

REF 2021 Final Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

a. Introduction

1. The Equality Impact Assessment reported here was conducted for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 to consider and understand the effect of REF policy and procedures on equality.
2. As detailed in the [REF 2021 invitation to make submissions](#) issued to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in February 2020 (with an [updated invitation](#) issued in November 2020), the University of Strathclyde (hereafter Strathclyde) is required to provide the Funding Bodies with a final EIA on its policy and procedures for submitting to REF as detailed in its REF 2021 Code of Practice (hereafter Code). Particular attention is to be paid to policy and procedures implemented to identify staff with significant responsibility for research (i.e. eligible staff), determine research independence and select outputs for REF submissions.
3. The Funding Bodies and REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) will use the final EIAs submitted by HEIs to assist with evaluating the overall effectiveness of the equality and diversity aspects of REF 2021 at sector level, and to identify lessons learned for future research assessment exercises. EDAP will not record judgements or comment on individual institutions' EIAs.
4. This requirement aligns with the public sector equality duty enshrined in the [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#), with the aim of ensuring that REF policy and 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.
5. In line with the [Part-time Workers \(Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment\) Regulations 2000](#) and [Fixed-term Employees \(Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment\) Regulations 2002](#), it also seeks to uphold the right of fixed-term employees and part-time workers to be treated no less favourably than comparable employees on open or full-time contracts.
6. Furthermore, the [public sector equality duty in Scotland](#) requires HEIs to conduct EIAs on new and existing policies.
7. With oversight and input from the Deputy Associate Principal for Research (DAPR) with responsibility for the preparation and content of Strathclyde's REF 2021 submission, this final EIA was conducted by the University REF Team, located within Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES), between May and July 2021 once submission was complete.

b. Background

8. In accordance with the [REF 2021 Guidance on codes of practice](#) (REF 2019/03 January 2019), Strathclyde drew up a 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.
9. Staff information sessions and meetings with trade union representatives held during the Code drafting process ensured that the views of staff were taken into account, particularly in relation to the identification of eligible staff.

10. Following consideration by the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and Staff Committee, both of which include representatives of all affected staff groups, the Code was formally approved by University Senate on 5 June 2019. It was subsequently made freely available on the Strathclyde website and communicated to all potentially eligible members of staff through various avenues, including via email (or postal mail if required) and through publication on the internal RKES Portal REF 2021 website alongside other relevant information.
11. The purpose of the Code is to ensure that Strathclyde's REF policy and procedures do not discriminate against staff due to their protected characteristics (as detailed in The Equality Act 2010) including: age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex or sexual orientation. It also seeks to ensure that fixed-term and part-time workers are not treated any less favourably than comparable employees on open or full-time contracts.
12. In line with equalities legislation, an initial EIA of the Code was conducted in June 2019 to consider and understand its effect on equality. The completed EIA was submitted to the Strathclyde Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Team and appended to the Code. As the REF policy and procedures outlined in the Code make no reference to or use of age, disability, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, race, religion/belief or pregnancy/maternity related information, the EIA concluded that there should be no opportunity for bias on the basis of any of these characteristics.
13. Guided by the REF 2021 principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity, the policy and procedures outlined in the Code, including the composition of decision-making groups, were carefully considered with impact on equality, diversity and inclusion in mind. This included instituting protective measures aimed at ensuring effective implementation of the Code. For instance, representatives from the REF team, HR and the ED&I Team were included in decision-making panels as appropriate to provide advice and enable ongoing monitoring of practice.
14. Equality, diversity and inclusion training was provided to all staff with responsibility for decision-making in REF 2021. This included the Principal, Vice Principal, Associate Principals, Deputy Associate Principals, Vice Deans (Research), Heads of Departments, Circumstances Panel members, Appeals Panel members, UOA Leaders, any departmental or school staff involved in identification of eligible staff or selection of outputs or impact cases, and administrative staff with involvement in REF 2021 planning.
15. No substantial revision of the Code was undertaken during REF preparations, with only minor edits being made to the Data Collection statements in 2020 as a consequence of the REF 2021 COVID-19 contingency arrangements. These edits were in line with the updated [model REF Data Collection Statement](#) provided to HEIs.

c. Scope

i. Coverage

16. As with the initial EIA, the scope of this final EIA is to consider and understand the effect on equality of the policy and procedures outlined in Strathclyde's REF Code of Practice following its implementation. Particular consideration is given to the identification of staff with significant responsibility for research (i.e. eligible staff), determination of research independence for research only staff, and the selection of outputs. Although not detailed in the Code, the procedures developed to ensure fairness and transparency in the selection of Impact Case Studies for submission are also included.
17. The data collected and analysed at Strathclyde for the purposes of REF 2021, and discussed in this report, are based on the protected characteristics of age and gender. Strathclyde did not collect/analyse data on other protected characteristics because the Privacy Notices issued

stipulated that Special Category data would only be used for anonymised analyses and returns, or where there is a legal obligation to provide it. As such, it is not possible to conduct analyses on the selection and attribution of individual outputs, or the identification of eligible staff, with regards to other protected characteristics.

18. While recognising the value of engaging, consulting or involving staff from protected groups to inform an EIA, in the interests of proportionality and to minimise further burden from the exercise, no formal process was undertaken to gather additional information post-submission purely for the purpose of this EIA. However, a longer-term REF lessons learned process is being undertaken which will involve staff from protected groups as appropriate, tying in with broader equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives across the institution.

ii. Staff affected

19. The main body of Strathclyde staff affected by the policy and procedures outlined in the Code are those who were employed on either an academic contract (with a primary employment function to undertake 'teaching and research') or a research contract ('research only' undertaking independent research) of 0.2 FTE or greater at some point between June 2019, when the Code was approved, and the REF census date of 31 July 2020.
20. Former staff employed before June 2019 are considered out of scope as the policy and procedures were not in place during their employment. Where the outputs of these former staff were included in the submission, there were no envisaged implications for inclusion vs exclusion of these outputs.
21. Although not articulated in the Code, consideration is also given to the effect of REF policy and procedures on the wider body of Strathclyde staff involved in the development of Impact Case Studies, including those on Knowledge Exchange (KE) contracts. Given the high visibility of individual cases and the prestige associated with submission, instituting a fair and transparent process in selecting cases for submission was considered necessary to ensure that decisions were made on the basis of a rigorous assessment of the quality (in terms of reach and significance) demonstrated in the final impact case study narratives.

iii. Stages involved

22. In June 2019, an initial EIA was conducted as part of the preparation of the Code. A proviso of this, in line with the REF guidance, was that the REF 2021 processes 'be reviewed and, where appropriate updated...to test and adjust the real impact taking place'. Subsequently, the Code was kept under constant review between June 2019 and March 2021, with the University REF Team monitoring for any signs of discrimination, particularly in relation to the identification of eligible staff and selection of outputs. It was stipulated that if any issues arose they would be addressed via an amendment to the Code, with the equality effects being considered and understood through an interim EIA.
23. No formal complaints or appeals were made by staff in relation to the policy and procedures for identifying eligible staff and selecting outputs for submission. Moreover, the University REF Team was not informally alerted to any issues. As no discriminatory practices were apparent, an amendment to the Code was not considered necessary and no interim EIAs were formally undertaken. However, the equality effects arising from the implementation of REF policy and procedures were kept under constant review by the University REF Team.

d. Analyses

i. Identification of eligible staff

24. In accordance with the core eligibility criteria for Category A eligible staff set out in the [REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions](#) (REF 2019/01 January 2019: para 117), Strathclyde utilised employment contracts to identify eligible staff with significant responsibility for research and sought appropriate evidence of independence for research only staff.
25. As the relevant contract types at Strathclyde ('academic', equivalent to 'teaching and research', HESA Code ACEMPFUN 003; and 'research', equivalent to 'research only', HESA Code ACEMPFUN002) only apply to staff with a significant responsibility for research, no additional process was required to identify eligible staff. Detailed examination of Knowledge Exchange contracts (HESA Code ACEMPFUN009) confirmed that they did not involve a significant responsibility for research.
26. All members of staff on an academic contract of 0.2 FTE or greater on the payroll on the census date, considered to have significant responsibility for research and be an independent researcher, were therefore returned in Strathclyde's submission. This group comprises 738 staff.
27. For staff on research only contracts, a process was instituted to determine those meeting the REF definition of an independent researcher as 'an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme' (REF 2019/01 January 2019: para 131).
28. As those employed by Strathclyde on a research contract at Grade RS06 and RS07 do not undertake self-directed research, they were automatically considered ineligible for submission on this basis.
29. For staff employed on a research contract at Grade RS08 or above, evidence of independence was sought for those undertaking self-directed research. In line with the REF guidance, the following indicators of independence were used: leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project; holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement; and leading a research group or a substantial or specialised work package (REF 2019/01 January 2019: para 132).
30. As detailed in the Code, the University REF team worked with Unit of Assessment (UOA) Leads, Research Directors and Heads of Department/School to identify individuals who clearly evidenced independence on the basis of these indicators. 15 staff members were identified.
31. To ensure that no independent researchers were missed through this process, research only staff were notified of the REF staff eligibility criteria and given the opportunity to claim independence by emailing their Head of Department/School (copying to a dedicated email account created solely for this purpose, with access limited to the REF Administrator and the REF Manager). No claims of independence were made through this route.
32. As a result of the approach taken by Strathclyde, no selection was undertaken to identify eligible staff to be returned to REF and no direct equality impacts arose from the process. The following analysis of Category A staff (REF1a) is therefore intended to advance understanding of the underlying equality dimensions of Strathclyde's research community rather than highlighting specific issues in relation to REF policy and procedures.

Staff analysis: gender

33. The gender composition (male and female) of the Category A staff identified through the above processes and returned to REF 2021, is 32% female and 68% male. This is in line with Strathclyde's latest [Staff Equality Monitoring Report](#) (2021), which reports the proportion of female staff on academic contracts to be 32% and male 68%.

34. This close alignment suggests that Strathclyde’s REF policy and procedures for the identification of eligible staff have not resulted in discrimination on the basis of gender.
35. Of the 15 research only staff identified as being independent researchers and returned as Category A staff, 4 (27%) are female and 11 (73%) are male. As the equality monitoring data does not disaggregate below the level of ‘Research & KE’ (overall gender composition 29% female, 71% male) it is not possible to compare this with an appropriate comparator pool.
36. Reflecting disciplinary differences, the gender proportions of Category A staff vary by Unit of Assessment, with all Units in Science, Engineering and Business having a higher proportion of male staff (**Table 1**). In contrast, 4 of the 6 Units in the Humanities and Social Sciences have a higher proportion of female staff.

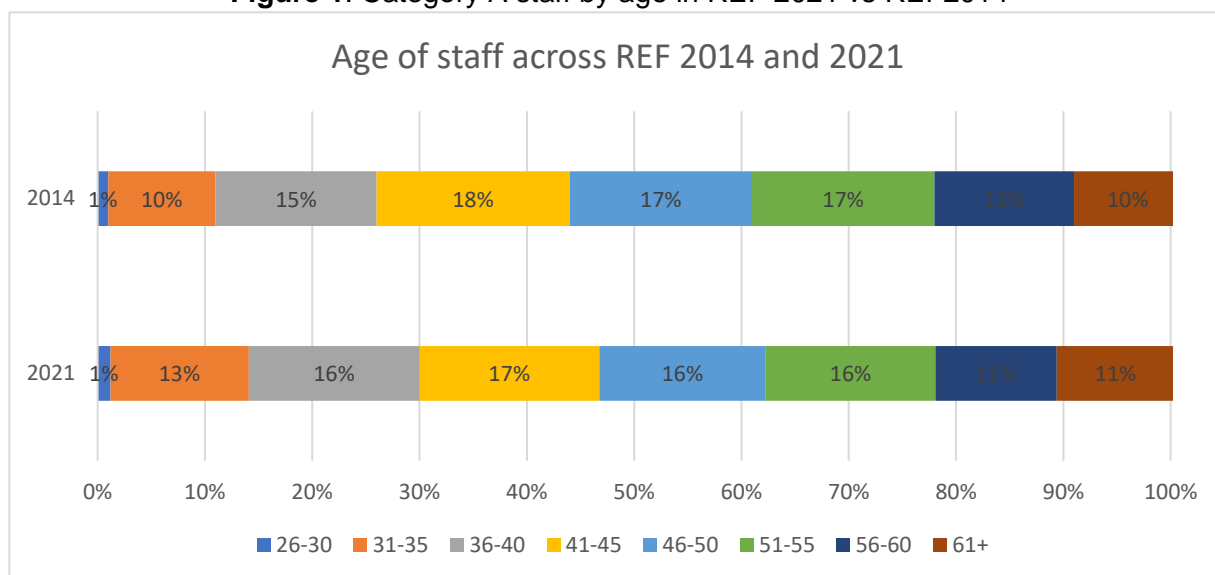
Table 1: Category A staff by gender in each Unit of Assessment (UOA)

UOA	Principal Faculty	Female Staff	Male Staff
A3	Science	47.4%	52.6%
B8	Science	22.9%	77.1%
B9	Science	12.5%	87.5%
B10	Science	28.6%	71.4%
B11	Science	12.1%	87.9%
B12	Engineering	19.9%	80.1%
C13	Engineering	26.7%	73.3%
C17	Business	33.6%	66.4%
C18	Humanities & Social Sciences	55.2%	44.8%
C19	Humanities & Social Sciences	31.8%	68.2%
C20	Humanities & Social Sciences	68.4%	31.6%
C23	Humanities & Social Sciences	58.8%	41.2%
D27	Humanities & Social Sciences	68.0%	32.0%
D28	Humanities & Social Sciences	38.9%	61.1%
Total		32.1%	67.9%

Staff analysis - age

37. Examining the age profile of Category A staff on the census date (31 July 2020), there are similar proportions of staff aged 36-40 (16%), 41-45 (17%), 46-50 (16%) and 51-55 (16%) (**Figure 1**). There are slightly less staff in the 31-35 (13%), 56-60 (11%) and 61+ (11%) categories, and a small proportion of staff in the 26-30 category (1%). This again aligns with the equality monitoring data which show that the highest proportion of Strathclyde staff are between 30 and 49 years of age. Data on the age profile of different contract types and Faculties are not available in the equality monitoring data, so no further inferences can be made. However, this REF 2021 profile is similar to the profile for REF2014 (**Figure 1**) suggesting it is representative of the research active staff at Strathclyde.

Figure 1: Category A staff by age in REF 2021 vs REF2014



ii. Selection of outputs for submission

38. As outlined in the Code, the selection of outputs was made on a strategic basis with a view to optimising the outcomes of the University's submission as a whole. To this end, outputs were selected based on an assessment of their quality (in terms of originality, significance and rigour) for the relevant UOA, taking account of the degree of confidence in this prediction where appropriate.
39. Internal peer review was the primary means of assessment across all Units, with external review undertaken if considered necessary to provide a fair and robust assessment. In alignment with the [REF 2021 Panel criteria and working methods](#) (REF 2021/02 January 2019), Units A3, B8, B9 and B11 were given the option to make use of article-level citation data to inform reviewer judgment of academic significance if considered helpful.
40. To identify potential outputs for submission, members of staff proposed a selection of their eligible research outputs along with an optional short statement explaining their reason for proposing. All proposed outputs were reviewed and a final agreed rating was assigned to each using a 13 point scale (unclassified, 1-, 1, 1+, 2-, 2, 2+, 3-, 3, 3+, 4-, 4, 4+) and Unit leads then used this information to select the highest rated outputs.
41. To assist with selecting and attributing outputs, an algorithm was designed by the University REF Team and used on all output reviews conducted since 2014. In doing so, due regard was given to the potential for algorithmic bias. The highest rated outputs were selected until the REF output requirements were satisfied (1 to 5 outputs per person and 2.5 outputs per FTE). Where outputs of the same quality rating were available for selection, Units were asked to confirm the algorithm's selection.
42. Some units used the algorithm as a starting point for selecting outputs, whilst others chose to use their own judgement for selecting outputs and only referred to the algorithm as a secondary source of information to help refine their output pool. There was no compulsory requirement for any Units to use the algorithm or follow the algorithms' selection.
43. To determine if any output reductions were required due to equality-related circumstances, a safe and supportive process was instituted in line with the Code from June 2019 to March 2021 to allow staff to disclose permitted circumstances confidentially (including the effects of COVID-19 during 2020). The guiding principle was that individuals should only disclose circumstances if they felt it would be of benefit to them more broadly (providing an opportunity to resolve and/or accommodate circumstances) and this was clearly communicated to all members of eligible staff.

44. As outlined in the accompanying Staff Circumstances Report, 33 eligible staff members declared circumstances (23 defined and 10 requiring a judgement). This constituted 45 declarations (36 being defined circumstances: 8 Early Career Researchers and 28 family-related leave). No minimum of one declarations were made.
45. As the reduction in output expectations in light of declared staff circumstances did not result in any Unit reaching the agreed threshold of 10-15% of the total Unit requirement, no requests for a reduction in the output requirement at Unit level were submitted. No negative effects of this process are apparent and positive action to support staff with equality-related circumstances (whether declared or not) has been encouraged.

Output proposer analysis: gender

46. Analysis of the proportion of output proposals made by female and male Category A staff shows that it is closely in line with the staff gender profile. As shown in **Table 2**, 31% of the output proposals were submitted by female staff who make up 32% of Category A staff. Likewise, 69% of the proposals were submitted by male staff who account for 68% of Category A staff. This suggests that there was no gender disparity overall in the volume of outputs being proposed for review.
47. In terms of output selection, of those submitted 30% had been proposed by female staff and 70% by male staff, which is broadly in line with the staff gender profile. This represents a proposal success rate (the proportion of proposed outputs selected for submission) of 39.5% for female staff and 41.7% for male staff (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Staff and output proposals by gender

	Female	Male
Category A staff	32%	68%
Output proposals	31%	69%
Submitted outputs	30%	70%
Proposal success rate	39.5%	41.7%

48. While marginal at University level, analysis of proposal success rates by gender at the Unit level shows varying outcomes with greater differences. In 5 of the 14 Units, female staff had a 12% to 15% lower proposal success rate than their male counterparts. However, analysis using a logistic regression model to take account of both the gender of the proposer and the output rating found no statistically significant effect of gender on output selection in 13 of the 14 Units. In the remaining Unit and the University overall, proposals were less likely to be submitted when proposed by a female author. This confirms that, in line with the Code, outputs were primarily selected on the basis of the quality rating assigned to them through peer review. Though not attributable to REF policy and procedures and beyond the scope of this EIA, the disparity in the volume of highly rated outputs proposed by female and male staff in some Units has been flagged for further consideration.

Output proposer analysis: age

49. As with gender, analysis using a logistic regression model to take account of both the age of the proposer and the output rating found no effect of age in 13 of the 14 Units. In the remaining Unit, proposed outputs were slightly more likely to be selected for submission with every additional year of age of the proposing staff member.
50. This logistic regression analysis of output proposal success rates confirms that by far the most significant driver of output selection was the output quality rating. No reference was made to the gender or age of the proposer/author in the output selection process.

iii. Authorship and attribution of submitted outputs

51. Although REF 2021 does not explicitly link submitted outputs with staff as was the case in REF 2014, the fact that the bibliographic details of outputs will be published once the assessment exercise is complete makes authorship an equality consideration. Furthermore, the attribution of outputs in the submission system, though purely for administrative purposes to evidence adherence to the REF 2021 output requirements, introduces an additional risk.
52. As the submission of staff and their outputs to REF 2014 was widely recognised as a marker of prestige and used as an indicator of research performance across the HEI sector, there is potential for authorship/attribution of outputs for REF 2021 to be interpreted in a similar way. Given the equality concerns around this, Strathclyde has been careful to devise and implement policy and procedures which discourage inappropriate use of REF data. To this end, the Code stipulates that output attribution *'does not indicate any view of the University about academic priority amongst staff members. REF will publish a list of outputs submitted to the process with a full author list and therefore with no indication of the staff member related to individual outputs in the submission'* (Clause 31). In support of this, staff have not been informed which outputs have been attributed to them in the submission. However, authorship of submitted outputs has been confirmed.
53. As outlined in the Code, it has also been stipulated that REF output data should *'not be used as a factor by the University for other purposes relating to the researcher's employment including academic performance assessment or promotions'* (Clause 36).
54. Recognising that REF 2021 output authorship (and attribution details, if made available in error) may still be used informally as a marker of prestige and indicator of research performance within the sector, analysis has been undertaken to understand the potential equality impacts in relation to gender and age.

Author analysis – gender

55. As the algorithm selected outputs for submission, they were simultaneously attributed to authors, with the algorithm attempting to equally share attributions as best as possible within the minimum of 1 and maximum of 5 rules.
56. With regards to gender, 32% of Category A staff were female, 30% of outputs were attributed to female staff members, who made up 27% of the eligible Strathclyde authors across the submitted outputs (**Table 3**). This means that female staff members had 2% less attributions and made up 5% less authors than the associated proportion of staff. However it also suggests that the algorithm worked as intended to distribute the outputs more equally as female staff members received 3% more attributions than the associated share of authors.

Table 3: Category A staff output attributions and authorship by gender

	Female	Male
Category A staff	32%	68%
Output attributions	30%	70%
Eligible authors on submitted outputs	27%	73%

57. At Unit level, 2 Units had a negligible difference in attributions to female vs male staff, and a further 2 Units had a higher number of attributed outputs per female staff member than male, leaving 10 Units where attributions favoured male staff. Similarly with authorship, 11 of the 14 Units submitted outputs with a smaller proportion of REF eligible female authors than the associated proportion of female staff.

Author analysis – age

58. The distribution of attributed outputs by age category closely aligns with the age profile of Category A staff. There is only a slight underrepresentation in the 31-35 age category (12% of outputs attributed vs 13% of eligible staff) and an overrepresentation in the 56-60 age category (12% of outputs attributed vs. 11% of eligible staff) (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Proportion of attributed outputs vs proportion of Category A staff split by age category, and average number of outputs attributed per group

Age Group	Proportion of outputs attributed	Proportion of Category A staff	Average number of outputs attributed
26-30	1%	1%	2.7
31-35	12%	13%	2.3
36-40	16%	16%	2.6
41-45	17%	17%	2.5
46-50	16%	16%	2.5
51-55	16%	16%	2.5
56-60	12%	11%	2.6
61+	11%	11%	2.5

iv. Assessment and selection of impact case studies

59. Recognising the potential equality effects arising from the submission of a select portfolio of impact case studies to REF 2021 (given the high-profile of submitted cases) a review and selection process was implemented between December 2020 and March 2021. Preceding this, an open call to propose examples of research impact for development as REF impact case studies was issued to all academic, research and KE staff via Departments/Schools, Faculties and, more latterly, Units of Assessments. Throughout the REF 2021 period, all staff wishing to develop a case study were encouraged and supported to do so as appropriate.
60. To ensure fairness, equality and transparency in the selection of cases for submission, a rigorous internal review of final case study drafts was undertaken in December 2020 to provide an assessment of quality and risk. A panel of reviewers was established and each case study was assessed by three members of the panel, at least one of whom was a subject specialist. Further reviews were undertaken if there was a notable disparity in the assessment made by the appointed reviewers.
61. The agreed quality and risk ratings from this review were fed into Unit decision-making meetings involving Department/School, Faculty, Deputy Associate Principal and REF Team representatives in January 2021. These meetings determined the final portfolio of cases to be submitted for each UoA and the outcomes were communicated to all stakeholders.
62. Although detailed analysis has not been undertaken to understand the characteristics of staff associated with submitted impact case studies, effective implementation of the above process ensured that decisions were taken on the basis of a rigorous assessment of the quality (in terms of the reach and significance of the impacts described in the final draft) and identified risks. Beyond eligibility checks, no consideration was given to who the named researchers were.
63. Furthermore, in overseeing the finalisation of the Unit impact submissions, the University REF Team clearly communicated the expectation that the efforts of all staff associated with the wider portfolio of impact case studies and impact activity more broadly would be recognised. Work is ongoing to ensure this as part of a longer-term strategy to support the realisation of impact from Strathclyde's research.

e. Conclusions

64. From the assessment undertaken here, including analysis of the gender and age characteristics of the returned Category A staff group and authors/attribution of submitted outputs, the overarching conclusion is that Strathclyde's REF 2021 policy and procedures did not discriminate against staff due to their protected characteristics or contract type. Overall, they are considered to have had a neutral effect on equality. However, it is apparent that the implementation of REF policy and procedures (which included ED&I sessions for staff, unconscious bias training for decision-makers and an additional review and selection process for impact case studies) has advanced understanding of equality concerns and encouraged positive action to prevent discrimination and promote equality going forward.
65. Although there is significant gender disparity in the Category A staff group, with the proportion of males (68%) being more than double that of females (32%) this is not a direct result of REF policy and procedures. As shown through comparison with the figures for academic staff in Strathclyde's most recent [Staff Equality Monitoring Report](#) (2021), the gender composition matches that of staff on academic contracts. The eligible staff identified and returned as Category A staff to REF 2021 are therefore representative of the research active staff group at Strathclyde. This does, however, confirm that ongoing effort is required to address the gender imbalance across Strathclyde's research community (and the sector more broadly), particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
66. The age profile of Category A staff returned to REF 2021 is also representative of Strathclyde's research active staff group, with this aligning closely with the most recent equality monitoring data. This profile is similar to that of the staff submitted to REF 2014.
67. Reflecting the gender imbalance in the eligible staff group (32% female, 68% male), the proportion of outputs authored and attributed to female staff (27% and 30%) is significantly lower than that of male staff (73% and 70%). However, statistical analysis of the proposal success rates shows no significant bias on the basis of gender when taking output ratings into account. Likewise, age had no notable effect on output selection, with the proportion of outputs attributed to staff in each age group closely reflecting the Category A staff age profile. This confirms that, in line with the Code, across all Units outputs were primarily selected on the basis of the quality rating assigned to them through peer review.
68. Though not attributable to REF policy and procedures and beyond the scope of this EIA, some gender disparity in the volume of highly rated outputs proposed for REF has been identified. While at University level the proposal success rates for female and male staff are similar, in some Units outputs proposed by male staff were much more likely to be selected on the basis of the quality assigned to them through peer review than those proposed by female staff. This has been flagged for further consideration.
69. Although the analysis undertaken for this EIA is limited to gender and age, to date no concerns have been raised concerning bias on the basis of the other protected characteristics (disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, race, religion/belief or pregnancy/maternity related information). No reference to or use was made of these characteristics in implementing the REF policy and procedures outlined in the Code.
70. Building on this EIA, Strathclyde has commenced a REF lessons learned exercise to consult more widely on the equality effects of REF 2021 policy and procedures, identify process improvements and capture ideas to enhance Strathclyde's research environment and culture. This includes further consideration of the gender imbalance in the eligible staff group and disparity in the output proposal success rate by gender in some units.

f. Action plan

71. A number of short and longer-term actions (**Table 5**) will be taken to inform and strengthen Strathclyde's existing efforts to prevent discrimination and advance equality.

Table 5: Planned equality actions

Action	Intended outcome	Timeframe
<p>1. Share EIA with key stakeholders across Strathclyde to inform policy and practice relating to research and knowledge exchange (including recruitment practice and researcher development).</p>	<p>Greater awareness of equality concerns and promotion of practices which prevent discrimination and advance equality (including strategies to address the gender imbalances in Strathclyde's research community and encourage greater representation more broadly).</p>	<p>Short term</p>
<p>2. Consult more widely on the equality effects of REF 2021 policy and procedures through a REF lessons learned exercise and devise a detailed action plan to address issues and/or promote identified good practice.</p>	<p>Enhanced understanding of the equality effects of REF 2021 and an agreed plan to drive evidence-based action across the institution.</p>	<p>Short to longer term</p>
<p>3. Continue to promote the view that inclusion of a staff member or their work in the REF 2021 submission is not an indicator of their performance or their value to the University. Monitor for practices that run counter to this.</p>	<p>Prevent practices that may disadvantage staff with protected characteristics, particularly those with equality-related circumstances.</p>	<p>Short to longer term</p>