

## Code of Practice

**Institution name: University of Oxford**

**Date of submission: 11 May 2026**

### Part 1: Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

##### i. Purpose of this document

This Code of Practice (“the Code”) sets out the process to be followed by the University of Oxford for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 exercise in relation to:

- identifying staff contracts which contribute to the REF volume measure;
- selecting outputs.

The Code also provides information about how the submission will be coordinated, how decisions are made, and how equality and diversity is addressed in REF preparations.

##### ii. Context

The REF is the system put in place by the four UK Higher Education Funding bodies (the funding bodies) for assessing the quality of research in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The funding bodies state that the purpose of the REF is to:

- inform the allocation of block-grant research funding to HEIs based on research quality;
- provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment; and
- provide insights into the health of research in HEIs in the UK.

The funding bodies require HEIs making a REF submission to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice. The Code helps HEIs to ensure that they correctly identify all volume-contributing staff contracts, that outputs for the submission are selected fairly, and that equality, diversity and inclusion are considered.

The funding bodies have introduced a number of changes for REF 2029 compared to the last exercise, REF 2021, following recommendations made by the Future Research Assessment Programme. This programme sought to identify, through consultation and careful evaluation, those approaches to research assessment that:

- encourage and strengthen the emphasis on delivering excellent research and impact;
- support a positive, productive research culture; while
- simplifying and reducing the administrative burden on the HE sector.

A key dimension of these changes is a shift away from the assessment of individuals and towards the assessment of institutions and units.

In REF 2021, HEIs had to identify all staff that met the definition of eligible staff with significant responsibility for research at a census date; these staff were “submitted” to the REF, and their FTE at the census date was totalled to give the volume of staff submitted. For each subject area (unit of assessment, or UOA) submission, the total number of outputs required was 2.5 times the volume figure, and each submitted staff member had to have between one and five of the outputs in the submission attributed to them.

In REF 2029, there is no staff submission, and outputs and staff have been decoupled. This means that staff whose contract contributes to volume do not need to have authored a submitted output, and that the submission of outputs is not restricted solely to those staff members whose contracts are contributing towards volume. These changes are designed to reduce the burden and constraint previous exercises placed upon submitted staff: individuals will no longer be required to produce outputs meeting REF requirements within the set time frames, and the focus of the assessment will move to the overall performance of the submitted unit. As such, an individual staff circumstances process within REF is no longer required.

The REF 2029 volume measure reflects the overall capacity of a HEI to undertake research in a UOA, and is to be determined using the average of two years' staff data, drawn primarily from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff return in the years 2025/26 and 2026/27. The pool of eligible contracts comprises those for which the primary employment function is given as 'teaching and research' or 'research only'. To contribute to volume, two further tests apply:

- **Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR):** for 'teaching and research' contracts.
- **Research Independence (RI):** for 'research only' contracts.

Full guidance is available on the [REF website](#).

### iii. Principles governing the Code of Practice

HEIs are required to address within their Code of Practice the following principles:

- robustness: how the policies and processes set out in the Code ensure that contracts identified as contributing to the volume measure reliably reflect the responsibilities of staff;
- transparency: how policies and processes set out in the Code will be communicated and made available to all staff and made available in accessible formats;
- equity and inclusion: how decisions about submissions are fair and impartial, supporting a diversity of people, research, and contributions.

### iv. The University of Oxford's approach and aims

The University's REF preparations are overseen by REF Project Board, which includes academic representation from the four main academic divisions, the Gardens, Libraries and Museums division (GLAM), the Department for Continuing Education, and the Conference of Colleges. REF Project Board reports to Research and Innovation Committee, one of the main committees of Council. REF Project Board has developed a [set of guiding principles for preparations for REF 2029](#), which include:

- University of Oxford seeks to maximise its REF performance across all elements of the submission to support its reputational and financial position, for the long-term benefit of our community of staff, and in order to fulfil our mission.
- The University will align its approach with its strategic plan, and specifically the *Extending Research Excellence* priority within the Research and Discovery theme of the 2025–2030 strategic plan (see 1.3 below).

## 1.2 Supporting the principles of robustness, transparency and equity & inclusion

The University recognises that REF 2029 is not a process which judges the research performance of individuals. Inclusion in volume or the selection of outputs authored by staff will not be used in other processes related to career advancement, including promotion, regrading or opportunities to apply for research funding.

We have sought to design a robust and accurate process for determination of volume which can be conducted annually without undue administrative burden. The University's REF 2029 volume determination process is an evolution from the REF 2021 Code, designed to:

- give an overall reflection of research capacity by focusing indicators for inclusion on key contributions to the research endeavour;
- recognise the diversity of roles within the collegiate University, and recognise collaborative activity;
- minimise subjective decision-making and reduce administrative burden, through a data-informed process and clear decision tree.

Decisions on volume will be informed by centrally held data, supplemented by input from departments and colleges where necessary. Responsibility for oversight of the process and final decisions on inclusion of staff contracts in volume, as for REF 2021, will be made by Main Panel Boards convened by the Divisions with Main Panel responsibility, as this supports consistency of decision-making whilst allowing recognition of disciplinary context.

The University of Oxford's REF submissions are made from the collegiate University as a whole, including colleges, societies and permanent private halls (PPHs) named in the [University statutes](#). The colleges and PPHs are separate legal entities, and currently data on college-only staff appointments are not included in the University's HESA staff return; the inclusion of college-only contracts in REF volume is supported via a college staff data collection conducted by Research Services (the "college census"), and returned annually to Research England.

The processes and indicators for staff volume set out in this Code have been informed by lessons learned from implementation of the University's REF 2021 Code, examination of 2023/24 staff data, and through the generation of data for the 2024/25 staff data return (REF 2029 pilot year) accompanied by equalities analysis of staff employed by the departmental University. College appointments with contractual responsibility for research will be included in the volume processes, with some minor amendments reflecting different employment practices between the colleges.

For equity and simplicity, the same process for determining staff volume will be applied to both 'teaching and research' and 'research only' staff appointments, i.e. the same test and indicators will be used for significant responsibility for research and research independence – a "significant responsibility for independent research" test. Although the University has a number of established and defined academic roles, as a highly devolved organisation it has a large diversity of other roles in the 'teaching and research' or 'research only' staff categories, including clinical academic staff, and staff in curatorial roles. College staff contracts are not included in the HESA staff return and are therefore not routinely classified in this way. Using the same indicators and decision tree for both tests therefore simplifies processes and supports equality of treatment between different roles.

Processes for the selection of outputs have been designed to minimise burden on authors and staff developing the submission. Academic UOA Leads, each supported by a working group which reflects the diversity of the discipline within the UOA, will be responsible for output selection. Each UOA submission will develop a discipline-appropriate process for constructing an output pool for review: this may include author nomination, peer nomination or judicious use of output meta-data. Outputs will be selected from this pool following a process of peer review based on the procedures used by the REF 2021 assessment panels. Final output selection will be based primarily on quality and eligibility. Divisions with Main Panel responsibility will provide oversight to ensure consistency and rigour throughout output selection process.

The Code will be hosted on the University's website in an accessible format, and signposted to staff through key communications channels including the University Bulletin (fortnightly email to all staff) and the Gazette (the University's journal of record). It will also be disseminated through local channels via the University email cascade. These communications will take place at consultation and annually ahead of communication of the outcome of the staff volume process, highlighting any updates or amendments to the process. Following approval of the Code, staff on leave or based overseas will, where appropriate, be made aware of the Code through direct communications, in a process managed by departmental Heads of Administration and Finance and college Senior Tutors. We will also make available via the OxIntranet a list of FAQs and further details of role holders and processes.

### 1.3 Contextualisation within the University's policies

#### Strategic plan 2025–2030

The University's 2025–2030 strategic plan sets out ambitious plans across the four themes of Education and Learning, Research and Discovery, Impact through Innovation, and Leadership through Partnership. For Research and Discovery, the core objectives are:

[Extending research excellence](#): We will strengthen and grow our research excellence across all disciplines by:

- Creating a new academic framework so that researchers at all career stages are stretched, supported and rewarded for research of outstanding ambition and quality.
- Recognising and rewarding all who support research excellence including data scientists, instrument and technique specialists, software engineers, curators and others.
- Making greater use of reliable internal and external data to better understand the excellence and impact of our research profile and environment in all its diversity, including national and international benchmarking of inputs and outputs in strategic areas.

[Investing in cross-divisional transformative research with global impact](#): We will show international leadership and impact in challenge areas by:

- Identifying bold challenge areas across the University where our transformative research could change the world, supported by aligning internal resources, such as the Strategic Research Fund, with externally leveraged funds.
- Developing new regional, national and international research partnerships that accelerate research and impact at scale including novel modes of engagement and researcher mobility.

[Nurturing tomorrow's research leaders](#): In partnership with colleges, we will build capacity and expertise to grow tomorrow's research leaders by designing and implementing an Oxford Research Fellowship Scheme connected to career progression.

#### People and EDI plans

The [University's People Strategy](#) 2024–27 reflects our collective ambition to create an outstanding work environment for all staff. Informed by feedback from the Staff Experience Survey and extensive consultation with colleagues across the divisions, departments and colleges, it centres on three key outcomes:

- a great place to work for all;
- enabling talent to thrive; and
- high-quality people services supporting academic delivery.

The People Strategy aligns closely with our first-ever collegiate University [equality, diversity and inclusivity \(EDI\) strategic plan](#), published in 2024. This plan brings together under a common framework the various initiatives on EDI across divisions, departments, faculties, and colleges. Our EDI ambition is to be a collegiate University where everyone belongs and is supported to succeed, and we strive to be a leader on EDI in society. The strategy sets out priorities to further increase the diversity of our community and ensure our education, research and engagement practices are inclusive.

#### Research Culture

We are an institutional signatory of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), and the [Technician Commitment](#), which have informed and shaped our research culture programme and are embedded in our People Strategy.

Our research culture programme is built on three pillars:

- **Research practice**: enabling researchers to do reliable, reproducible, transparent research;
- **Valuing contributions**: recognising diverse talents, skills, outputs, and activities;
- **Careers**: assessing research fairly, within an equitable working environment and supporting the professional development of researchers at all career stages and career paths.

It is intended that through these priorities what is good for research will be aligned with what is good for research careers, by creating an environment in which rigorous practices and diversity — of views, skills, and contributions — are valued and count towards career progression, while enhancing the University's research excellence.

## 1.4 Update on EDI actions since REF 2021

### Process against recommendations in the REF 2021 EIA

In response to issues identified in the REF 2021 EIA (see Appendix 1), the University has made significant progress against the following key recommendations:

#### Improving data collection and coordination

Improving collection of protected characteristics data: new [onboarding processes](#) have been developed and implemented to improve capture of EDI data; in the first six months that the new process operated, 52% of starters had engaged with the self-service system to update their data, compared to 3% before the process change.

Enhanced working with colleges, including sharing protected characteristics data: [Joint Committee for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (EDI) was established in 2024 as a committee that reports to the University's Council and to the Conference of Colleges. It acts to promote and advance equality, diversity and inclusion across the collegiate University. It has established a working group to investigate routes to EDI data sharing across the collegiate University.

#### Addressing progression of female staff

In 2022, Council adopted equalities targets for the proportion of women in senior roles.

| Target                                                                                                         | 2021 Baseline | 2023/24 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| To achieve a yearly increase in the proportion of female Statutory Professors, with 27% representation by 2029 | 19%           | 22%     |
| To achieve a yearly increase in the proportion of female Associate Professors, with 35% representation by 2029 | 31%           | 34%     |

Since early 2023, 40% of statutory professor appointments have been female. In February 2023, for the first time, the [University was awarded an institutional Silver Athena Swan award](#), acknowledging the progress that has been made in addressing a number of gender gaps across the University over the last five years. In late 2023, Research Services published [Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding: Barriers and Delivering Change](#), and in 2024 an action plan was agreed to address the barriers identified.

#### Improving access to mentoring and career support towards research independence, with a particular focus on under-represented groups

Supporting Career Development Reviews and uptake of professional development time was a key component of the University's [Concordat to support the career development of researchers Action Plan](#) (CAP) 2022–2025 delivered by the Researcher Hub. In delivery of this plan, over 2,000 1:1 careers advice appointments were provided. The Hub has facilitated a template career conversation planner, and provided resources for reviewers and reviewees. There is still some work required to embed these practices: in the 2023 staff survey, 70% of research staff agreed they take time to reflect on, and plan for, their career development, but only 60% reported they had had a development review in the last 2 years. In the 2025–30 action plan there is a [commitment to increase the diversity of people progressing in a range of academic roles](#), through achieving routine engagement with career development reviews and strengthening career mobility.

#### Enhance the visibility and value of non-REF-eligible roles in the research environment

The University is a signatory to the Technician Commitment; our [action plan 2024–27](#) includes measures to improve visibility of technical roles.

Since October 2022, authors have been able to apply the [CRedit](#) contributor roles taxonomy within our CRIS (Symplectic Elements). Over 4,000 contributor roles were recorded by July 2024. Following a central campaign to encourage [ORCID](#) usage, by July 2024, ~3,440 staff users had a claimed ORCID in Symplectic Elements.

## Support for individual staff circumstances

The University is committed to supporting individual staff with equality -related circumstances; key examples of activities beyond those identified in the REF 2021 EIA include:

### [Returning Carers Fund](#)

Introduced in 2014, the 'Returning Carers Fund' provides grants to those who have had a break for caring responsibilities to re-establish their research. In 2022, a review of the fund showed that in 2017/18–2020/21, the fund supported >150 staff with awards worth over £530k to undertake a wide range of activities including conference attendance, teaching buyout, and professional development. The fund has had a significant impact on recipients' research careers in terms of outputs and funding applications; improvements to the fund, which were implemented from 2023 onwards, include decreasing the minimum eligible leave from 6 to 3 months to better support those taking shared parental leave, or carer's leave.

### [Actions from the Vice-Chancellor's Pay and Conditions Review](#)

The Vice-Chancellor commissioned a major review of pay and conditions for staff in January 2023. Highly consultative in nature, the review steering committee, which included staff from across the collegiate University and drew on expertise from other HEIs, considered a large volume of new data gathered directly from colleagues. The review reported in May 2024, with an action plan to improve inclusivity by:

- providing financial support to help international staff with UK work visa and NHS surcharge costs;
- enhancing the flexibility of family leave policies to respond to different needs and circumstances and provide better balance in the availability of paid leave between parents/guardians;
- improving staff access to the University's nursery provision for parents/guardians on lower pay.

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

### 2.1 Policies and Procedures:

#### Criteria for SRR

##### Methodology

As described in section 1.2, the University will use the same indicators for the tests for Significant Responsibility for Research for teaching and research appointments and Research Independence for research only appointments: a unified “significant responsibility for independent research” test.

All fixed term, open-ended or permanent contracts in the departmental university categorised as ‘teaching and research’ or ‘research only’ in the HESA staff return, or equivalent college-only contracts which are not currently returned to HESA, will be considered for inclusion in volume. Atypical contracts (called “variable hours” or “casual” appointments and defined in the HESA staff return guidance) will not be considered.

The indicators for meeting tests for inclusion in volume are each informed by data items held on University systems, as described below. They are applied as per the decision tree provided as Appendix 2. Decisions are required for all appointments held by an individual in a given HESA reporting year; as detailed below, some criteria apply at appointment-level and will relate to the appointment in question only; some criteria apply at person-level and apply to all appointments held by that individual in the given HESA year. As no census date applies, some person-level criteria will be informed by data held on University systems in the 5 years up to and including the year of assessment e.g. for 2025/26, data for 2021/22 to 2025/26 will be used. Some indicators do not apply to college-only appointments, reflecting the different employment practices in and between the colleges. In some cases, Main Panel Boards will provide specifics and/or apply a threshold to the indicator, e.g. the minimum value of an award to the relevant department necessary for it to qualify as denoting significant responsibility for independent research. Setting thresholds at Main Panel level allows for differences in disciplinary context and practice, while maintaining consistency across related units. Main Panel Boards will review specifics and thresholds each year and they will be agreed by REF Project Board, informed by equalities analysis, prior to determination of volume each year. The agreed specifics and thresholds will be made available to the University community via OxIntranet.

##### Tests and indicators

**Test 1: From 2026/27 onwards, an appointment will be included in volume if the prior year’s assessment was to include it in volume**

This test applies at appointment level; any new appointments will be assessed as per the procedure below and any appointment assessed as not qualifying for inclusion in volume in a prior year will be reassessed. This test fulfils the REF funding bodies’ requirement for persistence of independence for contracts.

Data will be taken from the previous year’s HESA staff return or the separate submission to Research England made for college-only appointments.

**Test 2: Appointment will be excluded from volume if categorised as sub-category *Research Support (AS)***

This is consistent with the University’s staff classification, which states that research only research support (AS) appointments are roles providing “highly skilled specialist support to researchers or research groups...Undertakes research-related activities such as data analysis or research coordination but does not design the research...Work is directed by the main grant holder/PI.”

This test applies at appointment-level, and data will be taken from the University HR data system PeopleXD. As colleges do not use the University’s categorisation system, this test does not apply to college-only staff.

**Test 3a: Appointment will be excluded from volume if at Grade 6 or below**

This is consistent with the University’s [category and grade descriptions](#), which states that grade 6 staff “assist a research team to acquire and interpret data and results, where the method and purpose have been defined by the Principal Investigator.”

This test applies at appointment-level, and data will be taken from the University HR data system PeopleXD. As colleges do not consistently use the University’s grade system, this test does not apply to college-only staff.

### Test 3b. Appointment will be included in volume if senior grade

This test will ensure that appointments at the grades for the main academic roles (Associate Professor, Reader and Professorial roles), and other senior grades appropriate to disciplinary context, are included in volume.

This test applies at appointment-level, and data will be taken from the University HR data system PeopleXD. As many colleges do not use the University's grade system, this test does not apply to college-only staff.

Each Main Panel will specify the list of senior grades included in volume. Additional conditions may apply to grades recognised to represent a transition stage to significant responsibility for independent research.

### Test 4: Appointment will be included in volume if it meets the definition of *an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence*.

This test applies at appointment-level, and data will be taken from the University HR data system PeopleXD, the University's grant management system X5, and information supplied by appointing colleges and departments.

A research fellowship scheme is financial support for an individual researcher to pursue their own programme of research and develop their research leadership, which may be advertised as either a fixed term job role or an external funding award supporting the individual's salary. Main Panel Boards will decide which research fellowship schemes meet the definition of an *independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence* in their disciplinary context, with reference to the REF funding bodies' illustrative, but not exhaustive, [list of competitive research fellowships that inherently require or support research independence](#). The REF Funding Bodies also identify a number of transitional fellowships, i.e. fellowships which support the transition to independence.

Main Panel Boards may consider the following factors:

- status of the scheme on the REF Funding Bodies' [list](#);
- evidence of the purpose of the fellowship being independent research;
- evidence of being competitively awarded and independently won: e.g. evidence of competitive advertisement, proposal for self-directed programme of research required at application;
- evidence of requirement of research independence: e.g. requirement for completion of a research doctorate prior to the commencement of the fellowship and/or requirements for length of time since completion of a doctorate before application or award, mandatory arrangements for supervision or mentorship of the fellow;
- the length of the funded fellowship.

It is recognised that the colleges and the University's departments and museums offer a range of internally funded fellowship schemes which may meet this indicator.

Fellowship appointments which include significant other duties (e.g. teaching), or selection criteria based on other duties, and/or for which supervision are required, are not expected to meet this indicator.

Each Main Panel Board will document, and make available to the University staff community via OxIntranet each year ahead of decisions being made, its procedure for determining qualifying fellowship schemes in their disciplinary context, including identifying transitional fellowships.

#### *Application to transitional fellowships*

Where a Main Panel Board decides a qualifying fellowship supports the transition to independence, they will agree and document a time period from the start of the fellowship appointment when that appointment will be deemed to have significant responsibility for independent research and contribute to REF volume. This will then be applied in completing the HESA staff return as follows:

- if the date of reaching independence falls between 1 August and 31 January in a HESA reporting year, the appointment will be marked "REFQUALCON yes" for that reporting year and each subsequent reporting year;
- if the date of reaching independence falls between 1 February and 31 July in a HESA reporting year, the appointment will be marked "REFQUALCON yes" for each subsequent reporting year only.

Test 5: Staff member will be included in volume if they hold an academic title awarded for research endeavour through Recognition of Distinction or other Divisional process for conferment of title

This test applies at person-level: all appointments in the HESA reporting year for the individual which are still under assessment will be included in volume if the staff member meets the test. The indicator for inclusion is holding a title of Professor, Associate Professor, Reader or University Research Lecturer. The title of Professor of Practice is considered not to be awarded for research endeavour and will not be used for this indicator. Data will be sourced from the University HR data system PeopleXD for departmental staff, and the administrators of the Recognition of Distinction scheme in the relevant academic division for college-only appointments.

Test 6a: Staff member will be included in volume if named as PI on non-fellowship external award held by the University of sufficient value in the last 5 years

This test applies at person-level: all appointments in the HESA reporting year for the individual which are still under assessment will be included in volume if the staff member meets the test. The indicator for inclusion is being identified as the Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Lead at award on an external grant or contract of sufficient value recorded on the University's grant management system, X5, for awards made in the last 5 years. Main Panels will specify qualifying thresholds for the value of the award to the relevant department. Fellowship awards are excluded as they are considered under test 4.

Test 6b: Staff member will be included in volume if named as PI on an internal award of sufficient value in a scheme nominated by the Main Panel Board in the last 5 years.

This test applies at person-level: all appointments in the HESA reporting year for the individual which are still under assessment will be included in volume if the staff member meets the test. The indicator for inclusion is being identified as the Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Lead at award on an internal grant of sufficient value recorded on the University's internal awards management system, IRAMS, for awards made in the last 5 years. Main Panel Boards will specify qualifying internal awards and thresholds for award value. As a minimum, main awards from the [John Fell Fund](#), the University's major internal funding scheme, will qualify as these are recognised to have parity of status with external funding awards.

Test 7: Staff member will be included in volume if named as CoI on non-fellowship external award held by the University of sufficient value with sufficient time commitment in the last 5 years

This test applies at person-level: all appointments in the HESA reporting year for the individual which are still under assessment will be included in volume if the staff member meets the test. The indicator for inclusion is being identified as the Co-Investigator (CoI) or Project Co-Lead at award on an external grant or contract of sufficient value with sufficient time commitment on the University's grant management system, X5, for awards made in the last 5 years. Researcher co-investigator roles are not considered to indicate significant responsibility for independent research and will not be used. Main Panel thresholds will determine qualifying thresholds for the value of the award to the relevant department, and costed time. Fellowship awards are excluded as they are considered under test 4.

Test 8: Staff member will be included in volume if named as supervisor or co-supervisor of sufficient number of doctoral students in the last 5 years

This test applies at person-level: all appointments in the HESA reporting year for the individual which are still under assessment will be included in volume if the staff member meets the test. The indicator for inclusion is being identified as the supervisor or co-supervisor of sufficient number of doctoral students on the University's student information system, SITS, in the last 5 years. Main Panel thresholds will apply to the number of students supervised or co-supervised.

## **Decision-Making and Communication**

### [Determination of inclusion in volume](#)

Decisions on whether appointments should be included in REF volume will follow the process:

The Research Evaluation team in Research Services, in collaboration with colleagues in HR Systems, will issue central data on staff appointments, and the indicators met for those appointments, to divisional REF Project Managers.

Additional input will be sought from departments and colleges as appropriate, in particular for the details of fellowships held. Departments may be asked to check centrally held data and correct any errors found within the appropriate University system.

Main Panel Boards will review data and make decisions on inclusion in volume. In particular, Main Panel Boards will make decisions regarding the independence of fellowship schemes (indicator 4) where these are not included on the REF funding bodies' list, making decisions on fellowship schemes as a whole rather than about the individual holding a fellowship. Where fellowships are recognised as transitional (i.e. supporting the transition to independence, including those identified as such on the REF funding bodies' list), Main Panel Boards will be required to decide on the HESA reporting year from which the fellowship appointment will be included in REF volume.

Determination of inclusion in volume will be undertaken using the process above in June–September each year. Main Panel Boards will be required to minute their decisions, and final data on inclusion in volume for all eligible appointments will be returned to the Research Evaluation team.

The Research Evaluation team will oversee the return of volume data in the HESA staff return and the separate college-only submission. As the total combined CONFTE across all submissions for an individual must not exceed 100% CONFTE, if the HESA- returned and college-only CONFTE for an individual contributing to volume exceeds 100%, the college-only CONFTE will be adjusted according to the protocol agreed by REF Project Board.

#### [Communication of outcomes](#)

Outcomes of the REF volume processes will be communicated in autumn each year via a secure online system. Departmental staff will be able to access data for their appointments via the HR self-service system. College-only staff will be sent a link via email to access their data.

Information on the timing of outcomes, how staff can access them, and the appeals process will be communicated to staff in an annual reminder of the Code of Practice processes through University communications channels. Full details will be available via OxIntranet.

## 2.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

### Roles and responsibilities

The roles of the committees involved is summarised in Appendix 4.

#### Decision-making bodies

##### Research and Innovation Committee

There are 5 main committees of Council, of which [Research and Innovation Committee](#), chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), oversees research strategy and policy. Its terms of reference state that the committee shall, in conjunction with the divisions, facilitate the preparation for external reviews of the quality of research produced by members of the collegiate University and its impact, and co-ordinate as appropriate the use of systems to assist in gathering the required data from across Oxford.

##### REF Project Board

REF Project Board, which reports directly to Research and Innovation Committee and thence to Council, is the strategic oversight Board for the REF 2029 submission. REF Project Board is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and includes academic representation from the four main academic divisions, GLAM, Continuing Education and the Conference of Colleges. The Board oversees all preparations, including setting the timetable for REF at the University of Oxford, and agreeing the Code of Practice. The REF Project Board terms of reference can be found in Appendix 5, and its membership is available on [OxIntranet](#). REF Project Board oversees the process for UOA allocation and will make final decision on UOA allocations when necessary.

#### Divisions

The four main academic divisions that have primary responsibility for developing UOA submissions to the REF Main Panels are outlined below:

- Medical Sciences Division: Main Panel A;
- Mathematical, Physical & Life Sciences Division: Main Panel B;
- Social Sciences Division: Main Panel C;
- Humanities Division: Main Panel D.

Overall responsibility for submission decisions will rest with the Division with Main Panel responsibility. Each of these divisions has a Divisional Board which has convened a Main Panel Board (as defined below) to report to them and REF Project Board, and to manage the REF submission in the above fields.

##### Main Panel Boards

Each Main Panel Board will be responsible for maintaining oversight of the submissions as they develop.

Each UOA submission sits under the appropriate Main Panel responsible for them in the national REF exercise; however, it is noted that some UOAs cross divisional boundaries, so collaboration and cross-referral with other divisions in their capacity as Main Panel Boards will take place as necessary. A list of Main Panels and UOAs for REF is given on the [REF website](#).

Overall responsibility for volume decisions will rest with the appropriate Main Panel Board. This includes:

- decision-making on the inclusion of staff appointments in volume on the basis of indicators described in this Code;
- reviewing and agreeing indicator specifics and thresholds annually;
- UOA allocation, in particular where not derived from the appointing department, in cooperation with other Main Panels as appropriate.

Terms of reference of the Main Panel Boards can be found at Appendix 6, and the membership of the boards will be made available to the University community via OxIntranet. The Main Panel Board chairs are senior academic officers in their respective divisions, and the members include academic staff with experience of research assessment and/or personnel issues, selected to reflect the disciplinary range and characteristics of researchers within the Main Panel Board's remit. UOA Leads (see section 4) may sit on Main Panel Boards, but any decisions on inclusion in volume must be collective decisions of the committee, made on a consistent basis for all UOAs under its remit.

Advisory responsibility for information supporting the volume processes

#### Heads of Department/Faculty

Heads of Department/Faculty, or their nominated representatives, are responsible for identifying staff appointments which are fellowships. Departments and faculties are responsible generally for maintaining accurate data on University systems.

#### College Senior Tutors

College Senior Tutors, or their nominated representatives, have responsibility to supply the necessary information on college-only appointments with a contractual duty to undertake research, to enable decisions to be made by Main Panel Boards on inclusion in volume, and to complete the separate data return on college-only staff which is returned to the REF funding bodies.

#### Administrative support

Contact details for key administrative support staff are available on [OxIntranet](#).

#### Research Services Research Evaluation team

The Research Evaluation team in Research Services (RS) will:

- service the REF Project Board, and define the University's overall timetable for preparation;
- service the REF Appeals Committee;
- work with divisional REF Project Managers and UOA Leads to prepare the overall submission, and offer policy advice and guidance in matters relating to the REF;
- collect data from colleges on staff with a contractual duty to undertake research employed by the colleges (the "college census");
- provide central data to inform the decision-making process on REF volume by Main Panel Boards;
- provide quantitative data to support UOA and institutional narrative statements;
- act as first contact point between the University and the funding bodies on matters relating to the REF;
- work with the Equality and Diversity Unit to ensure the University develops, adopts and documents an appropriate Code of Practice, which attends to all relevant equalities legislation;
- monitoring EDI, undertaking EIAs and monitoring adherence to the Code of Practice;
- ensure that the REF submission is coordinated and submitted for the University on a timely basis.

#### Divisional REF Project Managers

Each division has identified a REF Project Manager who is responsible for co-ordinating the exercise within that division in its capacity as convenor of a Main Panel for the University. They will work closely with UOA Leads and the Research Evaluation team in Research Services (see above), and ensure that the Main Panel Board (or any body established by it for matters relating to the REF) is aware of progress, and the timetable for preparation.

#### REF Operations Group

REF Project Board is supported by the REF Operations Group. The REF Operations Group is chaired by the Director of the Research Strategy and Policy Unit (RSPU) in Research Services. REF Operations Group comprises University staff who are attending officers at REF Project Board, members of the Research Services' Research Evaluation and Research Information teams, other University Administration Services (UAS) teams with an operational role in REF, and divisional officers with responsibility for REF. The group reviews administrative and process matters and makes recommendations to REF Project Board to manage the risk of the project.

#### Training

All those with decision-making responsibility are provided with bespoke briefings on REF 2029 requirements and this Code by the Research Services Research Evaluation team and are required to undertake the University's online Information Security and Data Protection Course and Equality and Diversity Briefing.

Key decision-making groups (Main Panel Boards, REF Appeals Committee) are also be required to undertake training focused specifically on the context of research assessment: "Fairness in Research Assessment". This training programme covers in detail areas particularly pertinent to a research assessment context which includes unconscious bias, selective attention and group think.

## 2.3 Appeals

Staff members have the right to appeal the decision on whether or not their contract should be included in volume by meeting the criteria outlined in 2.1 above. Appeals will only be considered in respect of volume decisions for current staff volume-contributing years for REF 2029.

Appeals will only be accepted on the following grounds:

- there is evidence of material irregularity in the process by which a decision was reached such as to suggest that, in the absence of such irregularity, the outcome would have been different;
- a claim is made that the individual has been prejudiced against in some way as part of the process, including issues around protected characteristics, such as to suggest that, in the absence of the perceived prejudice, the outcome would have been different.

These grounds for appeal are exclusive. For clarity, appeals will not be accepted for:

- the peer review of the quality of the individual's outputs or output selection;
- the UOA to which an individual's appointment is allocated;
- a desire to 'opt out' of the REF processes;
- volume decisions relating to the contracts of former employees;
- decisions relating to the pilot year 2024/25.

If individuals believe that that decisions on volume contribution relating their appointment(s) are incorrect, they may seek feedback within two weeks of receiving information of the decision in autumn 2026 or 2027. Individuals should lodge the request by informing the Research Services Research Evaluation team in writing using an MS Form, which will be available via OxIntranet.

The Research Evaluation team will request feedback from the relevant Main Panel Board in respect of the affected individual on how the Main Panel Board reached its decision, and the data used. This feedback will then be sent to the affected individual, and if the individual wishes to proceed with having their appeal considered by the REF Appeals Committee, they must notify the Research Evaluation team within two weeks of receiving the written feedback. The Research Evaluation team will then refer the case to the REF Appeals Committee to be heard. The REF Appeals Committee will meet annually following the sharing of decisions as necessary. The Terms of Reference for the REF Appeals Committee are provided as Appendix 7.

## 2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken for the processes for inclusion in volume, in comparison with the REF 2021 process, and informed by University and national-level feedback on staff experience of REF. Iterative data analysis on protected characteristics of legal sex, age, ethnicity and disability informed the agreement of indicators and initial thresholds by REF Project Board. The equality impact assessment, using the [template and guidance provided by EDU](#), is provided as Appendix 1.

## **Part 3: Determining Research Independence**

### [3.1 Policies and Procedures](#)

See section 2.1 above.

### [3.2 Staff, Committees, and Training](#)

See section 2.2 above.

### [3.3 Appeals](#)

See section 2.3 above.

### [3.4 Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\)](#)

See section 2.4 above.

## Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UOAs

### 4.1 Policies and Procedures

#### Policy

The majority of University departments have a clearly connected single UOA. The normal process will be that all the staff appointments made by that department will be allocated to a clearly connected single UOA.

For staff appointments in departments which span multiple UOAs and in the colleges, the allocation of appointments to UOAs will be made on the basis of disciplinary fit of research undertaken to the UOA descriptor and where possible these will be allocated collectively by smaller structural groupings such as research centres, groups or themes to make best representation of UOAs within unit-level statements.

An initial mapping of departments to UOAs is available as Appendix 3.

#### Process

For staff appointments in inter-and multidisciplinary departments, and in the colleges, divisional REF project managers will undertake a preliminary allocation of appointments to UOAs in consultation with the academic lead for the relevant UOA(s), on the basis of disciplinary fit of research undertaken to the UOA descriptor. Care will be taken to apply a consistent allocation to researchers working together in a centre, group or theme where possible, in order to make best representation of subject areas within unit-level statements.

All UOA allocations will be reviewed, and endorsed or amended, by Main Panel Boards annually. Where UOA allocations are amended to a UOA in another Main Panel, the appointment will be transferred to the new Main Panel Board for consideration of inclusion in volume.

Where Main Panel Boards cannot agree UOA allocations, REF Project Board will make final decisions.

The UOA allocation of appointments will be determined prior to volume decisions; new appointments will be allocated to UOAs using the process above over the course of each year ahead of volume decisions. Staff will not be routinely informed of the UOA to which their appointment has been allocated, but this information will be provided to any staff requesting feedback on their inclusion in volume.

### 4.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

See section 2.2 above.

### 4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Analysis has been undertaken comparing volume inclusion outcome when UOA allocation is undertaken on a case-by case basis rather than by the appointing department. The equality impact assessment, using the [template and guidance provided by EDU](#), is provided as Appendix 1.

## Part 5: Selecting outputs

### 5.0 Introduction

The University recognises the primary purpose of REF as an exercise informing the distribution of quality-related research funding; it seeks to maximise its performance in terms of volume of world-leading research across all submitted elements in order to support the research of current and future staff. Therefore, the two primary considerations in the selection of outputs for REF 2029 will be quality and eligibility.

Our submission to REF 2029 exercise will only include a small percentage of the University's outputs published in the reporting period. The University will use the flexibility offered by the decoupling of staff and outputs to submit the research outputs which will secure the strongest possible performance in REF. Outputs will be submitted from a wider pool of staff than those who contribute to volume, including outputs from staff employed before or after the volume contributing years, staff who do not yet have significant responsibility for independent research, and technical and specialist support staff engaged in research activity. Equally it is expected that many researchers employed during the period 2021–28 will not be an author on a submitted output, nor will their employment evidence the substantive link (see below) of an output. There are many reasons for staff not having their outputs selected, including the technical issues of eligibility, open access compliance and the high quality of research of others. The University will not use selection of authored outputs for REF, or the use of an author's substantive link for co-authored outputs, for any other processes related to career advancement, including promotion, regrading or opportunities to apply for research funding. Guidance and reminders will be issued to this effect.

### 5.1 Policies and procedures

#### General

Outputs will be selected for submission following a process primarily based on peer review. It is not possible to review all outputs produced in the REF period; each UOA submission will develop and document, and make available to the relevant University community via departmental communications and OxIntranet, a discipline-appropriate process for constructing an output pool for review, taking into account the need to reduce administrative burden and pressure on staff. The use of multiple routes as appropriate to the discipline is encouraged, which may include:

- nomination from staff, which may be targeted by career stage, output type, research area or methodology;
- peer nomination from, inter alia, Heads of Department, Faculty Board Chairs, departmental research directors, heads of centres or groups, internal or external output reviewers;
- judicious use of output metadata, including citation counts and field-weighted citation indices and percentiles, taking care to adhere to the principles of DORA. Qualitative information on publication venue or output type may also be used as appropriate to the discipline, where other routes or factors for consideration in construction of the output pool for review are available over the course of the submission development period.

Outputs will be selected following peer review of their quality. At least one peer review must be undertaken for all selected items. REF Project Board has provided detailed guidance to UOA teams on processes for undertaking output review, modelled on the processes used by the REF panels, which will:

- be informed by a calibration exercise undertaken prior to review (see responsible research assessment below);
- take care that interdisciplinary research and non-traditional outputs are not disadvantaged;
- use the REF assessment criteria of originality, significance and rigour;
- assess outputs on an expanded 13-point scale (from 12 “high 4\*” to 0 “unclassified”);
- be informed by citation data as an indicator of significance where appropriate to the discipline. Each UOA submission will document their processes for the use of citation metrics;
- be recorded in the University's current research information system, Symplectic Elements, to enable oversight processes (including EIA) and collation of the output data for submission as required by the REF funding bodies.

Final selection of outputs will be based primarily on quality and eligibility (including substantive link, see below). Where outputs are deemed to be equal in terms of quality and eligibility, other factors such as representativeness may be considered.

To reduce administrative burden, there will be no University-wide “dry run” or “mock REF” exercises. Oversight of the output identification, review and selection processes will be provided by the Division with Main Panel responsibility, and through regular “milestone” meetings of the UOA Leads with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Submission development may be informed by responsible use of technology; where Gen-AI is used, this should be in compliance with the [University's Policy for using Generative AI in Research](#).

Output review and submission data will be treated as confidential and must not be used in performance management or other processes. Records must not be kept or used by UOA teams following submission. Central records from Symplectic Elements will be retained by Research Services and shared with Divisions with Main Panel responsibility for audit purposes and for preparation for future exercises.

### Responsible research assessment

Responsible research assessment has been taken into consideration from the establishment of the University's processes for REF 2029, and reflecting our commitments as a signatory of DORA, through the following measures:

- development by REF Project Board, and sharing with the University community, documented [principles for the preparations for the next REF](#), which includes a commitment to trialling processes and continuous improvement;
- consideration of diversity and representativeness in the recruitment of UOA Leads and working group members; provision of training, including an online *Fairness in Research Assessment* course (see Staff, Committees, and Training below);
- provision of guidance on output assessment from REF Project Board, including detailed guidance on the appropriate use of metrics, and issues and potential biases which may arise from the use of metrics;
- use of field-weighted metrics and promotion of multi-faceted, disciplinary-tailored approaches;
- prior to commencement of output quality assessment, requiring each UOA submission to:
  - undertake a calibration exercise using a sample of outputs of types and disciplinary range typical for their subject, and to document their methodology and findings, to support consistency of review; and
  - consider biases which may arise in output assessment and document an intention plan to address these;
- oversight of submissions development both by Divisions with Main Panel responsibility, and meetings of the UOA Leads with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) at regular submission development milestones to share best practice.

### Identifying substantive link to outputs

“Substantive link” is a new requirement for REF 2029, which ensures that only research enabled by the submitting institution is included in the assessment. HEIs may submit to the REF any output that meets wider eligibility criteria, to which they can demonstrate a substantive link through an eligible employment relationship between the HEI and an author, and where that employment relationship takes place within a defined period relating to the publication date.

#### *REF guidance extract – Eligible employment relationship*

Eligible employment relationships are defined as:

- a minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment (as defined by Section 210 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996) or the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996) by the HEI making the submission. Continuous employment may be demonstrated by a sequence of consecutive contracts, AND
- the role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity (in line with the REF definition of research) within the role. ‘Research activity’ is not restricted by profession and an eligible employment relationship may be with any staff member who undertakes, enables or supports research

The University expects the majority of outputs it submits to have a substantive link which will be evidenced by the eligible employment of staff who contribute to REF volume, but will use a wider range of employments to evidence substantive link where necessary, both from the departmental University and colleges. Substantive link for outputs in the output review pool may be established before, in parallel to, or following, review of quality.

Within the departmental University, as per the [staff classification guide](#), all employment relationships of sufficient FTE and duration returned to HESA as “Research only” or “Teaching and Research” would normally evidence an eligible employment relationship without further checks that research activity forms part of the role descriptor.

A range of other appointments, including, inter alia, senior University officers, library professionals, or museum professionals may also include research activity; the use of such appointments to evidence substantive link will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with reference to the contractual job description. In accordance with the [REF definition of research](#), “scholarship” will only be considered research activity when it encompasses “the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases”. Scholarship in the sense of maintenance of current knowledge of the discipline by a staff member to underpin excellent teaching will not be considered research activity.

The details of college-only staff appointments with a contractual duty to undertake research have been collected by Research Services in the “college census” conducted since 2023. Where expectations to contribute to research are not clear from data collected in the census or where the substantive link predates the college census, the relevant college will be asked to supply details of the appointment.

Many selected outputs will have more than one author whose employment evidences substantive link. The author chosen to provide substantive link may reflect other requirements of REF set out in the guidance and panel criteria, or minimisation of administrative burden. Substantive link use will not be routinely communicated to staff.

#### [Exceptional circumstances](#)

In exceptional cases, the University may seek to submit outputs sole-authored by staff on teaching-only, honorary emeritus contracts, or other non-research contracts where a clear case can be made that the relevant division, department, faculty or college provided allocated time and funding to support that specific research activity. Such cases are expected to be evidenced by internal funding (such as the John Fell Fund or Strategic Research Fund), or substantial use of facilities, infrastructure or support staff, documented by the supporting unit and acknowledged within the output. Such cases must be approved by the relevant Main Panel Board before external clearance to submit is sought from the REF funding bodies’ REF Director.

#### [Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff](#)

In order to make the best presentation within the submission of the University’s research, to maximise performance to benefit current and future staff, the University will submit the outputs of former staff under the same considerations of quality and eligibility as for current staff. The eligible employment relationship must have occurred within a defined period related to the publication date of the output: within two years of output publication for most outputs, and within five years for outputs which meet the REF definition of long form or long process. If the exact publication date is not available, the publication date will be assumed to be the first day of the month for the purposes of meeting this defined period.

#### [Substantive link to outputs of former staff first made publicly available during employment](#)

The University will use the employment of former staff to evidence substantive link to outputs published during an eligible employment relationship, without regard to the reason the employment relationship ended.

#### [Substantive link to outputs of former staff first made publicly available following employment](#)

The University will use the employment of former staff to evidence substantive link to outputs published following an eligible employment relationship, unless the staff member in question had been made compulsorily redundant from a permanent or open-ended appointment. In cases where the employment relationship ended for other reasons, including retirement, expiry of fixed term contract, or voluntary redundancy or severance, the University may use that employment relationship to evidence a substantive link.

### Assigning outputs to UOAs

The University will submit outputs in any or all appropriate UOA submissions. Those preparing UOA submissions may include outputs in their output review pool based on the discipline of the research outputs, and not just the department or faculty affiliation of the author(s), or the UOA or UOAs to which the author(s) employment contract(s) are allocated for volume.

Output fit to UOA will be considered within output review as a component of eligibility, which is assessed separately to quality. Where outputs are identified as high quality but which may fit in different UOA from that in which they are reviewed, UOA Leads will be able to refer the output to the output pool of (an) other appropriate UOA(s). Appropriate UOAs for outputs may be indicated through external or internal data sources but final decision on whether an output is included in a UOA submission rests on the academic judgement of UOA Lead, supported by the UOA working group and output reviewers.

Oversight of assignment to UOAs will be undertaken by Divisions with Main Panel responsibility (undertaken by Main Panel Boards where this duty is delegated to them) as part of their submission oversight duty. Divisional REF Project Managers will work together to coordinate assignment of outputs to UOAs in cross-panel and interdisciplinary subject areas.

### Representativeness

The REF funding bodies require that submissions should be representative of the range of research activity undertaken by a submitting unit during the REF period. Representation of research activity will be considered as contextualisation for assessment of the Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) assessment element, rather than reflected within the assessment of the outputs themselves.

#### *REF guidance extract - Indicators of representation of research activity*

- Submitted outputs are reflective of the research strategies and structures of the submitting unit over the REF period, including contributions to large-scale research programs, networks, or national/global initiatives.
- Submitted outputs reflect the diversity of research outputs produced within the submitting unit including how different and diverse types of research are included in the submission.
- Submitted outputs reflect contributions from multidisciplinary collaborations and institutional partnerships, supporting sustainable contributions to knowledge and understanding.

The University expects high quality research to be undertaken in all areas, and that outputs selected on the basis of quality and eligibility will be broadly representative of the research within the submitted unit.

Representativeness will not be considered only in terms of the affiliations and characteristics of the authors whose employment evidences substantive link. This is because, as set out above, substantive link may only be established after quality review, and, for co-authored outputs, it may be possible to evidence substantive link for a number of authors.

To support representativeness, the following measures will be undertaken:

- representativeness will be considered by Divisions with Main Panel responsibility (undertaken by Main Panel Boards where this duty is delegated to them) as part of their submission oversight duty;
- UOA working groups have been recruited to reflect the range of research undertaken in the UOA submission;
- standard reports, based on output metadata, on dimensions of representativeness of the output pool/selection will be made available to UOA Leads;
- at submission development milestones, consideration of representativeness of preliminary selections will be undertaken. Actions to increase representativeness appropriate to the submission development stage may be undertaken, such as:
  - identification of additional outputs for review, including via. nomination from target groups or peer nomination as appropriate;
  - optimisation of output selection to select alternative eligible outputs of the same quality (as assessed through internal review on 13-point scale).

## Diversity of research

The University produces a wide diversity of research outputs; our REF 2021 submission included (as well as books and journal articles) working papers, scholarly editions, translations, artefacts, compositions, digital or visual media, research data sets & databases, exhibitions, and 5 outputs classified as “other” as they did not fit within one of the other 21 categories provided. In particular, the University produces outputs in many languages and submitted outputs in languages other than English to REF 2021 including German, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, French, Spanish, Hebrew and Italian. Outputs in languages other than English were included in seven distinct UOA submissions across Panels C and D beyond UOA 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics.

To support diversity of research outputs, records can be created in Symplectic Elements for a wide range of output types, including all REF 2021 output types, and deposit of a wide range of output types is supported by the Oxford Research Archive. Output language may be recorded in Symplectic Elements. All review of output quality will be undertaken with reference to the REF criteria of originality, significance and rigour and not with reference to venue, type or language.

Measures to support the diversity of output submissions include:

- Infrastructure and services provided by the Bodleian Libraries, including:
  - the [DOI service](#), allowing University-based digital repositories to assign DOIs to a wide range of research outputs;
  - the [Sustainable Digital Scholarship service](#), providing guidance and a platform to publish data collections, including audio/visual outputs.
- Training and resources provided as part of the Research Practice programme, which includes guidance on publishing “non-standard” research outputs, pre-registration, data publication in repositories, software publication, and registered reports.
- Through internal communications or targeted outreach, staff will be encouraged to disclose diverse outputs, including those in British Sign Language (BSL), via creation of records in Symplectic Elements, with particular focus on relevant organisational units and networks (e.g. Disabled Staff network).
- Targeted nomination of output types beyond standard academic formats may be sought, and nomination processes for diverse outputs will include the opportunity to provide a short statement on the research process or research content in English, to support review.
- Sharing of best practice on the review and submission of diverse outputs:
  - each UOA working group will have a nominated representative for outputs; these representatives will be supported by the Research Services Research Evaluation team and divisional Project Managers to form a network for peer support, provide advice to reviewers, and, where academic expertise is relevant, share information on internal and external reviewers with non-English language expertise;
  - workshops on review and submission of diverse outputs will be held, including a workshop on production of single or multi-component items supported by contextual information in Panel D;
  - for UOA 26, a multi-language calibration exercise has been undertaken.
- For outputs identified in the output pool for review which are in BSL, these will be reviewed by a staff member with appropriate expertise, reviewed by an external reviewer with appropriate expertise, or reviewed in translation.
- For outputs identified in the output pool for review which are in Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Ulster Scots, Irish, or Irish Sign Language, and the research leading to that output was produced in collaboration with jurisdictions where such languages have protected status, these will be reviewed by a staff member with appropriate expertise, reviewed by an external reviewer with appropriate expertise, or reviewed in translation.

## 5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

### Roles and responsibilities

The roles of the committees involved are summarised in Appendix 4.

#### Decision-making bodies

##### Committees

See section 2.2 for a description of the committees involved in REF decision-making processes.

##### UOA Leads

UOA Leads play a key role in the preparation of the assessed elements of the REF 2029 submission (outputs, impact case studies, and unit-level statement) within a University of Oxford UOA submission. The UOA Lead role descriptor is available in Appendix 8. UOA Leads are responsible (with the support of their Working Group) for running the processes for the identification, review and selection of outputs within their UOA submission. A list of UOA Leads will be made available on OxIntranet.

#### Advisory responsibility for supporting the output selection process

##### UOA Working Groups

The role of the UOA Working Group is to support the UOA Lead in making the best possible REF submission in accordance with the University's REF Timetable, and to comply with the University's REF Code of Practice, including its equality and diversity aspects. The size of the UOA Working Group should be proportionate to the size of the submitted unit (indicatively 4–10 members), reflect the subject diversity in the UOA submission, and is expected to include a lead for each of outputs & open access, impact case studies and the unit-level statement. There should be a nominated deputy chair. It is recommended that the membership of the Working Group should include academics with REF panel experience or those who have coordinated previous submissions, as well as appropriate departmental office-holders e.g. Head of Department, Research Director, Head of Administration and Finance. The relevant Division with Main Panel responsibility will maintain oversight of the membership of UOA Working Groups to ensure diversity of membership, both in terms of protected characteristics and the participation of constituent departments of the UOA submission. Membership of UOA Working Groups will be made available to the University community on OxIntranet.

##### Output reviewers

A wider pool of experts (including, where appropriate external experts) may undertake quality review of outputs and participate in calibration exercises.

#### Administrative support

See section 2.2 for a description of administrative support. In addition:

##### Research Services Research Information team

Research Information team in Research Services (RS) will:

- support the configuration and use of the Symplectic Elements assessment module to enable output review processes;
- supply standard reports on output metadata to support submission development.

### Training

UOA Leads will be provided with a bespoke briefing on REF 2029 requirements and this Code by the Research Services Research Evaluation team. They will also be required to undertake the University's online training *Information Security and Data Protection Course* and *Equality and Diversity Briefing*, and in addition an online training course in *Fairness in Research Assessment*. These training courses will also be available to members of UOA Working groups and output reviewers.

## 5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An initial equality impact assessment has been undertaken for the processes for output selection, in comparison with the REF 2021 process, informed by feedback from University stakeholders and national-level reports. Analysis of the representation of authors by protected characteristic in the output review pool and final output selection will be undertaken in due course. The equality impact assessment, using the [template and guidance provided by EDU](#), is provided as Appendix 1.

## **Part 6: Appendices**

1. Equality Impact Assessment
2. Volume decision tree
3. Mapping of appointing departments to UOAs
4. Committee roles and responsibilities
5. Terms of reference of REF Project Board
6. Terms of Reference of Main Panel Boards
7. Terms of Reference for REF Appeals Committee
8. UOA Lead role descriptor
9. Version information