supported to assess all outputs equitably, based on content and contribution, not format or disciplinary convention.

HSU will monitor the diversity of output types submitted across UOAs to ensure that the selection process reflects the breadth of research activity within health sciences and does not inadvertently disadvantage researchers working in applied, clinical, practice-based, or interdisciplinary fields. This includes recognising outputs that may take non-traditional forms such as practice-led artefacts, policy analyses, datasets, software, and other formats that are particularly relevant to health and social care, sport and exercise sciences, and allied health disciplines.

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

Within the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) unit-level statements in HSU's REF submission, HSU will provide an overview of research activity and academic framing of the submitting unit, including any discrete subject structures, research groups and/or areas of specialised academic endeavour. HSU will aim for the submitted outputs to be representative of the subject range and diversity of research activities undertaken during the REF2029 cycle, with an explanation of any discrepancy included in the statement of representation in the SPRE unit-level statement. Furthermore, HSU will aim for no more than five outputs to be associated with a single substantive link (i.e. individual author) within a submission at UOA level (as per paragraph 7.2.3 in the REF CKU Guidance).

To prepare for REF2029 and contribute to the University's wider research culture and environment, HSU will conduct a series of output review exercises. These exercises are designed to evaluate research performance, support staff development, and inform strategic decision-making, operating through a process of qualitative peer review. The exercises will also help HSU to achieve a representative submission. Table 8 presents the timetable for the output review exercises.

We have adopted an inclusive and transparent approach to output review, with all eligible outputs included to maximise the developmental value of the exercise and the ensure that all outputs have an equal opportunity for inclusion. This supports staff development, aligns with our commitment to EDI, and supports our strategy to enhance the quality and impact of HSU's research beyond REF.

In 2023/24, the REF Working Group agreed a set of consistent procedures for output review. Each output is independently assessed through a process of qualitative peer review by at least two reviewers: one with subject familiarity and one with broader disciplinary awareness. Reviewers are nominated by UoA Leads. Scores are moderated at formal Outputs Review Panel meetings. After each exercise, a small sample of outputs will be sent to an external reviewer for moderation purposes. Metrics and author/journal prestige measures are excluded from the assessment process.

HSU's output selection strategy aims to maximise the overall quality of the submission, while ensuring that selected outputs reflect the breadth, diversity, and strategic direction of research within each unit and adhere where possible to the recommended allocation of a maximum of five outputs per substantive link.[4] Output selection will also review outputs with significant material in common, ensuring significantly different material is presented rather than a single output. Following moderation, outputs scoring above a defined quality threshold will be mapped against HSU substantive links, Research Centres, research narratives and themes, output types, and research methodologies, ensuring representation of outputs whilst acknowledging the growth and maturity of research areas across submitting units. This mapping process will be undertaken by the Director of Research, Research & Knowledge Exchange Manager, and UoA Leads.

Outputs are selected based on quality and strategic alignment. Where the pool of the highest scoring outputs does not adequately represent the unit's research activity and/or includes single substantive links associated with more than five outputs, additional outputs may be considered to enhance representativeness. This will be done in two stages: i) from within the quality threshold pool; and, if needed, ii) from the pool of outputs scored below the quality threshold. The initial output selection and reserve list decisions will be made by the Director of Research, Research & Knowledge Exchange

[4] The REF CKU Guidance (Section 7.2) states that "The expectation is that no more than 5 outputs are associated with a single substantive link within a submission at UoA level. This is intended to support HEIs and to ensure that submissions are representative of the full range of research within the submitting unit and are not unfairly disproportionate. Where this number is exceeded, the submitting unit should explain the rationale within the statement of representation."

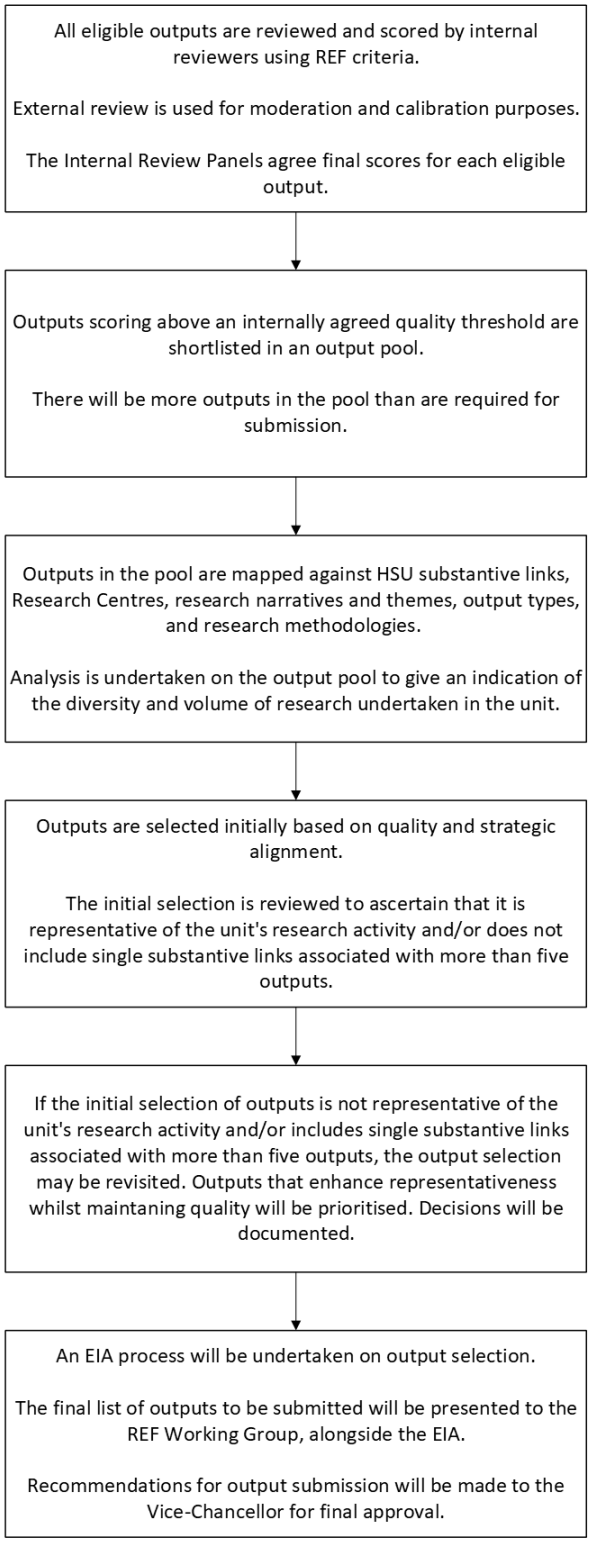
Manager, and UoA Leads. These preliminary decisions will be presented to the REF Working Group (alongside the Equality Impact Assessment) for discussion and recommendation for approval through the governance structure outlined in Figure 2. Final decisions will be made by the Vice-Chancellor. The rationale for all decisions will be documented and will be contextualised in the statement of representation in the SPRE unit-level statements.

Table 8: Timetable of output review exercises at HSU

| **Exercise number** | **Details of planned output review exercises** |
|---|---|
| 1 | December 2024 to June 2025: Review all eligible outputs published since 1 January 2021. *Completed.* |
| 2 | September 2026: Review all eligible outputs published since exercise 1 (including any outputs that were missed previously). |
| 3 | Summer 2027: Review all eligible outputs published since exercise 2 (including any outputs that were missed previously). |
| 4 | From autumn 2027 to final submission: Review all eligible outputs published since exercise 3 (including any outputs that were missed previously). Outputs to be reviewed on an *ad hoc* basis throughout this period. |

** The REF preparation plan is reviewed regularly by the REF Working Group, who retain the right to amend the timetable of REF output review exercises if deemed necessary.*

Figure 5: Flowchart of steps taken to select outputs for submission to REF2029



### 5.1.6 Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

HSU is committed to responsible research assessment and has been a signatory to both DORA and CoARA since 2023/24. These commitments underpin our approach to evaluating research quality, ensuring that assessment practices are responsible, fair, equitable, and transparent. In line with these principles, HSU does not use proxies such as metrics or journal/author prestige in the assessment of outputs. Instead, outputs are reviewed through a process of qualitative peer review and are considered based on their intrinsic quality, using REF criteria of originality, significance, and rigour. Internal reviewers receive guidance and training on responsible research assessment, including strategies to mitigate unconscious bias and ensure consistency. All decisions are documented and moderated by Outputs Review Panels, and the process is subject to an EIA to ensure it supports a diverse and inclusive research culture.

The HSU REF Working Group includes several members who also serve on the HSU CoARA Working Group, including the same chair. There is also some shared membership across the Outputs Review Panels and the HSU CoARA Working Group, including the chair of the UoA 3 Outputs Review Panel. This cross-membership supports the embedding of responsible research assessment principles within REF policies and processes. It operates within the governance safeguards set out in this Code of Practice, which are designed to ensure transparency, appropriate challenge, and confidence in decision-making.

In addition, HSU will periodically reflect on themes arising from REF processes, including outputs review and appeals, to inform the ongoing development of guidance, training, and support for research staff, without disclosing personal or case-specific information.

### 5.1.7 Procedures for ensuring that outputs in British Sign Language or other languages are not treated less favourably in output selection

HSU is committed to ensuring that outputs submitted in languages other than English are treated equitably and in accordance with relevant legal and cultural protections. All eligible outputs, regardless of language, are included in the output review process and assessed using the same quality criteria. Outputs in Welsh and British Sign Language (BSL) will not be treated less favourably in the output selection process. Where relevant, outputs in recognised languages (namely Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Irish, and Irish Sign Language) will be assessed in accordance with their legal status and cultural significance, particularly where research is produced in collaboration with jurisdictions where these languages have protected status. This commitment also extends to outputs submitted in other recognised international languages, such as French, Spanish, and Mandarin, where relevant to the research context. Where internal expertise is not available to assess an output in a non-English language, HSU will have the output professionally translated into English or seek external reviewers with appropriate linguistic and disciplinary expertise. All external reviewers will be briefed on HSU's output review procedures and responsible research assessment principles, including the use of REF criteria and the exclusion of metrics. HSU's commitment to responsible research assessment, as a signatory to DORA and CoARA, ensures that all outputs are evaluated on their intrinsic quality, regardless of language of publication.

## 5.2 Staff, committees, and training

This is the same as Part 2. Please refer to Section 2.4.

## 5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Although outputs are decoupled from individual staff in REF2029, an EIA was conducted to inform the development of HSU's output selection process to ensure this is fair, inclusive, and aligned with HSU's commitments to DORA and CoARA. The aim was to identify and mitigate any unintended bias or structural disadvantage.

The EIA analysed aggregated data on the distribution of research narratives and themes, Research Centres, Schools/Departments, and output types. It considered the proportion of outputs authored by high-output staff to ensure that no single author's work was disproportionately represented. Although outputs are decoupled from individuals, the EIA also examined the proportion of outputs with at least one HSU author/equivalent identifying as female. Analyses were undertaken separately for both of HSU's planned UoA submissions.

Key findings included:

- **Diversity of outputs:** Most outputs produced by HSU authors are journal articles, which aligns with disciplinary norms. The EIA indicated that journal articles were slightly more prevalent in the selected outputs compared with other output types. Internal reviewers tended to give lower scores to outputs such as book chapters, reflecting uncertainty about whether these met the REF definition of research, particularly in terms of originality.
- **Outputs from high-output individuals:** In both units, some outputs were produced by staff with a high volume of outputs. In one unit, there are most likely sufficient alternative outputs above the quality threshold to balance representation. In the other unit, which is an emerging area and represents HSU's first REF submission to this UoA, the number of outputs authored by a broader range of staff is expected to increase during the REF period.
- **Distribution of research narratives/themes:** In both units, the EIA indicated that selected outputs were broadly consistent with the overall distribution of research narratives and themes.
- **Distribution of Research Centres:** In one unit, selected outputs reflected the distribution of Research Centres in the output pool. In the other unit, while selected outputs were consistent with the output pool above the quality threshold, there were differences when comparing the output pool to all outputs produced within the unit. These differences were primarily linked to outputs from a new Research Centre and outputs authored by staff in the Clinical & Rehabilitation Services team.
- **Distribution of Schools/Departments:** In one unit, selected outputs reflected the distribution of Schools/Departments in the output pool. In the other unit, selected outputs were consistent with the output pool above the quality threshold, but differences were observed when comparing the output pool to all outputs produced within the unit. The main difference related to outputs from one School being less prevalent and outputs from another School being more prevalent, the latter primarily due to a high volume of outputs from one author. This can be considered through the output selection process.

The findings of the EIA have directly informed the development of HSU's output selection procedures and reviewer guidance. Actions include reinforcing the importance of recognising diverse output types during reviewer training and calibration exercises, monitoring the distribution of outputs across Research Centres and Schools/Departments, and ensuring that outputs from less prevalent areas are considered. The EIA has also shaped our approach to moderation and strategic mapping, supporting a final submission that reflects the breadth and diversity of research activity at HSU. The EIA will be reviewed and updated at key stages of the REF preparation process to maintain fairness, transparency, and alignment with HSU's commitments to responsible research assessment.

## Part 6: Appendices

1. HSU REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
2. List of abbreviation and acronyms used in this document
3. HSU REF Working Group terms of reference
4. HSU REF UoA Lead role descriptor
5. HSU Output Reviewer role descriptor
6. HSU REF Appeals Panel terms of reference
7. HSU REF Appeals Form

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

**Appendix 1: HSU REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

HSU HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

# Health Sciences University

## REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment v2

## Updated with data from the HESA Staff Record 2024/25

*This Equality Impact Assessment should be read in conjunction with the Health Sciences University REF2029 Code of Practice, which provides the detailed policies, processes, and criteria to which this assessment relates.*

## Introduction

**Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed**
This document presents the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Health Sciences University (HSU) REF2029 Code of Practice, including processes for i) determining staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR); ii) determining which staff have research independence (RI); iii) allocating staff contracts to units of assessment (UoAs); iv) selecting outputs for submission; and v) managing appeals and review processes.

The EIA is a live document and will be reviewed and updated throughout the development, implementation, and monitoring of HSU's REF2029 processes, ensuring that all policies and procedures remain fair, transparent, and inclusive and continue to align with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and HSU's Code of Practice.

**Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event**

The aim is to ensure that HSU's REF2029 submission is developed and implemented in a fair, transparent, and inclusive manner. The Code of Practice is designed to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into all REF-related policies and processes, ensuring compliance with the PSED and alignment with principles of responsible research assessment.

Its objectives are to:

1. Promote fairness and consistency in identifying staff contracts with SRR and RI.
2. Ensure equitable and evidence-informed allocation of outputs and staff contracts to UoAs.
3. Provide transparent mechanisms for staff to raise queries or appeal decisions.

4. Monitor processes to identify, address, and mitigate potential disparities or unintended negative impacts.
5. Align with HSU's broader commitments to responsible research assessment, as a signatory of CoARA and DORA.

**What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)**

The processes set out in the HSU REF2029 Code of Practice have been developed and agreed by the REF Working Group, ensuring that key stakeholders within the institution have been involved in their design. In June 2025, the proposed indicators and process for identifying staff contracts with SRR were shared with all staff via the internal RKE Hub website and staff newsletter, providing an opportunity for feedback.

Further engagement was undertaken in autumn 2025, when a complete draft of the Code of Practice was circulated to all staff and the HSU Staff Association for comment. In the same period, the Code of Practice was reviewed and discussed by the REF Working Group, Research & Innovation Committee, and Academic Board. Following the publication of new and updated REF Guidance in December 2025, the Code of Practice was updated and shared with all staff and also discussed at the REF Working Group. Following these engagement opportunities, the document was submitted to the Vice-Chancellor for formal approval to submit the Code of Practice to the external REF Team.

This phased approach ensures transparency, engagement, and input from relevant staff groups and institutional governance bodies, supporting confidence in the fairness, transparency and inclusivity of HSU's REF2029 processes.

## Table 1: Policy and process overview table

Table 1 summarises the key policies and processes covered by this EIA, outlining their purpose, the staff groups affected, the key procedural steps, and any relevant notes. This overview provides context for the detailed narrative analysis that follows, which applies the core PSED questions to ensure that all REF2029 processes are fair, transparent, and inclusive.

| Policy / process | Purpose | Who is affected | Key steps | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identifying staff contracts with significant responsibility for research (SRR). | To identify staff contracts with SRR fairly, transparently, and inclusively. | All eligible academic staff ('teaching & research' contracts). | 1. Draft criteria developed Feb 2025.<br>2. EIA (v1) applied to draft criteria, including alternative criteria.<br>3. REF Working Group discussion.<br>4. Draft criteria updated Apr 2025, including changes supporting processes and policies to | Annex 1 – full analysis including protected characteristics. |

| Policy / process | Purpose | Who is affected | Key steps | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | make the criteria more inclusive.<br>5. EIA (v2) updated with data from the HESA Staff Record 24/25.<br>6. Staff and Staff Association invited to comment on draft process and criteria in autumn 2025 and again in January 2026.<br>7. Staff given opportunity to query or appeal SRR decisions during data checking exercises. | |
| Determining which staff have research independence (RI). | To identify staff demonstrating RI fairly, transparently and inclusively. | All eligible academic staff ('research only' contracts) (at HSU, this is a very small cohort <5). | 1. Draft criteria developed.<br>2. EIA (v1) applied Jun 2025.<br>3. REF Working Group discussion.<br>4. Draft criteria updated Jul 2025.<br>5. EIA (v2) updated with data from the HESA Staff Record 24/25.<br>6. Staff and Staff Association invited to comment on draft process and criteria in autumn 2025 and again in January 2026.<br>7. Staff given opportunity to query or appeal RI decisions during data checking exercises. | Small cohort.<br>Data not published to protect confidentiality but instead grouped with SRR data in Annex 1. |

| Policy / process | Purpose | Who is affected | Key steps | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Allocating contracts to UoAs. | To ensure contracts are assigned equitably. | All staff with SRR/RI. | 1. Allocation based on disciplinary alignment.<br>2. EIA (v1) applied.<br>3. Staff and Staff Association invited to comment on draft process and criteria in autumn 2025 and again in January 2026.<br>4. Staff given opportunity to query UoA alignment during data checking exercises. | Criteria applied consistently across UoAs.<br>Does not restrict allocation of outputs to UoAs. |
| Selecting outputs for submission. | To ensure the selection of outputs is fair, inclusive, and aligned with DORA/CoARA principles. | Research outputs produced by HSU staff. | 1. Qualitative peer review determines output quality. Metrics are not used.<br>2. Aggregated data analysed on research narratives/themes, Research Centres, Schools, output types.<br>3. EIA applied to selection process.<br>4. Staff and Staff Association invited to comment on draft process and criteria in autumn 2025 and again in January 2026.<br>5. Reviewer guidance and training updated and keep under review.<br>6. Ongoing monitoring. | Actions include reviewer training, moderation, and strategic mapping. |

| Policy / process | Purpose | Who is affected | Key steps | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appeals and review processes | Ensure staff have a fair, transparent mechanism to query decisions and to appeal procedural irregularities or perceived prejudice. | All staff eligible for REF processes, including former staff whose outputs may be included. | 1. Appeals process for SRR and RI documented in CoP.<br>2. Staff and Staff Association invited to comment on draft process and criteria in autumn 2025 and again in January 2026.<br>3. REF Appeals Panel to be established and training to be provided.<br>4. Process for former staff to request non-inclusion of their output(s) in some situations. | Documented in CoP, including terms of reference for Appeals Panel, clear guidance on grounds for appeal, structured template, and clear timescales. |

## Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) analysis

In accordance with the REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment Guidance, this section applies the core questions of the PSED to the processes set out in HSU's REF2029 Code of Practice. The analysis is presented in narrative form to supplement the tabular assessments presented in this EIA document. It considers the extent to which each process has been designed and implemented to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. This narrative therefore provides an integrated account of equality considerations across the Code of Practice, ensuring that risks are identified, mitigations are articulated, and inclusive practices are embedded.

### Significant responsibility for research (SRR) and research independence (RI)

The following analysis applies the PSED core questions to the identification of staff contracts with SRR (for 'teaching and research' contracts) and the determination of RI (for 'research only' contracts). It considers potential impacts on equality groups, assesses risks of indirect discrimination, and sets out how the process has been designed and implemented to advance equality of opportunity and foster confidence in its fairness.

In developing the SRR and RI processes, careful attention has been paid to ensuring that they do not exclude or disadvantage staff with protected characteristics, as well as other groups such as staff on part-time or fixed-term contracts. Criteria for recognising SRR and RI are

transparent and applied consistently across all contract types. Indicators of SRR and RI are evidence-based and auditable and are aligned with REF2029 guidance.

The process is designed to advance equality of opportunity by ensuring that all staff groups have a fair chance to be considered for SRR/RI designation. As this is a live EIA, data on SRR/RI outcomes are monitored periodically by the REF Working Group, so that any disparities can be identified and addressed. Guidance has been provided to make the process clear and accessible.

Engagement with staff, including via the HSU Staff Association, informed the design of the criteria, supporting trust and transparency. Decisions are communicated with clear reasons, and staff are encouraged to seek clarification or request a review. In this way, the process not only embeds fairness but also fosters confidence in its application.

**Selection of outputs**

The PSED core questions have been applied to the process of selecting outputs for inclusion in REF2029. While outputs are decoupled from individual staff and therefore cannot be reviewed by protected characteristic, the process has been designed to mitigate structural inequalities and ensure fairness across output types, disciplines, thematic areas, and research languages. Reviewer guidance and calibration exercises emphasise recognition of diverse contributions, including outputs such as book chapters, applied or practice-informed research outputs, and interdisciplinary publications. Outputs in languages other than English, including Welsh, British Sign Langauge, other recognised UK languages, and relevant international languages, are assessed equitably using the same quality criteria, with translation or external expert review arranged where necessary. The process aligns with HSU's commitments to CoARA and DORA, supporting responsible research assessment and avoiding over-reliance on metrics or conventional indicators that may disadvantage certain research types or staff groups.

The process advances equality of opportunity by ensuring that all eligible outputs are reviewed and considered for inclusion in the submission in a transparent and consistent manner. Outputs are evaluated against clear criteria, and moderation processes are in place to ensure consistency of output scoring. External reviewers are engaged to undertake reviews of a sample of outputs after each Internal Review Panel to support moderation and calibration. The output selection process has been developed to avoid a skew towards outputs from any single author or unit, and strategic mapping is used to ensure that submissions are representative of the breadth and diversity of research activity within HSU's submitting units. These procedures demonstrate HSU's commitment to reducing disadvantage, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering confidence in the fairness and inclusivity of REF2029 processes.

**Appeals and review processes**

The following analysis applies the PSED core questions to the appeals and review mechanisms within the HSU REF2029 Code of Practice. It considers how the process safeguards against discrimination, ensures equitable access for all staff, and promotes trust and confidence in the fairness and transparency of decision-making.

The appeals and review process has been designed to be accessible, proportionate, and fair for all staff groups. It does not require specialist knowledge to engage with, and the timelines have been structured to avoid creating indirect barriers for those with caring or health-related responsibilities. REF Appeals Panel members will undertake mandatory training in responsible research assessment.

The process supports equality of opportunity by being open to all staff, regardless of role, discipline, or contract type. Data on use of the appeals route will be monitored to ensure that participation is equitable and to identify whether particular groups are more or less likely to engage.

Fostering good relations is central to the design of the appeals and review system. The process is confidential and supportive, and staff are provided with clear, transparent information about how to appeal and what to expect. In this way, the approach encourages constructive engagement, builds trust, and reinforces confidence in the fairness of REF-related decision-making across HSU.

## Table 2: Equality impact table

Table 2 presents the EIA across protected characteristics, highlighting potential impacts, mitigations, and evidence used to inform and review each policy or process. In line with REF Guidance, while outputs cannot be analysed by protected characteristic, the assessment considers their representativeness across output type, research theme, discipline, and unit of assessment. It also takes account of structural and procedural factors that could disproportionately affect particular groups. This approach ensures that all REF2029 processes are evaluated for fairness, inclusivity, and compliance with the PSED.

| Protected characteristic / category[5] | Potential impact | Mitigation actions | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex (gender) | The SRR/RI population has the same proportion of men and women as the pool of eligible contracts. The output selection process has been reviewed to ensure fair representation of female-authored outputs. | Review SRR criteria (complete); support part-time staff; PRP integration with workload planning (complete); reviewer training for diverse output types. | Staff demographic data, output metadata, consultation feedback. |
| Disability | The SRR/RI population includes a higher proportion of staff disclosing a disability (+7%) compared with the overall pool of eligible contracts. | Monitor outcomes; ensure equitable support and recognition. | Staff demographic data. |
| Age | The SRR/RI population includes a lower proportion of younger staff (35 years and below) and a higher proportion of older staff (56-65 years) compared with the overall pool of eligible contracts. | Targeted support; mentoring; PRP integration (complete). | Staff demographic data. |

[5] For output selection, note that outputs were decoupled from individual staff. Therefore, we could not assess impacts by individual protected characteristics in the same way as for SRR or RI. Instead, Table 2 summarises the main potential equality/research environment impacts using the following categories as indicators: sex (gender) and outputs (structural / process-level), which consider representation in outputs based on gender, Research Centres, research narratives/themes, Schools/Departments, and output type.

| Protected characteristic / category[5] | Potential impact | Mitigation actions | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nationality | The SRR/RI population has the same proportion of British and non-British staff compared with the overall pool of eligible staff contracts. | Monitor and ensure fair recognition. | Staff demographic data. |
| Ethnicity | The SRR/RI population includes a higher proportion of White staff (+17%) compared with the pool of eligible contracts, whilst staff from Global Majority backgrounds show a modestly higher proportion (+2%). | Continue monitoring; support inclusive recognition; continue to promote disclosure. | Staff demographic data. |
| Sexual orientation | The SRR/RI population includes a slightly higher proportion of staff identifying as gay or lesbian (+2%) compared with the overall pool of eligible staff contracts. | Continue to promote disclosure and inclusive recognition. | Staff demographic data. |
| Religion | The SRR/RI population includes a higher proportion of staff with no religion (+21%) compared with the overall pool of eligible contracts, while staff identifying with a religion show a slightly lower proportion (-1%). | Encourage inclusivity; maintain monitoring. | Staff demographic data. |
| Contracted hours | The SRR/RI population includes a lower proportion of part-time staff (−35%) compared with the pool of eligible staff contracts. | PRP integration (complete); workload planning; targeted support; further analysis undertaken by School (complete); REF Working Group to discuss this further. Many part-time staff are practitioner-educators with clinical responsibilities and may be less research-active. The REF Working Group has agreed to explore further ways to support and engage part-time academic staff in research, building on ongoing efforts to strengthen HSU's research culture and environment. | Staff contract data |
| Contract type | The SRR/RI population includes a slightly lower proportion of fixed-term staff (−3%) | Transparent criteria; periodic monitoring. | Staff contract data |

| Protected characteristic / category[5] | Potential impact | Mitigation actions | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| | compared with the pool of eligible staff contracts. | | |
| Outputs (structural / process-level)[1] | The SRR/RI population includes a slightly higher proportion of journal articles. Outputs from some high-output authors appear in greater proportion, while some Schools and Research Centres are represented at a slightly lower proportion. | Reviewer guidance; calibration exercises; monitoring distribution; moderation; strategic mapping. | Aggregated output metadata; CoP procedures; internal EIA analysis; reviewer and panel guidance and scoring. |
| Language of outputs (British Sign Language, Welsh, other recognised languages) | Risk that outputs in non-English languages could be undervalued or overlooked. | Standardised assessment criteria; translation or external review; reviewer briefing on responsible research assessment; procedures documented in CoP. | Aggregated output metadata showing output language; CoP procedures; internal EIA analysis; reviewer and panel guidance and scoring records; translation and external review records. |

## Table 3: Evaluation table

Table 3 summarises the evaluation and ongoing monitoring of equality impacts for each policy and process. It provides summary assessments of potential impacts on equality groups, records evaluation decisions, identifies further actions required, and specifies responsibilities for monitoring and review. Together with Tables 1 and 2, this table demonstrates how evidence from assessment and monitoring informs continuous improvement, ensuring that all REF2029 processes remain fair, transparent, and inclusive, and align with the PSED.

| Policy / Process | Summary of assessment of impact on equality groups | Evaluation decision | Further actions | Responsibility for monitoring and review |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identifying staff contracts with | Disparities (variance greater than 3%) present | **Adapt or change** the implementation of the | Keep under review throughout REF2029 | REF Working Group. |

| Policy / Process | Summary of assessment of impact on equality groups | Evaluation decision | Further actions | Responsibility for monitoring and review |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| significant responsibility for research (SRR). | in terms of age and working hours (full- or part-time). Staff disclosing a disability and staff identifying as gay or lesbian are represented at a higher proportion in the SRR/RI population compared with the overall pool of eligible contracts. There is no variation between the eligible pool and SRR/RI pool in terms of gender or nationality (British or non-British). | policy to aim to eliminate the bias. | preparations and submission.<br><br>Targeted support initiatives for part-time staff; PRP integration; workload planning; ongoing monitoring and review | Staff given opportunity to query and raise formal appeals about SRR during data checking exercises. |
| Determining which staff have research independence (RI). | Small cohort (<5); process applied consistently; no identifiable differential impact. | No barriers identified; therefore, activity will **proceed**. | Keep under review throughout REF2029 preparations and submission. | REF Working Group.<br><br>Staff given opportunity to query and raise formal appeals about RI during data checking exercises. |
| Allocating contracts to UoAs. | No differential impact detected; criteria applied consistently; equitable across Schools and Research Centres. | No barriers identified; therefore, activity will **proceed**. | Keep under review throughout REF2029 preparations and submission. | REF Working Group.<br><br>Staff given opportunity to query UoA alignment during data checking exercises. |
| Selecting outputs for submission. | There is a slightly higher proportion of outputs from some high-output authors and journal | **Adapt or change** the implementation of the policy to aim to eliminate the bias. | Keep under review throughout REF2029 preparations and submission. | REF Working Group. |

| Policy / Process | Summary of assessment of impact on equality groups | Evaluation decision | Further actions | Responsibility for monitoring and review |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | articles; however, this is addressed through the output selection process. The distribution of narratives, themes, Research Centres, and Schools/Departments is largely balanced. | | Review output review guidance; revisit potential bias in reviewer training and calibration exercises. | The rationale for output selection decisions will be documented.<br><br>Efforts will be made to contact former staff who left HSU due to compulsory redundancy or voluntary severance to inform them of the proposed inclusion of their output(s). They will be given the opportunity to request non-submission. |
| Appeals and review processes. | Provides mechanism to address potential inequities or discrimination and ensures any staff who perceive bias or procedural irregularity can have their case considered. | No barriers identified; therefore, activity will **proceed**. | Keep under review throughout REF2029 preparations and submission. | REF Working Group. |

## Conclusion

This EIA demonstrates that HSU's REF2029 processes have been designed and implemented in full consideration of the PSED. Potential impacts on staff and structural factors have been identified, mitigations applied, and ongoing monitoring arrangements established to ensure fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. The EIA is a live document and will continue to be reviewed and updated as part of REF preparation, supporting continuous improvement and ensuring alignment with the Code of Practice and HSU's broader commitments to responsible and equitable research assessment.

# EIA Annex 1 – aggregated data from identifying staff contracts with SRR and determining which staff have RI

**Source of data is HESA Staff Record 2024-25**

**Research-only contracts have been included alongside teaching & research contracts because of the very small number of research-only contracts (fewer than 5).**

**Sex/Gender**

| Group | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 44% | 56% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 44% | 56% |

**Disability**

| Group | No disclosed disability | Disclosed disability | Prefer not to say / Not available |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 72% | 12% | 16% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 73% | 19% | 8% |

**Nationality**

| Group | British | Other nationality |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 79% | 21% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 79% | 21% |

**Ethnicity**[6]

| Group | White | Global majority | Not known / Prefer not to say / Not available |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 75% | 10% | 15% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 92% | 8% | 0% |

**Sexual orientation**

| Group | Heterosexual | Gay or Lesbian | Prefer not to say / Not available |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 60% | 6% | 34% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 77% | 8% | 15% |

**Age**

| Group | 25 and under | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | 65 and over |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 1% | 18% | 30% | 26% | 21% | 3% |

[6] Data is not disaggregated further to avoid potential identification of individuals.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 0% | 6% | 29% | 25% | 40% | 0% |

**Religion**

| Group | No religion/atheist/ agnostic | People identifying with a religion | Prefer not to say / Not available |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 29% | 32% | 39% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 50% | 31% | 19% |

**Contract type**

| Group | Permanent | Fixed-term |
|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 91% | 9% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 94% | 6% |

**Contracted hours**

| Group | Full-time hours | Part-time hours |
|---|---|---|
| Eligible staff | 36% | 64% |
| Staff with significant responsibility for research / research independence | 71% | 29% |

REF 2029
Research Excellence Framework

**Appendix 2: List of abbreviation and acronyms used in this document**

| | |
|---|---|
| CoARA | Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment |
| CoP | Code of Practice |
| DORA | San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment |
| EDI | Equality, diversity and inclusion |
| EIA | Equality Impact Assessment |
| EU | European Union |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| HSU | Health Sciences University |
| PRP | Personal research planning process |
| PSED | Public Sector Equality Duty |
| REF | Research Excellence Framework |
| RI | Research independence |
| SPRE | Strategy, People and Research Environment |
| SRR | Significant responsibility for research |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UoA | Unit of assessment |
| **HESA field terms** | |
| ACEMPFUN | Academic employment function: a field used in the HESA Staff record to record the employment function of the contract for academic staff |
| CONFTE | This field identifies the percentage of a full-time equivalent (FTE) year being undertaken by staff on the contract over the course of the reporting period. |
| REFQUALCON | Contract qualifies to contribute to REF volume measure: a field used in the HESA Staff record to record that a contract qualifies to contribute to the volume measure for REF |
| REFUOA2029 | This field records the REF UoA relating to the contract(s) of the staff member. |

## Appendix 3: HSU REF Working Group terms of reference

**RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2029 WORKING GROUP**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Membership**

Director of Research (Chair)
Research and Knowledge Exchange Manager (Secretary)
Research Support Officer (Clerk)
Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads
Head of People and Development (or People Department representative)
Library and Learning Services Manager
Heads of School
Representative from the Research Centre Heads

**Terms of Reference**

1. To report to the Research and Innovation Committee as part of the University's committee structure, on all preparations for REF 2029, and advise on matters for strategy and investment to strengthen the submission to REF 2029.
2. To guide and support the preparation and submission to REF 2029 through developing and maintaining a preparation framework and institutional strategy pertaining to maximising our submission to REF 2029.
3. To maintain, update and communicate sector, disciplinary and institutional knowledge concerning REF 2029.
4. To develop and implement a process that identifies appropriate Units of Assessment and supports their development to ensure HSU has credible and robust submissions for REF 2029. To ensure that eligible outputs are included in each Unit of Assessment.
5. To develop and implement a process for identifying eligible staff with significant responsibility for research and those who are independent researchers for the purposes of classification in HESA data.
6. To support Unit of Assessment Leads in coordinating their unit submission.
7. To oversee the development and implementation of an institutional REF 2029 Code of Practice.
8. To consider and adhere to legislative expectations regarding equality and diversity in a transparent, consistent, inclusive, and accountable fashion, to include equality analysis monitoring.
9. To recommend to the Vice-Chancellor for approval the final submission including impact case studies and institutional and disciplinary level evidence statements.
10. To plan and oversee internal and external review (mock) exercises.

11. Building on ongoing alignment of the REF exercise with the institutional research strategy in supporting and guiding increased embedded research capacity and culture in the institution.
12. To review outcomes from REF 2029 and to provide recommendations to the Research and Innovation Committee for future research assessment exercises.
13. To approve HSU's responses to audit requests in the post-submission audit exercise.

**Meeting frequency**

Quarterly (may be more or less frequent at certain times in the REF cycle, depending on the preparation timetable)

**Quorum**

50% plus one

**Accountable to**

Research and Innovation Committee

## Appendix 4: HSU REF UoA Lead role descriptor

## Role Descriptor: REF UOA Lead and Deputy Lead

**Purpose of the role**
The UOA Lead undertakes a vital role in driving and delivering HSU's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029. This includes influencing the University' preparations, shaping optimal submissions for each UOA, building research capacity and enhancing the research culture, and ultimately having a significant effect on HSU's REF results.

**Main responsibilities**
1. Providing leadership, advice and support on all issues relating to research planning, impact, performance metrics and published guidance relating to the UOA.
2. Having an institutional outlook for the REF, i.e. aiming to optimise HSU's overall REF performance.
3. Optimising the UOA submission and that of other UOAs by mitigating weaknesses and highlighting strengths across all aspects of the submission. For example, liaising with the Heads of School/Centre on any resourcing requirements to optimise the REF submission.
4. Ensuring that all parts of the submission undergo rigorous qualitative peer review to assess quality and areas of development prior to inclusion for REF. This includes all assessment elements – strategy, people & research environment; contribution to knowledge and understanding; and engagement and impact.
5. Leading production of the UOA's Strategy, People & Research Environment unit-level statement.
6. Leading on REF communications about the UOA within and across Schools/Centre and being the key point of contact and advice about the UOA.
7. Working closely with the Research Team who are managing the central REF preparation and submission process.
8. Attending and participating in the REF Working Group meetings.
9. Working closely with the Research Team post-submission to respond to audit queries.
10. After submission, the UOA Leads will work closely with the Research Team to evaluate HSU's preparation and submission processes, and to analyse and communicate the REF 2029 results.
11. Completion of the mandatory EDI and responsible research assessment training.

**Duration**
UOA Leads are appointed for a complete REF assessment period up until the time after the REF 2029 results have been published, although role holders can choose to step down during this time.

**Support and workload allocation**
UOA Leads will receive support from, and work with, the Research Team, the Heads of School/Centre, and the Research Centre Heads. UOA Leads receive a workload allocation of 0.1 FTE, whilst acknowledging that time required will fluctuate throughout the duration of the role.

**Reporting requirements**
All UOA Leads are expected to attend and contribute to discussions at the REF Working Group.
UOA Leads will be required to provide regular updates to relevant committees and leadership teams within the Schools/Centre.

**Review**
This version of the role description was approved in January 2026.
It will be reviewed in line with the publication of relevant REF guidance from the national REF Team.

## Appendix 5: HSU Output Reviewer role descriptor

# HSU REF 2029 Output Reviewer Role Descriptor

**Purpose**

As part of HSU's preparation for the 'Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding' element of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 submission, we will be undertaking several output review exercises in preparation for submission in autumn 2028.

All eligible research outputs published since 1 January 2021 that have been added to HSU Research Repository (or its predecessors the AECC UC Research Repository and the UCO Research Repository) will be reviewed by a panel of internal reviewers in accordance with the 'HSU Process for Agreeing Output Scores for REF 2029'.

The output review exercises will have several benefits:

- Authors will receive feedback on the perceived quality of their outputs, including advice on how to strengthen and position their future outputs.
- The review will provide intelligence on the overall shape of the University's REF outputs profile.
- The review will inform the development of the draft narratives that will form part of the submission, particularly the Strategy, People ^ Research Environment element.

Being an output reviewer will also have numerous benefits for those undertaking the role:

- High-quality training and development will be provided to all reviewers. This will include participation at the calibration sessions. This will develop your skills as a reviewer, whilst also developing your skills and abilities as an academic author, thus helping to strengthen your own outputs in future.
- Exposure to a wide range of outputs, which will raise your awareness and understanding of research undertaken by colleagues at the university. This can also spark ideas for collaboration and new research possibilities.
- Peer review is an essential part of a healthy research culture and is considered 'academic citizenship' in the Academic Framework, which can help with your career development and CV.

**Main responsibilities**

1. Participate in calibration sessions to develop an understanding regarding how to apply REF criteria when assessing output quality.
2. Assess research outputs against REF criteria and assign REF quality ratings, ensuring consistent application of REF standards. Provide some written feedback to explain the score provided.
3. Review outputs to make recommendations as to how these can contribute to the Unit of Assessment's (UoA) Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding profile.
4. For outputs under review as primary reviewer, use expertise and subject knowledge to provide assessment of output quality.
5. For outputs under review as secondary reviewer, use basic knowledge of subject area to provide assessment of output quality.
6. Ensure impartiality and consistency in assessment, respecting diversity in research methodologies and disciplines.

7. Attend Output Review Panel meetings to agree final score for each output and engage with fellow panel members to discuss and calibrate assessments.
8. Maintain records of assessments and provide feedback.
9. Adhere to principles of confidentiality when assessing and deliberating outputs.
10. Participate in research assessment training and development, for example, equality, diversity and inclusion.
11. Completion of the mandatory EDI and responsible research assessment training.

**Additional Duties**

- To demonstrate support for the University's commitment to equal opportunities and its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- To demonstrate support for the University's Health and Safety Policy ensuring that it is adhered to in the post holder's areas of responsibility.
- To undertake other activities identified from time to time commensurate with the level of the post.
- To work in line with our values.

**Qualifications and experience**

- Desire to play an active part in the development of HSU's research culture.
- Expertise in your discipline as evidenced by publications, citations, and professional contributions.
- Experience in research evaluation or peer review is highly desirable.

**Benefits of acting as an Outputs Reviewer**

Acting as an Output Reviewer offers significant professional and academic benefits. Reviewers make an important contribution to academic citizenship by supporting a fair, rigorous, and collegial research assessment process that underpins institutional research quality and culture. The role provides valuable opportunities for personal and professional development, including strengthening critical appraisal skills, scholarly judgement, and confidence in evaluating research across a range of methodologies and outputs. Reviewers gain increased insight into disciplinary developments and emerging research themes, as well as enhanced awareness of colleagues' work and expertise across the institution, supporting greater connection and collaboration. Engagement in output review also supports reflective research practice, deepens understanding of REF expectations and research quality indicators, and contributes to leadership in research culture through service, mentorship, and stewardship of standards. These contributions are recognised within the HSU Academic Framework as meaningful indicators of research culture, leadership, and scholarly contribution, regardless of career stage.

*Version 2 – January 2026*

## Appendix 6: HSU REF Appeals Panel terms of reference

### HSU RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2029 APPEALS PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Purpose**
The REF Appeals Panel is responsible for ensuring that all appeals related to REF processes at HSU are considered fairly, independently, and in line with the University's REF Code of Practice and REF2029 guidance.

**Membership**
The REF Appeals Panel will be composed of members who are independent of HSU's REF preparatory work to ensure impartiality and objectivity in decision-making. Membership is convened on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that no conflicts of interest exist and that independence from the specific appeal under review is maintained. Panel members are appointed by the Director of Research, in accordance with governance arrangements set out in the HSU REF Code of Practice.

- **Chair:** A senior academic staff member with experience in research assessment, independent of the REF Working Group and Outputs Review Panels.
- **Panel members:** At least two additional senior academic staff members, independent of REF advisory and output review processes, convened for each appeal. Members will not participate in appeals relating to outputs or decisions in which they have had prior involvement.
- **Additional support for EDI-related appeals:** The Head of People & Development will join the Panel in cases where an appeal relates to equality, diversity, or inclusion matters, providing expert guidance on relevant legal and institutional requirements.
- **Administrative support:** A member of staff not previously involved in REF preparations will provide administrative support, including the preparation of meeting materials and recording of minutes.
- **External members:** Where appropriate, the Vice-Chancellor may appoint an external academic with relevant expertise and experience of REF processes to serve on the REF Appeals Panel, to provide independent perspective and additional assurance of objectivity.

**Responsibilities**
Independent review of appeals:

- Review all appeals submitted by staff regarding decisions made under the REF Code of Practice.
- Assess each appeal against the grounds specified in the Code of Practice, including procedural irregularity or perceived prejudice related to protected characteristics.
- Determine the outcome of each appeal objectively and independently of previous REF advisory or review processes, making final determinations within the scope of the HSU REF Code of Practice.

Review of evidence:

- Consider all relevant documentation and evidence submitted in support of the appeal, ensuring that decisions are based on the merits of the case.
- Seek clarification or additional information from appropriate sources, while maintaining confidentiality.

Communication:

- The Chair should report the outcome of each appeal to the Director of Research, who will formally notify the appellant and communicate any implications to the REF Working Group.
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information throughout the appeals process.

Governance and oversight:

- Operate in accordance with the principles of responsible research assessment, ensuring fairness, transparency, and alignment with HSU's REF Code of Practice.
- Maintain records of Panel discussions and decisions, including rationale for outcomes, while preserving confidentiality.
- Contribute to periodic reflection on themes arising from appeals, without reference to individual cases, to support continuous improvement in fairness and transparency.

Training and awareness:

- Members of the REF Appeals Panel will be required to have completed relevant training in responsible research assessment and equality, diversity and inclusion, or to undertake such training prior to participating in an appeal.

Required documentation:

- Members of the REF Appeals Panel are required to read:
    - HSU REF Code of Practice
    - Panel Criteria and Working Methods (due to be published autumn 2026)
    - REF Guidance of Codes of Practice
    - REF 2021 EDAP Final Report
    - HSU Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Policy

**Meeting frequency**
The REF Appeals Panel will be convened as required.

**Quorum**
A minimum of three academic members, including the Chair, will be required to consider any appeal.

**Appendix 7: HSU REF Appeals Form**

## HSU REF2029 APPEALS FORM

This form should be used by staff wishing to submit a formal appeal in relation to decisions made under HSU's REF 2029 Code of Practice.

Those considering making an appeal may raise their concerns with the Director of Research to seek clarification and informal resolution prior to submitting this form.

Appeals will only be considered on the grounds set out in the Code of Practice. Submission of this form does not guarantee that an appeal will be upheld.

### Section 1: Appellant details

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | |
| **Job title** | |
| **School/Department** | |

### Section 2: Grounds for appeal

| **Appeals will only be considered on one or both of the following grounds (as set out in the HSU REF Code of Practice).**<br>Please use the checkbox(es) to indicate which ground(s) apply: | |
|---|---|
| There is evidence of material irregularity in the process by which a decision was reached or in the operation of this CoP such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the outcome would have been different. | ☐ |
| A claim is made that the individual has been prejudiced against, including issues around protected characteristics, in some way as part of the process such as to suggest that, in the absence of the perceived prejudice, the outcome would have been different. | ☐ |

### Section 3: Case for appeal

**Please clearly explain the basis of your appeal *(maximum 1,000 words)*.**

You should:

- Reference the relevant section(s) of the HSU REF Code of Practice
- Describe how the process was not followed or how prejudice is perceived
- Explain why this may have affected the outcome

Please provide a clear, factual account. Personal opinions without reference to the HSU REF Code of Practice may not be considered.

| |
|---|
| |

## Section 4: Supporting evidence

| **Please list and attach any supporting documentation you wish the REF Appeals Panel to consider (e.g. correspondence, documentation, or references to procedures).** |
|---|
| 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6. |

## Section 5: Data protection and confidentiality

Please confirm the following by marking each box and signing below:

☐ I confirm that the information provided is a true and accurate description of my grounds for appeal.

☐ I understand that the information provided will be used solely for the purposes of considering my REF appeal and will be accessed only by those involved in the REF appeals process, including the REF Appeals Panel and the Director of Research.

☐ I understand that my personal data, including any equality-related information, will be processed in accordance with UK data protection legislation and HSU's data protection policies, and will be stored securely and treated confidentially.

☐ I understand that anonymised learning from appeals may be reflected in institutional processes, without reference to individuals, to support transparency and fairness.

Further information about how HSU processes personal data is available in the University's Staff Privacy Notice.

## Section 6: Declaration

I confirm that:

- The information provided in this appeal is accurate to the best of my knowledge
- I understand that appeals will be considered only on the grounds set out in the HSU REF Code of Practice

- I understand that the REF Appeals Panel's decision is final within HSU's internal REF processes
- I understand that the REF Appeals Panel will consider my appeal independently of any previous REF advisory or review process in which I may have been involved.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**Submission instructions**
This form must be submitted by email to the Head of People & Development by the relevant deadlines listed in the HSU REF Code of Practice. Please ensure any attachments are clearly labelled.

Appeals submitted after the stated deadline or on grounds outside those specified in the REF Code of Practice will not be considered.