



REF 2029 CODE OF PRACTICE

Aug 2026

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Research Excellence Framework 2029
Code of Practice Template
Institution name: Edinburgh Napier University
Date of Submission: 15 May 2026

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Each institution making a submission to the Research Excellence Framework - REF2029 is required to develop, document and apply a Code of Practice (CoP) for:

- i.* Identifying volume-contributing contracts
[Significant Responsibility for Research and Research Independence]
- ii.* Allocating contracts to Units of Assessment
- iii.* Selecting outputs for submission
- iv.* Identifying substantive links to outputs
- v.* Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff
- vi.* Assigning outputs to UoAs
- vii.* Supporting diversity of outputs
- viii.* Ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken in the period
- ix.* Responsible research assessment practices

2. The Edinburgh Napier University REF 2029 Code of Practice is underpinned by the REF principles of **Robustness, Transparency and Equity and Inclusion**:

- i.* **Robustness** – ensuring that submissions are an accurate reflection of the University and the sector. This supports confidence in the outcomes of the REF and related funding.

At Edinburgh Napier this is achieved by ensuring that we adhere to our processes for identifying and calculating an accurate REF volume-measure which is proportionate to our research scale and capacity over the REF period, and that the process is auditable and defensible to colleagues and to the funding bodies.

- ii.* **Transparency** – ensuring that people understand how decisions about submissions are made and that fair process is followed.
Transparent processes help reassure the sector that the same rules are being followed everywhere.

At Edinburgh Napier this is achieved by ensuring that our Code of Practice is written for colleagues in consultation with them and is accessible to all staff. It includes regular University-wide all staff communications through wide-reaching comms channels familiar to staff (e.g. The Bones and Staff Communication emails).

- iii. **Equity and inclusion** – ensuring that decisions about the submission are fair and impartial, supporting a diversity of people and research. The CoP promotes inclusive research environments where diverse individuals and research contributions are valued and supported and recognises the wide range of research, roles and people that are essential to promoting an inclusive research environment and ensuring the vitality of the UK's vibrant research system.

At Edinburgh Napier this involves upskilling our research decision-makers through a tailored, in-house 'EDI in Research' training provision so that decision-making is fair. It involves mechanisms to empower colleagues to understand the REF 2029 guidance and apply it in the context of personalised research objective setting and workload allocation. And it also includes transparent and responsible analysis of EDI protected characteristic data to inform proactive mitigations to prevent inequality of opportunity and promote diversity across our REF practices.

3. The University is required to ensure that REF procedures do not discriminate unlawfully against or otherwise have the effect of harassing or victimising individuals from protected characteristics (because of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or because they are pregnant or have recently given birth).
4. This Code of Practice has been developed based on the [REF 2029 Guidance \[Appendix A\]](#) provided by the Joint UK Funding Bodies.
5. The Code of Practice must be submitted to the joint UK funding bodies by 15 May 2026. The primary responsibility for approval lies with the funding bodies, with input from the REF 2029 People and Diversity Advisory Panel (PDAP) and Research Diversity Advisory Panel (RDAP).

PART 1.1

Accessibility and Communication

6. This Code of Practice is written for Edinburgh Napier colleagues and is accessible through the staff intranet.
7. It will be published on the Edinburgh Napier University website following approval from Scottish Funding Council.

8. The associated Equality Impact Assessments are also accessible to all colleagues.
[\[Appendix B1, Appendix B2, Appendix B3\]](#)
9. In developing the content for this Code of Practice, the University has actively sought colleague input and consulted with staff representatives through the following mechanisms:
- Discussion with the University's recognised Trade Unions
 - Discussion through University-level and School/Service level Committees
 - Dissemination of a final draft version of the Code of Practice to all staff, inviting comment through a Padlet collaborative board
 - A series of on-Campus 'Demystifying REF' roadshows delivered to staff
 - Dissemination to the University's Doctoral College – the oversight body for Doctoral students
10. The University recommends that all colleagues familiarise themselves with the content of the 'Demystifying REF' presentations aforementioned above [\[available here\]](#) before reading this Code of Practice.
11. The 'Demystifying REF' roadshow content is intended to provide insights and explanation of several elements of the Code of Practice and includes important information on core changes to the REF 2029 framework including principles of:
- 'De-coupling',
 - 'Representativeness'
 - 'Substantive links'
 - 'Volume measure calculation'
12. A set of Frequently Asked Questions and a Glossary of Terms is also available to access via the REF Staff Intranet.

Term	Explanation	REF Guidance
Volume Measure	Acts as a proxy measure to determine research capacity only.	Volume Measure
Substantive Link	Describes the relationship between an HEI and research, submitted in the form of an output. Evidenced through an eligible employment relationship.	CKU
De-coupled	Fundamentally separates the contracts used to calculate the volume measure from the specific outputs included in a submission.	CKU
SRR Significantly Responsible for Research	Explicit time and resources are made available to engage actively in independent research, and that is an expectation of the job role.	Volume Measure
Independent	Staff member undertakes self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme.	Volume Measure
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)	Volume Measure
Representative	Submissions include the highest quality research across all the disciplines in which an HEI is active.	CKU

Table 1: Glossary of REF 2029 Terms

PART 1.2

Institutional Policies

13. The [University's EDI \(Equality, Diversity and Inclusion\) mission and approach \[Appendix C\]](#) statement clearly sets out the institution's commitment to eradicating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all staff.
14. This Code of Practice has been developed with reference to the University's guiding principles relating to Equality and Diversity, as outlined through our EDI mission and Institutional values (Professional; Ambitious; Innovative; Inclusive) and with input from the [University Inclusion Committee](#).
15. This Code of Practice builds on and replaces the code used for the 2021 submission, taking account of relevant changes in the REF 2029 guidance.
16. The Code is designed to complement existing policies and procedures – namely, the [Academic Workload Framework, \[Appendix D\]](#) and REF29 internal scoring process [\[Appendix E\]](#), which have been subject to equality impact assessment and which comply with the Equality Act 2010.

PART 1.3

Actions since REF 2021

17. In developing this Code of Practice, the institution has considered the content of the Edinburgh Napier REF2021 CoP, alongside the outcomes of the final REF 2021 Equality Impact Assessment, conducted post submission, which broadly concluded that

practices for selection in REF2021 were fair and transparent. This was further evidenced through a zero appeals rate and a REF submission profile (in terms of protected characteristics), which closely reflected that of the overall eligible Category A staff profile.

18. Further, the University has considered the report by the REF 2021 Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) relating to good practice in REF 2021 to inform the content and implementation of this document. The EDAP report has also been used to drive positive research culture enhancements at the University.

19. Specific actions taken because of the REF 2021 EIA analysis and informed by the REF 2021 EDAP report include:

- i. **A REF 2021 post submission ‘REF-lections’ project – ‘You said, we listened’** involving targeted forums, surveys and focus groups resulting in a set of actions to enhance and improve REF process and awareness for all colleagues.
- ii. **Creation of an ‘EDI in Research’ Culture workstream** with a targeted remit to enhance equality of opportunity and outcome monitoring across our core R&I policies.
- iii. **Senior-led requests for staff profile monitoring data**, shared with the University Academic Workload Framework Steering Group. The AWF Steering Group has oversight of the workload framework and is a forum for ensuring consistency in application of the framework and sharing good practice across Schools.
- iv. **Enhancement of the remit and operation of School Inclusion Monitoring Forums**
- v. **Bespoke in-house design and delivery of an ‘EDI in Research’ training** provision, including tailored REF Code of Practice scenarios promoting diversity of research types and methods and people, professions and roles throughout the research objective setting and output scoring process. REF EDI intention briefings / declarations have also been introduced to set expectations and avoid bias creep.
- vi. **Improved guidance for conducting EIAs** and for reporting and responding to EIA findings.
- vii. **Introduction of a new ‘Research Development time’ workload category** - To support career development, fairness and transparency in workload planning, a new category has been added to the Academic Workload Framework for University Funded Research Development. This category recognises activity that builds capability in the future and ensures time allocated to this work is consistent, visible and reportable.

- viii. **Regular delivery of tailored, panel-specific REF criteria training in the period 2021 to present**, to enable all research-generating colleagues to apply the REF criteria confidently and reliably to their own research. This includes applying a quantitative score and a qualitative commentary, as well as training on effective use of 100/300 word supplementary information to promote diversity in research types and methods.
- ix. **A review of the University's REF21 internal and external scoring panel** underpinned by an evidence-based, quantitative disparity analysis using predicted scoring profile against final REF21 scoring profiles to remove scorers deemed to be unreliable / inaccurate.

PART 2: IDENTIFYING CONTRACTS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESEARCH (SRR)

DEFINITION: SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESEARCH [SRR]

Staff employed on a Teaching and Research contract (HESA ACEMPFUN 3) and where **explicit time and resources** are made available, to **actively engage in independent research**, and that it is an **expectation of their job role**.

PART 2.1

Policies and Procedures

Criteria for SRR:

20. Building on the foundations of the REF 2021 Code of Practice for identifying Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) – which is now a well-established and embedded part of annual appraisal and workload allocation, the REF 2029 Code of Practice retains the same criteria and process as used in REF 2021.
21. The University's criteria for determining significant responsibility for research is:
- All academic colleagues employed on a teaching and research contract (ACEMPFUN 3) of 0.2FTE or above, who have **received a research allowance of at least 0.2FTE per FTE (20% of target workload) per year with associated research objectives** across **R2** – Napier funded research time; **R3** – Research Degree supervision allocation and **R4** – Externally-funded research.
(Pro rata for part-time staff or minimum of 0.1FTE, whichever is greatest).
22. We believe it is important to ensure colleagues employed on part-time and fixed-term contracts can be deemed significantly responsible for research and are treated no less favourably than those on full time / permanent contracts.

23. We have therefore applied a relative interpretation of significant responsibility for research rather than an absolute workload measure. In developing these criteria, the University consulted (during REF 21) with colleagues and referred to existing policies, relating to career development of researchers, informed by the principles of the ‘Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers’, and more recently, the ‘Vitae Research Culture Framework’.

24. The process for applying the SRR criteria is underpinned by the following University policies and guidance documents:

- [Academic Workload Framework 2016](#) (updated 2019) [\[Appendix D\]](#)
AWF (developed by a joint working group of the University and academic trade union - EIS) is utilised to ensure that academic staff have balanced workloads that provide the opportunity for professional growth and are designed to deliver the academic outputs identified in school plans. Schools can agree local allowances for activities which are specific to them.

The AWF Steering Group – co-convened between the University and the academic trade union - has oversight of the framework and is a forum for ensuring consistency in application of the framework and sharing good practice across Schools. Deans of School are accountable for the local operation of the framework.

- [Annual Objective Setting Guidance](#) [\[Appendix F\]](#) – *My Contribution*
The *My Contribution* process ensures that all colleagues engage in meaningful and frequent 1:1 conversation with their people manager about performance and set personal research-related objectives.

Please note that a review of the University’s approach to annual objective setting is currently underway. As part of this review, there is a commitment to ensuring that the future approach to performance and development retains regular and meaningful dialogue between colleagues and managers, underpinned by clear and proportionate objective-setting. The approach will continue to recognise the diversity of academic and professional roles, providing clarity of expectations. Specific sections of this Code of Practice [Part 2 – Identifying contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research and Part 3 – Determining Research Independence] will be updated to reflect new systems, guidance, or timelines when this becomes available.

- [Research Workload category guidance](#) [\[Appendix G\]](#)
To support fairness and transparency in workload planning, this guidance document provides a unified overview of the research workload allocation categories used within Edinburgh Napier University’s Academic Workload

➤ **Research Development Time [R2D] Guidance [Appendix H]**

To support career development, fairness and transparency in workload planning, a new category has been added to the Academic Workload Framework for University Funded Research Development. This category recognises activity that builds capability in the future and ensures time allocated to this work is consistent, visible and reportable.

25. To identify Significant Responsibility for Research, the University utilises:

- i. **Academic Workload Framework (AWF) data as formally recorded in the Workload Allocation Model** to identify all colleagues in receipt of a research allowance of ≥ 0.2 FTE per year (pro rata for part-time staff with minimum of 0.1, whichever is greatest) in the REF census period 2025-26 and 2026-27, across research categories **R2, R3 and R4**.

R2 – Napier-funded Research Time

R3 – Research Degree Supervision Time

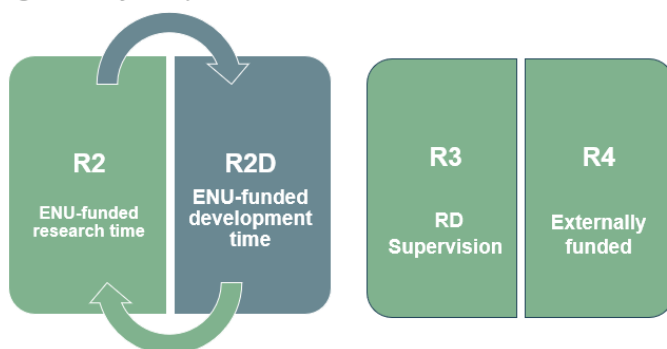
R4 – Externally-funded project time

- ii. **Personalised Annual Objective data as recorded in HR Connect – My Contribution annual review system**, categorised as R2 – Research Objective.

An objective ‘type’ drop-down field is available to select in My Contribution to distinguish between an ‘R2 - Research Objective’ and an ‘R2D - Research Development Objective’.

Academic contract: Research time in WAM

‘Significantly Responsible for Research’



If $R2 + R3 + R4 \geq 20\%$ of target WAMs = **SIGRES** = Volume Contributing

***R2D is excluded**

Figure 1: Research workload calculation for SRR



26. Utilisation of annual workload and objective setting data means that there could be fluctuation in SRR identification year-on-year, reflecting changes in personalised

objectives and workload allocations across consecutive academic census year.
e.g. An academic contracted colleague could be identified as SRR in 2025-26 but may not be identified as SRR in 2026-27, if their research objectives and associated allocation of research workload changes.

27. Academic Colleagues have access to their personalised workload record and are required to validate the accuracy of the data at year-end.
28. Colleagues are responsible for entering and maintaining accurate records of their personalised annual research objectives in ‘HR Connect - My Contribution’, aligning with the University annual appraisal timeline. [Objective setting in September and mid-year review in March].

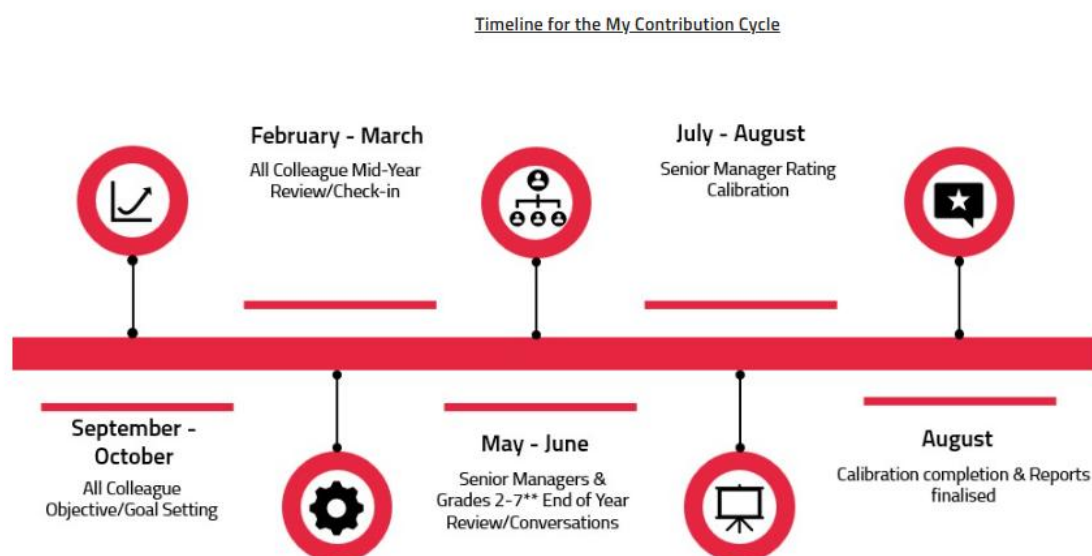


Figure 2: Timeline for My Contribution Annual Cycle

29. The process for identifying SRR is applied consistently across all Units of Assessment and subject areas and to all colleagues employed on permanent and fixed term ACCEMPFUN 3 – Teaching and Research contracts of 0.2FTE or more.
30. New starts and staff changing positions within the University will also be subject to the application of the criteria for identifying significant responsibility for research.

Decision-Making and Communication:

31. **Table 2** below depicts the process, roles and timeframes for applying the criteria for SRR identification, underpinned by the annual objective setting timeline (**Figure 2 above**).

Timeline-Annually	Activity	Role / Responsibility	System / Data / Comms
April / May	School / University R&I annual plans cascaded to staff (Key performance indicators and high-level objectives)	-Dean of School -Research and Innovation Committee <i>Decision-makers</i>	School-based comms
April / May	School-level workload guidance agreed , and ball-park apportionment of Napier-funded research time confirmed.	-Dean of School -School Associate Dean R&I -School R&I Committee <i>Decision-makers</i>	School-based comms
September	Annual My Contribution meeting occurs: Used to set and record individual's objectives and agree a corresponding allocation of research (R2) or research development (R2D) time. This is based on expectation of role, informed by proven capability to deliver on research objectives.	Academic Colleague and People Manager	<i>My Contribution</i> appraisal system
October	R2 research and R2D research development allocations entered to Workload Allocation Model system	Associate Dean R&I	WAM
Live – Nightly feed	R3 research degree supervision and R4 externally funded grant time imported to Workload Allocation Model System from Worktribe (Institutional Research Management system)	Automated	Worktribe (RIMS) to WAM
March	Annual mid-year objective review meeting: Used to adjust an individual's objectives and agree a corresponding allocation of research	Academic Colleague and People Manager	MyContribution system

	(R2) or research development (R2D) time		
April	Adjusted R2 research and R2D research development allocations entered to Workload Allocation Model system	Associate Dean R&I	WAM
August	Workload record validation / sign off	Dean of School and Academic Colleague	WAM
August	Workload calculation [R2 + R3 + R4] SRR = Yes	REF Manager	WAM
September	SRR Yes / No contract status submitted to HESA	REF Manager People Team Data and Systems	HESA Staff Data

Table 2: Decision-making and Communication

PART 2.2

Staff, Committees and Training

A full list of staff, committees and training provisions associated with the SRR component of the REF Code of Practice is available in **Table 3 below**.

Table 3: Staff, Committees and Training associated with REF29 CoP – Identifying SRR

DM = Decision-maker

ADV = Advisory

	SRR	EDI PROVISION	CONSTITUTION	Terms of Reference / Role Descriptor available?
Academic Board	DM Approves CoP (possibly with delegation to R&IC)	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee Sub-committee of Academic Board	DM - Approves CoP (if delegated) - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University REF	DM - Develops CoP criteria. - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics	YES

Steering Group			Leadership Prof Services Disciplinary spread	
Dean of School	DM - Formulates School R&I plan – High-level research objectives - Oversees research objectives and approves allocation of time. - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Manages workload appeals	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
School Associate Dean R&I	DM - Formulates School R&I plan – High-level research objectives - Oversees research objectives and approves allocation of time. - Ensure consistent application of workload guidance. - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Manages workload appeals. - Provides discipline-specific guidance on research objective setting. - Oversees workload disputes / appeals.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
Academic Workload Framework Group	ADV - Oversees consistency in workload allocation framework. - Receives data on SRR. - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Considers / advises on workload appeals.	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: -Leadership -Recognised Trade Union -REF Team -Prof Services	YES
University Inclusion Committee / School Inclusion Monitoring Groups	ADV - Receives data on SRR. - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: -Leadership -Head of Inclusion - Inclusion Leads -Prof Services	YES
School R&I Committee	ADV - Receives data on SRR - Sense-checks / develops School research plan / research objectives	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
UoA Leader Group	ADV Receives data on SRR	Astute Inclusion Essentials		YES

Staff member - Academic	ADV Negotiates personalised Research or Research Development objectives and agrees commensurate allocation of time.	Astute Inclusion Essentials		
People Manager	ADV Negotiates reportee objectives and agrees commensurate allocation of time.	Astute Inclusion Essentials		

PART 2.3

Appeals

32. The University operates an established appeals process for disputes concerning workload allocation and categorisation.
33. The process is managed locally at School level with oversight from the Associate Dean, Research and Innovation.
34. In the first instance, this involves local, informal appeal and resolution achieved through effective discussions between the people manager and colleague to negotiate realistic and achievable objectives commensurate to workload allocation and ability.
35. If agreement cannot be reached locally, the dispute is escalated to the Associate Dean, Research and Innovation and/or Dean of School for resolution using discipline-specific, evidence-based information on research objectives, track record and research expectations in the context of the School strategy / targets.
36. The University's recognised Academic Trade Union – EIS can support staff to ensure that the Academic Workload Framework (2016) is operating as intended regarding fairness, consistency, transparency and comparability.

PART 2.4

Equality Impact Assessment

37. An EIA has been conducted and used to support the University's decision to retain the REF 2021 criteria for identifying Significant Responsibility for Research.
38. The EIA raises potential issues and proposed actions to mitigate against inequality of opportunity, which could occur due to flexibility in how Schools allocate research workload.
39. Priority actions include:

- Regular monitoring and reporting of Research workload category allocations via the Academic Workload Steering Group, evidenced by workload data on R2 and R2D distributions
- Tailored 'EDI in Research' training delivered to all Deans and Associate Deans, Research and Innovation, to enhance equitable application of academic workload
- Heightened communications to the academic population to raise awareness of the School plans, AWF and R2/R2D workload guidance, empowering academics to negotiate realistic workload allocation and work collegiately in the distribution of workload across the School
- Transparency in workload allocation including visibility of WAM data across each School
- Analysis of volume-contributing (contracts classified as SRR or Independent) and non-volume contributing REF population by protected characteristic profile across REF census years 2025-26 and 2026-27
- Heightened communications to explain REF de-coupling and empower staff to understand the new implications of volume measure and de-coupling.

PART 3: DETERMINING RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE

PART 3.1

Policies and Procedures

DEFINITION: RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE

A 'research only' contract [HESA ACCEMPFUN 2] is considered to demonstrate research independence if the staff member **undertakes self-directed research**, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme.

40. Role descriptors for colleagues appointed at **Grade 6 – Senior Research Fellow** and **Grade 7 – Principal Research Fellow** at Edinburgh Napier University have an expectation that individuals **may** be conducting self-directed research.
41. Research colleagues appointed below this level at Grade 4 - Research Assistant and Grade 5 – Research Fellow are not expected to conduct independent or self-directed research and thus would not be considered independent.
42. Building on the foundations of the REF 2021 Code of Practice and informed by the REF 2029 guidance for identifying Research Independence, the REF 2029 Code of Practice

retains the same criteria and process as used in REF 2021.

The University's criteria for determining research independence is:

1. Leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on a substantial externally funded research project

or

2. Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement

or

3. Leading a research group or substantial or specialised research work package*

*It is the responsibility of the School Associate Dean, Research and Innovation to determine and communicate what constitutes a substantive externally funded research project or research work package, based on their professional and discipline-specific judgement and on the School's disciplinary norms.

43. Any new or promoted research contracted colleagues appointed at Grade 6 or 7 during the REF census period will also be subject to application of the above criteria to determine their status as an independent researcher.

Decision-Making and Communication:

44. **Table 4** below depicts the process, roles and timeframes for applying the criteria for Research Independence, underpinned by the annual objective setting conversation and evidenced using data recorded in the University's Research Information management system – Worktribe, relating to externally funded research, fellowship status or research leadership activities.
45. Colleagues are responsible for entering and maintaining accurate records of their personalised annual research objectives in 'HR Connect - My Contribution', aligning with the University annual appraisal timeline. [*Objective setting in September and mid-year review in March*] and for maintaining accurate person profile and project information within Worktribe. This includes details of fellowships and contributions to externally funded projects.
46. As highlighted in Table 4 – mechanisms for assurance of data quality and/ or opportunities to flag inaccuracies in relation to records of funded research; fellowships or substantive work packages is addressed within the annual appraisal My Contribution meeting between the colleague and people manager, where by the colleague is invited to validate the information recorded in Worktribe and mutually agreeing objectives for

the year ahead.

Timeline- Annually	Activity	Role / Responsibility	System / Data / Comms
April /May	School / University R&I annual plans agreed and cascaded to colleagues (Outlining Key Performance Indicators and high-level research objectives)	-Dean of School / School Associate Dean R&I -Research and Innovation Committee <i>Decision-makers</i>	School-based comms
September	Worktribe extraction Evidence of externally funded research or Research fellowship extracted from personal Worktribe profile for validation / discussion with colleague member at forthcoming My Contribution meeting.	School Associate Dean R&I	Worktribe Staff Profile / Projects
September	Annual My Contribution meeting occurs: Used to set and record individual's objectives including expectation of independence by one of the above means. This is based on expectation of role, informed by proven capability to deliver on independent, self-directed research objectives.	Researcher and People Manager	MyContribution appraisal system
March	Annual mid-year objective review meeting: Used to adjust an individual's objectives if deemed necessary.	Academic Colleague and People Manager	MyContribution system
September	RESEARCH ASSISTANT Yes / No contract status submitted to HESA.	REF Manager People Team Data and Systems	HESA Staff Data

	Where the contract is deemed NOT to be independent it will be returned in the HESA data field as 'RESAST' = 1 - Research Assistant. - Where the contract is deemed to be independent it will be returned as 'RESAST' = 0 - Not a Research Assistant and will qualify as REFQUALCON and be included in the volume measure.		
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Table 4: Decision-making and Communication – Research Independence

PART 3.2

Staff, Committees and Training

47. A full list of staff, committees and training provisions associated with the Research Independence component of the REF Code of Practice is available in **Table 5 below**.

Table 5: Staff, Committees and Training associated with REF29 CoP – Determining Research Independence

DM = Decision-maker

ADV = Advisory

	RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE	EDI PROVISION	CONSTITUTION	Link to Terms of Reference / Job Description
Academic Board	DM Approves CoP (or delegates to R&IC)	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee Sub-committee of Academic Board	DM - Approves CoP (if delegated) - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Oversees appointment and promotions framework – Academic and Research expectations by grade	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University REF Steering Group	DM - Develops CoP criteria. - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Leadership	YES

	Oversees implementation of CoP.		Prof Services Disciplinary spread	
Dean of School	DM - Oversees research objective setting. - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
School Associate Dean R&I	DM - Oversees research objective setting for School. - Determines and communicates what constitutes a substantive externally funded research project or research work package, based on their professional and discipline-specific judgement and on the Schools' disciplinary norms. - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Provides discipline-specific guidance on research objective setting.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
University Inclusion Committee / School Inclusion Monitoring Groups	ADV - Receives data on Research Independence. - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: -Leadership -Head of Inclusion - Inclusion Leads -Prof Services	YES
School R&I Committee	ADV - Receives data on Research Independence - Sense-checks what constitutes a substantive externally funded research project or research work package, based on discipline-specific judgement and on the Schools' disciplinary norms.	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
UoA Leader Group	ADV Receives data on Research Independence	Astute Inclusion Essentials		YES

Colleague - Research	ADV Develops personalised research objectives and validates evidence of independence	Astute Inclusion Essentials		
People Manager	ADV Agrees staff objectives and validates evidence of independence.	Astute Inclusion Essentials		

PART 3.3

Appeals

48. The University operates an established appeals process for disputes concerning personalised objective setting and for validating measure of independence.
49. The process is managed locally at School level as part of the annual appraisal and performance management cycle, and with oversight from the Associate Dean, Research and Innovation.
50. In the first instance, this involves local, informal appeal and resolution achieved through effective discussions between the people manager and colleague to negotiate realistic and achievable research objectives commensurate to capability.
51. If agreement cannot be reached locally, the dispute is escalated to the Associate Dean, Research and Innovation and/or Dean of School for resolution using discipline-specific, evidence-based information on research objectives, track record and research expectations in the context of the School strategy / targets.
52. Colleagues employed on Research-only contracts are encouraged to review and maintain accuracy in their Worktribe profile including details of self-directed research activities and to record these appropriately in the My Contribution Objective record.

PART 3.4

Equality Impact Assessment

53. An EIA has been conducted and used to support the University's decision to retain the REF 2021 criteria for identifying Research Independence.
54. The EIA raises potential issues and proposed actions to mitigate against inequality in opportunity, which could occur due to flexibility in how Schools determine and apply the criteria for what constitutes a 'substantive externally funded research project or research work package', based on a potential for bias creep of professional and discipline-specific judgement or Schools' disciplinary norms.

55. Priority actions include:

- Regular monitoring and reporting of the volume-contributing (contracts classified as Independent) and non-volume contributing REF population protected characteristic profile across REF census years 2025-26 and 2026-27
- Tailored 'EDI in Research' training delivered to all Deans and Associate Deans, Research and Innovation, to enhance equitable application of independence measures.
- Heightened communications to the research-only population to raise awareness of the School R&I plans and independence criteria
- Heightened communications to explain REF de-coupling and to empower colleagues to understand the new implications of volume-contributing and non-volume-contributing principles
- Continued promotion and implementation of the Vitae Concordat to support career development of researchers' action plans – encouraging five-year personal development plans and career trajectory planning to enable colleagues to become 'independent in research'.

PART 4: ALLOCATING ELIGIBLE CONTRACTS TO UOAs

DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE CONTRACTS:

Eligible contracts are those that fulfil all the following criteria:

- a. The contract belongs to a staff member whose **primary employment function is to undertake either 'teaching and research' (ACEMPFUN 3) or 'research only' (ACEMPFUN 2) activities**, as recorded in the HESA Staff record ACEMPFUN field.
- b. Payroll and REF period: **the staff member is on the payroll** of the submitting institution within the REF period (i.e., **academic year 2025-26 to 2026-27** for the relevant HESA Staff record collections).

Two tests determine if an eligible contract qualifies for inclusion in the volume measure.

Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR): for 'teaching and research' contracts.

Research Independence (RI): for 'research only' contracts.

PART 4.1:

Policies and Procedures

56. According to REF 2029 Volume Measure Guidance, research activity for the eligible contract pool must be **principally associated with one of the 34 Units of Assessment**

(UoA).

57. The University has considered the association of contracts to UoAs and has determined that whilst often related, HESA cost centres do not align exactly to UoAs.
58. As such, the allocation of contracts to UoAs will be based on a logical and rationale mapping of the University's established research infrastructures – **namely research group and centres**, mapped against the REF 2029 sub-panel titles, taxonomies and descriptors. [Awaiting publication]
59. It is anticipated that for most groups / centres this will result in a clear and logical principal UOA alignment in census years 2025-26 and 2026-27, applied consistently and ratified by the REF Steering Group.
60. However, in instances where a contract could legitimately and rationally align to multiple UoA descriptors, the principal alignment will be collaboratively decided using **quantitative data on critical mass and qualitative information** involving input from:
- The Associate Dean, Research and Innovation, in the associated School/s;
 - The Head of Subject – acting on behalf of colleagues in the group;
 - The UoA leader/s.
61. A 'UoA alignment decision-making pro-forma template' will be developed and used to record consistency in the generation and application of the quantitative and qualitative evidence indicators. This will include qualitative prompts to promote consideration of research and people diversity.
62. Final decisions on UoA contract alignment will be formally ratified and minuted at the REF Steering Group.

PART 4.2

Decision-Making and Communication

63. **Figure 3** below depicts the process, roles and timeframes for applying the criteria for contract UoA alignment.

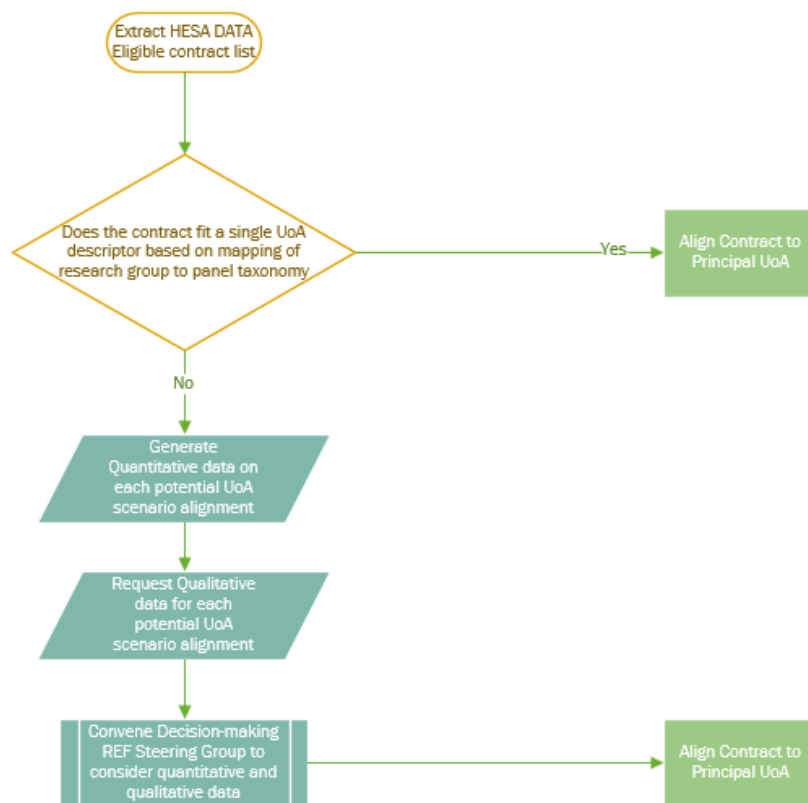


Figure 3: Contract alignment to principle UoA

64. Please note that the University **may** consider making amendments to the 2025-26 academic year HESA submission. Further information on this will be updated when the amendment process has been agreed and communicated by the UK funding bodies, and only where there is a legitimate and defensible case to do so.

PART 4.3

Staff, Committees and Training

65. A full list of staff, committees and training provisions associated with the contract UoA alignment component of the REF Code of Practice is available in **Table 6 below**.

Table 6: Staff, Committees and Training associated with REF29 CoP – Aligning contracts to UOAs

DM = Decision-maker

ADV = Advisory

	CONTRACT TO UOA ALIGNMENT	EDI PROVISION	CONSTITUTION	Link to Terms of Reference / Job Description
Academic Board	DM Approves CoP (possibly delegated to R&IC)	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership	YES

			Early Career Prof Services	
University Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee Sub-committee of Academic Board	DM - Approves CoP (if delegated). - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Approves research infrastructure applications –new research centres / groups	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University REF Steering Group	DM - Develops CoP criteria. - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Oversees implementation of CoP. - Receives quantitative data and qualitative data on UoA contract alignment and makes final decision on principal UoA alignment.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Leadership Prof Services Disciplinary spread	YES
Dean of School	DM Provides qualitative data on UoA alignment	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
School Associate Dean R&I	DM - Provides qualitative data on UoA alignment - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
University Inclusion Committee / School Inclusion Monitoring Groups	ADV Receives / analyses EIAs.	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: -Leadership -Head of Inclusion - Inclusion Leads -Prof Services	YES
School R&I Committee	ADV Receives data on UoA alignment and volume measure	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
UoA Leader Group	ADV Provides qualitative data on UoA alignment	Astute Inclusion Essentials		YES

Head of Subject / Colleagues	Provides qualitative data on UoA alignment, informed by colleagues.	Astute Inclusion Essentials		YES
REF Manager / REF Team	Generates quantitative indicators on critical mass / UoA scenario modelling	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES

PART 4.4

Equality Impact Assessment

66. An EIA has been conducted and used to support the University's decision to utilise established research infrastructures as the basis for aligning contracts to a principal UoA.

67. The EIA raises potential issues and proposed actions to mitigate against inequality of opportunity, which could occur due to organisational structure factors or rigid interpretations of research areas within research groups or centres.

68. Priority actions include:

- Regular monitoring and reporting of staff diversity profiling data across UoAs or at aggregated at Main panel level including contractual information relating to part time or fixed term contracts
- Heightened communications to explain REF de-coupling and to promote submission of interdisciplinary research to all potential eligible UoAs
- Heightened communications to promote the interdisciplinary nature of the University research centres and groups
- Consistent application of the qualitative and quantitative decision-making data applied against the panel taxonomies and descriptors

PART 5: SELECTING OUTPUTS

PART 5.1

Policies, Procedures and Responsible Research Assessment

69. The University has a well-established and embedded output scoring process, which has continued, annually since REF21.

70. Full detail of the REF 29 scoring process is available to access [\[Appendix E\]](#) and is premised on the REF 2021 supplementary panel criteria, underpinned by human peer review conducted by a panel of expert reviewers, selected on the basis of pre-requisite criteria, operating under responsible research assessment practices. The process utilises a consistent 12-point scoring scale, with scoring data recorded in consistent

proforma templates and entered to the Worktribe REF Module.

71. This process consists of a 4-stage scoring approach including:

Stage 1: Author self-identification and self-scoring

Recognising that this process is reliant on self-identification of research outputs by authors, there could be specific individuals or groups of individuals who do not engage with the process or undervalue the quality or eligibility of their outputs.

To mitigate this, the University will:

- a. Send wide-ranging and regular communications to target all output generating staff (including attempts to target specific groups e.g. research technicians or ECAs)
- b. Reconcile the Worktribe REF-eligible output repository with the respondent survey and proactively target non-responders
- c. Identify all non-responders and conduct targeted discussion about REF output identification at MyContribution meetings, with this population
- d. Ensure timeline avoids periods of high leave or heavy workload.

Stage 2: Internal panel scoring (2 independent scores)

Stage 3: External scoring

Stage 4: Moderation and Final Score assigned

Stage 5: Output Selection for final submission to REF 29

72. Scoring data, including the final moderated scores are recorded in the University's Research Information Management System – Worktribe REF module, and are ultimately used to model an optimised selection variation, to achieve the highest quality UoA selection, whilst adhering to rules on representation and maximum substantive links [as detailed in sections p/g 84 and 111].

73. This could result in outputs of higher quality being replaced by lower scored outputs in the final selection to ensure adherence to representation principles.

74. The selection stage involves input from an internal data & systems analyst to ensure accuracy in the data. REF Team members and UoA leaders are responsible for overseeing this stage of the process, with final decisions on output selection being signed off by the Associate Dean Research and Innovation and ultimately by the University REF Steering group, alongside the validation of representation template.

75. Selection and allocation of interdisciplinary outputs to multiple Units of Assessment will be formalised upon the publication of detailed panel criteria in Autumn 2026.

76. All scorers have undergone bespoke REF output quality assessment training, adapted to the main panel supplementary criteria – REF 21, including responsible assessment practices and are required to read and acknowledge a responsible assessment briefing [\[Appendix I\]](#) prior to commencing scoring.
77. All colleagues involved in output selection decision making are mandated to attend the University’s bespoke, in-house ‘EDI in Research’ training provision which includes worked scenarios on responsible output assessment, output diversity, and unconscious bias.

Statement on use of Artificial Intelligence

78. The use of AI and other digital technologies in scoring and peer review is strictly prohibited during the self, internal and external scoring stages. Scoring should be based on human peer review conducted by a panel of expert reviewers, selected on the basis of pre-requisite criteria as documented in the University’s REF scoring process document.
79. Provided that analyses are used to **inform** rather than determine decisions, AI and other digital technologies **may** be used at Moderation stage to support human peer review.
80. Where this is the case, usage will be fully documented by the REF Team and formally reviewed by the REF Steering Group as part of institutional REF audit trails.
81. Moderation panel members must interpret results with explicit human checks for bias or misrepresentation, and use of AI will only be permitted where Moderation panel leaders (UoA leads) have been trained in responsible research assessment as part of the University’s bespoke ‘EDI in research’ training provision, which has been expanded to include principles for AI use in REF.
82. Where appropriate, the use of AI in wider REF preparations, including use of AI in REF narrative sections or to assist with REF project and data management processes may be used, always subject to human validation, interpretation and oversight.
83. Where this is the case, it will be fully documented by the author, UoA lead or REF Team.

Prohibited uses of AI and other digital technologies

84. The following uses of AI and other digital technologies are strictly prohibited to safeguard research integrity, uphold human accountability and prevent misuse that could compromise the quality, fairness or credibility of REF submissions.

- Using AI or digital technologies to make final judgements about research quality, disciplinary fit or to select material for submission solely on the basis of automated recommendations or scoring.
- Drafting narrative content without human validation, interpretation and oversight.
- Fabricating or inventing references, data, evidence or quotations.
- Processing confidential, sensitive or personal data on unsecured or publicly accessible platforms.
- Using problematic citation-based metrics (e.g. Journal Impact Factors, H-indices) as the primary basis for training or validating models intended to assess research quality. These metrics are widely criticised for being reductive, discipline-biased and incompatible with responsible research assessment principles. Where citation-based indicators are used, they must be field-normalised, contextually interpreted and never treated as proxies for research quality.

Identifying substantive link to output

DEFINITION: SUBSTANTIVE LINK

A substantive link **describes the relationship between Edinburgh Napier University and research**, submitted in the form of an output.

A substantive link must be evidenced through an **eligible employment relationship** with an author (or equivalent) who has made a significant research contribution to the output.

Eligible employment relationships are defined as:

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

85. The University uses a Research Information Management System - Worktribe Output repository as the primary database for all outputs.

86. The University’s approach to identifying eligible outputs with a substantive link will be **principally reliant on a sophisticated Worktribe coding report, automatically linking publication date to author employment records.**

[In development].

87. Recognising potential shortfalls in the automated reporting, the University will also actively request that **staff self-identify outputs to be considered for REF submission**, using all staff communication channels and self-identification mechanisms. These outputs will be reconciled with the Worktribe data, resulting in an accurate ‘eligible output pool’.
88. To identify substantive links to outputs generated by former staff, the University will utilise HR employment records to generate a list of all eligible leavers within the REF period and reconcile this list with output publication dates in the Worktribe output repository; via ORCID research records (a persistent identifier (PID) for individuals to use as they engage in research), and using local intelligence and continued working relationships.
89. We recognise that the introduction of decoupling and substantive link means that outputs authored by non-volume contributing staff are now eligible for submission.
90. At Edinburgh Napier this could include staff in Professional Service roles [ACCEMPFUN 4] or other research-active roles who are less accustomed with using Worktribe or depositing outputs.
91. As such, a targeted communication drive aimed at non-volume contributing staff and those in Professional Services roles will be implemented to ensure these outputs are captured and entered Worktribe.
92. For clarity and transparency, a role with an ‘expectation of research activity’ is not restricted by profession and may include:
- ✓ Academic Roles (T&R contract)
 - ✓ Research Roles (R contract)
 - ✓ **SOME** Research Technician Roles - with explicit expectation of research activity within the job role
 - ✓ **SOME** Prof Service – with explicit expectation of research activity within the job role
93. The University REF Team is working with the People Team – Reward and Recognition Partner to identify all roles with an explicit expectation of research activity according to the HERA job evaluation scheme.

Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

94. The following section details the University’s process for submitting outputs from former staff, including those outputs made publicly available whilst the staff member

was employed at Edinburgh Napier, and those outputs published within an eligible timeframe* after the employee left the University.

[Typically this is a two year allowable timeframe for traditional outputs and five years for long-form outputs].

For Outputs first made publicly available when former employee was in-post at Edinburgh Napier:

95. For all eligible outputs where the former staff member was employed at Napier on the date that an output was first made publicly available, we may submit this output without consent of the author.

96. This approach is premised on the REF principle of aligning the assessment with institutional level funding allocation and providing appropriate recognition for research enabled by the institution.

For Outputs first made publicly available after the contract end date and where the employee left under:

➤ **Compulsory redundancy**

We will not submit these outputs

➤ **Voluntary redundancy**

We may submit these outputs with author consent

➤ **Retirement or personal reasons**

We may submit these outputs with author consent

➤ **End of fixed-term contract**

We may submit these outputs with author consent

97. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted on this approach – see section [5.3 below](#).

Assigning outputs to UOAs, including interdisciplinary research

98. The allocation of outputs to UoAs will be based on a logical and rationale mapping of the output sub-discipline / topic mapped against the REF 2029 sub-panel titles, taxonomies and descriptors. [Awaiting publication]

99. It is anticipated that for most outputs this will result in a clear and logical principal UoA alignment applied consistently and ratified at the level of Unit of Assessment REF Scoring and Moderation panels. This is principally driven by output tagging functionality

as recoded in Worktribe and linked to author UoA alignment data.

100. For outputs of an interdisciplinary nature or those on the boundaries of panel descriptors, and as part of the output self-identification process, staff are invited to select multiple UoAs to which the output could fit in order that it can be progressed for scoring under multiple internal panels.
101. Additionally, external scorers and moderation panel members are explicitly asked to comment on the 'fit' of the output to the UoA and to add recommendations for cross-referral to another panel. In such instances, attempts will be made to consider and score the output under another UoA scoring panel lens.
102. The Worktribe REF module is enabled to record scores for multiple UoAs, allowing different scores to be recorded for an output.
103. Final selection of outputs will be underpinned by the final score associated with the unit – recognising that outputs can score differently under different unit lenses. This could mean that an output is ultimately included in final selection for one unit, whilst excluded in another, based on an optimised quality selection for the unit.

Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

104. As part of the University's established REF scoring process, all research-engaged colleagues are invited to attend bespoke REF output quality training, utilising REF21 main panel supplementary output criteria. This is in recognition that sub-panels operate under a different set of criteria and apply the assessment criteria in different ways.
105. To promote self-identification of diverse research types. e.g. non-traditional outputs where the research process or research question requires further explanation, colleagues are invited to provide a qualitative statement for originality, significance and rigour alongside a quantitative score.
106. All communications, FAQs and training provisions refer explicitly to and link to the [REF 21 Annex K glossary of output types \[Appendix J\]](#)
107. The University's responsible research assessment declaration (read and acknowledged by all scorers) includes information about the approach to outputs produced in languages other than English, by supporting translation or referring to specialist advisers fluent in the language.
[This includes; Welsh and British Sign Language (BSL) Irish, Irish Sign Language, Ulster Scots, Scottish Gaelic, and Scots and other languages].

108. No output type or outlet is privileged over another, and all output types are included in the automated Worktribe output identification coding, including those produced in different languages. Colleagues are invited to self-rate all outputs, including those produced in languages other than English.
109. A member of the University REF team observes all moderation panels and is authorised to challenge on responsible and inclusive assessment.
110. To promote the submission of non-traditional / creative practice / multi-component outputs, the University has established a creative practice portfolio working group and has invested in the creation of a bespoke portfolio template to enable staff to present this work coherently to the scoring panel.
111. Scoring of multi-component and creative practice outputs is iterative and repeated over the REF cycle in recognition that the quality of these outputs can 'develop' or 'change' with the addition of contextual information.

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

REPRESENTATIVE DEFINITION: The expectation is that submissions include the highest quality research across all the disciplines in which an HEI is active. Submissions are required to represent the subject range and diversity of research activities undertaken during the REF 2029 cycle.

A submitting Unit comprises the collection of subject structures, research groups and research activity in an HEI, that collectively contribute to all or part of the total institutional submission to a UoA.

112. The University has considered mechanisms by which to ensure that submitted outputs are reflective of the research strategies and structures, the diversity of research outputs, and contributions, collaborations and partnerships of the submitting unit over the REF period and has concluded that this should be underpinned by:
Achieving an auditable spread of the highest quality outputs from all of the University's research sub-disciplines as characterised through our established research infrastructures – **namely research group and centres**, mapped logically against the REF 2029 sub-panel titles, taxonomies and descriptors. [Awaiting publication]
113. Audit mechanisms will be premised on use of systemised tagging functionality associated with each output, aligning the primary research group, centre or area with the REF UoA panel taxonomy.

114. Final output selections will be reconciled against the SPRE narrative statement in which the academic framing of the unit will be clearly described.
115. Prior to final submission, the University's REF Steering group will seek validation from the Associate Dean, Research and Innovation and Heads of Subject associated with each UoA, that the SPRE narrative is a true reflection of the discrete subject structures, research groups and/or areas of specialised academic endeavour over the REF period and will authenticate that the output selection is representative.
116. To support this stage of the process; where possible or if enabled by via the REF submission system, the University will attempt to generate 'representativeness' unit level data replicating that expected to be received by the REF panels.
117. A 'Representative submission sign off form' will be developed and used to consistently record this stage of validation for all submitting units. This will include qualitative prompts to promote consideration of research and people diversity.

Maximum occurrence of a single substantive link

DEFINITION OF MAXIMUM OCCURRENCE:

The expectation is that no more than 5 outputs are associated with a single substantive link within a submission at UoA level.

This is intended to support HEIs and to ensure that submissions are representative of the full range of research within the submitting unit and are not unfairly disproportionate.

Where this number is exceeded, the submitting unit should explain the rationale within the statement of representation.

118. The University has considered the REF guidance relating to maximum occurrences and has agreed that **only under exceptional circumstances** would we seek to exceed the association of 5 substantive links.
119. Further information about exceptional circumstances will be updated here, upon publication of panel guidance from the UK funding bodies in which we expect to receive example scenarios.
120. It is anticipated that this might include instances where an author has received an exceptionally and unusually high allocation of research time with commensurate research objectives or where the productivity of the unit has been adversely affected by an unusual circumstance.

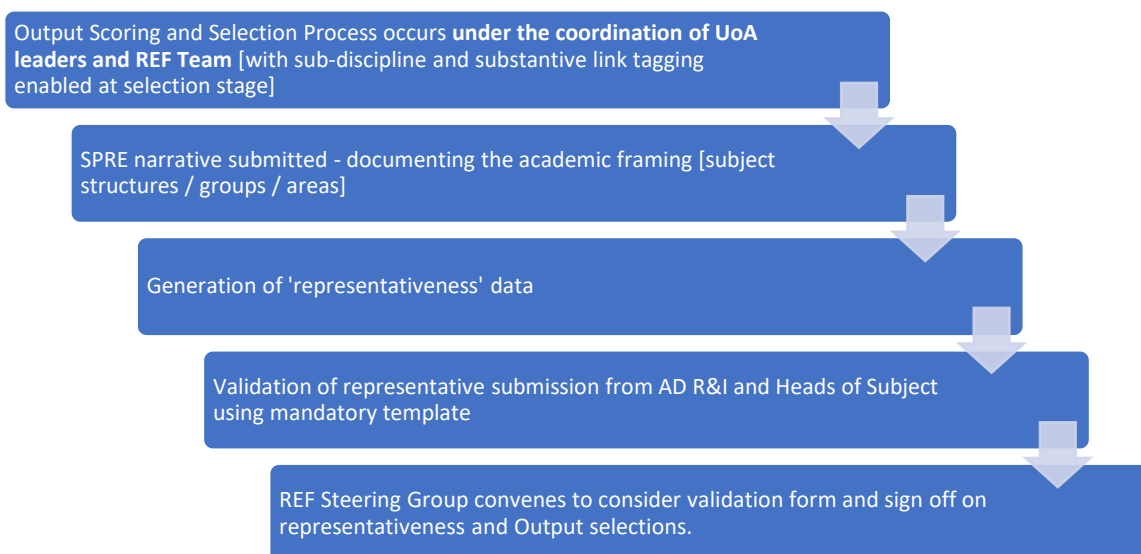


Figure 4: Overview of output selection process

PART 5.2 Staff, Committees and Training

121. A full list of staff, committees and training provisions associated with the Output selection component of the REF Code of Practice is available in **Table 7 below**.

Table 7: Staff, Committees and Training associated with REF29 CoP – Output selection

DM = Decision-maker

ADV = Advisory

	OUTPUT SELECTION	EDI PROVISION	CONSTITUTION	Link to Terms of Reference / Job Description
Academic Board	DM Approves CoP (possibly delegated to R&I)	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee Sub-committee of Academic Board	DM - Approves CoP (possibly with delegated authority). - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Approves research infrastructure applications –new research centres / groups	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Researchers Leadership Early Career Prof Services	YES
University REF Steering Group	DM - Develops CoP criteria. - Receives / analyses EIAs.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)	Representation from: Academics Leadership	YES

	- Oversees implementation of CoP. - Seeks validation of representativeness. - Oversees use of AI / digital technologies and reviews usage records. - Agrees final output selections.		Prof Services Disciplinary spread	
Dean of School	ADV Provides assurance of representativeness.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
School Associate Dean R&I	DM - Provides assurance of representativeness. - Receives / analyses EIAs. - Agrees final output selections.	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES
University Inclusion Committee / School Inclusion Monitoring Groups	ADV Receives / analyses EIAs.	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: -Leadership -Head of Inclusion - Inclusion Leads -Prof Services	YES
School R&I Committee	ADV Receives data on output selection and representativeness	Astute Inclusion Essentials	Representation from: -Academics -Researchers -Leadership -Early Career -Prof Services	YES
UoA Leader Group	ADV - Provides assurance of representativeness - Oversees output scoring and selection modelling	Astute Inclusion Essentials		YES
Head of Subject / Staff	ADV Provides assurance of representativeness	Astute Inclusion Essentials		YES
REF Manager / REF Team	ADV - Oversees consistency in scoring process and challenges bias / responsible assessment - Generates output records from Worktribe including optimised output	Bespoke REF EDI training (in-house tailored to CoP)		YES

	selection models using final scores.			
Scoring / Moderation panels	DM Provides / agrees scores	Bespoke REF output quality training incl. responsible assessment. Responsible assessment declaration.		YES

PART 5.3

Equality Impact Assessment

122. An EIA has been conducted and used to enhance the output selection process [\[Appendix B2\]](#).
123. The EIA raises potential issues and proposed actions to mitigate against inequality in opportunity, which could occur due to the subjective nature of output scoring; rigid interpretations of sub-disciplines or types; lack of engagement at self-identification stage and potential inconsistencies in how we contact former staff to seek consent to submit outputs.
124. Priority actions include:
- Proactive steps to encourage engagement with self-identification of outputs and targeted communication with non-engagers or staff who may underestimate quality or eligibility
 - Continued training provision for all output scorers covering responsible assessment, principles for AI use and consistent application of the REF supplementary criteria
 - Internal calibration exercises to align scoring / correct inflation
 - Consistent use of the REF 2029 UoA panel taxonomies for sub-discipline identification and application
 - Heightened and transparent communication about REF 2029 principles relating to representativeness - empowering staff and Heads of Subject to review and challenge the final submission
 - Heightened and transparent communication about output types and sub-disciplines- empowering staff and Heads of Subject to review and challenge the

final submission

- Sensitive and well-considered communication approaches – with input from REF team - to manage consent from former staff
- An attempt to generate ‘representativeness’ unit level data prior to submission replicating that received by the REF panels

PART 6: SELECTING IMPACT CASE STUDIES

125. Whilst there is no explicit requirement from the four UK funding bodies to document the University process for selection of impact case studies, the University considers it appropriate to include this section within the Code of Practice, to promote fairness, consistency and transparency.

126. REF impact case study selection consists of a staged approach:

Stage 1: Self-identification [Jan 2026- March 2026]

Coordinated using the University’s Worktribe Impact module.

Recognising that this process is reliant on self-identification of impact, there could be specific individuals or groups of individuals who do not engage with the process or do not declare impacts for consideration.

To mitigate this, the University will:

- a. Send wide-ranging and regular communications to target all impact-generating staff (including attempts to target specific groups e.g. research technicians or ECRs)
- b. Reconcile historic impact databases / surveys / newsletters and proactively target non-responders or those with promising ‘impact notebook’ entries in Worktribe
- c. Involve Impact Leads, UoA leads and ADRIIs to promote local communications and engagement with process via local forums including MyContribution meetings
- d. Ensure timeline avoids periods of high leave or heavy workload.

Stage 2: Eligibility evaluation and ranking

All impact case studies recorded in the Impact Module will be reviewed for eligibility criteria by the REF Impact Team, applying a preliminary traffic light status based on consistent evaluation (using a rubric) of:

- Eligibility of underpinning research according to the REF definition
- Maturity of impact – on a scale of *‘embryonic’* to *‘realised’*
- Availability of, or plans for corroboration

Stage 2 ranking will be used to prioritise support and to inform recommendations to schools for prioritisation of workload allocation.

Stage 3: Feedback and development

This stage of the process involves issuing all ICS authors with consistent feedback, using a pro-forma template, providing equality of opportunity to strengthen and develop the narrative prior to stage 4.

Stage 4: Quality Assessment and Ranking (Winter 2027)

This stage of the process involves a quality assessment using consistently applied REF scoring criteria, applied by the University Head of Research Impact and one other independent peer.

Stage 5: Moderation/ selection panel scoring (date tbc)

At final selection stage, a moderation panel, comprising University Head of Research impact; one independent peer/ Impact Lead; UoA lead and independent external, will convene to select the highest quality case studies adhering to the UoA volume quota.

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted [\[Appendix B3\]](#) to avoid inequality of opportunity which could occur during the impact identification and scoring process.

Priority actions include:

- a. Transparent and consistent scoring and selection criteria underpinned by the REF definitions of ‘Reach’, ‘Significance’ ‘Corroboration’
(Source REF2021 panel criteria and working methods)
- b. A consistently applied and robust quantitative scoring matrix for assessing ‘Reach’ / ‘Significance’ / ‘Eligibility of underpinning research’ / ‘Corroboration’ and ‘Fit to panel descriptor’ with a qualitative rationale provided for all scores.

- c. An Inclusive and wide-reaching comms plan, including
School-level comms familiar to staff
University level comms familiar to staff
- d. Unrestricted access to REF29 Engagement & Impact criteria and guidance via an accessible platform – SharePoint site
- e. Transparent and consistent feedback template issued to all potential ICS authors to provide equal opportunity for narrative enhancement
- f. Transparent and well-publicised timelines
- g. Transparent and auditable recommendations for allocation of workload and other resources for shortlisted ICS authors
- h. An Independent final scoring and selection panel including independent external experts / end-users
- i. Training for all ‘decision-making’ panel members on Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and responsible assessment practices
- j. Attempts to conduct Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and data analysis on potential case study authors by protected characteristics.

END OF DOCUMENT

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APPENDICES

‘Linked’ documents are available as appendices accessible [here](#).

Appendices [Available to access here]	
Appendix A	Code of Practice Guidance
Appendix B1	EIA (Code of Practice)
Appendix B2	EIA (Output Scoring)
Appendix B3	EIA (Impact)
Appendix C	EDI Mission Statement
Appendix D	Academic Workload Framework
Appendix E	Output Scoring

Appendix F	Annual Objective Setting
Appendix G	Research Workload Categories
Appendix H	R2D - Development Workload Category
Appendix I	EDI declaration checklist
Appendix J	Output Glossary (REF21 Annex K)

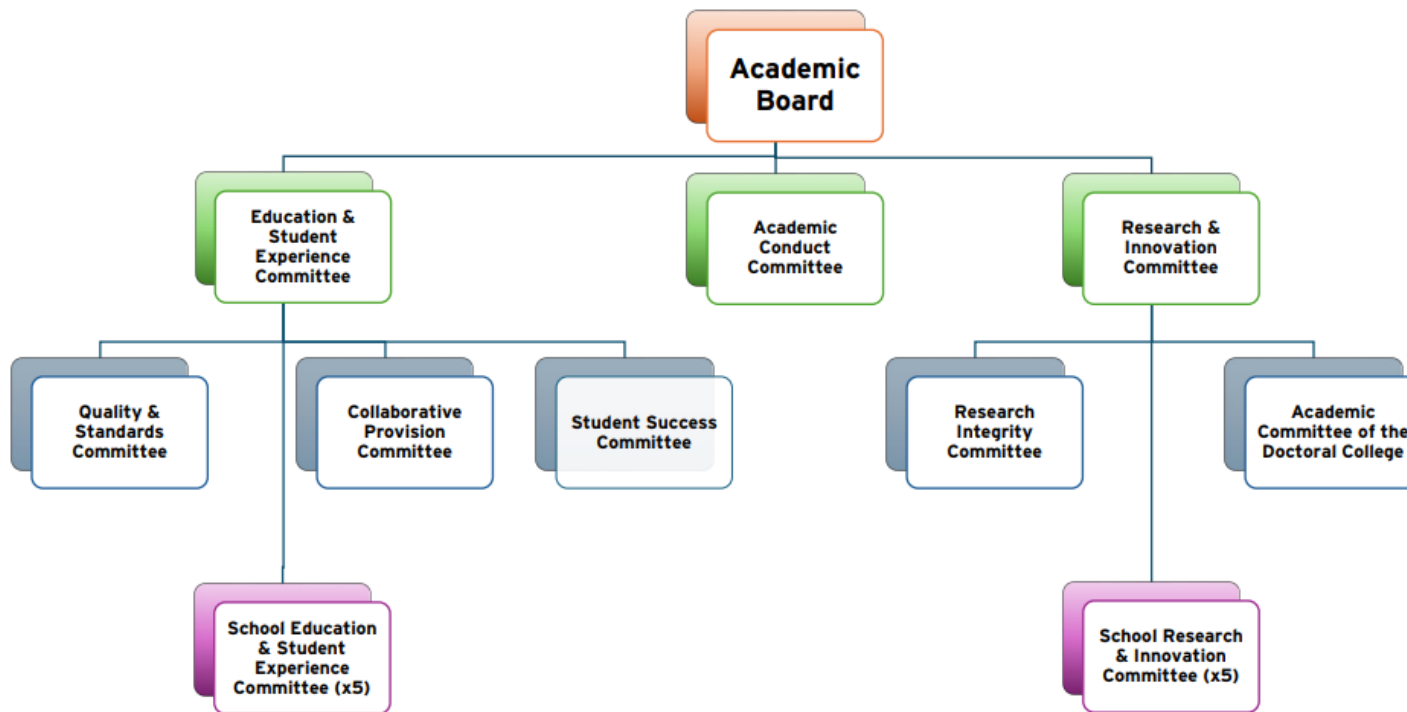
A **Governance Structure Diagram** [with overview of purpose and authority] is included below.

Governance Body	Purpose	Authority
Academic Board	The Academic Board is the primary academic body of Edinburgh Napier University with delegated authority from the University Court to oversee the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work of the University.	Delegates to R&IC
Research and Innovation Committee	To oversee the University's activities in pursuit of the Research and Innovation Strategy (2020- 2025) covering all research and knowledge exchange activity, including commercialisation and postgraduate research.	Decision-Maker
REF Strategy Group	The group delegates operational decision-making and oversight to the REF Steering Group and does not influence the decisions or approvals of the REF Steering Group. This body acts as a senior-level board of expertise and knowledge and monitors progress of the REF29 submission. It has responsibility for budgetary decisions and resourcing decisions.	Decision-Maker
REF Steering Group	Responsible for agreeing REF processes and overseeing preparations for final REF submission. The group is also responsible for the development and implementation of the REF Code of Practice.	Decision-Maker

	The group has decision-making and approval responsibility for the final submission across all components.	
UoA Leader Group	REF2029 operational implementation.	Advisory
School Research and Innovation Committee	To co-ordinate the delivery of the Research & Innovation strand of the academic strategy within the School, monitor the School's performance towards delivery of the R&I strategy with reference to the Academic KPIs and take any necessary decisions and actions required at School level in terms of delegated responsibility for research degree and research integrity matters.	Advisory
Inclusion Committee / School Inclusion Groups	To oversee the implementation of policy and processes in each of the Schools from an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion perspective, promoting equality of opportunity.	Advisory
Dean of School	REF2029 operational implementation.	Decision-Maker
Associate Dean, Research and Innovation	REF2029 operational implementation.	Decision-Maker
Scoring Panel	To review outputs and assign internal scores.	Advisory
Moderation Panel	To assign final moderated scores to outputs following internal and external review.	Decision-Maker
Head of Subject	The Head of Subject will support the Dean of School by providing leadership to staff delivering the vision and ambitions for the subject. The Head of Subject will have strategic responsibility to lead across research, learning & teaching, enterprise and professional practice activities to ensure the school is working towards the key performance indicators (KPIs) detailed in Strategy 2020 and the school plan.	Advisory
Staff Representative – EIS and UNISON	To liaise between management and union members, representing and upholding members' interests.	Advisory
Staff	There are several ways that individuals will contribute to REF2029. The University will continue to submit research	Advisory

	outputs and impact case studies authored by individuals associated with the University. We will also include information about the collective contributions, achievements and successes of individuals employed by the University in the Strategy, People and Research Environment narratives. This will include contributions from academic staff, research staff and professional service staff.	
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Academic Board and Sub-Committee Structure



University Committees

School Committees