# University of Hertfordshire

# REF2021 Equality Impact Assessment

1. Introduction

The University of Hertfordshire (UH) prepared an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on the University’s Code of Practice for Submission to REF2021 in early 2020 which is included as Annex A. The EIA gave assurance to those involved in managing the REF submission that no single group was significantly adversely affected by the policies and processes being implemented to prepare the REF2021 submission.

This document, which is the final report to the Research England REF2021 team, sets out what has been done and the plan for the post-REF submission period.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise is responsible for the EIA and for the resulting action plan and its implementation.

1. Background

The University REF2021 process was conducted within the framework of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity as set out in its REF2021 Code of Practice (COP) for Submission. The COP was approved by Research England in November 2019 (with a minor change consequent on the delayed submission date owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, approved in September 2020).

Since REF2014 many initiatives had been supported by the University including Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter, a review of flexible working and the HR Concordat. The University’s REF2021 process was conducted within an environment in which Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)takes a prominent role in many University decisions. All Schools and professional areas have, since 2020, an Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Team (EDIT) which support the University EDI Board to implement the Strategic EDI Action Plan and work towards achieving the institution’s EDI objectives and priorities.

The University’s intention with REF2021 was to make the highest-quality submission possible following the COP reflecting the University’s research strengths, in order to support the University’s research ambitions beyond 2021.

## Analysis

The University’s Code of Practice for Submission to REF2021 sets out in detail the process for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research and independent researchers (Category A submitted staff).

An analysis has been undertaken concerning the characteristics of Category A submitted staff[[1]](#footnote-1) compared with Category A eligible staff[[2]](#footnote-2). This analysis showed for almost all the protected characteristics for which there is enough data that the REF2021 submission was more diverse than REF2014. For example, the percentage of women staff submitted in REF2021 is 7.3% greater than in REF2014; staff declaring a disability 4.6% more than in REF2014. BAME staff percentages were the same in both submissions. In addition to action taken by the University since REF2014 this improvement in diversity is also a function of the change in REF2021 policy towards the inclusion of all staff with Significant Responsibility for Research and research independence with a minimum of one up to a maximum of five outputs, unlike the previous requirement that all staff submitted should have four outputs unless they had specific staff circumstances.

The profile of staff submitted to REF2021 ( seeTable 1) show that women are underrepresented in the submission, compared with the Category A eligible population, by 11%; and the data for BAME staff and staff with disabilities show that both black and ‘other ethnic’ staff are under-represented as are staff with disabilities. In terms of age, the age-group 40-49 were over-represented by just over 5% while all the others were all very slightly under-represented.

### Table 1: Profile of Category A submitted staff compared with profile of all Category A eligible staff

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | All Academic and Research Staff |  | Full Submission |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gender | Female | 745 | 53.83% | 146 | 42.20% |
|  | Male | 639 | 46.17% | 200 | 57.80% |
|  |  | 1384 |  | 346 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Age | 18-24 | 4 | 0.29% | 0 | 0.00% |
|  | 25-39 | 344 | 24.86% | 78 | 22.54% |
|  | 40-49 | 369 | 26.66% | 111 | 32.08% |
|  | 50-65 | 562 | 40.61% | 130 | 37.57% |
|  | 65+ | 105 | 7.59% | 27 | 7.80% |
|  |  | 1384 |  | 346 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ethnicity | White | 1046 | 75.58% | 263 | 76.01% |
|  | Asian | 174 | 12.57% | 58 | 16.76% |
|  | Black | 78 | 5.64% | 7 | 2.02% |
|  | Other ethnic | 29 | 2.10% | 6 | 1.73% |
|  | Other | 57 | 4.12% | 12 | 3.47% |
|  |  | 1384 |  | 346 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Disability | Yes  | 104 | 7.51% | 16 | 4.62% |
|  | No | 1245 | 89.96% | 320 | 92.49% |
|  | n/a | 35 | 2.53% | 10 | 2.89% |
|  |  | 1384 |  | 346 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

At Unit of Assessment level (see Table 2), the gender balance tends to reflect disciplinary norms reflective of the home departments of these Units. In the STEM disciplines gender is skewed towards men and in the allied health professions, towards women. The University’s active participation and recognition in Athena Swan and, in Physics, the Juno programme, are helping to address these imbalances. Details on progress achieved in this REF period are described in the Unit of Assessment (UOA) Environment Statements. For example, in UOA30, Philosophy:

*It is widely recognised that there is a discipline-wide problem in the under-representation of women in Philosophy. The Unit as submitted to REF2014 was no exception; indeed, only one staff member was a woman (5% by FTE, well below the national average). The Unit sought to correct this imbalance by seeking a gender-balanced shortlist for all new posts advertised in the current cycle. Typically, at least equal representation of women on the shortlist has been achieved from an overall field of applicants heavily dominated by men. Five of the seven appointments made in the current cycle were women.*

### Table 2: Gender and BAME profile of REF2021 Units of Assessment

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| UOA | UOA name | fte | % of submission | % male | % female | % BAME |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Allied Health, Nursing and Pharmacy | 75.9 | 23.6 | 40.7 | 59.3 | 16.2 |
| 4 | Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience  | 18.9 | 5.9 | 54.5 | 45.5 | 10.6 |
| 6 | Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Science  | 19.0 | 5.9 | 48.8 | 51.2 | 10.5 |
| 9 | Physics | 42.0 | 13.1 | 83.3 | 16.7 | 11.9 |
| 11 | Computer Science  | 31.2 | 9.7 | 78.2 | 21.8 | 35.9 |
| 12 | Engineering  | 34.8 | 10.8 | 80.5 | 19.5 | 59.7 |
| 17 | Business | 26.9 | 8.4 | 56.1 | 43.9 | 22.3 |
| 23 | Education | 14.7 | 4.6 | 27.2 | 72.8 | 6.8 |
| 27 | English | 13.8 | 4.3 | 52.9 | 47.1 | 21.7 |
| 28 | History | 14.0 | 4.4 | 42.9 | 57.1 | 0.0 |
| 30 | Philosophy | 11.2 | 3.5 | 55.4 | 44.6 | 17.8 |
| 32 | Art and Design  | 18.7 | 5.8 | 57.8 | 42.2 | 5.3 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Panel A: Health and allied subjects | 113.8 | 35.4 | 48.0 | 52.0 | 12.4 |
|  | Panel B: STEM | 108.0 | 33.6 | 80.7 | 19.3 | 35.8 |
|  | Panel C: Social Sciences  | 41.6 | 13.0 | 41.7 | 58.4 | 14.6 |
|  | Panel D: Arts and Humanities  | 57.7 | 18.0 | 52.3 | 47.8 | 11.2 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | 321.1 |  |  |  |  |

Similarly, with the representation of BAME staff, initiatives to address under-representation are described in the UOA Environment Statements. For example, in UOA32, Art and Design:

*To address the under-representation of BAME staff in the Unit, positive action has been taken to secure a diverse pool of applicants from the initial stages of staff recruitment. This takes the form of, for example, targeted advertising within the Unit’s ethnically diverse postgraduate research student population, where over 40% identify as BAME. In addition, University HR have recently implemented anonymous shortlisting to ensure that any potential bias is eliminated at this recruitment stage. In addition, the University Equality Office supports networks for staff from black or ethnic minority backgrounds and is represented on the Unit research management group. Furthermore, the ADR is currently reverse mentored by a BAME member of staff as part of a University programme to address under-representation.*

In terms of outputs, with gender, the profile of submissions is similar, with both genders most likely to submit one output, but overall more women than men submitted one output, and more men than women submitted 4 or 5 outputs (see Table 3). In the case of ethnicity, all ethnic groups were most likely to submit one output but White staff significantly more likely to submit four or five outputs compared with Asian or Black staff (see Table 4).

*Table 3: Gender profile of output submissions (%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 output | 2-3 outputs | 4-5 outputs | TOTAL |
| Female | 87 | 53 | 23 | 163 |
| Male | 108 | 59 | 52 | 219 |
| Total | 195 | 112 | 64 | 382 |

*Table 4: Ethnic profile of output submissions (%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | 1 output | 2-3 outputs | 4-5 outputs | Total |
| White |  | 153 | 85 | 60 | 298 |
| Asian |  | 18 | 10 | 4 | 32 |
| Black |  | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Other ethnic |  | 16 | 12 | 8 | 36 |
| Other  |  | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 |

# Conclusions

The process to determine SRR and research Independence included consideration of every member of staff who met the REF2021 Category A eligibility criteria. This process was mainly undertaken in the second half of 2019 and letters to staff were sent early in January 2020. No decisions were contested and no appeals were received. Subsequent further reviews took place in the remainder of the REF2021 census period with final letters to staff being sent in August 2020.

The policy and procedures set out in the University’s Code of Practice for Submission, and their implementation, were developed to ensure lawful and fair treatment and to advance equality. The determination of research independence, of the designation of significant responsibility for research, and of output selection was an outcome of a range of institutional processes and practices. In the EIA on the Code of Practice it was noted, in response to the question ‘Does your evidence or consultation suggest that people could be affected adversely because of their protected characteristic?’:

‘The criteria for SRR, published in the Code of Practice, are based on role expectation, research independence (which has its own, verifiable criteria) and workload allocation against appraisal objectives. The criteria for IR are based on objectively verifiable criteria published in the Code of Practice. However, the data above [i.e. the analysis shown above] does suggest that the EIA action plan for the next REF cycle needs to consider what mechanisms might be impacting certain groups in a different way’.

The analysis shows that the profile of the REF2021 submission is broadly in line with the profile of the academic and research staff of the University as a whole but that there are still issues to consider in relation to understanding the disparity of gender representation both in terms of staff submitted and the output profile together with the representation and output profile of black staff. Similarly, with the output profile for Asian staff.

# Action plan

One of the key objectives of the University’s research strategy up to 2025 is to

‘Develop a diverse community of research engaged staff, students and innovators: A full equalities audit of the REF 2021 staff submission will identify areas for further improvement. All staff will be required to engage in one equality training opportunity per year. Studentships for researchers from BAME backgrounds will be established in Units with significant under-representation of minority communities.’

The EIA has shown that there remains work to be carried out to tackle the under-representation of women, black, Asian and disabled staff either in terms of the profile of the submission as a whole and/or the number of outputs submitted. The data shows that the STEM subjects are effective at recruiting an ethnically diverse, but not always including

Black, group of staff but are also much less effective at achieving a gender balance. For some other disciplines the position is reversed. Whilst it is understood that this situation often reflects a national picture, work is already underway to develop interventions to improve this situation and it will be continued.

Another area of activity will be to focus on how the University can ensure a thriving, inclusive and impactful research culture across the institution. To do this an engagement programme is being planned drawing on the University’s active staff networks: BAME, Women+ Professors, Academic Women’s Action Group, Carers, Disability and Wellbeing, LGBTQ+, Menopause, Men’s Health, Working Parents. The engagement programme will focus on identifying key issues, barriers and challenges in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion in research. The outcomes from this engagement will lead to an action plan setting out short and longer-term actions to prevent discrimination and advance equality.

July 2021

**University of Hertfordshire**

**REF2021 Code of Practice Equality Impact Assessment**

1. **What are the aims and purpose of your policy? What are you trying to achieve?**

The REF2021 Code of Practice sets out how the University will manage the process of developing our submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 and specifically on our processes for identifying staff with significant responsibility for research, for determining research independence and for selecting outputs, fairly and equitably.

The University is required to have a Code of Practice approved by Research England before it can make a submission to REF2021.

1. **Is the policy `equality relevant’? This means - is it possible that it might result in students, staff or others being affected differently because they have a ‘protected characteristic’? Protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.**

Yes

1. **Could the policy be used to actively promote equality?**

Yes

1. **Who will be affected by the policy? Who will benefit from it? Will some groups benefit more than others? Who may lose out? Will some groups lose out more than others?**

Staff on academic and on research contracts are affected by this Code of Practice which sets out how the University determines who has significant responsibility for research and who is an independent researcher. It should not adversely affect staff who are not independent researchers or for whom research is not an expectation of their role.

1. **Who has been, is being or will be consulted on the policy? How?**

There has been formal consultation with the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee of the Representative Trades Unions (JNCC) at two formal meetings. There has been an open consultation with all staff and with staff on long term absence from the university (copies of the Code were sent to them by post). Members of the Athena SWAN and Race Equality SATs, of the University’s People Board and the Researcher Development Group were also asked to comment.

1. **What evidence (data or statistics) has been, is being or will be considered in developing this policy?**

An analysis has been done of the characteristics of those staff deemed to have Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and of those deemed to be independent researchers (IR)and compared these with staff who meet the REF2021 criteria for eligibility for submission but whom are not SRR or IR. This analysis showed for almost all the protected characteristics for which we have enough data the REF2021 position was better than for REF2014. For example, the percentage of women staff submitted in 2021 is 7.3% more than in 2014; staff declaring a disability 4.6% more than in 2014. However, BAME staff percentages were the same in both submissions. The data for REF2021 show that women are underrepresented in the submission by 11%; black staff by 2.6% and disabled staff by 2.9%).

1. **Does your evidence or consultation suggest that people could be affected adversely because of their protected characteristic?**

No. The criteria for SRR, published in the Code of Practice, are based on role expectation, research independence (which has its own, verifiable criteria) and workload allocation against appraisal objectives. The criteria for IR are based on objectively verifiable criteria published in the Code of Practice. However, the data above does suggest that the EIA action plan for the next REF cycle needs to consider what mechanisms might be impacting certain groups in a different way.

1. **Could the policy be used to promote equality? How?**

The policy is being used to promote equality by (a) setting out the University’s commitment to Equality and Diversity in research careers; (b) being open and transparent in its processes; (c) being committed to using the outcome of the REF process to continue to feed into development of future policy to advance equality.

**Date: February 2020**

1. staff with significant responsibility for research and independent researchers as defined by the University’s Code of Practice for Submission to REF2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, on the payroll on 31 July 2020 whose primary undertake ‘research only’ or ‘teaching and research’; with a substantive research connection with the submitting unknit and, for staff on ‘research only’ contracts, who are independent researchers [↑](#footnote-ref-2)