

Research Excellence Framework: Equality Impact Assessment based on ‘submitted staff’

# April 2021

An important element of the 2021 REF process is monitoring to ensure that the identification of staff for inclusion in REF submissions is not influenced on the basis of any individual’s age, disability, ethnic origin, marriage or civil partnership status, race, religious belief or affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity and paternity or any other irrelevant distinctions.

The University has adopted ‘eligibility to be nominated as a PGR Principal Supervisor’ as its criterion for identifying staff who are independent researchers with significant responsibility for research and so eligible to be included in REF 2021 submissions. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out in March 2019 when that criterion was first proposed. An EIA was carried out in November 2019 when the University’s Code of Practice [on the fair and transparent identification of staff with significant responsibility for research, determining who is an independent researcher, and the selection of outputs] was approved, based on that criterion. A further EIA was undertaken following the REF census date (31/07/2020). 30 academic staff were eligible to be included in a REF submission, out of a total of 176. A final EIA was carried out in April 2021 based on the 26 staff included in REF submissions.

Data were available for age, gender, contract type, religion, sexual orientation and disability. Data were not disclosed in the EIA where the number of individuals was fewer than 5; this has made meaningful comparisons impossible for some of the attributes under consideration.

The data disclosed in those EIAs suggest that the adoption of eligibility to be nominated as a PGR Principal Supervisor as the criterion for identifying staff who are independent researchers with significant responsibility for research has no negative or positive impact in terms of the attributes considered in the EIA, with the exception of age (where older individuals were more likely to have PGR Principal Supervisory status) and gender (where male staff were more likely to have PGR Principal Supervisory status). Under-representation of women was considered to be symptomatic of a broader gender issue in academic employment and not specifically related to PGR supervision (and so REF). Under-representation of staff less than 51 years of age was considered to be an outcome of the substantial restructuring which had taken place, with many less experienced academic staff not yet meeting eligibility criteria.