# Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances

This document is being sent to all Category A staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see [Guidance on Submissions](https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/), paragraphs 117-122). All eligible staff will be submitted to REF 2021 with a minimum of one output, and up to a maximum of five outputs, which first became publicly available between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020. Each Unit of Assessment is required to submit a total number of outputs (the ‘output pool’) calculated as the total of submitted staff multiplied by 2.5.

Where eligible staff have not been able to produce an eligible research output during the assessment period due to one of the circumstances set out in in 1a to 1c below, the School can request the removal of the minimum requirement of one output, and the unit’s output pool will be reduced by one without penalty. In addition, where an individual’s ability to contribute to the output pool at the same rate as other staff has been affected by individual circumstances, the unit may take these into account. The School may also request a reduction to a unit’s output pool where the declared individual circumstances have disproportionately affected the available output pool. Requests for the removal of the minimum requirement of one output and any requests for unit reductions will be made by the School to the REF Team at Research England in line with the REF 2021 Guidance on Submissions. In all cases, the reduction in the number of outputs will be made **at the level of the submitting Unit of Assessment.**

As part of the School’s commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF 2021, we have put in place supportive structures for staff to declare information confidentially about any individual circumstances that may have affected their ability to research productively during the assessment period (1 January 2014 – 31 July 2020), and particularly their ability to produce research outputs at the same rate as staff not affected by circumstances.

The purpose of collecting this information is threefold:

1. To enable staff who have not been able to produce a REF-eligible output during the assessment period to be entered into REF where they have any of the following:
	1. an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to individual circumstances (see below)
	2. *equivalent* to 46 months or more absence from research due to individual circumstances
	3. two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
2. To recognise the effect that individual circumstances can have on an individual’s ability to research productively, and to adjust expectations in terms of an individual’s ability to contribute research outputs to the output pool of their unit.
3. To establish whether there are any Units of Assessment where the available output pool has been disproportionately affected by declared individual circumstances which warrant a request to the higher education funding bodies for a reduction in the required total number of outputs to be submitted by the Unit of Assessment.

**Individual circumstances**

* Qualifying as an Early Career Researcher (ECR: defined as started career as an independent researcher[[1]](#footnote-1) on or after 1 August 2016)
* Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the higher education (HE) sector
* Qualifying periods of family-related leave
* Disability (including chronic conditions)
* Ill heath, injury or mental health conditions
* Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of the standard allowances
* Caring responsibilities
* Gender reassignment
* COVID-19 related circumstances (REF 6a only)[[2]](#footnote-2)

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the circumstances listed above, you are invited to complete the attached form. Further information can be found in paragraph 160 of the [Guidance on Submissions](https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/) (REF 2019/01). Completion and return of the form is voluntary, and individuals who choose not to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information.

This form is the only means by which the School will be gathering this information; we will only consult HR records, contract start dates, etc. for the purposes of verifying data provided on the form. You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the relevant information.

**Confidentiality of individual disclosures**

Individuals are invited to voluntarily disclose any individual circumstances which have constrained their ability to undertake research during the assessment period using the form below. All information related to individual staff circumstances will be treated in confidence and in accordance with data protection legislation and will not be used for any other purposes. To protect individuals’ confidentiality and privacy, details of sensitive staff circumstances recorded by the School for the purposes of REF 2021 will be restricted to as few people as possible within the School (further details can be found in the School’s [REF Code of Practice](https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/REF/REF-home-page)).

Completed forms should be emailed to Research.REFdisclosures@lse.ac.uk, where they will be anonymised. Individuals’ names, Departments and units of assessment will be removed from the completed questionnaires prior to being reviewed by the individuals identified below. Completed questionnaires will only be seen by those responsible for making assessment as to appropriate reductions in the number of outputs.

The initial assessment of the appropriate reduction in the number of outputs required will be made by a review group comprising the Head of Research Policy, REF Support Manager, Head of EDI, the Head of HR Policy and Employee Relations and one member of the REF Strategy Committee (REFSC). For some complex circumstances, it may be necessary to consult with the Chair of REFSC, or one other member of REFSC if the Chair has a conflict of interest. All members of the review group will be invited to declare any conflicts of interest that they believe they have, in so far as staff may be deduced from the anonymised forms, before an assessment is undertaken. Once the review group has determined that a request for a reduction meets the criteria set out above and has agreed the appropriate reduction being sought, the relevant REF Coordinator(s) will be notified of the reduction being sought by the individual, but will not be informed of the nature of the individual circumstances.

Staff who do not return a completed questionnaire to Research.REFdisclosures@lse.ac.uk will be assumed to have no individual circumstances which have affected their research outputs for REF 2021.

If the School decides to apply to the funding bodies for either form of reduction of outputs (removal of ‘minimum of one’ requirement or reduction in Unit of Assessment total outputs required due to unit circumstances) we will need to provide the REF Team at Research England with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Please see the [Guidance on Submissions](https://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/) document (paragraphs 151-201) for more detail about reductions in outputs and what information needs to be submitted.

Data submitted by the School to the REF team at Research England will be kept confidential to the REF team, the [REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel](https://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/equality-and-diversity-advisory-panel/), and the main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The REF team at Research England will destroy the submitted data about individuals’ circumstances on completion of the assessment phase in 2022.

**Changes in circumstances**

The School recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the REF census date (31 July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should contact Research.REFdisclosures@lse.ac.uk to provide the updated information.

To submit this form you should email it to Research.REFdisclosures@lse.ac.uk

**Name:**

**Department/Centre/Institute:**

Do you have a research output published between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable individual circumstance (see above) which you wish to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Circumstance** | **Time period affected and any supporting comments/ explanation** |
| **Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).***Date you became an early career researcher: see footnote 1 on page 2 of this form for details.**Note that LSE’s Research and Innovation Division may use HR records to corroborate information provided and may need to contact you to clarify these.* |  |
| **Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.***Dates and durations in months.**Note that LSE’s Research and Innovation Division may use HR records to corroborate information provided and may need to contact you to clarify these.* |  |
| **Family-related leave;*** statutory maternity leave
* statutory adoption leave
* Additional paternity or adoption leave or shared parental leave lasting for four months or more.

*For each period of leave, state the nature of the leave taken and the dates and durations in months.* |  |
|  |
| **Disability (including chronic conditions)***To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* |  |
| **Mental health condition***To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* |   |
| **Ill health or injury***To include: Nature / name of condition, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* |   |
| **Constraints relating to family leave that fall outside of standard allowance***To include: Type of leave taken and brief description of additional constraints, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.*  |   |
| **Caring responsibilities***To include: Nature of responsibility, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* |   |
| **Gender reassignment***To include: Periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* |   |
| **COVID-19** (Applicable only where requests are being made for the removal of the minimum of one requirement)*To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* *The overall impact of the COVID-19 effects should be considered in combination with other applicable circumstances affecting the staff member’s ability to research productively throughout the period.* |  |
| **Any other exceptional reasons e.g. bereavement.***To include: Brief explanation of reason, periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* |   |

Please confirm, by ticking the box provided, that:

* The above information provided is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below.
* I realise that the above information will be used for REF 2021 purposes only and will be seen by the review group as set out above, but that they will not see my name, Department or Unit of Assessment.
* I realise it may be necessary to share the information with the REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs, subject to the confidentiality arrangements set out above.

I agree [ ]

**Name:** Print name here

**Signed:** Sign or initial here

**Date:** Insert date here

[ ]  I give my permission for an HR Partner to contact me in the first instance to discuss my circumstances in order to provide them with information regarding options for support where appropriate.

[ ]  I give my permission for the details on this form to be passed on to the Head of my Department/ Institute/ Centre. (Please note, if you do not give permission your Department/ Institute/ Centre may be unable to adjust expectations and put in place appropriate support for you).

I would like to be contacted by:

Email [ ]  Insert email address

Phone [ ]  Insert contact telephone number

1. For the purposes of REF 2021, an independent researcher is defined as an individual who undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual’s research programme.  A member of staff is not deemed to be an independent researcher purely on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs.   Further details can be found on the [School’s REF website](https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/REF/REF-home-page) and additional advice can be obtained from the Head of Research Policy . [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As well as effects due to applicable circumstances (such as ill health, caring responsibilities), this includes 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 School in response to COVID-19); and / or external factors related to COVID-19 (for example, restricted access to research facilities). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)