

Research Assessment Exercise 2008 and Equality

Equal opportunities code of practice policy statement

Equal Opportunities Code of Practice

Introduction

It is a requirement of the RAE that each submitting institution establishes a code of practice. Institutional decisions on which members of staff to submit are at the discretion of HEIs but they need to be defensible. The funding bodies will require the head of each HEI making an RAE submission to confirm that the HEI has – in preparing its submissions and selecting staff for inclusion – developed, adopted and documented an appropriate internal code of practice, which attends to all relevant equal opportunities legislation in force on the submission date. HEIs may be required to submit their code of practice for verification.

Policy statement

The University's code of practice will make all the processes concerned with selection of staff for inclusion in RAE2008 submissions transparent. Practice in respect of submissions will be consistent across the institution and will set out the principles to be applied to all aspects/stages of the processes. Responsibilities will be clearly defined and the operating criteria and terms of reference for individuals, committees, advisory groups and any other bodies concerned with the RAE will be made readily available to all individuals and groups concerned. The existence of the code will be well publicised throughout the institution.

The University will:

- Develop open and transparent selection criteria for use by the University's selection panels/boards
- Detail the communication channels to be used to convey the relevant information to all involved in the selection process and all those eligible for submission
- Take account of individual's personal circumstances in accordance with the guidance set out in RAE Circular RAE 01/2006 and Appendix G from the RAE 2008 Guidance on Submissions (RAE Circular 03/2005).
- Ensure that selection for RAE submissions do not discriminate on the grounds of Race, Disability, Gender, Age, Sexual Orientation Religion or Belief as well as Fixed term or Part time status.
- Detail an appeal process that can be used by all members of eligible staff in order to seek further consideration for submission.
- Highlight the impact assessment process that will be undertaken in order to assess any adverse impact on the inclusion and exclusion rates of all eligible staff by race gender and disability.
- The Code of Practice will mainstream our commitment to equality and the RAE process by cross referencing the RAE into the University's key Equality policies and documents, and cross referencing equality into the University's key RAE policy statements.

Code of Practice Committees

Major responsibility for conducting aspects of the RAE process and making key decisions will be carried out by the University's Research Committee and the RAE Working Group (to be established from members of the SMT, and council and co-opted members to reflect diversity within the University).

The Research committee within each School will have responsibility for initial proposals for inclusion or exclusion of members of staff and the application of this code of practice. The appointment of members of the Committees must be through transparent processes.

School Research Committees will submit proposals for inclusion in the RAE to The University Research Committee.

The University Research Committee will be responsible for formulation of the University's submission and ensuring compliance with this code of practice through impact assessment.

The RAE Working Group will test and challenge proposals from School Research Committees to ensure the University is consistent and fair in its selection decisions and will consider any appeals for inclusion.

Members of all committees and working groups involved in selection of staff for the RAE will have already received or be given appropriate training through the staff development unit or the Equal Opportunities Officer.

The University Research Committee will:

- define which units of assessment are to be submitted
- define the overall quality level to be expected from submissions
- will notify Schools in writing about decisions made with regard to exclusion or inclusion and provide feedback about any changes to proposals made for inclusion of members of staff

The School Research Committee will:

- develop detailed criteria that reflect the quality level expected by the University within each unit of assessment to be submitted; Whilst this will be a uniform process across the University for selecting staff for the RAE, the criteria to be used will inevitably vary from discipline to discipline. Such criteria should be based on the RAE criteria specific to each Unit of assessment set out in Circular RAE 01/2006 - Panel Criteria and Working Methods
- produce a statement of intent giving information about how it will carry out its selection and submission process. Staff should be consulted on the statement. Such a statement should be based on the guidance set out in RAE 01/2006 - Panel Criteria and Working methods
- recommend criteria to the University Research Committee for approval and once approved will communicate the criteria to all eligible members of staff;

Research Assessment Exercise 2008 and Equality

Equal opportunities code of practice policy statement

- measure the submissions of individual members of staff against the specified UoA criteria and will make proposals for inclusion of members of staff to the University Research Committee. The parameters of the decision must be clear, and records must be kept. Committees should be made fully aware of all the facts relating to individual circumstances.
- notify members of staff about decisions made with regard to exclusion or inclusion and provide feedback to members of staff who are not included
- notify members of staff about methods of appeal.

Personal circumstances

RAE Main panels and sub-panels have produced guidance on how they will deal with individual circumstances that might have had an effect on an individual's contribution to a submission and each panel's guidance document has an equal opportunities statement to ensure that personal circumstances are taken into account.

School Research Committees should make it clear to all members of eligible staff that they should put forward in writing to the School Research Committees any such relevant circumstances so that these can be considered along with their RAE submission.

In common with the panel guidance, the University and School Research Committees and the RAE Working Group will consider the following individual circumstances to the extent that they are stated to have had a material impact on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period:

- a. Family and domestic matters, including:
 - i. Absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave.
 - ii. Part-time working or other flexible working arrangements.
 - iii. Time spent acting as a carer or other domestic commitments.
- b. Disability, ill-health and injury, including:
 - i. Any disability to which the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 applies, including both permanent disabilities and any temporary disability with a duration of 12 months or more.
 - ii. Absence from work on the advice of a registered medical practitioner.
- c. Engagement on long-term projects of significant scale and scope.
- d. Status as an early career researcher. These are individuals of any age who first entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to RAE2008 as Category A staff on or after 1 August 2003.
- e. Prolonged absences (absences for more than six months consecutively in the assessment period) which were agreed by the individual with the institution but which do not fall in to one of the categories above. They include:
 - i. Secondment to non-academic positions outside the higher education sector.
 - ii. Career breaks for purposes unconnected with research, teaching or other academic duties.

Research Assessment Exercise 2008 and Equality

Equal opportunities code of practice policy statement

- f. Other absences which the institution is legally obliged to permit, such as absences for religious observance or absence arising out of involvement as a representative of the workforce.
- g. Any other personal circumstances which are considered to have had a significant impact on an individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period.

Other circumstances comparable with the examples above will be considered, as long as an explanation is provided as to the way in which they are said to have impacted on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs. Any member of staff wishing to bring one of the above to the attention of the School Research Committee or the RAE Working Group should provide:

- a. A broad description of the nature of the circumstances (eg, ill-health, maternity leave).
- b. The timing of circumstances, ie, when they occurred.
- c. The duration of the circumstances.
- d. The extent of the impact of the circumstances on the individual's ability to carry out research activities (eg, impossible to carry out research at all, roughly 50% reduction in time available).

Fixed-term and part-time staff

In the light of the Fixed-term and Part-time Regulations, consideration will be given by the University to individual circumstances affecting part time and fixed term staff, such circumstances might for example include pro rata consideration of the application criteria for submission in the case of part time staff and breaks in the continuity of employment of fixed term and where relevant, contract research staff.

Impact assessment

The University will provide an equality profile – in terms of disability, gender and ethnicity – of staff who are eligible for submission and indicate those who are submitted and those who are not. The Research Committee will monitor this using anonymised data supplied from the Personnel database. If any prima facie imbalance is found relative to the total potential pool, then the University Research Committee will investigate in order to account for it.

The University Research Committee will require that School Research Committees undertake impact assessments

Appeals

Appeals against exclusion should be made in writing setting out the case for inclusion to the PVC (Research) and will be considered by the RAE Working Group. Such appeals should, if appropriate, set out any relevant personal circumstances as set out above.

The RAE Working Group will consider the reasons given for exclusion by the School Research Committee and the case put forward for inclusion, and may if it considers appropriate seek the views of up to four external assessors, either two mutually agreed by the School Research Committee or in the event of no agreement being reached, two

Research Assessment Exercise 2008 and Equality

Equal opportunities code of practice policy statement

external assessors nominated by the member of staff concerned and two nominated by the School Research Committee.

Outcomes of Appeals will be notified to members of staff and to the School Research Committee and reasons provided.