MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021

CODE OF PRACTICE

May 2019
Revised October 2019
Amended October 2020
Amended July 2021

Middlesex University REF 2021 Code of Practice

Contents

Middlesex University REF 2021 Code of Practice

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1. This document sets out Middlesex University's processes and procedures to ensure equality of opportunity in the inclusion of staff and selection of outputs for REF2021. To this end, this Code of Practice sets out the **processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research, for determining research independence, and for selecting outputs** for submission to REF 2021, taking into account the published REF criteria and legislative framework.

1.2 Context

2. Each institution making a submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice detailing how staff and associated outputs will be selected for inclusion in their REF submissions. An Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) will examine these and all institutions' approved codes will be published before the submission deadline. The provisional publication date is April 2022. On making submissions, the head of institution will be required to confirm adherence to this code.

1.3 Background

3. This REF Code of Practice has been developed by the University Director of Research in consultation with the Director of Human Resources, who will play an important role throughout the period of preparation for REF2021. Executive oversight is provided by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange.

4. The University's inclusive approach for REF2021 builds on the Code of Practice and strategy that was developed to guide our REF2014 submission. A copy of the REF2014 Code of Practice can be found at: (https://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/media/ref/content/equal/Middlesex%20University.PDF).

   The development of this Code of Practice has been informed by the REF2021 Guidance on Codes of Practice (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-codes-of-practice-201903/) and adheres to the template set out in that document.

   It was further amended to incorporate revisions announced in July 2020 to take account of disruption arising as a consequence of the Covid-19

pandemic: (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-revisions-to-ref-2021/).

In line with the additional guidance on Covid-19 revisions, we will be gathering data, regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the University's submission.

The full REF2021 submission criteria can be found in 'Assessment Framework & Guidance on Submissions', at (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/).

The principal legislative requirements are set out in the Equality Act 2010, details of which can be found at: (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents).

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with information and documents that can be found at the above websites.

2.0 Principles

5. The University is committed to supporting academic staff to fulfil their potential and REF2021 provides an important opportunity for the University community to demonstrate our excellence in research.

<u>2.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Middlesex</u>

6. The University seeks to maintain the highest standards of openness, fairness and equality for all its staff and students and this is inscribed within our values: 'we act fairly, with integrity, respect and purpose'. Our University Strategy makes an active commitment to our diversity and inclusivity agenda and the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for diversity will oversee this aspect of our REF preparations.

7. The University operates equality fora to support the embedding of diversity and inclusion into all aspects of our community. These include a Race, Religion and Beliefs Forum, Gender Forum, LGBT + Everyone Else Forum and a Disability Forum. The University is currently preparing to undertake the Athena SWAN charter and is actively involved with the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, now ranking 154 out of 445 submissions. The University is also a disability confident employer.

8. Our Equality and Diversity Strategy can be found under Public Policy Statements, Equal Opportunities at: https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/policies and details of our Health and Wellbeing support can be found at: https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/support/counselling-and-mental-health

9. As part of this support, a series of webinars specifically designed for those currently undertaking a Postgraduate Research Degree have been created. For full details, please see: https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/study/spotlights/types/research-at-middlesex/events-and-training

10. We are able to draw upon academic as well as corporate expertise in workplace equality practices. Our researchers, who will be contributing to the University's training programme for REF decision-makers, are also actively engaged in advancing knowledge and best practice in equality and diversity with several recent grant-supported projects: https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/faculty-of-professional-and-social-sciences/school-of-health-and-education/adult-child-midwifery/research-case-studies/cutting-edge-research-in-equalities-and-diversity-in-education

11. Other developments include work related to the research integrity agenda underpinned by our Whistleblowing Research Unit. The University has developed comprehensive support for whistle-blowers in the period since REF2014 and it is now firmly embedded within our culture. It is celebrated with an annual award, the most recent being: https://www.protect-advice.org.uk/middlesex-university-uk-whistleblower-award-for-2018-oxfam-whistleblower-helen-evans/

2.2 Identification of staff for inclusion

12. The University intends to implement in full Recommendation 1 of the Stern Report that 'All research active staff should be returned in the REF'. The full text of the Stern report can be found at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541338/ind-16-9-ref-stern-review.pdf

13. **All staff employed on academic contracts (teaching and research route, Senior Manager Academic or research only) on the REF census date (31 July 2020) who satisfy the REF2021 criteria for inclusion as Category A eligible staff will be submitted.**
    This is in accordance with the REF2021 Guidance on Submissions (para. 117) which states:

    Category A eligible staff are defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date, whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'.

14. The REF is a census of research excellence and eligible staff employed on academic contracts (teaching and research route, Senior Manager

Academic or research only) on the census date cannot 'opt out' of the University's submission. Staff whose circumstances have led them to generate fewer outputs than might be expected may request special consideration according to the procedures set out below (see Section 7). Such staff may be included in the submission with a reduced number of outputs, but will not be excluded altogether.

2.3 Identification of staff with significant responsibility for research

15. At Middlesex, academic staff with significant responsibility for research are determined according to the distinctions of our existing role profiles. Therefore, no additional procedure is required in order to identify staff with significant responsibility for research (SRR) for the purposes of REF. Since 2014, Middlesex University has routinely aligned all academic staff from Grade 7 to Professor to one of two routes: 'teaching and research' or 'teaching and professional practice'. Staff have significant responsibility for research if they are on the 'teaching and research' route or in designated research posts i.e. Research Fellow or Senior Research Fellow. Staff designated as 'Senior Manager Academic', a category which includes, for example, Heads of Department, Deans and Deputy Deans, also have significant responsibility for research and will therefore meet the criteria for inclusion. Academic staff on the 'teaching and professional practice' route do not have significant responsibility for research and will not be included.

2.4 Determining research independence

16. For the purposes of REF, an **independent researcher** is defined as: '*an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme*'. (See paras 128 to 134 of Guidance on Submissions)

17. Main panels C and D offer additional guidance on the likely indicators of research independence in their disciplines (para 189) and the University will be sensitive to disciplinary differences in determining research independence.

18. For Middlesex University, all staff designated as Category A as determined by their role (teaching and research route or Senior Manager Academic) are deemed to be independent researchers, with the exception of those registered for a research degree on the census date. Staff who are receiving active supervision of their research are not considered to be self-directed, independent researchers according to the REF definition.

19. However, candidates undertaking a research degree in Public Works mode will necessarily, as part of their admission requirements, have completed a significant body of prior independent research and so will be

considered to be independent researchers and included in the Category A total.

20. For staff employed on '**research only**' contracts, the REF submission guidelines provide the following as indicators that are considered appropriate by all main panels:

- *leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project*
- *holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement.*
- *leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.*

In addition, for Main Panels C and D, the following are also considered as evidence of research independence:

- *being named as a Co-I on an externally funded research grant/award.*
- *having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research*

21. Faculty REF Committees will have principal responsibility for the determination of research independence for all 'research only' staff in their respective Departments. An initial evaluation of research independence, based on the above three (or five) indicators, will be conducted by the relevant UoA Working Group, in discussion with the staff member concerned. A brief report will be prepared by the UoA Coordinator and shared with the researcher. Where there is agreement, both will sign the report which will then be submitted to the relevant Faculty REF Committee for consideration and approval. Where there is a disagreement of the evaluation, the member of staff may indicate this on the report form and submit a statement setting out their case. In this event, both the report and statement will be forwarded to the Faculty REF Committee for discussion and decision.

2.5 Former staff

22. The outputs of staff who have left the University during the census period but were formerly employed on Category A eligible academic contracts (teaching and research route) will also be eligible for inclusion in the submission, subject to the detailed guidance provided by REF.

2.6 Guiding principles

23. Four over-riding principles have been established as fundamental to REF2021 (see para 39 of Guidance on codes of practice (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-codes-of-practice-201903/) and will guide all our preparations, namely Transparency, Consistency, Accountability and Inclusivity:

a. **Transparency**: *All processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (where applicable), determining research independence, and selecting outputs for inclusion in REF submissions should be transparent. Codes of practice should be drawn up and made available in an easily accessible format and publicised to all academic staff across the institution, including on the staff intranet, and drawn to the attention of those absent from work. We would expect there to be a programme of communication activity to disseminate the code of practice and explain the processes related to i). identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (where applicable), ii). determining research independence and iii). selecting outputs for submission. This programme should be documented in the code. We encourage institutions to publish their codes of practice on their external website. They will be published by the REF team by the end of 2019 and any changes to final codes will be published as part of the submissions in 2022.*

b. **Consistency**: *The principles governing the processes covered by codes of practice should be consistent across the institution. We would expect that the approach to identifying staff with significant responsibility for research (where applicable) would only vary by unit of assessment (UOA) where employment practices vary at this level due to disciplinary differences, and the difference in practice can be verified as non-discriminatory in its own right. The code of practice should set out the principles to be applied to all aspects/stages of the process at all levels within the institution where decisions will be made.*

c. **Accountability**: *Responsibilities should be clearly defined, and individuals and bodies that are involved in i). identifying staff with significant responsibility for research, ii). determining research independence and iii). selecting outputs for REF submissions should be identified by role. Codes should also state what training those who are involved in the processes have had. Operating criteria and terms of reference for individuals, committees, advisory groups and any other bodies concerned with these processes, should be made readily available to all individuals and groups concerned.*

d. **Inclusivity**: *The processes described in the code should promote an inclusive environment, enabling institutions to identify all staff who have significant responsibility for research, all staff who are independent researchers, and the excellent research produced by staff across all protected groups.*

3.0 University Strategy and Policy

24. Middlesex University is committed to supporting high quality research and our current strategy, agreed by our Board of Governors, aims to 'Undertake high quality research, practice and knowledge exchange that benefits our students'.

25. Securing the best possible outcome in REF 2021 is an important strategic goal and the aim will be to optimise the outcome for the University, while continuing to support the development of our staff and research students. To this end, a systematic and strategic approach will be taken to all aspects of the submission.

26. In support of this endeavour, the University policies on staff support will have an important role to play. Of particular relevance for the REF will be our institutional provisions for mentoring, flexible working, workload allowances, and health and wellbeing. Should any additional, unforeseen or particular demands or needs be identified as a direct consequence of our REF preparations, suitable support will be made available.

27. Final approval of the content of the submission will rest with the Vice-Chancellor.

4.0 Communication

28. All staff have been made aware of this Code of Practice and have had opportunity to comment on the policies, processes and criteria that will be used in the identification of eligible staff and in the selection of outputs for submission to the REF. The Code is available on the Staff Intranet, together with minutes of the various committees and panels.

29. The University has a responsibility to maintain contact with all staff, including those on fractional or fixed term contracts, or temporarily absent from the University for whatever reason, to ensure that everybody is aware of the consultation on this Code of Practice and the available channels of communication. Communications with academic staff are managed within Faculties and through the University's central staff communications team.

30. Periodic global emails will be sent to all academic staff employed by the University with regular updates, and at key stages in the process (See Annex C for Timetable). This will ensure that all staff are kept as fully informed as possible.

31. A series of open consultation meetings was held in May 2019 to which all academic staff were invited, to discuss the University's approach to REF 2021 and any matters arising from the implementation of this Code. Additionally, the consultation was addressed to a meeting of the University's Leadership Forum, comprising senior managers and directors from across the institution. Formally, iterations of this code were considered by the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), Vice-Chancellor's Executive team (VCE), and given final approval by Academic Board and the Vice-Chancellor.

32. All materials used at these meetings (e.g. slides, handouts) have been placed on the University Staff Intranet, together with a summary of the Q&A sessions, for any staff not able to attend the meetings in person and by way of a permanent record of this element of the process.

33. The University's internal social networking platform, Yammer, has been used during the development of this Code of Practice and will continue to be used throughout the REF preparation and submission cycle.

34. Dedicated briefings and interactive sessions on the University's REF preparations and processes were included at our all-staff conference in June 2019.

35. A report to the University's Board of Governors was scheduled for September 2019 and the Board will be updated at intervals thereafter until the submission date.

5.0 Selection of Outputs

36. The over-riding principle that underpins preparation for the REF is that the University will select outputs adjudged to be of high quality in terms of their originality, significance and rigour, for inclusion in its submission to REF 2021. The University's single touchstone will be the quality of the outputs for inclusion when judging what might be included in any final submission, subject to the requirement to submit a minimum of one output and maximum of five per member of submitted staff, and to submit a total number of outputs per unit equivalent to 2.5 times the combined FTE of Category A staff. Impact Case Studies will be prepared in order to demonstrate the reach and significance of each unit's work.

37. Outputs of all staff (full-time, part-time, fixed term, retired, etc.) who satisfy the REF criteria for submission and are/were employed on eligible academic contracts (teaching and research route, Senior Manager Academic or research only) will be available for selection. The requirements for eligibility for submission to REF 2021 are detailed in the

'Guidance on Submissions', Part 3, paras 202 -296:
(https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/).

<u>5.1 Criteria for selection</u>
38. The outputs of all eligible staff will therefore be assessed for submission to REF 2021, based on the following criteria:

i.   Research which meets the REF published definition of research;
ii.   Compliance with REF open access policy;
iii.   Quality of the outputs relative to the REF and external benchmarks;
iv.   Fit with UoA and main panel criteria and with the University's policy and strategy for research;
v.   Volume – the number of research outputs permitted by a staff member (minimum of one, maximum of five).

i) <u>Definition of Research</u>
'*For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.*'
(https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/)
(Annex C)

ii) <u>Open Access</u>
The fundamental requirements for Open Access compliance are:
a) The output must have been deposited in an institutional repository, a repository service shared between multiple institutions, or a subject repository.
b) The output must be deposited within the repository within a specified timeframe, determined by the date of acceptance:

Outputs accepted for publication from the 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018. The output must have been deposited as soon after the point of acceptance as possible, and no later than three months after the date of publication.
Outputs accepted for publication from the 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2020. The output must have been deposited as soon after the point of acceptance as possible, and no later than three months after this date.

The output must have been deposited as the author's accepted manuscript.

For further details see:
(https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/ -
paras 223 – 263) and updated Guidance arising as a consequence of the

Covid-19 pandemic: (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-revisions-to-ref-2021/).

iii) Quality
Quality will be assessed on the basis of the published REF Guidance on Submissions: (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/), and the University's stated principles (see 2.0 above). REF Panels will assess outputs based on three overarching criteria: originality, significance and rigour and the same criteria will be applied by the University in making its assessments.

Where appropriate, use will be made of various metrics to inform the decision-making process (e.g. ranking/impact factor of outlet, citations, reviews) alongside internal peer review. The views of independent external assessors may also be sought as part of the output selection process.

UoA Working Groups will be responsible for making these judgments, based on their domain expertise and knowledge of REF criteria. All UoA Working Group members will receive training and will be guided and supported by the University Equality and Diversity Panel and the University REF Strategy Panel.

iv) Fit
Outputs which satisfy the above criteria will be further assessed in terms of their fit with the University's submission strategy. The list of UoAs under consideration for submission is subject to ongoing review by the REF Strategy Panel and may be revised up to the date of the final submission.

Where possible, UoA Working Groups will make a recommendation as to the most appropriate UoA for the outputs of an individual staff member. If a UoA Working Group is unable to make a recommendation or reach agreement, the decision will be referred to the relevant REF Faculty Committee, who may in turn refer it on to the University REF Strategy Panel for resolution. No member of staff affected by such a decision will remain uninformed of it, or the rationale for the decision.

The University reserves the right to determine which REF unit best aligns with any staff member's research outputs, in accordance with the submission strategy.

v) Volume
A minimum of one research output must be submitted per staff member returned in a particular UoA. Under certain circumstances, it may be possible to submit a reduced number of outputs per staff member, or to remove the minimum of one. For full details, please see:

(https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/).

Where a member of staff considers they have special circumstances that have constrained their capacity to undertake research or produce outputs during the assessment period, they may declare these in confidence (See Section 7.0).

Where a member of staff has more than the permitted maximum of five outputs available for assessment, the University will make a careful selection against the criteria set out in this Code of Practice.

39. Non-selection of an individual eligible output does not necessarily imply a judgment of lack of quality.

40. Individual researchers cannot veto the selection of any of their outputs for inclusion as part of the University's REF submission.

6.0 Panels and Committees

41. The University will operate through its existing committee structures (e.g. Academic Board, Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee) in addition to REF-specific committees and groups. A REF-specific management structure comprising one University level panel and three Faculty Committees will oversee and manage the preparations and final submission to REF 2021. These in turn will be supported by UoA Working Groups and a University REF Equality and Diversity Panel (see Structure Diagram, Annex A).

42. All REF committees and panels will comprise a cross-section of staff with specific responsibility for research matters and equality, including senior staff and early career researchers (ECRs). Chairs of UoA Working Groups will be appointed by their respective Faculty Executive Deans together with other faculty membership commensurate with the UoA. All committees, panels and working groups will include members selected from staff across the University or from the appropriate Faculty for the Faculty REF Committees and UoA Working Groups.

43. Calls for expressions of interest will be invited by the Chairs of the University REF Strategy Panel and University REF Equality and Diversity Panel from all academic staff for the various staff representative positions on those Panels. The respective Chairs will select staff to fill those positions from the pool of applicants. Likewise, the Executive Deans, together with their Faculty Deputy Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange will undertake a similar process to appoint the UoA Working Group Chairs and to fill the various staff representative positions. All

appointments will be subject to approval by the University REF Strategy Panel.

44. Brief summaries of the main function and responsibilities of the various Committees, Panels and Working Groups are provided here; for membership and full Terms of Reference please see Annex A.

6.1 University REF Strategy Panel

45. The University REF Strategy Panel has overall responsibility for all decisions related to the University's REF 2021 submission, ensuring that it adheres to the University's strategy and vision, and this Code of Practice. It is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange and reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, which in turn reports to the Academic Board.

46. The Panel is responsible for overseeing preparation of the University's REF submission and ensuring best practice in relation to REF preparations. This includes embedding transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity throughout our policies and processes.

47. It will have an important assurance function: it will be responsible for ensuring that all University procedures pertaining to the REF 2021 submission are designed and followed in accordance with the published framework and associated guidance and for ensuring the integrity of all submitted data. The Panel is also responsible for approving the appointment of staff to key roles in the process (e.g. UoA Working Group Chairs, external advisors).

6.2 University REF Equality and Diversity Panel

48. The University REF Equality and Diversity Panel will provide an independent body that advises the REF Strategy Panel on all matters relating to equality and diversity in relation to REF 2021. The panel's main purpose is to ensure that equitable, inclusive and transparent procedures are followed in all aspects of preparation for REF. It is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for diversity.

49. The Panel will be responsible for ensuring Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are conducted at key points in the preparation process, in order to ensure that the University's REF policy and procedures do not have a differential impact on particular groups as identified in the Equality Act 2010: (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents).

50. The Panel will also be responsible for considering any cases that may be referred to it in respect of individual staff circumstances.

6.3 <u>Faculty REF Committees</u>

    51. Faculty REF Committees will oversee and guide the detailed preparation of individual UoA submissions within their remit. The UoA Working Group Chairs will play a key role and where UoAs span more than one Faculty, the relevant UoA Chair will be a member of each relevant Faculty Committee. Each Faculty REF Committee will be chaired by the respective Faculty Deputy Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange on behalf of the Executive Dean.

6.4 <u>UoA Working Groups</u>

    52. UoA Working Groups will be responsible for the detailed preparation of individual UoA submissions. This will include the selection of outputs and impact case studies and other relevant data preparation/collation of any other materials required for submission.

    53. The unreserved Minutes of all the above Panels and Committees will be available on the Staff Intranet.

6.5 <u>Staff Training</u>

    54. All staff involved in REF committees, panels and working groups will be required to complete mandatory training in equality and diversity to ensure compliance with the University's legal obligations, and further training tailored to REF2021 and this Code of Practice, including implicit bias training. The University's generic training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is compulsory for all staff and is provided on-line via the Staff Intranet.

    55. Further REF-specific training workshops will be delivered during 2019, which all staff with a direct involvement in REF selection processes will be required to attend. These presentations will be made available via the Staff Intranet, together with copies of any course materials as an aide-memoire for staff.

    56. All training will be arranged by the Human Resources Department and the Staff Development team and overseen by the University REF Equality and Diversity Panel.

7.0 Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances

    57. REF 2021 includes provision to take account of the effects of equality-related circumstances on researchers' productivity throughout the assessment period (1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020). This section of the Code explains how the University will adjust expectations about the research contribution to be made by staff with such circumstances, while

ensuring that suitable support is provided to individuals. No minimum contribution to the output pool has been set by the University and where an eligible member of staff is unable to contribute any outputs, for whatever reason, they will be returned as a null submission.

58. Individual staff circumstances may be considered as clearly defined (e.g. parental leave) or complex (e.g. an ongoing medical condition or disability) (See Section 5.0 v). A reduction in the number of outputs expected will be agreed where any of the following criteria are satisfied:

- an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period
- circumstances equivalent to 46 months or more absence from research, (such as long-term health conditions)
- two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.

59. Staff are encouraged to disclose any circumstances that have adversely affected their research productivity, including any arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, so that any support needs can be identified and support put in place, regardless of whether the impact of the particular circumstances is sufficient to justify a reduction in outputs for REF (see paras 63-64)

60. Full details of how REF panels will deal with individual staff circumstances can be found in the Guidance on Submissions, paras 151 – 210: (https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/). See para 160 and Annex L for a full list of the '*equality-related circumstances that, in isolation or together, may significantly constrain the ability of submitted staff to produce outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period*'.

61. A further important aspect of the REF2021 provision is to make allowance for the potential impact on the available output pool for UoAs where there is a high proportion of staff with circumstances that have significantly constrained their ability to produce outputs during the assessment period. The University is committed to supporting staff who wish to declare equality-related circumstances.

62. Where special circumstances cumulatively affect the output pool available to a given Unit, the University may seek approval for a reduction in the total number of outputs required for a particular UoA. Any staff who believe they have special circumstances are therefore encouraged (but not required) to disclose these via the standardised declaration form supplied by REF, a copy of which will be sent to all staff and will also be available for download from the University's REF support intranet pages.

63. Completed declaration forms will be submitted, in confidence, to the University's HR Department via a dedicated and secure email address. HR will ensure that the right level of confidentiality is maintained throughout and will refer each case to the University's Equality and Diversity Panel for consideration of possible adjustment. The relevant UoA coordinator and the staff member concerned will be advised of any agreed adjustment.

64. HR will also ensure that ongoing support is provided. This will typically be taken forward through confidential discussions including the staff member themselves, UoA coordinators, Heads of Department, HR/Staff development, and/or any other support services as appropriate. Support will be offered in every case where a need is identified, irrespective of whether the impact of an individual's circumstances is sufficient to justify a reduction in outputs.

65. This process will be followed for all staff who declare a detrimental impact on their research capacity associated with equality-related circumstances, whether or not any requests for reductions are to be submitted by the University for individual UoAs.

66. Staff will need to agree to their declaration and any other supporting evidence being made available to EDAP, should it be required, in the eventuality that the University REF Strategy Panel wishes to request from EDAP a reduction in the total number outputs for that UoA. Highly sensitive material will be redacted where possible, providing it does not have a detrimental effect on the request for the reduction in outputs for the UoA.

67. The University REF Equality and Diversity Panel chair will make arrangements for the completion of any request to EDAP for a reduction in the number of outputs required for any particular unit as a result of special circumstances. '*The information provided in the request must be based on verifiable evidence, which may be audited in 2021, following the REF submission deadline*'. This will be compiled in conjunction with the University's HR Department who will ensure that all issues of confidentiality agreed with individual members of staff will be maintained.

68. If agreed by EDAP, the chair of the University REF Equality and Diversity Panel will notify the relevant UoA Working Group of the overall reduction in the number of outputs required for their Unit.

69. Reductions to take account of the effects of equality-related circumstances on researchers' productivity (including Covid-19 related effects) can be submitted at the submission deadline (noon, 31 March

2021). These will be considered during the assessment year and the outcomes of EDAP's review will fed directly to the relevant Panels.

8.0 Feedback and Appeals

70. Staff may seek feedback at any time from their UoA Working Group Chair. Where issues arise, every effort should be made to resolve them at the local level through dialogue, following the University's existing practices. Where this is not possible, staff may submit a formal request for review, setting out their case in writing to the Chair of the appropriate Faculty REF Committee. The Chair of the Faculty REF committee will consider the case, reviewing documentation and/or interviewing relevant parties as required, and will reach a decision. Both the staff member and the UoA coordinator will be informed of the Chair's decision, with the whole process normally taking no more than 10 working days.

71. If an individual considers that any of the principles and procedures set out in this Code of Practice have not been properly followed, or that there has been unfair treatment in respect of any aspect of REF preparation and submission, they may submit an appeal as set out under this section of this Code of Practice.

72. A REF appeal must be made in writing to the University Chief People Officer. An Appeal Panel will then be convened by the University's Chief People Officer to consider the case, comprising a chair and two other members of academic staff, all drawn from a pool of independent staff, none of whom will be from the same Faculty or UoA as the appellant. A pool of nine independent academic staff (three per Faculty) will be assembled by the University Chief People Officer, all of whom will receive the same mandatory training as the REF committees, panels and working groups (see Section 6.5) and who will be available throughout the REF submission preparation period to consider appeals.

73. The Appeal Panel will consider the written statements from the appellant and any other relevant materials and will invite the appellant and any other parties they may consider relevant, to discuss the case. The Panel may also seek other expert opinion, both from within the University and externally, to help inform their decision. The appellant may call upon others to support their case should that be appropriate to the situation.

74. The Appeal Panel will prepare a report detailing the outcome, which will be sent to the Chief People Officer, who in turn will inform the Chair of the University REF Strategy Panel and where relevant, the Chair of the REF Equality and Diversity Panel, of the outcome.

75. Copies of the Appeal Panel report will be made available to the appellant and others as appropriate, subject to any considerations of confidentiality, together with notification of the outcome.

76. The process should normally be completed within four working weeks of receipt of an appeal.

9.0 Grievance

77. The University's general Grievance procedures remain available to staff throughout. The additional processes outlined here are designed to respond to matters specifically arising from the implementation of this REF2021 Code of Practice. Nothing in this Code of Practice is intended to replace or supplant the University's general staff policies and procedures.

Annex A

Panels and Committees

<u>University REF Strategy Panel</u>
Constituted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange, under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor.

Membership: PVC/ Executive Dean with responsibility for Research and KE (Chair)
          PVC/Exec Dean with responsibility for Diversity
          Director of Research
          Director of Knowledge Exchange
          Faculty Deputy Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange (x3)
          Academic staff (1 per Faculty)
          An Early Career Researcher
          Designated REF Main Contact
          Other members may be co-opted as required

Terms of Reference:
- To oversee and manage preparations for the REF 2021 submission
- To ensure the REF 2021 submission is aligned with University Policy and Strategy
- To approve the appointment of staff to key roles (e.g. UoA Working Group Chairs, Faculty REF Committee members)
- To approve appointments and receive feedback from external advisors
- To receive reports from Faculty REF Committees
- To make recommendations to RKEC and Academic Board regarding REF

<u>University REF Equality and Diversity Panel</u>
Constituted by the PVC/Executive Dean with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange, under the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor.

Membership: PVC/Exec Dean with responsibility for Diversity (Chair)
          Director of Human Resources
          Chair of University Research Ethics Committee
          2 Academic Staff Representatives

Terms of Reference:
- To oversee and ensure compliance with the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to REF exercise
- To advise the University REF Strategy Panel and/or Vice-Chancellor as appropriate
- To take responsibility for REF Equality Impact Assessments

- To consider any issues that may be referred to it in respect of individual staff circumstances
- To oversee and monitor REF staff training

Faculty REF Committees
Constituted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Research & Knowledge Exchange, in consultation with Executive Deans.

Membership:
Faculty Deputy Dean for Research & Knowledge Exchange (Chair)
UoA Working Group Chair(s)
Professor/Associate Professor/Senior Research Fellow (One per UoA)
Other members as appropriate (to include at least one ECR and one Senior Lecturer/Research Fellow)

Terms of Reference:
To oversee and guide the preparation activities for individual UoAs
- To inform, implement and ensure compliance with policies and procedures as approved by the University REF Strategy and Equality and Diversity Panels
- To keep staff in the Faculty informed of REF developments
- To prepare and refine UoA submissions as appropriate

UoA Working Groups
Constituted by the Executive Dean of the appropriate Faculty, in consultation with the University REF Strategy Panel.

Membership: UoA Coordinator (Chair)
            Professors/Associate Professors (max 2)
            Other members as appropriate (max 2 - to include at least one ECR)

Terms of Reference:
- To undertake the preparation of all materials relevant to the submission for an individual UoA (i.e. selection of outputs, impact case studies and associated narratives)
- To ensure compliance with REF criteria at an individual UoA level
- To ensure adherence to this CoP at an individual UoA level
- To receive input from and/or report to the Faculty and University REF Committees and Panels.

REF Operations Group

Constituted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange.

This Group will provide support for all technical aspects of the REF submission. It will report via the University REF Strategy Panel and will support all other REF Panels, Committees and UoA Working Groups through the provision of data and other services as required.

Membership: Designated REF Main Contact (Chair)
University REF Technical Contact
Repository Manager
Research Funding Accounts Manager
HR Business Partner for Research
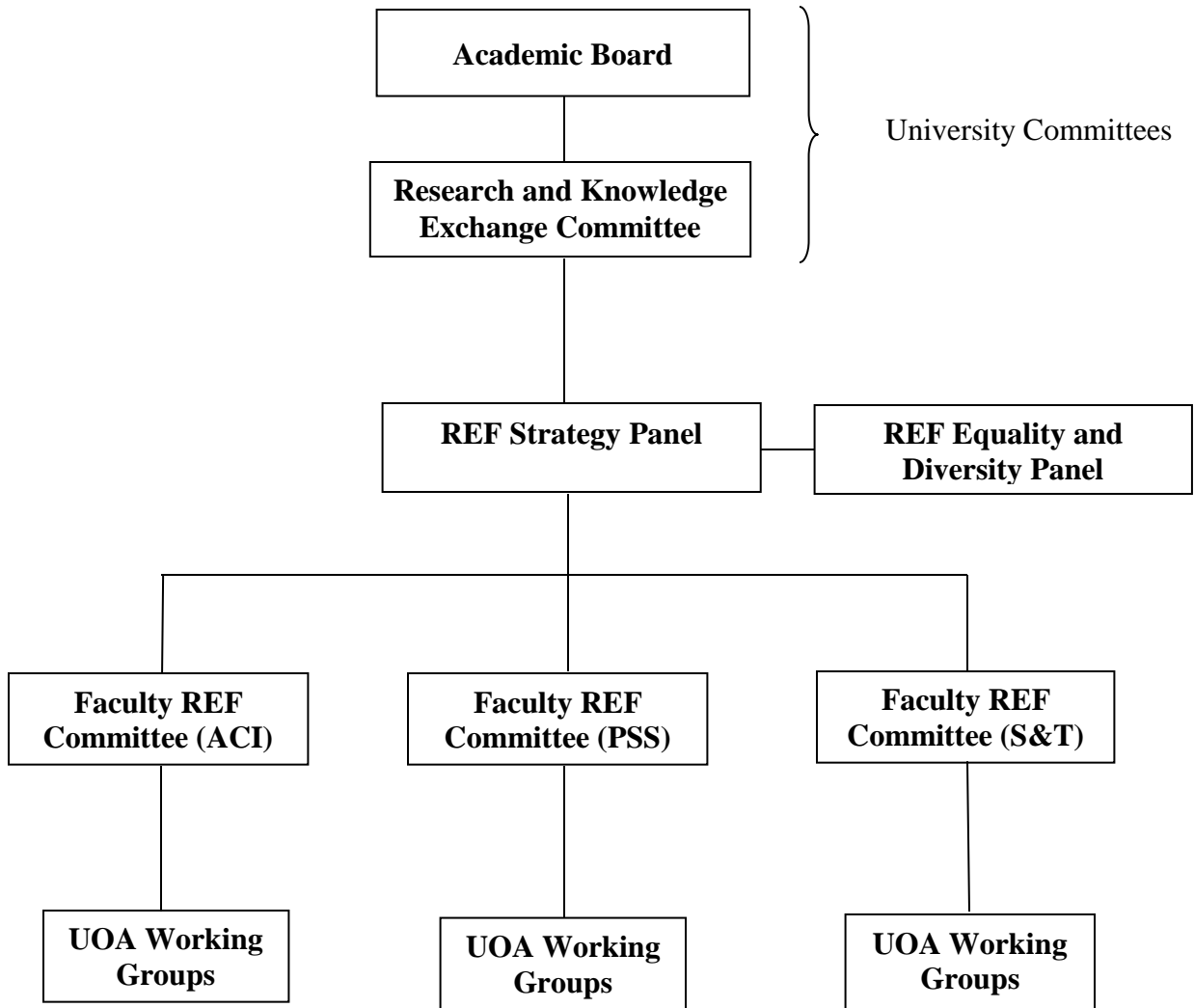Head of Department & Programme Administration
Other members may be co-opted as required

Terms of Reference:
- To manage all technical aspects of the REF submission
- To provide data and other technical support to REF Panels, Committees and UoA Working Groups
- To ensure suitable archive and other infrastructure is available as required and is compliant with legal requirements (e.g. GDPR)

<u>Figure A.1</u> Panels, Committees and Working Groups Structure Diagram

```
         ┌──────────────────────────┐  ╲
         │      Academic Board      │   ⎵
         └──────────────────────────┘    ⎬  University Committees
                      │                  ⎵
         ┌──────────────────────────┐   ╱
         │ Research and Knowledge   │
         │  Exchange Committee      │
         └──────────────────────────┘
                      │
                      │
         ┌────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐
         │ REF Strategy Panel │───│  REF Equality and   │
         └────────────────────┘   │   Diversity Panel   │
                      │           └─────────────────────┘
      ┌───────────────┼───────────────┐
┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐
│ Faculty REF   │ │ Faculty REF   │ │ Faculty REF   │
│ Committee(ACI)│ │ Committee(PSS)│ │ Committee(S&T)│
└───────────────┘ └───────────────┘ └───────────────┘
        │                 │                 │
┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐
│ UOA Working   │ │ UOA Working   │ │ UOA Working   │
│   Groups      │ │   Groups      │ │   Groups      │
└───────────────┘ └───────────────┘ └───────────────┘
```

Annex B

Staff Eligibility Criteria

The University intends to implement in full, Recommendation 1 of the Stern Report that 'All research active staff should be returned in the REF'. The full text of the Stern report can be found at: (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541338/ind-16-9-ref-stern-review.pdf)

For Middlesex University, this means we will be submitting all staff in accordance with the REF2021 Guidance on Submissions (para. 117) which states: *Category A eligible' staff will be defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) or greater, on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date (31 July 2020), whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'[1]*

This is further qualified by:
Staff should have a substantive connection with the submitting institution. For staff on 'research only' contracts, the eligible pool should only include those who are independent researchers, and not research assistants.

For the purposes of REF, an **independent researcher** is defined as: '*an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme*'. (See paras 128 to 134 of Guidance on Submissions)

Main panels C and D offer additional guidance on the likely indicators of research independence in their disciplines (para 189) and the University will be sensitive to disciplinary differences in determining research independence.

For Middlesex University, all staff designated as Category A as determined by their role (teaching and research route or Senior Manager Academic) are deemed to be independent researchers, with the exception of those registered for a research degree on the census date. Staff who are receiving active supervision of their research are not considered to be self-directed, independent researchers according to the REF definition, with the exception of those registered in Public Works mode. Public Works candidates will, as part of their admission requirements, have completed a significant body of prior independent research and so will be considered to be independent researchers and therefore included in the Category A total.

---

[1] Individuals whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research' are staff returned to the Higher Education Statistics Agency Staff Collection with an academic employment function of either 'Academic contract that is research only' or 'Academic contract that is both teaching and research' (identified as codes '2' or '3' in the ACEMPFUN field).

Therefore, all staff employed at 0.2 FTE or greater on Academic contracts (teaching and research route or Senior Manager Academic), except those who are enrolled for a research degree at the University on the census date, unless registered in Public Works mode.

For staff employed on '**research only**' contracts, the REF submission guidelines provides the following as indicators that are considered appropriate by all main panels:

- *leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project*
- *holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement.*
- *leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package.*

In addition, for Panels C and D, the following are also considered as evidence of research independence:

- *being named as a Co-I on an externally funded research grant/award.*
- *having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research*

All staff employed on 'research only' contracts on the census date will be considered to have Significant Responsibility for Research and therefore be eligible for submission, subject to a determination of their research independence.

Postdoctoral researchers on 'research only' contracts who are employed specifically to work on externally funded projects will not normally be expected to meet the criteria for independence.

Faculty REF Committees will have principal responsibility for the determination of research independence for all 'research only' staff in their respective Departments. An initial evaluation of research independence, based on the above three (or five) indicators, will be conducted by the relevant UoA Working Group, in discussion with the affected staff member. A brief report will be prepared by the UoA Coordinator and shared with the researcher. Where there is agreement, both will sign the report which will then be submitted to the relevant Faculty REF Committee for consideration and approval. Where there is a disagreement of the evaluation, the 'research only' member of staff may indicate this on the report form and submit an independent statement setting out their case. In this event, both the report and statement will be forwarded to the Faculty REF Committee for discussion and decision.

Annex C

Selection of Outputs

The selection of outputs for submission will be made in accordance with the guidance provided (see https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/ paras. 202 to 296) and this Code of Practice. Key extracts from the guidance are:

292. Institutions should select and submit outputs that in their judgement reflect their highest-quality research in relation to the full range of assessment criteria ('originality, significance and rigour'), and in accordance with their codes of practice (see REF 2019/03), having due regard to the equality implications of using citation data.

203. It is therefore not expected that all staff members would be returned with the same number of outputs attributed to them in the submission. As set out in REF 2019/03, to aid institutions in promoting equality, complying with legislation and avoiding discrimination, institutions must document and apply fair and transparent processes for the selection of outputs. These must demonstrate how they have taken into account equality and diversity considerations, and any equality-related circumstances affecting staff ability to research productively during the period.

217. In addition to printed academic work, research outputs may include, but are not limited to: new materials, devices, images, artefacts, products and buildings; confidential or technical reports; intellectual property, whether in patents or other forms; performances, exhibits or events; and work published in non-print media.

UoA Working Groups will have primary responsibility for the evaluation and selection of outputs from the available pool for individual units. Scoring templates will be developed to ensure consistency across individual UoAs and, as far as possible, across the University. UoA Working Groups will report to their respective Faculty REF Committees which in turn will report to the University REF Strategy Panel.

Staff who have no eligible outputs during the census period, for whatever reason, will be returned as a 'null submission'. Where special circumstances pertain, staff are encouraged to declare these using the procedures set out in Section 7.0.

Annex D

Equality Impact Assessment

Equality impact assessments will be conducted at various key stages throughout the REF2021 preparation cycle. An EIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of our processes designed to evaluate their impact and in particular to understand if those processes are likely to have a differential impact on one or more of the groups protected characteristics. (See Table 1 pp6-10 of Guidance on Codes of Practice: https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-codes-of-practice-201903/).

The primary focus of the EIAs will be to establish if:
- Discrimination may be inherent within a REF related policy, process or practice;
- There is a positive inherent impact in one or more of the protected characteristics groups;
- There is an opportunity to revise a REF related policy, process or practice that could result in a positive impact.

All policies and procedures set out in this Code of Practice will be evaluated and informed by EIAs following any preparatory reviews or other significant events. The assessments will consider data on:
- The characteristics and distribution of staff included in UoAs in relation to the profile of protected characteristics of staff across the University;
- The distribution (i.e. volume) and rated quality of selected outputs for submission in UoAs in relation to the profile of protected characteristics of staff across the UoA.

Feedback will be sought from staff as part of this process.

The findings will be reported first to the University REF Equality and Diversity Panel and then to the University REF Strategy Panel, who will decide if any changes are required to this Code of Practice.

Any significant proposed changes will be subject to a further EIA and, if necessary, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) will be consulted. Provision is included in the Guidance on Codes of Practice (Para 14):

'If an HEI identifies an exceptional need to make significant changes to the content of its code of practice after it has been approved by the relevant funding body, the HEI must provide a revised code to the REF team. Final versions of codes of practice will be collected from all submitting institutions in early 2021, for publication along with the submissions in 2022.'

All EIAs will be conducted by the University's Human Resources service and may include support from external agencies if appropriate.

Equality & Diversity Plan : 2017-2022

1.   Introduction

1.1   Middlesex University is proud of its diverse community of staff, students and partners and is committed to creating a positive environment where diversity is a strength and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the University to publish its objectives in relation to its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Progress against our objectives is monitored on an annual basis by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

1.2   The University has many distinct and positive indicators to celebrate. Approximately 65% of the university's student community is of minority ethnic origin; 59% of the total community are female. 28% of staff and 14% of our senior managers identify themselves as from minority ethnic origins. 56% of staff are female, of whom 40% are in senior leadership positions (includes senior managers and professors). Just under 4% of our staff have declared that they have a disability. (Full details of our staff and student diversity can be found in our [annual review of equality & diversity]).

1.3   The University has decided to bring its diversity objectives together, to form an Equality, Diversity Plan (see Annex 1 for details). The Plan includes a set of actions that follow the life cycle of our new University Strategy – Transforming potential into success. Both the Plan and actions aim to address key aspects of diversity, equality and inclusion issues which are important to the University as well as to further promote an inclusive culture that values diversity in all its forms.

1.4   The Equality & Diversity Plan 2017-2022 will prioritise equality and diversity issues identified through analysis of data, consultation and benchmarking activities. The plan will be reviewed annually to monitor progress and where appropriate, to set new targets, consistent with our value of constantly improving on what has gone before.

2.   Equality & Diversity Vision

2.1   Middlesex University is dedicated to the success of its students and staff. This commitment is reflected in Equalities Vision of building a culture where:

- Diversity is valued and celebrated as a strength, enhancing all that we do.
- Fairness, inclusion and respect are a key part of our culture.
- Positive relations between diverse members of the University's community are promoted.
- The diversity of our students and staffs' backgrounds, experience and talents are celebrated as a bedrock for creativity and innovation.
- Everyone at Middlesex will have an equal opportunity to see their potential turned into success.

2.2   The impact and outcomes of our Equality & Diversity Plan are outlined in our annual equality and diversity reports available from the Equalities pages of our website or on request.

3.   The Equality & Diversity Plan

3.1   The Equality & Diversity Plan and the accompanying set of actions have been developed for the academic years 2017-2022. It will be supported by clear performance indicators and monitored to track progress and achievement. Middlesex's aim is to go beyond the statutory requirement of compliance, to be considered an exemplar organisation on equality, diversity and inclusion within the higher education community.

3.2   The university will be delivering its plan, and accompanying actions that aim to reflect the needs of the people it serves through the following key objectives:

- We will embed our values in everything we do.
- We will shape and support our workforce to have the capabilities we need to achieve our aims.
- We will create a high-performance culture throughout the University that builds staff engagement, tackling poor performance and recognising innovation and improvement.
- We will develop streamlined, evidence-based and effective governance and management processes that empower everyone, add value and facilitate collaboration.

3.3   The University is committed to advancing and promoting equality of opportunity within its physical and digital environment. It will develop

supporting plans that will eliminate and prevent discrimination, victimisation and harassment and fosters good relations between different people and groups.

4.   Accountability and Responsibility

4.1   Overall responsibility for the Equality and Diversity within the University rests with the Board of Governors, Vice-Chancellor and his Executive team.

4.2   The Director of Human Resources along with the Chair of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee are jointly responsible for ensuring compliance with relevant legislation. They are also responsible for ensuring that the plan is communicated, implemented, monitored and continuously reviewed. The University Equality & Diversity Plan is agreed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee on behalf of Board of Governors.

5.   Leadership and Decision Making

5.1   Every member of the University community whether staff or student have a shared responsibility to deliver the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda.

5.2   Our `Valued Ways of Working` model sets out the behaviours we expect not just of our managers but all staff at Middlesex. Irrespective of seniority our managers and supervisors are responsible for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion to students and staff and are required to set an example for others in the institution to follow. Further guidance on the behavioural expectations we have of all our staff are set out within the Valued Ways of Working Model.

6.   Equality & Diversity Reporting

6.1   Equality monitoring and reporting will be regularly reviewed and outcomes reported to the appropriate management committees, to Trade and Student Union and the Board of Governors.

6.2   The annual Equality & Diversity report will provide a commentary on progress made in implementing the Equality & Diversity Plan and Objectives (Annex 1) and will provide data analysis in relation to the protected characteristics. This reporting mechanism will help us to:

- Meet our statutory duties in relation to the public sector equality duty and remain in compliance with equality legislation in respect of both staff and students.
- Identify areas where remedial action is required.
- Review outcomes against the Equality & Diversity Action Plan and institutional targets.

6.3   We are proud of our commitment to strive for the highest possible standards within the diversity arena, and our strategy, objectives and subsequent annual reports will be published and circulated both internally and externally.

7.   Equality & Diversity Action Plan

7.1   The Equality & Diversity Action Plan sets out the core objectives over this period, which will be agreed and reported corporately. It will be the principal document for considering the University's on going agenda on equality, diversity and inclusion issues. It will be regularly monitored through its Equality fora, and reported on annually to Board.

7.2   The finalised plan is appended to this document and has been agreed in conjunction with:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee;
- People Enabling Plan Steering Group;
- Wellbeing Group;
- MDXSU;
- Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE);
- UCU and Unison MDX Branch Executives (via the Joint Union Consultation Negotiation Committee).

HRS 2017 – to be reviewed September 2019.

Annex F   Units of Assessment

Main panel	Unit of assessment	
A	1	Clinical Medicine
	2	Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care
	3	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
	4	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
	5	Biological Sciences
	6	Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences
B	7	Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
	8	Chemistry
	9	Physics
	10	Mathematical Sciences
	11	Computer Science and Informatics
	12	Engineering
C	13	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
	14	Geography and Environmental Studies
	15	Archaeology
	16	Economics and Econometrics
	17	Business and Management Studies
	18	Law
	19	Politics and International Studies
	20	Social Work and Social Policy
	21	Sociology
	22	Anthropology and Development Studies
	23	Education
	24	Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
	25	Area Studies
D	26	Modern Languages and Linguistics
	27	English Language and Literature
	28	History
	29	Classics
	30	Philosophy
	31	Theology and Religious Studies
	32	Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory
	33	Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies
	34	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

REF2021 Timetable

1 January 2014	Start of publication period (start point for published of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies)
September 2017	Publication of 'Initial decisions on the Research Excellence Framework' by the funding bodies, following consultation on implementation of the Stern review recommendations (REF 2017/01)
October 2017	Publication of 'Roles and recruitment of expert panels' (REF 2017/03)
November 2017	Publication of 'Decisions on staff and outputs' (2017/04)
March 2018	Panel membership for criteria phase announced
End of July 2018	Publication of draft 'Guidance on submissions' and 'Panel criteria'
15 October 2018	Close of consultation on draft 'Guidance on submissions' and 'Panel criteria'
January 2019	Publication of final 'Guidance on submissions', 'Panel criteria', and 'Guidance on codes of practice'; appointment of additional EDAP members
Spring/summer 2019	Institutions intending to make submissions to the REF submit their codes of practice; invitation to request multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units (staggered deadlines in May, September and December 2019); beta versions of the submission system will be available in both test and live environments for institutions to use
Autumn 2019	Pilot of the REF submission system; survey of submissions intentions opens; proposed date for inviting reduction requests for staff circumstances
December 2019	Survey of submissions intentions complete; final deadline for requests for multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units; publication of approved codes of practice
Early 2020	Formal release of the submission systems and accompanying technical guidance; invitation to HEIs to make submissions; invitation to nominate panel members and assessors for the assessment phase; deadline for staff circumstances requests
Mid 2020	Appointment of additional members and assessors to panels
31 July 2020	Census date for staff; end of assessment period (for research impacts, the research environment, and data about research income and research doctoral degrees awarded)
31 December 2020	End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies)

31 March 2021	Closing date for submissions
01 June 2021	Deadline for providing further details for outputs pending publication; redacted versions of impact case studies; and corroborating evidence held for impact case studies
May 2021 – February 2022	Panels assess submissions
April 2022	Publication of outcomes
Summer 2022	Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles