

## SOAS CODE OF PRACTICE FOR REF 2021

### Part 1: Introduction

1.1 This Code of Practice is intended to meet, with respect to SOAS, the requirement of the funding bodies for a Code of Practice as specified in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 45d] and REF 2019/03 *Guidance on Codes of Practice*. It is intended to provide a clear, consistent and appropriate basis for preparing our submissions to the REF.

- **General Principles**

1.2 The Code of Practice is not only a REF requirement; it also relates to our mission and vision to embed equality and diversity in our academic environment and our agenda to decolonize all modes of knowledge acquisition and transfer, as well as our deeply-felt wish to prevent any form of discrimination against members of staff with protected characteristics. In this context, we also wish to make it clear that we are committed to supporting our fixed-term and part-time staff in the same manner as our full-time staff. The policies, processes and procedures set out in this code will apply to all eligible staff whether employed on full-time or part-time or fixed-term or open-ended contracts.

1.3 Our key objective for REF 2021 is to maximise our performance in each submitted unit of assessment, but we will ensure that sound consideration is given to equality and diversity issues in order to promote equality, comply with legislation and avoid discrimination whilst maintaining the excellent quality of the School's submission. Final decisions will not be taken into account in relation to any promotion, progression, extension of contract or performance management procedures.

1.4 The School intends to submit to REF 2021 all Category A eligible staff, which means we are not required to develop and document criteria and processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research. Category A eligible staff are defined in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 117] as

*Academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date (31 July 2020), whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'. Staff should have a substantive research connection with the submitting unit. Staff on 'research only' contracts should meet the definition of an independent researcher.*

1.5 We are however required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice on determining who is an independent researcher and the selection of outputs in our REF submissions (REF 2019/03 *Guidance on Codes of Practice* [paragraph 2]).

1.6 This Code explains how decisions will be taken within the School and how measures have been set in place to take account of the effect of individuals' circumstances on research productivity during the assessment period. These measures, with an appropriate degree of confidentiality, will allow an individual to be returned without the required minimum

of one output without penalty in the assessment, where the circumstances are deemed to have had an exceptional effect on productivity.

1.7 The REF process is subject to the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018. One copy of the submission will be retained permanently in the School's archives. Personal data will be retained until the end of the assessment period and will be destroyed in April 2022.

1.8 There has been wide consultation on the code. Staff Groups including the Women's Network, BME Network and the School's Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (SAT), Trade Unions and all academic and research staff have been invited to comment on the Code. The Code was considered by the UCU at meetings which took place on 4 April and 28 May 2019. The Code has also been considered by the following institutional Boards and Committees:

- Academic Board (13 March 2019)
- REF Steering Group (19 March 2019)
- Equality and Diversity Committee (17 May 2019)
- Research and Enterprise Committee (14 May 2019)
- Executive Board (11 March 2019 and 3 June 2019).

1.9 The Code has been approved by the Academic Board and Executive Board of the School. A copy of the Code will be made available on the School's external website and intranet.

- **How the code relates to broader institutional policies / strategies that promote and support Equality and Diversity**

#### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

1.10 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is enshrined in our values at SOAS. The School has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that addresses all areas of our work. We are working towards continually building an approach that enables and ensures that considerations of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are embedded in all our activities, be they for students, staff or external suppliers.

1.11 The strategy covers three domains which are:

- The recruitment and teaching of diverse students
- Becoming an employer of choice
- Delivering inclusive central and professional services

1.12 The principles behind the strategy are to ensure that our approach goes beyond merely meeting our statutory and regulatory requirements under the Equality Act 2010. We want to ensure that through having an approach that encompasses all our activities, we can develop and continue to strengthen a culture in the School where considerations of Equality and Diversity are an integral part of the way that we do things here.

1.13 The full time EDI Manager was appointed in August 2017. This post is based in our Legal and Governance Team within the Directorate, and as such, it is at the heart of the

School. In addition to this role, there is a part-time Equality and Diversity Advisor (0.6 FTE), and a part-time diversity data analyst (0.4 FTE).

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

1.14 Since January 2019, the Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is the Pro-Director for Research and Enterprise. The Committee membership comprises representation from key decision makers and stakeholders from across the School. It includes the Research Excellence Manager, the Chair of the Athena SWAN Self - Assessment Team, and representatives from the Trades Unions. The Committee meets on a termly basis, primarily (though not exclusively) to monitor and review progress against the School's EDI action plan. The Committee reports to the Board of Trustees.

1.15 Other key areas of Equality, Diversity and Equality work that have priority at the School include Athena SWAN and the racial attainment gap (students).

1.16 SOAS was awarded a Gender Equality Charter Mark (Bronze) in September 2014, which was converted to an Athena SWAN (AS) bronze award in May 2015. The School is committed to the principles of the Athena SWAN Charter and we entered a submission for renewal of our institutional Bronze award in April 2019. Our Director, Baroness Amos, is the Athena SWAN Champion, which is further evidence of our commitment to the principles of the charter. The Self-Assessment Team (SAT) is chaired by Gina Heathcote, Reader in Gender Studies and International Law (who is also a member of the REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion [EDI] working group, as well as being a member of the EDI Committee). The Self-Assessment Team membership comprises representatives from all areas of the School, and is balanced in terms of gender and academic and professional services. Specifically, in relation to the overlap of Athena SWAN and the REF, some examples from our Athena Swan submission include the following:

#### 1.17 Supporting and Advancing Women's Careers

Our data shows that our performance has improved in relation to applications from, interview for and appointments of female identifying candidates. This increase correlates to our concerted focus on:

- Introducing Unconscious Bias training.
- Enhanced monitoring of attendance at the School's mandatory training for staff involved in recruitment and selection processes.
- From 2016 our policy about gender representation on interview panels has been monitored much more closely.
- In 2017 the Recruitment and Selection training was reviewed ready for the commencement of the 2018/19 academic session.
- Whilst these outcomes are encouraging, we are interested in the next level of quality outcomes and in focusing on intersectional aspects going forward.

#### 1.18 Induction

For early career researchers on academic contracts, SOAS provides a three-year probation period where staff are supported in the development of their career via a reduced teaching load (50% in year 1, 67% in year 2) and two terms of internally funded research leave on successfully completing probation. All academic probationers have a mentor for the period

of probation and with the new mentoring scheme (paragraphs 1.29 – 1.31) mentoring is also provided to staff after probation. Review meetings are scheduled after 9 months, 21 months and 30 months after commencing their appointments.

### 1.19 Promotion

The overall data for the assessment period of our submission shows that there were tangible improved outcomes connected to key changes in practice, including the re-modelling of promotions panels and re- design of the promotion application process. The School is also looking at ways to improve the promotion prospects of staff on teaching-only contracts such that they may be able to progress to positions with research responsibilities; for example, the new research mentoring scheme will be open to all academic staff including those on teaching-only contracts.

### 1.20 Staff submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) by gender

All eligible staff are to be submitted to REF 2021. In both the 2008 and 2014 RAE / REF clear gender imbalances in submissions were evident (Table 1). The decision was taken early in this assessment period to submit all eligible staff to REF 2021 and to ensure support was inbuilt through the provision of research mentors to members of staff. The SAT regards this as fundamental to moving beyond the figures to build a culture of inclusion and the process of the delivery, support and monitoring of mentoring for research informs our key objective to address the reward and recognition of female professors, and BME women in particular. Through promoting the progression of women professors, a range of other concerns raised in the assessment process are also likely to be addressed, including women’s appointment as Head of Departments, diversity in mentoring and role models in the institution, and further reduction of the pay gap. In essence, this is about us looking at every possible way to develop the diversification of our talent pipelines going forward.

*Table 1 RAE 2008 and REF 2014 Exclusion Rates by Gender*

	RAE 2008		REF 2014	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Eligible Population (no.)	94	179	113	191
Submitted (no.)	82	169	88	159
Percentage Excluded	13%	6%	22%	17%

1.21 Our focus on reducing the racial attainment gap for students is divided into two parts as follows:

1.22 At a national level, Baroness Amos has led an inquiry into the racial attainment gap as a joint project with the NUS and Universities UUK. This has involved the development and roll out of a survey, together with an analysis of responses. This has been supported by six regional focus groups, which were attended by students, as well as Heads of Institutions. There was also a virtual Vice Chancellors group. The aim of this inquiry was to develop and disseminate a better understanding of the key reasons for this disparity, with an emphasis on

sharing best practice examples (and examples of approaches that have not worked). The report has been finalised and will be formally launched early in June 2019.

1.23 Internally, SOAS is committed to reducing inequality of academic outcomes on the basis of race. Therefore, we have established a working group to ensure that our understanding and approach remains a priority. This group is chaired by a Senior Lecturer (reporting to our Pro-Director, Learning and Teaching). From an analysis of outcome data, we have determined to focus on a number of programmes for improvement. Actions to deliver these outcomes include the delivery of bespoke face to face workshops for staff on unconscious bias, mentoring, and further development of our approach to inclusive learning and teaching.

### Culture@SOAS

1.24 We have very recently developed a programme of work aimed at bringing about transformational change in our organisational culture at SOAS. The aim is to progress towards creating an environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and included. As part of this whole-institution approach, we have revised our policies, processes and procedures, including a new Dignity@SOAS policy to tackle bullying and harassment. We have implemented an anonymous reporting tool (Report and Support) to enable confidential reporting of all forms of bullying and harassment, including sexual and racial harassment. We have trained a number of Dignity Advisors who can act as a first point of contact and ensure that students and staff are offered the right support in a timely way. We have undertaken a review of our case management procedures. Our staff appraisal process has been completely revised for 2019/20 in line with a “coach approach” to performance management. Additional work will include, amongst other things, development of a values framework that can translate our values into behaviours and a comprehensive review of all relevant policies.

### Key Policies

1.25 Dignity@SOAS Policy; Gender Reassignment and Trans Equality Policy.

1.26 In addition, the School is currently reviewing its HR ‘family friendly’ policies. This has resulted in implementation of an updated Flexible Working Policy. Updates to other policies are expected shortly.

### Key EDI Training

1.27 Equality and Diversity training is mandatory for all new staff. Unconscious Bias training is also offered, which is mandatory for those sitting on selection panels.

- **An update of actions taken since REF 2014**

1.28 In 2016 the REF Steering Group approved the creation of a REF Working Group on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The Group is supporting the development of this Code of Practice for REF 2021 and is responsible for ensuring all REF processes are fair, transparent and lawful, and in compliance with REF requirements. It is anticipated that the

Group may be called on to provide advice to the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group and the REF Appeals Panel.

1.29 We have examined our policies and practices relating to the mentoring of staff on research matters, one of the actions in our REF 2014 EIA, which has led to the approval of a new Research Mentoring Policy. The aim of the scheme is to contribute to developing an enabling environment for all researchers with a view to supporting their professional development and their contribution to the School's overall mission and purpose. The scheme seeks to put in place a significantly strengthened mentoring and career development structure. It places a particular emphasis on ensuring that early career researchers can benefit from mentoring in developing their research careers. Specifically, it aims to support researchers to produce their best possible work, to have the greatest possible impact and to generate the funding that can sustain and expand the originality, significance and reach of their research.

1.30 Enhanced Mentoring Guidance circulated to Departments in 2017 has been reviewed and incorporated into the new Research Mentoring Policy alongside a revised Staff Development Review (SDR) process which will commence in 2019/20. The revised process is an evidence-based approach to appraisal that focuses on development, support and instituting a "coach approach" rather than a target-based or accounting model of annual review. We have redesigned our Personal Research Plan process, with a focus on putting in place a stronger mentoring and career development structure for all researchers, including research-active senior teaching fellows. It provides a tool for self-assessment and development, and will feed into the SDR and serve as a basis for meetings with Research Coordinators and research mentors.

1.31 The new Mentoring Policy will also support the School's implementation of the [\*Concordat to Support the Career Development of Early Career Researchers\*](#). In addition, the School was awarded the [\*HR Excellence in Research Award\*](#) in 2012, with successful review in 2014 and re-accreditation in 2016, which is further evidence of our commitment to the development of Early Career Researchers.

1.32 We have also significantly developed our systems for the collection and management of REF data, another action in our REF 2014 EIA. Dedicated posts to support this work have been created within HR and the Research and Enterprise Directorate and staff in HR and REO liaise monthly to ensure the information is up-to-date. This has meant that any members of staff who need additional support are provided with appropriate mentoring and assistance at an early stage.

- **How the institution is addressing the principles of Transparency, Consistency, Accountability, and Inclusivity in demonstrating fairness**

1.33 We wish to affirm our commitment to these principles, which will be addressed as described below.

Transparency:

1.34 All processes will be transparent. This Code will be made available and publicised to all staff. In addition to our communication plan for disseminating this Code (see paragraph 1.38), the following actions have been and are being taken:

- Personal emails have been sent to all Category A eligible staff explaining the REF processes at SOAS and where to seek advice and help (December 2017 and 2018 - to be repeated in December 2019).
- Individual emails are sent to all new Category A eligible staff within a month of their arrival, explaining the School's REF processes, what they are required to do, and where to seek advice and help.
- Information about REF 2021 and the School's processes is provided on the School's intranet and on its external website.
- Information and updates on REF 2021 are disseminated regularly in the School's monthly "Research Excellence" newsletters and in the School's weekly e-bulletin to all staff.
- REF information sessions open to all staff have been provided as part of the School's annual Research Development Workshop series since 2015.
- Information about the School's REF processes, and the help available, is disseminated regularly at Departmental meetings. In addition, departments organise annual Research Days, during which REF-related issues are discussed.

#### Consistency:

1.35 The policies and processes for determining independence, the selection of outputs, consideration of staff circumstances and appeals will be implemented uniformly across the School. All Units of Assessment have similar criteria for the selection of outputs via internal and external peer review processes (see paragraphs 4.1–4.20).

#### Accountability:

1.36 Responsibilities will be clearly defined, and the individuals and bodies involved in REF processes will be identified by role. Operating criteria and terms of reference for individuals, committees, advisory groups and any other bodies involved are described within this Code, and will be readily available to all the individuals and groups concerned. We have put in place a REF Equality Diversity and Inclusion Working Group to ensure that Equality and Diversity matters are taken into consideration in our REF processes.

#### Inclusivity:

1.37 Our Code will promote an inclusive environment. Diversity has been and will continue to be taken into account in the composition and working practices of committees, advisory groups and any other bodies involved. This inclusive environment will enable us to identify the excellent research produced by staff across all protected groups.

- **How the code is being communicated to staff across the institution (including to those on leave of absence), through various mechanisms and channels, including the staff intranet**

1.38 In accordance with the principle of transparency, the code will be communicated to staff as follows:

- The code will be made public in an easily accessible format on the School's intranet.
- Electronic copies will be sent to all academic staff via email and hard copies will be available on request.
- Hard copies will be posted to staff absent from work.
- The code will be publicised regularly in the School's weekly e-bulletin.
- It will be officially launched at an internal REF Q&A event in September 2019.
- After distribution the School's Research Excellence Manager will attend departmental meetings to lead Q&A sessions specifically on the Code.
- The Code will be made available on the School's external website when approved by Research England.

## **Part 2: identifying staff with significant responsibility for research**

2.1 The School is submitting 100% of Category A eligible staff, and as such, does not need to complete Part 2.

## **Part 3: Determining research independence**

- **Policies and procedures**
- **Criteria used for determining staff who meet the definition of an independent researcher, including information about how the criteria are being applied**

3.1 The School considers that all members of staff employed on academic (teaching and research) contracts are independent researchers.

3.2 As a small, specialist institution focused on the arts, humanities and social sciences the School has a relatively small number of staff on research only contracts (c.60) who may be defined as independent researchers. Our approach to determining independence will be applied consistently across the School and is based on REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraphs 128-134].

3.3 The School's definition of research independence for the purposes of the REF is:

*an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme.*

3.4 Indicators of independence include:

- Leading or acting as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project.
- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement - the list of independent fellowships published by the funding bodies will be made available to staff accompanied by an explanation that this is illustrative only, and that other fellowships will be considered.
- Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.
- Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.

3.5 The School takes the view that:



- Each indicator may not individually demonstrate independence and where appropriate multiple factors will be taken into consideration.
- In line with REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 133] a member of staff is not deemed to have undertaken independent research purely on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs. This principle stands even if the individual is the sole author of the output.

- **How decisions are being made and communicated to staff, including timescale**

3.6 The School considers that the following members of staff employed on research contracts do not usually meet the definition of independence:

- Staff employed to carry out another individual's research programme. Such staff may be called Research Assistants, Postdoctoral Research Assistants, Postdoctoral Researchers, Research Associates, or may have a different title.

3.7 The School considers that the following members of staff employed on research contracts usually meet the definition of independence:

- Staff who are employed at SOAS on 31 July 2020 who hold an externally funded fellowship on the funding bodies' [illustrative list of independent fellowships](#).

3.8 Members of staff employed on research-only contracts who do not hold a fellowship on the illustrative list of independent fellowships will be invited to make a case that they meet the definition of independence.

3.9 In addition to communicating the Code of Practice as described in Part 1, in accordance with the principle of transparency, the School's approach to determining research independence for the purposes of REF will be communicated in the following ways:

- By individual email to staff employed on research only contracts.
- Information will be provided on the School's intranet and external website.
- Information will be disseminated in the School's weekly e-bulletin to all staff.
- At the School's termly lunches for early career researchers facilitated by staff development. All staff employed on research only contracts are invited to these lunches. The information was first disseminated on 13 March 2019, and will be repeated during 2019/20.

- **Codes of practice should describe stages of approval (diagrams, schematics & timelines might be included as an aid)**

3.10 Members of staff employed on research-only contracts to work on a research programme led by another individual with the title Research Assistant, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Postdoctoral Researcher or Research Associate will be informed by individual email in June 2019 that the School does not consider them to be independent researchers for the purposes of REF. New members of staff in this category who commence employment between 1 July 2019 and 31 July 2020 will be informed by email within one month of commencing employment that the School does not consider them to be

independent. They will be invited to make a case for the status of independent researcher should they disagree with this decision.

3.11 Members of staff who will be employed on the census date 31 July 2020 on a research-only contract funded by a fellowship on the list of [illustrative independent fellowships](#) as stated in paragraph 3.7 will be informed by individual email in June 2019 that the School considers them to be independent researchers for the purposes of REF. New members of staff in this category who commence employment between 1 July 2019 and 31 July 2020 will be informed by personal email within one month of commencing employment that the School considers them to be independent. All such staff will be advised where to find further information about the School's policies and processes for REF 2021.

3.12 All members of staff who will be employed on the census date 31 July 2020 on a research-only contract who are not funded by a fellowship on the list of illustrative independent fellowships as stated in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.11 will be invited to submit a case for independence. A form will be provided for this purpose (Appendix 7). Applicants will be asked to explain how they meet the definition, and to provide evidence of meeting one or more indicators of independence. There will be three deadlines for applications:

- 1 September 2019
- 15 January 2020
- 15 August 2020

3.13 Applications will be considered by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group which will seek advice from Heads of Departments if necessary.

3.14 Staff will be advised by individual email about the outcome of their application within two weeks of the Group's meeting and will be provided with information about the appeals process, should they disagree with the outcome.

3.15 The REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group will review applications received against the list of staff on research-only contracts, and where deemed appropriate will contact staff who have not submitted applications to suggest that they apply.

3.16 Please see Appendix 2 for a diagram of this process, and Appendix 6 for the timeline.

### **Staff, Committees and Training**

- **Procedures for identifying designated staff and committees/panels responsible for determining research independence (distinguishing between those with advisory and those with decision-making roles)**
- **Information provided should include role descriptions for individuals and terms of reference for committees/panels, modes of operation, and record-keeping procedures, as well as information about where these roles/committees/panels fit into the wider institutional management structure**

3.17 The School's Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) has strategic responsibility for the School's submission to REF 2021 and was appointed to the role in accordance with the School's external recruitment processes. The Pro-Director is supported by: Associate

Directors of Research, each appointed with specific strategic responsibility in accordance with the School's internal recruitment processes; Outputs Co-Directors, appointed by the Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) on the basis of their knowledge and expertise in research assessment, and REF Coordinators, appointed by Heads of Department on the basis of their knowledge and expertise of research assessment and staff within the UoA. The School's Research Excellence Manager, appointed to the role in accordance with the School's external recruitment processes, is responsible for the co-ordination of the School's submission.

3.18 The School has a number of institutional groups with different responsibilities for the School's submission to REF 2021.

- Approval: Research and Enterprise Committee, Academic Board; Final approval: Executive Board.
- Decision-making: REF Strategy Group, REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group, REF Appeals Panel.
- Advisory: Unit Advisory Panels; REF Impact Working Group, REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group.
- Oversight: REF Coordinators Forum and the REF Operations Team (a subset of the REF Coordinators Forum).

In accordance with accountability and transparency principles, please see Appendix 1 for the School's governance structure chart for REF 2021 and Appendix 5 for the Membership and Terms of Reference for each of the groups with responsibility for the School's submission to REF 2021.

3.19 Specifically in relation to determining the independence status of staff on research-only contracts, applications will be considered by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group, a decision-making body. Heads of Department will have an advisory role. Careful consideration has been given to the membership of the Group to adhere to the key principle of inclusivity, and to ensure appropriate knowledge and representation.

3.20 Staff will be advised to submit applications to a confidential email mailbox which will be monitored by the Secretary to the Group and the HR representative. Information relating to applications, including outcomes, will be stored securely in an anonymised, password protected database maintained by the Secretary to which only members of the Group will have access. The Group will meet four times:

- October 2019
- February 2020
- September 2020 (Independence applications only)
- November 2020 (Staff circumstance declarations only)

- **Details of training provided to individuals and committees involved in identifying staff, the timescale for delivery and content (including how it has been tailored to the REF).**

3.21 REF-specific Equality and Diversity training will be facilitated by the School's Equality and Diversity Adviser and the School's Research Excellence Manager and will be mandatory

for all members of decision-making bodies, namely the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group, the REF Appeals Panel and the REF Strategy Group.

3.22 The training will be comprised of half-day workshops scheduled twice between June and September 2019 and will be repeated as needed throughout 2019 and 2020 in order to ensure that all staff in decision-making roles attend. Staff in advisory roles will be invited to attend this training. On-line training will also be developed which staff in advisory roles will be required to complete if they are unable to attend the scheduled workshops. Attendance and completion will be carefully monitored. Specific training will also be offered to other staff, for example, about the staff circumstances processes.

3.23 The training will be tailored to REF 2021, and will include information about the purpose and context of REF 2021; the interaction between equality and quality; an overview of equality and diversity and data protection legislation; changes since REF 2014; the School's policies, procedures and processes for REF 2021 with particular reference to the criteria for determining independence, the selection of outputs and staff circumstances, and the implications for staff with responsibility for making decisions. It will also incorporate unconscious bias training appropriate to the REF. The training will be interactive, with exercises incorporated.

## Appeals

- **How the appeals process has been communicated to staff**
- **Details of the process, including how cases are submitted, eligible grounds for appeal**
- **Details of those involved in hearing any appeals (demonstrating their independence from earlier decision processes), timescales and how decisions are being communicated to staff**

3.24 For transparency, the appeals process will be communicated to staff in the same way as this Code, as set out in paragraph 3.9. Members of staff whose applications for independence are rejected by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group will be provided with information about the appeals process.

3.25 Staff will be advised to submit written appeals to a confidential email mailbox which will be monitored by the Secretary to the REF Appeals Panel and the HR representative. There will be three deadlines for applications:

- 28 February 2020
- 30 September 2020
- 15 December 2020

3.26 The REF Appeals Panel will meet three times if required:

- Early March 2020
- October 2020
- January 2021

3.27 Information relating to applications, including outcomes, will be stored securely in a password protected, anonymised database maintained by the Secretary to which only members of the Appeals Panel will have access.

3.28 Appellants will be required to argue their case against the outcome of the original decision by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group, the reasons for which will have been communicated to them by individual email (see 3.14). Eligible grounds for appeal will be:

- that a member of staff has either been excluded or included, contrary to the stated criteria and/or
- that due process has not been followed.

The reasons behind final decisions will be communicated by email to the individual concerned within two weeks of the panel meeting.

3.29 Please see Appendix 5 for details of the membership and Terms of Reference of the REF Appeals Panel. Careful consideration has been given to membership to ensure appropriate representation, inclusivity and independence from any earlier decision processes.

#### **Equality impact assessment**

- **How an equality impact assessment has been used to inform the identification of staff and make final decisions**

3.30 The School will conduct an EIA in September 2020 on those staff employed on research-only contracts on the REF census date of 31 July 2020.

3.31 The EIA will compare the characteristics of those staff deemed to be independent against the characteristics of those staff deemed not to be independent. Should the outcomes show under-representation of staff with protected characteristics in the independent group, we will review the process used and consider if any changes should be made. If the final outcomes give cause for concern the matter will be referred to the School's Research and Enterprise Committee and Equality and Diversity Committee, and any agreed actions will be reflected in the School's EDI Action Plan and in the institutional Environment Statement.

3.32 The EIA will be a living document which will be updated over time and linked to future actions. We will adhere to best practice in conducting the EIA. It will be conducted by a team with knowledge of both equality and research assessment, and we will engage, consult and/or involve staff from protected groups to inform our EIA.

#### **Part 4: Selection of outputs**

##### **Policies and procedures**

- **Details of procedures that have been developed to ensure the fair and transparent selection of outputs, including the HEI's approach to submitting outputs by former staff, including those made redundant**

- **Information should be provided about how processes for selecting outputs have been developed and the rationale for adopted methods**
- **Codes of practice should describe stages of approval (diagrams, schematics & timelines might be included as an aid)**

4.1 The approach adopted for the selection of outputs is as follows:

- (i) Staff have been asked to flag all their personal outputs that they deem to qualify for the REF.
- (ii) Those outputs are reviewed internally with input from external advisors.
- (iii) An indicative list will be drawn up by Unit Advisory Panels that includes the best single output from each member of staff.
- (iv) The 'balance' of outputs for each UoA will then be selected by Unit Advisory Panels from a graded list to produce a preliminary list of outputs.
- (v) The preliminary list of outputs will then be subjected to analysis of the profile from an EDI perspective and reviewed accordingly.

4.2 Assessments on the quality of outputs are being conducted on an on-going basis. These commenced in January 2017 and will conclude in December 2020. Outputs are being evaluated by reference to the published REF criteria of originality, significance and rigour. Granular scoring is being applied and outputs are being evaluated by internal and external assessors. All assessors are selected on the basis of relevant expertise and experience.

4.3 In order to minimise burden, staff are not routinely sent feedback about outputs which have been reviewed, but feedback is provided when any individual requests it, or when there is a particular perceived reason or benefit to providing it.

4.4 *Guidance on Submissions* (paragraph 203) notes that:

*There are many reasons why an excellent researcher may have fewer or more outputs attributable to them in an assessment period. It is therefore not expected that all staff members would be returned with the same number of outputs attributed to them in the submission.*

This is also the view of the School, which has no set expectations of individuals in respect to their contribution to the pool of outputs (beyond the minima and maxima required), and therefore the School does not need procedures to adjust expectations on the basis of individual circumstances. However, the effect of equality-related circumstances on staff performance more broadly is taken into consideration in a number of ways by the School:

- in our Academic Promotions Special Circumstances Process, in which an Individual Circumstances Panel, chaired by a Pro-Director, gives careful consideration to declarations of special circumstances;
- in the reasonable adjustments process in our Health and Wellbeing Procedure, which, amongst other forms of support, includes the re-allocation of duties;
- in our Research Leave Policy, in which staff who have taken a period of parental leave of between 6 and 12 months are eligible to apply for an additional term of research leave. Early Career Researchers are also eligible to apply for one additional term of leave on successful completion of their probationary period.

In addition to the above, specific support will be offered to staff who declare equality-related circumstances as part of our REF processes. With the permission of the individual staff member, line managers (who in most cases will be the Head of Department) will be provided with the names of staff who have declared circumstances (no personal information will be disclosed), and these members of staff will be invited to a confidential meeting with their line manager to discuss and agree the adjustments to be put in place. Staff can also be referred to Occupational Health for support and advice on any health concerns, and our Employee Support Programme provides a source of advice on a strictly confidential basis. Callers to the telephone helpline are given support, advice and information to deal with any issues they may be facing, and the helpline service can be complemented by face-to-face counselling.

4.5 The School took a strategic decision early in this assessment period to conduct regular reviews of outputs rather than formal 'mock' exercises, with a view to reducing the pressure on staff that was likely to be incurred with scheduled formal mock exercises. It was also anticipated that ongoing reviews would enable identification of staff members who might need additional support at an early stage, and this has indeed been the case. The support measures provided have been discussed with individuals and include the granting of research leave and provision of mentoring.

4.6 Two selection criteria will inform the approach adopted for the final selection of outputs. The primary selection criterion will be the quality of the outputs. Where outputs are judged to be of equal quality, a secondary selection criterion may be the representativeness of staff with protected characteristics in the submission.

4.7 We believe that the granular way in which we have gathered information and data on outputs will allow us to build quality submissions by attributing a single output to each individual in such a way as to maximise the overall quality profile, followed by the best of the remaining outputs in the output pool. Interim EIAs will provide information and data sufficient to enable changes to be made (where deemed appropriate) in accordance with our secondary selection criterion.

4.8 We are confident that the division of responsibilities between the Unit Advisory Panels and the REF Strategy Group (decision-making) will result in a fair process for the selection of outputs.

4.9 For transparency, we will ensure that final decisions about the selected outputs are communicated to staff by individual email. In accordance with REF2019/03 *Guidance on Codes of Practice* there will not be an appeals process for output selection.

4.10 Unit Advisory Panels will be formed for each of the 11 Units of Assessment to which the School will be submitting in REF 2021. A multiple submission will be requested in one case, which means there will be 12 panels in total.

4.11 These Panels will produce preliminary lists of outputs on the basis of quality by 31 January 2020. Outputs by former staff will be considered on a case-by-case basis using the same criteria. The School will consider outputs authored by staff who have left the School. As a matter of courtesy and where possible, former staff members will be advised if their output(s) will be included in the SOAS submission.

4.12 In February-March 2020 interim EIAs will be conducted on the UoA preliminary output lists, following which the Unit Advisory Panels will be invited to review the analysis, consider any implications, and decide whether any adjustments should be made to the lists.

4.13 In December 2020 the Unit Advisory Panels will refer their finalised output lists to the REF Strategy Group which will make the final decision about which outputs should be submitted by March 2021.

4.14 Please see Appendix 4 for a diagram of this process, and Appendix 6 for the timeline.

### **Staff, committees and training**

- **Procedures for identifying designated staff and committees / panels responsible for selecting outputs (distinguishing between those with advisory and those with decision making roles)**
- **Information provided should include role descriptions for individuals and terms of reference for committees / panels, modes of operation, and record-keeping procedures, as well as information about where these roles / committees / panels fit into the wider institutional management structure.**

4.15 The Unit Advisory Panels will be chaired by one of the School's two Outputs Co-Directors to ensure consistency. Careful consideration will be given to membership to adhere to the key principle of inclusivity, and to ensure appropriate knowledge and representation.

4.16 Final decisions about the outputs to be submitted will be taken by the REF Strategy Group. This Group is chaired by the School's Pro-Director for Research and Enterprise. Members have been selected on the basis of their interest and research experience, with careful consideration given to the overall membership to ensure inclusivity.

4.17 The Unit Advisory Panels are responsible for producing preliminary and finalised lists of outputs for consideration by the REF Strategy Panel. Formal meetings will be scheduled. A Secretary will be appointed to each panel to service meetings. Confidential records will be anonymized and/or password protected as appropriate.

4.18 The REF Strategy Group is responsible for the final selection of outputs. It will be serviced by the School's Research Excellence Manager and formal meetings will be scheduled. Confidential records will anonymized and/or password protected as appropriate.

4.19 Please see Appendix 1 for the School's governance structure chart for REF 2021 and Appendix 5 for the Membership and Terms of Reference for each of the groups with responsibility for the School's submission to REF 2021.

- **Details of training provided to individuals and committees involved in the output selection process, the timescale for delivery, and content (including how it has been tailored to REF)**



4.20 Please see paragraphs 3.21 – 3.23 for details of training.

### Staff Circumstances

- **Procedures for taking into account staff whose circumstances have affected their ability to research productively throughout the period in relation to the unit's total output requirement.**
- **Procedures for taking into account the effect of circumstances that have had an exceptional effect on the ability of an individual staff member to research productively throughout the period so that they do not have the required minimum of one output.**
- **For both of the above cases, procedures for staff to disclose circumstances in a confidential manner.**

4.21 The School is putting in place supportive procedures to enable eligible staff members to declare voluntarily any circumstances which have constrained their ability to produce outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period 1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020.

4.22 The School will adhere to the instructions set out in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraphs 186-191]. This information is also summarised in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions Annex L*.

4.23 REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 175] states that

*“It is clear there are some instances whereby the available output pool for a given unit has been disproportionately affected by equality-related circumstances...such cases may include where there are high proportions of staff in the unit whose individual circumstances have affected their productivity, including in very small units...”*

The majority of Units in the School are comprised of fewer than 20 FTE. We are mindful therefore that in order to be fair to all of the staff in the Unit it is likely that we will need to seek permission from EDAP for reductions in the number of outputs returned where members of staff have voluntarily declared staff circumstances in line with the qualifying criteria.

4.24 Eligible staff circumstances include:

- Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher (ECR). (*The REF definition of an ECR is a member of staff who is eligible for submission on the census date who started their career as an independent researcher (i.e. undertaking self-directed research) on or after 1 August 2016*)
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Circumstances with an equivalent effect to absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:

- Disability (*the definition of disability includes physical and mental impairments which have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long term impairments include those that last or are likely to last for at least 12 months*).
  - Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions
  - Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare
  - Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member)
  - Gender reassignment
  - Other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics described in the Equality Act 2010.

4.25 A request for an individual to be returned with zero outputs can be made when an individual's circumstances have had an exceptional effect on their ability to work productively throughout the assessment period (1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020), such that the individual has not been able to produce an eligible output. This request can be made where any of the following circumstances apply:

- (i) an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to one or more of the circumstances set out in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraphs 160-163]
- (ii) circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research, where circumstances set out in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 160] apply (such as mental health issues, caring responsibility, long-term health conditions) or
- (iii) two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave, as defined in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions Annex L*

4.26 In cases where these precise circumstances do not apply, but the individual's circumstances are deemed to have resulted in a similar impact (including where there is a combination of circumstances that would not individually meet the thresholds set out), a request may still be made.

4.27 As part-time working is taken account of within the calculation for the overall number of outputs required for the Unit, reduction requests on the basis of part-time working hours should only be made exceptionally. For example, where the FTE of a staff member late in the assessment period does not reflect their average FTE over the period as a whole.

4.28 Information about the processes for declaring staff circumstances will be widely communicated using the staff intranet, SOAS staff bulletins, and by email to all eligible staff to ensure transparency.

4.29 All eligible staff will be invited to complete a form (see Appendix 8) about their circumstances. In order to ensure the appropriate level of confidentiality and consistency, the process will be managed centrally. Applicants will be advised that no information will be passed to their own or other departments without their express permission.

4.30 Applicants will be advised to submit applications to the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group via a confidential email mailbox which will be monitored only by the Secretary and the HR representative. Information relating to applications, including outcomes, will be stored securely in an anonymised, password protected database maintained by the Secretary to which only members of the Group will have access.

4.31 There will be three deadlines for applications:

- 1 September 2019
- 15 January 2020
- 15 November 2020

4.32 Applications will be considered by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group which will meet four times:

- October 2019
- February 2020
- September 2020 (Independence applications only)
- November 2020 (Staff Circumstance declarations only)

4.33 Staff will be advised by individual email about the outcome of their application within two weeks of the Group's meeting. All information about individuals' circumstances will be destroyed in April 2022, on completion of the assessment phase.

4.34 Where such applications are approved by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group, the School will submit requests for these reductions to the funding bodies in accordance with the instructions in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraphs 180-182].

4.35 Please see Appendix 1 for the School's governance structure chart for REF 2021 and Appendix 5 for the Membership and Terms of Reference for each of the groups with responsibility for the School's submission to REF 2021.

## **Appeals**

4.36 The appeals process against decisions made by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group will be as set out in paragraphs 3.24–3.29. Appellants will be required to argue their case against the outcome of the original decision, the reasons for which will have been communicated to them by individual email. The eligible criteria will be:

- that a request to be returned with zero outputs has not been granted contrary to the stated criteria; and/or
- that due process has not been followed.

4.37 Please see Appendix 3 for a diagram of the Staff Circumstances process.

## **Equality impact assessment**

- **How an equality impact assessment on the spread of outputs across staff (in relation to their protected characteristics) has been used to inform the final selection of outputs to be submitted.**

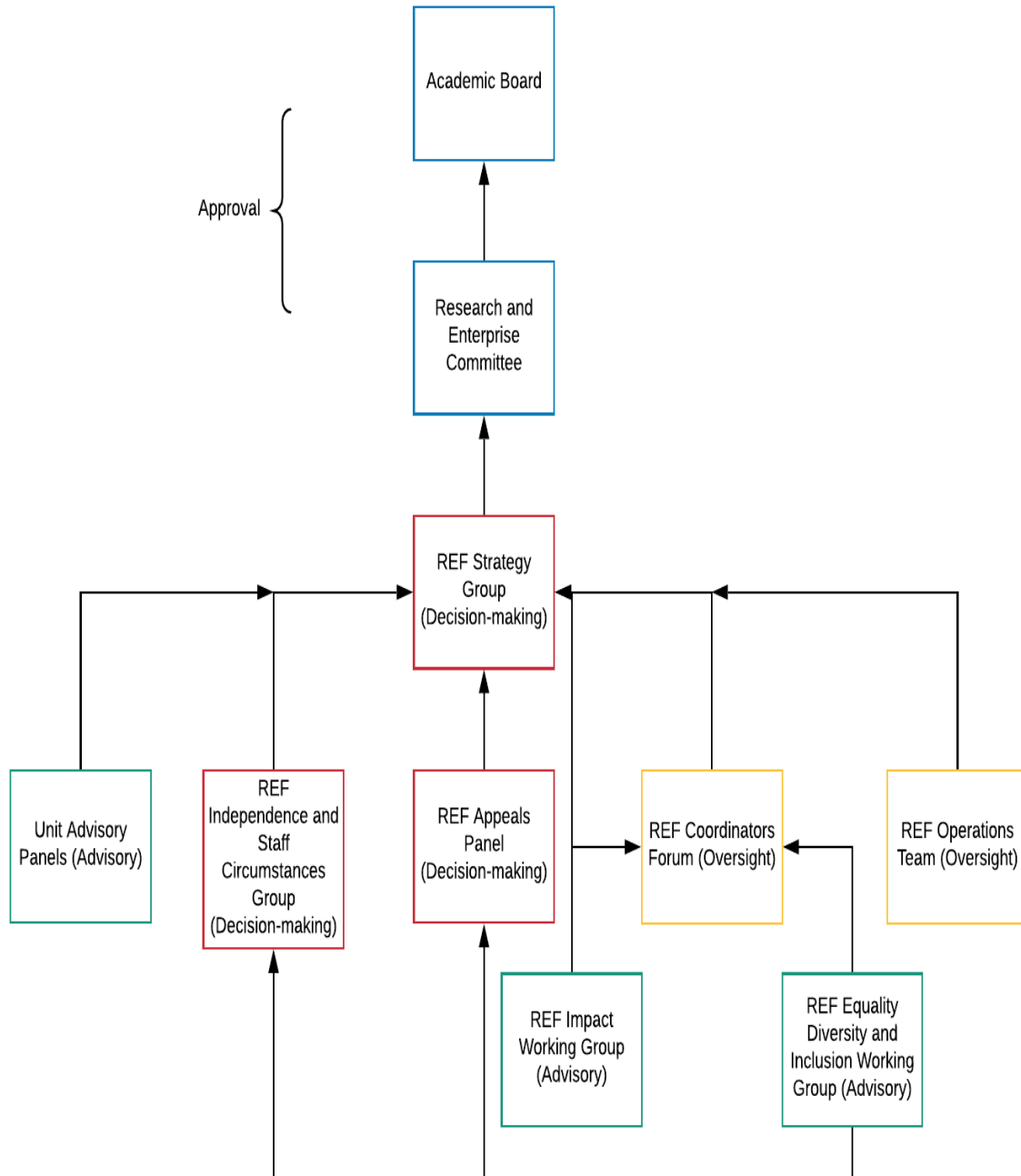
4.38 In February-March 2020 interim EIAs will be conducted on the provisional lists of outputs for submission. These EIAs will review the distribution of the outputs pool for each UoA, and will compare the proportion of outputs from staff with protected characteristics in the context of the whole pool. The Unit Advisory Panels will consider the information in the EIAs and agree if any changes should be made. These recommendations will be reviewed and approved by the REF Strategy Group. A final EIA will be conducted after submission.

4.39 If the final outcomes still give cause for concern the matter will be referred to the School's Research and Enterprise Committee and Equality and Diversity Committee, and any agreed actions will be reflected in the School's EDI Action Plan and in the institutional Environment Statement.

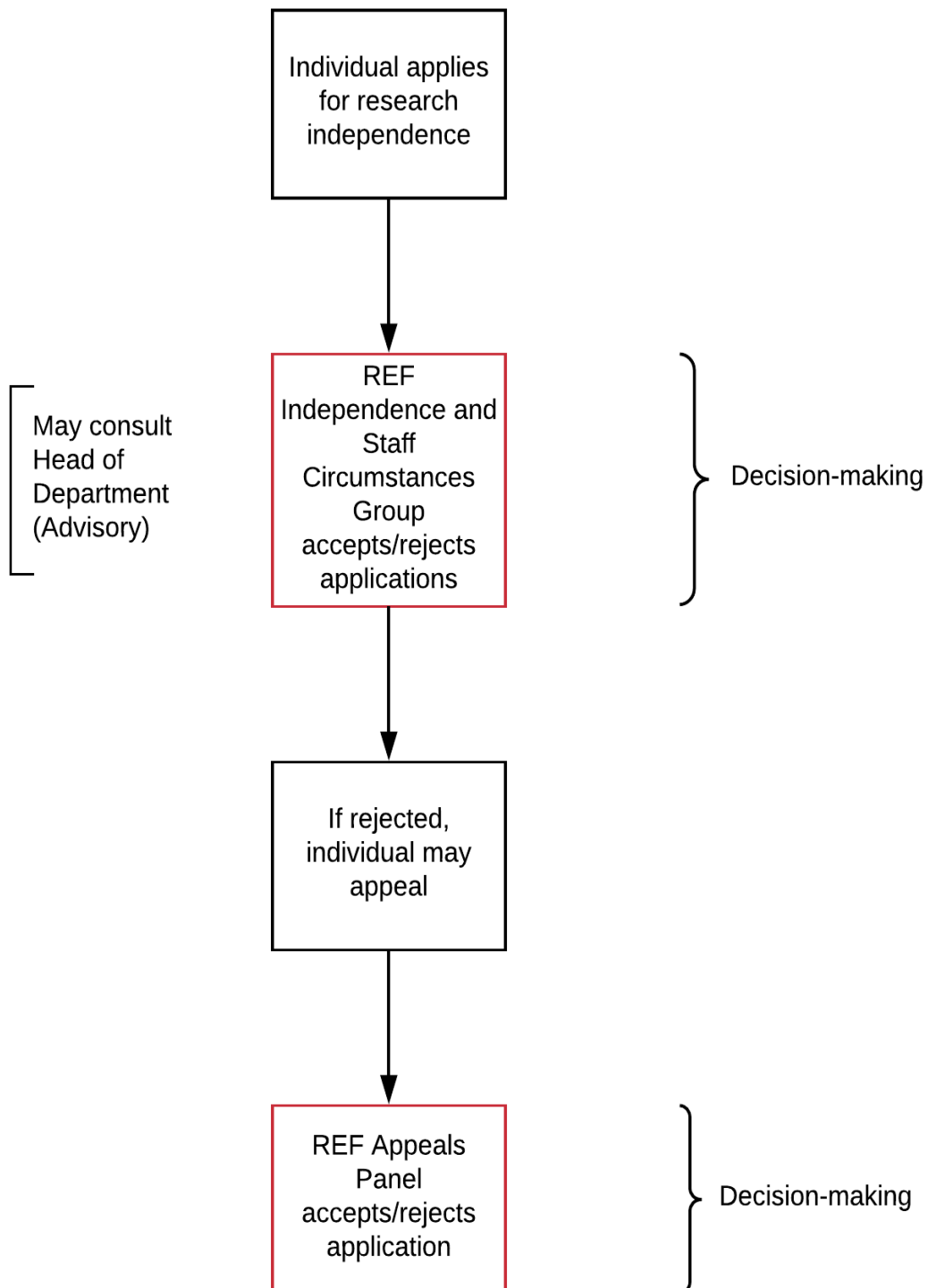
4.40 The final EIA will be a living document which will be updated over time and linked to future actions. We will adhere to best practice in conducting the EIA. It will be conducted by a team with knowledge of both equality and research assessment, and we will engage, consult and/or involve staff from protected groups to inform our EIA.

## Part 5: Appendices

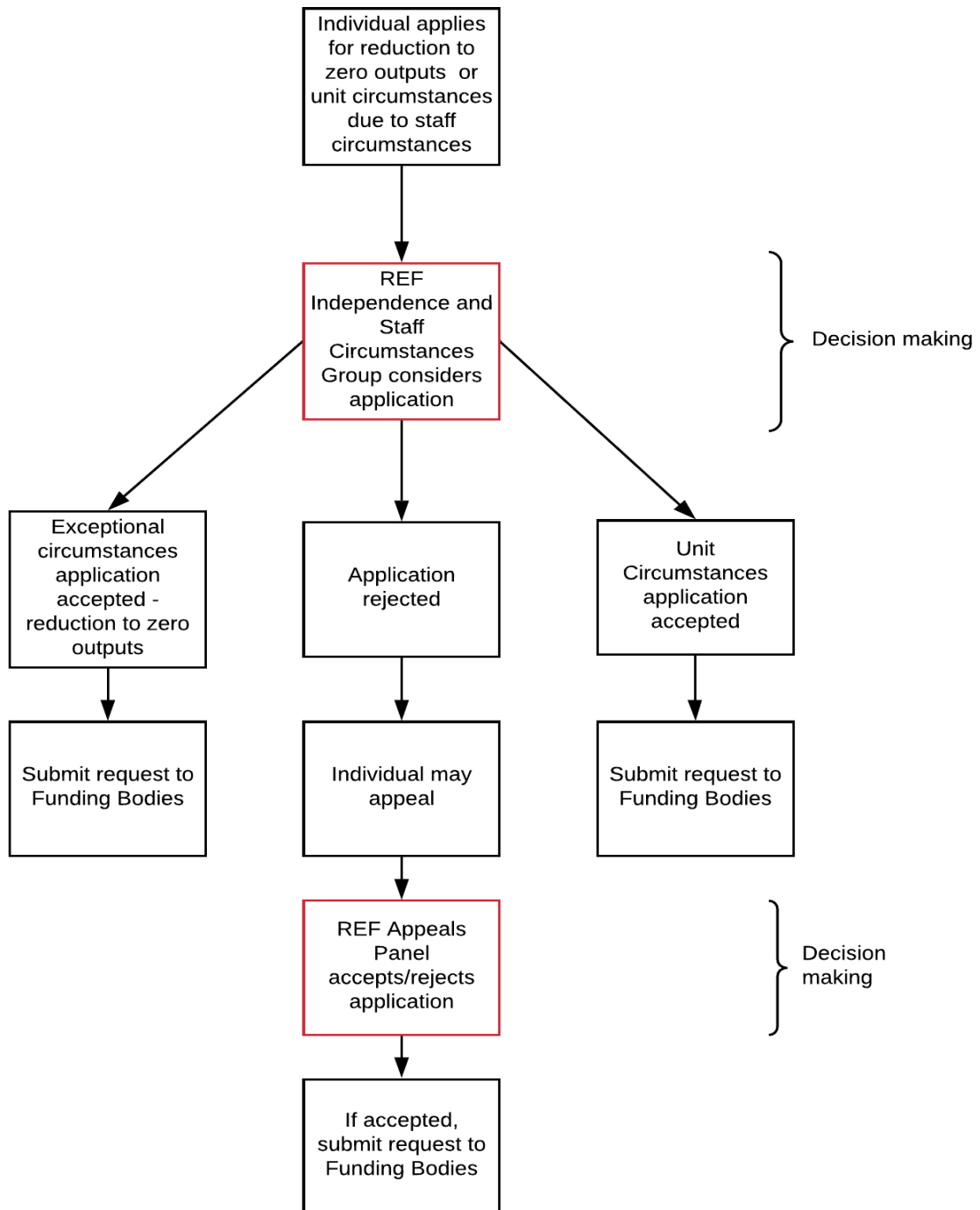
### Appendix 1: School Committee Structure for REF 2021



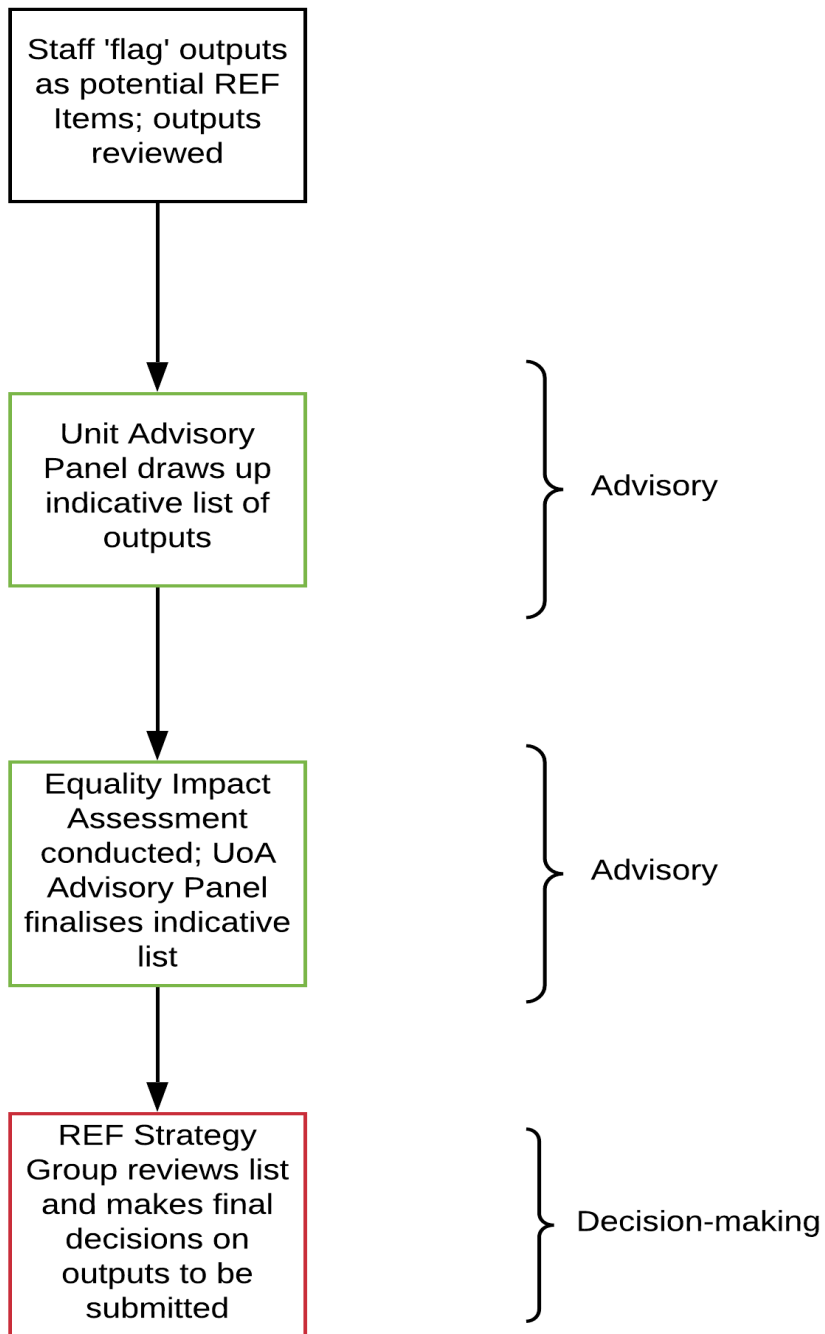
## Appendix 2: Research Independence Process



### Appendix 3: Staff Circumstances Process



## Appendix 4: Output Selection Process





## **Appendix 5: Terms of Reference for REF-related Groups/Panels**

### **REF Strategy Group (Decision-making)**

#### **Membership:**

Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) (Chair)  
Deputy Director and Provost  
RAE/REF experienced staff  
Senior and mid-career academic staff with appropriate expertise

In attendance:

Director of Library, Learning and Research Services  
Research Excellence Manager (Secretary)

Reports to: Research and Enterprise Committee

#### **Terms of Reference:**

- To determine internal strategies regarding the School's submission
- To consider the recommendations of the Unit Advisory Panels and the Impact Working Group and make the final decisions on:
  - The Units of Assessment to which staff should be returned
  - The outputs and impact case studies to be included in the School's submission for REF 2021
- To review and make the final decisions on the institutional and unit-level environment statements and accompanying data to be included in the School's submission for REF 2021
- To ensure that sound consideration is given to equality and diversity issues in reaching all decisions

The role of the Chair is to bring an expert understanding of the REF and Equality and Diversity requirements, ensuring that decisions are taken in accordance with the School's principles and objectives for REF 2021 as set out in the Code of Practice.

The role of the members is to bring the necessary academic expertise and judgement to enable decisions to be reached on the components of the School's submission.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group (Decision-making)**

#### **Membership:**

Professor of Politics<sup>1</sup> (Chair)  
Director of HR or delegate  
Academic lead for Athena SWAN  
Senior Academic  
Early Career Researcher  
Research Excellence Manager

In attendance:

Secretary

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<sup>1</sup> The Chair has stepped down from the role of Pro-Director (International)

Reports to: REF Strategy Group

**Terms of Reference:**

- To consider applications submitted by members of staff for:
  - The status of ‘independent researcher’
  - Reductions to zero outputs due to exceptional staff circumstances
  - Unit circumstances
- To reach a decision about whether such applications should be granted
- To calculate the reductions in the number of outputs for each Unit
- To communicate decisions to applicants, Units and to the REF Strategy Group

The role of the Chair is to bring an in-depth understanding of the REF requirements regarding independence and staff circumstances.

The role of the Senior Academic and Early Career Researcher is to provide the necessary academic understanding of the definition of research independence and of the circumstances which may impact on an individual’s ability to undertake research.

The role of the academic lead for Athena SWAN and of Director of HR or delegate is to bring a detailed understanding of equality and diversity issues.

The role of the Research Excellence Manager is to bring an in-depth understanding of the REF requirements in terms of the reductions in outputs that should be applied to each Unit.

\*\*\*\*\*

**REF Appeals Panel (Decision-making)**

**Membership:**

Deputy Director and Provost (Chair)  
Director of HR or delegate  
Diversity and Inclusion Manager

In attendance:  
Secretary

Reports to: REF Strategy Group

**Terms of Reference:**

- To examine the case of any member of staff who lodges an appeal against outcomes reached by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group.
- To communicate decisions to applicants, Units and to the REF Strategy Group

The membership of this Group is completely independent of any previous processes.

The Chair will provide the necessary academic understanding of research independence and exceptional staff circumstances.

The Director of HR or delegate will bring a detailed understanding of the School’s grievance and appeals processes and the correct conduct of panels such as this.

The Diversity and Inclusion Manager will bring a detailed understanding of equality and diversity issues.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Unit Advisory Panels (Advisory)**

**Membership:**

- Outputs Co-Director (Chair)
- Departmental Directors of Research/Research Coordinators
- REF Coordinator(s)
- Senior academic(s)
- Early career academic(s)

In attendance:  
Secretary

Report to: REF Strategy Group

**Terms of Reference:**

- To ensure outputs are reviewed, and outcomes recorded, in accordance with the School’s processes as set out in this Code
- To produce a preliminary list of outputs to be submitted on the basis of internal and external reviews, selecting the best output from each member of staff and the balance from a graded list
- To consider outcomes from interim EIAs and review the preliminary list
- To send a finalised list of outputs to be submitted to the REF Strategy Group
- To provide feedback about outputs to individual members of staff on request
- To support the drafting of the Unit’s environment statement

The role of the Chair is to bring an in-depth understanding of the REF requirements and of the School’s processes, and to ensure consistency across Panels, as set out in this Code. The School’s two Output Co-Directors will share responsibility for chairing these Panels. The role of the Departmental Directors of Research and REF Coordinators is to ensure outputs are reviewed in accordance with the School’s processes, as set out in this Code, and to provide the necessary data to inform the selection process. The role of all academic representatives is to provide academic expertise to enable a list of outputs to be prepared.

\*\*\*\*\*

**REF Coordinators Forum (Oversight) (previously known as REF Steering Group)**

**Membership:**

- Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) (Chair)
- Associate Directors of Research
- Outputs Co-Directors
- REF Coordinator(s)
- Diversity and Inclusion Manager
- Research Excellence Manager
- Research Impact Manager
- Scholarly Communications Manager

In attendance:  
Secretary

Reports to REF Strategy Group

**Terms of Reference:**

- To share information, such as updates on the REF 2021 framework and progress with REF preparations within Units of Assessment.
- To ensure that effective and appropriate institutional action is undertaken to support an excellent REF2021 submission in all Units of Assessment.
- To ensure that the School's REF2021 submission is informed by data and views expressed by external and internal specialists.

This Forum has general oversight of the School's submission to REF 2021.

The role of the Chair is to bring in-depth understanding of the REF requirements and the School's strategic plans for its REF submission.

The role of the Associate Directors for Research is to bring in-depth understanding of different elements of the REF submission – impact, environment, and equality and diversity.

The role of the Outputs Co-Directors is to provide leadership on the selection of outputs, ensuring compliance with the REF requirements, adherence to best practice and consistency across UoAs.

The role of the REF Coordinators is to bring an understanding of preparations and issues at Unit-level, and to provide updates and advice to members of staff in their UoAs.

The role of the Diversity and Inclusion Manager is to ensure that due regard is paid to equality and diversity issues.

The role of the Research Support Librarian, Research Excellence Manager and Research Impact Manager is to coordinate the submission, bringing updates and queries for discussion and resolution.

\*\*\*\*\*

**REF Operations Team (Oversight)**

**Membership:**

Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise) (Chair)

Outputs Co-Directors

Associate Directors of Research

Research Excellence Manager

In attendance:

Secretary

Reports to: REF Strategy Group

**Terms of Reference:**

- To ensure that REF 2021 deadlines are met in accordance with the School's REF Action Plan and the external REF timetable.

This team is a sub-set of the REF Coordinators Forum and has specific responsibility for ensuring that all REF deadlines are met.

The role of the members is as described for the REF Coordinators Forum.

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**REF Impact Working Group (Advisory)**

**Membership:**

Associate Director of Research (Impact and Engagement) (Chair)  
Academics with experience of developing impact case studies  
Impact Manager  
Impact Officer(s)  
Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Manager  
Head of Communications

In attendance:

Secretary

Reports to: REF Coordinators Forum and REF Strategy Group

**Terms of Reference:**

- To take forward advice and guidance on impact case studies, to ensure that every Department/Unit of Assessment is working to develop research impact across a sufficient range of areas, and has an underlying approach to impact that is supported by and consistent with School policies and strategies.
- To make recommendations about impact case studies to be included in REF2021.

The role of the Chair, Impact Manager and Impact is to bring in-depth knowledge of the REF impact requirements.

The role of the academics is to bring experience of developing research impact from an academic perspective.

The role of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Manager and Head of Communications is to provide specific expertise related to research impact/pathways to impact.

**REF Equality Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (Advisory)**

**Membership:**

Associate Director of Research (Research Ethics and Researcher Development) (Chair)  
Outputs Co-Director  
Academic Lead for Athena Swan  
Mid-and Early-Career academics with experience in this area  
Diversity and Inclusion Manager  
Equality and Diversity Adviser  
HR Business Partner  
Head of Student Advice and Wellbeing  
Staff Learning and Development Manager  
Research Excellence Manager

In attendance:

Secretary

Reports to: REF Coordinators Forum, REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group and REF Appeals Panel

**Terms of Reference:**

- To support the development of the School’s Code of Practice for REF2021.
- To ensure processes articulated in the Code of Practice are fair, transparent and lawful, and in compliance with REF requirements.
- To provide advice to members of the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group and the REF Appeals Panel as required.

The role of the Chair, Outputs Co-Director and Research Excellence Manager is to bring in-depth knowledge of the REF equality and diversity requirements.

The role of the academic lead for Athena Swan, the Diversity and Inclusion Manager and HR Equality Advisor is to bring in-depth knowledge of best practice in equality and diversity.

The role of the academic lead for Athena Swan and the academics is to provide an academic perspective at various stages of their academic career on equality and diversity matters.

The role of the Equality and Diversity Adviser and the Staff Learning and Development Manager is to bring specific expertise and experience in staff development and training.

The role of the HR Business Partner is to provide information on HR data/information and processes.

The Student Advice and Wellbeing Manager brings specific expertise in mental health issues.

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## Appendix 6: REF 2021 Timetable

Date	REF National Timetable	SOAS Timetable
Spring/summer 2019	Invitation to request multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, exceptions to submission for small units	To be submitted by 20 September 2019
30 May 2019	First deadline for submission of multiple submission requests, impact case studies requiring security clearance, exceptions for small units	
7 June 2019	Closing date for submission of Code of Practice	Deadline for submission of SOAS Code of Practice Publication of submitted Code of Practice internally
18 June 2019		First REF-specific E&D Workshop – mandatory for staff involved in decision processes
30 June 2019		Completion of formal review of impact case studies Emails to staff on research-only contracts re independence (to be sent to new staff monthly thereafter)
1 July 2019		Deadline for UoAs to submit updated Environment Statements
June-September 2019		Provisional decisions about allocation of staff to UoAs by REF Strategy Group REF Q&A session (September)
July 2019-July 2020		Further work on outputs, impact case studies, environment statements
July 2019		Annual reporting of progress with REF preparations to Board of Trustees
16 August 2019	Notification from Research England whether Code of Practice has been approved, or if resubmission is required	
1 September 2019		First deadline for submission of applications for research independence or staff circumstances
17 September 2019		Second REF-specific E&D Workshop – mandatory for staff involved in decision processes

<b>Date</b>	<b>REF National Timetable</b>	<b>SOAS Timetable</b>
20 September 2019	Deadline to resubmit Code of Practice  Second deadline for submission of multiple submission requests, impact case studies requiring security clearance, exceptions for small units	Submit SOAS multiple submission requests
October 2019		First meeting of the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group; outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group
Autumn 2019	Pilot of the REF submission system; survey of submissions intentions opens	Publicise Code of Practice at Departmental meetings  Additional REF Training Sessions take place as required  REF online training made available  Initial meetings of REF Advisory Panels  Test REF submission system  Complete and return survey of submission intentions
8 November 2019	Notification from Research England whether Code of Practice has been approved, or if resubmission is required	
15 November 2019	Deadline to resubmit Code of Practice	
29 November 2019	Final outcome for Code of Practice	
6 December 2019	Final deadline for submission of multiple submission requests, impact case studies requiring security clearance, exceptions for small units	Submit SOAS request for exceptions for small units, if needed
December 2019	Survey of submissions intentions complete; publication of approved codes of practice	Publication of Code of Practice on SOAS website and intranet
15 January 2020		Second deadline for submission of applications for research independence or staff circumstances



<b>Date</b>	<b>REF National Timetable</b>	<b>SOAS Timetable</b>
Early 2020	Formal release of the submission system and accompanying technical guidance; invitation to HEIs to make submissions; invitation to nominate panel members and assessors for the assessment phase	Further testing of REF Submission System Nomination of additional SOAS panel members and assessors to REF sub-panels for the assessment phase
31 January 2020		Final deadline for preliminary lists of outputs from Unit Advisory Panels
February 2020		Second meeting of the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group; outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group
February-March 2020		Initial EIAs on preliminary output lists
28 February 2020		First deadline for submission of Independence and Staff Circumstance appeals
Early March 2020		First meeting of REF Appeals Panel; outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group
March 2020	Deadline for submission of staff circumstance requests	Submit staff circumstance requests to Funding Bodies
<b>COVID 19 – Suspension of REF planning by Research England</b>		
31 July 2020	REF Census Date	Final decisions about allocation of staff to UoAs by REF Strategy Group
15 August 2020		Final deadline for submission of applications for research independence
Week commencing 14 September 2020	Outcomes of REF 6a/6b (Staff Circumstance) requests submitted in March 2020 provided to institutions	Inform UoAs of outcomes and exact number of outputs required for their UoA
15 September 2020		Third meeting of REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group (independence applications); outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group Final EIA on staff on research only contracts
30 September 2020		Final deadline for submission of Independence appeals
October 2020		Second meeting of REF Appeals Panel; outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group

<b>Date</b>	<b>REF National Timetable</b>	<b>SOAS Timetable</b>
9 October 2020	Deadline for submission of amended Codes of Practice	Submit amended Code of Practice
1 November 2020		Submission of near-final drafts of Impact Case Studies and Environment Statements
By 6 November 2020	Funding bodies' review of contingency arrangements	
November-December 2020		Unit Advisory Panels consider outcomes of EIAs, revise preliminary output lists as appropriate, send finalised output lists to REF Strategy Group Unit Advisory Panels submit final versions of Environment Statements and data to REF Strategy Group Impact case studies reviewed by REF Strategy Group
15 November 2020		Final deadline for submission of staff circumstance declarations
Week commencing 23 November 2020		Final meeting of REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group (staff circumstance declarations); outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group
15 December 2020		Final deadline for submission of staff circumstances appeals
31 December 2020	End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs and for outputs underpinning impact case studies) End of universal impact assessment period (1/8/13-31/12/20)	
January 2021		Final meeting of REF Appeals Panel; outcomes announced to individuals and REF Strategy Group
January-March 2021		Final decisions on selection of outputs and impact case studies by REF Strategy Group
February-March 2021		Institutional approval of the SOAS submission
31 March 2021	Closing date for submissions	Complete upload of information to REF Submission System and submit (internal deadline: 19 March 2021)

<b>Date</b>	<b>REF National Timetable</b>	<b>SOAS Timetable</b>
April 2021	Anticipated window for delivering physical outputs to the REF Team	Ensure all physical outputs are delivered by the deadline
1 June 2021	Deadline for providing redacted versions of REF3 (impact) and REF5a/b (environment) templates and corroborating evidence held for impact case studies	Submission of impact case study evidence and redacted impact case studies/environment statements
30 July 2021	Deadline for submission of staff circumstances report, equality impact assessment and final code of practice	Submit staff circumstances report, final EIA and final CoP
May 2021-March 2022	Panels assess submissions	
April 2022	Publication of outcomes	Destruction of all personal data, including all information pertaining to staff circumstances.
Summer 2022	Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles	

## Appendix 7:

### Application to be considered as an independent researcher (for staff on research-only contracts)

The School's definition of research independence for the purposes of the REF is:

***an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme.***

Indicators of independence include:

- Leading or acting as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project.
- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement - the list of independent fellowships published by the funding bodies will be made available to staff accompanied by an explanation that this is illustrative only, and that other fellowships will be considered.
- Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.
- Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.

In line with REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 133] the School takes the view that:

- Each indicator may not individually demonstrate independence and where appropriate multiple factors will be taken into consideration.
- A member of staff is not deemed to have undertaken independent research purely on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs. This principle stands even if the individual is the sole author of the output.

The proforma on page 35 should be used to demonstrate how you meet the definition of undertaking self-directed research. Evidence should be factual and verifiable. Please note that the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group may seek advice from the relevant Head of Department as necessary.

If you wish to apply for the status of research independence please complete and submit the proforma by email to [REF@soas.ac.uk](mailto:REF@soas.ac.uk) by one of the three deadlines:

- 1 September 2019
- 15 January 2020
- 15 August 2020

Information relating to applications, including outcomes, will be stored securely in a password protected and anonymised database maintained by the Secretary, to which only the members of the Group will have access. Staff will be advised by individual email about the outcome of their application. The School will destroy all information about individuals' applications in December 2021 on completion of the assessment phase.

If you would like more information about this process, or to obtain any informal advice please contact the Research Excellence Manager, Elizabeth Nolan ([rex@soas.ac.uk](mailto:rex@soas.ac.uk))

### Independent Researcher Application Proforma

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Department</b>	
<b>Line Manager /PI</b>	
<b>REF Coordinator</b>	
<b>Contract start and end date</b>	

**Evidence:**

Please mark with an X those indicators of independence you fulfil and provide an explanation of how you fulfil this criterion in the box. This statement should be factual and verifiable – for example, if you are claiming you were named on a grant please include the unique identifier from the funder (e.g. AH/11223/456). Please use the box labelled “other” if there are additional criteria you would like the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group to take into account. Again, this must be factual and verifiable.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Leading or acting as principal or co-investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project		
Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement including where the specific fellowship does not feature on the “list of independent research fellowships” provided by Research England		
Leading a research group or substantial or specialised work package		
Significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research		
Other		

**Date on which you believe you attained the status of independent researcher:**

--

Please email the completed form to [REF@soas.ac.uk](mailto:REF@soas.ac.uk)

## Appendix 8: Staff circumstances disclosure process

### Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances template

This document is being sent to all Category A staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF 2021 (see REF 2019/01 [‘Guidance on submissions’](#), paragraphs 117-122).

As part of the School’s commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, we have put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020), and particularly their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as staff not affected by circumstances.

The purpose of collecting this information is as follows:

- To enable staff who have not been able to produce a REF-eligible output during the assessment period to be entered into REF without an output where they have:
  - circumstances that have resulted in an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to equality-related circumstances (see below)
  - circumstances *equivalent* to 46 months or more absence from research due to equality-related circumstances
  - two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
  
- To recognise the effect that equality-related circumstances can have on an individual’s ability to research productively, which will enable the School to calculate the reductions that may be applied at the Unit level and to decide whether to submit a request to the funding bodies for a reduced number of outputs to be submitted.

### Applicable circumstances

- Qualifying as an ECR (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016)
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave
- Disability (including chronic conditions)
- Ill health, injury or mental health conditions
- Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of the standard allowances
- Caring responsibilities
- Gender reassignment

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the above circumstances, you are requested to complete the form on pages 38-40. Further information can be found in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraph 160].

Completion and return of the form is voluntary, and individuals who do not choose to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information if they do not wish to do so. This form is the only means by which the School will be gathering this information; we will not be

consulting HR records, contract start dates, etc. You should therefore complete and return the form by one of the three deadlines:

- 1 September 2019
- 15 January 2020
- 15 November 2020

if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the associated information.

### **Ensuring Confidentiality**

In order to ensure the appropriate level of confidentiality and consistency, the staff circumstances disclosure process will be managed centrally. **No information will be passed to your own or other departments without your express permission.**

Completed forms should be submitted to the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group using the [REF@soas.ac.uk](mailto:REF@soas.ac.uk) which will be monitored by the Secretary to the Group. Information relating to applications, including outcomes, will be stored securely in a password protected and anonymised database maintained by the Secretary, to which only the members of the Group will have access. Staff will be advised by individual email about the outcome of their application. The School will destroy all information about individuals' circumstances in March 2022 on completion of the assessment phase.

Where such applications are approved by the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group, the School will decide whether to submit requests for these reductions to the funding bodies in accordance with the instructions in REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraphs 180-182].

When we apply for reductions we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions* [paragraphs 151-201] for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted.

Submitted data will be kept confidential to the REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The REF team will destroy the submitted data about individuals' circumstances on completion of the assessment phase.

### **Changes in circumstances**

The School recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the census date (31 July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should contact the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group by email using [REF@soas.ac.uk](mailto:REF@soas.ac.uk) to provide the updated information.

**Name:** Click here to insert text.

**Department:** Click here to insert text.

Do you have a REF-eligible output published between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020?

Yes

No

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstance (see above) which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es).

Circumstance	Time period affected
<b>Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).</b>  <i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i>	Click here to enter a date.
<b>Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.</b>  <i>Dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
<b>Family-related leave;</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• statutory maternity leave</li><li>• statutory adoption leave</li><li>• Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more.</li></ul> <i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
<b>Disability (including chronic conditions)</b>  <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.



<p><b>Mental health condition</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Ill health or injury</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance</b></p> <p><i>To include: Type of leave taken and brief description of additional constraints, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Caring responsibilities</b></p> <p><i>To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p> <p><i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement.</b></p> <p><i>To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i></p>	<p>Click here to enter text.</p>

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

- The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below
- I realise that the above information will be used for REF purposes only and will be seen by the Secretary and members of the REF Independence and Staff Circumstances Group.
- I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the Research England REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs.

I agree

**Name:** Print name here

**Signed:** Sign or initial here

**Date:** Insert date here

I give my permission for an HR Business Partner to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements in relation this these.

I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to the relevant contact within my Department/Unit of Assessment. (Please note, if you do not give permission it may not be possible for the School to adjust expectations and/or put in place appropriate support for you).

I would like to be contacted by:

Email       Insert email address

Phone       Insert contact telephone number