**Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form and Privacy Notice**

This document is being sent to all Category A staff whose outputs are eligible for submission to REF2021 (see [‘Guidance on submissions’](http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/), paragraphs 117-122). As part of the University’s commitment to supporting equality and diversity in REF, we have put in place safe and supportive structures for staff to declare information about any equality-related 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:

* To recognise the effect that equality-related circumstances can have on an individual’s ability to research productively, and to adjust expectations in terms of expected workload/ production of research outputs.
* 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:
  + circumstances that have resulted in an overall period of 46 months or more absence from research during the assessment period, due to equality-related circumstances (see below)
  + circumstances *equivalent* to 46 months or more absence from research due to equality-related circumstances
  + two or more qualifying periods of family-related leave.
* To establish whether there are any Units of Assessment where the proportion of declared circumstances is sufficiently high to warrant a request to the higher education funding bodies for a reduced required number of outputs to be submitted.

**Applicable circumstances**

* Qualifying as an ECR (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016)
* Absence from work due to secondments or career breaks outside the HE sector
* Qualifying periods of family-related leave
* Junior clinical academics who have not gained a Certificate of Completion of training by 31 July 2020
* 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

If your ability to research productively during the assessment period has been constrained due to one or more of the following circumstances, you are requested to complete the attached form. Further information can be found at paragraph 160 of the Guidance on Submissions (REF 2019/01). Completion and return of the form is voluntary, and individuals who do not choose to return it will not be put under any pressure to declare information if they do not wish to do so.

This form is the only means by which the University will be gathering this information; we will not be consulting HR records, contract start dates, etc. You should therefore complete and return the form if any of the above circumstances apply and you are willing to provide the associated information. Submitted data will be held separately from individual’s HR folders. All

Staff who submit an Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form will be offered a consultation with their HR Business Partner, so that they have an opportunity to discuss the issues that they have declared. Individuals are not obliged to meet or discuss the matters disclosed with their HR Business Partner.

**Ensuring Confidentiality**

Staff will submit their Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Forma specific email address ([RKE\_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk](mailto:RKE_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk)). Forms will then be saved in a password protected Box folder, with each individual form also being encrypted. Hard copies will be kept in a locked cupboard within the Research and Knowledge Exchange Department.

Submitted forms will only be seen by the four members of the REF Individual Circumstances Group (ICG). The ICG will review individual disclosures and will make recommendations to the relevant School Management Group regarding the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty. The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the review by email from [RKE\_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk](mailto:RKE_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk). The outcome of each case will be reported to the School Management Group, with no further detail provided.

The Individual Circumstances Group will ensure that there is a consistent and fair assessment of all circumstances and will record the decisions appropriately. Members of the ICG will observe rules of confidentiality and decisions will be recorded separately from the applicant’s HR file.

If the institution decides to apply to the funding bodies for either form of reduction of outputs (removal of ‘minimum of one’ requirement or unit circumstances), we will need to provide UKRI with data that you have disclosed about your individual circumstances, to show that the criteria have been met for reducing the number of outputs. Detail about reductions and about what information will be submitted, is provided at paragraphs 151-201 of the [‘Guidance on submissions’](http://www.ref.ac.uk/publications/guidance-on-submissions-201901/) document.

Within the Research England REF team, submitted data will be kept confidential to the REF team, the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel, and main panel chairs. All these bodies are subject to confidentiality arrangements. The REF team will destroy the submitted data about individuals’ circumstances on completion of the assessment phase. All submitted data that is held at Aston University (email, box and hard copy) will also be destroyed on completion of the assessment phase.

**Changes in circumstances**

The University recognises that staff circumstances may change between completion of the declaration form and the census date (31 July 2020). If this is the case, then staff should provide the updated information to [RKE\_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk](mailto:RKE_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk).

**Aston University: Individual Staff Circumstances Declaration Form**

Please submit this form using the following email address: [RKE\_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk](mailto:RKE_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk)

**Name:** Click here to insert text.

**Department:** Click here to insert text.

Do you have a REF-eligible output published between 1 January 2014 and 31 July 2020?

Yes

No

Please complete this form if you have one or more applicable equality-related circumstance (see above) which you are willing to declare. Please provide requested information in relevant box(es).

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| **Circumstance** | **Time period affected** |
| **Early Career Researcher (started career as an independent researcher on or after 1 August 2016).**  *Date you became an early career researcher.* | Click here to enter a date. |
| **Junior clinical academic who has not gained Certificate of completion of Training by 31 July 2020.** | Tick here |
| **Career break or secondment outside of the HE sector.**  *Dates and durations in months.* | Click here to enter dates and durations. |
| **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.* | Click here to enter dates and durations. |
|  | |
| **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.* | Click here to enter text. |
| **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.* | Click here to enter text. |
| **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.* | Click here to enter text. |
| **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.* | Click here to enter text. |
| **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.* | Click here to enter text. |
| **Gender reassignment**  *To include: periods of absence from work, and periods at work when unable to research productively. Total duration in months.* | Click here to enter text. |
| **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.* | Click here to enter text. |



**Data Collection, Privacy Notice and Consent**

Aston University (“the University”) processes personal data as a “Data Controller” as defined in the Data Protection Act 2018 (“the DPA”) and the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) (“the GDPR”). This notice relates to information about you which will be collected by the University and processed as described below. This notice may be updated at any time. The most up to date version can be found at [www.aston.ac.uk/dataprotection](http://www.aston.ac.uk/dataprotection). Your personal data will be processed at all times in compliance with the DPA and the GDPR.

**What we collect**

Any information submitted to [RKE\_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk](mailto:RKE_REFCircumstances@aston.ac.uk) will be used solely for the purposes of the REF Individual Staff Circumstances process. All information will be held securely and separately to other records until the completion of the REF2021 process, after which time all applications will be destroyed. Specifically, declarations of Individual Staff Circumstances will not be stored with your main HR file. We acknowledge that these submissions will be personal in nature and may contain information which is classed as “Sensitive Personal Data” under the DPA, and “Special Categories of Data” under the GDPR.

The Aston University Individual Circumstances Group (ICG) has a duty:

* to keep such information secure;
* to allow access to it only on a ‘need to know’ basis; and
* to require explicit consent for sensitive personal data to be released to another party.

**Your rights**

Under the DPA and the GDPR you have certain rights over how your data is processed, including the right to know what information is processed about you and how it is processed. You have the right of access to your personal information. You also have additional rights i.e. the right to rectify inaccurate information; restrict processing; and object to processing. These rights are limited in certain circumstances by the GDPR, and may be limited further by future UK legislation where data is only processed for research or statistical purposes.

**How we process your data**

The University will process your personal data for the following purposes:

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| **Purpose 1 – REF2021 Individual Staff Circumstances process**  You consent to the information submitted on the Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form (Appendix 7) (“the Form”) being used by the University to assess the appropriate number of outputs to be allocated to you in the REF2021 return. The information submitted in the Form will only be used for the purposes of the REF2021 submission.  Members of the ICG will be made aware of these conditions, and will be required to maintain strict confidentiality. The Form will only be shared beyond the ICG if you appeal their decision, in which case the Form will be shared solely with the appeal panel.  We will process Special Categories of Data (e.g. information relating to health or disability) for this purpose on the basis of your consent (GDPR Article 9(2)(a)). Please confirm your consent by completing the declaration below.  If you do not provide your consent, the University will be unable to consider your completed Form as this would be unlawful.  **Please indicate your consent by completing the Consent to Personal Data Processing section at the end of this form.** |
| **Purpose 2 – Entry of REF2021 Personal Circumstances information onto the REF submission system**  Research England requires that a summary of any grounds for reduction is included in the REF2021 return. A short summary of the grounds for the reduction will therefore be entered direct onto the REF submission system.  We will process your personal data for Purpose 2 on the grounds of the University’s legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)). |
| **Purpose 3 – Entry of reductions onto PURE**  Information on the reduction in the number of outputs will be recorded on PURE. REF Coordinators will use the information on PURE to see whether the number of required outputs has been reduced and the number of outputs required. The grounds for reduction will not be recorded on PURE.  We will process your personal data for Purpose 3 on the grounds of the University’s legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)). |
| **Purpose 4 – Sharing of decision summaries with the Research England Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP)**  The decision summaries included in the REF2021 return will be made available to the Research England Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP). All REF panel members, chairs and secretaries are required to be bound by confidentiality requirements as a condition of their appointment. All information collected, stored and processed by the Research England REF Team will be handled in accordance with the GDPR and the DPA.  We will process your personal data for Purpose 4 on the grounds of the University’s legitimate interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(f)). |

**Consent to personal data processing**

I consent to the personal data I have provided through the REF2021 Personal Circumstances process being used for the purpose set out above.

**Yes/No**

**Declaration**

I confirm that the information provided in this Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances Form is a true and accurate description of my circumstances as of the date below

**Yes/No**

**Name:** Print name here

**Signed:** Sign or initial here

**Date:** Insert date here