

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Department	Research & Knowledge Exchange
Policy	REF Code of Practice (CoP) 2029

Introduction

The Royal Academy of Music (the Academy) will make a submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029. The REF is designed to assess how well organisations are supporting research excellence. Submission outcomes inform the amount of research funding that an institution receives to support their future research activity. The Code of Practice (CoP) sets out the approach that the Academy is taking in preparation for REF 2029.

Institutions are required to complete and document an EIA as part of their Code of Practice submission for REF 2029. This requirement applies to all UK higher education institutions participating in the exercise. This EIA references REF 2029 guidance issued to support institutions in meeting their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Academy's engagement with EIA for the REF 2029 exercise has advanced since REF 2021 to become integral within each stage of policy development and decision-making processes, rather than a one off exercise. It has been concluded that an equality based analysis of representation within the REF 2021 submission in terms of gender, race, disability or minoritised status was not particularly useful. This was due to fact that the numbers of research staff involved were small, with potential risk of individual identification, and any anonymised percentage data appearing to skew and distort the specific data. However, the Academy's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion has been focussed by the establishment of a Research Office to provide managerial and administrative support for the research environment. This has resulted in better support for staff and doctoral students, the establishment of formalised research infrastructures, and the expansion of The Royal Academy of Music (the Academy) will make a submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029. The REF is designed to assess how well organisations are supporting research excellence. Submission outcomes inform the amount of research funding that an institution receives to support their future research activity. The Code of Practice (CoP) sets out the approach that the Academy is taking in preparation for REF 2029.

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The Academy's overall approach to EIA for the REF exercise is to submit policies, procedures and reports for assessment, in order. to inform whether any changes are recommended, prior to their implementation.

CoP statements and commitments pertaining to equality

- **A commitment to belonging** – the Academy brings together its work in the areas of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) under the umbrella of Belonging. Belonging is a key priority of the CoP, ~~is~~ developing an approach that ensures no prejudice or discrimination. The Academy is committed to upholding principles of belonging in all aspects of research across the organisation involving its staff and/or students, in a setting of widely varying employment models, workloads and professional activities. Particular consideration is given regarding early career researchers and those on part-time or fixed-term contracts.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – the CoP includes a section on 'Institutional context on EDI.' This describes how, within the institutional context for creating conditions for outstanding research, EDI is integral to the development of research agendas and culture. Quality and belonging are core values that underpin all activities, as reflected in the Academy's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The Academy operates in a spirit of professionalism, collaboration and openness, promoting an inclusive learning and working environment in which all students, staff and visitors are welcomed and should feel they belong. The Academy's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Belonging Scheme have informed all stages of the planning and selection processes for REF 2029 with regard to compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The Academy's Research Strategy has seven strategic aims including, that of 'to align research with institutional priorities of Belonging'. This represents a particular opportunity to focus on aligning research with institutional priorities of Belonging through deliverables centred on the career development of researchers. With regard to the current REF period recent work on the SRR transferal

mechanism has been a key measure in the support of EDI and this has fed directly into the CoP in terms REF 2029 eligibility criteria. The third and final draft of the CoP provided additional clarification and advised that SRR status will be monitored as part of the annual cycle in recognition that staff, who have busy portfolio careers as musical performers or composers, may move in and out of research work due to fluctuations in their professional creative life. The design and annual monitoring of job roles, including research objectives, is therefore fundamental in supporting a diversity of staff and their personal or professional circumstances in research at the Academy.

- **Transparency in communication and consultancy** - the Academy ensures transparency in the communication of the CoP by inclusion on the Research Office SharePoint, an internal intranet site accessible to all staff and students which includes explanatory material about the REF exercise. For absent staff, including those on maternity leave, an email and hard copy will be sent to their home address by HR and line managers will be asked to discuss the CoP with them where appropriate. The CoP is digitally accessible as a PDF, but alternative formats can be provided by the Research Office who will arrange appropriate provision. The Academy has also put in place a consultation process in which all academic staff, including those absent from the Academy for any reason, will be emailed the draft CoP and invited to respond with comments. The approved CoP will be published on the Academy's intranet and website and made available in alternative formats where required.
- **Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE)** - the SPRE aspects of the REF exercise also informs how the Academy approaches the CoP, assisting in driving research development in the current REF cycle. SPRE is informed by professional benchmarks which look to advance equality including the Athena Swan Charter, Race Equality Charter and Support the Career Development of Researchers. The potential development of research specific, rather than holistic, policymaking is currently under review utilising the UK Research Integrity Office's self-assessment tool. This could be particularly significant in terms of improving accessibility, understanding and equity of policy in this area.
- **Diversity in outputs** - a diversity of research outputs is fundamental to the Academy's research culture and is reflected in the kinds of projects undertaken by our staff. These are championed institutionally by the Academy's strategic approach to research and underpinned by the concepts of academic freedom and freedom of speech. Professional services and research staff involved in undertaking or supporting research

must complete 'Unconscious bias' and 'Diversity in the workplace' training modules, administered by HR. To enhance such institution-wide knowledge and understanding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations, the Research Office will deliver targeted training on these topics specific to research and the REF exercise as part of its ongoing termly seminar series for research staff and doctoral students.

- **Selection of outputs** - the CoP states that staff will be invited to submit their outputs for consideration by the Contributions to Knowledge and Understanding (CKU) Outputs Selection Panel for inclusion in the REF submission. The Academy would normally expect a minimum submission of one output per researcher with SRR, but recognises that there may be circumstances that prevent this, including maternity, shared parental or adoption leave, caring responsibilities, absence due to long-term sickness, secondment or career breaks, or working on a large-scale research project where the publication date will not be within the current REF cycle. The Academy encourages all staff who meet REF eligibility requirements to submit their research outputs for consideration by the Selection Panel, whose remit is to choose the highest quality outputs that reflect the activities of the research environment as a whole. Equal consideration will be given to each output submitted by all eligible members of staff. The REF CKU Outputs Selection Panel will lead decision-making in relation to output selection. Membership of the Selection Panel will be inclusive by containing a wide range of SRR staff with research expertise in different sub-disciplines, research managers, staff at varying stages of their research career, and those whose demographics reflect that of the Academy's research cohort as a whole. Once the Selection Panel convenes, but before its first meeting, the Research Office will deliver a training session. This will cover the CKU Guidance for selection of outputs, bias in research assessment, the Academy's CoP, how these sits in relation to the Academy's EDI policies, and how the selection criteria and methodology underpins values of robustness, transparency, equity and inclusion.
- **The submission pool** - the CoP is due to be submitted in May 2026, at which point the Academy will not have any data on the outputs submission pool. The draft of this CoP can, however, anticipate adverse impacts in relation to output submission for staff with special circumstances, and design mitigations where required. This may specifically apply to staff:
 - on maternity, shared parental or adoption leave
 - with caring responsibilities
 - who are absent due to long-term sickness
 - on secondment or career break

- working on a large-scale project where the publication will not be within the current REF cycle.

Appendix A (REF 2029 EIA Guidance - Core Equality Questions), which specially address the Academy response to these questions, is attached.

Consultation in development of the CoP

The CoP was developed in consultation with the following staff groups, departments and external advisory agencies.

A CoP Working Group was formed to consult on the SRR transferal mechanism, to collaborate with the Research Office in preparing the CoP, and to consider REF 2029 eligibility criteria. Membership of the CoP Working Group is designed to be inclusive by containing staff representatives who are REF eligible and others who are not:

- Chair – 1 member staff of the Research Office
- Deputy Chair/Secretary – 1 member of the Research Office
- 1 member of staff from HR
- 1 member of staff from Academic Studies
- 1 research-active member of staff who was not included in the last REF
- 1 composer and/or early career researcher

Wider feedback was sought from all staff and doctoral students during the 2025/26 spring term.

The final CoP was shared with the Research Committee, Belonging Committee, Academic Board and Governing Body, prior to the CoP submission window (11-15 May 2026).

In order to promote a collaborative and collegial approach the Academy has engaged with, the following organisations in the development of its CoP:

- Conservatoires UK (CUK)
- University of London (UoL) REF Federal Forum
- UoL Practice Research Group

Governing Body - the final REF CoP was received and approved by the Governing Body in April 2026

Conclusion and actions

This EIA concludes that the Academy's CoP adheres to the principles of ensuring equality, transparency, consistency and accountability. The CoP aims to ensure that the Academy's REF procedures do not discriminate unlawfully against, or otherwise have the effect of harassing or victimising, individuals because of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or because they are pregnant or have recently given birth.

Action	Who	Timescale
Undertake an EIA on REF 2029 draft CoP	EIA sub committee	February 2026
Undertake a consultation process on the draft of the CoP	Research Office	Spring term 2025/26
CoP submitted as a second draft for an EIA	Research Office	February 2026
Conclude the review of the potential development of research specific, rather than holistic, policymaking	Research Committee	February 2026
EIA revision based second CoP second draft	EIA sub committee	February 2026
Final meeting of the CoP Working Group review the third and final draft	Research Office	April 2026
Prepare final CoP for submission to REF	Research Office	Spring term 2025/26
EIA approval	Belonging Committee	5 May 2026

Appendix A: REF 2029 EIA Guidance - Core Equality Questions

Eliminating unlawful discrimination

1. Could this process or decision disproportionately exclude or disadvantage people with protected characteristics?
 - *The Academy's recruitment of researchers and its transfer processes seek to eliminate unlawful practices through training, panel selection, teaching/research contract opportunities, accessibility factors in information provision and awareness raising of opportunities and selection processes.*
 - *The output selection process seeks to mitigate the potential for discrimination or bias.*
2. Are any criteria, systems, or practices indirectly discriminatory (that is to say, neutral on the surface but unequal in effect)?
 - *The balance between legacy factors in the research pool demographic, has been addressed by the broadening of the pool to include the opportunity for teaching staff to transfer onto a teaching/research contract through HR processes.*
 - *The Research Office will provide support to staff to allow them to access and understand the process, with the aim of reducing potential barriers to submitting output for consideration. This will include workshops and 1-1 sessions to provide information and raise awareness.*
3. Have reasonable adjustments been considered or applied where appropriate?
 - *Consideration of reasonable adjustments will be given at each stage of the process to ensure equity in opportunity to submit, and to reduce potential barriers that may directly, or indirectly, disadvantage potential researchers. This includes building an understanding of where barriers may exist and of the measures required to address these where possible.*

4. Are there any legacy practices or default assumptions that could disadvantage certain groups?

- *Legacy practices are being mitigated by an ongoing review of processes including that of recruitment and the evaluation of research output.*

Advancing equality of opportunity

1. Have barriers to access or participation been identified and addressed?

- *The Academy's Research Office is undertaking an ongoing review process to understand and address barriers via an all-staff anonymous feedback process.*
- *Through the Academy's teaching/research migration contracts.*
- *By undertaking a review of institutional practices to ensure alignment with fair and equitable recruitment of research staff.*

2. Do all relevant staff groups have a fair opportunity to contribute to, benefit from, or be considered in this process?

- *This has been, and continues to be, expanded by the introduction a new teaching/research pathway.*

3. Have we used disaggregated data to monitor representation, participation, or outcomes?

- *The staff survey will allow for the recording of anonymised data, which has the potential to broaden the pool and to allow the Academy to understand potential barriers to participation.*
- *Collating information, over a specified time period, will allow the Academy to understand trends in participation and output selection.*
- *The low volume level of monitoring data makes this a challenge for the Academy, but a balanced approach is being adopted, where possible, to identify and understand general trends.*

4. Are there opportunities to design this process in a way that proactively supports inclusion or recognises diverse contributions?
 - *The Academy recognises the diversity of research contributions which may be broader than that of other institutions. This is due to the nature of research being based on non-traditional outputs, curated work etc. The Research Office will continue to consider a broad range of outputs and to raise awareness of the opportunity to submit non-traditional outputs amongst staff.*
5. Have steps been taken to minimise over-reliance on metrics or conventions that may structurally exclude some groups?
 - *Not applicable due to the size of the Academy.*

Fostering good relations

1. Have relevant staff groups or equality networks been consulted or engaged?
 - *Please see the 'Consultation in development of the CoP' section included in the EIA.*
2. Has the process been clearly and transparently communicated, with reasons and routes for feedback?
 - *Please see the 'Transparency in communication and consultancy' section included in the EIA.*
3. Could the approach help build confidence in fairness and trust across different groups?
 - *Please see above.*
4. Are staff encouraged to raise concerns or suggestions in a constructive and supported way?
 - *The consultation process is led, and supported by, the Research Office, and this process will feed into the review of the draft CoP ahead of approval and publication on the Academy's intranet and website.*

- *To enhance institution-wide knowledge and understanding of EDI considerations, the Research Office will deliver targeted training specific to research and the REF exercise as part of its ongoing seminar series for research staff and doctoral students.*