

REF2029

Research Excellence Framework

Code of Practice template

Institution name: University of Lancashire

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**University of
Lancashire**

Research Excellence Framework 2029 Code of Practice

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Research and Knowledge Exchange Service
lancashire.ac.uk

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Open address from PVC Research & Enterprise

Dear Colleagues,

REF2029 will assess the best of the research endeavour at the University of Lancashire over the eight-year period since REF2021. Many people will have contributed to research at the University over this period, from doctoral candidates to the Professoriate, with support from Professional Services. Not everyone or everything can be showcased, but the work of all will be encompassed in some way within our submission, be it your research outputs, impact or contributions to research culture.

This REF2029 Code of Practice sets out the institutional approach to securing the best possible REF2029 outcomes. In these challenging times, it is more important than ever that our focus should be on putting forward the best submission we can to drive future research funding.

We will be **transparent** at all steps of our REF2029 preparations; communicating decisions and progress through an ongoing series of REF Open events and via our REF Intranet Site; and consulting regularly to ensure that your voice is heard at each stage.

We have developed a **consistent** approach to establishing Significant Responsibility for Research and research independence for those on eligible employment contracts, as well as for selecting research outputs that are representative of the diversity of research taking place across the University. The approach is flexible and inclusive, and applicable across all disciplines.

There is a clear governance structure in place to ensure **accountability** across the various strands of the REF and Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that our approach is **inclusive** and that no groups of staff are disadvantaged by the REF.

The University renewed its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, with the launch of its Belonging Strategy in late 2025. I am committed to reflecting the ethos of this strategy throughout our REF2029 preparations - removing barriers, building belonging, developing inclusive behaviours and practices, and increasing diversity and fostering connections.

Yours sincerely,
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Professor StJohn Crean

List of Acronyms

Term/Acronym	Meaning/Definition
CEDARS	Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey
CoARA	Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment
CKU	Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding (outputs section of REF2029 assessment)
DORA	San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HREiR	HR Excellence in Research Award
PDAP	People and Diversity Advisory Panel
PGR	Postgraduate Research Student
RDAP	Research Diversity Advisory Panel
REF2021	Research Excellence Framework 2021
RKEEC	University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee
RKES	University of Lancashire's Research & Knowledge Exchange Service
SPRE	Strategy, People, and Research Environment
SRfR	Significant Responsibility for Research (known as SRR in the REF2029 Guidelines)
UoA	Unit of Assessment
RKEEC	University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee

Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
ARA – Annual Research Assessment	The University of Lancashire’s Annual Research Assessment (ARA) is a regular review of all aspects of the REF submission (staff, outputs, impact and environment).
Diverse Forms of Outputs	A glossary of research output types will be published in the final REF2029 guidelines, along with discipline-level expectations. Examples of diverse output types include, but go well beyond, journal articles, conference papers, monographs and book chapters, to include, as appropriate to each UoA: • non-textual (artefacts, audio, visual, multi-modal) • creative, performance and practice-led outputs • reviews and research synthesis • software and code • datasets • translations and critical editions • reagents • multi-component outputs • policy summaries and analyses different types of reports
HESA staff record	The HESA Staff record is an annual, mandatory data collection covering staff employed at UK higher education providers, running from August 1 to July 31. It captures individualised data on personal characteristics, contract details, and employment activities, used for sector-wide analysis, policy, and research excellence frameworks (REF).
Long Form/Extended Process Output	Long-form outputs are defined as outputs of extended scale or scope. Extended process outputs are the culmination of a substantial, discrete research endeavour which, due to the nature of the approach or methodology, involved intense activity, sustained over a period of time, usually of five years or longer.
People and Diversity Advisory Panel	A dedicated group ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are embedded throughout the national REF2029 exercise. It advises on panel recruitment, training, and the development of assessment criteria to recognise a wider range of roles, career stages, and contributions.
REF census period	The period over which the REF2029 volume measure will be calculated (i.e. 2025/26 and 2026/27).
REF Intranet Site	University of Lancashire’s Research Excellence Framework intranet pages
REF Team	University of Lancashire staff within the Research & Knowledge Exchange Service (RKES) with responsibility for managing the REF2029 submission and Open Research
Research Diversity Advisory Panel (RDAP)	An expert group that develops strategies for the equitable recognition of diverse research forms, outputs, and impacts in REF2029. It advises on assessment criteria, supports the

Term	Meaning
	recognition of interdisciplinary work, and collaborates with the People and Diversity Advisory Panel (PDAP) to ensure a broad, inclusive assessment.
Use of Research England in this Code of Practice	REF exercises are run by the national REF team managed by Research England on behalf of the UK's four higher education funding bodies. Research England is used throughout the Code of Practice to refer to the national exercise.
Significant contribution	Authors must have made a significant contribution to research outputs.
Substantive link	Institutions must demonstrate a substantive link to the research output being submitted through an eligible employment relationship. This link ensures that only research enabled and supported by the submitting institution is eligible.
UoA Volume Measure	See the national REF2029 guidelines for detailed information on calculating the number of research outputs per UoA submission , along with illustrative examples. The number of outputs required in a UoA submission is determined by multiplying the volume measure by 2.5 at UoA level. The result is then rounded to the nearest whole number.

Note: Staff at the University of Lancashire are the principal audience for this REF2029 Code of Practice. A number of internal links are provided in the document direct the reader to information about our internal REF2029 preparations. If you are unable to access links and require further information, please contact the University's REF Team at researchassessment@lancashire.ac.uk.

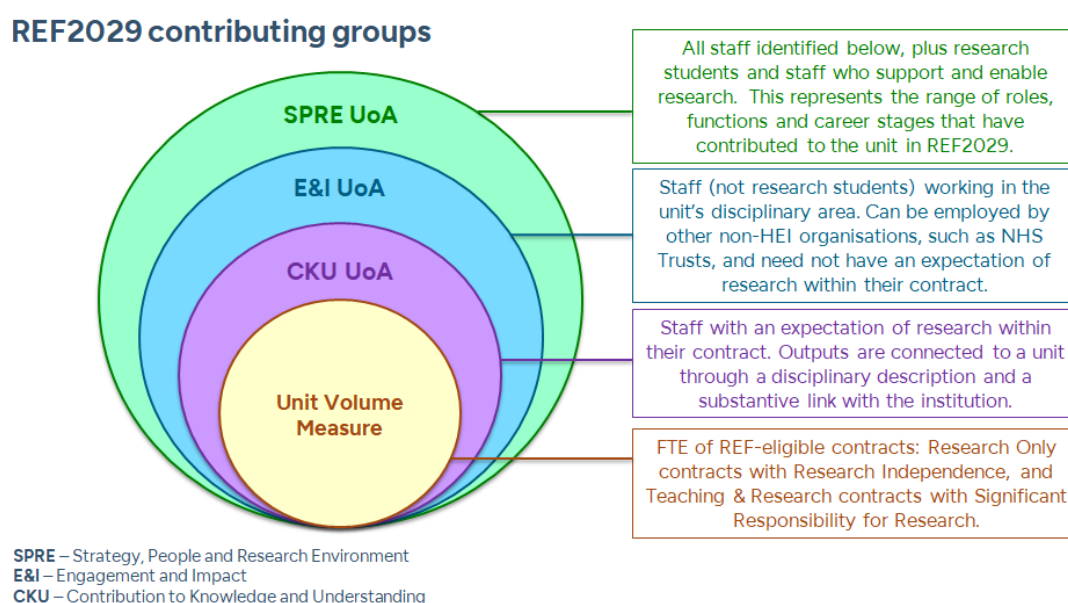
Part 1: Introduction

1. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK's system for evaluating research quality in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). REF outcomes serve three main purposes:
 - Informing the allocation of approximately £2 billion annually in block-grant Quality Research (QR) funding to HEIs based on research quality.
 - Providing accountability for public investment in research and produces evidence of the benefits of this investment.
 - Providing insights into the health of research across UK HEIs.

The assessment is carried out by expert review via 34 [subject-specific Units of Assessment \(UoAs\)](#), overseen by [main and advisory panels](#). Further information can be found on the [national REF pages](#).

2. In REF2029 there have been a significant number of changes compared to REF2021, including the calculation of an average FTE volume measure and the decoupling of research outputs from staff. The assessment embraces the wider population of staff contributing to research, beyond those traditionally considered in REF, staff are no longer “submitted” and there is more fluidity between Units of Assessment, Figure 1 shows the ways in which staff will contribute to the REF2029 submission.

Figure 1: Staff contribute to REF2029 in different ways¹



¹ Figure 1 adapted from original material by Ceri Margerison (KCL)

3. This Code of Practice sets out the University of Lancashire's approach to ensuring that the identification of staff for inclusion in the University's Research Excellence Framework 2029 (REF2029) submission is fair, equitable, transparent, consistent, accountable and inclusive; and that opportunities for the inclusion of all eligible members of staff are maximised.
4. The Code of Practice is a University document developed to meet the UK higher education funding body requirements regarding the management of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in relation to REF2029. Specifically:

“The REF 2029 CoP are a set of guidelines and procedures that HEIs must develop and implement. The CoP outlines how HEIs will make key decisions about their submission to the exercise. These decisions concern identifying contracts that contribute to the REF volume measure, and selecting research outputs for submission to the REF.”²
5. The Code of Practice will ensure that no isolated, unaccountable decisions are taken. It is intended for use by all academic and Professional Services staff involved in developing the University's REF2029 submission. It will serve as a guide, ensuring that the University adheres to its EDI commitments and responsibilities.
6. REF2029 Codes of Practice must be submitted to Research England³ for approval. Codes of Practice will be examined by Research England, informed, as appropriate, by the REF2029 [People and Diversity Advisory Panel \(PDAP\)](#)⁴ and [Research Diversity Advisory Panel \(RDAP\)](#)⁵. The approved version of the Code of Practice will be available on the University external website and REF2029 intranet pages.
7. The Code of Practice may be updated ahead of the REF2029 submission, for example, in response to staff consultation, feedback following review by the Funding Bodies, and publication of new or amended REF2029 guidance. An updated draft and table of updates will be made available on the REF2029 intranet pages.
8. Should the University need to make significant changes to its Code of Practice following approval by Research England, the University will be required to resubmit the revised version to Research England. Final versions of Codes of Practice will be collected for publication from all submitting institutions shortly after the REF2029 submission.

² Section 8 – REF2029 Code of Practice guidance 1.0.2

³ REF exercises are run by the national REF team managed by Research England on behalf of the UK's four higher education funding bodies. Research England is used throughout the Code of Practice to refer to management of the national REF exercise.

⁴ [Link to the REF2029 People and Diversity Advisory Panel \(PDAP\)](#)

⁵ [Link to the REF2029 Research and Diversity Advisory Panel \(RDAP\)](#)

REF principles: robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion

9. The University has a REF2029 governance structure that ensures adherence to the REF2029 principles of robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion in the University's REF2029 preparations.
10. Overall responsibility for the REF2029 submission sits with the REF Strategy Committee, with assurance provided three times per annum to the University Research, Ethics and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEEC).
11. The Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group advises on EDI-related aspects of REF2029 preparations.
12. Our REF2029 governance structure comprises the following bodies (further details in Appendix B:
 - **REF Strategy Committee (REFSC)** is the overall decision-making body for REF at the University and is tasked with setting and monitoring our REF policies and working processes.
 - **REF Operations Group (REFOG)** is tasked with operational delivery of REF priorities.
 - **Research and Knowledge Exchange Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group (RKE EDI Group)** covers the range of EDI aspects of Research and Knowledge Exchange activities, including REF2029 preparations, our Research and Knowledge Exchange for All (RKE4All) programme, and the Responsible Research Assessment agenda.
 - **Leadership of the University's REF2029 UoAs** who have the responsibility of managing discipline-level UoA submissions and ensuring staff engagement in REF processes and activities.
13. The University is addressing the principles of robustness, transparency, and equity and inclusion within its REF2029 preparations in the following ways:

Robustness

14. The University expects the principles outlined within its Code of Practice to be applied consistently across the institution.
15. The approach outlined in the Code of Practice for identifying staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRfR⁶) and research independence, as outlined in Parts 2 and 3, will be applied consistently to all eligible staff. The University will ensure that decisions are supported by robust, auditable evidence.
16. Regular meetings with Deans and Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange ensure that data on Significant Responsibility for Research are collected in a consistent manner. Panel Advisory Boards will ensure consistent decision making on research independence.
17. UoA Leads share a role descriptor, outlining roles and responsibilities. The University's Annual Research Assessment (ARA) exercise ensures consistent review of progress across the elements of the REF2029 submission.

⁶ Also known as SRR throughout the REF2029 guidance.

Transparency

18. In preparation for its submission, University staff are encouraged to attend “REF Open” events, which focus on different aspects of the University’s submission and its preparation. Sessions are streamed where possible for those unable to physically attend and the presentations (including recordings) are made available via our REF Intranet Site. These sessions are advertised to staff via the internal staff email “Round Up”; University events page, communications to Schools, UoA Leads and Senior Faculty leadership; and on the REF Intranet Site.
19. In addition, the REF Team actively works with the University’s UoA Leads and holds frequent UoA Lead information sessions which aim to ensure emerging REF2029 requirements and announcements are fully understood, consult on development of our REF processes, and provide a venue for sharing of best practice among our UoAs. Additional activities in this arena include continuous support as needed towards UoA, School or Research and Knowledge Exchange Institute events and workshops.
20. Early in the REF2029 cycle, the REF Team began discussions with the University’s REF stakeholders including Schools, Governance groups, People Team (HR), and the University EDI Team to establish a REF2029 governance structure (Appendix B).
21. Following the release of REF2029 Code of Practice Guidance in June 2025, these groups were included in discussions which informed the development of our REF2029 Code of Practice approach.
22. A draft REF2029 Code of Practice was developed in collaboration with the REF Strategy Committee.
23. After approval of the draft REF2029 Code of Practice by the REF Strategy Committee on 26th January 2026, a month-long consultation period with staff and Trade Unions was formerly open between 17th February and 17th March 2026. Comments from all staff were welcomed during this time, either directly to the REF Team or anonymously via an electronic survey system.
24. An electronic, accessible version of the draft Code of Practice for consultation, along with details of how to access and respond, was made available to all staff employed at the University.
25. The consultation was communicated on the front page of the University intranet, in both Academic and Research and Knowledge Exchange Updates, and through regular posting on our three researcher forums for Early Career Researchers, Mid-Career Researchers and Readers/Professoriate (see paragraph 54 for more detail on researcher forums).
26. Deans and Directors of Professional Services were asked to cascade information about the consultation to all staff.
27. Deans and Directors of Professional Services were also asked to send an electronic copy of the CoP to staff on maternity/paternity/shared parental leave or long-term absence from the University as deemed appropriate to individual circumstance.
28. Feedback from staff has been provided to the REF Team in the following ways:

- a) Staff open sessions hosted on Microsoft Teams to ensure wider and easier access;
 - b) An electronic survey, which could be completed anonymously;
 - c) Direct contact with the REF Team by email, MS Teams or face to face.
29. The LGBT+ Staff Network, Staff Disability Network, Neurodivergent Staff Network, Race Equality Network and Women's Network were invited to participate in the consultation (see paragraph 48 for more information on the University's [staff diversity networks](#)).
 30. Responses to Frequently Asked Questions arising during the consultation period have been made available on the REF Intranet Site.
 31. Feedback from the internal consultation was collated for review and discussion by the REF Strategy Committee. The Code of Practice was redrafted and approved ahead of final sign off. A list of key changes made to the draft Code of Practice has been made available on the REF Intranet Site.
 32. The submitted Code of Practice has been made available via the REF Intranet Site. Once approved by the funding bodies, the Code of Practice will also be made available via the University external Research webpages.
 33. Feedback from Research England, including any actions needed before resubmission, will be shared with staff. If necessary, a second period of consultation will be scheduled and communicated.
 34. All data that the University collects with respect to REF2029 will be held and processed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Some information may be passed securely to Research England for the purposes of REF2029 only. All staff whose data will be held for REF2029 purposes will receive a Data Collection Statement. This statement is currently in development for REF2029, however an exemplar of our [REF2021 privacy statement](#) can be found on the University's website.

Equality and inclusion

35. The University's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is described in Paragraphs 44 to 52.
36. The University recognises that its submission to REF2029 is an institutional submission and that all staff employed by the University make a valuable contribution to the research outputs, impacts, research culture and environment contained within the submission and to the institution as a whole.
37. Collection of staff circumstances to support inclusion of those who have been unable to research productively throughout the REF period is not a feature of REF2029. We have developed a more inclusive definition for Significant Responsibility for Research, which is intended to offset any unintended impact of this change to the REF assessment. The University will embed processes to promote inclusion throughout its REF2029 preparations, supported by regular EIAs.
38. Oversight of EDI aspects of the REF2029 submission is provided by the Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group (see Appendix B).

39. EDI will be considered at all decision-making points throughout the University's REF2029 preparations, with EIAs carried out at appropriate stages during the development of the University's REF2029 submission to ensure that the selection processes for staff and outputs has no disproportionate differential impact on any group with protected characteristics or on staff employed on part-time and/or fixed-term contracts.
40. Where possible, we will seek to maximise the number of researchers with research outputs included in the REF2029 submission.
41. The University is committed to responsible research assessment and values the diverse contributions made by our research community (see Paragraphs 55 to 57). 6% of the University's research outputs in REF2021 were considered "non-traditional"⁷ and we continue to encourage diverse contributions in our REF2029 preparations. We will ensure that staff and those involved in reviewing and selecting research outputs are aware of REF2029 guidelines with respect to diverse outputs, along with any emerging sector best practice from RDAP, the [Hidden REF](#) or elsewhere.
42. All staff with decision-making responsibilities in REF2029 will be required to undertake training on unconscious bias and responsible research assessment practices (see Appendix C).

Contextualisation within institutional policies:

43. University strategy and underpinning sub-strategies: The [University Strategic Plan 2021-2028](#) sets out our institutional vision to "transform lives by delivering an outstanding educational experience, creating prosperity and opportunity in the communities we serve". Our [Strategy is founded on six priorities](#), each underpinned by its own sub-strategy. Each priority has a detailed sub-strategy, and each is then supported by enabling strategies from Estates, Information Technology, Finance and Marketing and Communications. The enabling and sub strategies are reviewed annually with annual action plans and performance indicators that support the main strategic plan.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion:

44. The University's [Belonging Strategy](#) supports a fair and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. This Strategy was revised for 2024-2028, focusing on better EDI data collection and improved EIAs.
45. The [EDI Committee](#) and EDI Team are tasked with the strategic management and advancement of the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion programme for both staff and students within the University.
46. The University has established an effective network of [EDI Leads](#) in each academic school and professional service. These Leads have a valuable role in leading implementation and mainstreaming EDI in their areas in line with institutional EDI goals.
47. We hold or are working towards several [EDI Chartermarks](#), including renewing our [Athena SWAN Bronze award](#) with a view to seek a silver in the near future, [Race Equality Charter](#) (Bronze, 2025), Stonewall Diversity Champion ([Top 100](#)

⁷ REF2021 output types F to V.

[Employers 2024](#)), AccessAble, [Disability Confident](#) Level 2 (working toward Level 3), Mindful Employer, and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award. Additional recognitions include [University of Sanctuary status](#), [Baby Friendly Initiative Gold Award](#), and [Gold Award for Armed Forces](#). In 2026, the University received the University Mental Health Charter Award.

48. Our [staff diversity networks](#) provide a supportive forum where colleagues can connect, share experiences, and discuss issues of mutual interest. They also provide a safe space to raise concerns and contribute to a more inclusive workplace. Our networks include the [Race Equality Staff Network](#), [Women's Staff Network](#), [LGBT Staff Network](#), [Disability Staff Network](#), and [Neurodivergent Network](#).
49. Consideration of EDI across all aspects of Research and Knowledge Exchange is supported by our [RKE for All Framework](#) (see paragraph 54).

People, culture and environment

50. Research and knowledge exchange assurance is overseen by the [Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee](#) (RKEEC), which in turn oversees a range of specialist committees, including the Researcher Development Steering Group, Open Research Steering Group, RKE EDI Group, REF Strategy Committee and REF Operations Group, which evaluate and advise on their respective areas. Schools and Research and Knowledge Exchange Institutes report regularly into RKEEC.
51. The University holds the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) and thus subscribes to the commitments outlined in '[The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#)'.
52. The University participates in the [national CEDARS exercise](#) every two years. Data collected feeds into the HR Excellence in Research award action planning, shaping support for our research community.
53. RKES hosts career stage specific forums to support our researchers, facilitating access to support and sharing of experiences:
 - Early Career Researcher Forum
 - Mid-Career Researcher Network
 - College of Professors and Readers
54. [Research and Knowledge Exchange for All \(RKE4All\)](#) is a framework for embedding EDI perspectives across research and knowledge exchange activities. It seeks to support the inclusive design and delivery of research by addressing structural inequalities within the research system and integrating EDI considerations to promote research excellence. The framework was developed in consultation with the research community at the University and was formally adopted at Academic Board in 2023.

Responsible research assessment approach

55. The University has an ongoing commitment to the responsible use of research metrics and responsible research assessment that recognises the diverse contributions that are made to research.

56. Our [institutional statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics](#) is used to inform how metrics are used in measurement of research activity across the University, in line with REF expectations. We believe that
- Quantitative evaluation should support (and not replace) qualitative, peer review, expert assessment.
 - No internal review panel will use journal impact factors or any hierarchy of journals in their assessment of outputs
 - No output will be privileged or disadvantaged on the basis of the publisher, where it is published or the medium of its publication.
 - Outputs will not be disadvantaged on the basis of the language in which the research is published, including those produced in British Sign Language.
 - We will only refer to use of other metrics as allowed by REF2029 UoA subpanels, recognising that some UoAs may use citation metrics to support peer review evaluations.
57. We are a signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#). In 2023, we became an early signatory to the [Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#) and signatory to their Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. We are active participants in the UK Chapter of CoARA, including sharing best practice and contributing to working groups associated with the Chapter's strategic priorities. In 2024, we published our 5-year CoARA action plan, which sets out how we will advance responsible research assessment. This is overseen by our RKE EDI Group, with progress reported through to RKEEC.

Update on actions since REF2021:

58. EDI monitoring of our REF2021 populations was limited both due to size and quality of data on some protected characteristics. Ongoing promotion of the importance of staff providing this information through our HR system and in staff survey responses has led to substantial increase in disclosure of sensitive information on protected characteristics.
59. Our EIA for the University's final REF2021 submission suggested that overall our processes were broadly equitable, with no evidence that staff with other protected characteristics were disadvantaged with respect to submission to the REF.
60. In REF2021 preparations, a REF EDI subgroup oversaw EDI aspects of the submission. The Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group was established in 2022 to reinforce that EDI is not only a part of our REF preparations but should also encompass research and knowledge exchange culture and practices, including how staff are treated, and how research and knowledge exchange activities are conducted and communicated. Towards this, membership of the RKE EDI Group includes representatives from various staff career stages, postgraduate research student community and University staff networks.

61. EDI monitoring is carried out annually across the research project lifecycle, including access to bidding for internal and external funds, and access to research and knowledge exchange training and development activities.
62. Race Equality Charter Mark and Athena Swan: Research staff are fully considered in the benchmarking, action planning and ongoing monitoring for these awards, with research(er)-specific actions owned by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Service.
63. All schools and professional services have EDI Leads and annually set School/Service level priorities which are monitored and reported to the University EDI Committee. Research and knowledge exchange priorities include accessible communications, inclusive REF2029 preparations and further embedding our Research and Knowledge Exchange for All (RKE4ALL) framework (see paragraph 54).

Part 2: Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research

Policies and procedures

REF2029 guidance

64. In REF2029, an average staff volume measure will be used to determine the relative research capacity of a submitting UoA, and thereby the number of research outputs and impact case studies required for each UoA submission. The volume measure will be made up of FTE for staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (applies to Teaching and Research contracts) and/or research independence (Research Only contracts). **This section describes the processes associated with identifying those staff with Significant Responsibility for Research.** A flowchart describing these processes is also provided in Appendix A. See Part 3 for processes related to research independence.
65. In REF2029, contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (known locally as SRfR⁸) are those for whom explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of the job role. SRfR status applies to staff on an academic Teaching and Research contract. For information on REF2029 processes related to research independence which applies to staff on a Research Only contract, see Part 3.
66. Where SRfR status does not comprehensively apply to all staff on a Teaching and Research contract, HEIs must set out their own criteria for SRfR status within their REF2029 Code of Practice. This must be based upon job role expectations and not past performance.
67. Data for the academic years 2025/26 and 2026/27 collected through the annual HESA staff record will be used to determine the volume measure for REF2029 and thereby the number of research outputs and impact case studies required by each UoA submission. In the REF2029 guidelines, the following criteria for identifying colleagues with Significant Responsibility for Research are stated:

Explicit time and resources are made available

Indicators of this could include one or more of:

- a specific proportion of time allocated for research, as determined in the context of the institution's practices, and applied in a consistent way
- research allocation in a workload model or equivalent

To engage actively in independent research

⁸ Referred to using the acronym SRR within the REF2029 guidance.

Indicators of this could include one or more of (HEIs are also advised to refer to the indicators of independence, as additional guidance on this aspect):

- eligibility to apply for external research funding as the lead or co-applicant
- access to research leave or sabbaticals
- membership of research centres or institutes within the HEI

That is an expectation of the job role

Indicators of this could include one or more of:

- current research responsibilities as indicated in, for example, career pathways or stated objectives
- expectations of research by role as indicated in, for example, job descriptions and appraisals

Identifying staff with SRfR status at University of Lancashire

68. REF2029 fields within the HESA staff record are collected at contract level. A small number of staff may have multiple entries in the record during an individual academic year due to consecutive or concurrent contracts. Staff with multiple eligible contracts will be deemed to have the same SRfR status across contracts during an academic year.
69. The following paragraphs outline how eligible contracts at the University of Lancashire meet the three headline SRfR criteria.

(i) Explicit time and resources are made available

70. The standard academic contract for Teaching and Research staff provides 175 hours (pro rata) self-directed time for scholarship and research. Additional time is allocated on an individual basis for other research activities, including leading/undertaking research projects, research student supervision, bid development and leadership associated with research.
71. All staff at the University are expected to have three appraisals each year at which objectives, which are clear and measurable (SMART), should be set and reviewed. It is expected that objective setting will feed into workload allocations.
72. SRfR status in REF2029 will be determined by the existence **of at least one research-focused objective** that is clear and measurable and directly related to the conduct of research. This could include management of a research grant/project, writing/publication/production of research outputs, submission of research bids, and developing research impact. Attendance at a conference as a delegate, would not on its own be considered as conduct of research. It is recognised that disciplinary differences may exist, and that research can take diverse forms; the above examples should not be considered as exhaustive.
73. SRfR status will be automatically implied within an individual academic year for:

- All eligible staff who are PIs or Co-Is on an active, externally funded research project during an academic year.
 - Eligible staff with leadership responsibility for research, including, but not limited to, Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange and Deans of School.
74. An annual data-led review will be undertaken using the previous year's HESA data as a baseline, through which colleagues will be informed of their indicative status and proposed inclusion in the REF2029 volume measure and invited to confirm and indicate their appropriate UoA. If colleagues disagree with the indicative status, they will be able to provide their reasons and evidence via a survey. Outcomes of this review will be validated by Deans or Associate Deans for RKE.
75. All eligible contracts, regardless of SRfR status, must be allocated to a UoA in the HESA staff record⁹. The annual data-led form is therefore intended **to be completed by all staff on an eligible contract**.
76. We recognise that exceptionally there may be times when University strategic initiatives (e.g. block teaching roll out) could impact individuals' ability to conduct research related activity within an academic year. It is expected that there would be clear evidence of research activity during the preceding two academic years. This may be flagged to the REF Team by researchers during the annual data-led review. Deans will be asked to confirm SRfR status in this instance.
77. Where staff have had a prolonged period of absence or reduction in hours as part of a phased return during the two-year REF2029 census period, and/or where they may be absent during the annual SRfR review, SRfR status is implied where there is/ordinarily would be a research objective. It is expected that there would be clear evidence of research activity during the preceding 24 months from the point of a person having commenced a period of absence. The same processes would apply to staff covering such absences, where this is preventing them from carrying out their normal level of research related activities.

(ii) To engage actively in independent research

78. All Teaching and Research staff at the University are expected to have the skills to be able to undertake independent research and are eligible to bid for funding.

(iii) That is an expectation of the job role

79. Job descriptions for Teaching and Research roles at Grade H (Lecturer) and above have an expectation that the individual contributes to or leads research.

⁹ [Section 3 – Volume Measure guidance – REF 2029](#)

80. The University of Lancashire does not expect to vary its Code of Practice by UoA and believes the above criteria allow sufficient flexibility to support the inclusion of excellent research from all disciplinary backgrounds.
81. SRfR status for all eligible contracts will be validated by the Deans of School who will provide formal sign off annually of REF2029 fields within the HESA staff record.

Decision making and communication of SRfR process

82. The approved SRfR process will be published on the University's REF intranet site and communicated to all staff as part of our ongoing REF2029 communications plan.
83. The REF Team will meet with Deans of School (or equivalent where staff are located outside of the School structure) annually to confirm that staff on Teaching and Research contracts have met the institutional SRfR criteria during the academic year.
84. It is the responsibilities of the Deans and Associate Deans for RKE (or equivalent) to confirm with line managers the agreement of research objectives for Teaching and Research staff.
85. Prior to the submission of the HESA staff record (autumn), Deans (or equivalent) will formally sign off on SRfR status for all eligible contracts.

Staff, committees, and training

Roles and responsibilities

86. The University's overarching governance, including the REF Strategy Committee as the primary decision-making body and the REF Operations Group, REF Advisory Panels, and RKE EDI Group as advisory or operational groups, is described in detail in Appendix B. This Appendix also sets out how UoA Leads are appointed, how committees are constituted, how reporting lines operate. Staff can refer to the University's intranet pages for full Terms of Reference for each group.

Training

87. All staff with decision-making or advisory responsibilities for REF2029 will be required to complete training on unconscious bias, responsible use of research metrics, and the University's approach to the use of AI tools in REF preparations. Further details on the content, expectations, and delivery of this training can be found in Appendix C.

Appeals

88. Staff who wish to appeal decisions relating to their SRfR status can follow the processes outlined in Appendix D, which sets out how centrally held information is shared, how proposed amendments should be submitted, and the steps for escalation where disagreements arise. The appendix provides full details on who to contact, relevant deadlines, and the appropriate routes for appealing SRfR decisions via the University's Resolution Policy.

Equality Impact Assessment

89. EIAs inform the development of the University's SRfR processes and wider REF2029 policies, ensuring that potential impacts on different staff groups are understood and addressed. EIAs will monitor and support inclusion of staff with protected characteristics, and staff on fixed-term and part-time contracts. This includes identification of relevant actions. Progress is overseen by the Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group, with regular reporting to the REF Strategy Committee.
90. Information on the University of Lancashire EIA can be found in Appendix E.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

Policies and procedures:

Identifying staff with research independence - REF2029 guidelines

91. In REF2029, an average staff volume measure will be used to determine the relative research capacity of a submitting UoA, and thereby the number of research outputs and impact case studies required for each UoA submission. The volume measure will be made up of FTE for staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (applies to Teaching and Research contracts) and/or research independence (Research Only contracts). **This section describes the processes associated with identifying those staff with research independence.** See Part 2 for processes related to Significant Responsibility for Research. A flowchart describing these processes is also provided in Appendix A.
92. Research independence status will be collected at contract level through the annual HESA Staff Record data collection. Data for the academic years 2025/26 and 2026/27 will be used to determine the volume measure for REF2029.
93. In REF2029, a 'research only' contract is considered to demonstrate **research independence** if the staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme.
94. Research England have outlined the following criteria for identifying colleagues with research independence:

Contracts typically exhibiting research independence are those where staff members:

- act as lead applicant on externally funded research projects
- hold an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence. [This is the list of eligible research fellowships.](#)
- lead a research group or a substantial/specialised work package
- where research independence is an inherent expectation of a contract
- for UoAs 13-34 this may also include:
 - being named as a co-applicant on an externally funded research grant/award
 - having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research
- further discipline specific examples may be provided in the final guidance

Identifying staff with research independence - University of Lancashire

95. REF2029 fields within the HESA staff record will be collected at contract level. Staff with multiple eligible contracts will be deemed to have the same research independence status across contracts during an academic year.

96. The definition of an independent researcher for the purposes of the University of Lancashire's REF2029 submission will be as follows:

"An independent researcher is an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another's research program."¹⁰

97. Research independence is assumed for all Research Only contracts at Grade H (Research Fellow and equivalent roles) or higher, where self-directed research is an expectation.

98. Research independence will otherwise be determined on a case-by-case basis through provision of evidence of sustained research independence. Example indicators of research independence that apply across all UoAs are provided below¹¹. This is not an exhaustive list. Recognising differences in disciplinary norms, multiple factors may need to be considered to demonstrate independence at discipline level.

- a) Lead or direct their own research agenda, rather than working solely under the direction of another.
- b) Demonstrate autonomy in research design, execution, and dissemination.
- c) Be named as principal investigator or equivalent on research grants or fellowships.
- d) Having responsibility for shaping research direction
- e) Hold competitive research fellowships that inherently require or support independence, as confirmed by funders.
- f) UoA subpanel level criteria published in final REF2029 guidance

Decision and communication process for research independence

99. The following process will be followed:

- a) All Research Only staff without previously agreed research independence status on academic contracts at Grade G or below will be invited annually to complete a pro forma declaration with evidence of research independence based on the above criteria or equivalent markers of independence in their discipline. The schedule for completion of proformas and decision making will be published on the REF intranet pages.
- b) Submissions will be approved by the appropriate Panel Advisory Board.
- c) Applicants will be informed of the outcome within 14 days of the REF Strategy Committee meeting.
- d) Where research independence is considered as sufficiently evidenced, the staff member will be recorded as having research independence in the University's HESA Staff Record.

¹⁰ [Section 3 – Volume Measure guidance – REF 2029](#) please see point 9.1.3

¹¹ [Section 3 – Volume Measure guidance – REF 2029](#) please see point 9.2.1

- e) Where research independence is not considered to be sufficiently evidenced, applicants will be encouraged to seek feedback from their UoA Lead or ADRKE, and to discuss opportunities for developing research independence with their line manager.
 - f) Unsuccessful applicants will be able to resubmit in future rounds¹².
100. Research Only staff can hold multiple contracts simultaneously or sequentially during an academic year. It is assumed that once research independence is agreed for one contract, this will apply to all Research Only contracts at or above this grade.
 101. Once research independence has been agreed, this will remain in place for the remainder of the REF2029 cycle.
 102. Decisions regarding research independence can be appealed using the process outlined in Appendix D.
 103. We recognise that some staff may have had a prolonged period of absence or reduction in hours as part of a phased return during the two-year REF2029 census period, and/or where they may be absent during the research independence declaration phase. In these instances, the REF Team will liaise with Deans and ADRKEs to determine if research independence is applicable.

Staff, committees, and training

Roles and responsibilities

104. The University's overarching governance for REF2029, including the REF Strategy Committee as the primary decision-making body, and the REF Operations Group, REF Advisory Panels, and RKE EDI Group as advisory or operational groups, is described in detail in Appendix B. This Appendix also sets out how UoA Leads are appointed, how committees are constituted, and how reporting lines operate. Staff can refer to the University's REF intranet pages for full Terms of Reference for each group.

Training

105. All staff with decision-making or advisory responsibilities for REF2029 will be required to complete training on unconscious bias, responsible use of research metrics, and the University's approach to the use of AI tools in REF preparations. Further details on the content, expectations, and delivery of this training can be found in Appendix C.

Appeals

106. Staff who wish to appeal decisions relating to their research independence status can follow the processes outlined in Appendix D, which sets out how centrally held information is shared, how proposed amendments should be submitted, and the steps for escalation where disagreements arise. The appendix provides full details on who to contact, relevant deadlines, and the

¹²It is anticipated that this collection exercise will extend beyond the 2026/27.

appropriate routes for appealing research independence decisions through resubmission or independent panel review.

Equality Impact Assessment

107. EIAs inform the development of the University's research independence processes and wider REF2029 policies, ensuring that potential impacts on different staff groups are understood and addressed. EIAs will monitor and support inclusion of staff with protected characteristics, and staff on fixed-term and part-time contracts. This includes identification of relevant actions. Progress is overseen by the Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group, with regular reporting to the REF Strategy Committee.
108. Information on the University of Lancashire EIA can be found in Appendix E.

Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

Policies and procedures:

109. All eligible contracts (Teaching and Research, and Research Only), regardless of SRfR or research independence status, must have a clear association with a submitting Unit of Assessment (UoA). This association should be recorded in the relevant field in the HESA Staff record collection.
110. A list of UoAs that the University is considering for submission to REF2029 is available on the staff REF intranet pages, covering the spectrum of research taking place across the institution.
111. UoA association(s) will be informed by eligible academic staff via the annual data-led review in consultation with UoA Leads. Where this information is not provided:
 - a) Staff with SRfR and research independence status will be allocated to the most appropriate UoA within the University's planned REF2029 submission based on their research activity and published REF2029 UoA descriptors.
 - b) Staff without SRfR and research independence status will be allocated to the most appropriate UoA within the University's planned REF2029 submission by the REF Team using past research activity and/or teaching focus.
112. Prior to the HESA submission (autumn), the REF Strategy Committee will formally approve UoA allocation.

Staff, committees, and training

Roles and responsibilities

113. The University's overarching governance, including the REF Strategy Committee as the primary decision-making body, and the REF Operations Group, REF Advisory Panels, and RKE EDI Group as advisory or operational groups, is described in detail in Appendix B. This Appendix also sets out how UoA Leads are appointed, how committees are constituted, how reporting lines operate. Staff can refer to the University's intranet pages for full Terms of Reference for each group.

Training

114. All staff with decision-making or advisory responsibilities for REF2029 will be required to complete training on unconscious bias, responsible use of research metrics, and the University's approach to the use of AI tools in REF preparations. Further details on the content, expectations, and delivery of this training can be found in Appendix C.

Equality Impact Assessment

115. EIAs inform the development of the University's REF2029 policies, ensuring that potential impacts on different staff groups are understood and addressed. This includes identification of relevant actions. Progress is overseen by the Research

and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group, with regular reporting to the REF Strategy Committee.

116. Information on the University of Lancashire EIA can be found in Appendix E.

Part 5: Selecting Research Outputs

Policies and procedures:

Introduction

117. This section of the University of Lancashire REF2029 Code of Practice refers to headline aspects of the REF2029 guidance on eligibility of research outputs and submission requirements. Please consult the [published guidance](#) and/or the [University of Lancashire REF Team](#) if clarification is required on specific cases.
118. REF2029 replaces the “Research Outputs” assessment from previous REF assessments with a new policy on “**Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding**”. The new approach emphasises broader, diverse research outputs (not just traditional papers) valued across scholarly, applied, and societal modes, with decoupled staff-research output links, reduced individual burdens, and increased emphasis on institutional support for varied formats like policy summaries and media content to show knowledge advancement.
119. The national [Research Diversity Advisory Panel](#) has been established to advise on embedding diversity within REF2029, ensuring recognition for diverse research practices, research output formats (artefacts, software, datasets), and impact types, thereby fostering a more inclusive and representative research assessment system.¹³
120. Each UoA submission to REF2029 must include details of eligible research outputs produced during the REF2029 period. The number of research outputs required by each UoA submission will be determined by multiplying the [UoA volume measure](#)¹⁴ by 2.5 (rounded to the nearest whole number).
121. To be eligible for inclusion in REF2029, a research output must:
- have first been brought into the public domain during the publication period 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2028¹⁵ or, if a confidential report, lodged with the body to whom it is confidential during this same period.
 - be the product of research. For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.
122. HEIs must be able to demonstrate that they have enabled the research leading to a research output. A **substantive link** between HEI and research output must be evidenced through an eligible employment relationship with an author (or equivalent) who has made a **significant research contribution** to the research output.
123. A substantive link is ordinarily demonstrated through existence of an eligible employment contract at the point of publication of the research output. This

¹³ [REF 2029 People and Diversity Advisory Panel – REF 2029](#)

¹⁴ Please see glossary for definition

¹⁵ The guidance allows for publication of research outputs published prior to this, as long as they were not used in REF2021 (further guidance to follow)

enables submission of research outputs from researchers no longer employed at the University when the REF2029 submission is made.

124. An eligible employment contract is defined as:

- A minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment
- and**
- The role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity (as distinct from scholarship) 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.

125. REF2029 also allows for submission of research outputs produced for a time-limited period beyond the end of an eligible employment contract, up to two years for most research outputs and five years for long form and extended process¹⁶ research outputs.

126. In limited circumstances, REF2029 allows submission of long-form or extended process research outputs published up to five years prior to commencement of an eligible employment contract.

127. No staff details will be submitted for assessment with research outputs. However, the University must demonstrate a substantive link¹⁷ to each submitted research output through attribution of each research output to the HESA staff id of an author or co-author with an eligible employment contract at the point of publication.

128. There is no minimum number of research outputs per HESA staff id within an individual UoA submission. There is a recommended maximum of five research outputs per staff member within an individual UoA submission.

129. UoA submissions will be required to demonstrate the representativeness¹⁸ of their research output submissions within the Strategy, People and Research Environment narrative element of the REF2029 assessment.

130. The University is committed to ensuring that the selection of research outputs for submission to REF2029 is demonstrably representative of the diversity of research carried out in each UoA across the REF2029 period, whilst ensuring the best submission for the institution. We will use a principles-based approach to output selection, ensuring that we focus on intrinsic quality of the research and the effectiveness of the output in communicating it. We will utilise expert peer review, supported – where appropriate – by the transparent and considered use of metrics, in line with REF2029 guidance.

131. In line with Section 7 of the REF2029 guidance, the University will:

- Where it is not detrimental to the overall submission ensure that the research outputs selected for submission, reflect the full range of research activity within the UoA, across disciplines, career stages, and staff categories, including those no longer employed by the institution.

¹⁶ See glossary for definition

¹⁷ See glossary for definition

¹⁸ [Section 7 – Strategy, People, and Research Environment \(SPRE\) guidance – REF 2029](#)

- Research output selection will be based on clear, published criteria aligned with REF 2029 definitions of research and eligibility.
 - All decisions will be overseen by the REF Strategy Committee, with appropriate training provided to ensure consistency, fairness, and awareness of equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations.
132. Research outputs within scope of the REF2029 Open Access policy¹⁹ must meet the requirements of that policy, noting that a wide range of policy exceptions and tolerance for non-compliance are in place to support institutions achieving compliance.

Our broad approach

133. REF2029 is an institutional submission which will drive UKRI Quality Research (QR) funding allocations to the University from 2029 onwards. Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding will account for 55% of the overall REF2029 quality profile.
134. Selection of research outputs for inclusion in our REF2029 submission will seek to maximise the quality profile achieved across the whole submission.
135. The University is a signatory to the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment and San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment and introduced its own statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics in 2019.
136. All eligible “contributions to knowledge and understanding” (research outputs) that meet the [REF2029 Guidelines](#) may be considered for inclusion in the University of Lancashire’s submission to REF2029. This may include research outputs published before, during or after an eligible employment contract.
137. Researchers will be invited to participate in the identification of research outputs that they made a significant contribution to and that could be considered for inclusion in the REF2029 submission.
138. The selection of research outputs for submission to REF2029 will be based on a transparent review process at UoA level which aims to estimate relative quality in terms of the REF2029 criteria of rigour, originality and significance²⁰.
139. A draft set of research outputs to be included in each UoA REF2029 submission will be selected in Summer 2028 by UoA Leads and Associate Deans for RKE from the available pool of scored research outputs.
140. Provision will be made for inclusion of high-quality research outputs published after this time (before the end of 2028). It is the author’s responsibility to flag to UoA Leads any research outputs that they expect to be published from 1st August 2028 to 31st December 2028 and that they think could be considered for the REF2029 submission. The deadline for flagging such research outputs will be 31st July 2028.
141. Assessment of research outputs for inclusion in REF2029 will not be based on journal-level metrics; and use of citations will be in accordance with UoA subpanel level guidance. We anticipate that peer review will remain the gold

¹⁹ Journal articles and conference proceedings with an ISSN.

²⁰ REF2029 guidance on scoring criteria is due to be published in Autumn 2026.

standard for REF2029 assessment, with citations used as supporting evidence in a small number of disciplines only. [to be updated when guidance is published]. [See paragraphs 161-163 for use of artificial intelligence in evaluation of research outputs.]

142. Final approval of research output selections will be made by the REF Strategy Committee in Autumn 2028.

Identification of eligible research outputs

143. Continuing our ongoing regular programme of Annual Research Assessment²¹ of research outputs, all research staff will be invited annually to nominate their strongest set of research outputs for inclusion in the REF2029 submission and to identify in which UoA(s) their research outputs might be considered.
144. The REF Team will complement this exercise by screening the full set of research outputs available on the institutional repository (Lancashire Online Knowledge), including those from staff no longer employed at the University.

Former staff

145. REF2029 allows submission of research outputs from staff who have left the University at the time of the REF2029 submission. Eligible research outputs can also be published after the end of the author's employment contract with the University - two years for most research outputs; five years for long form-form and extended research outputs.
146. Eligible research outputs from staff who have left the University ahead of the REF2029 submission may be considered for inclusion in the submission where a substantive link can be evidenced and where the research output will improve the University's submission.
147. The University will only use eligible research outputs from former staff that have left the institution voluntarily, moved to another HEI, left the HE sector or through the ending of a fixed-term contract.

Review of research outputs

148. UoA Leads are responsible for confirming fit of each eligible research output to their UoA based on published REF2029 UoA descriptors²².
149. UoA Leads are responsible for regular internal review of the eligible research output pool within their UoA.
150. Where possible, research outputs will be reviewed by at least one member of research active staff within the UoA.
151. UoA Leads are encouraged to convene a panel of discipline experts to moderate any discrepancies in assessments, taking into consideration the diversity of reviewers and panel.
152. Given differing publishing volumes between disciplines, it will not always be possible to review every eligible research output.

²¹ Annual Research Assessment – see glossary

²² To be published by Research England.

153. A subset of internally reviewed research outputs will undergo external review by subject experts with experience in REF assessment criteria. External review will be used to support UoA Leads in calibration of internal research output scoring, and to support evaluation of research outputs that cannot be effectively reviewed through internal processes (for example, due to lack in specific subject expertise).
154. The UoA Lead is expected to share feedback and scores with authors and, where possible, advise on how the individual may improve the quality of future research outputs.
155. The REF Team will provide an annual update to all current staff on research outputs that have been reviewed for inclusion in REF2029.

Selection of research outputs

156. REF2029 is an institutional submission. Selection of research outputs for inclusion in our REF2029 submission will seek to maximise the quality profile achieved across the whole submission.
157. Research outputs do not need to be returned to the same UoA that authors were returned to in the HESA volume measure²³, and the University of Lancashire may submit the same research output to more than one UoA where the research clearly aligns to multiple UoA descriptors (awaiting publication of these) and would maximise the quality profile.
158. The University of Lancashire will adopt an inclusive approach to selecting of research outputs in line with REF2029 guidelines. Diverse forms of research outputs²⁴ from across the research community will be considered for the submission, including those forms considered to be “non-traditional” or not written in English. Outputs produced in British Sign Language will not be treated less favourably in output selection.
159. Selection of research outputs will prioritise those research outputs assessed as likely to achieve 4* or 3* ratings. This prioritisation will be balanced with a commitment to:
- Representing the breadth and diversity of research activity within each UoA
 - Maximising the number of researchers with research outputs included in the REF2029 submission
 - Ensuring fairness and equity in the treatment of all eligible research outputs, regardless of research output type or medium, and authors/creators
 - Upholding the principles of inclusivity and transparency throughout the process
 - Maximising open access compliance for those research outputs in-scope of the [REF2029 Open Access policy](#)

²³ Based on HESA staff record for 2025/26 and 2026/27

²⁴ Diverse forms of research – see glossary

160. A substantive link between the University and each submitted research output must be demonstrated. To do this, all selected research outputs must be attributed to the HESA staff id associated with an eligible staff contract for a single co-author on each research output, with a recommended maximum of five attributions per id within a single UoA submission²⁵. Attribution of research outputs is designed to ensure that each UoA submission complies with the REF2029 guidance and will not be included in the material assessed by the REF2029 subpanels. Information on attribution of research outputs will not be shared within the institution beyond what is needed for UoA submission optimisation, quality control and approval of the REF2029 submission.

Artificial Intelligence and research assessment of research outputs

161. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly developing field and increasingly a topic of discussion in respect to research assessment, in particular for reducing administrative burden. Following REF2021, UKRI commissioned research on the use of machine learning in the evaluation of research outputs (2022)²⁶. More recently, further research, funded by Research England, explores the potential use and challenges associated with the use of generative AI in REF preparations²⁷. The report sets out a suite of recommendations on AI policy and governance in institutions; REF guidance and auditing mechanisms; and equity, capability, and sustainability.
162. There is not yet any mention of the use of AI tools within the REF2029 guidance or any associated audit requirements that may be introduced²⁸.
163. We do not anticipate that any AI-based approaches can or should be used routinely in the preparation of the University's REF2029 submission. An "AI in REF policy" is in development. Meanwhile, the following points should be considered in the preparation of the Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding submission:
- In line with emerging best practice in the sector, the University does not consider the use of AI tools or applications suitable for evaluation of the quality of research outputs being considered for submission to REF2029.
 - UoA Leads, internal and external reviewers must not use AI tools to evaluate the quality of any research outputs to be considered in the REF2029 eligible output pool.
 - UoA Leads should not use AI tools as part of the selection of research outputs for submission to REF2029.

²⁵ It may be possible to exceed this limit under limited circumstances (details to be confirmed in final guidance).

²⁶ Can REF output quality scores be assigned by AI? Experimental evidence (2022). A report for the four UK HE funding bodies by Mike Thelwall, Kayvan Kousha, Paul Wilson, Mahshid Abdoli, Meiko Makita, Emma Stuart, Jonathan Levitt. Statistical Cybermetrics and Research Evaluation Group, University of Wolverhampton, UK. [Link to report](#).

²⁷ Watermeyer, R., Phipps, L., Benites, R., and Crick, T. (2025). REF:AI: Exploring the potential of generative AI for REF2029. Centre for Higher Education Transformations and Jisc, Bristol. [Research: REF-AI project | Centre for Higher Education Transformations](#).

²⁸ This is expected to be considered within UoA-level guidance (to be published).

- A number of narrative elements exist within the Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding assessment, such as UoA-specific impact statements, double-weighting statements and contextual statements. AI tools are unable to replicate the nuance and detailed understanding required to generate meaningful and accurate content, but may be useful in improving narrative elements, for example, reducing content within a word limit.
- Current sector good practice is for users to be transparent about where they have used AI tools in the development of content.
- Decision makers in REF2029 will receive training to understand the risks of the use of AI tools within the research outputs submission and in the wider REF2029 submission (e.g. hallucinations, bias, confidentiality breaches) (See Appendix C).

Staff, committees, and training

Roles, responsibilities, process and transparency

164. Table 1 outlines the main roles and responsibilities anticipated for the selection of the University of Lancashire's REF2029 research output submission.
165. The REF Strategy Committee has overall responsibility for agreeing the approach to research output review and for final approval of research output selections proposed by the UoA Leads.
166. The REF Strategy Committee has commissioned the REF Team in collaboration with UoA Leads to:
 - a) Develop appropriate processes to review research outputs, including recruitment of expert external reviewers, through a dialogue with the Panel Advisory Boards and UoA Leads.
 - b) Design a methodology for selecting research outputs to be submitted to REF2029.
 - c) Consult colleagues from across the institution and its REF Governance Groups to ensure that the processes are fair, open, and transparent.
167. The process and methodologies developed by the REF Team will be discussed and approved by the REF Strategy Committee prior to them being initiated. The University's REF governance structure (Appendix B) will be used to collate views on processes under development, as well as to disseminate information on approved processes and methodologies. All relevant REF Strategy Committee papers and documentation relating to the review and selection of research outputs will be made available on the REF Intranet Site.
168. The REF Team will provide all staff with a regular update on which of their research outputs have been reviewed UoA submissions and any review scores.
169. UoA Leads will provide research staff with feedback on internal review outcomes. Following external review, all University staff will be provided with the agreed rating and external reviewer report for their outputs. This information will be confidential and shared only between the UoA Leads and the staff member in question.

170. All current staff will be advised of which of their research outputs were included in the REF2029 submission in early 2029.

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities in research output selection

	Researchers	UoA Leads	Main Panel Advisory Boards	REF Team	REF Strategy Committee
Identification of research outputs					
Nomination/flagging of research outputs	x	(x)			
Provision of complete research output lists				x	
Screening research outputs/author contracts for eligibility				x	
Allocating eligible research outputs to UoAs	(x)	x		(x)	
Screening eligible research outputs for Open Access compliance status				x	
Confirming publication dates with publishers for pending / delayed publication dates				x	
Provision of additional contextual data for individual research outputs e.g. statements for double weighted research outputs	x	(x)			
Curation / collation of practice-based outputs and / or multi-component research outputs	x	x		(x)	
Review of research outputs					
Managing internal review process		x		(x)	
Managing external review process		(x)		x	
Communicating outcomes from research output review		x		(x)	
Selection of outputs					

	Researchers	UoA Leads	Main Panel Advisory Boards	REF Team	REF Strategy Committee
Design of research output model to support optimal selection of research outputs		(x)		x	
Final research output selection		x		(x)	
Decision to allocate any research outputs to multiple UoAs		(x)	x	(x)	
Decision making for multi-author research outputs		(x)	x	(x)	
Decision making on double weighted research outputs		x	(x)		
Decisions as required on issues arising on individual research outputs, attributions or approach to research output selection			(x)		x

Preparation of final submission					
Collation of UoA level data, e.g. classification of research outputs	(x)	x		(x)	
Selection of reserve research outputs (double-weighted/pending publication)		x		(x)	
Collation of REF2029 submission within REF system				x	
Checking REF2029 submission		x			
Final approval of research output submission					x*
Provision of physical research outputs to national REF2029 team		(x)		x	

x = overall responsibility; (x) supporting activity

*It is anticipated that the PVC Research and Enterprise will be required to approve the final submission within the REF2029 submission system.

Training

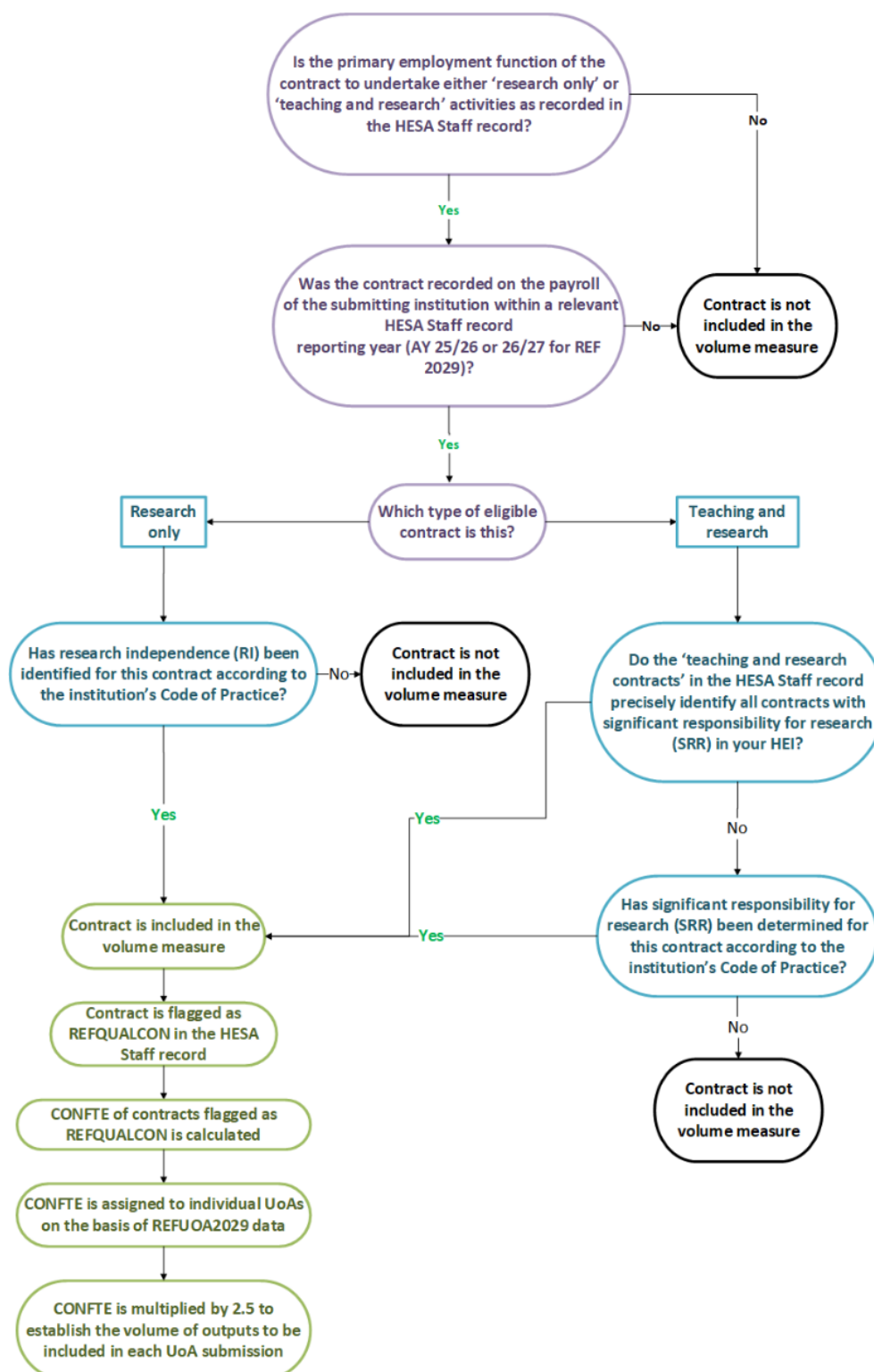
171. All staff with decision-making or advisory responsibilities for REF2029 will be required to complete training on unconscious bias, responsible use of research metrics, and the University's approach to the use of AI tools in REF preparations. Further details on the content, expectations, and delivery of this training can be found in Appendix C.

Equality Impact Assessment

172. Monitoring of the emerging research output pool will be carried out at regular intervals from 2026 onwards to assess participation of authors by protected characteristics throughout our research output processes. EIAs will also monitor and support inclusion of staff on fixed-term and part-time contracts. Findings will be reported to the Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group and required actions identified and addressed.
173. The representativeness of draft and final research output selections will be assessed in late 2028. Amendments to these selections may be made to improve representativeness where this is possible without affecting the quality of the UoA submission.
174. A final EIA of selected research outputs will be submitted to Research England following the REF2029 submission deadline.

Part 6: Appendices

Appendix A: REF2029 Volume measure contributing contracts²⁹



²⁹ Based on REF2029 guidance - [REF2029 Volume measure contributing contracts](#)

Appendix B: University's REF governance approach and structure

- B.1. The following governance structure has been put in place to oversee the University's REF2029 preparations:
- a) **REF Strategy Committee (REFSC)** is the overall decision-making body for REF at the University and is tasked with setting and monitoring our REF policies and working processes. Members primarily include Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange or equivalent senior representative for each School, along with senior representation from our EDI, Marketing and Communications, and People Teams.
 - b) **REF Operations Group (REFOG)** is tasked with operational delivery of REF priorities. Members primarily include Professional Services representatives and UoA Leads with responsibility for curating REF submissions.
 - c) **Research and Knowledge Exchange Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group (RKE EDI Group)**. Established in 2022, this group covers the range of EDI aspects of research and knowledge exchange activities, including REF2029 preparations, our Research and Knowledge Exchange for All (RKE4All) programme, and the Responsible Research Assessment agenda. Membership of this group includes representatives from various staff career stages, Post Graduate Researchers and University staff networks.
 - d) **REF Advisory Panels:** Once the panel guidance is announced for REF2029, we plan to reinstate our Main REF Panel Advisory Groups A to D to provide oversight for UoA preparations within each of the REF Main Panel areas and to facilitate sharing of best practice. Chairs of these groups will report to the REF Strategy Committee.
 - e) **Leadership of the University's REF2029 UoAs:** Each UoA has a dedicated UoA Lead, usually supported by one or more deputy UoA Lead. UoA Leads have the responsibility of managing discipline-level UoA submissions and ensuring staff engagement in REF processes and activities.
- B.2. The REF Strategy Committee also links to other University governance groups, with formal assurance reporting three times per year to the [University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee \(RKEEC\)](#), which reports directly to the University's Academic Board.
- B.3. UoA Lead roles are filled through an open call process. Where appropriate, we apply the same approach to other committee membership roles. However, many roles are appointed directly by the REF Strategic Committee (SC) and ADRKEs, particularly where specific groups are needed to ensure appropriate representation.
- B.4. Terms of Reference (ToR) and membership lists for all roles are made available to staff via the intranet. If staff have any concerns or questions about appointments, they are encouraged to raise them through their UoA Lead, ADRKE and the Impact & Outputs Unit (IOU).

- B.5. All meetings will be minuted and records stored electronically by RKES.
- B.6. All decision-making roles are required to undertake unconscious bias training (see Appendix E).

Appendix C: Training for University's REF governance bodies

- C.1. All members of staff with decision-making or advisory responsibilities for REF2029 will be required to attend REF-specific training on unconscious bias, as well as the University's policy position on responsible use of research metrics and use of Artificial Intelligence in REF2029 preparations.
- C.2. In REF2021, the University provided "Unconscious Bias Training: Decision Making for REF2021" sessions, delivered by Advance HE. We anticipate providing something similar in REF2029 with objectives for participants to:
- Understand the legislative and policy drivers and context for embedding consideration of EDI in REF2029
 - Understand the potential for implicit bias to play out in decision-making around selection of outputs in REF2029
 - Begin to develop individual and institutional actions and strategies to minimise the potential for bias in REF decision-making.
- C.3. These sessions will be supplemented with:
- Training to introduce staff to the University's evolving approach to the use of AI tools in the context of REF2029, emphasising that AI tools should not be used in preparing the submission and are not considered suitable for evaluating the quality of research outputs. Participants will be guided through key risks, such as bias, hallucinations, and confidentiality issues, and reminded that AI tools must not be used for output assessment or selection.
 - Training on the University's policy on responsible use of research metrics, aligned with the national REF expectations, which will emphasise that quantitative indicators should support rather than replace expert peer review, and that internal review panels must not use journal impact factors or any hierarchy of journals when assessing research outputs. The session will equip colleagues with the understanding needed to apply metrics appropriately, consistently, and fairly within REF2029 processes.

Appendix D: Appeals process

- D.1. SRfR and research independence statuses within the HESA staff record for 2025/26 and 2026/27 will be used to determine the staff volume measure for each UoA submission to REF2029 and thereby the number of research outputs and impact case studies required.
- D.2. Information held in the staff record, such as names of staff contributing to the volume measure, will not be shared with REF2029 panel members. Inclusion or otherwise in the volume measure is not required for research outputs to be included in the REF2029 submission.
- D.3. SRfR and research independence statuses will be collected centrally at contract level for inclusion in the HESA staff record as outlined in Parts 2 and 3 of the University of Lancashire REF2029 Code of Practice, respectively.
- D.4. These statuses will be shared with staff on eligible contracts where still employed at the University in June/July of each academic year to ensure accuracy of this information ahead of final preparation of the HESA staff record.
- D.5. Where staff believe that the centrally held information is incorrect, they should email the REF Team with any proposed amendments by no later than 31st July of the relevant academic year.
- D.6. The following processes may be followed where staff disagree with the centrally held information or decisions leading to the assignment of these statuses.

SRfR status

- D.7. SRfR status of staff on Teaching and Research contracts will be based on the existence of research objectives as described in Part 2 (paragraphs 68 to 81). Information will be collected centrally via an annual data-led review, with outcomes validated by Deans of School or equivalent.
- D.8. Proposed changes sent to the REF Team (point C.5) will be referred to the relevant Dean of School or Director of Service as appropriate who will confirm or otherwise any amendment to SRfR status. The result of this will be fed back to the staff member.
- D.9. Setting of research objectives and associated workload (and thereby SRfR status) is carried out within Schools and appeals at this point should follow the University's Resolution Policy. Should the staff member continue to disagree with the recorded SRfR status, they should contact their People Team partner immediately to discuss resolution.
- D.10. Any appeal process must be concluded by 31st August of each academic year.

Research independence status

- D.11. Research independence status of staff on Research Only contracts will be based on the process outlined in Part 3 (paragraphs 95 to 98). Staff will be required to evidence their independence via a proforma. Decisions regarding research independence status will be made by the relevant Panel Advisory Board and communicated to applicants.

- D.12. Where staff believe that the centrally held information (see point C.5) is incorrect, they should email the REF Team with any proposed amendments by no later than 31st July of the relevant academic year.
- D.13. Proposed changes sent to the REF Team (point C.12) will be referred to the relevant Dean of School or Director of Service as appropriate who will confirm or otherwise any amendment to SRfR status. The result of this will be fed back to the staff member.
- D.14. Where staff disagree with any decision made based on submission of a research independence proforma, they should email the REF Team within two weeks of receiving their decision.
- D.15. In this instance, the staff member will be encouraged to resubmit their research independence proforma, providing additional evidence.
- D.16. Should no further evidence be available, or should the decision stand upon review by the Panel Advisory Board and the staff member still wishes to appeal the decision, a panel that is independent of institutional REF2029 decision making processes will be convened, comprising three members of the professoriate from the same Main Panel area. To ensure independence, appeal member panels will be drawn from different Schools and UoAs than the appellant and will not be a current UoA Lead, ADRKE or member of any institutional REF2029 governance group.
- D.17. The decision of this panel will be final.
- D.18. Where research independence status is not conferred, staff will be provided with research career development advice. They will be able to apply for research independence status in any further rounds of data collection.

Appendix E: Equality Impact Assessments for REF2029

- E.1. The REF2029 EIA is a live, iterative document that will be updated throughout the REF cycle. A copy of the current REF2029 EIA is provided for the CoP staff consultation and can be found on this intranet page. The EIA will be appended to the final Code of Practice prior to submission to Research England.
- E.2. EIAs inform the development of the University's wider REF2029 policies, ensuring that potential impacts on different staff groups are understood and addressed. EIAs are conducted at key stages, such as defining SRfR status, with findings, data, and resulting actions made available on the REF Intranet Site to support transparency and continual improvement.
- E.3. Our combined EIA covers:
- Identification of staff with significant responsibility for research (Part 2)
 - Identification of staff with research independence (Part 3)
 - Selection of research outputs (Part 5)
- E.4. EIA integration with our REF processes includes communication strategies (ensuring accessibility for part-time staff and those on leave), unconscious bias training, internal review and selection of outputs, conducting external reviews to validate internal reviews and correct for any internal bias, staff engagement and sharing review scores with staff.
- E.5. The EIA will also evidence how data and findings have influenced actions taken, including amendments to processes where disproportionate impacts or barriers are identified.
- Oversight of the EIA and its integration across REF processes will be provided by the RKE EDI Group, which will review findings, advise on actions, and ensure alignment with the University's broader Equality, Diversity & Inclusion commitments.



University of
Lancashire

REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment

May 2026

Version 3.0

Research and Knowledge Exchange Service
lancashire.ac.uk

Version control

Version number	Version stage and key changes
Version 1.1	Published as part of staff consultation (12 th February 2026)
Version 2.1	Submitted for approval to RKE EDI Group (29 th April 2026) and REF Strategy Committee (27 th April 2026)
Version 2.2	Submitted to Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee (6 th May 2026) and VCG
Version 3.0	Submitted to Research England with Draft REF2029 Code of Practice (14 th May 2026)

Introduction

1. The University of Lancashire is a large Higher Education Institution with a REF eligible population of ~1,500 (~1,200 FTE)³⁰. As with many other post-1992 institutions, a large proportion of eligible staff are teaching-focussed or carry out other activities unrelated to research. Around 450 members of staff within the wider eligible population currently contribute to the REF2029 volume measure (i.e. have significant responsibility for research or research independence³¹). This is broadly in line with our REF2021 submission.
2. The University's REF2029 Code of Practice outlines our institutional approach to REF2029 and the processes the University is taking in preparing its submission. The Code of Practice covers processes and criteria for defining Significant Responsibility for Research (SRfR) and research independence, and output selection.
3. Publication of REF2029 guidance saw removal of the requirement to link specific research outputs to individual researchers and eliminates the collection of individual staff circumstances (e.g., part-time, career breaks) as a mechanism for reducing output submissions.
4. Research England expects institutions to be fair to staff and demonstrate the principles of equity, equality and transparency throughout REF2029 preparations and within the submission.
5. The University is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our REF2029 Code of Practice is being developed in consultation with staff, including with networks for those with protected characteristics, across career levels and with the Trade Unions.
6. The University must demonstrate through Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) conducted throughout its REF2029 preparations that it has considered any negative or positive impacts arising from the processes and criteria outlined in its REF2029 Code of Practice, giving due regard to its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and that it does not unlawfully discriminate against individuals because of an actual or perceived association with one or more of the following characteristics: age, disability (or association with someone with a disability), sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity or paternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. Our intention is to take a broad of inclusivity in our REF2029 preparations, extending the scope beyond that of defined protected characteristics. We will also consider the broader impact on gender and gender identity, staff with caring responsibilities, and different employment characteristics.
7. The REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment will look at:
 - Identification of Teaching & Research staff based on their Significant Responsibility for Research status

³⁰ As of 31st July 2025.

³¹ Significant Responsibility for Research (SRfR) is a REF term that applies to academic staff on Teaching and Research contracts as returned in the annual HESA staff record collection; Research Independence status applies to staff on Research Only contracts. The REF2029 volume measure will be based on average FTE for both groups in the HESA staff record for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

- Identification of Research Only staff based on their research independence status
 - Allocation of eligible contracts to Units of Assessment
 - Output selection
8. Oversight of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion during REF2029 preparations is provided by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Equality and Diversity Steering Group, feeding into the REF Strategy Committee which provides overarching governance for REF2029.
 9. Our REF2029 EIA is a “living” document and will be reviewed and refreshed throughout the University’s REF2029 preparations. Implementation of the REF2029 Code of Practice will be monitored to ensure staff with protected characteristics are not disadvantaged by REF processes, including clear, wide and accessible communication of REF requirements, engagement with staff networks, and improving the quality of diversity data on the University’s iTrent HR system. Where EDI analysis allows, identified issues regarding inclusion of different staff groupings across REF2029 preparations will inform decision making regarding communications, processes, and preparation of the final REF2029 submission.
 10. Following submission of our REF2029 return (Autumn 2028), the University is required to carry out a final Equality Impact Assessment, to be submitted to Research England alongside our finalised REF2029 Code of Practice.

Part 1: Significant Responsibility for Research

Clarify the aims and objectives of your policy or practice

11. As set out in the REF2029 Guidance³², the University is required to identify all eligible staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRfR) within its HESA staff record collection for the academic years 2025/26 and 2026/27. The average FTE across this two-year period (combined with that for research independence, see Part 2), will determine the volume measure for each UoA submission, and thereby the number of research outputs and impact case studies required in the final submission.
12. The criteria used to determine SRfR status³³ are specific to the University and have been agreed through a period of consultation with the staff body, specific staff networks and Trade Unions.
13. Individuals can only be counted in the REF2029 volume measure if they meet the agreed institutional definition of SRfR.

³² [Link to REF2029 volume measure guidance](#).

³³ See University of Lancashire Code of Practice, Part 2

14. Staff and research outputs are decoupled in REF2029. Individual researchers do not have to be included in the volume measure for their research outputs and impact to be submitted to REF2029³⁴.

How could the processes and criteria outlined in the Code of Practice impact on people?

15. Unlike previous REF exercises, individuals are not submitted to REF2029, details of staff are not included in the REF2029 submission, and UoA sub-panel members will not receive lists of outputs attributed to individual staff members. There is no collection of staff circumstances that have affected productivity during the REF cycle.
16. Although individual researchers are less visible in the REF2029 assessment, due to the use of the HESA staff record to determine the volume measure and the decoupling of research outputs from authors, inclusion within the University's REF2029 submission may be a sensitive topic for some staff members. The University has signalled its commitment to responsible research assessment and use of research metrics through its membership of the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment and own internal policies. REF2029 decisions are strategic and aim to maximise the quality profile of the overall submission. Individual researchers are no longer "submitted to the REF" and should not be assessed solely based on their contribution to the REF volume measure or number of outputs submitted to REF2029. That said, understanding of changes in REF2029 are not well embedded. The REF Team will provide clear explanations to senior management, UoA Leads and other decision makers, and the research population more broadly regarding these changes.
17. The University's definition of SRfR is intended to be inclusive and flexible. We have moved away from our REF2021 definition based on minimum levels of research workload and propose instead a focus on the existence of at least one research objectives that should be agreed and discussed during regular appraisal meetings. In particular, this is hoped to support those towards the beginning of their career, as well as part-time researchers.
18. Some staff may not feel able to effectively vocalise their career or any wish to be included in the REF2029 volume measure during their appraisal. The University will ensure that all staff holding appraisals have received relevant guidance to avoid introduction of unconscious bias and to support all staff fairly. In addition to monitoring those groups most likely affected (ECRs, part-time staff, staff with protected characteristics), all staff on eligible contracts will have an opportunity to comment upon their SRfR status as part of the annual SRfR review.
19. Part-time staff have been considered in the guidance by Research England through introduction of a variable output requirement, and with the minimum output requirement removed. However, part-time staff may find it more challenging to produce research and are encouraged to discuss workload

³⁴ Eligibility of research outputs is determined by the existence of a substantive link between the University and research output, normally an employment relationship of at least 0.2 FTE and minimum 12 months continuous employment.

issues with their line manager during appraisals. The University will not determine SRfR status based on the quantity or quality of research outputs. The proportion of part-time staff within the SRfR population will be monitored.

20. Similarly, staff with caring responsibilities may face additional barriers to conducting research productively. This information is not currently held for individuals. EDI monitoring of contract status (part-time/full-time) and/or by gender will be used in the first instance as proxy indicators. It is anticipated that staff may be asked about caring responsibilities in future to align with sector good practice.
21. Concerns were raised during REF2021 preparations on the level of awareness and understanding by line managers of unseen disabilities, with some individuals having felt unsupported in the past. Since REF2021, a Neurodivergent Staff Network has been launched, alongside the Tailored Adjustments Plan³⁵ and a range of training on neurodivergence and mental health. We will seek to monitor inclusion of staff with unseen disabilities through relevant staff networks and surveys. The University is currently reviewing disability questions with a view to allowing provision of more detailed information on types of disability in line with sector best practice, including unseen disability. This will be used when available to inform our REF preparations.
22. There is no collection of staff circumstances in REF2029. Although, the removal of a minimum output requirement is intended to increase inclusivity of the REF2029 submission, staff with a disability, illness or other personal circumstances that reduces their productivity over the REF2029 volume period may be disproportionately affected by the requirements of the SRfR definition. These staff may be less likely to engage with the self-declaration stage of our SRfR process.
23. Where staff have had a prolonged period of absence or reduction in hours as part of a phased return during the two-year REF2029 census period, and/or where they may be absent during the self-declaration phase, SRfR status is implied where there is a research objective or where there ordinarily would be a research objective, regardless of any research activity taking place. We will work with the relevant staff networks to assess the need for additional analysis or monitoring.
24. Where possible, consideration will be given to where intersectionality may create a further barrier than two characteristics alone, for example, women from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. In the first instance, we will analyse data for race/gender and contract type/gender and consult with EDI networks on other areas that would be helpful to monitor.

Analysis of the evidence gathered regarding the protected characteristics of the staff affected directly/indirectly by this work.

25. Table 1 compares current REF2029 SRfR estimates (from the 2024/25 annual HESA staff record) to the REF2029 eligible population by age, gender,

³⁵ Previously the Disability Passport, this is a formal, tailored, living record of workplace (reasonable) adjustments agreed between a colleague and their line manager. [Link to intranet resources on Tailored Adjustments Plan](#) (University staff only).

disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and nationality. SRfR figures for the final REF2021 submission are provided for comparison.

26. When considering gender, the current eligible population has a higher proportion of female employees (55% female, 45% male), compared to the SRfR population (51% female, 49% male). However, the current proportion of female SRfR staff is substantially higher than seen in the final REF2021 submission (41%). The University has undergone significant staff changes since REF2021, and investigation is required into the impact of discipline distribution on gender shares. REF2021 analysis at Main Panel level (not shown) highlighted relatively high proportions of women in Panel A, and conversely relatively high proportions of men in Panel B. This will be replicated for REF2029 populations.
27. The age profile of the current REF2029 SRfR and eligible population are broadly in line with each other. However, there has been an upwards shift in age profile since REF2021, which may be related to the cost containment programme and reduced rates of recruitment. This warrants further investigation to ensure that younger staff are sufficiently supported to engage in research.
28. There is a slightly lower proportion of staff from an ethnic minority background in the REF2029 SRfR population compared to the eligible population, again warranting further investigation.
29. There do not appear to be high level differences in other protected characteristics. Whilst the high level of non-declaration prevents robust analysis, these levels have fallen substantially since REF2021 for sexual orientation and religion.
30. Further investigation of the characteristics of the SRfR and eligible population will be carried out at School level to assess the impact of local practices on ability to secure SRfR status.

Table 1. Analysis of declared characteristics of REF2029 eligible population and those with REF2029 SRfR status³⁶, compared to the REF2021 SRfR population (% of headcount)

Age	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
≤ 30	0%	1%	2%
31-40	24%	15%	19%
41-50	32%	35%	33%
51-60	32%	32%	31%
60-69	12%	17%	14%
70+		1%	1%
Grand total	100%	100%	100%

Gender	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
Female	41%	51%	55%
Male	59%	49%	45%
Other			
Grand total	100%	100%	100%

Disability	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
No	88%	85%	84%
Yes	6%	7%	7%
Not known	7%	6%	9%
Prefer not to say		3%	
Grand total	100%	100%	100%

Ethnicity	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
Asian or Asian British	5%	7%	9%
Black or Black British	4%	4%	4%
Mixed	3%	2%	2%
Other ethnic groups	6%	4%	4%
White	79%	80%	77%
Not stated	3%	1%	2%
Prefer not to say		2%	2%
Grand total	100%	100%	100%

³⁶ HESA 24/25 pilot year, as at 31.07.2025

Sexual orientation	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
Bisexual	1%	1%	2%
Gay/lesbian	2%	3%	3%
Heterosexual/straight	58%	71%	75%
Other	1%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say / not known	38%	25%	20%
Grand total	100%	100%	100%

Religion	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
No	29%	33%	31%
Yes	34%	40%	48%
Not known	37%	27%	21%

Nationality	REF2021 SRfR	REF2029 SRfR	REF2029 eligible
Non-UK	Not Collected	21%	20%
UK		79%	80%
Not Known		1%	0%
Grand total		100%	100%

How has consultation with those who share a protected characteristic informed your work?

31. The University's REF2029 Code of Practice was developed in consultation with staff in February/March 2026. Staff could respond to the consultation via a variety of methods to suit their availability and working patterns:
 - Institutional staff open sessions
 - An electronic survey, which could be completed anonymously
 - Contacting the REF Managers by email, phone or face to face.
32. The LGBT+ staff network, staff disability network, neurodivergent staff network, race equality network and women's network were invited to participate in the consultation, with awareness raising activity across our three career stage networks for early career researchers, mid-career researchers, and readers/professoriate.
33. The Research and Knowledge EDI Steering Group will have oversight of the REF2029 EIA. This group contains representatives across staff networks.

In light of the evidence listed in section C and outcome from the consultation in Section D, what potentially negative impacts could this work have on people with protected characteristics?

34. There is a difference in age profile between the 2024/25 SRfR and eligible population, suggesting that younger researchers may be less able to be identified as having SRfR status and securing research time.
35. There are also differences in the ethnicity profile of the 2024/25 SRfR and eligible population. Further investigation is required to understand this difference.
36. Further investigation of the characteristics of SRfR and eligible staff will be carried out at School and discipline level to assess the impact of local practices on ability of researchers to secure SRfR status.

What could you do to ensure your work has a positive impact on equality and diversity?

37. The decision-making process in the University's REF governance will be transparent, with all Sub-group and Committee memberships and meeting summaries available on the REF intranet pages. Where a vacancy arises, consideration to equality and diversity and under-representation will be given during the recruitment and appointment process.
38. The REF Team will work with UoA leads, Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge exchange, Deans of School and others to increase the visibility of REF, including targeted sessions for staff in groups identified as being Early Career Researchers, independent Research Only or otherwise needing support.
39. Ongoing robust monitoring will be carried out to investigate anomalies in our datasets, with appropriate actions identified. This will be overseen by the RKE EDI Group, which will also be a forum for raising issues that may not be identifiable in EDI datasets, including protected characteristics that are difficult to monitor due to small numbers.

In light of the assessment above what is the decision, and what specific actions are proposed to deliver positive impacts and address any potentially negative impacts?

40. Actions have been captured on the REF2029 EIA Action Plan. The Action Plan will be overseen by the RKE EDI Group.

Part 2: Research Independence

Clarify the aims and objectives of your policy or practice

41. As set out in the REF2029 Guidance³⁷, the University is required to identify all eligible Research Only staff contracts with Research Independence within its HESA staff record collection for the academic years 2025/26 and 2026/27. The

³⁷ [Link to REF2029 volume measure guidance](#)

average FTE across this two-year period (combined with that of significant responsibility for research, see Part 1), will determine the volume measure for each UoA submission, and thereby the number of research outputs and impact case studies required in the final submission.

42. For REF purposes an independent researcher is an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another's research program. As per the REF2029 guidance, academic staff whose primary employment function is 'Research Only' and who are employed to carry out another individual's research program³⁸, are not considered to be independent. An individual is not considered to be an independent researcher on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs. Most Research Only staff at the University are Research Assistants/Associates and fall into this category and therefore, as outlined in the institution's REF2029 Code of Practice, Research Only staff are assumed to not be independent unless evidence of independence can be provided.
43. The process used to determine research independence status (see Code of Practice Part 3) is specific to the University and will be agreed through a period of consultation with the staff body, specific staff networks and Trade Unions.
44. Individuals can only be counted in the REF2029 volume measure if they meet the REF2029 definition of research independence for Research Only staff.
45. Staff and research outputs are decoupled in REF2029. Individual researchers do not have to be included in the volume measure for their research outputs and impact to be submitted to REF2029³⁹.
46. Staff on Research Only contracts at Grade H and above are assumed to be independent by virtue of their grade and will be included in the REF2029 volume measure. To be included in the REF2029 volume measure, staff on Research Only contracts below Grade H are required to self-declare and evidence their independence through a proforma and subsequent review. This process will commence in Spring 2026 (with respect to the 2025/26 HESA staff record collection) and end on 31st July 2027.
47. Due to the varied nature of Research Only contracts, decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the University's REF2029 Panel Advisory Boards⁴⁰. We note that of 140 Research Only staff were in post on the REF2021 Census⁴¹ date, with 40 approved as being independent researchers.

³⁸ [Link to REF2029 guidance on identifying staff with research independence](#), Volume Measure Guidance section 9.

³⁹ Eligibility of research outputs is determined by the existence of a substantive link between the University and research output, normally an employment relationship of at least 0.2 FTE and minimum 12 months continuous employment.

⁴⁰ Our REF2029 governance structure includes four REF Panel Advisory Boards aligned to the Main Panel areas. Boards will be chaired by senior research leaders and comprise academic UoA Leads for each of the University's REF2029 submissions within the Main Panel area. See REF2029 Code of Practice Appendix B.

⁴¹ 31st July 2020.

48. Targeted support and encouragement for self-declaration will be provided by Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads, Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange and the institutional REF Team.

How could the processes and criteria outlined in the Code of Practice impact on people?

49. Although individual researchers are less visible in the REF2029 assessment, due to the use of the HESA staff record to determine the volume measure and the decoupling of research outputs from authors, inclusion within the University's REF2029 submission may be a sensitive topic for some staff members. The University has signalled its commitment to responsible research assessment and use of research metrics through its membership of the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment and internal policies. REF2029 decisions are strategic and aim to maximise the quality profile of the overall submission. Individual researchers are no longer "submitted to the REF" and should not be assessed on the basis of their contribution to the REF volume measure or number of outputs submitted to REF2029. That said, understanding of changes in REF2029 are not well embedded. The REF Team will provide clear explanations to senior management, UoA Leads and other decision makers, and the research population more broadly regarding these changes.
50. Staff who need to evidence their independence need to complete the relevant proforma, which will be reviewed by the appropriate Panel Advisory Board. Decisions will be made based on the evidence provided, supported by recommendations from the Dean of School and UoA Lead. This process is required for any post-submission audit but appear daunting to less experienced staff. Suitable mentorship or support from senior colleagues will be provided by relevant UoA Leads.
51. The majority of Research Only staff are not considered independent researchers as defined by the REF2029 guidance, regardless of authorship on one or more research outputs. It will be necessary to carefully manage the expectations of staff. Prior to completing the independence proforma, staff will be advised to first discuss their individual situation with their UoA Lead. The process is designed to provide sufficient feedback to ensure that staff career development and research ambitions can be supported through the University appraisal cycle.
52. Research Only staff are more likely to be ECRs and therefore may require support from more experienced colleagues in evidencing their independence or in having confidence to self-declare. Due to the variation by discipline, staff are encouraged to seek support from their line manager, UoA Lead or AD RKE.

Analysis of the evidence gathered regarding the protected characteristics of the staff affected directly/indirectly by this work.

53. Analysis will be carried out following the first round of declaration of research independence in Spring/Summer 2026.

How has consultation with those who share a protected characteristic informed your work?

54. The University's REF2029 Code of Practice is being developed in consultation with staff in February/March 2026. Staff are able to respond to the consultation via a variety of methods to suit their availability and working patterns:
 - Institutional staff open sessions
 - An electronic survey, which could be completed anonymously
 - Contacting the REF Managers by email, phone or face to face.
55. The LGBT+ staff network, staff disability network, neurodivergent staff network, race equality network and women's network will be invited to participate in the consultation, with awareness raising activity across our three career stage networks for early career researchers, mid-career researchers, and readers/professoriate.
56. The Research and Knowledge EDI Steering Group will have oversight of the REF2029 EIA. This group contains representatives across staff networks.

What potentially negative impacts could this work have on people with protected characteristics?

57. The decision-making process in the University's REF governance will be transparent, with all Sub-group and Committee memberships and meeting summaries available on the REF intranet pages. Where a vacancy arises, consideration to equality and diversity and under-representation will be given during the recruitment and appointment process. Open call and encouragement for staff from protected groups.
58. The REF Team will work with UoA leads, Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge exchange, Deans of School and others to increase the visibility of REF, including targeted sessions for staff in groups identified as being Early Career Researchers, independent Research Only or otherwise needing support.
59. Ongoing robust monitoring will be carried out to investigate anomalies in our datasets, with appropriate actions identified. This will be overseen by the RKE EDI Group, which will also be a forum for raising issues that may not be identifiable in EDI datasets, including protected characteristics that are difficult to monitor due to small numbers.

What could you do to ensure your work has a positive impact on equality and diversity?

60. The REF Team will work with UOA leads, Heads of School and others to increase the visibility of REF, including targeted sessions for staff in groups identified as being ECR, Research Only (independent) or otherwise needing support.
61. Engagement with the ECR staff network and colleagues as they joined the University enables the communication of REF information and support for staff needing to declare their independence from the beginning of their employment contract with the University.

62. The REF Team will continue to work with the ECR network to disseminate information about REF processes. Staff within the Professoriate will be encouraged to mentor and support independent Research Only contract staff to complete the pro-forma and evidence their independence.
63. The number and make up of completed proformas and rate of research independence approval will be monitored closely, alongside targeted communications in hand with UoA Leads to ensure relevant staff are encouraged appropriately to self-declare.

In light of the assessment above what is the decision, and what specific actions are proposed to deliver positive impacts and address any potentially negative impacts?

64. Actions have been captured on the REF2029 EIA Action Plan. The Action Plan will be overseen by the RKE EDI Group.
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Part 3: Allocation of eligible contracts to UoA

Clarify the aims and objectives of your policy or practice

65. HEIs are responsible for mapping eligible contracts to Units of Assessment (UoAs) in the annual HESA staff record collection. Each eligible contract should be linked to the UoA to which it is principally associated. A reasonable rationale for this allocation may be requested at audit.
66. The EIA must consider equality impacts of the process and specifically consider whether the process of allocating contracts to UoAs is fair and inclusive.
67. UoA association(s) will be informed by research staff via the annual data-led review in consultation with UoA Leads. Where this information is not provided:
68. Staff with SRfR and Research Independence status will be allocated to the most appropriate UoA within the University's planned REF2029 submission based on their research activity and published REF2029 UoA descriptors.
69. Staff without SRfR and Research Independence status will be allocated to the most appropriate UoA within the University's planned REF2029 submission by the REF Team using past research activity and/or teaching focus.

How could the processes and criteria outlined in the Code of Practice impact on people?

70. UoA allocation is determined by the area of research that is being undertaken and fit to REF2029 UoA descriptors, noting that many researchers at the University of Lancashire conduct interdisciplinary research that may be returned to more than one REF2029 UoA.
71. No impacts from the processes and criteria outlined above have been identified.

Analysis of the evidence gathered regarding the protected characteristics of staff affected directly/indirectly by this work.

72. An EDI comparison will be carried out annually at Main Panel level, and at UoA level where feasible.

How has consultation with those who share a protected characteristic informed your work?

73. The University's REF2029 Code of Practice was developed in consultation with staff in February/March 2026. Staff could respond to the consultation via a variety of methods to suit their availability and working patterns:
- Institutional staff open sessions
 - An electronic survey, which could be completed anonymously
 - Contacting the REF Managers by email, phone or face to face.
74. The LGBT+ staff network, staff disability network, neurodivergent staff network, race equality network and women's network were invited to participate in the consultation, with awareness raising activity across our three career stage networks for early career researchers, mid-career researchers, and readers/professoriate.
75. The Research and Knowledge EDI Steering Group will have oversight of the REF2029 EIA. This group contains representatives across staff networks.
76. No impacts from the processes and criteria outlined above have been identified.

What potentially negative impacts could this work have on people with protected characteristics?

77. We do not anticipate any negative impacts from this process.

What could you do to ensure your work has a positive impact on equality and diversity?

78. Our REF2029 Code of Practice sets out criteria and processes related to inclusion in the REF2029 submission that we believe to be inclusive.
79. Participation of staff with protected characteristics, caring responsibilities and different contract arrangements across REF preparations will be monitored over time and arising issues fed into forward action-planning and decision-making processes.

In light of the assessment above what is the decision, and what specific actions are proposed to deliver positive impacts and address any potentially negative impacts?

80. No specific actions are proposed.

Part 4: Selection of Outputs

Clarify the aims and objectives of your policy or practice

81. The majority (55%) of the University's REF2029 results will be determined by assessment of research outputs. Research outputs can take many forms, including (but not limited to) journal articles, book chapters, artefacts and portfolios of research practice works.
82. English Higher Education Institutions receive annual mainstream Quality Related (QR) funding, currently based on the percent of their REF submission rated at 3* and 4* (4* weighted 4x higher than 3*)⁴². This funding is vital for the University to continue to grow and sustain a thriving research environment. The primary goal of the REF2029 outputs submission is therefore to maximise the quality of the return, specifically the number/proportion of 3* and 4* outputs, whilst ensuring the set of submitted outputs are representative of the research areas and diverse staff associated with each UoA.
83. In REF2021, all staff submitted were directly associated with outputs, with a minimum requirement for one output per submitted researcher and maximum of five⁴³.
84. Output selection in REF2029 is different. HEIs will not submit staff in the same way as in earlier REF assessments. Outputs are decoupled from staff, with the number of outputs required determined by the REF volume measure⁴⁴. HEIs will be required to attribute outputs to an eligible staff contract via their HESA staff id, to demonstrate that each UoA submission fulfils the minimum/maximum parameters set out in the guidance⁴⁵. Each submitted Unit of Assessment (UoA) requires 2.5 outputs per submitted FTE. Research England will not publish the attribution of outputs to individual researchers.
85. The University of Lancashire Code of Practice outlines the process by which outputs will be selected for the submission.
86. Staff will be invited annually to participate in the identification of their best eligible research outputs to which they have made a significant contribution to and will be kept informed of estimated scores obtained through internal or external review.
87. In early 2029, all staff in post at that time will be notified of which outputs they were listed as a co-author on within the submission.

⁴² This is the funding model currently that has been used to translate REF2021 results into QR funding (up to 2025/26 allocations). The model may be amended in future years or following future REF assessment exercises.

⁴³ The minimum one requirement could be removed where defined or complex circumstances had been declared and approved. The number of outputs required at UoA level could also be reduced where the UoA had been disproportionately affected by a combination of such circumstances.

⁴⁴ An average FTE calculated from the annual HESA staff record over the two year-period 2025/26 and 2026/27.

⁴⁵ There is no minimum requirement for attributing outputs to staff ids, but the guidance suggests a recommended maximum of five attributed outputs per HESA staff id in an individual UoA submission.

How could the processes and criteria outlined in the Code of Practice impact on people?

88. It is anticipated that engagement with nomination of research outputs will vary across the University. There are significant pressures on staff time, and some researchers may not be able to prioritise participation in REF2029 processes. Part-time researchers and those with caring responsibilities may be less likely to participate. International or younger researchers may not fully appreciate the importance of REF2029 to the University or research culture. An improved process is being introduced in 2026 to support higher participation.
89. Participation by different groups in REF2029 related activities will be monitored. UoA Leads will be given supplementary information on all research outputs recorded in the institutional repository, to complement the annual research output nomination exercise.
90. Attribution of research outputs to researchers will be carried out to maximise the University's REF2029 quality profile, whilst endeavouring to balance representativeness across groups of staff and research areas. Attributions will not be shared institutionally beyond those directly involved in preparing the REF2029 submission.
91. Researchers or research managers may have expectations of how many outputs should be attributed to researchers, for example, depending on career stage or research workload allocation. Staff may be concerned that the number of outputs selected will affect their career progression or standing in the research community.
92. Where staff have constraints on the time available to produce research (for example, career breaks, disability, fractional contracts), it is anticipated that their overall contribution could be less.
93. The institution is being open and transparent, communicating how outputs will be selected and that the primary aim of output selection is to maximise the quality of its submission. The institution aims to make it clear that there is no detriment to an individual based on number of research outputs returned in the submission.
94. Following final submission, the University will notify all staff and School management of all research outputs on which researchers were a co-author, regardless of attribution (or UoA), allowing their full contribution to REF2029 to be understood.
95. It is understood that long-standing biases may exist within sub-disciplines within individual UoAs that may influence selection of particular research output types, methodologies, or topics. UoA Leads, who are responsible for making the final research output selection, will undertake mandatory unconscious bias training. In addition, UoA Leads will be encouraged to establish a committee of UoA representatives, spanning the diversity of their discipline.
96. Staff may not agree with the selection of their outputs. Staff will be notified in 2028 of the outputs that are being considered for selection and will be encouraged to discuss this with their UoA Lead and to suggest any new outputs that had not been reviewed. Outputs will be reviewed internally and externally

to inform selection of outputs for the submission. Staff personal views on their strongest work will be considered.

Analysis of the evidence gathered regarding the protected characteristics of staff affected directly/indirectly by this work.

97. Ongoing monitoring of participation in Annual Research Assessment of research outputs will commence in the autumn of 2026.

How has consultation with those who share a protected characteristic informed your work?

98. The University's REF2029 Code of Practice was developed in consultation with staff in February/March 2026. Staff could respond to the consultation via a variety of methods to suit their availability and working patterns:
- Institutional staff open sessions
 - An electronic survey, which could be completed anonymously
 - Contacting the REF Managers by email, phone or face to face.
99. The LGBT+ staff network, staff disability network, neurodivergent staff network, race equality network and women's network were invited to participate in the consultation, with awareness raising activity across our three career stage networks for early career researchers, mid-career researchers, and readers/professoriate.
100. The Research and Knowledge EDI Steering Group will have oversight of the REF2029 EIA. This group contains representatives across staff networks.
101. No comments were received during the consultation specifically related to research output evaluation and selection.

In light of the evidence listed in section C and outcome from the consultation in Section D, what potentially negative impacts could this work have on people with protected characteristics?

102. To be completed following first round of analysis.

What could you do to ensure your work has a positive impact on equality and diversity?

103. Monitoring of participation in research output nomination exercises will help identify groups that may be underrepresented, with action taken to redress any imbalances.
104. It will be made clear to staff throughout REF2029 preparations that there is no detriment to a staff member having no outputs returned within the submission.
105. Staff will be given full opportunity to have their best outputs assessed and included in the submission. To this end, staff will be notified at regular intervals of outputs that have been reviewed. In December 2027 an indication will be given of which outputs are being considered for submission and will be invited to suggest others for inclusion. The final selection will take place in summer 2028.

106. In sharing details of the final REF submission with senior managers, information on the full set of outputs on which staff are co-authors has been provided and not on the number of attributed outputs.
107. UoA Leads will be encouraged to check with staff regularly whether new outputs have been produced and to discuss those that would be strongest for the submission.
108. There is an emphasis throughout on REF2029 as an institutional submission and that contributions are made from across the University.
109. Where a UoA has a choice between outputs of equivalent quality for submission they will be encouraged to consider the representativeness of their UoA within their selection. This may include representativeness of sub-disciplines, research output types and characteristics of the authors of research outputs.

In light of the assessment above what is the decision, and what specific actions are proposed to deliver positive impacts and address any potentially negative impacts?

110. Actions have been captured on the REF2029 EIA Action Plan. The Action Plan will be overseen by the RKE EDI Group.
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Conclusions

111. It is hoped that the University of Lancashire's REF2029 Code of Practice and the policies and procedures set out within it will ensure that our REF2029 submission is inclusive.
112. There is no REF2029 requirement for collection of information on staff with circumstances limiting their productivity, which served to enable fair inclusion of such staff in previous, more selective REF exercises. We will monitor our REF2029 processes to ensure that these staff are not disadvantaged. We have set out a revised definition for Significant Responsibility for Research that is intended to be more inclusive.
113. We have consulted with the staff body, including those with protected characteristics, in drafting our Code of Practice; and aim to regularly communicate with staff throughout our REF2029 preparations.
114. The University is committed to ensuring EDI is considered across all its activities, with sustained progress in achieving this since we made our REF2021 submission. Our new Belonging Strategy will serve to place EDI at the heart of what we do up to and beyond our REF2029 submission.

Appendix 1 – REF2029 Equality Impact Assessment Action Table

Objective	Aim	Action	Action(s)	Owner	Timing
REF EDI 1	We have robust EDI data that allows us to monitor for EDI-related issues in REF datasets.	1.1	Improve staff awareness of importance of disclosure of EDI data through internal communications and annual push for data to be completed.	People Team, School EDI Leads	Ongoing, with push in September annually
		1.2	Monitor disclosure rates at Main Panel level and target comms accordingly via School EDI Leads.	REF Team (RKES), School EDI Leads	Annually in summer
REF EDI 2	We regularly monitor EDI characteristics of our REF populations and respond to arising issues in a timely fashion	2.1	Annual monitoring of eligible, SRFR and independent Research Only populations by EDI characteristic. <i>From 2024/25 analysis:</i> Additional Panel level data required (gender/ethnicity) Additional age profile analysis compared to REF2021 Additional School level data required to look at differences in local practices (ethnicity / age)	Analytics Project Officer (RKES)	Annually in autumn (following HESA submission)
REF EDI 3	Participation in Annual Research Assessments is inclusive	3.1	Monitor staff engagement with Annual Research Assessment processes	Analytics Project Officer (RKES)	Annually in summer
		3.2	Monitor output pool by EDI characteristic	Analytics Project Officer (RKES)	Annual
REF EDI 4	Our REF communications are inclusive	4.1	Ensure all REF communications are produced in inclusive and accessible formats/language.	Head of Impact & Outputs	Ongoing

Objective	Aim	Action	Action(s)	Owner	Timing
		4.2	Engage with EDI-related networks at least once per year to ensure communication needs are being met and REF-related issues are picked up	Head of Impact & Outputs	Annual
REF EDI 5	We have representative REF committee membership who reflect on EDI considerations in all decision making	5.1	Review and monitor EDI policy for establishing REF committees and maintaining inclusive membership	RKE EDI Steering Group	Annual
		5.2	Regular review of staff development for research leaders relating to EDI	Head of Impact & Outputs	Annual
		5.3	Ensure that all members of decision-making REF committees have undertaken unconscious bias training	Head of Impact & Outputs	Annual
REF EDI 6	Colleagues and those involved in REF2029 preparations understand headline changes to the assessment	6.1	Produce clear infographics explaining REF2029 assessment and key changes from earlier exercises, to be used in staff communications and in REF-related meetings.	Head of Impact & Outputs	Annual
		6.2	Ensure that all REF guidance and communications are produced in accessible formats.	Head of Impact & Outputs	Annual
REF EDI 7	Internal data allows identification and monitoring of part-time colleagues with SRfR	7.1	Contract status (part-time/full-time, fixed-term, permanent) to be included in annual monitoring of inclusion.	Head of Impact & Outputs	Annually in autumn (following HESA submission)

Objective	Aim	Action	Action(s)	Owner	Timing
REF EDI 8	Explore whether we are able to expand our assessment of inclusivity to staff with unseen disabilities or caring responsibilities.	8.1	Look into the possibility of expanding fields on iTrent to capture a wider range of disabilities, including unseen disability.	EDI & People Team	Autumn 2026
		8.2	Explore if we can increase participation in CEDARS/staff survey which collects data on caring responsibilities.	REF Team & People Team	Spring 2027
REF EDI 9	All staff with decision-marking responsibilities in REF2029 routinely reflect on potential unconscious biases	9.1	Unconscious bias reminder slide(s) to be drafted and introduced by Chair at all REF decision making meetings.	REF Team	June 2026
		9.2	Unconscious bias training to be developed and delivered to all staff with decision-making roles in REF2029, including colleagues reviewing and selecting outputs and impact case studies for inclusion in the REF2029 submission	REF Team	April 2027
REF EDI 10	We can demonstrate that our research community welcomes staff from a range of backgrounds socioeconomic backgrounds.	10.1	Encourage colleagues to fill in CEDARS to show the diversity of colleagues	All	Ongoing

Objective	Aim	Action	Action(s)	Owner	Timing
REF EDI 11	Barriers faced by staff from an ethnic minority in participating in research are understood.		Develop proposal for independent assessment of barriers faced by colleagues from an ethnic minority in participating in research.	Head of Impact & Outputs	September 2026

