



Senate

Paper Title	Queen Mary REF2029 Code of Practice (CoP)
Outcome requested	To approve the Code of Practice
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<p>The REF is a UK wide exercise, approx. every 7 years, assessing the quality and impact of university research. The next submission is due in 2028 for assessment in 2029. The outcome informs the allocation of QR funding from Research England (~ £36m pa for QMUL). The result is also used by many university rankings. Although submission is some time off preparation began in 2023 given the extensive work involved.</p> <p>REF2029 has some significant differences to REF2021. The most fundamental is the ‘decoupling of individuals and outputs’ which changes the approach to determining both the volume measure and the selection requirements for outputs/impact case studies. There is no longer a census of research staff and no requirement for each member of research staff to submit an output. The People Culture and Environment element also has additional prominence with the institutional statement scored and likely additional metrics. We anticipate some changes to the planned approach to be announced in December 2025 following a pause in REF policy development however the final submission date in 2028 has not changed and final guidance will still be developed for publication autumn 2026.</p> <p>The CoP sets out how QM will approach the preparation of key stages of the submission with particular consideration of EDI implications. It is based on the previously approved REF2021 CoP adapted to reflect the changes to REF2029 alongside learning from the evaluation report of institutional REF2021 CoPs which highlighted the characteristics of strong codes.</p> <p>The CoP is required to be submitted to REF for clearance before the final REF guidance is available. The drafting reflects this and we will update if needed to meet any changes in approach or final guidance requirements once available. The CoP also contains our overarching approach to Equality Impact Assessment. Individual EIAs will be produced in the coming months/years as part of key preparation steps and as data becomes available. Once complete these will also be published as supplementary detail to the CoP.</p> <p>The requirements and template for the CoP can make it hard to digest for those not involved in day to day REF preparations. We plan to produce a short summary of the document and what it means for QM researchers as part of our staff communications post clearance. Further information on QM preparation for REF can be found on our dedicated intranet pages.</p>
Questions for Senate to consider	Do you approve the Code of Practice for submission to the REF Programme for clearance?

Regulatory/statutory reference points	<p>Preparation and publication of a CoP is an entry requirement to REF.</p> <p>Guidance on CoP requirements and the template to use was published in July 2025 and clearance of the CoP is required from the REF Programme (Research England and the Devolved funding bodies) – our aim was to submit to the December 2025 submission window. As of 23rd September the date of the submission window is uncertain given the REF pause but we are assuming a shift to early new year.</p>
Strategy and risk	<p>Quality of research is one of the University’s KPIs. Performance in REF is one of the indicators of quality we use.</p> <p>Our performance and eventual ranking within REF have significant funding implications (direct and indirect) and reputational implications.</p>
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	<p>This Code has been reviewed by the REF EDI Advisory Group, agreed by the REF Steering Board and is being discussed at SET (14th October after submission deadline for Senate papers – verbal feedback will therefore be provided at the Senate meeting on 16th).</p>
Authors	<p>Bryony Butland, Director Research and Innovation</p>
Sponsor	<p>Andrew Livingston, VP Research and Innovation</p>

Queen Mary University of London Code of Practice REF2029 DRAFT v1.6

Background and ask of Senate

An agreed Code of Practice is an entry requirement for the REF. This document is an edited form of the Code from REF2021 using the latest template and guidance provided by the REF team [July 25]. It keeps key text where still relevant but much is new to reflect the changes in REF2029. The template and guidance we are required to follow can mean the text is highly repetitive.

This document has been discussed and agreed at the REF Steering Board chaired by the VP R&I with input from faculties, HR, library and research services teams. It has also been considered by the REF EDI Advisory Group who have endorsed the approach to Equality Impact Assessment (Annex A).

Once cleared by the REF programme, and any feedback addressed, the document will be published on Queen Mary's website.

Senate is asked to approve this document for submission to the REF programme when the clearance window reopens post REF pause.

Note on this document

This Code of Practice was approved by the REF Steering Group in September 2025 following consideration by the REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group. The Code uses the template and guidance provided so far by the UK REF team.¹ It has been developed drawing on our approach in REF2021 but reflecting staff feedback and learning from that exercise and the changes introduced to the REF2029 exercise. We note that final REF guidance is not due until autumn 2026 but the deadline for submitting our Code to REF for clearance will be before that date. We will update our Code to reflect the final guidance as needed once available. Oversight and sign off of any changes will be undertaken by the REF Steering Group. However, if the Steering Group judge these changes to be of high significance impacting substantially on our planned approach the agreement of Senate will also be re-sought.

The Code of Practice, alongside other REF information for staff, will be available on the REF2029 pages of Queen Mary intranet site [REF 2029 - Connected](#), our public website and will be circulated to staff by email. Any questions can also be raised with the QMUL core REF team at ref@qmul.ac.uk.

Objectives

The objectives of this Code of Practice are to:

- provide staff with clear information about how Queen Mary University of London (Queen Mary, the University) is managing its REF2029 preparations and submission to ensure our approach is robust and meet the requirements of all REF guidance available at the time of writing;

¹ The term "UK REF team" is used for brevity in this Code - the REF is undertaken jointly by the four UK higher education funding bodies: Research England (RE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.

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- describe how Queen Mary is discharging its responsibilities in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and relevant employment legislation;
- recognise the right of the Principal and President and the REF Steering Group to select all elements of the final submission in order to best represent the University's research and seek to optimise its assessment;
- ensure consistency and transparency of practice across Queen Mary in relation to the identification of REF eligible staff contracts and outputs;
- ensure that the identification of eligible staff for both the volume measure and output/impact submissions are made on transparent and defensible grounds relating only to REF requirements;
- ensure that all staff are aware of the mechanisms that are in place to make decisions on the research independence of REF eligible staff on research-only contracts;
- provide an effective communication plan that informs staff of the criteria and process for the selection of elements of the overall submission.

The following points guide our approach to REF2029 and underpin the Code of Practice:

- The selection of outputs and impact case studies will be made based on internal and external assessments, with the overall aim of optimising the University submission as a whole; this may not necessarily optimise all individual UoA submissions;
- The selection of outputs for submission will in the first instance be based on optimising the expected final assessment, for example with respect to overall Grade Point Average (GPA);
- REF UoA boundaries do not in general align with Queen Mary School and Institute structures, and the research outputs or impact cases of some individuals may be suitable for submission in different or multiple UoAs in accordance with REF rules; in such cases the final choice of UoA will be made by the REF Steering Group and the President and Principal on the basis of seeking to optimise the overall University submission, bearing in mind assessments of quality as well as the representativeness of submissions;
- Queen Mary is committed to taking an equitable and inclusive approach to REF preparations and will undertake Equality Impact Assessments at key points in the process (see Appendix A). This will include consideration of determination of Research Independence, internal output review processes, the equality profile of all persons/groups involved in the process and the composition of the final submission in 2028;
- All Queen Mary staff involved in REF selection and decision-making processes will be expected to undertake appropriate equality and diversity training (see Appendix C);
- Where the numbers of staff are small enough to enable individuals to be identified, these data will not be published in accordance with the provisions of Data Protection legislation.

Part 1 Introduction

1.1 Broader Context

This Code of Practice has been developed by Queen Mary in the context of the Research Excellence Framework 2029 (REF2029). It reflects our ambitions to meet the highest standards of research in a broad range of subject areas, as judged by international comparators, and our commitments to the ideal of a university as a mutually supportive community of scholars, and to equality, diversity and inclusion within all

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our work. The University is noted for the diversity of its students and staff; it is highly international and encompasses people from many backgrounds.

This Code of Practice identifies the mechanisms by which Queen Mary will exercise these commitments in managing its assessments of the quality and value of the research of its academic staff through internal REF assessment exercises, leading up to the final submission in 2028. It forms part of the University's development of its equality, diversity and inclusion objectives, and is supported by a programme of activities and support for staff delivered at University, Faculty and Institute/School/professional services Directorate level.

Our policies and practice with regard to REF2029 are embedded within those of the University as a whole, through researcher support and development at all career stages, and the fostering of a research environment that brings out the best in all our staff, whether they undertake or enable our research (see section 1.3). The formulation and application of this Code is overseen by the University's REF Steering Group.

Close attention will be paid to promoting equality and diversity during all stages of our REF preparations and final submission. The REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (REF EDIAG) provides REF specific advice and recommendations to the REF Steering Group, on the basis of regular Equality Impact Assessments as well as more generally. While the primary function of the REF EDIAG is to advise on REF-specific processes, it operates within the broader Queen Mary EDI framework by maintaining a link to the institutional EDI Steering Group. Our EDI Steering Group, which drives the strategic direction of EDI across the University, plays a key role in shaping and aligning institutional priorities with national expectations. (A structure diagram showing EDI governance is given as part of our EIA in Appendix A). The Queen Mary EDI Steering Group also provides a level of oversight, offering a space to test processes and ensure that best practices are upheld. By linking these two EDI groups, Queen Mary enhances accountability and coherence in a fair and transparent REF approach.

1.2 Robustness, Transparency, Equity and Inclusivity

This Code is based on these principles as follows:

Robustness: Our approach to identification of contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research that contribute to the volume measure follows our regular process for HESA data collection where data is subject to substantive quality checks before submission. Ensuring the robustness of this data is critical given its new use at a more granular UoA level and additional quality checks have been introduced into our usual process to address this with research leads in our faculties consulted and reviewing data in addition to operational and HR leads. The process outlined in Part 3 sets out our approach to robustly identify researchers with Research Independence status. The 2024-25 record collection will be used as an opportunity to both engage relevant staff and quality assure data against the REF criteria. Learning from the pilot year will be fed into future practice balancing the need for robust data against administrative burden.

Transparency: This Code is designed to make it clear to staff how decisions are taken, by whom, and when. It makes it clear how any decisions about individual contributions to the REF submission will be reported to and discussed with staff. It will be circulated to all Queen Mary academic staff and made available in accessible formats on our website. During development, the Code of Practice has been discussed and approved by the Queen Mary REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory

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Group and the REF Steering Group [further references to SET and Senate² will be added as appropriate].

All groups involved with decision-making with respect to our REF2029 submission are described in this Code, along with terms of reference, membership and expertise (Appendix B).

Equity and Inclusivity: To ensure fairness and impartiality the Code applies uniformly across the University and to all Units of Assessment (UoAs) that we are submitting to. Any variations in detail are purely on the basis of disciplinary differences and have been agreed after consultation. Care has been, and will continue to be, taken to take account of all eligible staff who have significant responsibility for research, to value the full breadth of research contributions that may be made in identifying and assessing research, to support staff development and to take account of EDI considerations through our EIA process.

Communication and Engagement

The Code will be disseminated in such a way as to reach all relevant audiences: it will be made available in accessible formats and circulated by email in all-staff messages, highlighted in Vice-Principal (VP) Research and Innovation briefings, heads of school and UoA lead meetings, cited in all-staff newsletters, shared and agreed at Senate, available alongside other REF material on our webpage and dedicated intranet pages. Staff absent from work due to secondments, career breaks or parental or other leave and those based overseas without access to the above will be made aware of the Code through individual contacts provided by Human Resources. In addition to discussion through the REF governance structure (Appendix B) the processes described by this Code have been discussed in meetings concerning research at a number of levels – Faculty Dean of Research Advisory Groups and REF related meetings and at the Senior Executive Team meeting, as well as the REF EDI Advisory Group. Drop-in sessions for staff were also organised as part of the engagement around declaration of Research Independence during the HESA pilot year and similar sessions will be run on the Code itself on publication.

1.3 Supporting Staff and Institutional Context

Queen Mary's mission is to become the most inclusive university of its kind, anywhere. Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our 2030 strategy with a university level KPI focused on Increasing diversity and representation at all levels of the organisation and our [People, Culture and Inclusion Enabling Plan](#) setting out a range of commitments (more details can also be found at <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/human-resources/media/hr/edi/EDI-Annual-Report-2022-23.pdf>). Our commitment to equality and diversity objectives has been enhanced over the REF period by the establishment in 2018 of university-wide and Faculty academic leads and governance arrangements to provide oversight (Appendix A). A series of action groups report directly to the University's EDI Steering Group, chaired by a Senior Executive Team member, and we have an established annual cycle of staff surveys providing us with an invaluable opportunity to learn from staff experiences. The staff survey response rate, since initiation in 2022, has ranged from 63% - 69%, providing clear representation of staff feedback. In the survey we ask a number of questions specifically related to EDI, including "Queen Mary values diversity". This is one of our highest scoring questions each

² Senate is the body with primary responsibility for oversight of the academic activity of Queen Mary including, amongst other things, academic standards, academic freedom and research. Membership includes heads of faculties, institutes and schools, student union representatives and elected members of academic staff.

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year and in the 2025 survey 72% of respondents rated this statement favourably – over the 4 years the survey has been running, favourable responses to this question have increased year on year from 67% in 2022 to now 72% in 2025 (+5%).

Our priorities include reaching gender balance and better representing London’s ethnic diversity across middle and senior roles by 2030. Since 2019, the representation of women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff in senior roles has steadily increased. There has been a 6% increase in the proportion of both BAME staff and women in senior positions since the launch of our Plan. Queen Mary currently holds Athena SWAN silver and is a member of the Race Equality Charter. We are also proud to take one of the most transparent approaches to [pay gap reporting](#).

Queen Mary supports fixed term and part time staff in a number of ways:

- Regularly reviewing our workforce data including on the basis of fixed term vs permanent and part time vs full time to ensure there is no differential of experience, or if any is indicated, action can be taken as a result. This includes reviewing staff survey data;
- Ensuring parity of support and opportunity including maintaining the expectation of regular meetings between line managers and their staff, annual appraisals, and access to development for all staff;
- Provision of a number of staff networks including parents and carers;
- Supporting staff to work flexibly, including job shares.

Queen Mary is firmly committed to supporting the career development of all our staff, and proud to uphold the tenants of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and the [Technicians Commitment](#), with our ambition “to nurture a world-class research culture for our entire community” (Strategy 2030). Our efforts have been recognised through the [HR Excellence in Research Award](#), which we have held since 2012. The programmes and initiatives in place for this include, but are not limited to:

Initiatives for all the research community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory training on EDI and Unconscious Bias. • Aurora – Advance HE leadership training for women • Staff networks and associations, including the Parents and Carers Network and Staff Menopause network. • A new suite of leadership development programmes, offering tailored support to different career stages. • Carers Career Development Fund, to meet additional costs faced by parents and carers engaging in career development activities.
Support for research enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational leadership development for professional services leaders. • Institutional memberships of relevant external groups, e.g. ARMA and KE-UK.
Support for post docs and ECRs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-MEntor, a mentoring scheme where senior academics from four London institutions mentor Black and Ethnic Minorities (BME) research and early-career academic staff. • Post-doc peer support programme, providing peer to peer mental health and wellbeing support. • Faculty level induction and orientation sessions. • Enhanced support for career development and planning, offered jointly by the Queen Mary Academy and the Careers and Enterprise team. Queen Mary Academy was established in 2020 to deliver university-wide support for education and researcher development by working with staff and students

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	to enhance their practice in teaching, learning, scholarship, research, and academic leadership.
Support for academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midcareer mentoring, a bespoke programme for mid-career researchers.• Heads of School/Institute training programme, designed to support those transitioning into senior leadership, including on how to embed EDI within their practice.
Support for PGRs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Induction and orientation sessions for all students including “getting started” week sessions.• PGR training programme arranged around key skills to be developed by PGRs to support research careers both within and beyond academia.• EDI training for supervisors.• Enhanced support for career development provided through collaboration of the Doctoral College and Careers and Enterprise team.• STRIDE programme to support underrepresented undergraduates to undertake short research projects and support access to funded research degrees.
Support for technicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of new Clear Visual Technical Career Pathway.• Expansion of opportunities for secondments and work shadowing, including through the South East and London Technicians Connection Network.• Targeted support to address gender-imbalance in identified schools/institutes.

Our approach to responsible research assessment is set out in section 5.1.6. Activity in this area is overseen by Queen Mary’s Research and Innovation Board (chaired by the VP Research and Innovation). More broadly, our approach is embedded through our CoARA action plan, in guidance notes provided for academic appraisal and promotion, and in the specific guidance sent to those who serve on internal REF committees.

1.4 Update on Actions Taken Since REF2021

After the 2021 REF submission, and publication of our Equality Impact Analysis which showed that there was no statistically significant variation between the inclusion of staff with protected characteristics compared to the total REF-eligible staff population, an engagement exercise was conducted across the University. This sought feedback on the policies, processes and actions taken to prepare the REF2021 submission and provided space for reflection on how future preparation could be improved. Much was learned from this feedback and it was used extensively to design our processes for REF2029.

Our REF2021 EIA process also led to several recommendations which we are taking forward in our preparations. These recommendations were to:

- monitor the constitution of reviewers of outputs in internal dry run exercises according to protected characteristics (through the enhanced requirements for UoA reporting) and requiring equality and diversity considerations are fully considered by the review process in arriving at consolidated scores;
- ensure all staff involved in final reviewing and output selection decisions have undertaken appropriate EDI training;

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- continue to monitor closely the score profiles and output selection outcomes through EIAs following dry runs and, where necessary, undertaking reasonable adjustments to the selection of outputs for submission while still ensuring the maximum GPA;
- Ensure faculties and UoAs submit an EDI pro-forma on their final selections.

However, the REF2029 approach is substantially different to REF2021. The decoupling of individuals from submission contents along with additional considerations to be factored into output selection and the use of HESA data to determine the volume measure has meant substantial revisions to this Code and the need for new processes across the University.

We have considered how to incorporate the learning from our previous EIA and the post REF2021 engagement exercise alongside the new REF2029 guidance to improve our preparations with actions including the following:

- early formulation of a detailed plan for the entire REF period, which is updated regularly as the REF policies and guidance are released. As a living document this evolves to incorporate the learning and feedback from early stages of preparation and insights from EIAs at key points in the process;
- a re-design of internal assessment processes, incorporating EIA recommendations and staff feedback from REF2021. This included better use of internal REF assessment experience and targeted use of external input building on advice from Schools and Institutes on best practice within their disciplines;
- the provision of increased professional services support and underpinning systems, particularly for the new HESA process, assurance mechanisms around output eligibility, Impact capture and People, Culture and Environment;
- considering where automation of data processes is feasible on the basis of cost and time saved in order to reduce the admin burden on all involved – for example through development of better dashboards for real time review of HESA data;
- enhanced approach to internal communications starting in 2023 and building through our preparations
- redesign of governance structures and introduction of new processes to reflect the changes in REF submission requirements;
- making use of our enhanced university EDI systems, policies and processes during our REF preparation. The REF EDIAG is closely linked to the institutional EDI Steering Group, with cross membership from the EDI Leads across academic Faculties. This dual membership ensures strong lines of communication and consistent alignment between institutional EDI priorities and REF-specific activities;
- taking forward the recommendations from our EIA for REF2021 where relevant processes are still being undertaken (see annex A).

Some changes may still be required to our Code of Practice on publication of the final REF guidance which is due after this Code is required to be submitted for clearance. Our Code will therefore remain a living document and oversight and sign off of future changes will be undertaken by the REF Steering Group. However, if the Steering Group judge these changes to be of high significance impacting substantially on our planned approach the agreement of Senate will also be re-sought. Major changes to the Code will also be proactively communicated to staff.

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

Queen Mary's 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) contracts captured in the HESA staff record comprehensively identify all staff with significant responsibility for research. Given the new purpose of this data it has been double checked for quality by introducing an additional assurance step by Research Deans or their nominated deputies in our three faculties as part of the annual HESA data collection cycle.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

3.1 Policies and Procedure

Research staff who are not members of academic staff on Teaching and Research contracts may still be on a contract eligible for inclusion in volume measure calculations if they meet the criteria for REF eligibility and research independence (RI). For example this could be if they hold an appropriate Fellowship or are employed in a Research Only role. Expectations of RI will normally be established at the point of contract, based upon whether the researcher has been employed in a capacity to undertake self-directed research, or to carry out another individual's research programme.

Queen Mary's approach to determining RI follows that set out in the REF Guidance on the volume measure and builds on our approach in REF2021. We use the definition of RI set out in the guidance (section 3- REF volume measure guidance 9.1.3) namely *'a research only contract is considered to demonstrate research independence if the staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individuals' research programme'*.

Our approach refers to the following indicators of contracts typically exhibiting RI as set out in the Guidance on the volume measure:

- Members of staff acting as lead applicant on externally funded research projects;
- Members of staff holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence. We will utilise the list of eligible fellowships once this is issued by the REF team;
- Members of staff who are leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package;
- Members of staff where research independence is an inherent expectation of a contract;
- For UoAs 13- 34 this may also include
 - Being named as a co-applicant on an externally funded research grant/award
 - Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research

In order to ensure that we are fairly and consistently capturing relevant information on staff in Research Only roles, including those in roles transitioning to independence we have used the 24/25 pilot year for REF related HESA categories to quality assure our data and seek input from staff. This pilot is also informing the development of the future approach as we embed into business as usual.

HESA pilot year

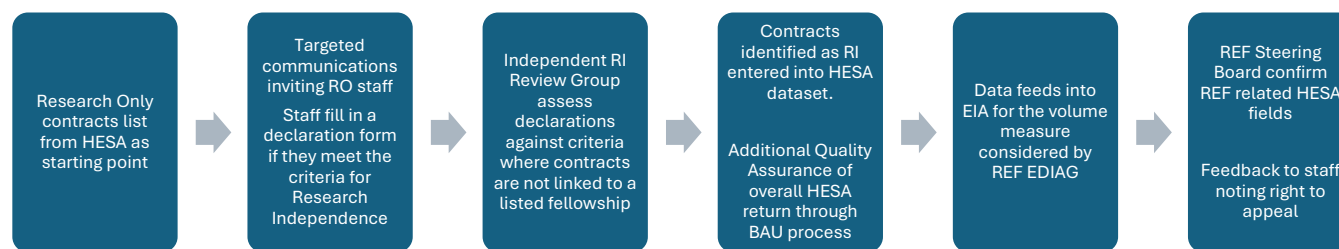
A summary of the steps followed in the pilot year is set out in figure 1 below. Between March and October 2025 Research leads (Research Deans or their nominated deputies) in Faculties reviewed lists of Research

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Only contracts to ensure accuracy of this list and help target staff engagement. All staff on Research Only contracts were then requested to make a declaration to RI and provide their view on UoA alignment if they felt they met the criteria. Declarations were then assessed against the definition of RI by the Research Independence Review Group in July and September (Appendix B). Due to discipline and role differences general job titles and grade are not a good indicator in and of themselves of RI and were not considered. Instead, staff were asked to provide details of why they met the criteria for RI; if related to a specific grant this could be independently checked on Queen Mary systems. Contracts that were considered to meet the definition were recommended for inclusion in the HESA return.

The set of recommendations, and the evidence they are based on, was considered by the REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group and fed into equality impact analyses (taking into account where possible the protected characteristics of the RI group vis-à-vis the wider 'Research Only' staff population, see Annex A) before consideration by the REF Steering Group who made the final decision on both the REF eligibility of the contracts, UoA assignment for the purpose of the volume measure and any updates to RI indicators to guide identification in future HESA returns. These decisions will be communicated by the Chair of the Research Independence Review Group to the individuals concerned at an appropriate time.



Future years

In future years we will adopt a more data-driven approach to place less burden on research staff and administrative systems. This includes development of improved data dashboards to allow ongoing quality assurance of data by appointed HESA data leads within our faculties, refinement of indicators of RI contracts (as agreed by the REF Steering Group) and incorporating RI eligibility checks into wider HESA data checks.

Queries related to HESA data can be raised throughout the year by contacting Queen Mary HR operations representatives. Any complex questions around RI will be considered by the relevant Research Dean supported by the Queen Mary REF team as needed. The strong foundation laid during the pilot year and the development of a more interactive data dashboard enables us to uphold rigorous standards for RI assessment while simultaneously simplifying procedures and supporting staff.

3.2 Staff, Committees and Training

The relevant details of staff, committees and training for those involved in the RI process are given in Appendix B and C. All Queen Mary staff involved in the decision-making processes are expected to have undertaken appropriate equal opportunities training.

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3.3 Appeals

Any researcher who wishes to appeal against the recommendation of the REF RI Review Group or REF Steering Group decision regarding matters of RI may do so by getting in touch with the Queen Mary REF team (ref@qmul.ac.uk). Staff should note that an appeal may not be relevant in cases where there is no expectation of research independence in an individual's contract at time of appointment and if the primary purpose of a role is to support the research of others such as can be the case with Research Assistants (see [REF Code of Practice guidance 13.4.2](#)).

A separate, independent appeals panel will be assembled to take forward any appeal, assess the evidence provided with regard to eligibility in relation to the REF Guidance on volume measure section 9.1.3 and form a final decision. The panel will be composed of research staff with expertise relevant to the appeal and would endeavour to provide feedback within 6 weeks of receipt or sooner if possible. Should an update to the HESA data return be required this will follow any guidance for HESA amendments.

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment

Queen Mary is conducting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on our volume measure processes to determine if they may have a differential impact on particular groups by reference to one or more protected characteristic(s). Our EIA focuses on the aspects of the volume process where there is a decision step specific to the REF. These are:

- Determination of the UoA assignment of T&R contracts (SRR)
- Determination of Research Independence (pilot year)

There is no impact on individual staff members as a result of the volume measure process due to the 'decoupling of individuals and outputs' within REF2029, and the fact that inclusion of a contract in the HESA data for purposes of REF has no link to performance management of individual staff members. However, longer term there could be positive benefits for some groups, as this data gathering enhances our understanding and highlights subject areas where additional action could be taken to shape our research culture.

Details of our overall EIA approach and the focused analysis available at time of writing are included in Appendix A. The EIA will be used as a tool to identify potential biases within the pilot process. The analysis to date has been considered by the REF EDIAG who endorsed the overall approach. They will continue to provide advice to the REF Steering Group on future analysis and the implications for the future process. As it develops the EIA will also be shared with the Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Advisory Group.

Our approach to EIA and follow on actions will evolve as this part of the HESA return becomes more embedded in business as usual. We will repeat the analysis in future years to inform our understanding of longer term trends. A finalised EIA will be published as part of the final REF submission in 2028.

Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedure

The initial allocation of contracts to UoAs is done at the point of appointment of a member of staff by the line manager based on the nature and subject of the research they will be undertaking. This is part of existing recruitment practice and could happen at any point during the REF period as staff join.

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In many cases the contract UoA will align with Queen Mary School and Institute structures however, for a substantial number this will not be the case and a contract may be better allocated to alternative UoA(s). This is most likely to occur when a school or institute spans more than one UoA; the work of the member of staff is more closely aligned to a different UoA than the majority of researchers in their school/institute; where a member of staff works in an inter/multi-disciplinary fashion; a member of staff has multiple contracts in different subject areas or where their research focus has evolved since initial recruitment.

To ensure we capture an accurate allocation of contracts to UoAs and give due consideration to cases where contracts can be legitimately be allocated to alternative UoAs we have introduced additional quality checks to our annual HESA process which runs from approximately July – October each year. For contracts with Research Independence we have also used the pilot year declaration process outlined in 3.1 to ask staff their UoA and, if this is unclear, to indicate which other UoAs they consider may apply. REF relevant HESA data fields are then reviewed by the Research Deans for each faculty (or their designated deputies) who will confirm UoA allocation and identify where there are still choices of assignment. Where legitimate choices remain we will take a 'best fit' approach that will allow us to optimise our submission. This is potentially highly complex to configure therefore we are developing an optimisation programme to inform our decision making (see section 5.1.5). This approach will be embedded into business as usual for future years and our experience of our pilot year will inform future timings and steps.

The final allocation of UoA will be agreed by the REF Steering Group and the President and Principal on the basis of seeking to optimise the overall University submission. This ensures that the same processes and procedures have been and will be applied equitably to all contracts in all UoAs.

4.2 Staff, Committees and Training

The relevant details of staff, committees and training for those involved in REF preparation processes are given in Appendix B and C. All Queen Mary staff are expected to have undertaken appropriate equal opportunities training.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment

Queen Mary is conducting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on UoA assignment of contracts for the purpose of the volume measure to determine if there is any differential impact on particular groups by reference to one or more protected characteristic(s).

There is no impact on individual staff members as a result of the UoA contract allocation process due to the 'decoupling of individuals and outputs' within REF2029, and the fact that UoA allocation in HESA has no link to performance management or location of individual staff members. However, longer term there could be positive benefits for some groups, as this data gathering enhances our understanding and highlights subject areas where additional action could be taken to shape our research culture.

Details of our overall EIA approach and the focused analysis available at time of writing are included in Appendix A. The EIA will be used as a tool to identify potential biases and the analysis will be considered by the REF EDIAG. The EDIAG have endorsed this overall approach and will continue to provide advice to the REF Steering Group on future analysis and the implications for the future process. As it develops the EIA will also be shared with the Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Advisory Group.

Our approach to EIA and follow on actions will evolve as this part of the HESA return becomes more embedded in business as usual. We will repeat the analysis in future years to inform our understanding of longer term trends. An updated EIA will be published as part of the final REF submission in 2028.

Part 5: Selecting Outputs

5.1. Policies and Procedures

Eligible outputs must first be made publicly available between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2028 with some exceptions [see guidance [Section 4 – Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding \(CKU\) guidance – REF 2029](#)]. All selection processes (eg of eligible and submitted outputs and impact case studies) will involve a fair and equal judgement of all relevant material that is available as the product of the research of REF eligible staff. This will be coordinated centrally by the Vice Principal for Research assisted by the REF Steering Group and associated committees.

The final decisions about the REF submission will be taken by the REF Steering Group and the President and Principal. This ensures that the same processes and procedures have been and will be applied equitably to all staff in all UoAs at all points in the process. Queen Mary will judge research outputs (and impact case studies) by the same standards for all staff eligible to submit in a given UoA, and the standards applied will be based on the criteria announced by the REF and UoA sub-panels. Once the REF2029 final guidance is released the same criteria will apply to Queen Mary's dry runs as will apply to the final REF submission. Should we need to submit a unit reduction request this will be agreed by the REF Steering Group on an exceptional basis.

5.1.1 Identifying substantive link to outputs

REF2029 guidance sets out the definition of a substantive link between an author who has made a significant research contribution to the output and the submitting institution [[Section 4 – Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding \(CKU\) guidance – REF 2029](#) section 6].

To ensure we are consistent with this definition we will cross reference the authors of the pool of outputs selected for each dry run and the final submission for each UoA against HR records for the REF period, or before where applicable, and check publication databases to ensure

- Outputs have been made public in the required time window 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2028 or meet the exceptions as set out in the REF guidance;
- Authors have a minimum of 0.2 FTE for at least 12 months continuous employment either on a single or consecutive contracts (as defined by Section 210 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996) with Queen Mary within the relevant period;
- The author's role descriptor includes an explicit expectation of research activity (as distinct from scholarship) within the role. All Queen Mary staff role descriptions use our standard templates. For those on teaching and research contracts these include clear expectations of research activity appropriate to grade alongside any responsibilities with regard to scholarship or teaching. For those on research only contracts with Research Independence the expectation is assured on a case by case basis.

To achieve this, we will load researcher information including contract start and end dates, HESA ID, and contract FTE, into the tool Queen Mary uses to support REF preparations within our research information system. We will then link individual researchers to their output and use internal reporting within the system to validate that the author and output meet the substantive link requirements.

We will use our dry run exercises to identify potential exceptional circumstances where approval to submit the output will need REF team approval. As stated in REF guidance (6.8.1 REF Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding guidance) it is anticipated exceptional circumstances will relate only to outputs where Queen Mary has provided time and/or funding to allow staff who are on teaching only or other non-research contracts to conduct research.

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We will keep our approach under review pending the release of the final guidance and any UoA specific variations from sub-panels.

5.1.2 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

Through our preparatory processes, staff have and continue to identify their published or publicly available research outputs, and those amongst them that they consider the strongest. REF eligible staff employed on fixed-term and part-time contracts are treated in the same way as staff employed on open-ended contracts in terms of the consideration of research outputs.

Outputs of staff who have left the University will be included in these processes as research which was generated whilst employed at Queen Mary and where it is recognised that high quality research outputs have been produced during the eligible time periods as per REF guidance (section 6.5.1 REF Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding guidance). Outputs that may be eligible from former staff will be identified through our publication depository system drawing on our HR systems to identify a pool of eligible staff alongside local knowledge within Queen Mary often arising from ongoing collaborations. Where potential outputs are identified we will also cross reference for Open Access compliance and with research funding records as an additional check of eligibility.

Outputs from staff made redundant will not be considered for submission, except where co-authored with another eligible member of staff. We also reserve the right to submit outputs produced in specific circumstances, e.g. when produced by independent research staff funded via external, time bound fellowships whose contract has not continued at the conclusion of their fellowship. Outputs from staff who are supported to resign through voluntary severance during the REF period will be considered for submission on a case-by-case basis (in line with our approach to outputs of staff who have left the university via resignation). Where outputs are co-authored with another eligible member of staff, these remain eligible for submission.

We will keep our approach under review pending the release of the final guidance and any UoA specific variations from sub-panels.

5.1.3 Assigning outputs to UoAs

The majority of outputs align clearly to a single UoA with assignment matching the UoA assigned to the relevant staff member's contract in HESA. However for some this will not be the case, either because the output subject matter or journal of publication aligns more closely to a different discipline than the wider portfolio of that staff member or because the work is inter or multidisciplinary and could legitimately be submitted to multiple UoAs.

We will use our dry run exercises to understand where there are potential differences in alignment between the output UoA and staff contract UoA or where there are options to submit to multiple UoAs. This will be additionally informed by drawing on indicators of potential output and UoA alignment such as on dimensions data and funding source where a funder is discipline based. Where legitimate choices are identified we will take a 'best fit' approach that will allow us to optimise our submission.

This is potentially highly complex to configure therefore we are developing an optimisation programme to inform our decision making. This will draw on our HESA data and dry run results to select the set of outputs that could gain the highest overall sum of individual scores. This will be bound by our approach to representativeness as set out in section 5.1.5 and once the final REF guidance is issued. This programme is being developed by Queen Mary staff to allow anonymised modelling of scenarios to inform the final submission. The optimisation programme is purely algorithmic and selects scenarios based only on anonymised output and impact case study labels and scores. It allows for a more robust balance of the selection of eligible outputs and impact case studies whilst also supporting the optimisation of the overall

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outcome for the University and for UoAs. The final selection process in 2028 will bring together all information about outputs from dry runs, volume measure requirements and impact case studies. These will be used as inputs to the optimisation tool and, along with the EIA results, will inform the final output selection choices and opportunities for balancing output distribution.

We will keep our approach under review pending the release of the final guidance and any UoA specific variations from sub-panels.

5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

Queen Mary by nature of our diverse research activity produces diverse outputs. We are also a signatory of CoARA which emphasises the recognition of a broad range of outcomes and outputs in research assessment. We will publish our CoARA action plan on our website [\[link TBA\]](#). In relation to the REF we are also taking the following actions to ensure all output types are considered equally and by merit. In particular we ensure

- Staff involved in reviewing outputs have relevant expertise in their UoA and hence the range of output types from those disciplines – e.g. practice based researchers are involved in and experienced in reviewing practice-based research
- We are investing in support systems that allow the capture, enhanced sharing and submission of diverse outputs often emerging from practice-based work such as film, audio and exhibitions and where a range of content is linked together into a specific output. This is part of a wider programme to enhance the availability and curation of our research outputs through Queen Mary's library including the creation of our Centre for Digital Collections opening late 2025.

We will keep our approach under review pending the release of the final guidance, the update to REF Guidance Annex K from REF2021 and any UoA specific variations from sub-panels.

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

At the time of preparing this CoP to meet the REF programme clearance deadlines we have agreed to apply the following principles to the selection of research outputs to ensure the body of work is representative of the research conducted in each UoA at Queen Mary over the REF period. All UoA leads will be asked to take these principles into account in developing their Discipline Level Statement (DLS) and selecting potential outputs.

The portfolio of outputs and DLS statement from each UoA should

- prioritise quality of outputs (as assessed through internal dry run exercises);
- reflect any relevant UoA focused research strategies and structures including outputs from large-scale programmes, networks and national/global initiatives;
- be representative of the diversity of subject areas and research groups within Queen Mary that align to the UoA including the type of outputs to be assessed and potentially submitted (see section 4.1.4);
- consider the presence of multi and interdisciplinary outputs and collaborations, including those with key partners, where this is a substantial feature of the UoA. Such outputs may derive from parts of the institution outside of the disciplinary focused organisation structures;
- In anticipation of additional considerations that may emerge from the PCE pilot we will use our EIA process to consider the characteristics of selected output authors alongside the characteristics of our overall staff profile over the REF period for each UoA.

Given there will be variation in how these principals can be applied between UoAs, particularly smaller units, individual UoA leads are responsible for ensuring the proposed selection of outputs considers

these principles with the support of their relevant Faculty Dean while considering relevant results from the EIA. This may include outputs from across the institution that are in scope for that UoA (see 5.1.3).

Cross institution collaboration and interdisciplinarity

Over the REF period Queen Mary has invested in new mechanisms and structures to support cross institutional collaboration outside of the administrative structures of our faculties, schools and institutes. The intention to foster inter and multi disciplinarity means outputs are likely to span multiple UoAs and particular attention will be given to ensuring outputs from these initiatives are considered in the appropriate way.

Notable examples include the development of two cross-faculty University Research Institutes: the Digital Environment Research Institute (DERI, est. 2020) and the Precision Healthcare University Research Institute (PHURI, est. 2022). DERI and PHURI are intended to support connections across the institution and with external partners.

We have also continued our investment in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (IHSS), an institute to stimulate collaboration across these disciplines and to nurture the careers of early career researchers working in interdisciplinary spaces.

The university has also considered how our administrative structures support collaboration in synergistic disciplines. In the 2024/2025 academic year, the School of English and Drama merged with the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film to create a new School of the Arts. This was followed in the 2025/2026 academic year by the merger of the School of Politics and International Relations, School of History and School of Geography to form the new School of Society and the Environment.

The final output selection and all DLS will be reviewed at the REF Steering Group to ensure coherence across Queen Mary's submission. The final sign off of the institution's submission is also the responsibility of the REF Steering Group and the President and Principal who will ensure each UoA presents a suitable balance of activity across all parts of the submission. Once the final submission is agreed we will feedback to staff where their outputs were included in the final submission. We will keep this approach under review pending release of the final guidance and any UoA specific variations from panels. This will inform the final selection of outputs for our submission in 2028.

5.1.6 Responsible Research Assessment Practice

Queen Mary has been a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA) since 2020 and to Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) since 2023. The university is publishing its first CoARA action plan in 2025. We have considered our obligations under both frameworks in the development of this code of practice.

In all cases, the method of output selection will be through peer review, with additional external expert review as considered appropriate, and input from committees responsible for REF decision making. Selection panels are provided guidance on the responsible and appropriate use of research metrics, including (in line with DoRA) that no reference will be made to journal-based metrics (e.g. Journal Impact Factors) when considering the quality of research outputs. Where appropriate and available, citation data will be considered as an indicator to inform judgments on output quality for submissions to units of assessment, or for outputs likely to be cross-referred to units of assessment; where the sub-panels have confirmed that they will make use of citation data in their assessment.

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We have developed additional systems and processes to support the inclusion of practice-based research and non-traditional outputs, which we will refine over the period to submission as we progress our commitments under our CoARA action plan.

We will keep our approach under review pending the release of the final guidance and any UoA specific variations from sub-panels.

5.2. Staff, Committees and Training

The relevant details of staff, committees and training for those involved in the selection of outputs are given in Appendix B and C. All Queen Mary staff involved in the selection and decision-making processes are expected to have undertaken appropriate equal opportunities training.

5.3. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Queen Mary is conducting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on our dry runs and output selection processes to determine if they may have a differential impact on particular groups by reference to one or more protected characteristic(s).

Faculty dry run exercises will provide details of how they ensured consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion issues in their internal processes. Analysis of this information is feeding into on-going EIA analysis conducted under the aegis of the REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group. Insights from this work will inform the approach to subsequent dry runs and the final output selection as well as practices more generally. The EIAs will also be reported to the REF Steering Group and Queen Mary Equality and Diversity Advisory Group.

Details of our overall EIA approach and the focused analysis related to output selection for dry run exercises available at time of writing are included in Appendix A. Our EIA will continue to evolve as we build on the learning from each dry run. We will repeat the analysis for future exercises and for the final output selection. An updated EIA will be published as part of the final REF submission in 2028.

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Part 6: Appendices

- A. **Equality Impact Assessment**
- B. **Groups and committees**
- C. **Training on EDI**

Appendix A: REF2029 Preparation - Equality Impact Assessment

Part 1: Overarching Framework

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a comprehensive and systematic analysis to assess whether institutional policies or processes may affect specific groups of staff differently based on one or more protected characteristics and to identify any potential barriers or unintended consequences for individuals. This annex sets out our overall framework and approach to our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for REF2029 preparation alongside details of specific analysis. This framework has been endorsed by the REF EDI Advisory Group.

The purpose of the EIA is to enable Queen Mary to reflect on its approach to REF2029 decision-making processes and to understand the impact of these processes on different staff groups. We are seeking to identify areas for improvement, to enhance support for diverse communities, and ensure that EDI are central to our REF processes and policies. EIA will be carried out at key moments during the REF period ensuring that any potential issues are identified and addressed during the REF preparation and submission. The outcomes of these assessments will inform decision-making, demonstrating Queen Mary's commitment to fostering a fair, inclusive, and supportive environment for all staff. The EIA is a living document which will be updated during the run up to REF with a final copy published as part of our submission in 2028.

We are using the Queen Mary Equality Analysis Framework to shape our approach (<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/human-resources/equality/governance/equality-analysis/>). This is a robust and proven tool designed to help identify and address potential inequalities in research and decision-making processes. It can be adapted to fit different programmes and contexts and is designed to help assess the potential impacts of REF-related policies and processes and to guide the development of actionable steps to mitigate potential barriers.

In line with our ambition to be the most inclusive university of our kind, our intention is to expand our EIA to consider as many protected characteristics as possible. In early 2025, we integrated the Diversity and Inclusion Survey (DAISY) —a comprehensive, intersectional tool supported by the Wellcome Trust that covers age, disability, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, religion, and socio-economic background— into our data collection framework, complementing our existing HR data. Our ability to broaden our analysis will however be limited by the data available and it will take time to build up information through the DAISY tool in particular. Where there is sufficient completion of details we will seek to use this information to enhance our understanding of where there are differential impacts on groups of staff. Some questions may only be feasible to consider as part of our final EIA.

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Subject to the final REF Guidance including the People Culture and Environment (PCE) guidance we will also consider in more detail how we can ensure that our PCE and EIA frameworks align effectively without duplication. As a guiding principle our EIA will focus on our REF preparation process whereas our PCE submission will consider our research context, people, and our goals, policies and processes for driving improvements related to equality within specific communities or groups.

Part 2: Responsibility for the EIA

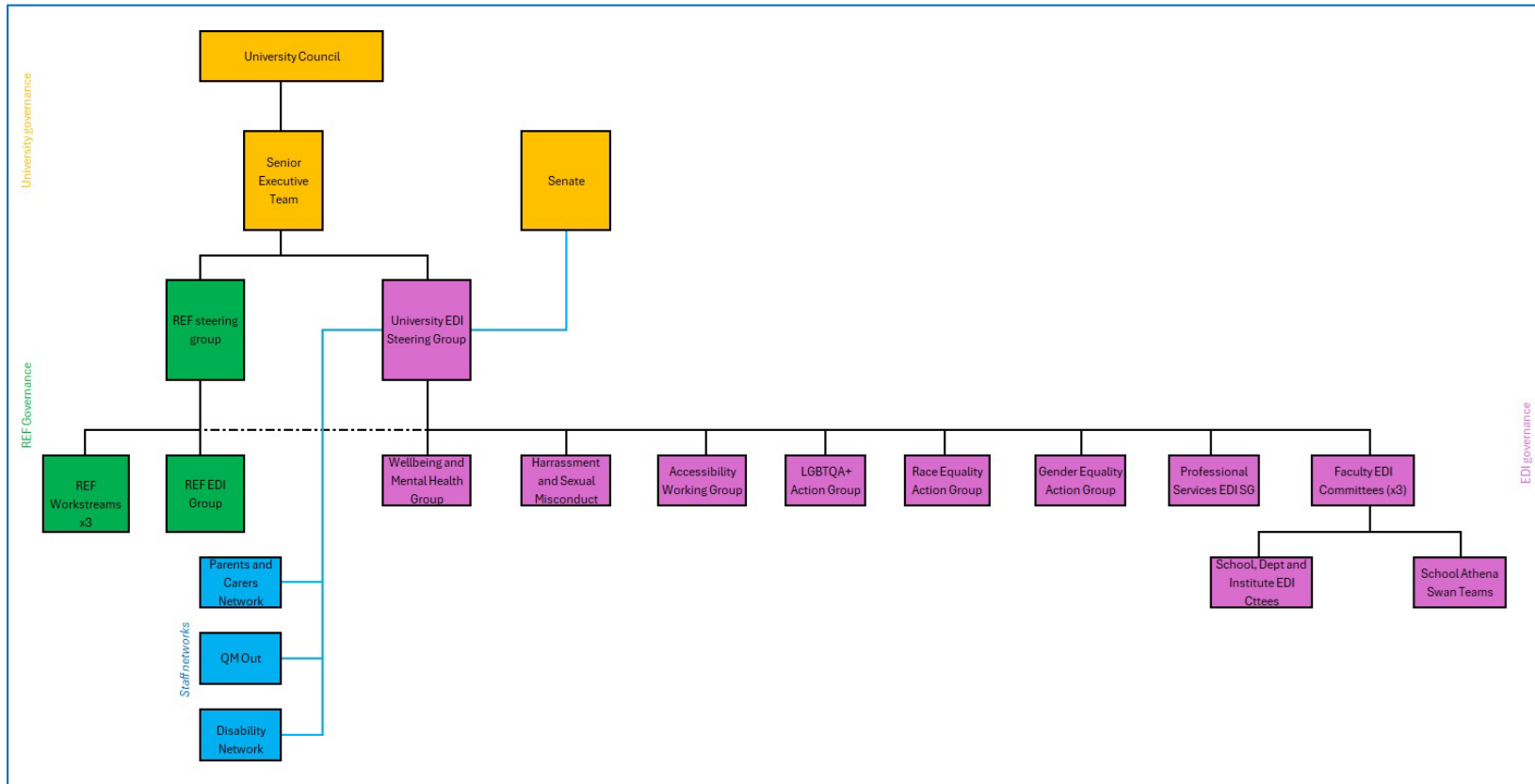
The preparation of the Equality Analysis will be conducted under the aegis of the REF EDI Advisory Group (EDIAG) who are providing independent, expert advice and guidance throughout the preparation and analysis stages. Responsibility for delivering the actions identified in the resulting action plan will lie with the REF Steering Group. Details of the membership and role of the EDIAG and REF Steering Group can be found in Annex 2.

Alongside REF focused action the University's commitment to equality and diversity objectives has been more generally enhanced by the establishment in 2018 of University-wide and Faculty academic leads in this area with new governance arrangements to provide oversight of our progress. We have made use of our enhanced systems, policies and processes during our REF preparation. The REF EDI AG is closely linked to the institutional EDI Steering Group, with membership including the EDI Leads across academic Faculties—each of whom also sits on the central EDI Steering Group. This dual membership ensures strong lines of communication and consistent alignment between institutional EDI initiatives and REF-specific activities. The figure below shows the wider university structures in relation to EDI and the link to REF EDI groups.

Training for those involved in decision making related to EDI including unconscious bias is set out in Annex C.

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Part 3: Areas of Focus

By applying the Equality Analysis Framework, we aim to ensure that our REF submission is not only a reflection of academic excellence but also a testament to our commitment to equality and inclusion. Targeted analysis will allow us to identify areas for improvement, tangible actions and learning for future REF cycles. A core goal will be to ensure our EIA informs and shapes our REF preparation process and future questions explored in later phases of the EIA.

We will undertake Equality Analysis on the following key processes as part of our REF preparation:

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A. The composition of key REF committees (listed in Annex B) and characteristics of reviewers involved in internal output and impact case study assessment processes to ensure they are representative of the overall equality profile of senior staff within Queen Mary.

B. Identification of SRR and RI for REF Volume measure: A major change from previous REF's is the use of HESA data to determine Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR). This means there is no separate staff census for making this determination, it is dependent on the recruitment policies and practices across the institution and is not linked to choices around output or impact case study selection. We have focused our EIA on the parts of the REF volume process where there is a decision step unique to the REF. These are:

- Determination of the UoA assignment of T&R contracts (SRR)
- Determination of RI and UoA assignment (pilot year)

We have/will considered REF specific policy, procedures and outcomes relating to the identification of independent researchers and the characteristics of these staff and have/will benchmark our SRR pool against overall staff profile.

C. Output Selection (internal dry runs and final selection): anonymised data on assessment outcomes will be monitored against the equality profile of eligible staff for Queen Mary (where sufficient data are available) alongside a review of the Equality and Diversity data provided by Schools and Institutes as part of each Dry Run to identify potential biases. This will also be repeated for the final submission in terms of the distribution amongst different protected groups where practicable. We note this may also be a factor in assessing representativeness subject to the final REF guidance (REF Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding guidance section 4.1.5).

D. Impact Case Study Selection: the small numbers of individuals and collaborative nature of case studies will limit what analysis is appropriate for this part of the submission but we will be monitoring the constitution of impact case study reviewers by protected characteristics; ensuring all staff involved in the final consolidation of scores have undertaken EDI related training; and reviewing the impact case study selections to ensure there are no concerns from an EDI perspective

Where the numbers of staff are small enough to enable individuals to be identified, the data from these analyses will not be published in accordance with the provisions of Data Protection legislation.

Part 4: EIA of composition of key REF committees and internal reviewing activity

Details will be added when the data is available to conduct the analysis. Our aim is to benchmark REF committees against our research staff population and consider this for protected characteristics including sex, ethnicity, disability, age and grade where data availability allows. We anticipate the first opportunity to conduct university wide analysis will be early 2026 timed after we will have completed and analysed our first set of dry run exercises for outputs.

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Part 5: EIA of process for identifying staff contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) and Research Independence (RI)

A major change from previous REF exercises is the use of HESA T&R data to determine SRR. This means there is no separate process such as a staff census for identifying T&R contracts and therefore SRR; it is dependent on the recruitment policies and practices across the institution. We are therefore focusing our EIA approach on parts of the process where there is a decision step unique to the REF which are:

- Determination of the UoA assignment of T&R contracts (SRR)
- Determination of RI [noting that use of the data is also different to previous REF exercises]

We are seeking to review the gender, ethnicity, disability, age profile and parental leave status, as well as terms of employment data across the contracts included by UoA. Where possible, these figures will be benchmarked against our research staff headcount and similar other institutions.

Details will be added when the data is available to conduct the analysis. We anticipate the first opportunity to conduct university wide analysis will be October/November 2025, following the HESA pilot year as part of our final checks on the data before submission to HESA (see section 3.4). Preliminary data from initial analysis of our Determination of RI was discussed at the REF EDIAG and provided as a separate, companion document to this Code.

In later years we will also seek to use the recent incorporation of the DAISY instrument into HR systems to assess a wider set of characteristics and increase our understanding of intersectionality and the socio-economic profile of this group. This will be subject to sufficient completion by staff and is more likely to be feasible from 2026 onwards.

Part 6: EIA of process for output selection

Guidance on equality, diversity and inclusion is being circulated to faculties as part of preparations for 2026 dry runs. This confirms that the principles of equality and diversity should be embedded throughout the steps of internal assessment, including:

- the constitution of reviewing panels and nominations for external assessors
- in ensuring relevant training for staff involved in REF processes and decision-making (see Annex C)
- through monitoring the profile of staff involved in dry run processes, including internal reviewers
- ensuring consistency in review processes for outputs

There is a significant change to the process for REF2029 through the decoupling of staff from specific research outputs. While this change aims to minimise unintended consequences on staff evaluations and career progression, for Queen Mary it remains important that the

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selection process is transparent, consistent, and fair. Even though outputs are no longer linked to individual researchers we are committed to ensuring an equitable selection process that recognises research excellence without bias.

Building on QM's EIA process for REF2021 we will undertake a series of analytical steps to assess the scoring of outputs via t-tests to explore whether there are significant differences in the scoring of outputs by sex, ethnicity, disability, and parental leave status, and use linear modelling to assess rank differences by protected characteristics.

Based on the results of the above, steps will be taken to address any differences or issues in our selection of outputs. We expect these results to inform our processes for review panel selection (see part 4 above), as well as output selection and scoring in subsequent years.

Details will be added when the data is available to conduct the analysis. We anticipate the first opportunity to conduct university wide analysis of internal output assessment processes (dry runs) will be early 2026 drawing on data from 2025 assessment exercises. Following this first year's EIA analysis we will also compare subsequent EIA analysis results to the year prior via paired sample t-tests and evaluate change over time.

Part 7: EIA of process for Impact Case Study selection

The capacity to undertake an EIA on the impact case study element of the submission will be more limited, since case studies are commonly collaborative efforts (rather than attributed to individual staff members in the same way as outputs); they are currently in draft form (or varying stages of development) and thus can only be given a provisional scoring based on the perception of potential quality and maturity at the time of drafting and; sample sizes are much smaller than for outputs. Therefore, it is not considered appropriate to conduct an EIA on the initial case study pipeline in 2025 as for output dry runs.

However, we note the importance of continuing to ensure that EDI considerations are embedded in the processes for assessing and supporting impact case studies, to mitigate against any potential bias. Therefore in 2026 we will be monitoring the constitution of impact case study reviewers by protected characteristics; ensuring all staff involved in the final consolidation of scores have undertaken EDI related training; and reviewing the impact case study selections to ensure there are no concerns from an EDI perspective.

Part 8: Updating the EIA

Further updates and new sections of this EIA will be added at key points in the preparation of our REF2029 submission when the analysis can be done – for example when REF have released the requirements, when key data becomes available or when we are preparing the final submission.

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Appendix B: Individuals, groups and committees involved in REF 2029

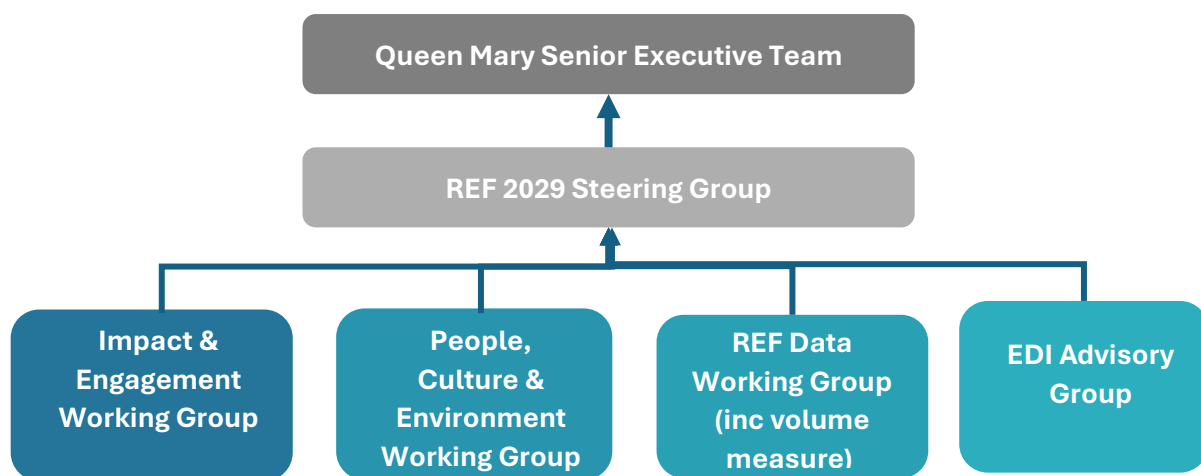
The REF2029 preparations and submission are overseen by the Principal and President, supported by the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation). Responsibility for the final REF2029 submission rests with the President and Principal and the REF Steering Group, following recommendations from individual groups leading on submission workstreams.

All Queen Mary staff involved in the selection and decision-making processes are expected to have undertaken appropriate equal opportunities training that (as a minimum) involves fair selection training and the Equality Act. Equality and diversity training is being provided to all those involved in decision-making on UoA submissions on a rolling basis. All staff will also be provided with copies of this Code of Practice and any relevant guidance issued by the REF team.

Queen Mary REF decision-making groups

Queen Mary is comprised of three main faculties: the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Science and Engineering, and the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. Each faculty contains a number of schools and institutes, forming the university's main framework for teaching, learning, and research activity.

The figure shows the university level REF committees with key responsibilities for developing the REF2029 submission. Time bound focused groups and UoA or faculty level committees are not shown for simplicity. The university's Senior Executive Team (SET) comprises the Senior Officers of the University (Vice Principals and Chief Officers) and others as invited by the President and Principal. It is advisory to the President and Principal and assists in discharging the President and Principal's obligations to Council (the University's governing body). SET advises on the management of day-to-day university business as well as its long-term future and is responsible for the development and implementation of the university's Strategic Plan.



The following table gives further details of the committees involved in decision-making processes for REF2029, and of the process followed for their selection to undertake the stated role(s) in relation to Queen Mary's REF preparations. This also includes details of faculty and UoA level committees and time bound groups undertaking key tasks.

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REF Steering Group (RSG)	
Membership	The RSG reports to SET. Membership includes the VP Research and Innovation (Chair), the three Queen Mary Faculty Deans for Research, DVP for Impact and Innovation and Chair of I&E Working Group, DVP for Research and Innovation Culture and Chair of PCE Working Group, Director of Research and Innovation and Chair of REF Data Group, Deputy Dean for REF in the faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Head of Corporate Communications, Executive Officer R&I, R&I Analysis and Planning Manger (Secretariat)
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed to the RSG because of their Queen Mary role.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2029	This group has a decision-making role providing strategic oversight for REF2029, ensuring that all policies, procedures, and systems are updated and aligned with the latest guidelines and expectations of the REF. Undertakes Queen Mary-wide planning for REF and determines the final submission; commissions and reviews internal and external assessments of research; ensures that systems for recording and uploading REF documentation are robust and effective; determines criteria for selection for staff submission; ensures work across the institution and workstreams is consistent and joined up; agrees on internal communication strategy; reports on progress to SET; submits the final Queen Mary submission.
REF Impact and Engagement Working Group (I&E WG)	
Membership	DVP for Impact and Innovation (Chair), Deputy Deans for Impact for the Faculties of Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Science, Dean for Impact for the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Research Impact Manager, Impact Engagement Manager, R&I Analysis and Planning Manager (by invitation), Impact Officer (Secretariat)
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2029	This group has a decision-making role and is responsible for overseeing and guiding the overall approach to delivering Research Impact for REF2029. Agrees Queen Mary's overall approach to delivering Impact and Engagement submission ensuring alignment with the Code of Practice and REF guidance; provides guidance to academic UoA Impact Leads in the Faculties on submission requirements; develops overarching institutional I&E messaging and ensures consistency between statements for different UoAs; defines and agrees approach and timing of internal Impact Case Study assessments and ensures learnings are acted upon; informs RSG of tactical decisions; signs off Impact Case Studies and narrative statements before referral to RSG.
REF People, Culture and Environment Working Group (PCE WG)	
Membership	DVP for Research and Innovation Culture (Chair), Director of HR, Associate Director Culture and Inclusion (HR), PCE Faculty representatives, Director of Research and Innovation, Research Culture Manager, Head of Doctoral College, Executive Officer R&I, Head of

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	Researcher Development (QM Academy), Head of Responsible Research and Innovation Policy, Senior Research and Innovation Analyst, R&I Analysis and Planning Manager (by invitation), Estates lead (by invitation), Technician Commitment Lead (by invitation), Research Culture Officer (Secretariat).
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. They are appointed to this committee because of their expertise and understanding of REF processes.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2029	This group has a decision-making role and is responsible for overseeing and guiding the overall approach to delivering the PCE component of REF2029 Agrees Queen Mary's overall approach to delivering PCE submission ensuring alignment with the Code of Practice and REF guidance; provides guidance to UoA Leads on submission requirements; develops the institutional PCE submission and ensures consistency across UoA statements; identify key messages for narrative statements, reviews data, ensures update of data and benchmarking when REF PCE indicator guidance is available and contributes to sector consultations and research culture metric development; reviews and signs off on institutional and UoA submissions before referral to RSG.
REF Data Working Group (DWG)	
Membership	Director of Research and Innovation (Chair), Director of Planning, Head of Library Research Support, Head of HR Operations and Recruitment, Associate Director Culture and Inclusion (HR), Head of Workforce and Analytics (HR), HR Management Information and Analytics Manager (HR), Strategic Faculty Research Managers, Executive Officer R&I, R&I Analysis and Planning Manager, Finance Partner Research Grants, Assistant Academic Registrar (Research Degrees) (by invitation), Senior R&I Analyst, R&I Analysis and Planning Manager (Secretariat)
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. They are appointed to this committee because of their expertise, understanding of REF processes and operational roles.
Responsibilities in relation to REF2029	This group considers all the data-related requirements and issues involved in preparing for REF2029 with a particular focus on updating policies, procedures and university wide systems related to HESA and the new approach to determining volume and any other HR data requirements that emerge as guidance is issued. Ensures systems are in place that enable consistent capture of REF submission information across workstreams; provides guidance to Faculties/UoAs and supportive teams on data capture requirements, process and deadlines; ensures HESA data processes meet REF requirements; builds the supporting tools, methodologies and analysis to inform submission composition; ensures that data underpinning the REF submission are robust; provides quality assurance; leads Queen Mary's response to HESA consultation on UoA level data; makes recommendations to the RSG or relevant working group.
REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EDIAG)	

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Membership	<p>Director of HR (Chair)[#], Director of Research and Innovation[*], Associate Director Culture and Inclusion[#], DVP for Research and Innovation Culture^{#*}, Faculty EDI leads[#], Early Career Researcher, R&I Analysis and Planning Manager (Secretariat)[*]</p> <p>In recognition of the importance of coherence and accountability across REF governance and wider institutional EDI governance mechanisms, the REF EDIAG includes representatives from the RSG indicated by[*] and from the EDI Steering Group indicated by[#]. Additional attendees are requested to join key discussions where necessary according to their areas of expertise.</p>
Selection process	<p>Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes and involvement in the wider development of EDI plans or membership of key committees within the university.</p>
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2029	<p>The EDIAG operates independently from other Queen Mary REF committees, plays an expert advisory role throughout the REF2029 cycle and will meet at key stages of the preparation process. The group scrutinises and provides assurance over the conduct and review of Equality Impact Assessments for processes such as output selection and research independence decisions. It ensures the Code of Practice reflects consistent and transparent EDI approaches, in alignment with QMUL policy, and provides targeted guidance to other REF working groups and the RSG when required. The group also oversees the approach to EDI training and works closely with the PCE workstream to ensure institutional EDI priorities are fully integrated with REF processes.</p> <p>This group will report into the Queen Mary EDI Steering Group and the RSG. Meetings are held periodically, timed to fit with key moments during REF preparation.</p>
<p>Research Independence Review Group [RIRG] – time bound committee for HESA pilot year only.</p>	
Membership	<p>Director of Research and Innovation (Chair), three academic faculty representatives, R&I Analysis and Planning Manager (Secretariat)</p>
Selection process	<p>Members were appointed to their Queen Mary posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Faculty members were appointed to this group because of their role or discipline related expertise and independence from other REF groups.</p>
Responsibilities in relation to REF2029	<p>This committee was convened during the HESA pilot year to assess applications for Research Independence in the context of REF to ensure the quality of baseline data. It reviewed individual research only contracts for eligibility for inclusion in the volume measure against the definition and indicators set out in the Guidance and this Code of Practice. It has an advisory role making recommendations to the RSG.</p>
<p>Research Independence for volume measure- appeals panel – convened subject to an appeal.</p>	
Membership	<p>Membership will be determined subject to the particular appeal to ensure the panel have the necessary expertise, independence and disciplinary background to review the evidence</p>
Selection Process	<p>Will be subject to specific queries raised but will follow the principles adopted as part of Queen Mary's approach to Research Integrity queries.</p>

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Responsibilities in relation to REF2029	To hear and make recommendations on any appeals to decisions on RI status of particular contracts in relation to the REF volume measure.
Faculty and UoA level committees	
Humanities and Social Sciences - Faculty REF Delivery Group	
Membership	Faculty Dean for Research (chair), Faculty Deputy Dean for REF, Faculty Strategic Research Manager, Senior Research Managers, UoA Leads: Geography & Environment Studies, Business & Management Studies, Linguistics, Modern Languages, English Language & literature, Drama, Film, Politics & international studies, Economics & Econometrics, History and Law.
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed to the group because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2029	Oversees REF2029 preparations at Faculty level and ensuring assessments meet the highest standards of quality and accuracy; communicates updates and decisions from central REF committees to UoAs; agree on preparation timelines that align with central processes; advise UoAs on dry runs and preparations while sharing best practices; rigorously review and provide feedback on draft assessments and outputs; maintain close communication with central REF groups to ensure alignment and avoid duplication.
Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (FMD) - Research Strategy Board	
Membership	Dean for Research (Chair), Dean for Research Impact, Dean for Global Engagement, Institute Directors of Research, Deputy Dean for Postgraduate Research, Deputy Dean for Research Integrity, Director of Clinical Research, Chair of FMD Data Strategy and Capability Committee (DSCC), Chair of FMD Research Culture and Environment Committee (RC&E), Chair of FMD Equipment Committee, FMD EDI Committee Representative, Early Life Research Institute Lead, Deputy Faculty Director of Operations, Faculty Strategic Research Manager, Research Strategy Support officer
Selection Process	Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed to the group because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes.
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2029	In the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry all REF related decisions are managed the Research Strategy Board. The Board provides senior leadership in the development and implementation of the Faculty's research strategy and responding to strategic or policy developments within the broader organisation.
Faculty of Science and Engineering – S&E REF Delivery Group	
Membership	Dean for Research (Chair), Deputy Dean for Research (Impact & Industrial Engagement), Deputy Dean for Research (PGR), Science and Engineering EDI Lead, Directors of Research for each of the 5 schools in the Faculty, REF leads for each of the 6 units of

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	<p>assessment in the Faculty, Faculty Strategic Research Manager, Faculty Senior Research Manager (with REF responsibility)</p> <p>Impact leads for each of the 5 schools - invited as required. These sit on separate Impact & Industrial Engagement Committee, chaired by Deputy Dean for Research (Impact & Industrial Engagement), and which feeds into the REF Delivery Group.</p>
Selection Process	<p>Members were appointed to their posts through open advertisement, in line with Queen Mary's Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice and complying with Queen Mary's Equal Opportunities Policy. Members were appointed to the group because of their role or expertise and understanding of REF processes.</p>
Responsibilities in relation to REF 2029	<p>The S&E REF Delivery Group oversees all aspects of REF2029 preparation within the Faculty in line with processes and timescales set out at Institutional level.</p>

Selection of internal and external reviewers

Queen Mary conducted our first dry runs in 2025 and will conduct further exercises in the run up to submission. These included advice and input from staff across the institution and some advice from external assessors to review outputs and impact case studies.

Reviewers were selected based on their subject matter expertise, peer review experience with previous experience on a REF Panel considered an advantage. The assessors remained anonymous. The profile of assessors is being considered (where possible) as part of the EIAs on dry runs (Annex A) which will inform further decisions on assessor selection, keeping in mind the constraints on the willingness and availability of assessors to undertake this work for Queen Mary.

Appendix C: Training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

To ensure that all staff involved in REF decision-making processes engage with and uphold principles of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity, our Code of Practice requires the completion of training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This is a mandatory component for any member of staff participating in REF activities under the Code of Practice.

There are two elements to this training:

1. **'Introducing inclusion' EDI training developed by the university.** All university staff, including those involved in REF preparations, must complete this course as part of their mandatory training. This comprises two key modules: 'Equality and Diversity in Practice' and 'Challenging Unconscious Bias'. Staff are required to repeat this online training every two years to ensure continued awareness of best practice and completion is monitored through Queen Mary's Continuous Professional Development system.

The 'Equality and Diversity in Practice' module requires staff to have read and agreed to the relevant policies and guidelines associated with our institutional commitment to equality. These policies are published on the Queen Mary Intranet Equality Policies page and underpin the expectations we place on staff contributing to REF processes.

Learning outcomes include an understanding of the Equality Act and requirements of staff in line with this e.g protected characteristics, and of regulatory and legal requirements related to prevention of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment. The training also builds awareness of implicit bias and provides learning techniques to address this. The training uses a number of case studies that have been designed for the QM context and developed in line with feedback from the University Good Campus Relations group. The training has been reviewed to ensure that it is in line with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

As part of their normal duties staff are also required to undertake fair selection and interview skills training, which covers the Equality Act 2010 and issues of unconscious bias.

2. **Supplementary REF focused training.** We are currently exploring the introduction of additional training for those involved more routinely in internal assessment processes. This aligns with our COARA action plan, and our ambition to embed expertise in responsible research assessment across the university.
3. As a first step to directly support REF we are developing two interactive case studies to help reviewers to explore particular examples relevant to responsible research assessment. One case study will focus on assessing a research output, with the other focussing on assessing an impact case study. Both exercises will build on the core principles established through our mandatory training but translate them specifically to research and innovation. They will also incorporate additional specialist principles of responsible research assessment, for example around the use of citation metrics, which are not included in our general training for all university staff. The overall training provision represents a key mechanism through which we ensure all those with REF related responsibilities are equipped to engage in a way that actively supports equality, mitigates bias, and contributes to a fair and inclusive research environment.

Equality Impact Assessment for Volume measure: Part 1 Research Independence Process for REF2029

This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been developed to support the implementation of the REF2029 Code of Practice for identifying staff contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) or Research Independence (RI). It should be read as supplementary information to the Code.

The EIA has been prepared through the application of Queen Mary Equality Analysis template (<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/human-resources/equality/governance/equality-analysis/>), which has been adapted to meet the specific requirements of REF. The current analysis focuses on the RI step due to the need to fit with the timing of the HESA data collection process during the pilot year and Code clearance timeline.

The analysis was completed using data available mid August 2025 in order to feed into discussions of the EDI Advisory Group and REF Steering Board. The analysis will need to be updated to reflect the finalised RI HESA data set in late October at which point it will also be supplemented with ‘Part 2’ analysis of determination of the Units of Assessment (UoA) assignment of T&R contracts (SRR). This wider analysis will also be reviewed by the EDI AG and REF Steering Board. In future years it will be possible to conduct both parts together as we will have more ability to align timelines.

We are required to undertake EIA on this particular step by the REF programme. However, there are no direct implications for individual staff members, instead the EIA will give us more general insights into our researcher community, how this is evolving over time and will be a useful point of reference to assess the ‘representativeness’ of our submission.

QMUL Equality Analysis template:

Policy Title	REF2029 Code of Practice: Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) or Research Independence (RI) Part 1: determination of RI [note this is not a policy – it is a procedure to put REF guidance into operation]
Purpose	Determining the staff contract data to be submitted to HESA as having SRR or RI and therefore eligible to be used for the calculation of the volume measure in REF2029

Equality Analysis Lead(s)	QMUL REF co-ordination team
Policy Sponsor (if applicable)	VPR
Date of equality analysis	29 August 2025
School/Institute/Department	QMUL as a whole
Is the policy new or existing?	New
Has the policy previously been subject to equality analysis?	Not in full as REF2029 approach is different to previous REFs. The RI portion of the process was subject to EIA in REF2021 but the context and use of the data is different in REF2029 which makes a comparative analysis less relevant.
If so, what are the main changes since the last analysis?	n/a
Committee/group giving formal approval (if applicable)	REF Steering Board will make the final decision on allocation of contracts to UoAs and will confirm the contracts designated as RI taking into account any comments and advice from the REF Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EDI AG) and Research Independence Review Group (RIRG).

1. Consider your approach to undertaking equality analysis.

This is an opportunity to consider how you will approach your equality analysis; who are your key stakeholders and who needs to be involved, how will you embed the equality analysis into the wider decision-making process, what scale of impact do you anticipate?

The aim of the process and the EIA: The requirements of the work are set out by the national REF programme (referred to as REF in this document) which has published specific guidance on the determination of volume for REF2029 (how many outputs and impact case studies we need to submit). A major change from previous REFs is the use of HESA data to determine contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) which feed into the volume calculation. This means there is no separate process such as a staff census for making this determination; it is dependent on the recruitment policies and practices across the institution. 2025 is a pilot year for incorporating REF fields into the HESA return. 2026 and 2027 will then be the formal collection years which will determine the volume.

There are two types of contracts that contribute to the volume measures – Teaching and Research (T&R) contracts and a subset of Research Only (R) contracts. We will not undertake any new EIA on this aspect as the impact of our wider recruitment approach is considered as part of our overarching approach to EDI as set out in the relevant Enabling Plan. We are therefore focusing our EIA on the specific parts of the volume process where there is a decision step unique to the REF. The T&R contract data can be automatically taken from HESA but there are two steps where new, specific REF decisions are being taken. These are:

1. Determination of contracts with Research Independence (RI), a subset of Research Only contracts
2. Determination of the UoA assignment of T&R contracts (SRR)

The current EIA focusses on point 1, the process for determining Research Independence. Point 2 will be addressed once the full HESA data set is Quality Assured and becomes available in October.

Who is involved: The QM REF Steering Board, staff involved in the HESA return including additional ‘research leads’ for quality assurance of the REF aspects (research deans or their designated deputy), the Research Independence Review Group (RIRG) and supporting REF Co-ordination team and the REF EDI Advisory Group (EDIAG). By proxy, staff involved in wider recruitment processes for T&R contracts (line managers, wider university governance) will also play a role through creation of initial contracts and default assignment of UoAs however all this will be checked through the new HESA quality assurance steps. Full details of the roles of the REF groups and committees are set out in the draft Code of Practice Appendix B (see separate attachment).

Who will be impacted: All research staff will be impacted indirectly as REF assesses the quality of research at QMUL and the results will inform both the amount of QR funding we receive and the reputation of the institution for particular areas of research.

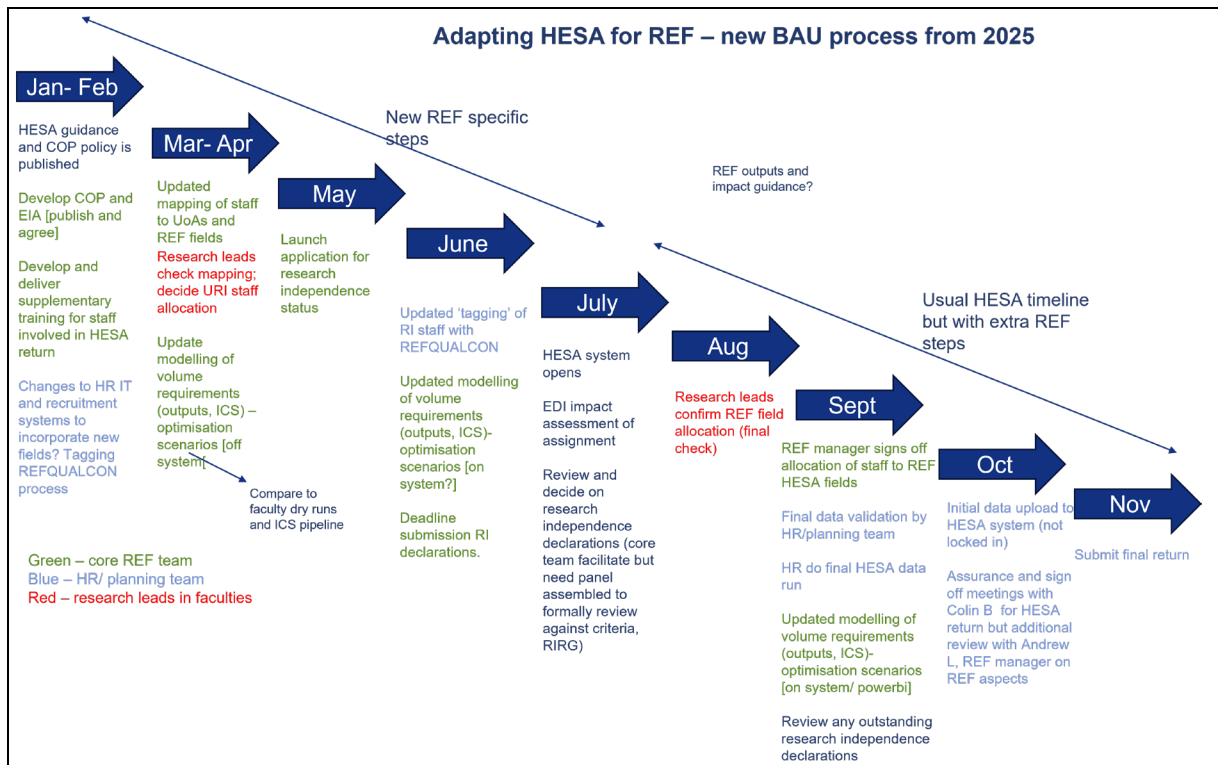
However, the inclusion or not of any individual staff member's contract in the volume measure will have no direct implications for them as individuals. This is because:

- REF29 has 'broken the link' between individuals and outputs included in the submission with no minimum or maximum requirements. This means the determination of eligibility of a contract for inclusion in the volume measure is a separate exercise to the selection of outputs or impact case studies. Staff contracts may count towards the volume measure but not contribute any submitted outputs or vice-versa (provided staff are not on a teaching only contract). Contracts may also be allocated to one UoA in the HESA data but output(s) from that member staff can be submitted to a different UoA(s) provided they meet the scope of that UoA.
- Whether an individual contract has been included in the HESA record for REF volume calculation will not be known by REF panels assessing the outputs and impact case studies.

As a consequence, the inclusion or UoA assignment of a contract has no direct bearing on either output/impact case study selection, access to grant funding or internal performance review processes for individual staff members within Queen Mary University London.

Summary of overall HESA data collection and validation process:

A summary flow chart of the whole HESA process, including T&R and RI contract data collection is included below. This highlights the additional steps being integrated into the existing process for REF. 2025 is the pilot year for testing this, therefore our approach has built in additional QA to ensure we can be confident in our baseline. We have also launched a new HESA dashboard as a tool for the faculties to check data quality and feedback. As the data collection and validation process proceeds the EDI related data required for our EIA will start to become available.



Process for determination of research independence:

The pilot year has also required us to undertake additional work to determine RI contracts and establish the baseline for future years. Our approach follows that set out in the REF Guidance on the volume measure and builds on our approach in REF2021 which defines as RI as:

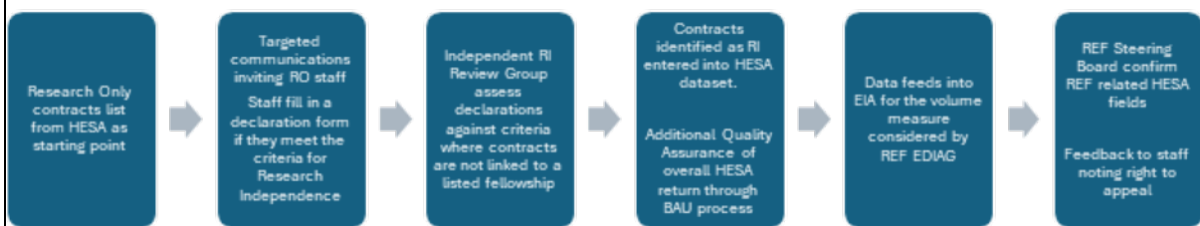
‘a research only contract is considered to demonstrate research independence if the staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individuals’ research programme’.

Key indicators include:

- Members of staff acting as lead applicant on externally funded research projects;
- Members of staff holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship requiring research independence with reference to the [list of eligible fellowships](#) issued by the REF team
- Members of staff who are leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package;
- Members of staff where research independence is an inherent expectation of a contract
- For UoAs 13- 34 this may also include:

- Being named as a co-applicant on an externally funded research grant/award
- Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research

In order to ensure that we are fairly and consistently capturing relevant information on staff in Research Only roles, including those in roles transitioning to independence, we have used the pilot year to quality assure our data and seek input from staff. Through a Research Independence Declaration process, we requested all staff on research only contracts to make a claim to RI if they considered they met the criteria. Declarations were then assessed against the definition by a Research Independence Review Group (RIRG) of academic colleagues nominated by faculties and independent of other REF decision making structures. Once relevant contracts have been identified these can be fed back into the HESA data set enabling us to access the information needed for our EIA. A summary flow chart of the steps taken in the pilot year is set out below.



Future years

The pilot year is enabling us to quality assure the data creating a baseline for our pool of RI staff. For future years we will be able to adopt a more streamlined approach to place less burden on research staff and administrative systems integrating the RI checks into the ongoing quality assurance of data by appointed HESA data leads within our faculties, supported by guidance on indicators of RI contracts. As future years will only need to focus on changes to our RI cohort (new joiners) the numbers will be much smaller and can be addressed case by case rather than through a review panel.

Researchers are entitled to appeal against the decision on RI status of their contract. Details of how to do this are set out in the Code of Practice. Should any appeals be received a separate independent appeals panel will be assembled to assess the evidence provided with regard to eligibility in relation to the REF Guidance on volume measure section 9.1.3 and form a final decision.

How we are embedding EIA and anticipated findings:

The particular analysis of the full data set and RI contracts specifically, alongside the advice of the REF EDIAG, will inform our view of how representative our eventual REF submission is of our researcher population.

As a minimum we will review the sex, ethnicity, disability, age profile and parental leave status. In the first instance, we will analyse sex and ethnicity (see EIA analysis on Research Independence below), and once the HESA submission is complete, we will provide the full breakdown. Where possible, the figures in the EIA analysis section below will be benchmarked against our staff headcount and other relevant institutions.

Ensuring mitigation of risk of bias in our approach

- EDI training is mandatory for all staff members. Consequently, every individual involved in the REF decision-making process will have successfully completed this training. We will review this process and ensure training is complete.
- Specific consideration will be given to ensuring the communications approach is inclusive and mindful of reaching a diverse staff audience. Drop-in sessions were held by the REF co-ordination team for those staff who wanted to discuss how the RI declaration process might have been relevant to them.

2. Supporting Queen Mary's Values and Strategy 2030

- How does this policy demonstrate Queen Mary's [Values in action?](#)
- What opportunities are there for this policy to progress positive impact across protected characteristics and beyond?
- How does it support the aims of Queen Mary Strategy 2030, including our mission to be the most inclusive university of our kind

As we will need to perform this exercise annually from now as a new BAU process, over time, this will have wider benefits:

- improved quality of our information regarding our researcher cohort,
- enhanced trend data to assess whether wider interventions and support are being successful in widening the diversity of our research staff.

Use of this approach will provide a valuable assurance mechanism against which to test whether our eventual REF29 submission is representative of the diversity profile of our research staff. Further, the data and characteristics we report are, to an extent, a source of competitive advantage and credibility in the equality and inclusion space.

3. Evidence and information

Consider what sources of information you will need to undertake your equality analysis. You should consider both quantitative and qualitative information and must consider the protected characteristics listed below as a minimum. You should consider what information is already available and whether any additional data is required.

The potential impacts you anticipate the policy may have should inform your approach.

We aim to deepen our understanding of our research community and assess whether it accurately reflects the broader research population. By exploring the composition of this group by personal characteristics, we can better identify and address potential biases, ultimately enhancing the quality and inclusiveness of our approach.

As set out above the EIA analysis for the pilot year will occur in two stages:

1. Determination of Research Independence: analysis will focus on a breakdown of staff with RI by sex and ethnicity (White/BAME) preliminary composition data is set out in the EIA analysis section below. Data is benchmarked against the research-only group and the wider staff headcount.

Given the small sample size of this group (n = 83), further analysis of additional characteristics will not be conducted in order to prevent the disclosure of sensitive information or identification of specific staff where grouping by Faculty leads to numbers < 5.

2. Allocation of UoA assignments for T&R contracts: Given the larger size of this group, we will be able to provide a more detailed breakdown, including disability status, parental leave, age profile, and terms of employment. Where possible, this analysis will be benchmarked against staff headcount.

The analysis will use the HESA data collected through the cycle therefore the timing of the analysis is linked to when that becomes available.

Our approach to EIA and follow on actions will evolve as the changes to the HESA return become embedded in business as usual. The real benefits of the analysis will come as we repeat it annually and analyse longer-term trends.

4. Engagement and qualitative data

- What engagement exercises have taken place already?
- What do the findings show? How will these inform the proposed policy?
- Is any further engagement required to inform your assessment of potential impacts?

Engagement so far has largely been through REF specific groups established for this process. We also have established a general information resource on the QMUL intranet which will be updated to include information on the new HESA approach and guidance in our 'What do I need to do' page. The Code of practice and approach to EIA will also be discussed at SET and Senate over the autumn 2025.

However, there is limited scope to change the approach to the volume measure as this is required by REF. There is also a risk in extensive engagement with staff on this specific process given inclusion of a contract in the volume measure has no impact on them as individuals. Communications therefore need to be proportionate and nuanced. We have attempted to balance the benefit to staff in a greater understand how the mechanics of REF have changed with the risk of creating misconceptions over what this means for them personally.

Our focus is therefore on:

- Ensuring we conduct the process fairly and care is taken to be inclusive in capturing RI staff. The opportunity for self-declaration in the pilot year rather than just relying on assumed knowledge of HR/senior research leaders and existing data helped with this.
- Specific engagement around Research Independence Declaration process starting in May 2025:
 - Research Deans cascading the information through their faculties
 - Faculty newsletter (where applicable)
 - REF intranet webpages launched
 - QMUL E-bulletin
 - Targeted emails to staff on research-only contracts
 - two drop-in sessions open to all staff to join who had questions on RI or REF more generally.

The outcomes of the declaration process will also be communicated via the RIRG chair.

5. Assessment of potential impact on different groups

- The list below follows the legal framework of the Equality Act 2010 and the groups protected within it as well as additional groups whose needs should be considered. You can add any additional groups to this list where relevant.
- Consider both **negative** and **positive** impacts here
- Please consider intersectionality throughout your assessment

Characteristic	Impact identified	Rationale
<p><i>(Characteristics in bold reference those which are protected under the Equality Act 2010)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative • Positive • Neutral/non identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data or information has informed your assessment of impact

<p>Age</p>	<p>It is important to note that the EIA for Research Independence (RI) relates to a small cohort, which limits our ability to make any substantive claims regarding impact.</p>	<p>The main rationale for arguing the impact of this process is neutral is that the HESA process for volume is now separate from the selection of outputs and impact case studies.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>In contrast, for the larger HESA data set (Part 2), results are not yet available, but at present we do not anticipate any impact for the following reasons:</p>	<p>As REF has ‘decoupled individuals and outputs’, there is no minimum or maximum requirement from individuals anymore and this has no bearing on individuals.</p>
<p>Marriage and Civil Partnerships</p>	<p>Neutral – this has no tangible impact on individual staff members</p>	<p>In other words, the inclusion of a contract in the HESA data set has no implication for individual staff members.</p>
<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p>Over the longer term there could be a positive benefit for some groups listed here where the data gathering driven by REF enhances our understanding and highlights subject areas where addition action could be taken to shape our research culture.</p>	<p>It will also act as part of our assurance that our REF submission is representative of our researchers.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p>	<p>We will focus analyses on age profile, disability, ethnicity, parental leave and sex. We have chosen these characteristics to 1. maintain some processes from REF 2021. And 2. because they can paint a picture of the conditions in which staff with RI conduct their work. Some of the characteristics in the list do not necessarily influence staff’s work and we want to make sure we are conducting analyses on data that is robust enough to provide insightful numbers. Using more granular data can also increase the risk of identification when sharing publicly.</p>	<p></p>
<p>Sex <i>(The Equality Act 2010 defines ‘sex’ as relating to male and female)</i></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>
<p>Sexual orientation/ LGBTQIA+</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>
<p>Trans and non-binary people <i>(The Equality Act 2010 uses the term ‘Gender Reassignment’)</i></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>

Caring responsibilities	The process for Declaration of Research Independence incorporated several calls for declaration and various data checks to ensure that we are including every relevant staff member. This would have accommodated to different staff's individual circumstances and levels of involvement.	
Socio-economic background or status		
Menopause		

6. Action plan to eliminate or reduce adverse impact.

- The template below allows you to identify specific actions to address any negative impact that you have identified through your assessment.
- Negative impact should be address before the policy is put into place.
- This may include actions already undertaken since the beginning of this equality analysis exercise.

Impact identified	Action planned	Timeframe
n/a		

7. Decision

Is the policy ready for implementation:	YES X	NO
Equality analysis reviewed by (e.g., relevant governance group):	REF EDI AG, REF Steering Board	
If "No", what action will be taken?		

8. Monitoring and Review

- How will you monitor the impact of your project once it has been implemented?
- Include date for review and person(s)/group/committee responsible

This data will be reviewed annually as it is a new requirement for the HESA data collection process for all future REFs as well as REF29. The use of the new HESA staff dashboard will provide support in streamlining our process to identify staff.

Date for review	October 2026. This aligns with the HESA data cycle.
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Person responsible	QM REF co-ordination team
Relevant committee(s)/working group(s)	REF EDIAG, REF Steering Board

Preliminary EIA analysis on Research Independence – Pilot year¹

A total of 136 RI declarations were received from staff through the self-declaration process in this pilot year, of which:

- 38 were on T&R contracts (submitted in error)
- 32 answered with no RI (nil returns were not requested)
- 24 are on eligible fellowships (REF published a list of fellowships which inherently require or support research independence, <https://2029.ref.ac.uk/publication/research-fellowships/>)
- 42 submitted to the RIRG.

We took the 122 declarations from the first RIRG meeting and cross-checked using the HESA dashboard. Only 22 needed updating, which confirmed the quality of the majority of our data.

Composition analysis

The group of Research Independent staff are all on Research only contracts and have been verified to be REF-eligible as defined above and in the Code of Practice.

We are not analysing staff on an FTE basis as we are interested in the personal characteristics of staff, and so numbers may be different to official FTE reports.

Staff numbers by faculty are shown in the table below:

Faculty	Number of staff
Humanities & Social Sciences	18
Medicine & Dentistry	54
Science & Engineering	6
University Research Institute	5

Breakdown by sex

The group is 38% female and 62% male. Female representation is lower compared to both the wider research-only pool (55% female and 45% male) and all-staff headcount, which is fairly even split (53% female and 47% male) (see Figure 1).

This distribution varies by faculty, and when looking at the disaggregated distribution, we can see some variation by disciplines (Figure 2). Given low numbers, we cannot draw overarching conclusions, but we can note that in particular in Science & Engineering and the University Research Institutes, the ratio female to male is uneven, with Science

¹ Data for this analysis was taken before final HESA checks and so there may be some inconsistencies with final numbers.

& Engineering having 1 female and 5 male members of staff, and the University Research Institutes 1 female to 4 male members of staff.

In contrast, the proportion of female staff in Medicine & Dentistry is higher than the proportion for all staff, meaning there is higher female representation.

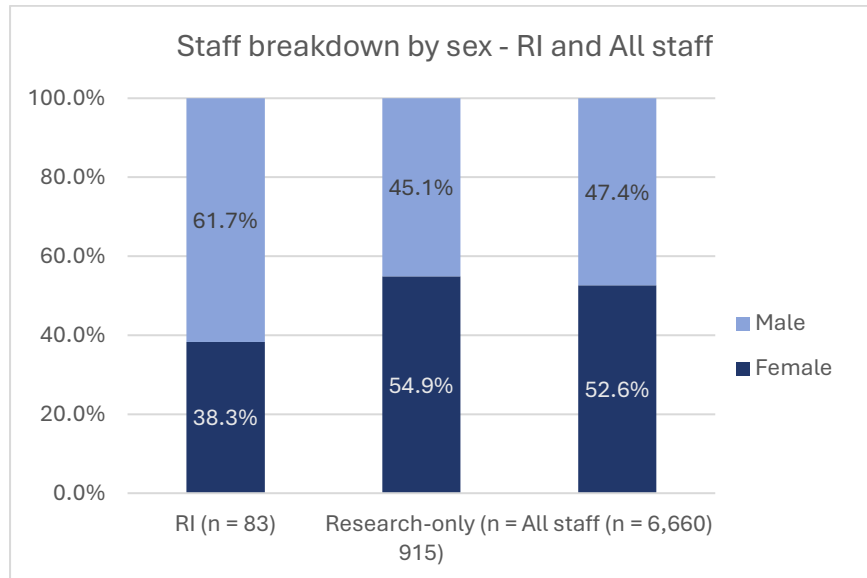


Figure 1 Staff breakdown by sex

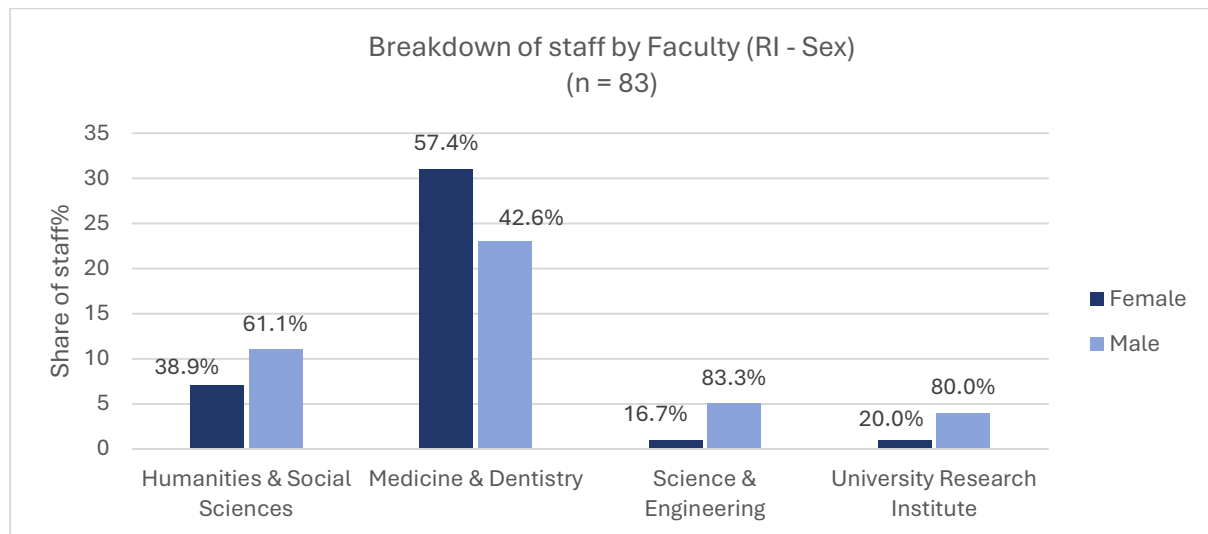


Figure 2 Breakdown of staff by Faculty - Sex

Breakdown by ethnicity (White/BAME)

RI staff have declared their ethnicity as 69% white and 26% BAME. This shows a lower BAME representation than the research-only group (60% white and 40% BAME), and our all-staff headcount, which is 58% white and 42% BAME (Figure 3).

When looking at the distribution by faculty (Figure 4), we can see some faculties where representation is more evenly distributed. For example, in Medicine & Dentistry, where

the proportion of BAME staff (39%) is closer to the all-staff share (42%), or Science & Engineering where there is an even split. However, in the latter, there are only 6 staff so no conclusions should be drawn about representation.

Conversely, Humanities and Social Sciences has low BAME representation with almost all staff identifying as white. This is also the case for the University Research Institutes.

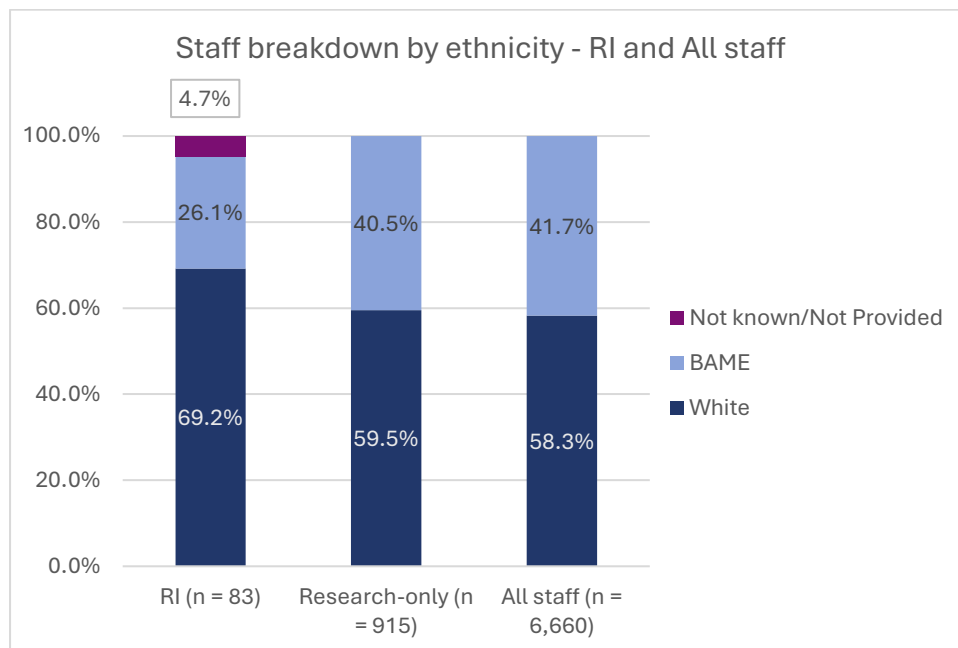


Figure 3 Staff breakdown by ethnicity

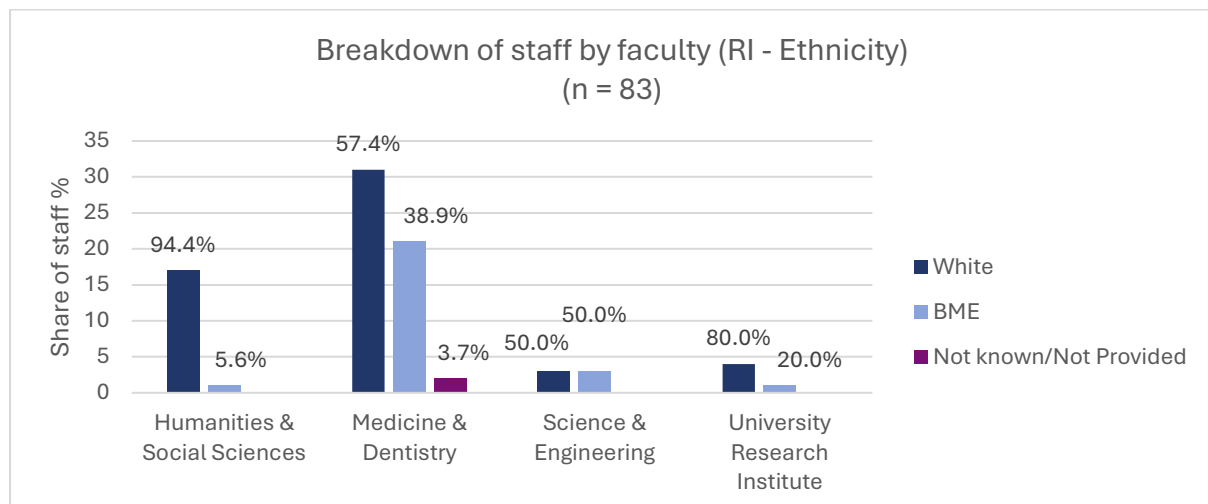


Figure 4 Breakdown of staff by Faculty - Ethnicity

Implications

In summary, the number of RI staff is low compared to our pool of SRR (to be published), to the wider research-only group, and to our all-staff headcount. This is to be expected but means we cannot draw meaningful conclusions about representation.

However, we can observe patterns and variation in comparison to the wider QMUL population.

We can see that the composition of our RI staff by sex and ethnicity varies by faculty, and that this can paint a picture of representation by disciplines. We note the areas where representation is more uneven, and how these differences are not present at the research-only level. Given that this is a group with staff with research independence, it would be important to explore whether most of staff with RI are also early career researchers. This could have implications on our researcher pipeline.

Some actions that could be influenced by these findings are:

- Further exploring data in future years to learn, for example, if female or BAME staff with RI (underrepresented characteristics) also have a lower FTE equivalent, or if most or all staff fit the description of early career researcher.
- Identifying points of support or strategic decisions that could influence access to fellowships or research opportunities.

However, actions to influence or improve this span beyond the EIA as this would involve wider strategic decisions.