

Code of Practice

Institution name: Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine

Date of submission: 11 May 2026

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Version	UMB Approved	Comment
1	13 April 2026	Initial version
1.1	13 April 2026	Research England-approved version

Change Log

Version	Effective date	Section(s) changed	Description of change	Reason for change	Author /owner	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	11 May 2026	All	Initial publication	Research England requirement	Central REF team	Research England	13 Aug 2026
1.1	19 Aug 2026	5.1.4	Addition of text explaining procedures for assessment of outputs in British Sign Language (BSL) or where relevant outputs in Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Irish, or Irish Sign Language.	Change required by Research England as condition of full approval.	Central REF team	Research England	13 Aug 2026

Part 1: Introduction

Research Excellence Framework

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the system for assessing research in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by the four UK HE funding bodies (including Research England). The REF was first conducted in 2014, when it replaced the previous Research Assessment Exercise, and most recently in 2021. The REF is conducted through a process of expert review to assess both the potential for research excellence at HEIs and the research quality profiles for each Unit of Assessment (UoA) submission.

The primary purposes of the REF are to:

- Inform the allocation of block-grant research funding to HEIs based on research quality (known as mainstream quality-related, or QR funding);
- Provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment; and
- Provide insights into the health of research in HEIs in the UK.

REF at Imperial College London

Imperial College London (referred to as “Imperial” or the “University”) is a world-leading, research-intensive university. The REF represents an important opportunity for Imperial to showcase our research and undergo robust external evaluations, as well as being the mechanism through which QR funding is allocated.

Mainstream QR funding is an essential source of support for research at Imperial, funding both embedded costs that are either not met or are only partially met through research grants – for example, academic time, estates and equipment costs – as well as underpinning internal competitive schemes including the Imperial College Research Fellowships. The funding Imperial receives each year from QR provides the foundation that enables the University to secure research funding for projects from partners in the UK, Europe and across the world. Since REF 2021, Imperial has received approximately £58.5m each year in mainstream QR funding, including the London weighting.

Imperial is committed to developing its REF submission to represent the excellence of the research that we undertake, including our contribution to knowledge, our impact beyond academia, and the research strategy, culture and environment which enables our people to produce excellent research. To achieve this, it is important that our processes are robust, transparent and underpinned by the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Purpose of the Code of Practice

Since REF 2021, each institution making a submission to the REF has been required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice (CoP) governing its processes for making key decisions which shape the REF submission. The CoP provides a shared framework to ensure clarity about how REF guidance applies to the institutional context, and that processes are consistent and fair across Imperial, while recognising diversity in our faculty structures and operational parameters. The purpose of the procedures set out in this CoP is to ensure that REF-related decisions are made objectively and transparently; that the decisions lead to a submission that reflects the breadth and excellence of our

research; and that no individual staff member or staff group is treated unfairly due to decisions taken in the preparation of the REF submission.

A key change for REF 2029 is the ‘decoupling’ of staff from contracts and outputs. Staff whose contracts contribute to the volume measure do not need to submit an output; and outputs authored by staff whose contracts do not contribute to the volume measure (but who do have a contractual expectation to undertake research) may be submitted. The CoP demonstrates how REF-specific processes, training and communications have been developed to account for this.

The CoP for REF 2029 focuses on four key areas:

1. **Inclusion of Academic Staff.** All academic staff at Imperial are expected to undertake both teaching and research. Therefore, all academic staff contracts are included in the REF volume measure, a measure used by REF as a proxy for an HEI’s research capacity.
2. **Inclusion of Research Staff.** Research staff contracts are eligible for the REF volume measure where they are research independent. Independence for REF is determined by objective factors based on contractual status, duties and independently awarded funding. Eligibility is not determined by whether an individual produced eligible outputs, or the quality of those outputs. Decisions on whether contracts are considered independent are for REF purposes and are not related to an individual’s career progression at Imperial (e.g. employment, promotion, etc.).
3. **Assignment of Staff Contracts to Units of Assessment.** Where departments and UoAs directly map, there is an initial assignment of staff contracts to a default UoA. Where default departmental mapping is not appropriate (e.g. Faculty of Medicine) and for cross-disciplinary research, further indicators will be used to determine a contract’s UoA assignment. There is no requirement for an individual’s contract and their outputs to be returned to the same UoA in REF 2029.
4. **Selection of Outputs.** Imperial selects outputs to reflect both the quality and the breadth of the University’s research. Our aim is that the selected outputs represent the full disciplinary range of our research.

The purpose of this document is to describe the processes for decision-making in these four key areas, enabling everyone in our community to be fully informed of the University’s context and of the principles guiding decisions for REF 2029. Accordingly, our CoP:

- a) Provides transparency on the processes involved in determining our volume measure contributing staff contracts and selecting outputs for submission into REF 2029;
- b) Ensures robustness by embedding clear, evidence-based and consistent criteria that support accurate, representative and reliable decision-making throughout the REF process;
- c) Provides accountability by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of bodies and individuals that are accountable for, or involved in, the determination of volume measure eligible contracts, and the selection of research outputs for the REF;
- d) Is inclusive, by ensuring that all eligible research contributions are equally and fairly considered for submission;
- e) Ensures that all decisions are consistent, justifiable, non-discriminatory, and comply with current equalities legislation;
- f) Reflects the University’s ambition to deliver excellent, inclusive and impactful research for the benefit of society.

1.1 How the Code of Practice supports REF Principles

To ensure an accurate reflection of Imperial, our submission is based on data that is produced for internal or external purposes wherever possible. REF-specific processes have been designed only where existing processes and data do not address the REF reporting requirements.

The CoP has been developed by the central REF team led by the Head of REF, under the leadership of the Director of Planning & Insight, reporting to the Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise, VPRE), in consultation with the Deans of the faculties, Faculty REF Leads, Faculty REF Managers and REF Groups and Committees, and in collaboration with the People Function. The Code of Practice is ultimately approved by the University Management Board (UMB).

As part of the CoP development process, both the wider staff community and members of key stakeholder groups were consulted, including academic staff, research staff and holders of professional and technical roles involved in research. More information on contributors to the consultation and a summary of the key changes that resulted is detailed in **Appendix 6.2.9**.

The Code of Practice is a living document and, where necessary and appropriate, this document is subject to revision in light of changes to equalities legislation, findings of equality impact assessments and the Funding Councils' REF guidance. Revisions are not expected to require approval by Research England but will be subject to approval internally by the REF Steering Group (REF-SG), under advisement by the REF People & Environment Advisory Group (REF-PEAG) and Research and Enterprise Committee (REC), with final approval by UMB. See the version control table on page 2.

1.1.1 Robustness

An important way in which Imperial ensures the robustness of its REF decision making is to, wherever possible, base decisions on objective criteria and use data which are already collected and subject to audit, for example by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Significant Responsibility for Research: All Academic staff at Imperial are contracted to undertake teaching and research, and so our population of staff with significant responsibility for research can be derived directly from our HESA data (see **Part 2**).

Research Independence: Most Research Only staff are employed in intermediate grades where research independence cannot be inferred from the contract and role descriptor alone. For these roles, an evidence-based process, set out in **Part 3**, is applied and staff can appeal the decision. In the case of the most senior and most junior research roles, the expectation (or not) of research independence is clear from the role descriptors. Independence is determined at a contract level and considered to be persistent for a given contract.

Allocating Contracts to UoAs: Whilst research at Imperial is often highly interdisciplinary, the academic Department is the primary organisational unit for research, teaching and management. Most academic staff will find their immediate research community within their Department, and for many departments, the structure mirrors the REF UoA structure. In some cases, such as the Faculty of Medicine and the Engineering departments, multiple departments map to a single UoA. There is therefore an initial presumption that the allocation of staff contracts to UoAs will follow their departmental affiliation. For cases where departmental affiliation is not an appropriate mechanism for assigning contracts to a UoA, allocations will be made using objective indicators, including research specialisation, which UoA an

author's outputs are assigned to, and the UoA to which their most frequent collaborators' contracts are assigned. See **Part 4** below for further detail.

Output Selection: The process for the selection of outputs is described below in **Part 5**. To ensure the robustness of this process, it is designed around our business-as-usual process whereby staff are required to identify their published outputs using existing software systems. Eligible outputs (based on publication date, Open Access status and substantive link to Imperial demonstrated by an eligible employment contract) will be selected based on elements of self-selection (where staff are asked to nominate the outputs that they consider to be their best), peer review and moderation at disciplinary and institutional levels.

1.1.2 Transparency

Imperial's REF provision comprises a central REF team under the direction of the VPRE and teams in each of the four faculties, as well as support in areas such as the People Function, ICT, the Research Office and the Library. Central to transparency is communication with the wider community, which will include updates to staff members about the REF, including the CoP, at regular intervals.

Communication of REF processes and updates uses a variety of the University's channels including, for example, sharing information through the "Staff Briefing", our periodic communication from the President, Provost or VPRE to the Imperial community, as well as more targeted communications cascaded through Faculty and Department level communications channels. The central REF team is responsible for communications to the wider community and to the faculties. Faculty REF teams and committees are responsible for additional communications to their members, and it is expected that operational detail will be communicated to staff by the Faculty teams. This approach aims to make the process as accessible as possible to our community while reducing the scope for duplication.

To ensure that staff who have an expectation of research in their job role and who are on long term leave (or otherwise not expected to check their Imperial email) are aware of REF activities, hard copy letters informing staff of this CoP will be sent to the home addresses of these staff. Decisions related to research independence for inclusion in the REF volume measure will also be communicated to relevant staff in the Research job family on long term leave via hard copy letter to their home address.

Staff members who have questions or want to discuss concerns are encouraged to raise them with a variety of contacts, including the central REF team, Faculty Leads and REF Managers, Department contacts, and REF Committees.

The central REF team maintains a **website** which brings together resources for the community for REF 2029 in an accessible format, including REF Essentials training which is available for all staff, a copy of our CoP and a list of central and Faculty contacts. This site will also explain the institutional processes and timelines for REF and will contain a set of FAQs.

1.1.3 Equality & Inclusion

By basing decisions on objective evidence and existing reporting processes, we minimise the number of subjective decisions required in preparing the REF submission. This particularly applies to the eligibility of contracts for the volume measure, where decisions are based on quantifiable factors alongside REF requirements.

Decisions on output selection are inherently subjective. Peer review is a key element of responsible research evaluation, and a process that excluded it in favour of the exclusive use of more 'objective' metrics would not be acceptable. Measures that we will take to mitigate EDI risks include giving all current members of staff on an eligible contract with an expectation of undertaking research the opportunity to nominate their own outputs; providing appropriate training and support for staff involved in selecting outputs, making independence decisions or allocating staff FTE to UoAs; and conducting analysis of selected outputs which will contribute to discussions of representativeness.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) based on a draft of the CoP reviewed where REF processes may inadvertently impact staff with protected characteristics and aimed to identify ways to proactively advance equality (see **Appendix 6.1** for details). Interim EIAs at key points during preparation of the REF submission (e.g. annually prior to the HESA staff return, during output selection activities) will review data to assess whether any bias is evident in the decisions related to REF. If there are statistically significant concerns these will be investigated further, and the CoP processes will be reviewed and amended where appropriate. The REF-PEAG is independent from other decision-making bodies for REF at Imperial and a key element of its remit is to monitor and advise on EDI aspects of REF decision making.

1.2 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

Imperial's mission "is to achieve enduring excellence in research and education in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society." The University's strategy, Science for Humanity, seeks to maximise Imperial's potential as a force for good in the world.

Imperial Values, launched in 2021, underpin and reflect our behaviour and are critical in shaping our working environment. These values (Respect, Collaboration, Excellence, Integrity and Innovation) contribute to cultivating a positive culture at Imperial. The Imperial People Plan is based on these values, and provides the strategic framework for supporting, developing, and empowering our people.

The University is fully committed to EDI, and this is embedded throughout the organisational structure. At the most senior level, the People and Culture subcommittee of the UMB considers strategic issues relating to people, culture, and EDI.

Imperial's formal work on EDI dates to the early 2000s, including the creation of an Equality and Diversity Unit as part of Human Resources in 2002. Imperial was a founding member of the Athena Swan Charter in 2005, reflecting gender equality as a primary focus. The scope of our work broadened over time and our current EDI strategy has the following objectives:

- Strengthen and amplify the Imperial strategies that are people-facing, spanning all staff and student communities, and embed the Imperial Values to create an enabling environment.
- Quantify the gaps in current practices and spaces that limit the diversity of our staff and student communities, as well as equity of the education and research experience.
- Consult widely, monitor, measure and then action the steps that will serve as a catalyst for further positive change, measured against a set of 2026 benchmarks.
- Reinforce inclusivity frameworks for behaviour that establish conditions such that all members of our community can excel in all areas of our endeavours.

Our EDI strategy is inclusive of all staff groups, including part-time and fixed-term staff (such as contract research staff). Imperial has an Associate Provost post for EDI whose responsibility is to lead on the development and implementation of the strategy, and whose role includes holding the University

leadership to account on issues of EDI. At the University, the People and Culture Committee, the Associate Provost (EDI) along with the EDI Advisory Group and the EDI Forum provide prominence and focus for EDI matters within the University leadership, helping to create an organisational culture in which consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion is central to all decision-making processes. Within the REF framework, the Associate Provost (EDI) will sit on the REF-PEAG.

The University's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Centre (EDIC) is a team of experts who listen and talk to staff across the University and work towards mainstreaming EDI. The EDIC is part of the People Function (formerly Human Resources) and works closely with the Associate Provost (EDI). The EDIC works with individuals, teams, and departments to provide help and advice. The EDIC delivers training, programmes and initiatives, and works with HR colleagues on policies and processes, including development of REF-specific EDI and unconscious bias training and co-delivery of the EIA stages.

The University's Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI) delivers tailored support to our early career researcher staff, via learning and development opportunities, events, support, and resources. ECRI will support the dissemination of REF-specific processes, training and communications to early career staff and has representation on the REF-PEAG.

In 2015, Imperial undertook the '*Richardson Review on the Application and Consistency of Approach in the Use of Performance Metrics*', investigating the use of bibliometrics in staff performance assessment. A formal commitment to not consider journal-based metrics (such as Journal Impact Factor) in recruitment and promotion decisions has been in place since 2017, when Imperial became a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), shaping the way bibliometrics are used to evaluate research outputs at Imperial.

In line with the University's commitment to responsible innovation and an inclusive research culture, Imperial supports the responsible, transparent and secure use of artificial intelligence (AI). Staff have access to AI tools provided by Imperial (e.g. dAlsy, Imperial's AI platform, and secure version of Microsoft Copilot with Commercial Data Protection). If staff choose to use AI for REF purposes, they are required to use these tools. Imperial's generative AI principles are found in dAlsy Use Policy and the dAlsy Code of Practice 8 - Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Imperial is committed to ensuring that our procedures for assessing the achievements of all staff are fair, transparent and robust. The University's REF CoP has been informed by, and is aligned to, University policies, the Equality Act 2010 and Imperial Values.

1.3 Update on Actions Since REF 2021

Reflecting the excellence of research and commitment to EDI undertaken by Imperial academic and research staff, the EIA of our REF 2021 submission did not identify any statistically significant anomalies that required action. The only statistically significant finding identified was that female staff were less likely to have multiple papers submitted than male staff. This effect persisted when normalised by grade. However, further investigation revealed a correlation between length of professorial tenure and number of papers submitted; and female professors were likely to have been in post for a shorter time than male professors (highlighting the fact that progress in gender equality in professorial promotions had been a relatively recent success). We therefore concluded in the REF 2021 EIA that this effect should self-correct. We will monitor the extent to which this has occurred at the shortlisting stage for outputs for REF 2029.

Since its submission to REF 2021, the University has reaffirmed its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated by:

- Receipt of institutional Athena Swan Silver award in 2022. As of summer 2025, all academic departments hold Athena Swan awards. We have seen an increase in the female percentage of academic staff from 22% in 2021 to 26% at the start of 2026. We are considering applying for Athena Swan Gold in 2027.
- Achieved Race Equality Charter Bronze award in 2021. Through our Race Equality Charter action plan, we have created the Provost's Visiting Professor initiative to increase the visibility and representation of minority ethnic and female staff at the highest levels. The initiative has just appointed its fourth cohort. We are preparing to apply for Race Equality Charter Silver award in 2026.
- Imperial is a Disability Confident Leader. We established a more transparent process for Workplace Adjustment Passports in 2023.

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

All academic staff at Imperial are expected to undertake Teaching and Research, and Imperial's 'teaching and research' (HESA code: ACEMPFUN 3) contracts in the HESA staff record already comprehensively identify all staff with significant responsibility for research.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

3.1 Policies and Procedures

Staff on Research Only (HESA code: ACEMPFUN 2) contracts (including fixed-term and part-time appointments) are employed in several grades:

- Roles at the most senior grades (Principal Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow) carry an explicit expectation of independence. All holders of such roles are therefore independent for REF purposes and their contracts are automatically included in the volume measure.
- Research Assistants do not undertake independent research as part of their duties and are not independent for REF purposes and therefore their contracts are not included in the volume measure.
- The remaining Research Only grades (Research Associate, Research Fellow and Advanced Research Fellow) cover a range of experience and research expectations, including both individuals who are independent and those who are transitioning to independence. Individual indicators of independence, informed by REF guidance, are used to determine research independence for REF purposes for these grades.

The process for identifying contracts which contribute to the REF 2029 volume measure is summarised in a flowchart, see **Appendix 6.2.4**.

3.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

Research Only contracts are considered independent if:

1. The contract is at the grade of Principal Research Fellow (PRF) or Senior Research Fellow (SRF);
or

2. The contract is at the grade of Research Associate (RA), Research Fellow (RF) or Advanced Research Fellow (ARF) **and** the individual has met at least one of the following indicators of research independence at any point while holding the contract during the REF 2029 reporting period (1 January 2021 to 31 December 2028):
- Leading as a Principal Investigator (PI) or equivalent on a material externally funded research project grant. A PI, or equivalent, is normally defined as undertaking intellectual leadership, leading a substantive programme of work and/or holding overall responsibility for a project grant that enables the employment of other staff. Materiality will ordinarily be determined by the grant/award having a value of at least £70,000.
 - Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement. A list of Fellowships that the University considers to meet this requirement has been agreed by the REF-SG and is included in **Appendix 6.2.5**. This list is not exhaustive, and other fellowships not included on this list may also indicate research independence, for example industry-funded Fellowship schemes. Where an external funder has confirmed that a scheme indicates independence then this implies that such staff contracts are independent for the REF volume measure. Holding a Fellowship not included on the list (for example Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships funded by the European Commission) does not necessarily imply that a staff contract is not independent, if other indicators of independence apply.
 - Leading a research group or specialised research package.
 - For contracts submitted to main panel C (Social Sciences), being named as a Co-I on a material externally funded research grant/award and/or having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of research. Materiality will ordinarily be determined by the grant/award having a value of at least £70,000.

3.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

For Research Only staff on intermediate contract grades, decisions on independence for REF purposes will be made by Faculty REF Leads with input from the relevant Head of Department (HoD), or their delegate, and communicated to the individual. These decisions will be reviewed annually in line with the HESA staff return.

When a change in decision is made about a contract's independence, this will be communicated via email by HoDs (or their nominees) to the individual as soon as possible after a decision has been made, and within two weeks of the end of the HESA reporting period at the latest. Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. long-term leave such as maternity or shared parental leave) will be sent hard copy letters to their listed home address.

Staff have the right to reply on independence decisions. Individuals who wish to appeal the independence status of their contract must notify their HoD within two weeks of the date on which decision communications are sent. The appeal will follow the process set out in **Appendix 6.2.6**.

3.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

3.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The decision-making framework for the University's REF submission is shaped by the University's academic organisational structure, comprising four faculties (Engineering, Medicine, Natural Sciences and the Business School), and their constituent departments.

The VPRES has ultimate responsibility for the delivery of an accurate and timely REF submission, which aims to achieve the best outcome for the University. The Head of REF is the main source of specialist advice for the University on REF policies and procedures, and has overall responsibility for the preparation of the University's submission to the REF under the leadership of the Director of Planning & Insight.

The VPRES is advised by the REF-SG, with representatives from each of the four faculties. The membership and terms of reference of the REF-SG are available in **Appendix 6.2.3**. The REF-SG reports to the REC and the UMB. REF Faculty Leads sit within faculties and are the academic leads for REF, taking responsibility and providing leadership for the implementation of processes and strategic development of the REF submission at faculty level. Faculty REF Managers are the first point of contact and main source of specialist advice for implementation of REF policies and procedures within faculty contexts.

The REF-PEAG is independent from other decision-making bodies for REF at Imperial. Its role is to monitor EDI impacts of REF decision making, hear appeals on research independence, and provide specialist advice for developing narrative statements.

Operational and strategic decision making in each UoA is the responsibility of the Faculty REF Committees and may be delegated to a UoA Lead (who may further delegate to individuals to lead sub-areas or aspects of the UoA submission). Decisions impacting on individual members of staff are made in consultation with HoDs, who are accountable for People issues within their departments. Some decisions (outlined in this CoP) will require escalation to the Faculty REF Lead and/or REF-SG.

Within this CoP, decisions on independence of Research Only contracts will be made by the Faculty REF Lead (or the delegated UoA Lead), and in consultation with HoDs (and their delegates) as required. Appeals rejected at Department level will be adjudicated by the REF-PEAG.

3.2.2 Training

All staff at Imperial are required to have undertaken Imperial's mandatory EDI e-learning course within six months of joining the University, and refresh this at least every two years. For REF 2029, there is an additional e-learning course relating to the principles of unconscious bias, responsible research assessment (RRA) and REF-specific policies and procedures. This training is developed and delivered by subject-matter experts from the central REF team, the People Function and the Library, and is available to all staff to aid transparency around decision-making. All involved in decision making for the REF (including independence decisions, output selection, allocation of staff and outputs to UoA, and impact case study selection) and all members of REF committees, including REF-SG and REF-PEAG, will be required to undertake this course. Guidance is provided to output peer reviewers providing specific information on responsible research assessment and unconscious bias. Faculty/UoA REF Leads and HoDs will be responsible for cascading training to staff involved in making REF decisions in their UoAs/departments. Support is available from the central REF team, REF Faculty Managers, Library and EDIC.

3.3 Appeals

There is no appeal mechanism for staff contracts that are automatically considered independent or non-independent, as their independence is based on the contract job family and grade.

Staff on Research Only contracts in the grades RA, RF and ARF who wish to appeal the independence status of their contract can do so via the appeals process. Any grounds for appeal must focus on why the individual believes that their contract has been incorrectly determined as independent or not independent for the purposes of the REF based on the criteria described in **Part 3.1.1**. Appeals will be reviewed by HoDs, with support from the Faculty REF Managers, Department REF Leads and the REF-PEAG as appropriate. The full appeals process is included as **Appendix 6.2.6**.

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment

An initial EIA was carried out during the drafting process on an earlier version of the CoP to consider potential implications of the procedures and processes being established for REF 2029. This EIA involved evidence and engagement from three primary sources: (1) advice from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (EDIC), (2) review by Senior Legal Counsel with expertise in EIA and Employment Law, and (3) EIA focus group composed of volunteers from Imperial staff diversity Networks. The initial EIA is included as **Appendix 6.1.1**.

The equality impact of decisions outlined in this CoP will be reviewed periodically during REF 2029 preparations. At least one full interim EIA will be conducted by the central REF team supported by EDIC once data is available following the implementation of the CoP processes in preparing the HESA staff return and output selection. Where data is held, should any statistically significant biases compared to the overall staff composition be identified, these will be further investigated and the CoP reviewed and amended where appropriate.

Clear communication to staff was identified as a key mitigating action to ensure that staff are aware that decisions made regarding eligibility of contracts for REF 2029 will not disadvantage career progression at Imperial, and that staff not contributing to the volume measure can contribute outputs where eligible (see **Part 5.1.1**). Following the initial EIA, the independence appeal process (**Part 3.3**) was amended to include an informal discussion step with the relevant Faculty REF Manager, who will provide support during the process or signpost an appealing individual to alternative support for their appeal (e.g. line manager, EDIC, REF-PEAG).

Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedures

Research at Imperial is primarily organised departmentally with the Academic Department as the primary organisational unit for teaching, research and management. Whilst research at Imperial is often highly interdisciplinary, most academic staff will find their immediate research community within their Department. In general, for the Natural Sciences and Business School faculties, Imperial's departmental structure mirrors the REF UoA structure. For the Faculties of Engineering and Medicine, multiple departments map to a single UoA. There is therefore an initial presumption that the allocation of staff

contracts to UoAs will follow departmental affiliation. **Appendix 6.2.7** provides the default mapping of departments to UoAs.

For cases where departmental affiliation is not an appropriate mechanism for assigning contracts to a UoA, allocations will be made based on whether the primary research area is within the remit of the UoA using objective indicators, including which UoA an author's outputs are assigned to, and the UoA to which their most frequent collaborators contracts are assigned. These cases include:

- Every Department in the Faculty of Medicine may potentially have staff contributing to the Main Panel A (Medicine, Health and Life Sciences) UoAs to which Imperial submits, and some staff have previously been returned to UoAs in Main Panel B (Physical Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics) as well as Main Panel C (Social Sciences); allocation of contracts in Medicine will therefore be based on the primary research field of the individual.
- Staff working across disciplines may also contribute outputs that are more appropriately assessed in a different UoA. For that reason, where an individual's submitted outputs have mostly been assigned to a UoA that is not the main UoA for their Department, their contract's UoA allocation may be reviewed, taking into account evidence such as alignment with the wider UoA research profile and in conjunction with UoA Leads, the HoDs (as appropriate) and the REF-SG to optimise the quality of the overall submission.
- Staff with multiple contracts will have each contract returned to the most appropriate UoA.

4.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

Where staff contracts are allocated to the UoA which maps to their home Department, this will be based on evidence of departmental affiliation from Imperial's HR and payroll systems.

Where staff are allocated to a different UoA, evidence of a connection to that UoA will include their research specialisation, collaboration with staff in a Department or departments that map to that UoA, joint research, outputs, and/or funding.

4.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

Decisions on the allocation of staff to UoAs will be made by the Faculty REF Committee, which may take advice from the UoA Leads for the candidate's UoAs and the HoD of the member of staff's home Department. Where no agreement can be reached, the decision shall be referred to the REF-SG and the VPPE.

UoA allocation for individual contracts will not be routinely shared. However, any staff member can request information about the UoA allocation of their contract(s) by contacting their REF Faculty Manager.

4.2 Staff, Committees and Training

The framework for REF decision making and training at Imperial is set out in **Part 3.2** above.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment

The EIA process for REF is set out in **Part 3.4** above. The initial EIA Is included as **Appendix 6.1.1**.

Equality considerations in the allocation of contracts to UoAs would arise where allocation of a particular UoA may be seen as more favourable than another. However, Imperial expects to succeed in every UoA to which it submits, and therefore there is no significance or advantage in the allocation to one or another UoA. The allocation of a UoA other than that to which the majority of an individual's peers are allocated does not constitute a statement about an individual's performance. Nevertheless, a review of those who are not returned to their department's default UoA will be undertaken. This will be reviewed at interim EIA checkpoints and, where data is held, should a pattern of relationship to protected characteristics be identified, this will be investigated further and the CoP reviewed and amended as appropriate.

Part 5: Selecting outputs

The fundamental overriding criterion for selecting outputs for submission to the REF will be one of excellence and maximising the quality profile of the outputs sub-profile within a UoA. The process for selecting outputs is summarised in a flowchart (see **Appendix 6.2.8**).

5.1 Policies and Procedures

Overview

The main process for selecting outputs will begin with self-nomination: all eligible staff with outputs (see **Part 5.1.1**) will be invited to nominate what they consider to be their best outputs authored over the REF publication period, and these will form the basis of the output selection pool. This process represents Imperial's commitment to valuing our staff and recognising their unique perspective on their own work.

Faculty and UoA Leads (or their delegates) will then be able to add additional outputs, that have not been nominated by an author, to the pool, including outputs from former staff. As part of the selection process, Faculty and UoA Leads will consider whether an output should be referred to an alternative UoA.

In line with our responsibilities as a DORA signatory, Imperial is committed to the responsible use of metrics at all stages of selection.

Process Detail

The leading REF Faculty Committee will select outputs for submission by the process outlined below.

1. All eligible staff (see **Part 5.1.1**) will be invited to self-nominate for consideration the output(s) they have authored over the REF publication period which they consider to be the highest quality. Staff are invited to nominate any type of research output they believe to be their best work (see **Part 5.1.4** regarding output diversity). The number of outputs that can be self-nominated is subject to a maximum which will be set by the Faculty REF Lead.
2. Faculty REF Committees, UoA Leads and their delegates will review the self-nominations and consult a broader list of eligible outputs, including for example outputs that have not been self-nominated and outputs from staff who are not currently employed by the University (see **Part 5.1.2**), resulting in a pool of outputs.
3. The selection of outputs from the pool will be informed by the following criteria:
 - a) Quality, in keeping with the University's overall objective of fairly representing the excellence of our research.

- b) Strategy, considering the submission across the entire UoA, or for the University as a whole, such that the overall quality profile, taking into account the sub-profile of UoAs, is optimised.
- 4. In all cases, judgements of quality will be through a multi-stage process, formed by a combination of internal peer review, external expert review as considered appropriate, and committees responsible for REF decision making (see **Appendix 6.2.3**).
- 5. The final selection of outputs will be determined by viewing the UoA submission as a whole, and making a strategic decision about how the unit should best be presented to optimise the outcome in terms of the overall quality profile for the unit and the University. This will include a consideration of how the research culture and environment of a submission may be assessed and, as such, may mean that the final pool of outputs selected for submission within a UoA may not necessarily coincide with the pool of outputs felt likely to achieve the best assessment within the outputs sub-profile alone. Individuals will not be directly informed on whether their nominated output was selected or not for the final submission.
- 6. In accordance with the University being a signatory of DORA, journal-based metrics such as Journal Impact Factors will not be used when forming judgements on the quality of research outputs. Where appropriate and available, contextualised citation data (or equivalent indicators for alternative output types, such as policy or patent citation) could be considered as an additional indicator to inform judgements on output quality.

5.1.1 Identifying substantive link to outputs

To evidence Imperial's contribution to an output, we are required to provide details of an author with an eligible employment relationship as the "substantive link". There is no minimum number of outputs per substantive link (i.e. there is no requirement for every member of staff with an eligible contract to have an output selected). The maximum number of outputs per substantive link is ordinarily five.

Research excellence depends on the strengths of the entire research ecosystem at Imperial, and therefore on the contributions of all staff in our community. We are committed to ensuring that all staff are fairly represented in the REF submission, supported by transparent processes and robust analysis during our output selection. The use of the substantive link as the mechanism for evidencing Imperial's contribution to an output is a technical requirement of the REF; however, assessing the substantive link at the level of individual authorship for e.g. representativeness or EIAs is (1) not sufficiently robust, as any author with an eligible contract may be used to evidence the link, and (2) inconsistent with the principles of decoupling, as it creates an unnecessary association between an output and a specific individual.

Communicating the wider scope of output selection will also be an opportunity for HoDs to invite staff on contracts outside of the Academic and Research job families, i.e. Professional, Technical and Operational (PTO) Services staff to become involved in the REF.

Process Detail

Individuals with an eligible employment relationship to undertake research, with contracts of a minimum 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months' continuous employment, and who have outputs recorded in Imperial's

systems, will be invited to take part in the self-nomination process. The following additional criteria and processes will be considered:

1. All Academic staff on Teaching and Research contracts (see **Part 2**) will automatically be invited to self-nominate.
2. Research Only staff determined to be research independent (see **Part 3**) will automatically be invited to self-nominate.
3. Faculty/UoA Leads and HoDs will review other Research Only staff and, where appropriate, invite those to self-nominate, confirming that they are not a student at Imperial.
4. Contracts in the Technical Services job family at Grades 4 and above will be reviewed by Faculty/UoA Leads and HoDs. Where individuals are identified as having a contract with an explicit expectation of research activity, they will be invited to self-nominate. Roles in these job families that relate solely to teaching will be excluded.
5. Contracts in the Operational and Professional Services job families will be reviewed by Faculty/UoA Leads and HoDs. Where individuals are identified as having a contract with an explicit expectation of research activity, they will be invited to self-nominate. Roles in these job families that relate solely to teaching and contracts in Registry, Academic Services, Chief Operating Officer's office, and the People functions will be excluded.
6. Faculty/UoA Leads and HoDs will also review staff lists to identify any other staff who are on contracts with an explicit expectation of research who have not otherwise been identified.
7. Visiting and honorary staff are excluded from contributing outputs.

For staff members who have transitioned from an ineligible contract to an eligible contract during the REF period, outputs published at Imperial before they transitioned to the eligible contract can still be nominated and will be assessed via the same process.

5.1.2 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

The process for selecting outputs by former staff will be led by the Faculty/UoA Lead, who will compile a list of outputs generated by former staff since 1 January 2021 and select from this list outputs to be added to the output pool. The process for shortlisting is the same as for outputs by current staff, as set out in **Part 5.1**. All outputs by former staff (and that do not have another author with a current eligible contract) that are shortlisted will be scrutinised to ensure that the author concerned had an eligible employment contract with Imperial when the output was first made publicly available, and that the author was not subject to compulsory redundancy.

5.1.3 Assigning outputs to UoA(s)

The default assumption is that an output will be assigned to the UoA in which one of its authors works, and where the research is within the remit of the UoA. Where multiple authors in different UoAs self-nominate the same output, it is possible that the output will be shortlisted and appear in the final submission in multiple UoAs. We encourage interdisciplinary outputs and the cross-referral of outputs wherever appropriate. Additionally, at both the long- and short-list stage, Faculty/UoA Leads are also able to search the whole of Imperial's output database and will be able to request access to outputs from other UoAs where they consider this desirable for the UoA's strategy.

5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

It is our procedure that individual Faculty/UoA Leads should select those outputs that best reflect the excellent research in their UoA. This includes interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary outputs, research publications, and diverse output types such as datasets, software code or policy summaries and analyses. Staff are invited to nominate any research output they believe to be their best work, and outputs of all submissible types will be reviewed following the same process.

Outputs in British Sign Language (BSL) will be reviewed by an internal or external reviewer with appropriate expertise, or reviewed in translation. The same review process will be followed for outputs in Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Irish, or Irish Sign Language, where the research was produced in collaboration with jurisdictions where such languages have protected status.

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

During the process of output selection, analysis will be undertaken to understand the extent to which outputs are representative of the areas of the UoA's research, including interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary outputs. For the purposes of the EIA, we will also review the types of output produced in the UoA at Imperial and the staff groups who undertake research as part of their duties. These analyses will be reviewed by REF-SG and REF-PEAG, with data aggregated so that individuals are not identifiable. The representativeness of the final output selection will be discussed in the EIA and the Strategy, People, and Research Environment (SPRE) narrative statements.

5.1.6 Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

Imperial's policy on RRA is set out in the 2015 Richardson review, which primarily covered the use of research assessment at an individual level, particularly in the context of decisions concerning career advancement. The review enshrined the principle that profiles of activities – including, for example, research, teaching, and mentoring – should all be recognised in a thoroughly evidence-based way in hiring and promotion decisions at Imperial.

The Richardson review also acknowledges that the responsible use of metrics must align with the five principles¹ of **'The Metric Tide: Review of Metrics in Research Assessment'**, a report published by Research England.

Imperial has been a **signatory to DORA** since 2017, meaning that Imperial considers the content of an output to be more important than publication metrics and does not use journal impact factors in assessing the quality of research. Further, there is an expectation that all research outputs (including datasets and software) are considered.

In using bibliometric indicators, it is important to understand their limitations to promote fair, transparent and robust research evaluation processes. It is recognised that there are a range of non-journal based metrics that can be used, as appropriate, for making decisions about outputs for REF. Our training covers the principles of RRA, and further advice on the responsible use of bibliometrics is available from the Library Services, in consultation with Faculty/UoA Leads and Faculty REF Managers.

¹ **Robustness** – basing metrics on the best possible data; **Humility** – recognising that quantitative indicators should support not supplant qualitative assessment; **Transparency** – keeping data collection and analysis processes transparent; **Diversity** – reflecting a diversity of research and researcher career paths; **Reflexivity** – recognising the systemic effect of indicators and updating them where possible.

5.2 Staff, Committees and Training

The framework for REF decision making and training at Imperial is set out in **Part 3.2** above.

5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The framework for REF decision making at Imperial is set out in **Part 3.2.1**.

Faculty REF Committees and Faculty/UoA Leads (and their delegates) will be responsible for initially reviewing outputs within their UoA and determining which outputs will be submitted in line with the parameters within the REF guidance and the principles described above. Their decisions will be informed by peer review of the quality of outputs and by departmental REF lead(s) most relevant to the UoA.

Faculty REF Committees and the REF-SG will consider analysis of outputs selected during the output selection process. If output selection is not representative of the research within the UoA, Faculty/UoA Leads will be asked to review their selection and consider substituting outputs of equal quality where available to increase representativeness. When considering EDI aspects of output selection, the REF-SG will be advised by the REF-PEAG.

In the event of any dispute concerning output selection, the VPRES shall make a final adjudication. The VPRES, advised by the REF-SG and the REF-PEAG, will have the ultimate responsibility for the final decision on output selection, considering the best possible profile for the University, and for a given UoA.

5.2.2 Training

The framework for REF training at Imperial is set out in **Part 3.2.2**.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

The EIA process for REF is set out in **Part 3.4** above. The REF assesses the quality of a unit submission as a whole – the quality of individual staff members is not assessed or considered. No inferences can be drawn on the quality of individuals from the final selection and attribution of outputs to staff. In particular, the University will not consider the inclusion of staff research outputs within a REF submission in promotion, remuneration, career progression, extension of contract or performance management considerations.

The initial EIA is included as **Appendix 6.1.1**. Impacts of implementing CoP processes on staff with protected characteristics will be reviewed during output selection and evaluated, with at least one interim EIA. The primary criterion for output selection is quality, and the selection is also strategically reviewed for the best outcome of the unit and the University. Following concerns raised in the initial EIA focus group about the representativeness of REF Committees, the composition of Faculty committees was reviewed. As a result, early career researcher representatives were added to both the REF-PEAG and the Business School REF Committees, and a professional services representative was added to the Business School REF Committee. Statements on the diversity of outputs were also revised following the initial EIA to remove language that equated outputs with journal articles and provide examples of diverse outputs.

Part 6: Appendices

6.1 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1.1 Initial Equality Impact Assessment Report

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EIA) is to consider the equality implications of any change (e.g. new or revised policy, process, practice, project, function or service) on different groups of staff, students, alumni and visitors. This EIA has been based on [Imperial's EIA framework](#) to help evaluate whether the processes in the REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) are equitable towards staff groups with protected characteristics, and aims to identify ways to proactively advance equality and inclusion.

In preparing this initial EIA, evidence and engagement was sought from three primary sources: (1) advice from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (EDIC), (2) review by Legal Counsel with expertise in EIA and Employment Law, and (3) an EIA focus group consisting of volunteers from Imperial staff diversity networks held on 15th January 2025. As this initial EIA was conducted at the point of processes being established, no quantitative data was available for analysis. However, the REF 2029 CoP processes are based on those developed for REF 2021, and the EIA of the REF 2021 submission data did not identify any statistically significant anomalies that required action (see our REF 2029 Code of Practice, [Part 1.3](#)).

The impact of putting the CoP processes into effect will be monitored throughout the course of the REF 2029 preparation with further EIAs conducted when there is data for review. If there are concerns that the processes are impacting particular staff groups, these will be investigated further, and the CoP processes will be reviewed and amended where appropriate.

The REF Steering Group (REF-SG) is responsible for oversight of the EIA data analysis and revising the Code of Practice, following advice from the REF People & Environment Advisory Group (REF-PEAG). Formal changes to the CoP are ultimately approved by the University Management Board.

Process	Part 2: Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)
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Summary of aims and objectives of the process

Identification of REF volume eligible staff contracts returned to the HESA staff return as being part of the 'teaching and research' ([HESA code: ACEMPFUN 3](#)). At Imperial, all contracts in the [Academic job family](#) are part of this staff group, and all of these contracts are included in the REF volume measure.

Who is affected by the policy/decision/activity?

All staff with a contract in the Academic job family.

Evaluation of the potential impact

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact Quantification	Identified Potential Impacts	Action to address negative impact
Age	N/A, all contracts included.	No barriers identified at this stage, subject to ongoing monitoring.	N/A

Disability		Potential for staff to miss REF communications if on long-term leave. Subject to ongoing monitoring.	Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent relevant hard copy letters to their listed home address. This approach pursues the legitimate aim of ensuring all eligible staff receive essential REF communications, and is proportionate as it provides a reliable means of contact for those not expected to monitor email while on leave.
Pregnancy, maternity and shared parental responsibilities		Potential for staff to miss REF communications if on long-term leave. Should a potential impact be identified, this will be reviewed by the REF-PEAG and REF-SG.	
Race		No barriers identified at this stage, subject to ongoing monitoring.	N/A
Religion or belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation			
Gender reassignment		No barriers identified at this stage. Should a potential impact be identified, this will be reviewed by the REF-PEAG and REF-SG.	
Marriage and civil partnership			

Conclusion & Mitigating actions:

- Staff on long-term leave may not receive REF communications as these are generally sent via email. Therefore, staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent relevant hard copy letters to their listed home address.
- When REF 2029 processes are implemented, if a potential impact is identified for particular staff groups, this will be investigated further and reviewed by the REF-PEAG and the REF-SG. Where appropriate, the processes and the CoP will be amended.
- Once REF 2029 data is reviewed, if an underlying bias is identified within staff populations this may be used to highlight directions for achieving progress in equal representation across the University.
- Should a potential impact be identified during a subsequent EIA, this will be reviewed by the REF-PEAG and REF-SG.

Process	Part 3: Determining Research Independence
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Summary of aims and objectives of the process

Identification of REF volume eligible staff contracts returned to the HESA staff return as being 'research only' ([HESA code: ACEMPFUN 2](#)). At Imperial, this refers to jobs in the [Research job family](#). Decisions on independence will be based on independence criteria and be made by Faculty/Unit of Assessment (UoA) REF Leads with input from the relevant Head of Department (HoD). Once a contract has been

determined to be independent, this independence is persistent for the contract, following REF guidelines. Contracts not meeting independence criteria will be reviewed annually in line with the HESA staff return. Criteria and processes are set out in [Part 3](#) and the related appeals process is provided in [Appendix 6.2.6](#). When staff are informed of the outcome of the independence review of their contract(s), they will also be provided with information about how they can raise an appeal.

Who is affected by the policy/decision/activity?

All staff with a contract in the Research job family.

Evaluation of the potential impact

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact Quantification	Identified Potential Impacts	Action to address negative impact
Age	Medium	Younger staff are more likely to be on contracts which do not automatically demonstrate Research Independence. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are less likely to be research independent, compared to more senior staff members. The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD, could deter staff from appealing their classification.	The indicators of independence are based on objective criteria, following the REF requirements. Where staff disagree with the decision about the independence of their Research contract, there is an appeal process with a support provision for those who choose to appeal. In addition to HoDs who arbitrate at the initial stage of the appeal, alternative contacts will be provided to staff for informal discussions and support during research independence classification appeals. Where required, the final decision for an appeal is made by the REF-PEAG.
Disability	Low	A staff member's disability has the potential to introduce obstacles or be the cause of career interruptions which may impact on progress to REF research independence. The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD, could deter staff from appealing their classification.	Staff in the Research job family who have an expectation of undertaking research and otherwise have an eligible contract (0.2 FTE for at least 12 months) are to be invited to self-nominate outputs irrespective of their REF
Pregnancy, maternity and shared parental responsibilities	Low	Staff progression to REF research independence may be impacted by career interruptions caused by pregnancy, maternity and shared parental leave. The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD, could deter staff from appealing their classification.	
Race	Medium	Staff progression to REF research independence may be due to systemic barriers. Staff from poorer socio-economic backgrounds may be more likely to have experienced career interruptions due to caring responsibilities. The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD,	

		could deter staff from appealing their classification.	research independence classification.
Sex	Medium	The REF 2029 independence indicators are broadly in line with those used in REF 2021. For REF 2021, the only statistically significant finding identified in the final EIA was that female staff were less likely to have multiple papers selected for submission than male staff. This effect persisted when normalised by grade. However, further investigation revealed a correlation between length of professorial tenure and number of papers submitted; and female professors were likely to have been in post for a shorter time than male professors. Staff progression to REF research independence may be due to systemic barriers. Female staff members may be more likely to have experienced career interruptions due to pregnancy, maternity or caring responsibilities, which can impact their progression to REF research independence. The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD, could deter staff from appealing their classification.	Clear communication is to be provided following existing communication channels (e.g. messaging from HoDs, through line managers and via staff networks such as ECRI), stating that eligibility for REF does not impact staff's career progression at Imperial. Imperial has additional peer-support in place for staff with protected characteristics via its EDI staff networks, including Able@Imperial, Imperial 600 and Imperial As One. Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent hard copy letters to their listed home address.
Gender reassignment	Low	Where staff undergo gender reassignment procedures, there is a potential that any related leave of absence may impact staff's ability to progress to REF research independence. The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD, could deter staff from appealing their classification.	These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring fair, transparent and objective research independence classifications, and are considered proportionate given the communications, available support routes, and opportunities for staff to engage with or appeal decisions.
Religion or belief	Low	The formality of the research independence appeal process, based on contacting the HoD, could deter staff from appealing their classification.	
Sexual orientation	Low		
Marriage and civil partnership	Low		

Conclusion:

- The initial EIA identified (1) potential impacts that staff with protected characteristics may have experienced before REF 2029 decisions, as well as (2) potential impacts arising directly from the REF 2029 decision-making process itself.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

- Staff with certain protected characteristics may be less likely to have demonstrated research independence and these staff may therefore not meet the independence criteria to be included in the REF 2029 volume measure. (1)
- The formality of the appeals process outlined to date can deter staff from appealing their research independence classification. (2)
- Conflict of interest with REF research independence decision-makers may hinder staff appeals. (2)
- There may be differences in the barriers staff with certain characteristics encountered across departments and faculties. (2)

Mitigating actions:

- Decisions related to REF 2029 do not form part of the criteria for promotion, pay, contracts or future opportunities at Imperial. This message must be clearly communicated through all channels, including the REF 2029 Code of Practice, REF webpages, staff briefings, HoDs, line managers and staff networks.
- Staff communication to be tailored and targeted through existing communication channels to increase awareness regarding the purpose of research independence for the REF volume measure and the different eligibility criteria for self-nominating outputs.
- Staff to be made aware that non-Research Independent staff, who are eligible to demonstrate the substantive link, can self-nominate outputs. HoDs and line managers to be asked to explicitly inform staff of the opportunity to self-nominate outputs to REF 2029 and to communicate this with consideration for an individual's reasonable adjustments.
- Staff with protected characteristics can receive peer-support and advice where appropriate from our [EDI staff networks](#), including Able@Imperial, Imperial 600 and Imperial As One.
- Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent hard copy letters to their listed home address.
- Decisions on staff independence for REF are based on objective measures and all eligible contracts are included.
- Where staff in specific job grades disagree with the decision about the independence of their Research contract, support will be provided for those who choose to appeal.
- Introduce an informal discussion step into the appeals process, and identify the support available for any individual choosing to proceed with their appeal.
- Data gathered throughout the REF 2029 process will be applied to conduct further, data-driven EIAs to review representation against the staff population where data is collected. Once REF 2029 data is reviewed, if an underlying bias is identified within staff populations this may be used to highlight directions for achieving progress in equal representation across the University.
- Should a potential impact be identified during a subsequent EIA, this will be reviewed by the REF-PEAG and REF-SG.

Process	Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs
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Summary of aims and objectives of the process

Eligible contract allocation to UoA will be predominantly based on the staff members' departmental allocation, with the departmental structure of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Business School mirroring the REF 2029 UoA structure. For the Faculty of Engineering, multiple departments will map to a single UoA. For the Faculty of Medicine, UoA allocation will be based on the primary research field of the individual staff member. Staff with multiple contracts will have each contract returned to the most appropriate UoA.

Who is affected by the policy/decision/activity?

All staff with a contract identified as being part of the REF volume measure.

Evaluation of the potential impact

Evaluation of the potential impact			
Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact Quantification	Identified Potential Impacts	Action to address negative impact
Age	N/A, all UoAs considered equal.	No barriers identified at this stage, subject to ongoing monitoring.	N/A
Disability			
Race			
Religion or belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation		No barriers identified at this stage. Should a potential impact be identified, this will be reviewed by the REF-PEAG and REF-SG.	
Pregnancy, maternity and shared parental responsibilities			
Gender reassignment			
Marriage and civil partnership			

Conclusion

- All eligible contracts are included, and all UoAs are considered equal and Imperial aims to perform strongly in each UoA it submits to.
- Data gathered throughout the REF 2029 process will be applied to conduct further, data-driven EIAs to review representation against the staff population where data is collected. Once REF 2029 data is reviewed, if an underlying bias is identified within staff populations this may be used to highlight directions for achieving progress in equal representation across the University.
- Should a potential impact be identified, this will be reviewed by the REF-PEAG and REF-SG.

Process	Part 5: Selecting Outputs
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Summary of aims and objectives of the process

Outputs for submission to REF 2029 will be selected based on their quality, with a maximum of five outputs ordinarily selected per individual. Therefore, outputs of the highest quality will be submitted, subject to a review of representativeness of research. Output selection will be predominantly based on

self-nomination with Faculty/UoA Leads having the ability to add additional outputs. Faculty committees will then select the final portfolio of outputs for their UoA for the REF 2029 submission. The REF-SG has oversight of the output selection process, with the VPRES having ultimate responsibility for the final decision.

Who is affected by the policy/decision/activity?

All staff with a contract of employment that is eligible to evidence a substantive link between Imperial and a research output. This eligibility is determined following the [REF definition](#):

- a minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months' continuous employment, *and*
- a contract which includes an explicit expectation of research activity.

Evaluation of the potential impact

Protected Characteristic	Potential Impact Quantification	Identified Potential Impacts	Action to address negative impact
Age	Medium	ECRs, who are not as far along in their career progression, will often have fewer outputs from which to select their self-nominated outputs. REF decision-making committees are primarily senior staff members, with underrepresentation of Early Career Researchers (ECRs). Unconscious bias among peer-reviewers and predominantly senior decision-makers could disproportionately impact outputs authored by ECRs.	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking responsible research assessments (RRAs). This training is available to all staff. The number of outputs an individual can self-nominate is to be clearly communicated as a maximum and not a target. The Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI) provides dedicated support for staff in early career positions. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure and mandatory training to mitigate unconscious bias.
Disability	Medium	Potential to affect staff where the disability affects their ability to produce outputs as they may have fewer outputs from which to self-nominate. A staff member's disability has the potential to make it more challenging to engage	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff.

		in the training or self-nomination process. <u>Unconscious</u>Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers, which may have an underrepresentation of staff with a disability, could disproportionately disadvantage disabled staff members during output selection.	All eligible output types can be nominated, and each self-nominated output will be reviewed following the same process. The number of outputs an individual can self-nominate is to be clearly communicated as a maximum and not a target. REF training has incorporated information in various formats to increase accessibility for disabled staff and to aid different learning styles. Further support to be provided if additional reasonable adjustments could improve engagement. Staff can contact their line manager and/or REF Faculty Manager for support in self-nominating outputs and accessing REF training and an alternative method for interacting with these processes will be provided as a reasonable adjustment (e.g. verbally informing a REF Faculty Manager of their self-nominations). These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, accessible and inclusive output selection process for disabled staff, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure, support available and training to mitigate unconscious bias.
Pregnancy, maternity and shared parental responsibilities	Medium	The need for a leave of absence may result in fewer outputs for staff to self-nominate. Unconscious bias among peer-reviewers and decision-makers during output selection could disproportionately impact outputs authored by staff members who have taken an extended period of maternal, paternal, shared or carers leave.	Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent hard copy letters to their listed home address. This will include information about the CoP and decisions for REF as well as information about self-nominating outputs. Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. The number of outputs an individual can self-nominate is to be clearly communicated as a maximum and not a target. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff.

			These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, accessible and inclusive output selection process for staff who have taken extended leave, and are considered proportionate given the enhanced communication measures, multi-layered decision structure, and training to mitigate unconscious bias.
Race	Medium	Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers, who may not be reflective of race distribution across Imperial staff and in the wider community, could disproportionately impact outputs authored by staff members from different ethnicities.	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process for staff of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure and training to mitigate unconscious bias.
Religion or belief	Medium	Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers, who may not be reflective of religion or belief distribution across Imperial staff and in the wider community, could disproportionately impact outputs authored by staff members with different religions and beliefs.	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process for staff of all religions and beliefs, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure and training to mitigate unconscious bias.
Sex	Medium	The final REF 2021 EIA concluded that female staff were less likely to have multiple papers selected for submission than male staff due to female professors being in post for a shorter time than male professors. There is a risk that this statistically significant	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff.

		finding has persisted if sex equality in professorial promotions has not progressed. Female staff members may be more likely to have caring responsibilities and have taken longer periods of absence related to parental leave and may therefore have fewer outputs from which to select their self-nominated outputs. Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers could disproportionately impact outputs authored by female staff members, particularly if female staff are underrepresented in output selection activities.	Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent hard copy letters to their listed home address. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process for all staff, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure, training to mitigate unconscious bias and enhanced communication measures.
Sexual orientation	Medium	Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers, who may not be reflective of sexual orientation across Imperial staff and in the wider community, could disproportionately impact outputs authored by staff members with different sexual orientations.	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process for staff of all sexual orientations, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure and training to mitigate unconscious bias.
Gender reassignment	Medium	Where staff undergo gender reassignment procedures, there is a potential that any related leave of absence may impact the member of staff's ability to produce outputs. Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers, who may not be reflective of gender	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff.

		reassignment across Imperial staff and in the wider community, could disproportionately impact outputs authored by staff members with gender reassignment.	Staff who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence) will be sent hard copy letters to their listed home address. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process for staff with gender reassignment, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure, training to mitigate unconscious bias and enhanced communication measures.
Marriage and civil partnership	Low	Unconscious bias among decision-makers and peer-reviewers, who may not be reflective of marriage and civil partnership across Imperial staff and in the wider community, could disproportionately impact outputs authored by staff members who are married or in a civil partnership.	Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity. Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRAs. This training is available to all staff. These actions pursue the legitimate aim of ensuring a fair, objective and inclusive output selection process for staff with gender reassignment, and are considered proportionate given the multi-layered decision structure and training to mitigate unconscious bias.

Conclusion

- There is a risk of staff with protected characteristics being underrepresented across output selection activities and REF Committees, compared to their representation in the wider research active community.
- Staff with protected characteristics may have fewer outputs from which to select their self-nominated outputs.
- There may be differences in the bias and experiences of staff with protected characteristics encountered across departments and faculties.
- The language used in describing the process for supporting output diversity is viewed as biased towards journal articles, which may limit output diversity.

Mitigating actions:

- Self-nomination requirements to be set by Faculty/UoA Leads, these will be the maximum number a staff member can nominate. Clear communication that this is a maximum and not a target to form part of the wider communications strategy.
- Staff with protected characteristics can receive peer-support and advice where appropriate from our EDI staff networks, including Able@Imperial, Imperial 600 and Imperial As One.
- Staff representativeness of the submission to be evaluated during the selection process, where data is available. This data will be summarised and reviewed at interim EIAs with the REF-PEAG making recommendations to the REF-SG.

- The output nomination process is designed around business-as-usual process whereby staff are required to identify their published outputs using existing software systems to benefit from existing familiarity with the software system and any reasonable adjustments that might already be in place to facilitate its use.
- Staff involved in REF decision-making to receive training which outlines responsibilities related to these decisions, as well as key principles and strategies related to mitigating unconscious bias and undertaking RRA. This training has been provided in accessible formats, with both text and video components, to accommodate different learning styles and needs. Should a staff member be unable to interact with the e-learning material, they can contact their line manager, Faculty REF Manager or central REF team for further support.
- Output selection is via a multi-layered approach, with decisions made at various levels and stages, to ensure thoroughness and integrity.
- Update the language of the CoP to be more inclusive, particularly towards a wider range of output types.
- Review the composition of REF Committees to improve inclusion of underrepresented groups. Where a staff group is in the minority on a committee, ensure that their voice is heard by providing support directly to the staff member, and briefing the committee chair.
- Hard copy letters to be sent to staffs listed home addresses who may not reasonably be expected to read their Imperial email (e.g. staff on a long-term leave of absence).
- The removal of the 2-star rating threshold for impact case study submissions may allow research from less research-intensive parts of Imperial to be showcased.

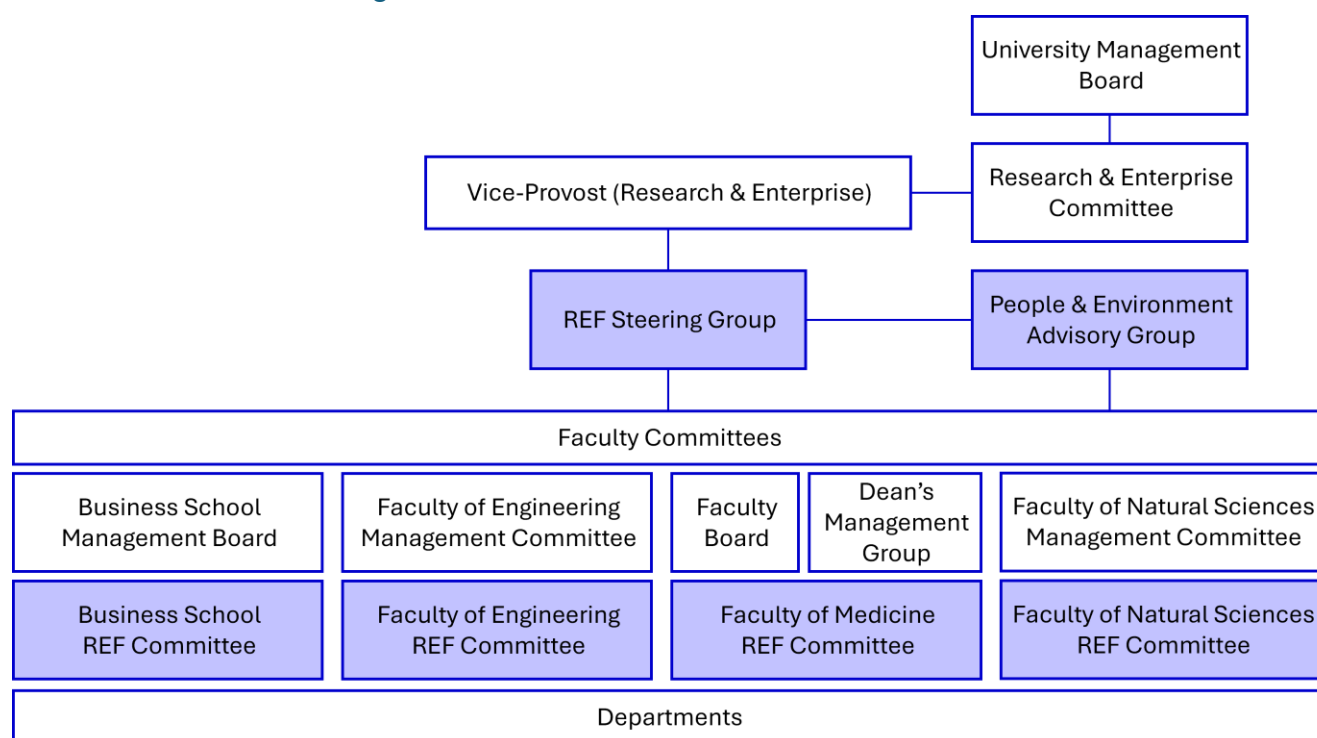
As this initial EIA has been conducted by considering the potential impact of processes, prior to the availability of REF 2029 specific quantitative data. The assessment will be updated at defined intervals as the processes are implemented and data becomes available. These data-driven EIAs will be undertaken throughout the REF 2029 cycle to ensure ongoing compliance and to identify, monitor, and mitigate any emerging differential impacts.

6.2 Referenced Material

6.2.1 Terminology Glossary

ARF	Advanced Research Fellow
BS	Business School
CKU	Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding
CoP	Code of Practice
DORA	San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment
E&I	Engagement and Impact
ECRI	Early Career Researcher Institute
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion
EDIC	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FOE	Faculty of Engineering
FOM	Faculty of Medicine
FONS	Faculty of Natural Sciences
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HoD	Head of Department
PRF	Principal Research Fellow
PTO	Professional, Technical and Operational
QR	Quality-related Research (funding)
RA	Research Associate
REC	Research & Enterprise Committee
REF	Research Excellence Framework
REF-PEAG	REF People and Environment Advisory Group
REF-SG	REF Steering Group
RF	Research Fellow
RRA	Responsible Research Assessment
SPRE	Strategy, People, and Research Environment
SRF	Senior Research Fellow
SRR	Significant Responsibility for Research
UMB	University Management Board
UoA	Unit of Assessment
VPRE	Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise)

6.2.2 REF Decision Making Structure



6.2.3 REF Decision Making Committees

REF Steering Group

REF-SG Terms of Reference

- The REF Steering Group has responsibility and accountability to the University Management Board for the delivery of an optimal, accurate and timely REF 2029 submission.
- The Group will provide management and oversight of the preparation of Imperial's REF submissions including decisions on issues of strategic importance. To include the provision of:
 - Advice on the configuration of units of assessment (including which UoAs to make submissions to, which staff and research groups should be presented in each submission, etc.).
 - Input to strategic choices which will inform Imperial's submission (including guidance to inform submission decisions about research outputs for Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU) sections).
 - Guidance to inform the preparation of the institution-level Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) statement and disciplinary-level narrative statements (including research strategy, enabling impact, supporting collaboration, structures to support interdisciplinary research, and open research).
 - Guidance to inform the preparation of Engagement and Impact (E&I) sections in the REF submission, including on cross-departmental/multidisciplinary case studies.

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- c) Oversee development and review of the University's Code of Practice and ensure REF-related decisions are undertaken in line with this.
- d) Input to, and overview of, external consultations related to REF.
- e) Review and sign-off of Imperial's REF 2029 submissions.
- f) The quorum for the REF 2029 Steering Group is half of the members with a minimum of two Faculty REF Leads and the Chair in attendance.

Meeting Frequency: The REF Steering Group meets every other month. More frequent meetings are likely to be scheduled as the REF deadline draws nearer.

Reports to: Research and Enterprise Committee and University Management Board.

REG-SG Membership

- Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise) (Chair)
- Faculty REF Leads
- Faculty REF Managers
- Director of Strategic Planning and Insight
- Head of REF
- Co-Director of Enterprise
- Senior ICT representative
- Senior People Function representative

REF People & Environment Advisory Group

REF-PEAG Terms of Reference

- a) Maintain independence from other University REF-related committees and groups.
- b) Advise REF decision-makers on matters arising related to equalities legislation, advice from internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies and People Function teams, REF guidance and Research England policy.
- c) Ensure REF-related decisions are informed by current equalities legislation and best management practice in line with the University's REF Code of Practice.
- d) Guide assessment of the Code of Practice as it relates to EDI and institutional culture.
- e) Review of representativeness and oversight of the Equality Impact Assessments at key stages of the REF submission process, advising the REF Steering Group and VPPE of recommendations.
- f) Support development of the institutional Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) statement as it relates to EDI and research environment.
- g) Review appeals raised by staff regarding decisions on research independence and serve as the final arbitrator, advising the REF Steering Group accordingly of the outcome.
- h) The quorum for the REF People & Environment Advisory Group is half of the members, with the Chair in attendance. Decisions require a simple majority (half of panel members plus one) of those present.

Meeting frequency: The REF People & Environment Advisory Group meets approximately termly. More frequent meetings may be scheduled at key points in the REF programme as required.

REF-PEAG Membership

- Director of Early Career Researcher Institute (Chair)
- Associate Provost (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)
- Director of People Partnering & Operations
- Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre
- Senior Consul
- Consul for Faculty of Engineering and the Business School
- REF Impact Manager
- Early Career Researcher Staff Representative
- Technical Services Representative

Imperial College Business School REF Committee

BS-REF Terms of Reference

- a) To deliver a maximum REF return on behalf of the Business School
- b) To oversee REF activity across the School (including research outputs, environment, and impact), set targets where appropriate (with the Dean's office) and recommend interventions to the Research Committee and Management Board when concerns arise.
- c) To advise the Research Committee and Management Board on School REF strategy and its implementation.
- d) To promote the impact of School research on policy and practice.
- e) To respond to changes in the research assessment environment and ensure compliance
- f) To manage engagement with University strategies and processes in preparing submission data.

Meeting frequency: The Business School REF Committee meets approximately termly. More frequent meetings may be scheduled at key points in the REF programme as required.

BS-REF Membership

- Faculty REF Lead (Chair)
- Head of Department (Finance)
- Head of Department (Analytics, Marketing, Operations)
- Head of Department (Economics and Public Policy)
- Head of Department (Management & Entrepreneurship)
- Vice-Dean (Research and Faculty)
- Faculty REF Manager
- Head of Research Support
- Senior Faculty Representatives
- Professional Staff Representative
- Early Career Researcher Representative

Faculty of Engineering REF Committee

FOE-REF Terms of Reference

- a) To take ownership and oversee preparations of the REF2029 submission within FoE's departments.

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- b) To ensure a shared understanding of the Research England and University REF submission requirements.
- c) To ensure that the Faculty's submissions are consistent with the University's REF Code of Practice.
- d) To share information between Departments and the group and establish best practice in preparing for the REF submission.
- e) To advise the Associate Dean REF and the Faculty Management Committee on the strategies for the REF submission, identify any issues and develop solutions.
- f) To advise on the identification, development, selection and review of the REF outputs, Impact Case Studies and Strategy, People & Research Environment element.
- g) To advise on decision-making for all aspects of the Faculty's REF submission subject to final approval by the Faculty Management Committee and the University Management Board.

Meeting frequency: Six-weekly from summer 2025 and increase to monthly from January 2027.

FOE-REF Membership

- Associate Dean REF (Chair)
- Associate Dean REF Impact
- Associate Dean EDI
- Vice Dean Research
- Department REF Lead
- Department Impact Lead
- Director of Research Strategy and Development
- Head of Research Coordination and Evaluation

Faculty of Medicine REF Committee

FOM-REF Terms of Reference

- a) To strategically advise on the formulation of the Faculty's REF submission across all areas (i.e. volume measure eligibility, outputs, impact, research environment and culture).
- b) To guide and contribute to the formulation of all narrative elements of the REF submission.
- c) To guide the preparation of impact case studies and review and evaluate iteratively for the submission.
- d) To review and evaluate the progression of the submission against Faculty targets.
- e) To be responsible for the collection and interpretation of REF-related environment data for the submission.
- f) To make strategic decisions about the REF submission for the Faculty as a whole (i.e. not individual departments).
- g) To support the Faculty in meeting both internal and external deadlines.

Meeting Frequency: once per term in the first year and then increasing thereafter

Reports to: Faculty Board and Dean's Management Group

FOM-REF Membership

- Faculty REF Leads (Co-Chairs)
- Vice Dean People and Culture
- Vice Dean Research
- Faculty REF UoA Advisors
- Director of Research Strategy
- Head of Research Development
- REF Manager

Faculty of Natural Sciences REF Committee

FoNS-REF Terms of Reference

To oversee Faculty preparations of the REF submission within the Faculty, namely:

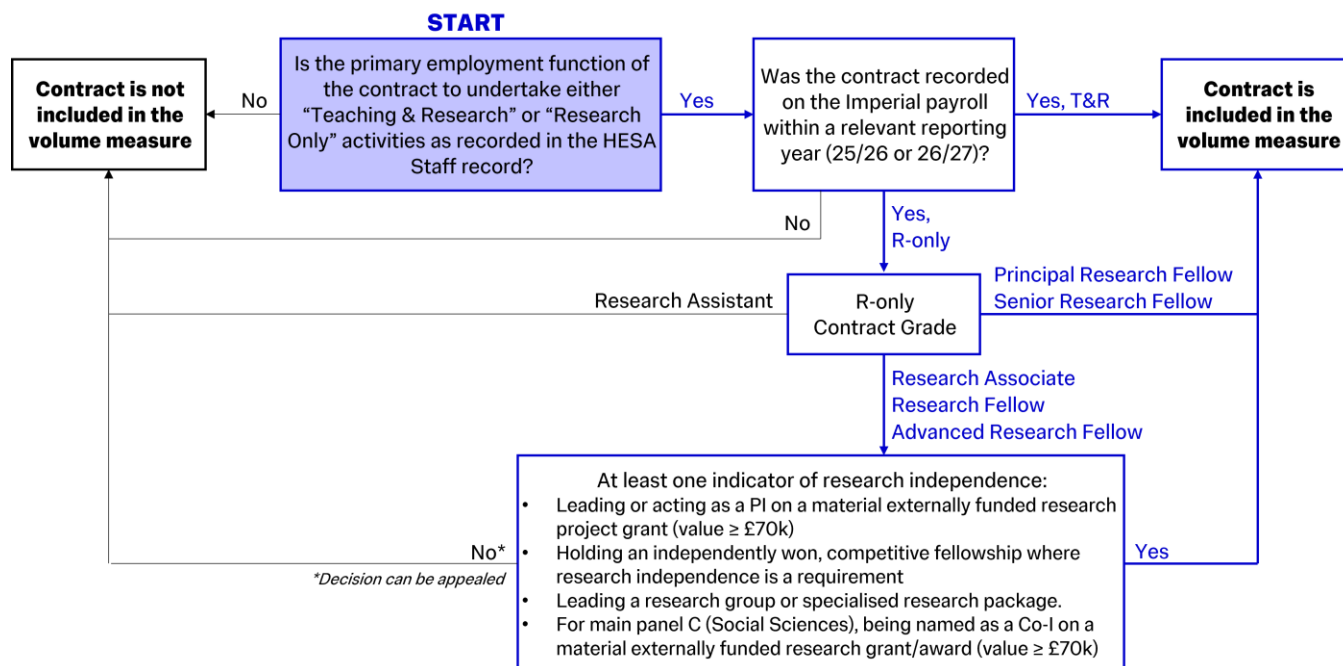
- a) To provide a forum for discussion between departments regarding all aspects of the submission.
- b) To establish and share best practice in the preparation of submissions.
- c) To support an ensure departmental preparedness for submission to each appropriate UoA.
- d) To discuss and agree any cross reference of staff, outputs or impact case studies across UoAs.
- e) To ensure that Research England guidance and the University strategic steer are communicated and to advise departments.
- f) To communicate University-level REF activity to Department leads, including activity within the REF Steering Group.
- g) To provide input to Research England consultations on REF2029.
- h) To ensure that all decisions are informed by current equalities legislation and good management practice in line with the University's REF Code of Practice.
- i) To agree Faculty timelines and deadlines for developing each part of the REF submission

Meeting Frequency: once per term in 2026 and then increasing thereafter as required.

FoNS-REF Membership

- Faculty Vice Dean - Research (Chair)
- Faculty Associate Dean (Enterprise)
- Faculty Associate Dean (EDI)
- Director of Research Strategy and Development
- Faculty REF Co-ordinator
- Departmental REF Leads (to be nominated by each department)

6.2.4 Volume Measure Flowchart



6.2.5 Independent Research Fellowships

This list identifies competitive research fellowships that inherently require or support research independence. This list has been expanded from the official list provided by Research England and agreed by the REF-SG. The list is presented alphabetically by funder and includes fellowships that either require independence from the outset or support the transition to independence (marked with an asterisk*) where additional indicators of independence will be required (see **Part 3.1.1**). It is not exhaustive and includes some old schemes which are not open for new applications to account for fellows who are still completing their fellowships.

AHRC

AHRC Leadership Fellowships – Early Career Researchers
AHRC Leadership Fellowships

BBSRC

BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships
BBSRC Discovery Fellowships

British Academy

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

Newton International Fellowships
Wolfson Research Professorships

British Heart Foundation

BHF-Fulbright Commission Scholar Awards
Career Re-entry Research Fellowships
Clinical Research Leave Fellowships
Intermediate Basic Science Research Fellowships
Intermediate Clinical Research Fellowships
Senior Basic Science Research Fellowships
Senior Clinical Research Fellowships
Springboard Award for Biomedical Researchers
Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers

Cancer Research UK

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

EPSRC

Early Career Fellowship
Established Career Fellowship
Open Fellowship
Open Plus Fellowship
Postdoctoral Fellowship*
Quantum Technologies Career Acceleration Fellowship
Stephen Hawking Postdoctoral Fellowship
Turing AI World-Leading Researcher Fellowship

ESRC

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

European Research Council

Advanced Grants
Consolidator Grants
Starting Grants

Health Education England

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

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Imperial College London

Chapman Fellowship
Edmond and Lily Safra UK DRI Fellowships
Imperial College Research Fellowship²

Leverhulme Trust

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

MRC

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

NC3R

David Sainsbury Fellowship
Training fellowship

NERC

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

NIHR

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

Royal Academy of Engineering

Engineering for Development Research Fellowship
Industrial Fellowships
Green Future Fellowship
Research Fellowship

² Imperial appoints ICRFs to be intellectual leaders of their programmes. The default is therefore to ordinarily consider these contracts as independent from the outset, except for the Business School due to differences in their hiring and promotions criteria.

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Senior Research Fellowship

UK Intelligence Community (IC) Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851

Research Fellowships

Royal Society

Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship*

Faraday Discovery Fellowship

JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship

Newton Advanced Fellowship

Royal Society/Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship

Royal Society Wolfson Fellowship

University Research Fellowship*

Royal Society and Wellcome Trust

Sir Henry Dale Fellowship*

Royal Society of Edinburgh

RSE Arts & Humanities Awards (for permanent staff)

RSE Personal Research Fellowship

RSE Sabbatical Research Grants (for permanent staff)

Sêr Cymru

Recapturing Talent*

Research Chairs

Research fellowships for 3-5 year postdocs

Rising Stars

STFC

CERN Fellowships

Ernest Rutherford Fellowship

ESA Fellowships

Innovations Partnership Scheme Fellowships

Returner Fellowships

RSE/STFC Enterprise Fellowships

Rutherford International Fellowship Programme

Stephen Hawking Postdoctoral Fellowship

UKRI

Future Leaders Fellowships

Innovation Fellowships

Stephen Hawking Postdoctoral Fellowship

Wellcome Trust

Career Development Award*

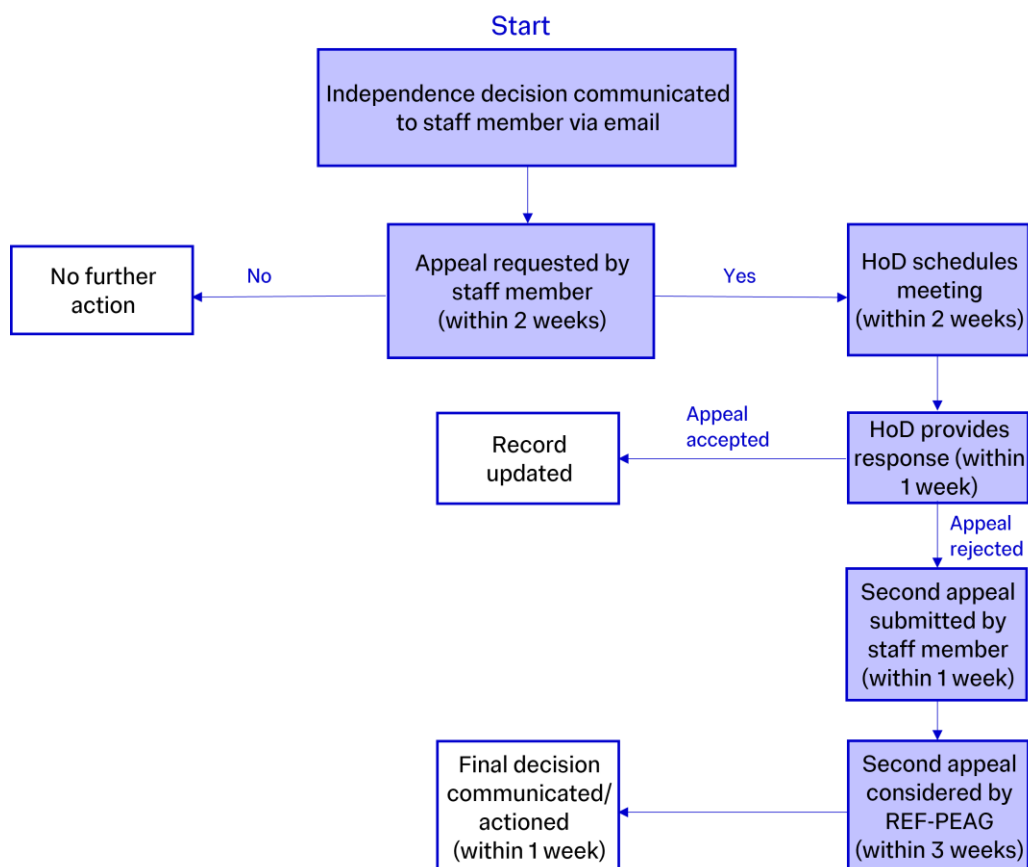
Discovery Award

Intermediate Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical Medicine

Principal Research Fellowships

Research Award for Health Professionals

6.2.6 Research Independence Appeals Process



Appeals Process Detail

If a Research Associate (RA), Research Fellow (RF), or Advanced Research Fellow (ARF) believes that they have grounds for an appeal based on **Part 3.1.1** of the Code of Practice, then they should request a meeting with their HoD (or the nominee who is responsible for REF matters in their Department) within 2 weeks of being notified of the independence status of their contract. When requesting the meeting, the individual should clearly identify what they believe to be the potential grounds for appeal. Staff are encouraged to informally discuss their appeal with their Faculty REF Manager or Department REF Lead prior to submitting their appeal to their HoD and may ask the Faculty REF Manager or Faculty/Department REF Lead for support in presenting their appeal.

The HoD (or nominee) should meet with the individual within 2 weeks of the request, to discuss the matters that the individual has raised. After the meeting and following full and proper consideration of the

matters raised, the HoD (or nominee) will write a formal response. The response will be issued within 1 week of the meeting. If the HoD accepts the individuals appeal, records will be updated accordingly.

If the HoD rejects the appeal but the individual continues to believe that they have grounds for appeal, a second appeal should be submitted to the Chair of the REF-PEAG stating what action has been taken to date and the reasons why they remain dissatisfied. The second appeal should be received no later than 1 week after the receipt of the HoD's (or nominee's) formal response. Following receipt of the second appeal, the REF People & Environment Advisory Group will be informed and a meeting convened at the earliest opportunity, but no later than 3 weeks from receipt of the appeal, to ensure that each case is considered as quickly as possible. The individual and their HoD (or nominee), will be asked to attend the meeting to answer questions.

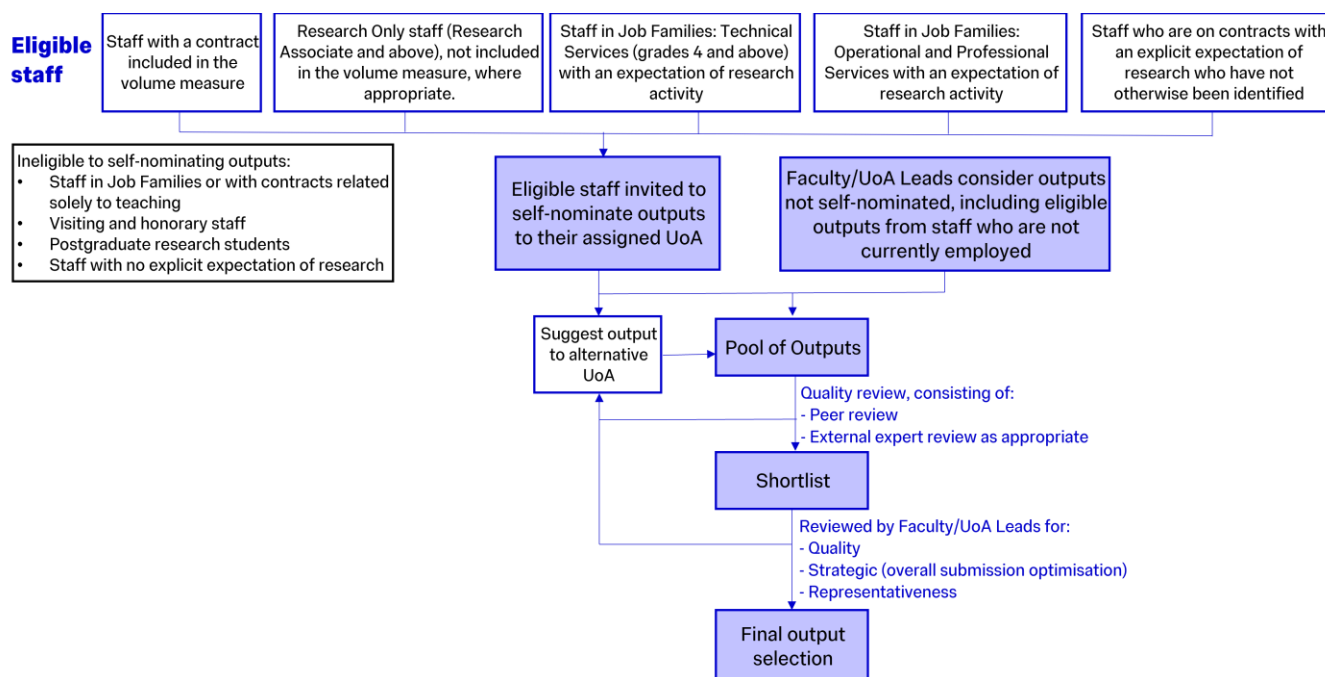
After the meeting, and following full and proper consideration, the Chair will communicate a final decision which will normally be issued within 1 week after the meeting. The decision of the REF People & Environment Advisory Group will be final.

6.2.7 Department to UoA Mapping

Faculty	Department	UoA
Medicine	Institute of Clinical Sciences	1 Clinical Medicine
	Department of Infectious Disease	
	National Heart & Lung Institute	
	Department of Immunology and Inflammation	2 Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
	Department of Metabolism, Digestion and Reproduction	
	Department of Surgery & Cancer	4 Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
	School of Public Health	
	Department of Brain Sciences	
Natural Sciences	Department of Life Sciences	5 Biological Sciences
	Department of Chemistry	8 Chemistry
	Department of Physics	9 Physics
	Department of Mathematics	10 Mathematical Sciences
	The Grantham Institute for Climate Change	14 Geography and Environmental Studies
	Centre for Environmental Policy	
Engineering	Department of Computing	11 Computer Science and Informatics
	Department of Aeronautics	12 Engineering
	Department of Bioengineering	
	Department of Chemical Engineering	
	Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering	
	Department of Earth Science and Engineering	

	Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering	
	Department of Mechanical Engineering	
	Department of Materials	
	Dyson School of Design Engineering	
Business School	Business School	17 Business and Management Studies
Non-Faculty	Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship	23 Education
	Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication	34 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

6.2.8 Output Selection Flowchart



6.2.9 Summary of CoP Consultation

As part of Imperial's commitment to developing REF processes and procedures which are robust, transparent and inclusive for all staff groups, the REF team ran a consultation on a draft version of our CoP in February 2026. The consultation had five mechanisms for feedback:

1. The whole staff community was invited to contribute responses via a written online form, and informed of this opportunity to contribute via REF committees and an All Staff briefing.
2. Members of key stakeholder groups were invited to attend focus groups to contribute feedback in structured sessions led by the central REF team.
3. The VPRES shared the CoP consultation draft with all HoDs, inviting feedback either directly to the central REF team or through the other consultation channels.

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4. The CoP consultation draft was shared with University leadership committees (Research & Enterprise Committee and People & Culture Committee) for consultation and feedback.
5. The CoP consultation draft went to all four Faculty REF Committee's for consultation and feedback, coordinated through the Faculty REF Managers.

In total, approximately 200 staff members contributed to the CoP consultation, including representation from all four faculties, and members of the academic, research, technical and professional service staff groups. The feedback gathered informed Imperial's final draft of the CoP, with key changes including:

- **Explanation of 'decoupling'** - staff expressed that while there was clear messaging in the CoP that REF decisions would not impact individuals, the reasoning for this was not made clear. As a result, a clarifying statement on 'decoupling' was added in [Part 1](#) and throughout the CoP, language was updated to refer to 'contracts' rather than 'individuals'.
- **Support for early career researchers** - in response to queries on support for early career researchers, a statement on ECRI was added and further clarity provided regarding inclusion of staff on fixed-term or part-time contracts in [Part 1.2](#).
- **Enhanced understanding of output diversity** - staff asked us to expand on our definition of output diversity to increase understanding in [Part 5.1.4](#).
- **Updated appeals process** – the timings of the appeals process were updated for clarity and consistency and a process diagram was added. A common query was why there was a lengthy section dedicated to the appeals process when the outcome does not impact on an individual. To reflect this, the appeals process was moved to the [Appendix 6.2.6](#).
- **Re-examination of independence indicators** – after extensive discussion, prompted by the staff consultation, the £70k threshold was maintained as the most appropriate value, representing a clear inflation-linked increase from REF 2021 and applicability across the institution.
- **Added additional consideration to the EIA** – while not the main focus of the CoP consultation stage, EIA considerations which had not yet been captured were addressed in [Appendix 6.1.1](#).
- **Clarifications** – minor edits were made throughout the CoP to address areas where questions and feedback identified that clarity could be enhanced. For example, explicitly referring to interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary outputs in [Part 5.1.4](#).

Further feedback received during the consultation has influenced wider REF preparations and programme. For example, it became clear that awareness of key changes for REF 2029 was inconsistent the community. In response, the communication plan has been enhanced and a reference guide to the CoP has been developed. This guide will be available on the REF webpages, providing staff with a more accessible and user-friendly resource.