



# REF 2029 Code of Practice

**INSTITUTION NAME: UNIVERSITY OF HULL**  
**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 15 MAY 2026**

**REF 2029**  
Research Excellence Framework



**UNIVERSITY  
of HULL**



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## PART 1

# Introduction

The University of Hull (hereinafter ‘Hull’ or the ‘University’) has produced this Code of Practice (CoP) to fulfil a requirement of Research England in relation to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029, as specified in Section 8 of the guidance for the REF 2029 CoP dated 16 January 2025 and updated 22 January 2026.

The University is a broad-based academic institution that consists of three Faculties – Arts, Social Sciences and Education; Health Sciences; Science and Engineering – and Hull University Business School (HUBS). Reflecting this broad base, in REF 2029 Hull intends to make submissions to 14 different Units of Assessment (UoA), i.e., 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28 and 33. This CoP will apply to all these UoA.

Research, alongside teaching, enterprise, knowledge exchange and clinical work, is an integral part of Hull’s mission and institutional strategy. This mission is described in the University’s [Strategy 2030](#) document ([Our Mission, Vision and Values | University of Hull](#)) and in relation to research, in its [Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2025-2030](#) which replaces a previous strategy covering the period 2021-2024.

This CoP supports the principles of:

- **Robustness** – by describing University policies and processes designed to ensure that all staff contracts identified as contributing to the volume measure reliably reflect the responsibilities of the members of staff concerned.
- **Transparency** – by noting a) how the CoP will be communicated to staff at Hull, including those based outside the UK or on leave of absence; b) how it will be made accessible and communicated through internal communiques, web pages, consultation events and other means; and c) how and when the CoP will be published and made available on the University’s website.
- **Equality** – by explaining how the processes set out in this CoP promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and ensure that decisions relating to REF are fair, consistent and transparent. In line with the [University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-30](#), these processes seek to identify and mitigate potential barriers, recognise the diversity of staff circumstances, and promote equitable opportunity for all staff. This includes staff who work part-time, flexibly or on fixed-term contracts, in accordance with the [Part-time Workers Regulations \(2000\)](#) and [Fixed-Term Workers Regulations \(2002\)](#).

# 1.1 Development of the CoP

## 1.1.1 Actions underpinning the CoP

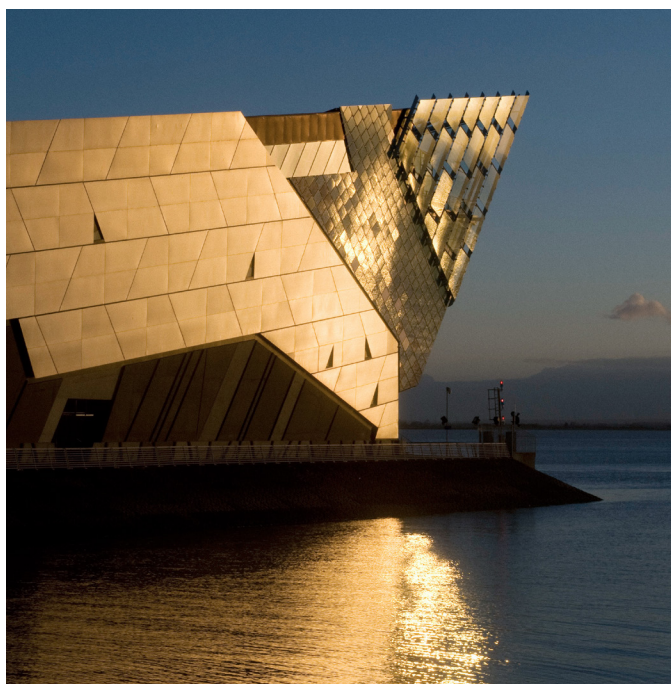
Initial drafts of the CoP were prepared in May 2025 and July 2025. Following the REF 2029 pause in summer-winter 2025, the current version was drafted in February 2026 and emailed to staff prior to a consultation exercise in March 2026. Where a member of staff is on leave of absence, a paper copy of the draft CoP was sent by registered post to their home address or other address, as appropriate.

The REF Manager will continue to liaise with employees who are absent long-term, either through direct contact or via the individual's Head of Institute / School, on an ongoing basis, to ensure these employees are kept informed of developments regarding the CoP.

In parallel with the consultation, colleagues in the People and Organisational Development directorate, working with the REF Manager and senior managers in the University's three Faculties and HUBS will be charged with checking and confirming that staff contracts that contribute to the volume measure in the REF 2029 submission have been placed in the correct academic pathway with regard to their responsibilities at the University (viz., Teaching and Research, Research only).

At the consultation events in March 2026 (one per faculty, one for HUBS) and through engagement with trade unions, staff had the opportunity to comment on the draft CoP (two separate consultation meetings were undertaken with the campus unions). All feedback was logged such that it could be considered and addressed in later iterations of the CoP. Consultation feedback was received verbally at the meetings, via the REF email address, or via the [Academy of Research and Knowledge Exchange \(ARKE\) staff portal](#). Outside of the consultation events, if any member of staff has questions about the CoP, they can contact the REF Manager ([REF@hull.ac.uk](mailto:REF@hull.ac.uk)) in the first instance.

Following the CoP consultation events and prior to the CoP submission deadline in mid-May 2026, a revised version that incorporates feedback from the consultation events and any other feedback received was presented to the University REF Steering Group (see below for details); and thereafter, to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, University Leadership Team, Senate, and ultimately Council, with acknowledgement that it is still awaiting final Research England approval. A final draft was prepared by 30 April 2026. The submitted version of the CoP will be available on the University's website and, post-August 2026, will be replaced by the Research England-approved version.



## 1.1.2 Governance Structure for REF 2029

The **University REF Steering Group** co-ordinates all aspects of the REF 2029 submission, including:

- Advising the University Leadership Team on strategic issues and direction.
- Ensuring consistency of approach across all faculties / HUBS and professional service areas.
- Advising UoA Co-ordinators and Academic Units on operational and strategic issues.
- Evaluating proposals concerning the UoAs to which the University will make a submission.
- Recommendations for the determination of research independence.
- Co-ordination of the required policies and documentation.
- Internal assessment of outputs, impact case studies (and the use of external advice).
- Collecting, checking and validating data.
- Preparation of the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) institutional and unit-level statements.
- Oversight of the training and development for all staff with regards to REF, equality, diversity and inclusion training and evaluation of this training for those working on outputs and impact.

Following discussions with the Faculties, the University REF Steering Group will make recommendations to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, University Leadership Team and Senate on the structure and content of the REF 2029 submission.

The members of the University REF Steering Group are:

- Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise (Chair)
- Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Culture
- Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise (ADRE) for each faculty / Hull University Business School
- Executive Director of Research, Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation
- Director of Research Services
- Representative of People and Organisational Development
- In attendance:
- REF Manager
- Other Professional Services colleagues as required, e.g., technicians, staff with Worktribe (research management system) expertise, or colleagues from the University Library

**Faculty REF Steering Groups and the HUBS REF Steering Group** are advisory committees that make recommendations to the University REF Steering Group on which UoAs to submit to, including working across UoAs to capture interdisciplinary research. Membership includes the Faculty Dean, ADRE, Directors of Research in Schools, UoA Co-ordinators, UoA Impact Champions, and other colleagues co-opted (such as Impact Case Study Leads) as and when required. Professional Services colleagues invited to attend include the Director of Research Services, the Head of Research Excellence, Governance and Impact, and the REF Manager. The ADRE chairs the Group. The steering groups also have either an EDI Lead, or one member of the group is designated the EDI Lead.

**UoA Co-ordinators**, through Faculty REF Steering groups, are responsible for:

- Confirming research independence of staff (Part 3).
- Confirming quantitative data for the submission.
- Selecting research outputs for return in the UoA.
- Selecting and supporting REF Impact Case Studies.
- Preparing the SPRE Unit-level statement.

If anyone is concerned that the REF submission process for their UoA is not being run in accordance with the CoP, they should contact the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise ([pvc-re@hull.ac.uk](mailto:pvc-re@hull.ac.uk)). Should concerns persist, the matter should be raised with the Director of Organisational Development ([HR@hull.ac.uk](mailto:HR@hull.ac.uk)).

## 1.2 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

### 1.2.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion

The University recognises the importance of attracting, supporting and retaining a diverse community of staff which strengthens the quality and impact of its teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities. The University is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and to creating an inclusive environment in which all staff can contribute and thrive. Hull's approach to EDI is set out in the University's [EDI strategy 2025-30](#), which replaces the earlier [Social Justice and Inclusion Strategy \(2021\)](#). The strategy focuses on:

- Leadership and Accountability
- Data and Reporting
- Communication and Engagement
- Learning and Development

The strategy is supported by the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2025 - 2028 \[v3\]](#), which is reviewed every three years.

All staff and committee members involved in preparing the University's REF submission will receive REF-specific training in EDI, delivered by the EDI Team within People and Organisational Development. This training is intended to support fair, consistent and transparent decision making throughout the REF process.

Prior to submission of the CoP, the University will undertake one or more Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) at institutional level to identify whether any groups or individuals with protected characteristics could be



adversely affected by the processes supporting the REF 2029 submission. Where appropriate, additional EIAs may be undertaken at UoA level if there is evidence that groups or individuals may be disadvantaged.

#### *Update on EDI actions since REF 2021*

Since 2021, the University has further strengthened its institutional commitment to EDI. Key developments include:

- Establishment of specialist roles within the People and Organisational Development directorate to support and oversee the University's EDI transformation.
- Introduction of mandatory EIAs for organisational proposals to ensure that equality implications are considered during decision making. These reviews enable all decisions to be considered more holistically and with clear oversight of the impact over the full range of protected characteristics.
- Creation of an EDI Governance Board chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, bringing together representatives from across the University, including faculty EDI committees, Professional Services EDI groups, staff networks, AFC working group, White Ribbon working group, Accessibility working group, EDI in Research sub-committee, and the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team.
- Re-establishment of the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team in 2024 and implementation of an action plan supporting a Silver award submission in 2027 (the University currently holds a Bronze award).
- *Gender Pay Gap* – the difference in average earnings between men and women across the organisation was 14% in favour of male employees (2025), down from 22% in 2018. Actions to close the gap still further include building development pathways for technical roles, improved mobility for women in lower graded roles and developing female academics through leadership schemes such as the Aurora and Women Accelerator programmes.
- *EDI Transparency Report (annual)* – includes demographic data for staff and students and highlights some of the vital work that has taken place over the past year within the University to grow the EDI agenda and promote an inclusive culture.
- *Staff networks* – include Neurodiversity, Women's Empowerment, Global Majority, LGBTQIA+, Disability Staff, Parents & Carers, and Inclusivity & Allyship. Each group offers a safe and supportive space for staff to connect, share lived experiences and contribute to positive change, and feed in the challenges and discuss solutions at the EDI Governance board.
- *Leadership programmes* – **Building Brilliant Leaders**, an inclusive leadership programme was established in 2024. The cohort of **Advance HE Aurora** alumni at Hull now comprises 140 women (2026), and 10 women are participating in the spring 2026 cohort.

The University successfully renewed its Bronze Athena SWAN status in 2022, reporting gender equality progress to Advance HE and Horizon Europe. It holds Disability

Confident Employer and Mindful Employer Charter status, publishes an Annual Statement of Research Integrity, and submits an annual report to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, whose secretariat is hosted at Nottingham Trent University.

All staff received EDI training, with 96.2% of managers of researchers trained.

### **1.2.2 People and research environment, including responsible research assessment**

Hull has had the HR Excellence in Research award since 2012, and since 2019 has been a signatory of the Concordat to Support Researcher Development. Both aspects are governed by the **Concordat Steering Group (CSG)** that is chaired by the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research Culture. Each has an action plan overseen by the steering group, where they receive, and discuss, quarterly reports from the concordat lead relating to implementation, delivery, and impact of the action plan. The CSG's Terms of Reference ensure membership includes the ADRE for each faculty, colleagues from the central EDI team and the Doctoral College, researcher representatives at different career stages including Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRAs) and those undertaking doctoral study, and the leads from all seven concordats to which Hull is a signatory.

In addition to these concordats Hull has produced a **Research Culture Action Plan (2024-30)** designed to empower researchers at every stage of their careers. This plan was developed through survey and focus groups and has four components:

- *Researcher and career development* – Offering resources to enable professional growth, such as the THRIVE early-career researcher programme, and the Future Leaders programme for emerging research leaders.
- *Time for research* – Ensuring researchers have the dedicated space to innovate.
- *Collaboration across disciplines* – Building a collaborative culture for impactful, interdisciplinary work (e.g. the Developing Policy-engaged Researchers programme, launched in 2025).
- *Inclusive and responsible practices* – Promoting integrity, openness, and inclusivity, with a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. This covers training in responsible research practices including the fair and transparent assessment of research; data management; and open research.

Support for implementation of the Action Plan is provided by the **Academy for Research and Knowledge Exchange (ARKE)**, hosted by the Directorate of Research, Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation. The ARKE offers customised training, co-ordinates mentoring for researchers, runs support networks, and provides resources for researchers (e.g. workshops for newly promoted colleagues). Oversight of the implementation is provided by the Concordat Steering Group.



## PART 2

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

## 2.1 Policies and Procedures

### 2.1.1 Criteria for SRR

The shift from REF 2021 of 'person-entity' and individual based volume measure to the REF 2029 'contract-entity' volume measure (based on an ongoing criterion and directly inputted into the HESA return, to minimise burden) requires some changes to the concept of what identification of SRR and research independence means. The FTE from contracts is the driver for the size of the UoA submission, and is a proxy measure for research capacity only.

The University will submit 100% of its eligible staff contracts with SRR, based on the HESA definition, i.e., *'those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of their job role.'* The principles noted below will apply across all UoAs to which the University will make a REF 2029 return.

All academic staff at Hull have a single contract of employment and pathways that are not contractual. The employment function of these staff is governed by the University's **Academic Careers**

**Framework** and their academic pathway:

- All staff with an academic contract on the Teaching and Research pathway Grade 7 and above are identified on the HESA staff record as **'Teaching and Research'** (ACEMPFUN 3) and all have SRR, irrespective of any other criteria.
- Staff with an academic contract on the **'Research-Only'** pathway (ACEMPFUN 2) at Grade 7 and above engage in research but may not in all cases demonstrate research independence (see Part 3). Only those who demonstrate research independence will be considered as having significant responsibility for research.
- Staff on the **'Leadership'** pathway have an academic contract and can be either research- or scholarship orientated. Staff in the former group have SRR; those in the latter do not.

Staff promoted from the Teaching and Research pathway to the Leadership pathway during the REF period, and who retain research-supported time, will retain their SRR against their contract and be marked in the HESA return (REFQUALCON).

For staff recruited onto the Leadership pathway from outside the University, we will discuss at

appointment whether they wish to have supported time for research; if so, this will be marked on the HESA return (REFQUALCON).

Academic staff in senior leadership positions (e.g. Deans and Executive Deans) may be research active. They will retain their SRR against their contract and be marked in the HESA return (REFQUALCON).

All contracts of 0.2 FTE or greater, who have a contract of employment for 12 months or more and who are on the HESA return on the HESA submission dates (31 July 2026 and 31 July 2027), will be included as having SRR, and for research only staff when their research independence is confirmed. Staff undertaking a PhD (or equivalent) whilst working will not be considered as having research independence regardless of other criteria.

Individuals on the **‘Teaching and Scholarship’** pathway (or Teaching-only Fellows) will not be included as having SRR for the volume measure and will not have their pedagogical research contributions considered for REF 2029, unless they move to the **‘Teaching and Research’** pathway. This is in accordance with official REF 2029 guidance. In line with Hull’s commitment to transparency and inclusivity, staff can check their contract pathway on the HR system (Workday). Staff who believe their information is incorrect can undertake a People Services Enquiry via [ServiceNow](#).

## 2.1.2 Decision making and communication

The criteria outlined in Section 2.1.1 have been developed in consultation with staff and trade unions (viz., UCU, UNISON, UNITE) and communicated following the processes and procedures described in Section 1.1.

## 2.1.3 Different processes for different UoAs

Not applicable.

# 2.2 Staff, Committees and Training

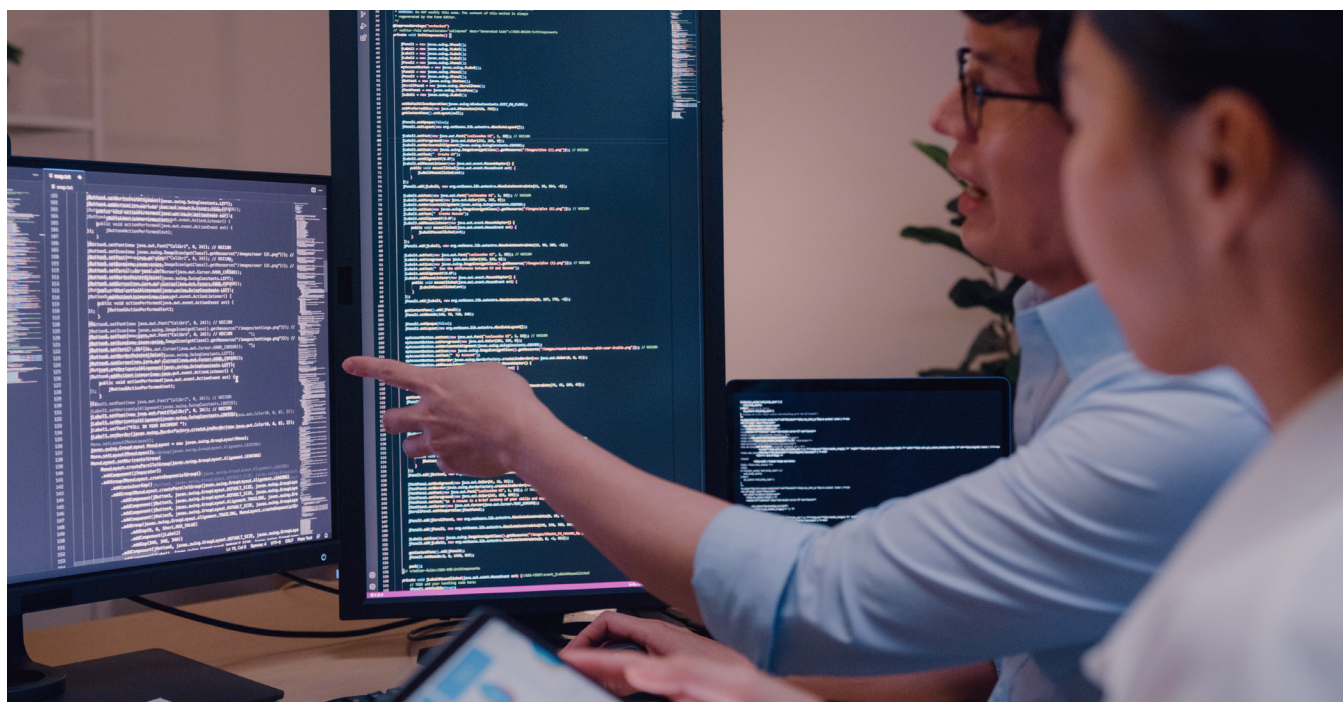
## 2.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Information concerning the roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups in relation to REF 2029 can be found in Section 1.1.1.

## 2.2.2 Training

All staff involved in preparations for REF 2029 have been encouraged to attend workshops and briefings hosted by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, Director of Research Services and/or the REF Manager. These activities have covered every element of REF 2029, including the draft CoP, as well as the University’s administrative processes and procedures relating to the REF 2029 submission (see Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2). To aid those unable to attend, presentations and materials were circulated via email and uploaded to the University’s REF page on the ARKE SharePoint.

As noted in Section 1.2.1, all staff with decision-making responsibilities in REF 2029 will receive REF-specific training in EDI.



## 2.2.3 Appeals

Members of staff can bring appeals against any part of the REF 2029 process, apart from the decision on whether to return an output or not (this is because this decision must take account of the requirement in REF 2029 to ensure that submitted outputs are representative of the wider portfolio of research conducted in a particular UoA over the time-limited period for REF).

To ensure all appeals are concluded before the REF submission, we will set a deadline of 31 March 2028, beyond which time no further appeals will be considered.

Permissible grounds for appealing a decision reached by a Faculty/HUBS REF Steering Group, including with regards to research independence (see Part 3), include:

- Where it can be demonstrated that a process or procedure detailed in this CoP has not been followed correctly.
- Where a decision by a Faculty REF Steering Group can be demonstrated to have been taken without the availability of full information that they could reasonably have been expected to consider in reaching that decision.
- Where circumstances have occurred that fall outside the grounds listed above but demonstrate that the decision reached by the Faculty REF Steering Group is not consistent with the key REF 2029 principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity.

An appeal should be made by letter and sent to the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise ([pvc-re@hull.ac.uk](mailto:pvc-re@hull.ac.uk)), who will convene a **REF Appeals Committee** (see below).

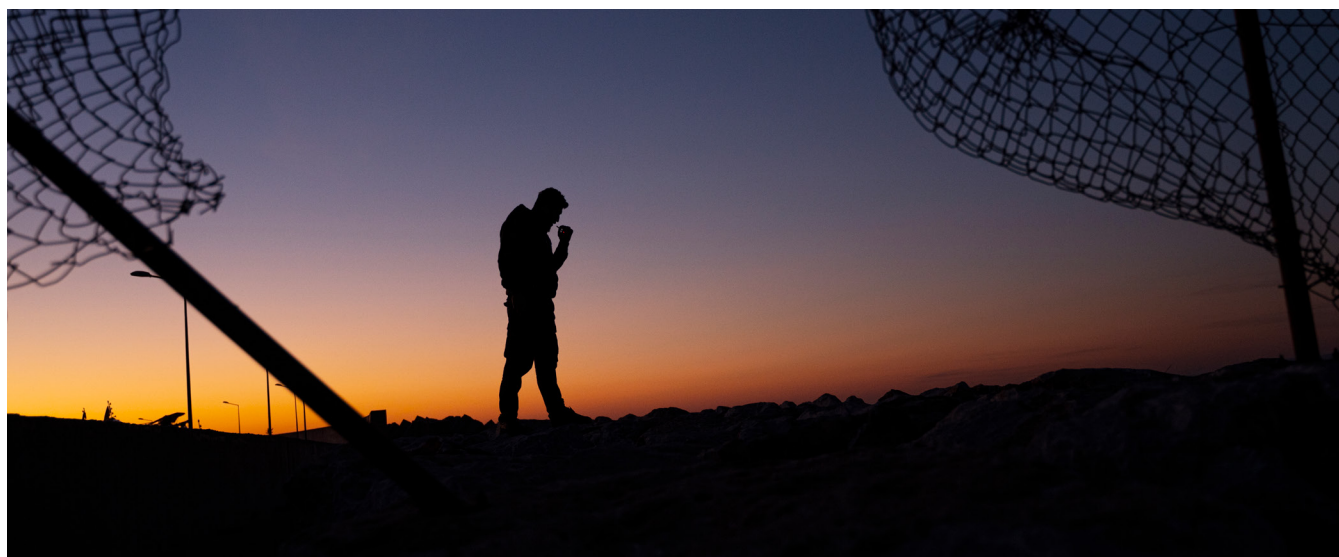
- The letter should state clearly the grounds of the appeal, which will be checked by the Head of Research Excellence, Governance and Impact to confirm it falls within the scope of the CoP.

- The letter will be acknowledged by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise (or in their absence, the Associate PVC for Research Culture) normally within 10 working days of receipt. A REF Appeals Committee meeting will then be organised to consider the appeal.
- The REF Appeals Committee will consist of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (or PVC Education), University Secretary (or proxy), one Executive Dean (from a different faculty to that of the person requesting the review), and a representative of People and Organisational Development. A member of the EDI Team and the Director of Research Services will attend the panel as advisers. All members of the Committee will be independent of the original decision.
- In the event of a conflict of interest (e.g. an appeal is in relation to a member of the REF Appeals Committee) an alternative, equivalent member of the University's Leadership Team will participate in their stead.

The decision of the Appeals Committee will be conveyed in writing to the Chair of the relevant Faculty REF Steering Group and to the appellant normally within 10 working days of the meeting at which the appeal is heard. The decision of the Committee will be final, and no further correspondence will be entered into, i.e., there will not be an opportunity to resubmit concerns through the University's Resolution Procedure.

## 2.2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

In setting out the University's policies and procedures for SRR in REF 2029, we will undertake an EIA to establish whether any individual or group with a protected characteristic has been or could be negatively affected because of these policies and procedures. An EIA will be conducted by the Director of Research Services with input from the Professional Services EDI team, prior to the HESA census date each year (31 July).





## PART 3

# Determining Research Independence

## 3.1 Policies and Procedures

**As detailed in section 2.1, staff on the Teaching and Research pathway or the leadership pathway are assumed to have research independence. Therefore, the criteria below do not apply to these staff.**

Following the Research England guidance for staff on 'Research-Only' contracts, for those contracts to be eligible to be included in the volume measure for submission to the REF, staff must be working as an independent researcher. For the purposes of REF 2029, **an independent researcher is defined as an individual who undertakes self-directed research** as opposed to solely undertaking research under direction as part of others' research programmes. It should be re-iterated that these processes are just for the volume measure for REF 2029 and all staff regardless of contract type who have research expectations can have their work considered for submission to REF 2029.

The University will use the broad indicators of research independence as published in the REF 2029 Volume Measure Guidance (January 2025) to determine if Research-Only staff are research independent – see Section 3.1.1.

## 3.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

The University employs staff on Research-Only contracts at a range of career levels and job descriptions (including Knowledge Exchange Fellows). Some individuals have a job title of "Research Assistant" but this is not definitive of their status as independent researchers. The University will therefore undertake to evaluate all staff with research contracts, "Research-Only" or "Research Assistant" flags on the HESA record, who are Grade 7 or above, or who are Project Lead or Co-Lead on an externally funded research award (grant or contract). All research-only staff grade 7 or above will be informed of the need to show research independence.

Note that Research-Only staff appointed at Grade 9 or above (equivalent to Principal Research Associate or Senior Lecturer on Hull's Teaching and Research pathway) will automatically be considered independent, as this is part of the core criteria for this grade within the Academic Careers Framework. If a Research-Only staff member was returned as part of the REF 2021 volume measure at the University of Hull they will continue to be classified as research independent.

The **main indicators for research independence** are as follows:



- Hold (or held) an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence. Research England has provided guidance ([list of eligible research fellowships](#)), but this list is not exhaustive and due consideration of all fellowships will be undertaken.
- Lead a research group, research centre, or have a substantial research leadership role.
- Act as Project Lead or equivalent on an externally funded research project. To meet the criteria of research independence, the University will normally expect the project to extend over several months and for the individual concerned to be responsible for the overall direction of the research, management of the budget, and delivery (or oversight) of project outputs.
- Lead a discrete and substantial work package of an externally funded research project, which is equivalent to a Project Lead role on a distinct grant.
- Lead a distinct specialist area within a wider research area.

For UoAs that fall under **Main Panel C (Social Sciences) and Main Panel D (Arts and Humanities)** additional criteria indicate research independence for their disciplines, i.e.,

- Be named as a Co-Lead on an externally funded research award, or
- Have significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research.

In addition to the above criteria and in accordance with the principle of inclusivity, the University will also consider appointment as a primary PhD supervisor to be an indicator of research independence.

Staff will not be viewed as having research independence if they are:

- Undertaking a PhD (or equivalent) whilst working;
- An early-career fellow, e.g., Marie Curie early-stage researcher; or
- A Knowledge Transfer Partnership Associate.

Note: Being named as an author or co-author on a research output(s) is not of itself grounds for claiming research independence.

### 3.1.2 Decision making and Communication

To ensure the fair, consistent and transparent application of the criteria listed in Section 3.1.1, Faculty REF Steering Groups will follow this process:

1. Lists of Research-Only staff on Band 7 and above, derived from HESA returns (including staff members absent through sickness), will be supplied to Faculty REF Steering Groups for each relevant UoA.
2. Equality Impact Assessments of criteria used to establish research independence will be conducted using HR data (based on the initial and subsequent lists).
3. UoA Co-ordinators will work with ADREs, making use of research grants and contracts data from Worktribe to determine research independence in accordance with the criteria listed in Section 3.1.1. Research independence will be ascertained on a provisional basis.
4. Faculty REF Steering Groups will review staff lists, without any personal data. The Faculty REF Steering Group has an EDI designated lead who will be present during the process to determine research independence. All decisions will be minuted.

The process will be conducted annually (spring 2026 onwards), and at the appointment for new starters.

Research-Only staff will be notified of their eligibility for the volume measure by their UoA Co-ordinator. The notification will include the eligibility criteria and an explanation of the individual's right to request that the Faculty REF Steering Group review its decision. Reviews are likely to fall within criteria of specialist expertise or significant input into design etc., which will be difficult to ascertain from existing records.

The notification will reinforce the information that all outputs, impact and contribution to the research environment is submittable to REF 2029 regardless of the research independence decision, which is purely about the contract of employment for the volume measure (FTE).

Once a contract has been identified as research independent it will persist without revision, unless requested by the staff member.

Where a review is requested by a member of staff of a decision taken by a Faculty REF Steering Group, this process will be followed:

1. Members of staff may provide any additional information, referenced against the criteria for REF research independence, to their Faculty REF Steering Group or directly to their ADRE.
2. The Chair of the Faculty REF Steering Group will acknowledge receipt of the request within 10 working days and convene a meeting as soon as is reasonably practicable.

3. The Chair (ADRE) will be responsible for ensuring that before the meeting, the Steering Group receives all the information that the Chair considers necessary to support the review.

4. The Faculty REF Steering Group will review the documentation and make the final decision. The decision will be communicated to the member of staff who requested the review, in writing within 10 working days of the meeting at which the review is considered. This communication will include information about the appeals mechanism, which will follow the process described in Part 2, Section 2.2.3.

## 3.2 Staff, Committees and Training

### 3.2.1 to 3.2.3 Details as for Section 2.2.1 to 2.2.3.

### 3.2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

In setting out the University's policies and procedures for establishing research independence in REF 2029, we will undertake an EIA to establish whether any individual or group with a protected characteristic has been or could be negatively affected because of these policies and procedures. An EIA will be conducted by the Director of Research Services, prior to the HESA census date each year (31 July).





## PART 4

# Allocating Contracts to UoAs

### 4.1 Policies and Procedures

#### 4.1.1 Criteria and Evidence

As per REF 2029 guidance, each eligible staff contract should be linked to the UoA to which it is principally associated.

The discipline-based criteria for each UoA sub-panel have not been published at the time of submission of this Code of Practice. Therefore, for the purposes of the 2026 HESA staff census, the University will use the discipline-based criteria for REF 2021 to map eligible staff contracts against UoAs. For the 2027 HESA staff census, discipline-based criteria for REF 2029 will be used to map eligible staff contracts against UoAs. Thus, it is possible that the UoA assignment for individual staff may change between these two returns.

The allocation must be underpinned by reasonable rationale, and institutions are required to outline the criteria, supporting evidence and decision-making processes used to allocate contract to UoAs.

It is important to note, allocating a staff contract to a particular UoA is solely to calculate the FTE volume of the UoA. It does not determine, restrict or require the submission of an individual's research outputs to the same UoA. Research outputs submission

will be guided by the disciplinary alignment of each output, detailed in Part 5. Schools and Institutes do not map uniformly to REF UoAs. HESA cost centres are also not always clear in terms of which REF UoA to map to. Where a HESA cost centre maps to a single UoA (e.g. Engineering), all staff in that cost centre will be allocated to that UoA. Where it is not straightforward to map staff contracts using the HESA cost centre, a link will be made to the UoA with which the person's research is most closely associated.

Staff who work in disciplines that Hull will not submit to REF 2029 (e.g. Philosophy) will have their research mapped to the most appropriate UoA, based on the research theme with which they are most closely associated.

HESA cost centres are School / Institute not individual discipline based, so the principles here will be followed for provisional alignment, but academic judgement of disciplinary fit and optimal presentation of research excellence will be used for final UoA alignment. The process will be overseen by the UoA Co-ordinators and the REF Steering Groups. To maintain the principle of decoupling of individuals from the REF submission staff will not be routinely told of their UoA assignments. However, this information can be provided on request via the Faculty or HUBS ADRE or the REF Manager ([REF@hull.ac.uk](mailto:REF@hull.ac.uk)), and can be appealed using the processes determined in Part 2.

## 4.1.2 Decision Making and Communication

In April-May 2026, the REF Manager and colleagues from People and Organisational Development will conduct a mapping exercise of eligible staff contracts against UoAs. The Director of Research Services will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (see Section 4.2).

The Chairs of Faculty/HUBS REF Steering Groups are responsible for advising the University REF Steering Group of staff contract FTE to UoAs. This process is determined by:

1. Taking their discipline as expressed by their School/ Institute.
2. Identifying the most appropriate UoA for that cost centre.
3. Where cost centres do not match with UoA descriptors, their FTE will be mapped to the most appropriate UoA for their most common research undertaking.
  - a. Research undertaking will be determined research activity including research outputs, internal and external thematic research contribution and strategic fit. Research quality or productivity indicators will not be used. But keywords determined by using publication and other databases may provide additional context.
  - b. Consistency with the wider context: location within the organisational structure (including School / Institute / Centre membership), location of PGR students, management of external grant income and access to resources and facilities.
4. Mapping of staff will be undertaken annually each Spring, or at appointment to the University.

In May-June 2026, Faculty REF Steering Groups (cf. Section 1.1) will be provided with data for eligible staff contracts that fall within UoAs to which it is proposed

the faculty will make a return. The Steering Groups will sense-check the mapping and highlight any errors or omissions, and report these to the ADREs for discussion at the University REF Steering Group. Following this, changes will be made to the HESA staff record, as necessary. Where a member of staff has multiple contracts, each maybe placed within different UoAs if appropriate.

The outcome of this exercise will be communicated by the REF Manager to the Chair of the University REF Steering Group. A further sense-check may be performed by the Chair (or another member of this group, as appropriate). This will take place in May-June 2026.

In Spring 2027, in preparation for the 2027 HESA staff census, this process will be repeated. If a member of staff is identified as being in the 'wrong' UoA based on the discipline-based criteria to be released in Autumn 2026, the record will be changed.

## 4.2 Staff, Committees and Training

### 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 As per Sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.3.

### 4.2.4 Equality Impact Assessment

In setting out the University's policies and procedures for allocating contracts to UoAs in REF 2029, we will undertake an EIA to establish whether any individual or group with a protected characteristic has been or could be negatively affected because of these policies and procedures. An EIA will be conducted by the Director of Research Services, drawing upon advice from the EDI Team, prior to the HESA census date each year (31 July).





## PART 5

# Selecting outputs

The University of Hull uses the Worktribe research management system to log all outputs for all academic staff, irrespective of REF criteria of the staff contracts. The Worktribe REF module will be used to collate all the outputs and complete the submission, and eligibility for REF return of outputs is detailed in this module. Due to the different sizes of UoAs across the organisation, each UoA Co-ordinator undertakes their management of outputs and scoring differently. However, all scores are collated and submitted from within Worktribe.

## 5.1 Policies and Procedures

### 5.1.1 Identifying substantive links to outputs

In the REF 2029 guidance, eligible employment relationships are defined as:

- a. A **minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment** (as defined by Section 210 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996) **by the HEI making the submission**. Continuous employment may be demonstrated by a sequence of consecutive contracts;

AND

- b. The **role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity** (in line with

the REF definition of research) within the role. 'Research activity' is not restricted by profession and an eligible employment relationship may be with any staff member who undertakes, enables or supports research.

An eligible employment relationship must have occurred, either:

At the point at which the submitted output was first made publicly available,

- An output may first be made publicly available at any point during the eligible employment relationship.

OR

Before the submitted output was first made publicly available, when the research resulting in the output was carried out.

- For most outputs this time-limited period will have occurred between 01 January 2021 to 31 December 2028.
- This time-limited period may be extended prior to January 2021 providing that the output was published during the REF publication period.
- The time-limited period will be longer for long-form or extended process outputs (see below).

Eligible employment relationships that occur *after* an output was first made publicly available cannot constitute a substantive link. Essentially this removes the aspect of portability that was in REF 2021. Within the guidance an exception was allowed for specific outputs that can be considered long-form or extended process, details below.

#### *Long-form / extended process exception*

REF guidance has provided a limited exception to the removal of portability for long-form or extended process outputs. Where a researcher is employed on a contract that constitutes an eligible employment relationship at Hull at the point a REF submission is made, long-form and/or extended process outputs published before this contract commenced will be eligible for submission if:

- They were first made publicly available during the REF period (1 January 2021 to 31 December 2028); and
- The staff member's eligible employment relationship with the submitting institution commenced within five years of the output first being made publicly available.

#### *Effect of type of employment contract on eligibility of outputs*

As noted in Part 2, the University of Hull has a single academic employment contract for all academic staff. In the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 July 2025 inclusive, University staff were employed in one of three 'domains' – Education, Knowledge Exchange, or Research. All domains had workload allocations for domain activities, which were not limited to be the

specific domain type. Outputs created during this period that fulfil eligibility criteria in the REF 2029 guidance will be deemed as eligible for submission. However, individuals in the Education domain are not eligible to author outputs for REF purposes unless they demonstrate that their domain time was for research or knowledge exchange.

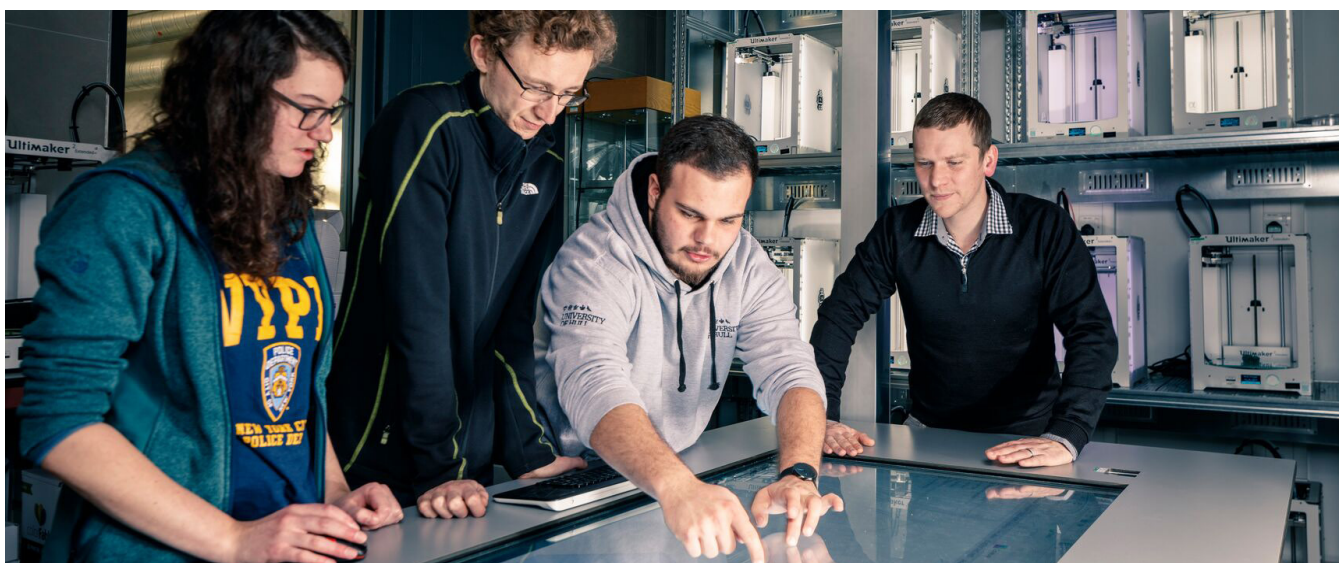
On 1 August 2025, the new Academic Careers Framework was implemented with two main pathways – Teaching and Research, and Teaching and Scholarship – and a Leadership pathway (see Section 2.1). Staff on all pathways can undertake research activities, though for those on the Teaching and Scholarship pathway, this research time is for pedagogy (educational theory and practice).

**Staff on Teaching-Only contracts, or staff with only Scholarship workload time will not be able to have outputs considered, regardless of any other eligibility (e.g. Teaching and Scholarship pathway or Education domain).**

Academic staff who change domain or pathway during the REF 2029 period will have outputs considered as appropriate for the guidelines above, unless the output was created during their time on a Teaching-Only contract, when no allocated time for scholarship was provided.

Staff on **Professional Services contracts** may be involved in research-enabling activity. This includes but is not limited to technicians; data managers; project managers; research software engineers; and Library staff. **Outputs created or authored by staff on Professional Services contracts will be included if they have time set aside for research within their job expectations.**

Outputs will not be returnable where the sole author is a postgraduate research student, academic visitor, emeritus staff member (but see Section 5.1.2 below), or honorary member of staff.



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

Outputs from **staff who have left the University** during the time-limited period will be considered if the outputs fulfil the eligibility criteria until the date on which the staff member leaves the University.

**Staff who retired** during the time-limited period will have all outputs considered if they fulfil the eligibility criteria until the date of retirement. Outputs from staff who retire, irrespective of emeritus status, will not be included after their employment contract ends, unless the output was first submitted before retirement.

Outputs from **staff who take or have taken voluntary redundancy** during the time-limited period will be considered until the date they leave the University. No consideration will be given for any outputs created after that date.

As per REF 2029 guidance (see: [Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding, Section 4, para. 6.7.2](#)), no outputs from an **author who was subject to compulsory redundancy** will be eligible for submission.

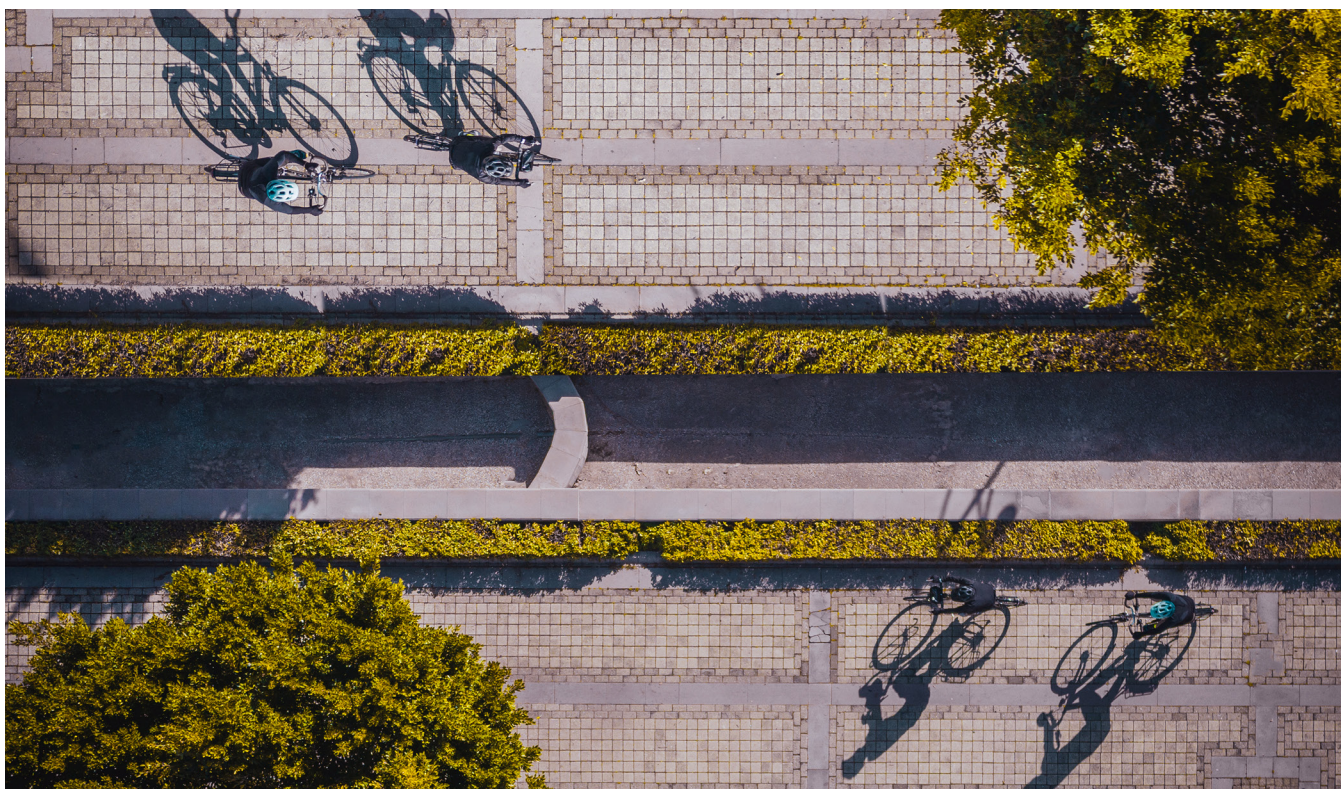
## 5.1.3 Assigning outputs to UoAs, including interdisciplinary research outputs

Faculty REF Steering Groups will be responsible for assigning outputs to UoA, as follows (see also Section 1.1):

- Outputs will initially be assigned to the UoA most closely associated with the School or Institute of the author / creator of the output. Where the output has multiple authors, it will be considered by each relevant UoA.
- Outputs that are not considered to sit within the remit of the UoA most associated with the School or Institute that hosts the author / creator will be forwarded by the Chair of the Faculty/HUBS REF Steering Group to another UoA for consideration.
- Outputs that could sit in a UoA outside of the faculty other than the one in which the author / creator is working, will be referred to the University REF Steering Group to help establish the appropriate UoA.
- Outputs that fall within the remit of a UoA that will *not* form part of the University's REF 2029 submission may be considered for inclusion in a UoA that will form part of the submission, provided the subject matter can reasonably be linked to that UoA (with cross referencing to alternative UoA as appropriate).

**Interdisciplinary outputs** will be flagged as such for the purpose of assignment to the correct UoA. Those that fall within the remit of more than one UoA will initially be assigned to the UoA most associated with the School / Institute of the author / creator, and to one other UoA where the research is a good fit.

NB. The UoA Co-ordinator will make recommendations for double weighting of outputs and forward them to the Faculty/HUBS REF Steering Group for consideration. The Chair of the University REF Steering Group will make the final decision prior to submission to the REF.



## 5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

All forms of research output and impact are supported at the University of Hull. Where research outputs move beyond the pure textual based outputs evaluation, storage and submission require appropriate procedures.

Support for storing diverse outputs is available via the University Library and production assistance within specialist teams across the organisation, and with training available as part of the Academy of Research and Knowledge Exchange (ARKE). Some of Hull's diverse outputs are deposited on the Worktribe research management system as a portfolio output, or part of a portfolio. However, because Worktribe does not support large file sizes, it has been necessary in many instances to use an external repository – typically a subject-based repository. In such cases, metadata and links to the externally deposited outputs are included within Worktribe.

In preparation for REF 2029, all faculties have procedures in place for supporting diverse research outputs. Diverse outputs will be considered when the criteria for the additional statements are known and can be evaluated together with the diverse output. Full guidance is expected in autumn 2026 from the REF sub-panels. Procedures will be adjusted based on these guidelines, but initial plans are detailed below:

1. When a UoA receives a diverse output, a bespoke review panel (up to three people aligned with the UoA, including the UoA Co-ordinator) is convened to evaluate it. A UoA Co-ordinator or ADRE from another faculty will be part of this panel to share experience and good practice regarding diverse outputs across the UoAs.
2. The panel should discuss at the outset what rigour, significance and originality mean, across the 'star' ratings; this could vary quite a lot depending on the nature of the diverse output being reviewed and on the discipline. They should also refer to, and consider, what the relevant UoA panel has said about diverse outputs in previous REF returns.
3. The panel members then review the output, first individually and then as a group, to agree on the score to be recorded.

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

Every effort will be made to ensure that the University's submissions to REF 2029 are representative of the research undertaken by the submitting unit during the REF period, reflecting the full range of research activity at Hull in the UoA concerned. Decisions on which elements to include in SPRE unit-level statements will be the responsibility of ADREs and other members of Faculty REF Steering Groups, who will make recommendations to the Chair of the University REF Steering Group.

The following approach will be taken:

- SPRE unit-level statements will be drafted by UoA Co-ordinators so that they reflect the subject structures, research groups and research activity within that UoA. The statements will be sense-checked by the ADRE and other members of the Faculty REF Steering Group. Any anomalies will be noted by the ADRE, and the statement rewritten accordingly. The Chair of the University REF Steering Group will have the final sign-off.
- In keeping with guidance from Research England, it is expected that **no more than five outputs will be associated with a single substantive link** within a submission at UoA level (note there may be an exception in the case of three double-weighted outputs). This will be checked by the REF Manager.
- Unit-level statements will be drafted by UoA Co-ordinators so that they describe the research diversity, demographics, role and career stages of the staff included within that UoA. As above, they will be sense-checked by the ADRE and others in the Faculty REF Steering Group, with sign-off by the Chair of the University REF Steering Group.

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

In May 2020, the University issued a [statement on the use of metrics in the assessment of research](#). This is based upon principles contained in the Leiden Manifesto (see below) and informed by two UK reports, 'The Metric Tide' (2015) and its follow-up, 'UK Progress Towards the Use of Metrics Responsibly' (2018). In 2025, with the launch of its [Research Culture Action Plan 2024-30](#), Hull signalled its intention to align its assessment processes with those set out in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment ([CoARA – Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#)) (2022). The key (Leiden Manifesto / CoARA) principles that have been considered are as follows:

- a. *Measure performance against the research missions of the institution, group or researcher* – The metrics that will be most appropriate in different circumstances should be agreed at the level of research activity at which they will be applied: they should be fit for the purpose for which they will be used. They should be closely aligned with the strategy or objectives being pursued and the associated outcomes from these so the metrics can play a clearly defined role in demonstrating whether those outcomes have been achieved. There should be a clear purpose for each metric being used and a clear link to the area being measured.
- b. *Recognise the systemic effects of assessment and indicators* – Multiple metrics should also be used to alleviate any bias that can come about simply from using metrics. Behaviour can change based on what is being measured, hence a collection of metrics will prevent this affecting an assessment and avoid gaming.

- c. *Keep data collection and analytical processes open, transparent and simple* – Data being collected or acquired to provide the basis for metrics should be open and transparent so all those involved can understand what the data is and how and why it will be used. This ensures trust and appreciation of the value of the metric being used. Keeping metrics simple is important as this aids transparency and understanding; however, in doing so the use of simplistic metrics should be avoided, as they lack the substance to provide a valid measure.
- d. *Base assessment of individual researchers on a qualitative judgement of their portfolio* – The data available to calculate metrics from is influenced by career stage and gender as well as discipline. For example, a popular metric, the h-index, increases with age regardless of current research activity. Hence, when assessing individuals, metrics can inform and add to an overall picture, but ultimately assessment should be based on a qualitative analysis of their portfolio of work as a whole.
- e. *Allow those evaluated to verify data and analysis* – To further establish trust in the assessment of research, those being assessed, and those carrying it out, should be able to have access to the data to be used so they can verify that this is correct. Many metrics related to research outputs are based on data from the predominant corpus of western English language publications. Where research is focused on languages or in cultures that are not widely reported within this corpus there will be a need to recognise this when assessing its performance, identifying relevant metrics that remove bias within the data. There should also be open processes in place to allow for challenge where errors or gaps are identified, so that the data quality can be improved.
- f. *Account for variation by field in publication and citation practices* – Identifying appropriate metrics also involves recognising the disciplinary field that is being assessed and its specific metrics. For instance, if assessing a field that produces a particular type of research output (e.g. articles or books), then metrics relevant to that type of output will be most valid.
- g. *Avoid misplaced concreteness and false precision* – Some metrics will suggest they convey a strong message if they score highly. It will be important to ensure that no metric is overly relied upon based on perceived substance, but that multiple metrics are used to validate each other. Metrics that provide excessive detail in their precision should also be avoided so metrics are not used simply for the sake of measuring. Where metrics honestly offer evidence with error margins, these should be transparent.
- h. *Scrutinise indicators regularly and update them* – The factors that will be used to inform which metrics work best will themselves change over time. Hence, the metrics identified will benefit from regular scrutiny to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose over time and changed if they are not.

## 5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

### 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 As per Sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.3.

### 5.2.4 Equality Impact Assessment

In setting out the University's policies and procedures for selecting outputs in REF 2029, we will undertake an EIA to establish whether any individual or group with a protected characteristic has been or could be negatively affected because of these policies and procedures. An EIA will be conducted by the Director of Research Services, supported by the EDI Team, prior to the HESA census date each year (31 July).



## PART 6

# Appendices

### **Material referenced in the CoP**

- [University Strategy 2030 \(2025\)](#)
- [University Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2025-30 \(2025\)](#)
- [University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-30 \(2025\)](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy \(2025 – 2028\) \[v3\]](#)
- [University Research Culture Action Plan \(2024-30\)](#)



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