Research Excellence Framework 2014

Staff disclosure

# Introduction

The four UK funding bodies recommend that higher education institutions (HEIs) submitting to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) develop robust procedures to enable staff to disclose, with an appropriate degree of confidentiality, individual circumstances that may impact on the number of research outputs that they have produced. It is also recommended within the Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions that HEIs take a proactive approach to encourage staff to disclose their circumstances. Therefore, all eligible staff should be asked to complete a form about their individual circumstances.

The form provided is designed to be adapted by HEIs submitting to the REF. HEIs can also find notable examples of staff disclose templates used in the RAE at <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/inclusive-practice/research-assessment-exercise-2008-and-equality>.

# Data protection and confidentiality

The Data Protection Act 1998 requires HEIs to comply with a number of important principles regarding privacy and disclosure when handling personal data. These principles include ensuring such data are processed and used for limited purposes, and that the data are accurate and up-to-date. The Data Protection Act categorises certain types of data, including some of the data that HEIs will need to collect for REF purposes on individual staff circumstances, as sensitive personal data. Sensitive personal data are subject to stricter forms of processing and HEIs may want to consult their human resources division or data manager on requirements for storing and handling such data. Further information can also be found on the website of the Information Commissioner’s Office [www.ico.gov.uk/](http://www.ico.gov.uk/)

Most importantly, if a member of staff informs someone of their personal circumstances their permission must be sought before the information is passed on or stored. Where staff do not provide permission for information to be passed on or stored, HEIs may be limited in the actions they can take. Staff cannot be compelled to provide information about their circumstances or to give permission for it to be stored or passed on.

**To encourage staff disclosure of individual circumstances that may be sensitive, HEIs can consider:**

1. **How will we reassure staff about the way in which the data will be stored?**
2. **How will we communicate any safeguards that exist to protect staff members' confidentiality and privacy?**
3. **How will we support staff who disclose individual circumstances that we were previously unaware of?**

# Template covering note and staff disclosure form

To: All members of staff eligible for return in REF 2014

From: [insert]

Subject: REF 2014, consideration of individual staff circumstances

The [insert institution name] is committed to ensuring that decisions about selecting staff for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) are made in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. Information on how eligible staff will be selected for submission to the REF can be found in the [insert institution name]’s Code of Practice which can be found at [insert web address].

To ensure that REF processes are fair, the [insert institution name] is collecting data on individual circumstances from all staff eligible for submission. The data will be used to identify which staff are eligible for submission with fewer than four outputs. Summary level data collected may also inform the [insert institution name]’s monitoring of staff selection procedures at the institutional level.

In determining whether eligible staff may be submitted to the REF with fewer than four research outputs, the [insert institution name and centralised committee name where appropriate] will take the following circumstances into consideration:

* Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009)
* Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 [Delete as appropriate: applies to specific units of assessment within Panel A]
* Part time employment
* Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector in which the individual did not undertake academic research
* Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, and additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters)
* Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue)
* Ill health or injury
* Mental health conditions
* Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption, paternity or childcare **in addition to** periods of maternity, statutory adoption or additional paternity leave taken. This could include for example, pregnancy related illness and health and safety restrictions in laboratory and field work.
* Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative)
* Gender reassignment

If your research output has been affected by other circumstances, not including teaching and administration that are not listed above, please detail them on this form as they may be considered.

In determining the number of outputs staff are required to submit, the institution will observe the definitions of individual staff circumstances provided in the published REF ‘Panel criteria and working methods’ (January 2012) available at [www.ref.ac.uk](http://www.ref.ac.uk) under ‘Publications’.

## What action do I need to take?

If you are eligible for REF submission you are encouraged to complete the attached form.

If further information is required about any circumstances disclosed, you will be contacted by [insert details].

## Who will see the information that I provide?

Within the institutions, the information that you provide will be seen by [state name of central committee or individuals within the institution who will see the information].

[Members of the [insert name] committee or individuals] handling individual staff circumstances will observe confidentiality and information will be stored securely. [Further information can be included here on the institutions arrangements for confidentiality].

Information provided on the form may be shared externally for the purposes of evidencing any reduction in the number of research outputs:

* For circumstances with a clearly defined reduction in outputs, information will be seen by the relevant REF sub-panel, the REF panel secretariat and the UK funding bodies’ REF team. This will be information about early career researcher status, part-time working, career breaks or secondments, and periods of maternity, additional paternity or adoption leave taken.
* For more complex circumstances**,** information will be seen only by the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, the REF Main Panel Chairs and the UK funding bodies’ REF team. This will be information to explain the impact on your research of circumstances such as disability, ill health, injury, mental health conditions, gender reassignment, caring responsibilities or constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, adoption and paternity (in addition to the period of leave taken). This information will **not** be seen by the REF sub-panel.

All REF panel members, chairs and secretaries are bound by confidentiality requirements, and acceptance of the confidentiality requirements is a condition of their appointment to the role. No information relating to identifiable individuals’ circumstances will be published by the funding bodies REF Team. All data collected, stored and processed by the UK funding bodies REF Team will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The REF Assessment Framework and Guidance on Submissions [www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02\_11/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/02_11/), requires all higher education institutions participating in the REF to ensure appropriate confidentiality in handling individual staff circumstances. [Delete is not applicable: Where joint submissions are made it may be necessary to share the information provided with another institution.]

## What if my circumstances change?

The [insert institution name] recognises that staff circumstances may change between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013. If your circumstances change you can download a copy of the attached form at [insert web address].

# Individual staff circumstances disclosure form

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** |  |
| **Department** |  |
| **Unit of Assessment** |  |

## Section one:

Please select one of the following:

🞎 I have no individual circumstances that I wish to be taken into consideration for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

🞎 I have individual circumstances that I wish to make known but I am not seeking a reduction in outputs. (Please complete sections two and three)

🞎 In completing this form I am seeking a reduction in research outputs. (Please complete sections two and three)

## Section two:

Please select as appropriate:

🞎 I would like to be contacted by a member of human resources staff to discuss my circumstances and requirements and/or the support provided by [institution name]. My contact details for this purpose are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Email** |  |
| **Telephone** |  |
| **Preferred method of communication** |  |

🞎 I do not wish to be contacted by a member of human resources staff

## Section three

I wish to make the University aware of the following circumstances which have had an impact on my ability to produce four outputs or work productively between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013:

Please provide information required on relevant circumstance/s and continue onto a separate sheet of paper if necessary:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Circumstance | Information required |
| Early career researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2009) | Date on which you became an early career research |
| Information | |
| Junior clinical academic staff who have not gained Certificate of Completion of Training by 31 October 2013 [Delete as appropriate: applies to specific units of assessment within Panel A] | Please place a tick in this box if the circumstance applies: |
| Part time employee | FTE and duration in months |
| Information | |
| Career break or secondment outside of the higher education sector | Dates and duration in months |
| Information | |
| Maternity leave, statutory adoption leave, or additional paternity leave (taken by partners of new mothers or co-adopters) | For each period of leave state which type of leave was taken and the dates and duration in months |
| Information | |
| Disability (including conditions such as cancer and chronic fatigue) | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information | |
| Mental health condition | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information |  |
| Ill health or injury | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information | |
| Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding, paternity, adoption or childcare **in addition to** the period of maternity, adoption or additional paternity leave taken. | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information | |
| Other caring responsibilities (including caring for an elderly or disabled relative) | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information | |
| Gender reassignment | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information | |
| Other exceptional and relevant reasons, not including teaching or administrative work | Impact on ability to fulfil contractual hours and other impacts on ability to undertake research. Duration in months |
| Information | |

Please select as appropriate:

🞎 I confirm that the information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances.

🞎 I recognise that the information provided will be used for REF purposes and will be seen by [insert information].

🞎 I realise that it may be necessary to share information with the UK funding bodies’ REF team, who may make the information available to REF panel chairs, members and secretaries and/or the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel. [Delete if not applicable: I recognise that if a joint submission is made, information may be shared with another institution.] Where permission is not provided [insert name of institution] will be limited in the action it can take.

Signature: Date:

(Staff member)

# For official use only

Following consideration of the personal circumstances described above, the [insert name of responsible committee or individuals]:

Will progress the staff member’s inclusion in the REF submission with [insert number] of research outputs. [Subject to specified institutional criteria]. Rationale for the proposed number of outputs:

*e.g. this decision is based on the tariffs outlined in the panel criteria.*

Requires further information of the circumstances described as follows:

*e.g. please provide information from your occupational health assessment on the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments provided.*

Does not feel that the staff member meets the criteria outlined within the REF ‘Panel criteria and working methods’ for submitting fewer than four research outputs. The reason(s) for this decision are:

e.g. circumstances detailed are not recognised within the assessment framework and guidance on submissions.

If [insert name of staff member] wishes to appeal against the decision of the [insert name of the committee or individuals] they will need to do so by [insert date] and details of the appeals process can be found at [insert web address].

Signature: Date:

([insert name of person/chair of committee responsible for decision])

Signature: Date:

*(REF Manager)*