

Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances

Overview of individual staff circumstances

The UK funding bodies are committed to supporting and promoting equality and diversity in research careers. As part of this commitment, the measures set out by the REF have been put in place to recognise the effect that individuals' circumstances may have on research productivity (REF Guidance on Submissions, Part 3: Staff Circumstances, paragraphs 151-201). St George's, University of London's Code of Practice provides a framework within which recommendations and decisions of identifying staff with significant responsibilities for research, determining research independence and selection of outputs are conducted in a fair and transparent way with the aim of promoting equality and diversity, complying with legislation and avoiding discrimination.

Consideration will be given to any individual circumstances which may apply to an individual employed at St George's.

St George's will have the opportunity of confidentially reporting individual staff circumstances that may have significantly affected an individual's research activity or output in REF1b in the period 1st January 2014 to 31st July 2020.

Applicable circumstances

Individual staff circumstances might include but are not restricted to:

- Qualifying as an early career researcher (defined as starting their career as independent researcher on or after 1st August 2016);
- Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks;
- Qualifying periods of family-related leave;
- Other circumstances (for example Junior Clinical Academic);
- Circumstances equivalent to absence, that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:
 - Disability
 - Ill health, injury, or mental health conditions
 - Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare.
 - Other caring responsibilities (such as caring for an elderly or disabled family member)
 - Gender reassignment
 - Other circumstances relating to the protected or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.
- Part-time working.
- Circumstances affected by COVID-19.

For circumstances affected by COVID-19, the REF has issued the following guidance: Output(s) in the process of being produced have been affected by COVID-19 during the assessment period (1st January 2014 to 31st July 2020). This includes effects due to applicable circumstances (such as ill health, caring responsibilities); other personal circumstances related to COVID-19 (such as furloughed staff, health-related or clinical staff diverted to frontline services, staff resource diverted to other priority areas within the HEI in response to COVID-19); and/or external factors related to COVID-19 (for example, restricted access to research facilities); **and** The overall impact of the COVID-19 effects, combined with other applicable circumstances affecting your ability to research productively during the assessment period. For example, where a staff member is an early career researcher, or has held a fractional contract for a significant proportion of the assessment period, and has experienced COVID-19 related disruption to the production of an eligible output.

Process for Disclosure of Individual Staff Circumstances by staff

Information submitted in REF1b: Staff details will be kept confidential to St George's Human Resources and the REF Steering Executive.

Information submitted in REF1b: Staff details to the REF audit and data verification team, Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, Main Panel Chairs, will be kept confidential; these members are subject to confidentiality undertakings in respect of all information contained in submissions.

REF sub-panels will know where a reduction in the overall number of outputs in the submitting unit has been agreed without penalty on the basis of individual circumstances, but will not have access to further information about the circumstances (REF Guidance on Submissions, Part 3: Part 3: Section 1: Staff details – Staff circumstances, 151-201).

St George's Code of Practice will guide the decision-making process in submitting a reduction in individual staff circumstances to REF.

The exclusion of a member of staff from the St George's REF 2021 submission will not carry implications for the employment of that individual.

All decisions relating to submissions to REF 2021 will be made in accordance with the principles and criteria for inclusion and non-inclusion as detailed in this Code of Practice.

Members of staff who feel that individual circumstances may apply to them and who wish to make a statement of such circumstances will be able to do so at the outset of preparations and at any time during the lead up to submission (from October 2019, when the disclosure period

opens for individual staff circumstances, to 31st March 2021, when the REF submission period ends). This is a voluntary process.

The individual staff circumstances disclosure form for completion will be available on the SGUL portal, and can be requested by email from Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR. Additional guidance notes for applicants will accompany the form. Category A eligible staff will be notified of the process (Appendix 16: REF 2021 Individual Circumstances Disclosure Form) by individual email from the Academic Lead for REF in October 2019.

Staff are offered the option to discuss their intention to submit for individual staff circumstances before applying with the Academic Lead for REF (Professor Jodi Lindsay), their Institute Director(s) (Professor Dot Bennett, Professor Julian Ma, Professor Peter Whincup, and Professor Jane Saffell), the Deputy Principal (Research & Enterprise) (Professor Jon Friedland), or the Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR (Liz Grand).

Round two applications for staff disclosing personal circumstances must be submitted by 20th January 2021 to ensure due consideration by the time that St George's makes its submission to REF by March 2021. All eligible staff will be asked to complete this form between December 2020 and 20th January 2021. Disclosure forms may be submitted and revised after this date.

Individual circumstances forms should be submitted to the Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR (Liz Grand lgrand@sgul.ac.uk). This person is independent of the REF Steering Executive.

The Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR, will provide necessary information to the REF Steering Executive subgroup: staff member, the applicable circumstance(s), and brief statement describing how the circumstances have affected the staff member's ability to produce an eligible output during the submission period or its effect on the submitting unit overall (data required by REF in REF Guidance on Submissions, Part 3: Section 1: Staff details – Staff circumstances, paragraphs 192-197).

All requests received will be reviewed by the subgroup of the REF Steering Executive and treated as confidential. This subgroup will include the Deputy Principal (Institutional Affairs) and/or the Associate Dean for Culture, Development and Inclusion and the relevant Research Institute Director. The Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR, will attend this meeting.

The relevant Research Institute Director will recommend if the overall output pool for the Unit of Assessment should be adjusted, or if the 'minimum of one' requirement for the individual staff member should be removed, and this will be based on the guidance in the REF Guidance on Submissions, Part 3: Section 1: Staff details – Staff circumstances, paragraphs 156-201 and Annex L. A summary of information and recommendations will be presented to REF Steering Executive.

The REF Steering Executive will make a decision if a reduction is to be applied at an individual level (removal of the requirements for the minimum of 1 output), unit level reduction or not at all. Decisions will be documented in the minutes and a redacted version of the minutes will be made to protect confidentiality.

The decision by the REF Steering Executive will be communicated in writing to each individual by the Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR. Additional support for individuals will be considered by the Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR, and the Director HR & OD (member of the REF Steering Executive), who will follow up with each member of staff.

All individual staff circumstances disclosure forms submitted to SGUL will be reported to REF as part of the final submission to REF (31st March 2021), without disclosing personal circumstances, irrespective of whether a reduction was applied. Completed individual staff circumstance disclosure forms submitted to SGUL will not be submitted to REF in full.

The data submitted to REF to remove the minimum of one output requirement will be: staff member identifier, details of the applicable circumstance(s), and brief statement describing how the circumstance(s) has affected the staff member's ability to produce an eligible output during the submission period. The data submitted to REF for a unit reduction request will be: details of the number of staff and staff member identifier, brief statement of the circumstance(s) (data required by REF in REF Guidance on Submissions, Part 3: Section 1: Staff details – Staff circumstances, paragraphs 192-197).

Changes in circumstances

The university recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the census date (31st July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should contact the Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR to discuss and provide updated information.

Submitting individual staff circumstances

All applications for staff disclosing personal circumstances must be submitted by 20th January 2021 to ensure due consideration by the time that St George's makes its submission to REF in March 2021. All eligible staff will be asked to complete this form between December 2020 and 20th January 2021.

Disclosure forms may be submitted and revised after this date up to the REF submission deadline of 31st March 2021.

Completed forms should be sent to Liz Grand, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, HR (lgrand@sgul.ac.uk).