

Staff and individual staff circumstances: summary of REF2014 rules

1. The REF guidelines divide individual staff circumstances into two categories: **clearly defined** circumstances and **complex** circumstances.
2. Staff may be returned with fewer than four outputs to the REF, if circumstances significantly constrained their ability to produce four outputs or to work productively throughout the assessment period:
 - a. Circumstances with a **clearly defined** reduction in outputs, which are:
 - i. Qualifying as an early career researcher
 - ii. Absence from work due to working part-time, secondments or career breaks
 - iii. Qualifying periods of maternity, paternity or adoption leave
 - iv. Other circumstances that apply for clinical, health and veterinary academics.
 - b. **Complex circumstances** that require a judgement about the appropriate reduction in outputs, which are:
 - i. Disability.
 - ii. Ill health or injury.
 - iii. Mental health conditions.
 - iv. Constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare (in addition to maternity / paternity / adoption leave).
 - v. Other caring responsibilities (e.g. caring for an elderly or disabled family member).
 - vi. Gender reassignment.
 - vii. Other circumstances relating to protected characteristics or relating to activities protected by employment legislation.
3. When submitting individual staff circumstances, the University must propose an output reduction and include enough evidence to show the rules (below) have been applied correctly.

Early career researchers

4. Early career researchers are those who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1st August 2009. You become an independent researcher the first time when:
 - You hold a contract of employment of at least 0.2FTE with a primary function of *research* or *teaching and research* with any HEI or other organisation in the UK or overseas **AND**
 - You undertook independent research, leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of research work (just being named on a research output doesn't automatically mean that you have started your career as an independent researcher).

If you started your research career before 1st August 2009 and then took a secondment or career break outside higher education, please look at the section on secondments and career breaks, below.

Date at which the individual first met the REF definition of an early career researcher:	Number of outputs may be reduced by up to:
On or before 31 July 2009	0
Between 1 August 2009 and 31 July 2010 inclusive	1
Between 1 August 2010 and 31 July 2011 inclusive	2
On or after 1 August 2011	3

Part-time working, secondments or career breaks

5. Please note that this section only applies to secondments or career breaks outside of the higher education sector, and in which the individual did not undertake academic research.

Total months absent between 1 January 2008 and 31 October 2013 due to working part-time, secondment or career break:	Number of outputs may be reduced by up to:
0-11.99	0
12-27.99	1
28-45.99	2
46 or more	3

6. The “months absent” in the table above are calculated on the length of the individual’s time away from working in higher education. For part-time working, ‘total months absent’ should be calculated by multiplying the number of months worked part-time by the full-time equivalent (FTE) **not** worked during those months. For example, an individual worked part-time for 30 months at 0.6 FTE. The number of equivalent months absent = $30 \times 0.4 = 12$.

Maternity, paternity or adoption leave

7. Individuals may reduce the number of outputs by one, for each discrete period of:

- a. Statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave taken substantially during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013, regardless of the length of the leave.

- b. Additional paternity or adoption leave¹ lasting for four months or more, taken substantially during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 October 2013.
8. If your maternity, paternity or adoption leave was associated with other constraints on your research (e.g. caring for a disabled child), these can be returned as complex circumstances.

Other circumstances that apply in UOAs 1-6

9. In UOAs 1-6, the number of outputs may be reduced by up to two for the following:
- a. Category A staff who are junior clinical academics. These are defined as clinically qualified academics who are still completing their clinical training in medicine or dentistry and have not gained a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or its equivalent prior to 31 October 2013.
 - b. Category C staff who are employed primarily as clinical, health or veterinary professionals.

Combining clearly defined circumstances

10. If you have been affected by more than one complex circumstances (e.g. working part-time after a period of maternity or paternity leave), then both can be submitted.

Complex circumstances

11. Complex circumstances could include disability, ill health or injury, mental health conditions, constraints relating to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or childcare, other caring responsibilities, gender reassignment or other circumstances.
12. Please note, however, that teaching workload and administrative responsibilities are not eligible as REF individual staff circumstances.
13. It is useful to try to describe complex circumstances in terms of equivalent number of months absent from work (where this is practicable) as this will help to determine the most likely output reduction.

The Equality Challenge Unit has published a number of fictional examples of complex cases at <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/ref-materials/complex-circumstances-examples>

¹ 'Additional paternity or adoption leave' refers to leave of up to 26 weeks which is taken to care for a child where the person's spouse, partner or civil partner was entitled to statutory maternity leave or statutory adoption leave, and has since returned to work. The term 'additional paternity leave' is often used to describe this type of leave although it may be taken by parents of either gender. For the purposes of the REF we refer to this leave as 'additional paternity or adoption leave'.