EIA on University of Westminster's
policy and procedures for selecting outputs for REF2021

1. Introduction

The purpose of this EIA is to examine the data and identify any trends in relation to equality and diversity that have resulted from the process used to select outputs for REF2021. The EIA is the responsibility of the University of Westminster REF E&D committee which reports to the REF2021 Sub-committee.

2. Background

The Research Excellence Framework is conducted by Research England on behalf of the UK higher education funding bodies. The REF informs the selective allocation of QR funding, provides public evidence of the benefits of research investment and supports the establishment of standards of research quality. The REF is organized into 34 subject sub-panels or units of assessment, of which the University of Westminster submitted to 13. Institutions make submissions at Unit level. For REF2021 there is also a pilot excise where institutions submit an institutional level environment statement to provide contextual information. Each Unit submission includes three components, outputs, impact and environment, with outputs representing 60% of the final assessment. Any output (e.g., journal article, monograph, portfolio, exhibition, book chapter) that meets the REF definition of research can be submitted regardless of output type. Journal articles and conference papers are expected to meet open access requirements. 2.5 outputs are required per submitted FTE, with a minimum one and maximum 5 outputs per individual submitted.

There is a dispensation process to support individuals and Units whose submission to REF2021 may have been impacted by equality-related circumstances, and all eligible staff at the University were invited to submit a Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances form on a voluntary basis to indicate confidentially any equality-related circumstances that affected their productivity over the REF2021 assessment period.

Those individuals at the University of Westminster involved in REF2021 decision-making processes are expected to be fully conversant with equal opportunities issues and the legislative environment and its implications for the REF, including around the selection of outputs, and undertook appropriate mandatory training on equality and diversity principles. Specific guidance on how such principles (including the responsible use of metrics) relate to REF policies and procedures were also provided through in-person workshops, and all staff in decision-making roles were asked to commit to running a fair and transparent process. All staff involved in REF preparations (including external advisors) were directly provided with the REF guidance on equality and diversity as well as with copies of the University's Code of Practice.

3. Scope
The policy covered by the EIA is detailed in Section 4: Selection of Outputs in the University's Code of Practice. This review is being carried out to identify whether staff with particular protected characteristics were more or less likely to have outputs selected for the University's REF2021 submission. The characteristics considered are age, ethnicity, gender, and disability.

Staff submitted to REF2021 have an interest in how outputs are selected. However, as the Code of Practice (section 4.1.2.) sets out: "No individual staff member will be set any specifically REF2021-related target as regards their individual contribution to the output pool for a particular Unit of Assessment". As such, "Any University published targets for REF2021 are thus explicitly set at the level of the University submission as a whole and not as a target for any individual."

Following an initial draft selection of outputs process undertaken in October 2020 an interim EIA on the outputs selection was produced.

4. Analyses
Both the interim and final EIA were similar, with output selection by staff members broadly in line with the proportions of staff with protected characteristics. In both the interim and final EIA, outputs from staff who identified as BME were selected at a slightly lower frequency than expected given the proportion of such staff submitted to REF2021, with outputs from staff who identified as white slightly overrepresented. Chi squared test demonstrated that the differences were not significant ($X2$ (3, N=1022) = 6.32, p< 0.05). For gender, outputs by female staff were marginally less likely to be selected than outputs from male staff. Outputs from staff declaring a disability were also marginally less likely to be selected. However, none of these differences were statistically significant (gender Chi Squared: (1, N=1022) = 0.360, p< 0.05; Disability Chi Squared: (2, N=1022) = 4.14, p< 0.05). No significant differences were identified with respect to output selection and age (age Chi Squared: (4, N=1022) = 4.04, p<0.05).

5. Conclusions
The output selection process for REF2021 resulted in a final output selection that was broadly in line with the proportions of staff with protected characteristics submitted to REF. Outputs from staff who identified as BME, female or disabled were slightly less likely to be selected for submission than those from staff who identified as white, male or non-disabled. While these small differences do not appear to be statistically significant, it is recognised that it is important to explore further any divergence in rates of submission between different groups and to continue to monitor and embed equality and diversity within our processes. In future, more detailed statistical analysis on the EIA data should be performed where possible and further protected characteristics included where data availability supports this.

6. Action plan

Building on the outcomes of the Metric Tide Report and the responsible use of metrics training delivered to all involved in preparing for REF 2021 and the associated statement included in the University's Code of Good Research Practice the University plans to put in place an action plan to develop a responsible use of metrics policy and framework. This will include evaluating existing frameworks including DORA, the Leiden Manifesto and Hong Kong Principles to develop a plan that aligns with Westminster's values and respects the broad range of disciplines we engage in. It will be underpinned by a cross-university working group with representatives from relevant stakeholders including HR and be led by a senior academic champion. That will more effectively embed equality into outputs selection in any future ref exercises and connect up with the external policy landscape.

7. EDI data

Equalities Denominator	All outputs		No. of staff selected for REF submission	% of staff selected for REF submission
Age				
16-24			≤5	≤1%
25-34	56	5.48%	26	5.9%
35-44	338	33.07%	139	31.3%
45-54	342	33.46%	150	33.8%
55-64	206	20.16%	98	22.1%
65 and over	80	7.83%	31	7.0%
Ethnicity				
BME	166	16.24%	85	19.1%
Information Refused	14	1.37%	7	1.6%
Unknown	44	4.31%	17	3.8%
White	798	78.08%	335	75.5%
Gender				
Female	483	47.26%	214	48.2%
Male	539	52.74%	230	51.8%
Disability				
No	1001	97.95%	430	96.8%
Prefer not to say	≤5	≤1%	≤5	≤1%
Yes	20	1.96%	13	2.9%