

Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 Code of Practice

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1.0 Introduction

This Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice (CoP) sets out the principles, policies and processes that the University of the Built Environment will follow in preparing its submission to REF 2029. Its purpose is to ensure that all decisions are made fairly, transparently and consistently, and in full accordance with the requirements and expectations set out in the REF 2029 guidance.

REF represents an important milestone in our ongoing evolution from a primarily teaching-focused institution to one with an inspirational, creative and sustainable research culture. We are committed to ensuring that everyone in the University – regardless of role or function – can understand, contribute to, and engage meaningfully with this strategic ambition. Our research activity is intended to enrich the whole institution, becoming embedded in everyday conversations, teaching practices, and our wider academic identity whilst addressing our [strategic goal](#) to enhance careers, increase professionalism and contribute to a sustainable built environment.

As we prepare for our first REF submission, we have proactively sought external expertise and sector engagement to inform the development of robust and credible policies and processes. The University has worked closely with GuildHE Research (the representative body for smaller and specialist research-active higher education institutions) and actively participated in its REF-focused working group. We have also engaged with the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) and other relevant professional networks to share best practice, strengthen our research governance, and refine our processes. In addition, the University has appointed an experienced external REF advisor to provide independent guidance and critical oversight as we build the institutional capability required for a strong and confident submission. Most importantly, we have engaged continuously and openly with staff across the University. Their feedback and participation have been essential in shaping our processes, ensuring they are practical, fair, and aligned with our values.

REF 2029, as an institutional submission, presents an opportunity for the University to showcase the strength and impact of our research in addressing global challenges. We have worked, and will continue to work, collaboratively across the University to ensure that our submission accurately reflects both the diversity of our research and the culture that enables it.

1.1 Supporting the principles of robustness, transparency and equity and inclusion

1.1.1 Robustness

How the policies and processes set out in our CoP ensure that contracts identified as contributing to the volume measure reliably reflect the responsibilities of staff.

The University of the Built Environment is committed to ensuring that we have robust policies and processes in place to accurately inform the scale of our REF submission. This has been developed on the principle that our decision-making methodology incorporates clear governance, defined criteria, and multiple stages of review. This structured approach provides confidence that decisions are made consistently, transparently, and based on reliable information.

Overall governance, monitoring and strategic oversight of our REF submission process is provided by the University [Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee](#), formed in 2025. It provides representation across our academic and professional services communities, including the University's HR Department, to ensure comprehensive and connected oversight. Roles and responsibilities of the Subcommittee and other decision-making bodies are defined in this Code, along with formal reporting lines within the University's established governance structures (detailed in Part 2). All staff involved in decision-making processes are required to read this Code and to undertake training to support the robustness of our processes, the details of which are outlined in Part 2.2 of this Code.

The University of the Built Environment academic staff community includes a pool of circa 200 Associate Lecturers, contracted on a casual or fixed term basis to undertake academic activities including project supervision, module marking and module tutoring. Our Associate Lecturers provide a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience, adding significant value to our teaching activities. However, for the purposes of this Code and the University's REF 2029 submission, references to 'academic staff' excludes individuals contracted as Associate Lecturers (many of whom are employees of other universities). The nature of their engagement with the University on a semester-to-semester basis does not provide scope for participation in the Two-year Research Plan process, as described below.

Designation of research responsibilities for academic staff is undertaken following submission and review of a Two-year Research Plan. Introduced in 2023, all academic staff are invited to declare their interest in undertaking research as a core part of their role, at two points in the year (July and January) for existing academic staff, or, for new academic staff, when they are first appointed. The Two-year Research Plan is reviewed by the Research Workload Panel using the Research Workload Panel Review Matrix, and a decision made on the percentage of research workload allocation to be granted to each staff member – the details of which are outlined in Part 2 of this Code. The Research Workload Panel meetings are aligned closely to the University's Performance and Development Review (PDR) process which takes place in the Summer each year, with a further midpoint six-month check-in. Academic staff and their Line Managers are informed of research workload allocations ahead of PDR discussions taking place. This is to encourage integration of Two-year Research Plans into discussions on formal performance monitoring and professional development. All research workload allocations are shared with the University's Academic Operations team, to ensure that it is accounted for during resource planning and to give confidence that our data reliably reflects the actual responsibilities of our academic staff.

All academic staff allocated research workload are eligible to be considered for designation as having Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR). This decision will be made by the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee, as outlined in Section 2. The outcome of the SRR designation process will directly inform our REF volume measure. The institutional HESA return will confirm this same data, identifying those individuals who hold an employment contract with the University in an academic role where their primary employment function is categorised as 'Teaching and Research' (ACEMPFUN 3).

Staff identified as holding an employment contract with the University where their primary employment function is categorised as 'Research Only' (ACEMPFUN 2) will contribute to the volume measure if it is determined that they have research independence. This will be confirmed by the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee as outlined in Section 3.

Accurate data collection and curation is vital to facilitate informed decision-making across the different decision-making bodies, and the University has invested in building our research information system capabilities to enable more efficient capture, monitoring and reporting of our research activities:

- **Academic Operations Database** is a bespoke online platform designed as a core component of the University's research management framework, enabling staff to submit their Two-year Research Plans through a central system. It also serves as a grants management database, providing functionality to record bid submissions and to track outcomes. The Database is co-managed by the Academic Operations Team and the Research Office, under the direction of the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Performance) and the Associate Dean (Research). Access is restricted to authorised users, and data is stored and processed in compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's Data Protection Policy. Through this system, the University promotes a culture of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement, while reducing administrative burden and ensuring that research activity is systematically recorded and aligned with institutional priorities.
- **Institutional Repository** serves as the central record and primary platform for the deposit and management of all research outputs and research data. It ensures that the University maintains a comprehensive, auditable, and openly accessible record of research activity in support of both institutional strategy and the REF 2029 submission. The University subscribes to the GuildHE Research Repositories service – a shared repository infrastructure that supports members of the GuildHE Research Consortium. This external platform provides long-term digital preservation, open access compliance, and sector-recognised metadata standards to ensure the visibility and discoverability of the University's research outputs. Each deposited output is accompanied by a metadata record and a 300-word descriptive summary, outlining the nature, context, and significance of the work. The management and oversight of the University's Institutional Repository is coordinated by the Research Office, under the direction of the Associate Dean (Research). This ensures that the Repository operates in line with sector best practice, data protection legislation, and the University's Research Data Management and Open Access Policies. Staff are responsible for depositing their outputs in a timely manner and ensuring that all required supporting information is provided – including abstracts, metadata, and evidence of peer review or publication status. All deposits are subject to quality assurance and verification checks, and where necessary, embargoes or restricted access settings are applied in accordance with publisher or funder policies.

1.1.2 Transparency

How the CoP is communicated to all staff, including those on leave of absence or based outside the UK.

The University is committed to ensuring that the development and implementation of its REF 2029 submission has been, and will continue to be, open, inclusive, and clearly communicated to all staff.

The creation of this Code has been co-led by the REF Subcommittee and our academic staff. A working draft has been published on the University's SharePoint and communicated at multiple stages and in a variety of formats. In written form, it has been shared on a research community Teams channel which all staff across the entire University are invited to join (research-active, research-aware and research-adjacent), as well as via email updates. Two all-staff Town Hall meetings were held, in September 2025 and January 2026, to provide a forum for consultation on the University's approach to identifying staff roles as having SRR and the principles underlying our submission and output selections. A recording of the webinar, slide deck, and further resources were shared afterwards and staff invited to submit their feedback (both written and verbal).

Our Research 'Frequently Asked Questions' resource, published on our Teams site, details all processes and policies related to research, and actively encourages individuals to contact the Research Office team should they wish to ask for more information, or to discuss the REF submission process. For a broader reach, every University staff member receives a weekly staff Bulletin email newsletter, which we have utilised to share links to resources and to this Code.

In recognition of the need to reach all staff – including those on leave of absence – the Research Office, through assistance from HR, have written directly to affected individuals via alternative contact methods, ensuring they have equitable access to consultation opportunities and updates.

This Code has been through the University's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process (see Part 5) and has been accessibility tested (for screen readers and assistive technologies) and published externally via the 'related resources' section of the University's [research webpages](#). As part of the University's ongoing preparation for submission, we will be extending and maintaining a dedicated webpage to host

supplementary resources to support staff in accessing REF-related materials and guidance, including timelines and a Q&A section.

A summary of key REF-related activities undertaken, and on our communication plan (including future milestones) is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of key REF related activities

Month/Year	Activity	Communication / Delivery
June 2022	Formal approval obtained from the Executive Team and Board of Trustees to proceed with submission to REF 2029.	Report and presentation delivered to the Executive Team; formal approval confirmed by the Board of Trustees and Executive Team.
September 2022	Intention to submit to REF 2029 recorded in Research Committee minutes. Open presentation delivered to all staff online outlining the rationale for participation in REF 2029.	Research Committee minutes published in internal SharePoint and summary circulated via the weekly staff bulletin; staff presentation invitation issued via email – session recorded and shared to all staff via follow-up email.
January 2023	Institutional Repository for research outputs set up, accompanied by staff training and publication of supporting guidance materials. First Mock REF Report produced and shared with staff.	Online training delivered (recorded session made available); guidance document published on internal Research Teams site and included/published in the Research FAQs document via internal Teams site.
March 2023	Development of the two-year research planning process for academic staff; feedback sought.	Draft process shared via internal Research Teams site for consultation; presentation delivered at Deans' Update Meeting.
July 2023	Launch of the two-year research plan process and implementation of the research workload allocation model.	Invitation and guidance of the process emailed to all academic staff. Presentation made at Deans Update meeting.
February 2024	Appointment of External REF Advisor and commencement of independent output review process. Invitation to staff to express interest in developing Impact Case Studies (ICS). Roll-out of the web-based Academic Operations Database	Appointment announced during Research Committee meeting; shared via meeting minutes, SharePoint, all staff email and the weekly bulletin. online training sessions held for staff – session recorded and shared to all staff via follow-up email.
September 2025	Production and dissemination of the second Mock REF Report for staff consultation and feedback. All-staff REF presentation.	Report shared via internal Research Teams site and presented at an all-staff briefing session.
December 2025	Draft REF 2029 Code of Practice developed and discussed at the first REF Subcommittee meeting. Shared with staff for consultation and feedback.	Code circulated via Teams, Research Committee, and email to all staff for feedback.
January/February 2026	Preliminary consultation on the proposed process for determining SRR and Research Independence. Full all-staff consultation on the draft REF Code of Practice.	Communication from the Research Office; presentations by the Associate Dean (Research); town-hall type meeting; feedback collected via online form and email.

March 2026	Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) completed on REF-related policies and procedures. Summary of feedback and initial data published. Finalisation and formal approval of the REF Code of Practice through Academic Board.	EIA recommendations actioned. Amendments shared via Research Teams site and staff bulletin.
May 2026	Formally submit REF CoP to Research England	
Summer 2026	Communication of provisional SRR decisions and outline of appeals process (to be completed by September 2026).	Letters issued via HR to individual staff members.
Winter 2026	Staff invited to submit individual circumstances information. Process and guidance communicated.	Email to all staff with SRR and research independence; details available via the Research Teams site.
Summer 2027	Confirmation of final SRR and Research Independence decisions following review and appeals.	Letters from HR to individuals, copied to Heads of School.
Autumn 2028	Formal submission deadline to REF 2029.	Confirmation of submission shared via internal communications and University-wide announcement.

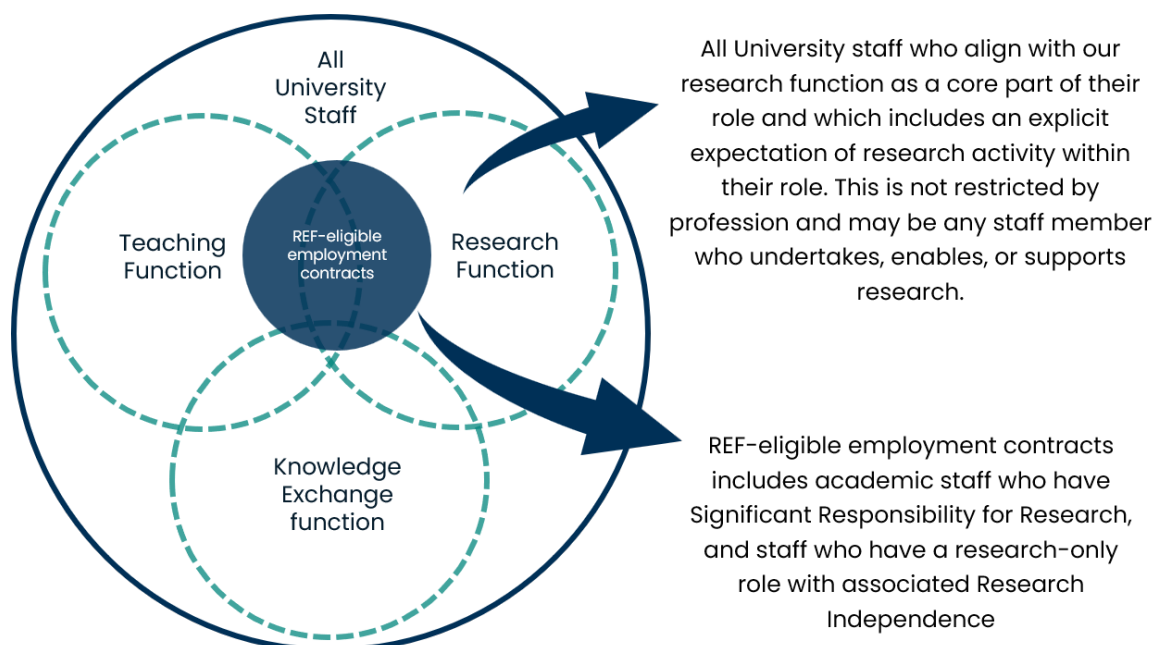
1.1.3 Equity and inclusion

Ensuring decisions about submissions are fair and impartial supporting a diversity of people and research, where diverse contributions are valued and supported.

The University's approach to REF 2029 is grounded in our institutional values and our commitment to building a research culture that places people and practice at the centre of everything we do. We are in the early stages of establishing our research identity as a leading University in the built environment sector and recognise that there is further progress to make.

As a supportive and close-knit community, we have sought to develop policies and frameworks that promote an inclusive, responsible, and positive research environment. Our priority is to ensure that all staff – including academic, technical, and professional services staff who play a vital role in enabling research – feel part of a collegiate and supportive research culture. A key part of this ongoing work involves developing a richer understanding of our staff community – those currently engaged in research, those who aspire to be research-active in the future, and those who are research-enablers as a core part of their role (see Figure 1). This insight will help us to tailor support, reduce barriers, and create equitable opportunities for everyone who wishes to contribute to the University's research strategy.

Figure 1: Staff of the University of the Built Environment



All academic staff are given the opportunity to submit a Two-year Research Plan, to declare their aspirations to develop an independent researcher profile, to explore the potential to receive a research workload allocation. The Two-year Research Plan template captures information on a diversity of research-related activities, beyond outputs and research income, in recognition that a research career can take many forms and should be tailored to the individual's interests, skills, and professional ambitions. We have intentionally built our Research Workload Panel Review Matrix around the Vitae Researcher Development Framework – and secured membership to Vitae in 2026 – to further champion this approach. The Research Workload Panel Review Matrix (the details of which are outlined in Part 2 of this Code) enables us to recognise where our researchers currently reside in distinct stages of development relative to different research-focused activities. This provides a visualisation of pathways for individuals to either initiate, or continue to build upon their research portfolios, putting in place appropriate training and support with the expectation that they progress towards Phase 3-4/SRR in the future (if not already at that stage).

We are acutely aware of the growing body of work across the HEI sector and research funding landscape, uncovering the inequalities experienced by different groups of researchers in accessing research-related opportunities. We currently have a small

researcher community and whilst we acknowledge the additional challenges this creates around diversification of panels and impartiality, it does also bring significant benefits. Our person-centred approach places the individual's unique needs and goals at the heart of decision-making, so that we can adapt our processes to ensure a fair outcome. Examples of this include allocating workload equitably to ensure our early-career researchers have appropriate protected time to start to build their research momentum or recognising and responding to the specific support requirements of staff returning from career breaks/periods of leave. We continue to review, educate and proactively seek out good practice shared by our peers ensuring that no one is disadvantaged due to personal characteristics, working patterns, or protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

The University is committed to supporting a diversity of people and experiences, research disciplines, and forms of contribution. This includes recognising and valuing collaborative research, interdisciplinary work, practice-based outputs, and those that support policy, industry, or community engagement. Reflecting the University's disciplinary strengths in architecture, built environment and planning (Unit of Assessment (UoA) 13 in REF 2029), the institutional Repository is designed to accommodate a wide range of research outputs beyond traditional written publications. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Architectural plans, technical drawings, and design portfolios;
- Digital or physical models and prototypes;
- Photographic documentation of completed built works or exhibitions;
- Video or multimedia presentations that demonstrate design concepts, processes, or impact;
- Project reports, policy documents, and other forms of applied or practice-based research dissemination.

1.2.0 Contextualisation within institutional policies

How this Code of Practice relates to our institution's context on equality, diversity, and inclusion, SPRE (Strategy, People, and Research Environment) and responsible research assessment.

The University of the Built Environment has been a specialist provider of education and training related to building, property, construction, and land, offering professional degrees and apprenticeships since it was founded in 1919. We aspire to become a research-informed institution and *the* Centre of Excellence for Built Environment Education, having undergone a significant transformation over the past three years, particularly in 2025 with an institutional merger with the London School of Architecture and renaming from the former, University College of Estate Management. Throughout this period of change, it has been vital for the University to build upon its legacy and heritage – supporting the evolution of its scope and ambition – while ensuring that its identity is not lost. This transition has shaped the institutional context and created an opportunity to reimagine the research and enterprise landscape.

This Code champions the University's [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment Statement](#), which encompasses the whole-institution pledge to students, staff and stakeholders to treat individuals and groups equally, fairly, and without bias. We are committed to fair and impartial decision-making, not only to meet REF expectations, but to strengthen a culture in which all individuals and contributions are genuinely valued. This work is guided by the University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and EDI Committee, which provides oversight to ensure our approach remains transparent, robust, and aligned with sector best practice. Training on equity, diversity, and unconscious bias is mandatory for all staff at the University, as part of our commitment. Those responsible for decision-making to shape our REF submission will also receive additional REF-focused training, as part of a collaborative effort led by GuildHE.

In 2023, the University published [Globe](#), our framework to drive change and advocate for a more sustainable built environment. We are aspiring to be the most sustainable university in the world, and the Globe programme sets out the University's sustainability strategy, delivered through five dimensions – what we teach, the way we teach, leadership and governance, how we operate, and who we influence. The University's [Research Strategy 2022-2030](#) was developed with Globe at its core, providing a mechanism to realise our ambitions in leading industry, professional and other partners towards building capacity for research that shapes the sustainable built environments of the future. Our Research Strategy provided the catalysis for developing new policies,

processes and systems essential to embedding good research practice, published on the [University Research webpage](#) and including our Code of Practice for Research, commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, ethics and data management policies. It also established strategic research focal points, mobilising and building communities of staff with shared interests around three key thematic research areas that form the core of our Research Centre;

- Adapting to a Changing World,
- Societal Wellbeing and Transformation,
- Towards an Equal, Diverse, and Inclusive Built Environment.

In June 2025, the University introduced a conferment process (for Associate Professor and Professor) that promotes parity of esteem and career progression for academic staff whose focus is on teaching excellence, research, leadership and innovation. In addition, a separate academic career pathway was also launched at the same time to recognise the full range of contributions that colleagues make through both teaching and research and enabled the progression of Lecturer to Senior Lecturer. Membership of Vitae, and alignment of our research workload allocation review matrix to the Researcher Development Framework, further strengthens our approach to fostering a focus on professional development that is fair, transparent, evidence-based, and inclusive of diverse contributions, disciplines, and career pathways.

The University's approach to research assessment is informed by sector-wide frameworks, including the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics. Our [Code of Practice for Research](#) clearly states our expectations of our researchers and individuals responsible for decision-making in how we assess research and use metrics responsibly. This Code incorporates principles of responsible research assessment by supporting the fair evaluation of outputs and impact, recognising a range of scholarly contributions beyond traditional metrics, and acknowledging varied career trajectories, interdisciplinary work, and research that supports policy, practice, or public engagement.

The creation of this Code was driven entirely by these broader institutional contexts – our structures, frameworks, and culture. This is our first submission to the REF, and whilst we have looked to other universities to learn from our peers and to replicate good practice, we have consciously and meticulously evaluated new policies and procedures

through the lens of our own institutional setting, tailoring each to help (not hinder) our staff. As a small specialist institution, we have ambitions to further cement our commitment to promoting positive, equitable, inclusive working practices by formally signing up to sector frameworks such as Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter, Disability Charter and Stonewall Diversity Champions. Engagement with these external frameworks will be kept under active review, with the intention to pursue relevant accreditations only when it becomes proportionate and sustainable to do so for the benefit of our students and staff.

1.3.0 Update on actions since REF 2021

REF 2029 will mark the University's first submission, and this Code has been developed as part of a broader institutional journey toward embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), creating a positive research environment, and adopting principles of responsible research assessment. Whilst the University does not have a legacy of REF-specific practices, its institutional values are nonetheless firmly rooted in fairness, transparency, and inclusivity: these values inform every aspect of our approach to research development and assessment.

2.0 Identifying staff contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)

2.1 Policies and procedures

2.1.1 Criteria for SRR

Defining the criteria for identifying staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), based upon job role expectations, not past performance.

The method used to identify staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) is based on the REF 2029 definition, namely that individuals must have explicit time and resources to engage actively in independent research, and that this is an expectation of their job role.

- **‘Explicit time and resources are made available’**

Academic staff must be in receipt of a minimum research workload allocation of 20% of their working hours to be deemed as having explicit time and resources to engage in research. Research workload allocations are determined by the Research Workload Panel using a phased grading matrix system (see Section 2, Part 1.2). Information on allocations is shared with the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee on a bi-annual basis for the purposes of identifying staff who meet this criterion. This separation ensures that workload allocation decisions are made independently of REF submission considerations.

- **‘To engage actively in independent research’**

Academic staff profiled as Phase 3 or Phase 4 within the Research Workload Panel Review matrix are actively engaged in independent research. Staff profiled as Phase 1 or Phase 2 represent a diverse range of research profiles, including those completing doctoral degrees, those at an early stage of building an independent research portfolio, individuals returning to research following a break, or those who have chosen to limit research activity to balance other responsibilities. The REF Subcommittee reviews this data for all staff with allocated research workload to determine which individuals meet the criterion of independent research activity. Academic staff undertaking postgraduate degrees, either internally or externally, may be allocated protected time to complete their studies, which may amount to

up to 20% of their working hours in accordance with the University's Academic Staff Development Policy. In some cases, staff undertaking postgraduate study may also be allocated additional research workload in recognition of independent research activity, such as externally funded grant awards, distinct from their studies.

- **'An expectation of the job role'**

The Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee includes membership from our HR department, to ensure that we align identification of those academic staff with a minimum of 20% research workload allocation with the following contractual expectations:

- **Employment Function:** The individual must hold an employment contract with the University in an academic role where their *primary employment function* is categorised as either 'Teaching and Research' (ACEMPFUN 3) or 'Research Only' (ACEMPFUN 2), as defined in the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Staff Record (ACEMPFUN field).
- **Employment Period:** The individual must be on the University's payroll during the REF assessment period – specifically within the 2025–26 and 2026–27 academic years, corresponding to the relevant HESA Staff Record collections.

2.1.2 Decision making and communication

Description of the process, roles, and timelines.

Decisions on SRR will be made by the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee, using the criteria outlined (Part 2. 1.1) and based on the data provided by the Research Workload Panel, informed by the Two-year Research Plan process.

Two-Year Research Plan Process: All academic staff who wish to undertake active research as part of their role at the University are invited to complete a Two-year research plan. The plan template captures information on the individual's research-related accomplishments and activities to-date, and to record those expected over the next 2 years. Inspired by the Vitae Researcher Development Framework 2025, this approach encourages academic staff to self-evaluate their progress aligned to their own individual research interests, to identify the areas or activities that they are keen to pursue further and to set clear, actionable objectives for the period ahead.

The Research Workload Panel meets twice a year, in January and July. Current academic staff who are either applying for research workload for the first time or are seeking to return to active research after a break (such as those returning to work after a significant period of leave), are invited to submit their plan for consideration at one of these meetings. For new academic staff, expectations for undertaking research as part of their role will be explored during the recruitment process and confirmed by the Research Workload Panel at the point of issuing the employment offer letter.

Part of the Research Workload Panel's role at each meeting is also in monitoring the six-monthly progress of research-active staff towards their personal research objectives. Staff members allocated research workload will be required to submit a review to the Panel ahead of each biannual meeting. This provides an opportunity to highlight both research-related successes and challenges, and a prompt to each staff member to reflect on their research-focused needs and explore whether they would benefit from additional support, training and/or resources to help them in achieving their goals. This monitoring role is also in place to ensure that we are on track, as a research community, to meet the University's broader annual research targets as outlined in the University's Research Strategy. In exceptional circumstances, the Research Workload Panel will also consider requests to amendments to two-year plans outside of this timetable, for example should an individual require short notice leave for a substantial period.

Two-year Research Plans will be collated by the Research Office and presented to the Research Workload Panel for consideration, accompanied by data sourced from the institutional repository. A Research Workload Panel Review Matrix assessment tool was created (Table 2) to assist the decision-making process on the allocation of research workload; the matrix is also shared with staff as a tool to support research career development. Mirroring the Vitae framework, the matrix is structured around four phases representing distinct stages of researcher progression and mapped against five areas of research-related activity. This matrix approach enables the Panel to acknowledge the breadth of research-related activity being undertaken, and to champion the importance of these wider contributions (beyond securing income and output) towards nurturing a positive research environment. It also recognises nonlinear career paths in research, and the nuances of individual portfolios, skillsets and strengths. The Research Workload Panel recommends an outcome for each individual relative to the phase that most closely represents the individuals research profile:

- **Phase 3 to 4:** meets expectations in at least three areas of activity, one of which must be outputs. Allocate a minimum of 20% workload for research responsibilities (working hours per annum for the next two years) and support to continue to develop a profile of leadership and professional esteem factors.
- **Phase 1 to 2:** on a trajectory to reach phase 3 in the next two years, in at least three areas of activity (one of which must be outputs), and would benefit from protected time and resources to develop their research skills and contributions. Allocate 10% research workload (working hours per annum for the next two years), as appropriate to individual circumstances.

Table 2: Research Workload Panel Review Matrix

	Research-focused areas of activity				
Phase	Grant bidding and award management	Published work and other outputs	Leadership and people-development within the University	Professional esteem and research partnerships outside of the University	Impact outside of academia
3 to 4	Works with colleagues, partners, or funders to co-develop competitive collaborative funding bids. Navigates complex funding landscapes, including large-scale or multi-partner opportunities. Contributes to the financial sustainability of projects, teams, or programmes. Provides expertise in budget management, audit, and planning; advises others on good practice.	Regularly produces and publishes in reputable, peer reviewed journals, or other outputs appropriate to the discipline. Builds collaborative or interdisciplinary partnerships to co-create outputs.	Takes responsibility for key team or organisational areas, driving improvements in the institutional research environment Sets a clear, transparent leadership style, encouraging creativity, initiative, and innovation Creates structured opportunities for others to develop research-related and leadership skills Leads supervision or people management aligned with institutional, organisational, or professional standards.	Demonstrates cross-sector leadership by building collaborations and integrating diverse insights. Leads research or innovation networks, special interest groups, or collaborative communities. Builds national or international connections with external organisations, partners, or policy groups. Integrates strategic network-building into research and career advancement. Invited to speak at research conferences, or participate on panels,	Builds and maintains sustainable partnerships with external organisations, communities, or policymakers to ensure mutual benefit Contributes expertise to policy processes or public debates, building a record of applied influence and trusted relationships Leads substantial engagement or knowledge exchange projects that shape public understanding or

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	Understands organisational and external financial systems that underpin research sustainability		Has supervised PGR students through to completion	committees or similar. Takes on roles such as reviewer or editor for external bodies	inform research directions. Identifies and acts on opportunities to maximise innovation, recognising potential for new applications and partnerships.
2	Recognises the importance of income generation for own research and organisational context. Has broad knowledge of key funding and income sources and successfully applies for or manages small-scale opportunities. Uses financial systems to track, reconcile, and manage research budgets in line with requirements. Begins engaging in income-generating activities such as	Confidently disseminates outputs across academic, professional, public, or online spaces, and has done so within the previous 2 years.	Guides less experienced colleagues, offering direction and support. Communicates confidently and effectively as a leader, fostering collaboration. Actively seeks leadership opportunities that integrate cross sector collaboration and learning. Contributes to co-supervision or joint management where appropriate. Supervises less experienced colleagues or students, providing constructive, empathetic support.	Builds equitable collaborations with clear roles, responsibilities, and shared outputs, engaging a wide range of contributors. Co-creates questions, designs, or outputs with stakeholders to ensure shared ownership and mutual benefit Attendance at research-focused conferences following submission and acceptance of a talk and possibly published an abstract within the conference proceedings.	Recognises the potential for research to inform policy, social change, or public understanding, and begins forming relevant connections. Designs and delivers inclusive engagement activities that communicate work clearly to non-specialist audiences. Connects with users, beneficiaries, policymakers, or public audiences to co-create or adapt engagement

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	partnerships or consultancy. Builds initial connections with funders, sponsors, or innovation partners to enable future opportunities.			Actively engaged with and attending meetings organised by external research networks or professional bodies.	approaches that reflect shared goals or needs.
1	Works with peers or colleagues to understand organisational and funder processes for securing and managing awards, contracts, or other research funding. Gains early experience in contributing to funding or income-generation applications. Understands basic financial management principles relevant to research activities. Builds awareness of potential income sources, including grants, fellowships, contracts, commissions, and tenders	Builds awareness of how research outputs are produced, shared, and evaluated, including publications, reports, datasets, policy briefs, commissioned products, creative works, or open-access contributions. Begins producing high-quality content in multiple formats (e.g. print, digital, multimedia). Explores various methods and platforms for dissemination, both traditional and emerging.	Engages in activities that build leadership capability, such as training, mentoring, or cross-sector placements Explores opportunities to demonstrate leadership, both formally and informally, within projects or team settings. Participates in or helps facilitate learning opportunities (e.g. workshops, meetings, knowledge-sharing events). Develops awareness of supervision or management policies and good practices.	Engages with diverse communities (e.g. professional associations, learned societies, public bodies, or innovation networks) to broaden perspectives. Actively participates in research-related discussions and debates, including across disciplines or sectors Beginning to establish a professional online presence.	Understands the value of engaging diverse public, policy, community, or sector audiences to enhance the relevance and reach of research. Participates in knowledge exchange or public engagement activities (e.g. talks, workshops, exhibitions, open days), offering and inviting feedback. Begins exploring how work connects to societal, ethical, or policy contexts, deepening understanding of relevant issues

The decisions of the Research Workload Panel will be communicated to academic staff within two weeks of the Panel meeting, to ensure that this can be incorporated into the individual's annual performance and development review (PDR), and to be formally recognised within academic workload resourcing. This ensures alignment with role expectations, accountability on contributing towards the University's Research Strategy targets, and to firmly embed each staff member's research aspirations as part of their broader professional development ambitions. The outcomes will also be presented to the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee at its next meeting, to inform decision-making on SRR status.

Academic staff who are designated as having SRR by the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee will be notified by the Research Office in the Summer of each year, aligned to the timelines of the research workload allocation and PDR processes.

An annual mock REF report, accompanied by a detailed action plan, will be produced – typically in August each year – to support evidence-based decision-making, promote transparency, and ensure institutional preparedness for REF 2029. Drawing on data from the Academic Operations Database and the University Repository, the report provides:

- A comprehensive overview of progress;
- Identification of strengths and areas for improvement; and
- Specific actions to enhance readiness for submission.

The report is shared formally with the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee, Research Committee and Academic Board, and disseminated informally through the University's Research Teams site and academic staff email, ensuring broad awareness and engagement across the academic community. The first mock REF report was produced in 2023, followed by a subsequent report in 2025.

2.2 Staff, committees and training

2.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Defining roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees, distinguishing between advisory and decision-making roles.

The University has three key committees with oversight of the REF 2029 submission preparation and process – the Research Workload Panel, the Research Excellence

Framework Subcommittee, and the Research Committee. Together, these governance structures ensure that all decisions relating to REF 2029 are evidence-based, strategically aligned, and informed by cross-institutional consultation.

The **Research Workload Panel** acts as a decision-making body to determine workload allocation and includes the following members:

- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic);
- Associate Dean (Research), Panel Chair;
- Associate Dean (Sustainability);
- Dean;
- Research Funding and Operations Manager.

The **Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee** acts as a decision-making body, with delegated responsibility on behalf of the Research Committee to determine designation of SRR status. The Subcommittee plays a central role in providing strategic direction and in developing and monitoring the University's REF 2029 submission, meeting a minimum of three times per year (as indicated within its [Terms of Reference](#), which also provides the list of members), The Subcommittee serves as the primary forum for REF-related deliberation, operational leadership and coordination of the REF 2029 process, responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining the institutional REF 2029 submission strategy;
- Coordinating activity across Unit of Assessment (UoA) 13;
- Reviewing data, draft environment statements, and impact case studies; and

- Making recommendations on the final submission content.

The Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee reports into the University's **Research Committee**, and upwards to the Academic Board who advise the University Executive on research policy, strategy, and governance. The Research Committee operates in a dual role capacity, providing strategic guidance whilst also holding the authority to receive reports and oversee progress. The Research Committee meets three times a year, with additional meetings convened as required. Its Terms of Reference are available via the University's internal SharePoint.

All formal decisions made by the Research Committee and Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee are minuted and circulated to members, and accessible to staff via the University's SharePoint site (with appropriate redaction of sensitive information).

Administratively, the University's REF 2029 submission will be overseen by the Associate Dean (Research), who will act as both the University and Unit of Assessment (UoA) submission lead, and operationally managed by the Research and Funding Operations Lead who oversees dedicated research administrative staff within the Research Office.

2.2.2 Training

In addition to the mandatory training for all University staff on equality, diversity and inclusion and overcoming unconscious bias, all individuals involved in the preparation of the University's REF 2029 submission (the REF Subcommittee members and Research Office staff) will be provided with REF-focused training. This will be arranged as part of a collaborative effort led by GuildHE to ensure sector-wide best practice guidance. Additional sessions will also be facilitated by the Research Office, in reading and understanding the principals outlined in this Code of Practice.

2.3 Appeals

Outlining how staff can appeal decisions about SRR.

The University has established a formal appeals process to support the REF 2029 exercise, ensuring that any concerns regarding decisions on SRR designations and/or research independence can be addressed fairly, transparently, and in a timely manner.

Submitting an appeal: Appeals should be submitted to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Students) and must:

- Be evidence-based;
- Refer explicitly to this Code of Practice; and
- Be submitted within two weeks of the outcomes from the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee meeting having been disseminated to academic staff. In exceptional circumstances, appeals will be considered on an ad-hoc basis outside of this timeframe, for example where staff are on long-term leave (such as parental leave).

Consideration of appeals: Appeals will be considered by a university-level panel composed of senior officers with no previous involvement in the decision. The panel will include:

- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), as Chair;
- Director of HR; and
- Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Performance).

The panel will review the appeal, record the reasons for its recommendations, and submit these recommendations to the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee for a final decision.

Notification of outcome: The appellant, together with their Head of School (or nominee) and Line Manager, will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal. The decision of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Students) is final.

Grounds for appeal: Appeals are limited to the following two grounds:

- Errors in the underlying data used to assess research independence (e.g., incorrect records of PhD supervision or grant awards);
- Change in circumstances since the original assessment, such that the individual now meets the research independence criteria (e.g., securing a new externally funded research grant as Principal Investigator).

2.4 Equality impact assessment

How Equality Impact Assessment informed SRR identification and policy/procedure development.

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed as part of our developing the processes outlined in this Code of Practice, to ensure that the proposed practices are fair and do not discriminate against any protected group (see Part 5). As a small specialist University with a modest research function, EIA exercises focused on our current research-active community involve small numbers of staff which makes reporting data anonymously and comprehensive analysis of the data a particular challenge. We are working closely with GuildHE and its member institutions, to ensure that we replicate good practice as a small cohort, supplementing with qualitative data and consultations. The EIA revealed areas of the Code that required further clarity, such as on flexibility of processes to take into consideration periods of staff leave, and we have addressed this accordingly.

The University will undertake further EIAs at key stages throughout the REF 2029 submission preparation period, including Summer 2026 and 2027 to support the Research Excellence Subcommittee decision-making process on SRR designation. Recognising that preparations for REF 2029 are already underway, processes adopted to date will be reviewed – including through EIAs – following the publication of this Code. Adjustments will be made as necessary to ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusion principles are fully embedded.

Each EIA will provide a thorough and systematic analysis of policies relating to research independence and output selection, assessing whether these may have a differential impact on particular groups. The analysis will encompass all eligible staff and, where possible, will involve engagement with staff from protected groups to inform the assessment process.

EIAs will examine data for all protected characteristics for which sufficient and reliable information is available. The relevant characteristics are detailed in the EIA documentation (see Part 6).

The University will present EIA reports to the relevant University committees highlighting any areas of potential discrimination and examples of good practice. Where potential discrimination is identified, this will be brought to the attention of the affected areas for appropriate action. Examples of good practice will be shared more widely across the institution to promote positive impacts on equality, diversity, and inclusion within REF-related activities.

Following the REF submission, the University will publish the final EIA in line with sector good practice and the principles of transparency and accountability on its dedicated REF webpage.

3.0 Determining Research Independence

3.1 Policies and procedures

This section outlines the policies and procedures that the University will follow in identifying colleagues who meet the criteria for research independence in preparing our REF 2029 submission.

3.1.1 Criteria and evidence

Outlining the criteria and evidence used to assess research independence, particularly for 'research only' contracts.

The method used to determine if staff employed in a 'research only' role demonstrate research independence is based on the REF 2029 definition, namely that an individual must be undertaking self-directed research, rather than primarily carrying out another individual's research programme.

At the University we currently employ research assistants, including Knowledge Transfer Partnership Associates – under REF 2029, such staff are not considered independent, as these roles typically exist to deliver another individual's research programme. This is evidenced within the individual's role description, and therefore no REF-related decision making is required.

In the future, we have an ambition to support research fellowship applications, and to expand the scope and size of our research-only staff community. As part of this forward-looking planning, we have provided the following criteria which will be used to determine research independence – a member of staff must meet at least five of the following indicators to be deemed independent:

- Acting as Principal Investigator (PI) or equivalent on an externally funded research project.
- Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where independence is an explicit requirement (we refer to the REF 2029 ['list of eligible research fellowships'](#)).

- Leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package within an externally funded project.
- Acting as main supervisor or co-supervisor for postgraduate researchers.
- Active engagement in national or international research networks, advisory roles, or editorial boards that demonstrate an independent research profile.
- Holding a doctorate or equivalent research experience evidencing the capability to lead independent research.
- Authorship of research outputs where the individual has demonstrably led or played a substantive role in shaping the intellectual direction of the work.
- In addition, research-only staff will comply with the following contractual expectations criteria, to be attributable towards the REF volume measure:
 - Employment Function: The individual will hold a Research-only employment contract (ACEMPFUN 2) as defined in the HESA Staff Record.
 - Employment Period: The individual must appear in the University's HESA Staff Record during the REF volume-measure period, specifically within academic years 2025–26 and 2026–27, from which REF 2029 will calculate the volume measure.

3.1.2 Decision-Making and Communication

The process, roles and timelines for determining research independence.

Research assistants and KTP (Knowledge Transfer Partnership) Associates are employed on a fixed contract for the purposes of undertaking activities linked to a specific research project(s), supervised by an academic member of staff, as outlined within their job role specification. There is, therefore, no REF-related decision-making required at an individual level for these roles.

If a research-only staff member is recruited where research independence is an inherent expectation of that role – such as an individual having secured or be expected to secure an externally funded fellowship award – this will be agreed and reflected within the

employment contract. The staff member will also be required to participate in the Two-year Research Plan process, for the purposes of establishing a research-focused professional development plan, setting targets aligned with the expectations of the fellowship award and monitoring progress. It is not expected that an individual will be employed for a period less than two years, but this timeframe can be amended if needed.

The Two-year Research Plan will be reviewed by the Research Workload Panel at the point that the new starter joins the University, and periodically as per the timeline for the Two-year Research Plan process, so that each research-only staff member is profiled against the Research Workload Panel Review Matrix. This grading will not be used to determine workload allocation, as it will be for those staff undertaking research as a proportion of their time, but instead provides the information required to determine that research-only staff are performing at a level that is expected of their appointment and that they are meeting the indicators for independent research as stated in Part 3:1.1. Staff will be provided with written feedback on progress made against research-related targets and activities, on a bi-annual basis and as per the process outlined for SRR.

This feedback and associated data will also be reported to the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee, as per the process and timeline outlined in Part 2, for final REF-related decision making and matters of REF submission planning.

3.2.0 to 3.4.0

The topics relating to staff, committees, and training, as well as roles and responsibilities, training, appeals, and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), are addressed in detail in Part 2 of this Code of Practice. Specifically:

- Part 3: 2.0 Staff, Committees, and Training
- Part 3: 2.1 Roles and Responsibilities
- Part 3: 2.1 Training
- Part 3: 3.0 Appeals
- Part 3: 4.0 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

4.0 Allocating Contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedures

The University of the Built Environment intends to make a single submission to Unit of Assessment 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning (UoA13) in REF 2029. Our institutional Research Strategy outlines the University's ambitions in establishing our reputation as a world-leading research centre that shapes the built environments of the future. All our academic staff, by virtue of the University's teaching focus, are aligned to UoA13 and therefore policies, procedures and decision-making to determine allocation of contracts to UoAs is not required.

5.0 Selecting output

5.1 Policies and procedures

This section sets out the policies and procedures the University will apply in selecting outputs for submission to REF 2029. It describes the criteria for decision-making, the processes through which selections will be made, and the timelines for both decisions and feedback.

For REF 2029, outputs are decoupled from individual staff. The University welcomes submissions from eligible research and research-enabling staff, but there is no requirement for staff included in the REF volume measure to contribute an output. Equally, outputs produced by staff not included in the volume measure may be submitted, provided they meet REF eligibility requirements, align with the Unit of Assessment (UoA) descriptor, and satisfy the required quality threshold.

To be eligible for submission, an output must constitute research, fall within the permitted publication period, demonstrate a substantive link to the University, and comply with open access requirements where applicable. Selection is primarily based on output quality, with due consideration given to representativeness. To support fairness and objectivity, outputs and authors are treated independently as far as possible throughout review and selection

processes. This approach ensures that assessment is focused on the merit of the work rather than the individual.

5.1.1 Identifying substantive link to outputs

In accordance with REF 2029 guidance, the University will ensure that all submitted outputs demonstrate a substantive link between the author and the institution. A substantive link will normally be evidenced through an eligible employment relationship (or equivalent arrangement) that demonstrates the individual's active and ongoing connection to the University's research environment.

To evidence this link:

- The author must hold, or have held during the relevant REF assessment period, an employment contract with the University that includes a research function as part of their role. For the purposes of REF 2029, "the University" refers to the University of the Built Environment, including its institutional merger with the London School of Architecture (LSA) in May 2025 and its transition from the University College of Estate Management (UCEM) in June 2025.
- In cases of equivalent arrangements (for example honorary, visiting, adjunct, or joint appointments), there must be clear and documented evidence of the individual's substantive engagement with the University's research environment. This may include participation in research projects, supervision of research students, collaboration on research outputs, leadership or membership of research groups, or securing research funding through the University.

Outputs will not normally be submitted where no substantive link can be demonstrated. The University will not knowingly submit outputs from individuals who do not meet this requirement, even where the output was produced during a period of association with the institution.

Where the substantive link is not straightforward – for example in cases involving joint appointments, honorary contracts, or complex employment arrangements – the University will assess eligibility on a case-by-case basis. Decisions will be made by the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee, with advice from HR and the

Research Committee, to ensure consistency, fairness, and alignment with REF 2029 requirements.

5.1.2 Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff

The University will include the outputs where there is a substantive link of staff who have left the institution through:

- transfer to another university,
- resignation, or retirement,
- voluntary redundancy or severance,
- expiry of a fixed-term contract, or
- death.

In cases of bereavement, the University will seek permission from the next of kin before including any outputs.

The University will not normally seek to include the outputs of staff who have been made compulsorily redundant. The only exception will be where such outputs have been either:

- co-authored with a current member of staff,
- former member of staff that falls under the criteria listed above, or
- former staff who have completed intensive research contracts and who have specifically indicated that their preference would be for their research outputs to be considered for selection.
-

5.1.3 Assigning outputs to UoA/s

The University intends to make a single submission to Unit of Assessment 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning (UoA13) in REF 2029. This submission will encompass the

full breadth of our research activity, including interdisciplinary work that extends beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries.

5.1.4 Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs

The University is committed to recognising and valuing the full diversity of research outputs across all disciplines within Unit of Assessment 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning (UoA13), career stages, and staff circumstances. We acknowledge that high-quality research can take multiple forms beyond traditional journal articles, including but not limited to books, practice-based outputs, software, digital artefacts, datasets, policy reports, exhibitions, monographs, and other contributions to knowledge and practice.

The University's procedures for supporting diversity of outputs will ensure that:

- **Inclusivity:** All eligible staff are encouraged to submit outputs that best represent the originality, significance, and rigour of their research, irrespective of format, medium, or disciplinary tradition.
- **Equity of assessment:** Selection of outputs for submission will be guided by transparent, evidence-based criteria that are applied consistently and assessed on their merit rather than on assumptions about format or venue.
- **Recognition of career stage and circumstance:** We will take account of variations in opportunity (e.g., early career researchers, part-time staff, staff with caring responsibilities, or those with equality-related circumstances) to ensure fair recognition of contributions.
- **Training and awareness:** Members of the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee involved in output selection will receive training on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), as well as on responsible research assessment (aligned with DORA and the Concordat on Research Assessment), to mitigate bias in the evaluation of diverse outputs.
- **Support and guidance:** Staff will have access to guidance and mentoring to help them identify outputs most appropriate for submission.

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

The University is committed to ensuring that its REF 2029 submission is fully representative of the research activity undertaken within the submitting unit. Its processes are designed to reflect the breadth and dynamism of research outputs, contributions, collaborations, and partnerships, while aligning with the unit's research strategy and will largely focus on quality. Where the inclusion of outputs from eligible staff who have since left the University would best demonstrate the highest quality of research, these outputs will be considered on the same basis as those from current eligible staff. Such outputs will also be subject to the processes outlined in this document.

The University's Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee will take responsibility for the research outputs included, acting upon any recommendations made by the Research Committee. The decisions with respect to any staff circumstances will be informed by the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee.

The University has established a rigorous, transparent, and equitable process for the selection of research outputs, ensuring consistency and fairness across its Unit of Assessment (UoA) 13 submission (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Procedure for selecting outputs



Authors are responsible for depositing research outputs in the [University's institutional repository](#) in accordance with the University's Open Access Policy and Authorship and Publication Policy (see for Policies [Research – University of the Built Environment](#)).

1) Output Sorting and eligibility analysis

All eligible outputs deposited in the [University's institutional repository](#) will be recorded in the University's Output Sorter, a rules-based tool used to support transparent and data-informed allocation of outputs. The tool applies the following REF rules, which will be double checked by the Associate Dean (Research), to determine eligibility:

- deposited within three months of acceptance, in line with the University's Open Access Policy;
- published during the REF assessment period (from 2021 onwards);
- include an appropriate University affiliation (University of the Built Environment, University College of Estate Management, and/or London School of Architecture);
- meet the Research England's definition of an eligible research output.

This systematic approach supports consistent decision-making, reduces potential bias in output allocation, and enables the University to model different submission scenarios as staffing profiles and output portfolios evolve.

2) External quality assessment

Eligible outputs will undergo independent external peer review. Given the University's emerging research profile, and the relatively small number of SRR staff, external peer review will be the primary mechanism for assessing the quality of research outputs.

An External REF Advisor with extensive disciplinary expertise and prior experience in previous REF cycles has been appointed to conduct independent evaluations of all eligible outputs. The External REF Advisor has received a detailed briefing on the assessment process to ensure methodological consistency and fairness. Each output will be assessed against REF criteria of originality, significance and rigour, using a 13-point scoring scale mapped against the REF star ratings (4★ to 0★):

- 4★ – World-leading in terms of originality, significance, and rigour;

- 3★ – Internationally excellent;
- 2★ – Recognised internationally;
- 1★ – Recognised nationally;
- 0★ – Unclassified (not meeting the definition of research).

Scores and qualitative feedback will be captured in the University's Output Sorter and confidentially shared with the Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee.

3) Author Input and Construction of the Output Pool

Authors will be invited annually to self-assess and rank their eligible outputs against the REF criteria of originality, significance, and rigour. This process enables authors to contribute disciplinary insight into the relative strengths of their work and supports transparency in the selection process. Results will be fed into the University's Output Sorter, and combined with the External Advisor's quality assessment scores, will be used to identify outputs attributable to staff with SRR and research independence, to model potential submission scenarios in accordance with REF rules.

The Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee will review the output pool to:

- confirm alignment with eligibility requirements;
- ensure appropriate attribution of outputs to staff (maximum of 5 per staff member);
- identify any anomalies in the data.

This process ensures that the output pool accurately reflects the University's research activity while maintaining fairness and transparency in output attribution. If significant discrepancies arise between author rankings and external Advisor scores, an additional external REF Advisor will be engaged to provide an independent moderation.

Diversity of output types and recognition of collaborative and interdisciplinary contributions will be actively considered, alongside traditional metrics of quality, to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

The Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee will ensure that output selection does not disadvantage staff based on protected characteristics, career breaks, or atypical career paths as per our EIA policy and process.

4) Monitoring and Mock REF Exercises

The output pool will be reviewed three times annually, as part of each Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee meeting. In addition, an annual mock REF report will surmise the current position, and will be shared with various University committees (Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee, Research Committee and Academic Board) and academic staff:

- output quality profile;
- UoA readiness;
- strategic gaps.

An EIA will be conducted annually as part of the mock REF, and the findings will be used to inform institutional planning and research development.

5) Final Output Selection

The Research Excellence Framework Subcommittee will determine the final output selection based on Output Sorter analysis.

5.1.6 Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice

The University is committed to ensuring that all research assessment processes related to REF 2029 are conducted in a fair, transparent, and responsible manner. This approach is guided by the principles of integrity, equity, and inclusivity, and aligns with national and international frameworks for responsible research assessment, including DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, to which the University is a signatory since 2023.

Assessment of research quality will be based on the intrinsic merit and contribution of the work, rather than on proxy measures such as journal impact factors, publisher prestige, or the volume of outputs. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence may be considered, but all judgements will prioritise the originality, significance, and rigour of the research.

Policies and procedures supporting this commitment include the University's Research Integrity Policy, Open Access Policy, Data Management Policy, and Authorship and Publication Policy. These are reviewed annually to ensure alignment with sector best practice (see Appendix Part 6: 2.0 for links to policies).

5.2.0 to 5.3.0

The topics relating to staff, committees, and training, as well as roles and responsibilities, training, appeals, and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), are addressed in detail in Part 2 of this Code of Practice. Specifically:

- Part 5: 2.0 Staff, Committees, and Training
- Part 5: 2.1 Roles and Responsibilities
- Part 5: 2.1 Training
- Part 5: 3.0 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

6.0 Appendices

6.1 Equality impact assessment

Equality Impact Assessment and Compassionate Communication Form

Policy / Practice (name or brief description)

Name: Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice

Brief description: Describes our policies, procedures, and decision-making processes for REF29

Who does the policy/procedure impact (e.g. staff, students): Academic staff, research staff, technical staff

When will the policy come into effect? Policy will be submitted externally in May 2026

Reason for Equality Impact Assessment

- Proposed new policy/practice ☒
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice ☐
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice ☐
- Other (please state) ☐

Person responsible for the policy area or practice

Name: Professor Angela Lee & Dr Jaydene Witchell

Job Title: Research Office

EIA completed by:

Professor Angela Lee (AL), Associate Dean – Research: Policy Owner

Dr Jaydene Witchel (JW), Research Funding and Operations Manager: Policy Owner

Lily Rogers (LR), HR Analyst & Adviser: Policy Stakeholder and Advisor

Kate Greenway (KG), Quality Assurance Officer: EIA Chair

Richard Higgings (RH), Head of Disability and Welfare: Disability and Welfare Lead

Section A – Equality Impact Assessment

Group	Potential impact	Positive / Negative / Neutral	Mitigation / Enhancement Measures
Age	No process or policy within the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice (CoP) seeks to identify or use researchers' age in decision-making. REF decisions are based on clearly defined, transparent criteria. Retirement is noted within the Code of Practice, and retirees are treated in an inclusive manner.	Neutral	Processes will continue to be monitored to ensure no direct or indirect age-related disadvantage arises.
Disability	No process associated with research allocation or the REF Code of Practice seeks to identify researchers' disability status. Reasonable adjustments are available through existing institutional processes. Staff are signposted to support mechanisms, and the REF Code of Practice reflects sector best practice on inclusivity. Making documentation available in different formats is a positive. The accessibility of the document itself needs further work (see mitigation column).	Neutral <i>(once the accessibility issues with the document itself have been addressed)</i>	Accessibility (screen reader): - Run the accessibility check in MS Word and take the actions to rectify any accessibility issues - Alternate text is required for diagrams and images - Where weblinks are included they should be followed by '(opens in a new window)' - Review Figure 3 (page 34): it is blurry and the contrast of white text on a green

			background may need to be considered - Diagrams are text-heavy: alternative text should be used and/or alternative ways of providing the information should be considered - Remove the guidance boxes at the start of each section - Spell out the REF acronym in the document title.
Gender identity (reassignment)	The REF Code of Practice does not require disclosure of gender identity or reassignment history, and no decisions are influenced by this characteristic. All processes use inclusive language and respect confidentiality. EDI training for REF decision-makers reinforces equality principles and respectful practice.	Neutral	N/A
Sex	No REF-related processes differentiate on the basis of sex. Decisions are based on research quality and eligibility criteria only. Equality and diversity training for REF panel members supports fair decision-making.	Neutral	Outcomes will be monitored at an aggregate level to ensure there is no unintended differential impact.

Being married or in a civil partnership	Marital or partnership status is not collected or considered in any REF related process. REF processes remain focused solely on research criteria and institutional requirements.	Neutral	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy and maternity status is not used in REF decision-making. However, periods of leave may affect research outputs or circumstances. Such periods of leave will be dealt with in a positive way. This should be clear in the Code of Practice. Clearly communicated processes are in place to account for individual circumstances in line with REF guidance. Confidentiality is maintained, and support is available through HR processes.	Neutral	Consider adding extra wording around adjusting the expectations for outputs following periods of leave.
Race	No aspect of the REF Code of Practice identifies or differentiates researchers on the basis of race. Institutional monitoring and equality training help ensure that processes are applied consistently and without bias. Any concerns can be raised through established governance routes.	Neutral	N/A
Religion or belief, including lack of belief	Religion or belief is not requested, recorded, or considered within REF processes. REF activity is scheduled and communicated inclusively, with flexibility provided where reasonable through existing institutional policies.	Neutral	N/A
Sexual orientation	Sexual orientation is not identified or considered in REF decision-making. Inclusive language and confidentiality	Neutral	N/A

	are embedded within REF processes. Staff are supported by broader institutional equality and dignity policies.		
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Further comments:

The role of the REF Subcommittee in reviewing equality monitoring data is a positive. It is great to see reasonable adjustments throughout the document and the positive commitment to EDI. The EDI training referred to within the CoP is welcomed.

There was discussion about the allocation of time to research activities, and whether there was potential for this to disadvantage certain groups. As the time is allocated as a percentage of 'working time', the panel agreed that there would be no implicit detriment to certain groups (such as those with disabilities), noting that holistic support is provided for the entirety of the working time. It was noted, that output targets should be set in consideration of the working pattern (part-time etc.) and that a statement can be added into the CoP to ensure that this is clearly articulated, however this is not required as part of the EIA assessment.

Further action: Review the wording around equality monitoring data to ensure that accurately reflects the EDI data monitoring position (particularly page 12).

Section B – Plain English

Please review the policy / procedure to ensure that it meets plain English principles and complete the table below. Where 'no' or 'Partial' is answered to a principle please determine an appropriate action to address this.

AREA	QUESTION	YES	NO	PARTLY	COMMENTS AND ACTION REQUIRED
CLARITY OF WORDS	Is the language simple and free from unnecessary jargon?	☐	☐	☒	The authors have tried to explain and use diagrams, but it is recognised that some aspects are (unavoidably) complex. It was noted that the structure and wording used it to a large extent dictated by the external, pre-determined guidance which needs to be followed. On page 12 there is a switch from the equality to equity. This should be reviewed. A consistent 'person' should be used throughout the document (sometimes 'we', sometimes 'it' (the University)). Marketing can advise.
	Are acronyms or abbreviations written in full the first time?	☐	☐	☒	A final check should be completed to ensure that all

					acronyms are spelt out (UKRI, UOA etc.), including in the document title.
STRUCTURE AND READABILITY	Are sentences and paragraphs short and easy to follow?	☐	☐	☒	The consistency of spacing between paragraphs should be checked.
	Is information broken up with headings, bullet points, or numbering?	☐	☐	☒	It is noted that the structure of the REF Code of Practice 2029 guidelines has been followed to ensure ease of assessment by the external review. It was agreed that the guidance boxes at the start of each section should be removed.
	Does it have clear formatting including readable font, limited use of bold and italics, colour contrast	☒	☐	☐	The page numbering should be checked in the final version.
	Is the key message or decision clearly stated at the start?	☐	☐	☒	Could the introduction be more direct setting out the purpose of the document?
ACCESSIBILITY OF CONTENT	Is readable for the target audience?	☐	☐	☒	The target audience is University staff. It was recommended that, when the finalised CoP is disseminated to staff, consideration is given to how the purpose and information can be explained in

					a manner that is easier to digest e.g. the offer of consultations/FAQs/ a guide/summary/video.
	Are alternative formats available (e.g., Easy Read, large print, audio, translation)?	☐	☒	☐	This can be provided easily on request. University staff have access to a range of accessibility support generally. There are statements on pages 10 and 20 around the provision of documents in alternative formats. This wording should be reviewed for accuracy. See also the accessibility comments under section A of this form.

Further comments:

The document is lengthy and quite complex, but it is acknowledged that this is due to following the structure of the REF Code of Practice Guidelines and the complex nature of the subject matter. The actions to remove the instruction boxes and be more direct in setting out the purpose of the document should help with the readability. The action to consider ways to accompany the publication of the document with further support/advice/guidance, seeks to mitigate against any barriers to understanding the CoP. It was discussed whether table 1 could be put into an appendix, however the authors explained that this needed to remain in order to follow guidance.

Section C – Compassionate Communications

Please review the policy / procedure to ensure that it supports inclusion and meets compassionate communication principles and complete the table below. Where 'no' or 'partial' is answered to a principle please determine an appropriate action to address this.

Principle	Yes / No / Partial	Action Required
1. Inclusive and respectful language is used throughout (gender-neutral terms and inclusive phrasing)	Yes	None
2. Acknowledges staff/ student emotions and challenges (does the document recognise that the policy might be read at a stressful time and use empathetic phrases)	Yes	None
3. Offers reassurance / support, easy routes for asking for help and encourages help seeking behaviours	Yes	None
4. Avoids punitive tone	Yes	None
5. Fair and transparent (detail how decisions are made and whether there is a right of appeal)	Yes	None
6. Uses examples to clarify complex information	No. Diagrams are used however.	None

Section D – Assessment Outcome

On reviewing the sections above select one of the four options below to indicate the outcome of the assessment and state the rationale for the decision

- A. **No change required** – the assessment is that the policy/practice is robust ☐
- B. **Changes needed** – steps need to be made to remove barriers and to promote equality or improve readability ☒
Minor actions are required to ensure that the document is accessible (see actions)
- C. **Continue despite impact** – which can be mitigated or justified ☐
- D. **Discontinue** – impact cannot be prevented / mitigated / justified ☐

Section E – Action and Monitoring

For all mitigations / actions identified, detail in the table below the action, action owner and deadline.

Action Required	Action Owner	Deadline	Success Indicator	Change resulting and date completed
Accessibility: Run an accessibility check in MS Word and ensure that any identified issues are rectified. Provide alternate text for diagrams and images. Review figure 3 on page 34 for accessibility (clarity, contrast). Ensure any weblinks are followed by 'opens in a new window'	AL It is recommended that support is requested from Learning Technologies Production Manager, Graham North (GN) for the diagram accessibility KG can support the general accessibility checks	30.04.26	The CoP document is accessible and compatible with screen-reading software.	Completed.
Check all acronyms to ensure that they are spelt out in the first instance, including 'REF' in the title.	AL/JW	23.02.26	All acronyms have been spelt out for clarity.	Completed.
Ensure the consistency of language used: - 'person' ('we' vs 'it') - equity vs equality	AL/JW	23.02.26	The language and tone used throughout the document is consistent.	Completed.
Remove the guidance boxes at the start of each section.	AL/JW	30.04.26	The document is more focussed and barriers to	Guidance boxes removed.

			accessibility are removed.	
Formatting: Check the page numbering and paragraph spacing in the final version.	AL/JW	30.04.26	The format of the document is clear and consistent.	Completed.
Review the introduction to ensure that it clearly sets out the purpose of the document.	AL/JW	23.02.26	The purpose of the document is clear from the outset to aid with accessibility.	Completed.
Review the statements on pages 10 and 20 around the provision of documents in alternative formats.	AL/JW	23.02.26	The information on the alternative format of documentation is clear, accurate and ensures accessibility.	Completed.
Review the wording around equality monitoring data to ensure that accurately reflects the EDI data monitoring position, particularly page 12.	LR	23.02.26	The information on equality monitoring data is clear, accurate and promotes affective equality monitoring.	Completed.
Consider adding extra wording around adjusting the expectations for outputs following periods of leave (such as maternity, long term sickness).	JW	23.02.26	The wording around adjusting the expectations for outputs following periods of leave (such as maternity, long term sickness)	Completed.

			reflects the positive intentions of the CoP that periods of leave will be accounted for so that the individual is not adversely impacted.	
Consider accompanying the publication of the CoP with guidance and/or support to staff. E.g. the offer of consultations/FAQs/a guide/summary/ video.	AL/JW	Decide upon the planned activity by 30.04.26 – implement alongside publication	Staff are assisted in engaging with and understanding what is an unavoidably long and complex document.	Virtual session delivered in January 2026 explaining CoP to staff. Future session will be organised in June 2026.

Section F Sign-off

Signed by (Policy area owner)

Angela Lee

19/02/2026

Signed by (Review Chair)

Kate Greenway

20/02/2026

Signed by (Head of Disability and Welfare) Richard Higgins

20/02/2026

6.2 Referenced material in the CoP

List policies referenced in this Code and their links:

- University of the Built Environment's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement](#), including governance structure
- The vast majority of the University of the Built Environment's research related policies can be found in the 'related resources' section of our [research webpage](#). These include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Authorship and publication policy
 - Data management policy
 - Research ethics policy
 - Research misconduct policies and relevant terms of reference and appeals process
 - Research strategy
 - Concordat to support research integrity
 - Sustainability principles
 - Code of Practice for Research
 - Open access policy
 - REF 2029 policies and guidance including the REF Subcommittee terms of reference and this REF Code of Practice.
- Additional internal policies and guidance documents relevant to the REF are made available to staff through the University's SharePoint and Teams sites. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 2 year research plan template as per our FAQ
 - Mock REF reports
 - Annual research achievements reports
 - University of the Built Environment's Research Committee Terms of Reference
 - Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

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6.4 Abbreviations

ADR	Associate Dean (Research)
DORA	San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment
PVC(A)	Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)
ECR	Early Career Researcher
ED&I, EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GPA	Grade Point Average
LSA	London School of Architecture, part of the University of the Built Environment since May 2025
PDR	Performance and Development Review
PGR	Post Graduate Researcher
PI	Principal Investigator
RC	Research Committee
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SRR	Significant Responsibility for Research
UCEM	University College of Estate Management, former name of the University of the Built Environment (prior to June 2025)
UK	United Kingdom
UoA	Unit of Assessment
UoA13	Unit of Assessment 13: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
WLBM	Workload Balance Model