

Research Excellence Framework (REF) Submission: Code of Practice

Part 1: Introduction

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) has produced this Code of Practice to fulfil a requirement of Research England in relation to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, as specified in publication REF 2019/03 dated January 2019. The Code of Practice will apply to RVC's intended submission to REF Unit of Assessment 6 – Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Science.

Research, alongside teaching, enterprise activity and clinical work, is an integral part of RVC's mission and institutional strategy. The College's Corporate Plan 2015-19 states that its strategic goal in research is:

"To deliver relevant, useful and economically sustainable research programmes of international significance to the animal health and comparative biomedical sector in the context of One Health. The RVC prizes its position as a research-led organisation where our research findings inform our teaching and underpin our position at the cutting edge of clinical practice. Our research is founded on high quality science with the aim of maximising the impact on our stakeholders to the benefit of animal and human health and welfare. We will foster collaboration across disciplines and provide a supportive environment to maximise the potential of all of our academics and early career researchers."

It is RVC's intention to create an inclusive environment for everyone and promote equal opportunity for all employees. This should be regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation or any other characteristic – as required under the Equality Act (2010). This also includes staff who work part-time, flexibly or on a fixed-term contract, who are protected under the Part-time Workers Regulations (2000) and Fixed-Term Workers Regulations (2002). To this end, the College operates a number of policies and procedures to support inclusivity. These policies and procedures are overseen by the Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC, formerly known as the 'Equality Strategy Group'), the chair of which sits on the College Executive Committee.

All departments and groups within the College have nominated people to be part of the EDC. Members of the EDC act as Departmental or Group E&D Champions, who then work within their areas to advance equality and diversity through the formation of local Equality and Diversity Action Plans.

The RVC's current E&D Action Plan (see: https://www.rvc.ac.uk/Media/Default/About/HumanResources/Documents/AthenaSWANActionPlan_finalPDF.pdf) aims to:

1. embed Athena SWAN Charter principles into RVC culture;
2. strengthen E&D training by adding tools to tackle and address unconscious bias;
3. develop and enhance the RVC's E&D policy and support framework;
4. develop a culture that supports and encourages flexible working;
5. demonstrate the College's commitment to improving career progression;
6. support and develop female leaders;
7. provide improved support for staff with caring responsibilities; and
8. undertake additional actions, including a commitment to ensure that REF submissions more accurately reflect the gender composition of the RVC.

Since REF 2014, the College has substantially advanced in its commitment towards the E&D agenda. Recent actions include:

- appointment of Mrs Ferhat Nazir-Bhatti in the role of Diversity and Inclusion Manager (2015);
- submission (in 2017) and award (in 2018) of the Athena SWAN Bronze Charter Mark in recognition of advancing gender equality across the institution;
- development of guidance and training for staff on how to conduct an Equality Analysis (Equality Impact Assessment);
- publication of the College's Gender Pay Gap reports which include a set of actions to advance gender equality (2017 and 2018);
- launch of LGBT+ allies Informal Staff Network (2018);
- establishment of a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) Informal Staff Network (2018);
- formation of a Carers' Informal Staff Network (2018);
- participation of female members of staff in the Aurora Leadership Programme run by Advance HE (2018-19); and
- provision of training for staff on how to address unconscious and conscious bias in decision-making processes such as recruitment and selection, appraisal, academic probation and promotion processes (from 2017 onwards).

This Code of Practice is designed to support the principles of fairness, transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity which are woven into RVC's broader institutional E&D-related policies and strategies, as outlined in more detail below:

Transparency – The processes used in preparing the REF submission will be clearly defined and made available in an accessible format on the staff intranet. The Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will ensure that employees on leave of absence from the College at the time of producing this Code, are contacted to inform them of its existence and the procedures in place to ensure all aspects of the REF submission process are fully transparent. The Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will continue to liaise with employees who are absent either through direct contact or via the individual's Head of Department, on an ongoing basis, to ensure those employees are kept informed of the latest developments. In early May 2019, RVC provided two briefing events for staff, one at each of its two campuses, to raise awareness of the Code and explain the processes relating to the submission of outputs, in parallel with a formal consultation process (see Part 2). When approved by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, the Code will be published on RVC's website.

Consistency – The Code will be applied consistently and uniformly across the College.

Accountability – All individuals and bodies involved in evaluating the REF submission and making decisions about the selection of employees will be identified, by role and name, together with their clearly defined responsibilities. Everyone involved in creating and/or assessing drafts of the submission will have received appropriate E&D-related training and will be familiar with this Code of Practice.

Inclusivity – The REF submission process will promote an inclusive environment, enabling the College to identify all eligible employees that have produced excellent research, irrespective of their contractual status (e.g. fixed-term or part-time). Any particular circumstances that may have had an effect on an individual's contribution during the census period will be taken into account should they wish this to be the case. Each individual's research will be evaluated on its merits. In addition, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been or will be carried out at each stage in the proceedings as the College prepares its submission for REF 2021 (see below for further details).

In preparation for the REF, the College has undertaken a baseline survey of its staff from an E&D perspective, as shown in Appendix A.

If any member of staff has questions about the Code of Practice, they should contact their Head of Department (see Appendix B) or one of their Departmental E&D Champions (Appendix C) in the first instance.

If anyone is concerned that the REF submission process is not being run in accordance with the Code in their area, they should get in touch with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation. Should the response not be satisfactory, the matter should be raised with the Director of Human Resources.

Part 2: Identifying staff with significant responsibility for research

The College does not expect to submit 100% of its eligible staff to REF 2021, for reasons described below.

2.1 Policies and procedures

2.1.1 Criteria for identifying staff with a significant responsibility for research

Where a member of Category A staff is employed on an academic contract at RVC, they are automatically assumed to undertake research, with the following exceptions:

- staff in the **School of Veterinary Nursing**, whose role it is to provide veterinary nursing education and training;
- staff in the **Clinical Skills Centre**, who provide clinical education and training;
- those staff appointed to **Assistant Lecturer** (Teaching Fellow) positions with the primary purpose of supporting the delivery of major teaching programmes within departments; and
- **newly-appointed Lecturers on the Clinical Educator track**, who are obliged to focus on teaching and clinical service during their probationary period.

As a result of these duties, staff in these groups are not given time or resources in order to undertake research.

2.1.2 Decision-making and communications with staff

One-to-one consultations with individual staff from the groups noted in section 2.1.1 took place during April and May 2019, providing an opportunity for questions and feedback (see also section 2.2, part ii). Following this a meeting took place in May 2019 to decide whether to exclude from the College's REF submission some or all of these 'exceptional' staff. Participants in this meeting were: the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, Heads of Academic Departments, the Deputy Director of Human Resources, the Head of HR Operations and the Diversity and Inclusion Manager. At the meeting the participants consulted records such as Appraisal documents and academic probation forms, that confirmed that no member of staff from the groups listed in section 2.1.1 was required to undertake research at any time during the REF census period. The participants agreed that following this meeting, the decision to exclude would be communicated in writing to the staff members concerned.

On 4 June 2019, representatives from the campus trade unions were invited to a meeting to discuss the Code of Practice and review the baseline equality data on academic staff (see Appendix A – Table A1). Equality data were also presented for the groups of staff noted in section 2.1.1 (Appendix A – Table A2). This meeting was chaired by the Director of Research and Innovation Services, and attended by the Diversity and Inclusion Manager, the Employee Relations Manager, and representatives from the principal campus trade unions. The meeting concluded with the group agreeing that in its opinion all elements of the Code of Practice – including the processes for identification of staff with significant responsibility for research – are fit for purpose, and hence the document can be presented to Research England. Evidence of this agreement is provided in the form of a letter signed by the Deputy Director of Human Resources and union representatives, and attached as Appendix H.

2.2 Development of the process

RVC conducted the following exercise in order to identify which groups of staff were not allocated time or resources to undertake research during the census period:

- i. Heads of Department were asked to indicate which groups of staff fell into the above category;
- ii. The staff concerned were consulted by the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, their Head of Department or a senior representative from Human Resources. Where available, Time Allocation Survey returns for these staff (collected under Research England's annual Transparent Approach to Costing exercise) were reviewed with them and a brief report written;
- iii. A group of senior staff (see section 2.1.2) reviewed these reports and decided whether the member of staff is considered to have responsibility for undertaking research;
- iv. All decisions will be reviewed in June 2020, and the staff concerned will be invited to indicate if their circumstances have changed in the intervening period.

The above process was developed by discussion at Research Strategy Committee, College Executive Committee and Academic Board, respectively. Details of the process were presented to Academic Board in April 2019.

2.3 Staff, committees and training

The College has used its existing committee structure in order to develop and agree the process described above. The composition of the decision-making group is indicated in section 2.1.2. Discussions leading to the formulation of the process were recorded in the minutes of the relevant committee / council / board.

All staff involved in the decision-making process will receive training in relation to the REF and its equality and diversity requirements. The training will take place between May 2019 and December 2019 (dates to be agreed), and will cover:

- Changes to the REF 2021 submission process when compared to REF 2014;
- RVC's approach to REF 2021, including the preparation of this Code of Practice and the membership of the various panels (see Appendix D);
- The timetable for preparing the College's REF submission, including dates by which key decisions will need to be made (see Appendix E);
- Understanding the potential for unconscious bias in the College's submission to REF 2021;
- Ensuring that equality is embedded in all decision-making relating to the submission to REF 2021;
- E&D legislation (e.g. Equality Act 2010, and the responsibilities placed on individuals under this Act);
- E&D initiatives that have been implemented by the College since 2014; and
- Data protection legislation relevant to REF 2021 (e.g. GDPR 2018).

2.4 Appeals

RVC will consider appeals in relation to staff identified as not having a significant responsibility for research. Details of the appeals process have been communicated to staff through individual consultations with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, Head of Department and/or HR representative (see section 2.2), via publication on the staff intranet of this Code of Practice and at the staff briefings for REF 2021, held in early May 2019.

Any member of College staff who wishes to appeal against their proposed exclusion from the REF submission will be able to do so on the grounds that they can provide objective evidence to indicate that:

- they have been granted dedicated time for research, free of other duties; and
- appropriate resources (e.g. funding, research assistance in the form of dedicated scientific or technical support staff) that has enabled them to carry out and publish original research during the census period for REF 2021.

Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, with a copy to the Head of Department. There is no template for this purpose; the letter should simply provide the evidence indicated in the paragraph above.

Appeals will be heard by a panel, to be convened on the following dates, if required: 31 October 2019, 30 April 2020 and 1 October 2020. The panel (see also Appendix D1) will consist of:

- The Chief Operating Officer (Chair);
- The Director of Finance;
- The Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee;
- The College Secretary; and
- A senior (professorial) member of staff, who was not involved in the earlier decision-making process.

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the appellant within 5 working days of the panel meeting. The decision of the appeals panel will be final.

2.5 Equality impact assessments

In May 2019 an EIA was undertaken for the mock REF exercise carried out at the College in November 2018 (NB. this mock exercise was run with the assumption that all staff belonging to the groups noted in section 2.1.1 would be excluded from REF 2021). The EIA indicated that the processes and procedures followed by the College in relation to identifying staff with a significant responsibility for research (section 2.1) were transparent, applied in a consistent manner and fully justified in relation to staff roles and responsibilities. The EIA also showed that in regard to the staff that will be excluded from REF 2021, these processes and procedures led to contrasting outcomes for men and women, and for staff in different age categories (see Appendix A – Table A2). Thus, women comprise four-fifths of staff belonging to the groups listed in section 2.1.1; a majority (56%) of the excluded staff are in the age band from 31 to 40 years; and 87% of these staff are employed at Grade 7, the second-lowest grade for academic staff.

The College's second mock REF exercise will take place in November 2019 and will be subjected to another EIA.

Part 3: Determining research independence

3.1 Policies and procedures

3.1.1 Criteria for determining independence

The College considers that any member of staff employed on its standard contract is employed in the capacity of an independent researcher, unless they demonstrably have no significant responsibility for research (see Part 2 above).

Where a member of staff has been appointed to a RVC-funded postdoctoral fellowship awarded in open competition with other researchers (where the job description requires them to develop an independent programme of research), and/or holds a fellowship grant from Research England's 'list of independent research fellowships' (<https://www.ref.ac.uk/guidance/additional-guidance/>), they are assumed by RVC to be independent researchers and will automatically be included in the REF submission.

Members of staff employed as research assistants or research associates are not normally considered to be independent researchers (see REF Guidance on Submissions, para. 129), but in certain situations may *achieve* independence whilst employed on this type of contract (for example, if a researcher is asked to lead or act as the Principal Investigator on an externally-funded research project; or lead a research group; or manage a substantial programme of work on a grant). Staff who find themselves in this situation will be asked by their line manager to consult the REF Guidance on Submissions (<http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications>); and thereafter, if they believe themselves eligible and wish to be considered for inclusion in the REF, be required to complete a template ('Application to be considered as an independent researcher', attached as Appendix F). This should be done as soon as possible and before 31 July 2020, the census date for staff to be included in the REF. Any applications received will be reviewed in batches at the following intervals: i) 31 October 2019; ii) 30 April 2020; and iii) 1 October 2020 (final review).

If the applicant would like to discuss their case more fully with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation before completing the template, they will be afforded an opportunity to do so.

For the avoidance of doubt, and in accordance with the REF Guidance on Submissions, para. 133, a researcher will not be deemed to have undertaken independent research solely on the basis that they are first author or have been named in one or more research publications.

Laboratory managers and senior technicians are not normally considered to be independent researchers, and therefore they are not expected to engage with the College's REF submission process.

3.1.2 Decision-making and communication to staff

Decisions about whether or not a particular individual has demonstrated research independence will be made at a meeting of the Research Strategy Committee, based on the completed template (noting that the template includes provision for the applicant's line manager and Head of Department to provide supporting information, as appropriate). The decision will be communicated by the Head of Department, in writing, to the person concerned within 14 days of the meeting date, accompanied by an explanation of the factors considered in making the decision and details of how to appeal, if they believe a mistake has been made. When communicating the decision, the College will ensure the same safeguards are put in place as described in Part 1 under the sub-heading 'Transparency', i.e. care will be taken to ensure that no-one is missed out as a result of being on sick leave or maternity/adoption leave.

It will be possible for an individual to re-apply if their application has been turned down, but new information has become available or their circumstances have changed since the original application was submitted. The final cut-off date for this will be 31 October 2020, i.e. one month prior to the REF submission date.

Appeals will be heard in accordance with the processes described in section 3.3 below.

3.2 Staff, committees and training

The Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will act as the senior designated member of staff for the College with responsibility for conducting and/or delegating aspects of the REF process, as well as having responsibility for making key decisions associated with the REF submission. In this role, the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will be assisted by members of the Research Strategy Committee (see below), acting in their capacity as the REF steering group for the College. This Committee is also the body responsible for determining research independence.

The Committee includes the following staff (for full list please see Appendix B):

- *Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation* – with strategic oversight of the REF 2021 submission, and responsibility for the selection of outputs;
- *Associate Dean for Research, Associate Dean for Innovation* – responsible for overseeing the Environment and Impact elements of the REF submission, respectively; and for supporting the VP in his oversight role;
- *Heads of Department, Head of the Graduate School, Director of Clinical Research and other senior members of academic staff, including Research Programme Leaders* – responsible for the review of outputs, and providing general advice and support in the decision-making processes surrounding the REF 2021 submission; and
- *Director of Research and Innovation Services* – the College's manager for REF 2021, with responsibility for preparing the final submission.

The Research Strategy Committee will be responsible for final selection of research outputs and impact case studies for submission to the REF. By the end of calendar year 2019, all Committee members will have undertaken a refresher of the mandatory E&D training available through the College. They will also receive training that is tailored to the requirements of REF 2021, to ensure that individuals fully understand their responsibilities in this regard.

This REF-specific training will be mandatory and will include:

- a description of RVC's approach to REF 2021;
- a recap of English E&D legislation (e.g. Equality Act 2010) and the responsibilities placed on individuals under this Act and the context for embedding consideration of equality and diversity in REF 2021;
- understanding the potential for bias and how this can impact decision-making around selection of staff and outputs in REF 2021;
- understanding what can be done to manage and mitigate bias;
- a description of key changes to the REF 2021 submission process when compared to REF 2014;
- changes to English law since 2014 (e.g. GDPR considerations), that could have a bearing on staff circumstances, including the handling of sensitive / personal information; and
- scenarios and questions to assess an individual's level of understanding of the REF 2021 submission process.

3.3 Appeals process

The appeals process will be communicated to staff by means of this Code of Practice, with reminders as necessary (e.g. where a member of staff has had their application to be considered as an independent researcher turned down).

In advance of submitting a formal appeal, staff are encouraged to discuss their case with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, in case the situation can be resolved informally without resort to the formal process.

Deadlines: individuals affected by the decision to exclude them from the REF on the grounds that they are not independent researchers may lodge an appeal against a decision between 1 August 2020 and 1 October 2020. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation. The written submission should contain all of the information required by the College's appeals panel to reach a decision but should not contain any new evidence attesting to research independence.

Eligible grounds to appeal are as follows:

- i) evidence that the Research Strategy Committee has failed in its duty to give appropriate consideration to the evidence presented to it in the 'independent researcher' template (see above, section 3.1.1); AND that
- ii) based on the criteria listed in section 3.1.1, para. 3, independence has been demonstrated.

The appeals panel will consist of the same staff as indicated in section 2.4 (see also Appendix D1). The College Secretary will act as panel secretary.

None of the above persons has any involvement in the REF submission process other than by virtue of being a member of the appeals panel.

The panel will meet up to three times (in October 2019, May 2020 and October 2020), as necessary in order to consider any appeals received prior to the date of each meeting. The decision of the panel will be final.

After the meeting, the appellant(s) will be informed by the panel secretary in writing of the outcome, with the decision copied to the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, the appellant's Head of Department and the Director of Research and Innovation Services.

3.4 Equality impact assessments

Prior to 31 July 2020, an EIA of decisions relating to staff that have applied to be recognised as independent researchers will be carried out by the RVC's Diversity and Inclusion Manager, supported by the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, and the Director of Research and Innovation Services, to determine whether any group at RVC is under-represented in the responses. If that is found to be the case, a summary of the outcomes from this analysis (with

due regard to maintaining the anonymity of respondents) will be communicated to all staff, with a call to those from under-represented groups to consider making an application no later than 31 July 2020. Subsequently, a further EIA will be undertaken to determine whether the call has had any impact in terms of new applications received.

Part 4: Selection of outputs

Staff involved in the selection of outputs are as follows:

- *Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation* – who has ultimate responsibility for deciding on the selection of outputs;
- *Associate Dean for Research, Associate Dean for Innovation* – responsible for supporting the VP in the task of selecting outputs;
- *Heads of Department, Head of the Graduate School, Director of Clinical Research and other senior members of academic staff, including Research Programme Leaders* – responsible for the review of outputs, and assisting the Vice-Principal and Associate Deans in final decision-making on outputs.

4.1 Policies and procedures

In the run-up to REF 2021, the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation has contacted all eligible staff with the offer to discuss their research outputs and give advice as to how these could be developed and/or improved. Following these exchanges, feedback has been provided to Heads of Department and Research Programme Leaders describing the actions suggested to develop or improve output quality.

During the selection process no type of publication will be prioritised over any other, albeit it should be noted that RVC's outputs during the REF census period are almost exclusively in the form of journal articles. All outputs eligible for submission to the REF will be read and graded by a combination of internal and external assessors, following the criteria relevant to Main Panel A (see paragraphs 197-205 in the REF 2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods, <http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/>). Each output will be assigned a score (ranging from 4* to Unclassified) following the grading structure used by the REF panels, based on an assessment of originality, significance and rigour.

All external assessors have been selected in consultation with the Research Strategy Committee to ensure there is the appropriate expertise across the breadth of the College's research portfolio. These assessors have experience of similar research assessment exercises (e.g. REF 2014), as well as an international perspective. Details of the external assessors are available upon request from the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation. All outputs are also evaluated by a member of the Research Strategy Committee, or another senior experienced academic internal to the RVC, selected by Research Strategy Committee; and therefore to ensure transparency, at least two independent scores are used to decide whether an output is suitable for selection.

Upon completion of this initial assessment, the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will submit to the Research Strategy Committee a recommendation about the outputs to be selected for submission to REF, together with a commentary where necessary. When considering this recommendation, the Committee must satisfy themselves that, in accordance with the Guidance on Submissions:

- a) all eligible staff are returned with at least 1 output;
- b) no member of staff is to be returned with more than 5 outputs; and
- c) no more than 5% of the selected outputs fail to comply with the Open Access policy for REF 2021.

The Committee will then choose which outputs are to be submitted according to the following rationale:

Step 1: for each individual member of staff, the output that has been graded the highest will be selected for inclusion in the REF submission (NB. where an output has been co-authored by

more than one member of RVC staff, this output will be assigned to a particular author to ensure the highest possible grade for the submission, whilst ensuring full compliance with the REF rules on outputs as outlined above).

Step 2: remaining outputs will be included in rank order starting at 4*, the aim being to include the maximum number of outputs that have been ranked 4* whilst also ensuring compliance with the rules for REF.

Step 3: Research Strategy Committee will make the final selection, working towards a consensus view. If such a view fails to emerge at this stage, certain outputs will be sent to an external reviewer for their consideration. Following this additional review, the Committee will meet for a second time to decide on the final outputs pool.

In the event that an output is recommended for double weighting, a high quality 'reserve' output will be put forward where possible.

Outputs from former members of staff will be included where appropriate and on a case by case basis, provided that the person concerned meets all of the criteria necessary for inclusion (NB. RVC will not include outputs from former staff that were made compulsorily redundant; this latter aspect will be checked by colleagues in Human Resources). As a courtesy, Human Resources will also contact the person concerned to inform them of the proposed inclusion of their output(s) in the College's submission to REF.

Please note that the College does not intend to institute an appeal process for outputs. Should any current or former member of staff have concerns that the selection process is being run in an unfair manner, they should get in touch with the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation. Should the matter not be resolved to the satisfaction of the individual concerned, they will be directed to the mechanism operated by Research England, details of which are to be confirmed later in 2019.

The process outlined here were subject to informal and formal consultation, up to and including 3 June 2019. Feedback received as part of this consultation was considered by the Research Strategy Committee at its meeting on 9 July 2019 and incorporated into the Code of Practice.

A final decision on the selection of outputs will take place during October 2020, to allow for the inclusion of new outputs as they emerge. Within one week of that meeting, the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation will write to the College Principal to confirm which outputs will be included in the submission to REF 2021.

4.2 Staff, committees and training

Persons / roles to be involved in the selection of outputs are listed at the beginning of this section 4. Each of these persons will receive Equality and Diversity training as described in section 2.3.

4.3 Staff circumstances

The College has a duty of care towards its staff to ensure that they are employed in a safe and supportive environment. Thus, in deciding the shape of the RVC's REF submission, careful consideration will be given to any circumstances that may have influenced the productivity of a given individual, such that they were constrained in their ability to undertake and/or publish research during the REF census period (1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020).

The College intends to apply to the REF's Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) for a reduction in the number of outputs required to be submitted to REF, where a member of staff has voluntarily declared to the College any relevant circumstances which meet the qualifying criteria as stated in the REF Guidance on Submissions:

- paragraphs 146-149 and Annex L – relating to the identification of staff as Early Career Researchers

- paragraphs 160-183 and 186-191 – relating to other personal circumstances such as but not limited to: secondments or career breaks spent outside of higher education; family-related leave; disability; ill health (including poor mental health) or injury; constraints relating to children (pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare matters); other caring responsibilities; gender reassignment; other circumstances relating to the protected characteristics (e.g. as listed in Table I of the Guidance on Codes of Practice dated January 2019); or certain activities protected by employment legislation.

Where circumstances have been declared, the College will make an adjustment to an individual's contribution to the output pool and communicate this to the person concerned via their Head of Department. The size of the adjustment will be calculated based on the total number of outputs the individual has been able to produce over the course of the REF census period, and their particular personal circumstances, as detailed below:

- **Early Career Researchers** (Category A staff who started their career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016): to remove the minimum of one output, the member of staff concerned must have first met the criteria of an ECR on or after 1 November 2017 AND have no eligible outputs. The reductions to outputs, to be applied for each ECR are as follows:

Date on which the individual first met the REF definition of ECR	Output pool may be reduced by up to
Between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017 inclusive	0.5
Between 1 August 2017 and 31 July 2018 inclusive	1
On or after 1 August 2018	1.5

- **Secondments or career breaks** (i.e. absence from work due to secondments or career breaks of at least 12 months outside of the HE sector and in which the individual did not undertake academic research). To remove the minimum of one output the member of staff concerned must have been absent for at least a total of 46 months AND have no eligible outputs. The reductions to outputs, to be applied for each person that has undertaken a secondment or career break, are as follows:

Total months absent between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020 due to secondment or a career break	Output pool may be reduced by up to
At least 12 calendar months but less than 28 months	0.5
At least 28 calendar months but less than 46 months	1
46 calendar months or more	1.5

- **Family-related leave** (includes statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020, regardless of the length of the leave; and additional paternity or adoption leave, or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2020). Shorter periods of such leave can be taken into account if there are additional circumstances equivalent to absence (see below).

To remove the minimum of one output then the person concerned must have had two qualifying periods of family-related leave AND have no eligible outputs.

- **Circumstances equivalent to absence:** include the following:
 - Disability
 - Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions
 - Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare that fall outside of, or justify the reduction of further outputs in addition to, the allowances made above
 - Other caring responsibilities

- Gender reassignment
- Other circumstances relating to the characteristics protected by employment legislation.

We will make a judgement about the effect of such circumstances, including in combination with those above, in terms of the equivalent period of time absent and apply the reductions as set out below. To remove the minimum of one output then the member of staff concerned must have been absent for at least a total of 46 months AND have no eligible outputs. The reduction that may be applied for each staff member's total absence is:

Total months equivalent to absence between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020	Output pool may be reduced by up to
Fewer than 12 calendar months	0
At least 12 calendar months but less than 28 months	0.5
At least 28 calendar months but less than 46 months	1
46 calendar months or more	1.5

- **Combinations of circumstances:** If a member of staff has experienced a combination of different circumstances then these may be accumulated up to a maximum reduction of 1.5 outputs. In accordance with the REF Guidance on Submissions, Annex L paragraph 12, when combining circumstances, only one circumstance will be taken into account for any period of time during which they took place simultaneously.

It should be noted that the College does not expect all staff to contribute equally to the output pool, beyond the minima and maxima specified by the Guidance on Submissions. Final decisions on outputs selected for submission will have no bearing on the individual's subsequent career trajectory within the College.

Where an individual's personal circumstances have had an exceptionally deleterious effect on their research productivity during the census period, such that they were not able to produce a REF-eligible output, the College will make a request for the person concerned to be returned with zero outputs (cf. REF Guidance on Submissions, paras. 160-163).

In order to capture information relevant to such a request, the member of staff concerned should, on a strictly voluntary basis, complete the proforma provided in Appendix G. This should be returned to the Deputy Director of Human Resources by 1 February 2020. The information in the proforma will be used to calculate the level of reduction in outputs to be requested from the EDAP, and not for any other purpose unless with the express written permission of the individual concerned (see also below).

All information submitted using the staff circumstances proforma will be treated confidentially by the Deputy Director of Human Resources (unless exceptionally this information discloses a threat to life or may constitute a significant breach of Health and Safety law). In furtherance of the College's duty of care, members of staff that make a declaration will be offered the opportunity to meet with a member of Human Resources, for a confidential discussion regarding their circumstances. They will also be given details of the College's 'Care First' service – a free, impartial and confidential information and advice helpline, with access to a counselling service.

The Deputy Director of Human Resources will convene a staff circumstances panel in May 2020, to consider all submissions made prior to the March 2020 deadline for notification to EDAP of any requests for a reduction in outputs. The constitution of this panel is detailed in Appendix D2. Thereafter, a further panel meeting will take place in October 2020 to consider any staff circumstances that have arisen since the panel meeting in May 2020.

4.4 Equality impact assessments

RVC anticipates that it will be in a position to return to Unit of Assessment 6 the appropriate number of outputs, with a minimum of 1 output per member of staff (or where staff circumstances apply, and subject to a successful application to EDAP, zero outputs).

When the final selection of outputs has been approved by the Principal (anticipated in late October or early November 2020), an EIA focused on processes leading to the selection of outputs will be carried out by the College. Using the results of this EIA, the Equality and Diversity Manager will create an action plan relating to outputs, that will be used to inform RVC's approach to the REF exercise that follows REF 2021.

Part 5: Appendices A-H

Please see below.

Appendix A: Baseline diversity report in preparation for REF 2021

Table A1: Academic staff, excluding independent research fellows (as at 6 June 2019)

Count of Pay ID				Gender	
Grade	Female	Male	Grand Total	% (Female)	% (Male)
6	6	2	8	75	25
7	45	22	67	67.1	32.8
8	34	32	66	51.5	48.5
9	16	31	47	34	66
Grand Total	101	87	188	53.7	46.3

Count of Pay ID							
Grade	Disability				Grand Total	No (%)	Yes (%)
	0	No	Not Known	Yes			
6		8			8	100	0
7		65		2	67	97	3
8	1	62	3		66	94	0
9		44		3	47	93.6	6.4
Grand Total	1	179	3	5	188	95.2	2.7

Count of Pay ID						
Grade	BAME			Grand Total	BAME (%)	White (%)
	BAME	Not Stated	White			
6			8	8	0	100
7	7		60	67	10.5	89.5
8	17	3	46	66	25.8	69.7
9	6		41	47	12.8	87.2
Grand Total	30	3	155	188	16	82.4

Count of Pay ID											
Grade	Age Band					Grand Total	(%) 21-30	(%) 31-40	(%) 41 -50	(%) 51-60	(%) 61+
	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	61+						
6	2	2	2	2	8	25	25	25	25	0	
7	1	40	15	8	3	1.5	59.7	22.4	11.9	4.5	
8		12	39	14	1	0	18.1	59	2.1	1.5	
9		1	12	23	11	0	21.23	25.5	48.9	23.4	
Grand Total	3	55	68	47	15	188	1.6	29.2	36.2	25	

Table A2: Staff in groups identified in section 2.1.1 (staff to be excluded from REF 2021) at the time of writing – 6 June 2019

Count of Pay ID				Gender																
Grade	Female	Male	Grand Total	% Female	%Male															
6	6	1	7	85.7	14.3															
7	13	4	17	76.5	23.5															
8	2		2	100	0															
9	1		1	100	0															
Grand Total	22	5	27	81.5	18.5															
Count of Pay ID				BAME																
Grade	BAME	Not Stated	White	Grand Total	% BAME	%White														
6			7	7	0	100														
7	2		15	17	11.8	88.2														
8		1	1	2	0	50														
9			1	1	0	100														
Grand Total	2	1	24	27	7.4	88.8														
Count of Pay ID				Disability																
Grade	No	Yes	Grand Total	(%) No	(%) Yes															
6	7		7	100	0															
7	16	1	17	94.1	5.9															
8	2		2	100	0															
9	1		1	100	0															
Grand Total	26	1	27	96.3	3.70%															
Count of Pay ID				Age Band																
Grade	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	Grand Total	(%) 21-30	(%) 31-40	(%) 41-50	(%) 51-60											
6	2	2	2	1	7	28.6	28.6	28.6	14.3											
7		13	2	2	17	0	76.5	11.8	11.8											
8			1	1	2	0	0	50	50											
9				1	1	0	0	0	100											
Grand Total	2	15	5	5	27	7.5	55.5	18.5	18.5											

Appendix B: Membership of the Research Strategy Committee, 2018-19, and details of its responsibilities in relation to REF 2021

Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation (Chair)	Professor Jonathan Elliott
Associate Deans for Research and Innovation	Professor Dirk Werling (R) Professor Liam Good (I)
Heads of Department	Professor Caroline Wheeler-Jones (CBS) Professor Dan Chan (CSS) Professor Ken Smith (PPS)
Other senior academic staff, including Research Group Leaders	Dr Ruby Chang Professor Javier Guitian Dr Nicola Lewis Dr Nicola Menzies-Gow Dr Christine Nicol Professor Richard Piercy Professor Fiona Tomley Professor Kristien Verheyen Professor Dominic Wells Professor Alan Wilson
Head of Knowledge Exchange and Impact	Mr Tas Gohir
Director of Research and Innovation Services	Dr Ray Kent

In attendance

Secretary to the RSC	Mrs Liz Wilkinson
Researcher Association representative	Dr Amanda Gibson

Notes

1. How the Committee was formed, and its representativeness:

The Research Strategy Committee (RSC) is a standing committee of the RVC, consisting of senior academic and professional services staff. It reports to the College Executive Committee. The Terms of Reference for the RSC place on its members the responsibility to guide the College's submission to REF exercises. It is well balanced in terms of gender (9 female members of staff, 11 male members of staff), with this balance being reviewed by the Chair each time one or more members is due to step down.

2. Responsibilities of the Committee in relation to REF:

As noted in the main text (sections 2.12, 3.1.2 and 4), the RSC is the principal decision-making body with respect to the College's policy and procedures relating to the identification of staff with significant responsibility for research, determination of research independence and output selection.

3. Training and information on E&D matters in relation to REF:

All members of the RSC will receive REF-related Equality and Diversity training prior to the end of 2019, with the first session scheduled for 18 September 2019. The content of this training is outlined in sections 2.3 and 3.2.

Appendix C: Departmental Equality and Diversity Champions

Name	Department/Role
Robert Abayasekara	CBS
Donald Palmer	CBS
Caroline Pellet-Many	CBS
Zoe Self Davies	CBS / Post-Doc
Hayley Carne	CSS
Sarah Hellens	CSS
Karen Humm	CSS
Jill Maddison	CSS / EDC Chair
Briana Smith	CSS
Claire Vinten	CSS
Jackie Cardwell	PPS
Sonja Jeckel	PPS
Daniel Ngugi	PPS
Christine Thuramira-McKeever	PPS / Athena SWAN Chair

Key:

CBS – Comparative Biomedical Sciences

CSS – Clinical Science and Services

EDC – Equality and Diversity Committee

PPS – Pathobiology and Population Sciences

Note

The list of E&D Champions is provided for information only. With the exception of Professor Jill Maddison (who will sit on the Research Independence and Staff Circumstances Panels), E&D Champions do not have advisory or decision-making responsibilities in relation to REF.

D1: Membership of the Appeals Panel – Significant Responsibility for Research and Research Independence

Chief Operating Officer (Chair)
Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee
College Secretary
Director of Finance

Mr Ian Darker
Dr Christine Thuranira-McKeever
Mr Matthew Grigson
Mrs Julie Waterfield

D2: Membership of the Staff Circumstances Panel

Deputy Director of Human Resources (Chair)
Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee
College Secretary
Director of Finance
Diversity and Inclusion Manager

Mrs Rebecca Costello
Dr Christine Thuranira-McKeever
Mr Matthew Grigson
Mrs Julie Waterfield
Mrs Ferhat Nazir-Bhatti

Notes

1. How the Panels were formed, and their representativeness:

The Panels have been specially constituted for the purposes of REF 2021. They consist of senior staff who have no involvement in the REF, other than by virtue of being a Panel member. The Panels are reasonably balanced in terms of gender (D1 = 2 females, 2 males; D2 = 4 females, 1 male).

2. Responsibilities of the Panels in relation to REF:

The Panels are decision-making bodies with respect to the College's policy and procedures relating to: (D1) appeals relating to significant responsibility for research, and requests to be considered as an independent researcher; and (D2) the voluntary submission of staff circumstances.

3. Training and information on E&D matters in relation to REF:

All members of the Panels will receive REF-related Equality and Diversity training prior to the end of 2019, with the first session scheduled for 18 September 2019. The content of this training is outlined in sections 2.3 and 3.2.

Appendix E: REF 2021 – Indicative Timetable

RE Deadline	RVC Deadline	Action
	April to June 2019	Draft Code of Practice reviewed by Academic Board REF briefings for staff in Camden and Hawkshead Consultation with trade unions on Code of Practice
Spring / Summer 2019		Invitation to request multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units; beta versions of the submission system available
7 June 2019		Deadline to submit Code of Practice
16 August 2019		Code of Practice – accepted or resubmit
20 September 2019		Deadline to resubmit Code of Practice
Autumn 2019		Pilot of the REF submission system; survey of submissions intentions opens; proposed date for inviting reduction requests for staff circumstances (proposed deadline March 2020)
	October 2019	Selection of outputs for use in the College's (second) mock REF exercise First drafts of Impact Case Studies, Environment narratives and data
	October-November 2019	Internal review of draft Impact Case Studies
	31 October 2019	First deadline to apply to be considered an independent researcher
8 November 2019		Code of Practice – accepted or resubmit
	9 November – 21 December 2019	First bulk outputs uploaded to REF pilot submission system
15 November 2019		Deadline to resubmit Code of Practice
29 November 2019		Final outcome of Code of Practice
December 2019		Survey of submissions intentions complete; deadline for requests for multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units; publication of approved Codes of Practice
	December 2019	Check initially selected outputs for compliance with REF open access policy

RE Deadline	RVC Deadline	Action
	31 December 2019	Mandatory E&D REF related training delivered
	December 2019 to Easter 2020	Staff circumstances process in operation
Early 2020		Formal release of the REF submission systems and accompanying technical guidance; invitation to HEIs to make submissions; invitation to nominate panel members and assessors for the assessment phase; deadline for staff circumstances requests
	February 2020	Initial upload of staff, outputs, environment data Checking of uploaded data begins
	30 April 2020	Second deadline to apply to be considered an independent researcher
April – October 2020		Individual circumstances confirmation and appeals process
	June-July 2020	Second upload of staff, outputs, Environment data Checking of uploaded data continues Confirmation of Impact Case Studies to be used
Mid 2020		Appointment of additional panel members
31 July 2020		Census date for staff; end of assessment period (for research impacts, the research environment, and data about research income and research doctoral degrees awarded)
	August to early September 2020	Window to lodge appeals against independence ruling
	End September 2020	Appeals heard Final upload of staff, outputs and environment data Checking of uploaded data continues
	1 October 2020	Final date to apply to be considered an independent researcher
	October 2020	Final versions: • Impact Case Studies • Environment statements • Environment data • Selection of staff and outputs (including OA eligibility check on any new outputs)

RE Deadline	RVC Deadline	Action
	Mid October 2020	Final submission available for College review
	Early November 2020	Final submission available for approval by College Principal
	15 November 2020	Target submission date
27 November 2020		Closing date for submissions
31 December 2020		End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies)
February 2021		Impact evidence returned to Research England
Throughout 2021		Panels assess submissions
December 2021		Publication of outcomes
Spring 2022		Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles

Appendix F: Independent researcher template

Please complete this form if you believe you fulfil the criteria for being considered as an independent researcher for REF purposes (see Part 3 of this Code of Practice).

Name	
Department	
Line Manager / PI	
Contract end-date	

Evidence: Please mark with an 'X' the indicator(s) of independence that you fulfil and provide an explanation of how you fulfil it (maximum of 200 words per box). All statements should be factual and verifiable. For example, if you were named as an investigator on a grant please include the unique identifier from the funder (grant reference) and a link which confirms the details of the award (e.g. Gateway to Research link for UK Research Council awards). Please use the box labelled 'other' if there are additional criteria you would like the panel to take into account. This information must be factual and verifiable, and each separate piece of evidence is limited to a single 200-word statement.

Leading or acting as Principal Investigator or equivalent on an externally-funded research project		
Holding an independently-won, competitively-awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement but where the specific fellowship does not feature on the "list of independent research fellowships" provided by Research England (https://www.ref.ac.uk/guidance/additional-guidance/)		
Leading a research group or substantial or specialised work package		
Other		

Statement from Line Manager/PI: Please ask your Line Manager/PI to provide any additional factual and verifiable information about your research independence; and sign below to confirm that they agree that you have attained research independence (Max. 200 words).

--

Signed by Line Manager: Dated:

Name (in capitals):

Signed by Researcher: Dated:

Appendix G: Staff individual circumstances proforma

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstance (see section 4.3) which you are willing to declare.

Please provide requested information in the relevant box(es):

Circumstance	Time period affected
Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016). <i>Date you became an early career researcher.</i>	Click here to enter a date.
Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector. <i>Dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
Family-related leave: • statutory maternity leave • statutory adoption leave • Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more. <i>For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.</i>	Click here to enter dates and durations.
Disability (including chronic conditions) <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Mental health condition <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Ill health or injury <i>To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance <i>To include: Type of leave taken and brief description of additional constraints, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when</i>	Click here to enter text.

unable to research productively. Total duration in months.	
Caring responsibilities <i>To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Gender reassignment <i>To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement. <i>To include: brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.</i>	Click here to enter text.

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

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

I agree ☐

Name: Print name here

Signed: Sign or initial here

Date: Insert date here

☐ I give my permission for a member of HR to contact me to discuss my circumstances, and my requirements in relation this these.

☐ I give my permission for the details of this form to be passed on to the relevant contact within my department/faculty/centre. (Please note, if you do not give permission your department may be unable to adjust expectations and put in place appropriate support for you).

I would like to be contacted by:

Email ☐ Insert email address

Phone ☐ Insert contact telephone number

Appendix H: Letter confirming staff agreement to the processes established by the College to identify staff with significant responsibility for research.



Human Resources
The Royal Veterinary College
Hawkshead Lane
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 7TA

Tel: 01707 666400
Email: rcostello@rvc.ac.uk

16 September 2019

Dr Steven Hill
Research England

Dear Dr Hill,

Re: Research Excellence Framework 2021: Codes of Practice Assessment Outcome

Thank you for your letter dated 16 August 2019, requesting amendment to the Code of Practice prepared by The Royal Veterinary College.

You asked us to confirm when staff agreement had been received for the processes established to identify staff with significant responsibility for research, the relevant date being 4 June 2019 (when representatives of the campus trade unions were invited to a meeting to discuss the Code).

The Code of Practice has been amended to include this date. To confirm the above we have asked our union representatives to be co-signatories to this letter (please see below).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Costello'.

Rebecca Costello
Deputy Director of Human Resources

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Kenny'.
..... [on behalf of UCU]A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Adh'.
17-9-19 M. Adh..... [on behalf of UNISON]A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Singh'.
17-9-2019 S. Singh..... [on behalf of UNITE]