Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations in REF2021

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Ensuring E&D in REF 2021

- Funding Bodies committed to E&D being firmly embedded from outset – All those involved in REF should exercise a shared responsibility for advancing E&D.

- Aim - to encourage institutions to submit, and fairly represent the work of, their best researchers irrespective of their equality related personal circumstances

- Should also act as a driver to bring about broader cultural change in the sector - key lever for future progress

- Evidence from RAE and REF2014 that some groups of staff are under-represented

Key measures

- Improved panel nomination process

- Improved E&D training

- Codes of Practice

- Allowances for Individual and Unit circumstances

- Equality Impact Assessments

- Promotion of inclusive cultures through environment template

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Panel appointments / nominations

- Consideration of E&D built into the selection process for Main and Sub-panel chairs

- Chairs (and nominating bodies) provided with REF2014 data on characteristics of panel membership

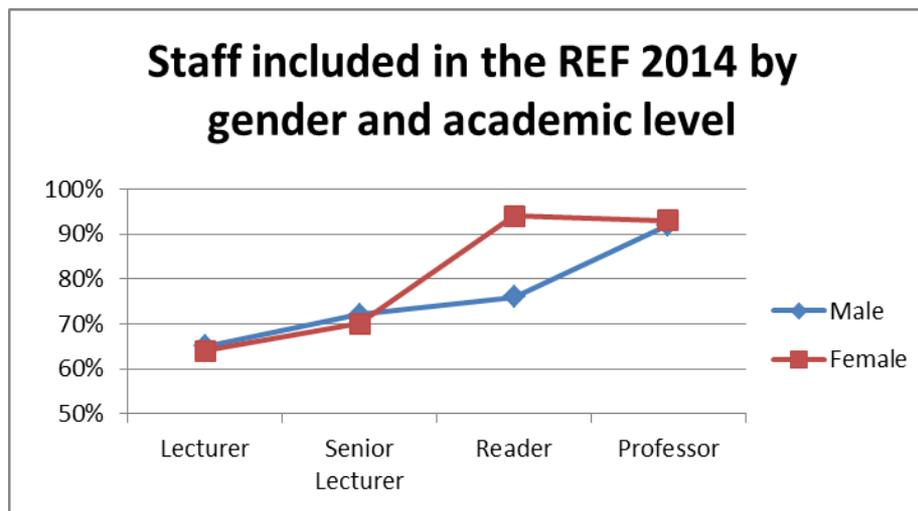- Nominating bodies required to complete template to provide info about how E&D issues were taken into account in putting forward nominations
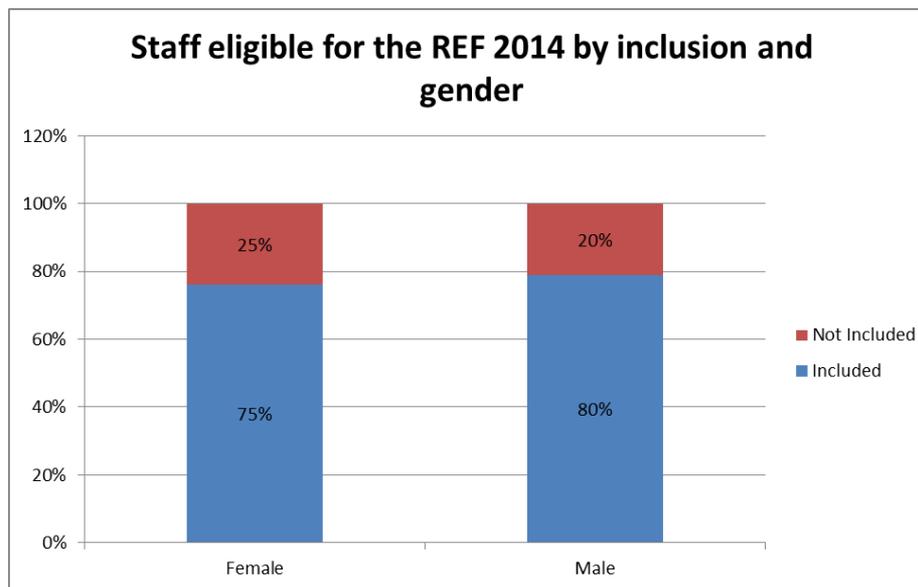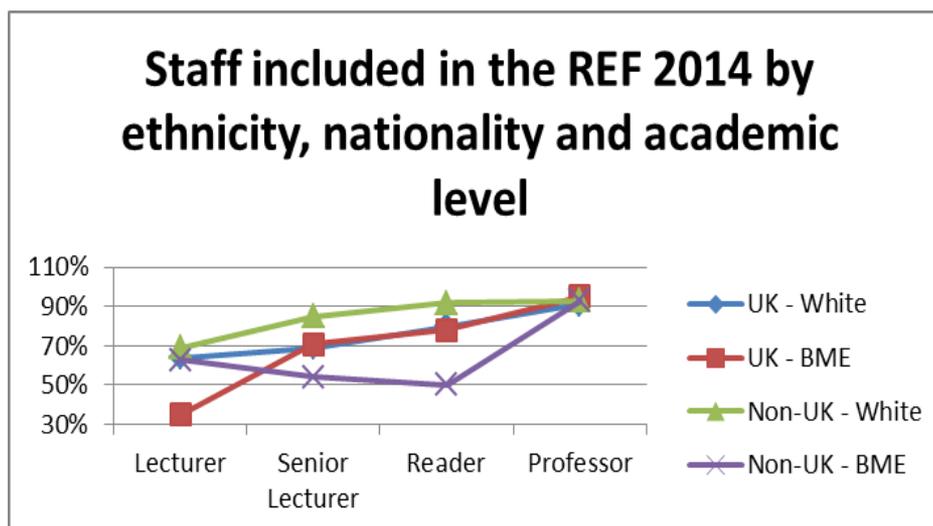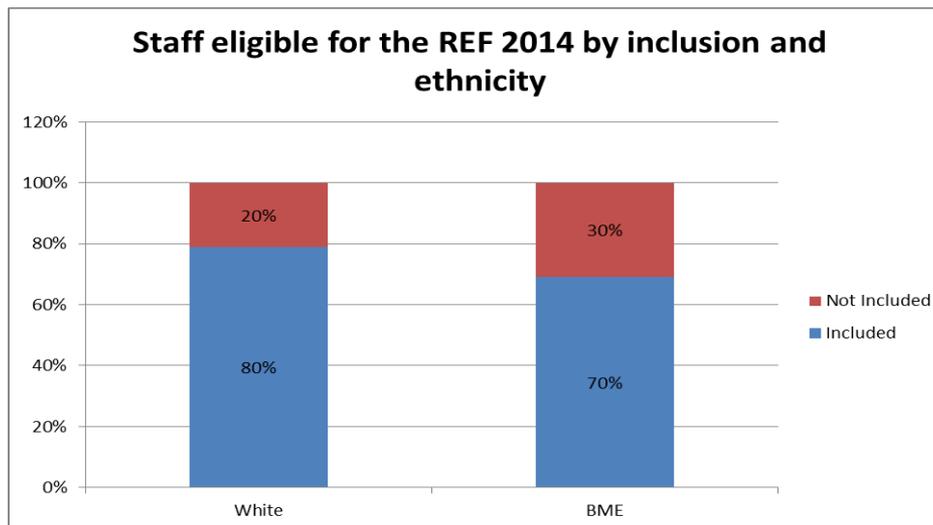
E&D training

- Those involved in selecting MP Chairs given E&D briefing

- Those involved in selecting SP Chairs underwent unconscious bias training

- SP Chairs had unconscious bias training, and Funding Bodies considering extending it to all panel members

- Will need further updates during assessment phase, as always potential for unconscious bias to reappear
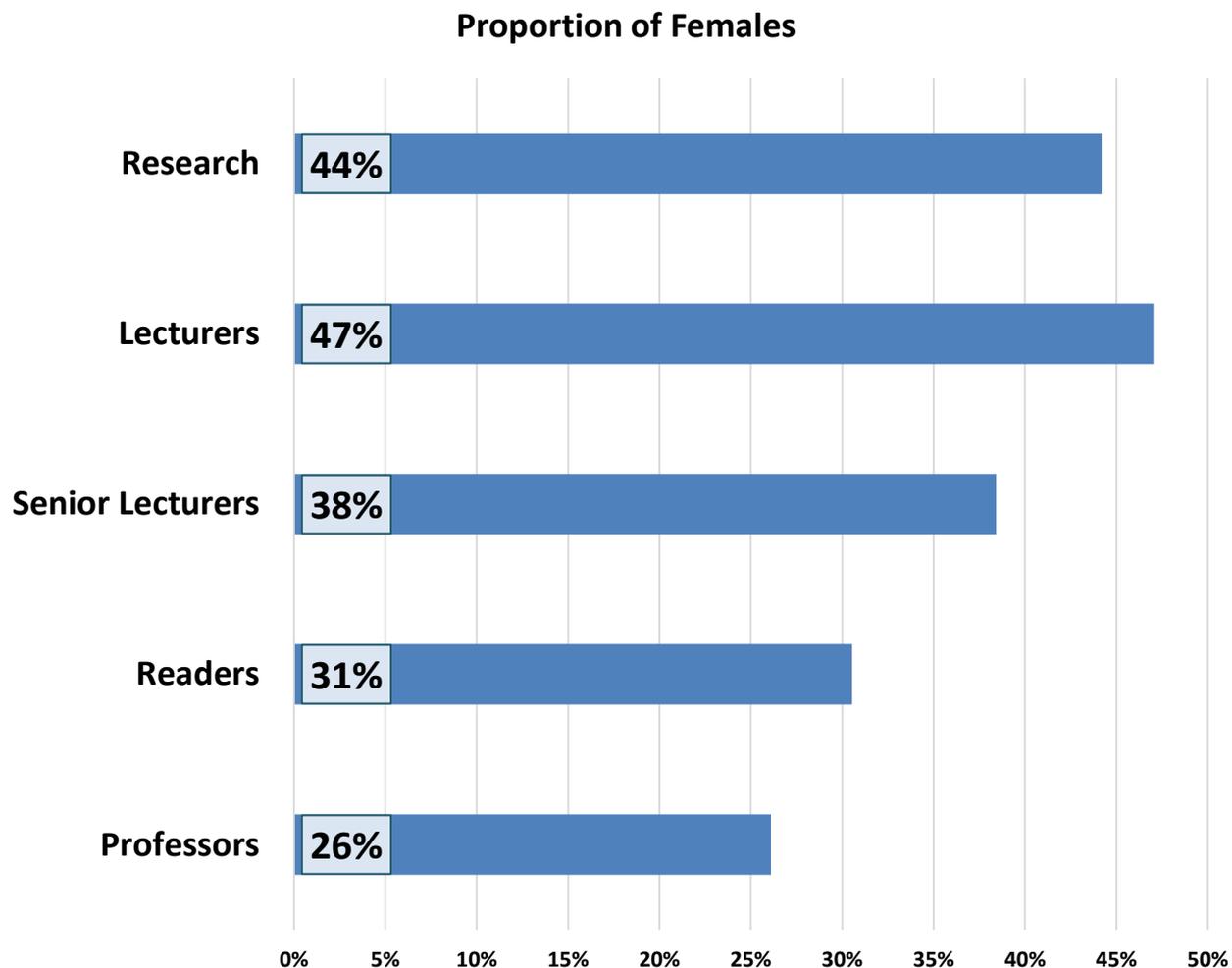
Code of Practice

- Our REF2021 Code of Practice sets out how we will comply with equality and diversity legislation and provides a transparent explanation of our approach to the REF2021 submission.

- ✓ Identification of staff who do not have significant responsibility for research (where not submitting 100%)
- ✓ Selection of outputs
- ✓ Equality impact assessments

	% eligible staff submitted RAE 2008	% eligible staff submitted REF 2014
Men	67%	67%
Women	48%	51%
Asian	**Comparable data not available but selection rate of black staff was lower and could not be justified when other factors were taken into account.**	56% (UK) 74% (EU) 60% (Int)
Black		35% (UK) 45% (EU) 46% (Int)
Chinese		68% (UK) 90% (EU) 68% (Int)
White		56% (UK) 75% (EU) 76% (Int)
Disabled	51%	47%
Non disabled	61%	61%

Staff eligible for the REF 2014 by inclusion and gender

Staff included in the REF 2014 by gender and academic level

Staff eligible for the REF 2014 by inclusion and ethnicity

Staff included in the REF 2014 by ethnicity, nationality and academic level

BAME Academic staff at The University of Manchester

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Proportion of BAME

Students	45%
Research	27%
Lecturers	19%
Senior Lecturers	13%
Readers	14%
Professors	10%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%
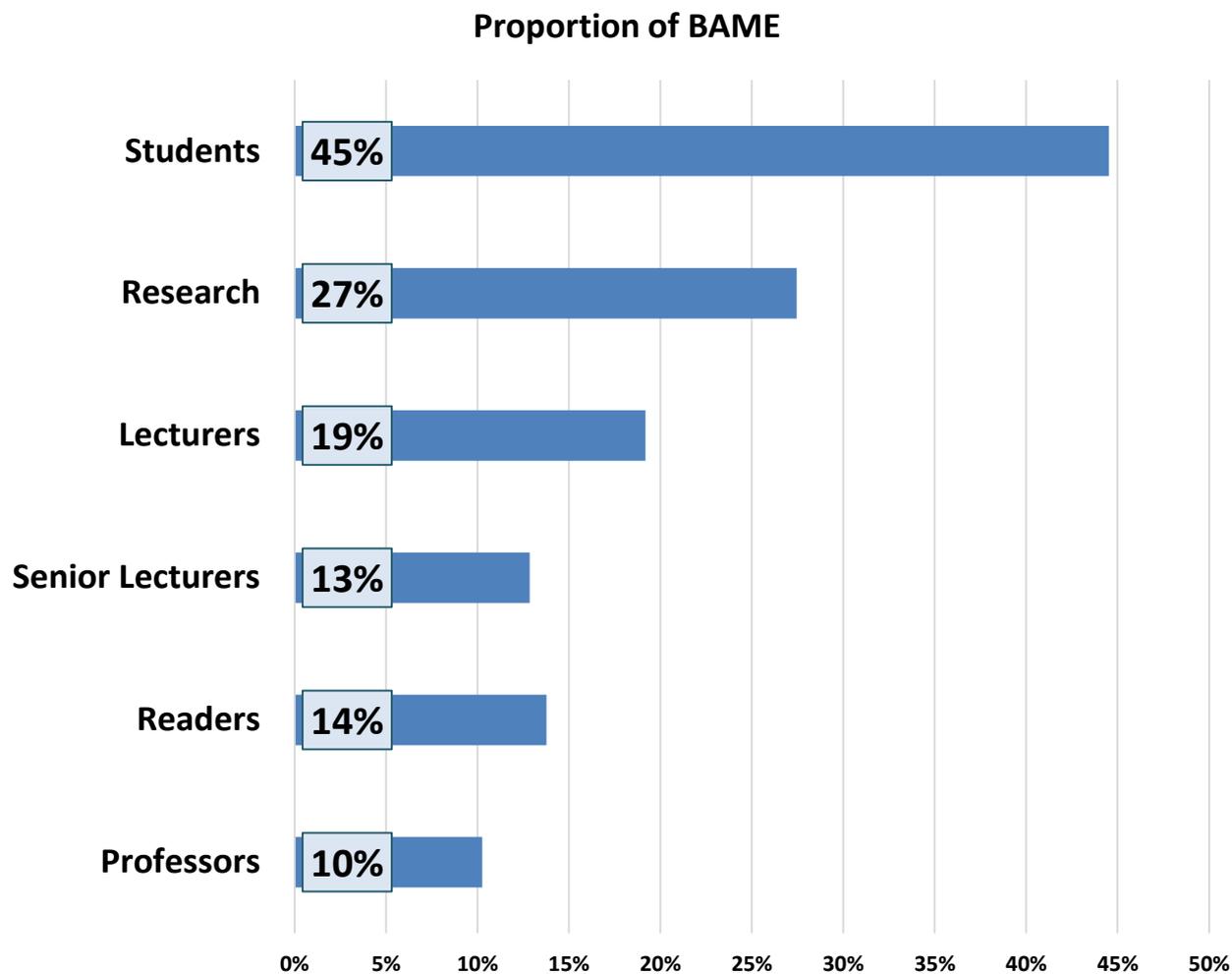
Under-representation at Manchester
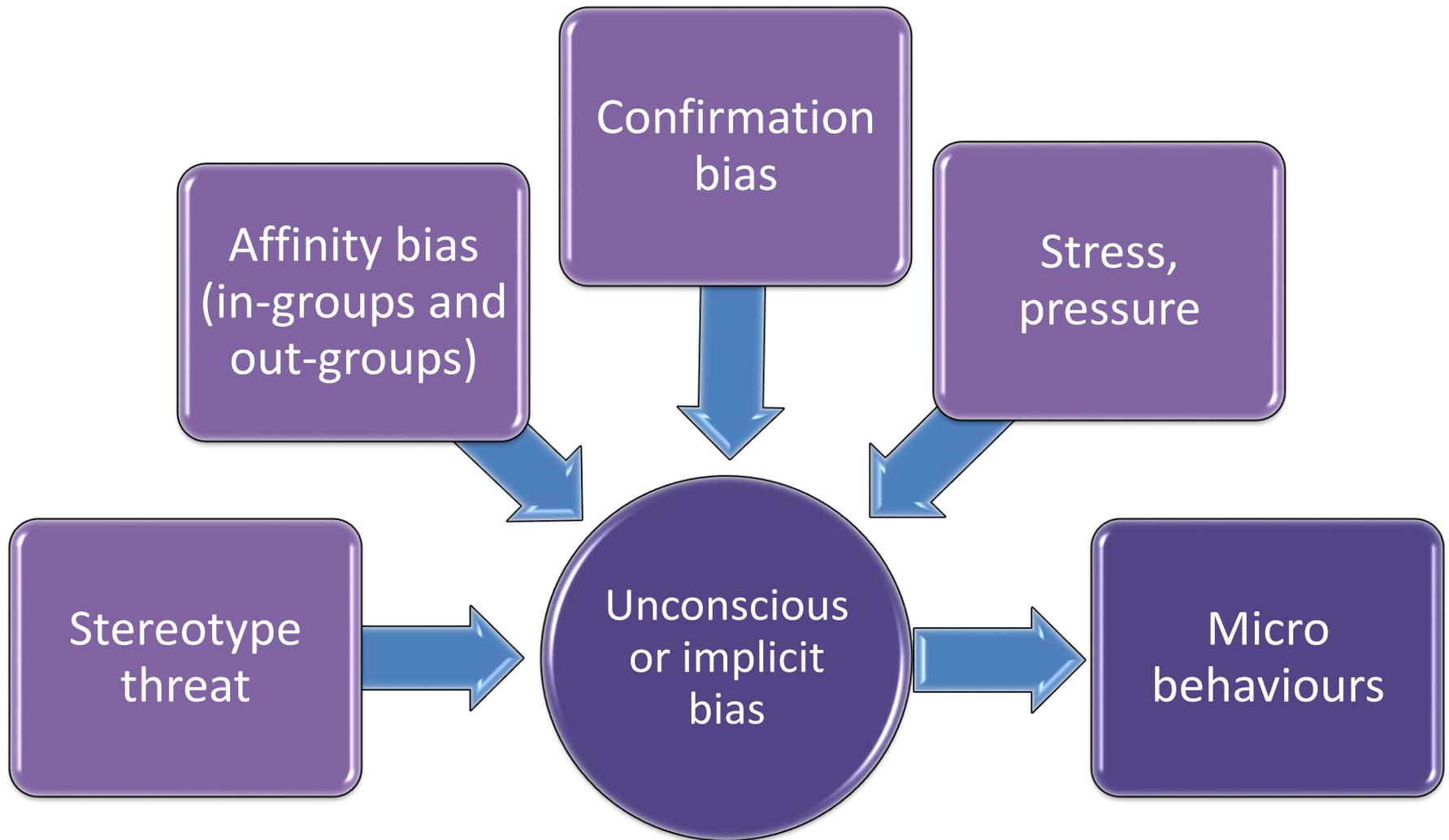
- Large disparities between academic profile and student profile

- Senior academics are decision-makers and the majority of decisions are taken by an unrepresentative demographic group

- Students cite the lack of visible role models as a significant factor in not pursuing an academic career

- Significant research showing that structural and cultural barriers remain for some groups

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Principles of EDI and REF at Manchester

- REF is first and foremost an exercise in assessing research quality and maximising the strength of Manchester's submission

- However – if our continued review of the process shows significant disparities for specific groups, we must consider this and think about what potential there is to adjust processes without lowering the quality of outputs

- By the time outputs are assessed, factors effecting inequalities in research careers will already be established

- The challenge for you is to ensure all REF processes are as fair as possible by recognising that subjectivity and scope for discretion can lead to implicit bias and therefore differential outcomes

What biases might play out in REF decisions?

Confirmation bias

Affinity bias (in-groups and out-groups)

Stress, pressure

Stereotype threat

Unconscious or implicit bias

Micro behaviours

Examples

Positive Stereotypes – Dominant group members are automatically presumed to be competent. Such a member receives the benefit of the doubt, negative attributes are glossed over and success is assumed.

Playing it safe – making quick decisions based on perceived reputation rather than a considered opinion based on evidence.

Elitist Behaviour (also called "Raising-the-Bar") – Women and other under-represented groups have to be more competent than other groups perceived as 'elite' to be viewed as equal

Metrics and gender

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Productivity

- men publish more papers (although the gap differs between fields and subfields)

- men are around 50% more likely to be invited by journals to submit papers

Self-citation: men are 56% more likely to cite their own work, 84% in mathematics (*Bergstrom et al*)

Gender gap in citations: both men and women are more likely to cite work by other men

(*Mitchell et al, Sugimoto et al, Fong and Wilhite*)

- **Authorship**: women are less often found in authorship positions usually associated with seniority *(Holman, Stuart Fox and Hauser; West et al)*

- **Culture**: female authors 38% more likely than male to be 'pressured' to add authors to papers – usually by lab director or other senior academic *(Fong and Wilhite)*

Conditions that enhance biases

- Bias control is less effective when we are:
    - cognitively or emotionally preoccupied
    - stressed
    - under-time pressure/rushing to make a quick decision
    - under emotional load
    - physically tired or low in glucose
    - have conflicting priorities
    - being challenged

Embedding equality and mitigating bias is critical in…

1. Determining:

- Who should be members of the UoA panels
- Who has significant responsibility for research
- Who is an independent researcher

2. Selecting outputs:

- Determining the number of outputs individuals contribute to the pool
- Assessing personal circumstances
- Creating a culture and process supportive of disclosure of personal circumstances

3. Calculating reductions

4. Selecting impact case studies

What can you do about reducing bias?

1. Accept we are all biased and that this has an impact

2. Consciously consider each person as an individual, not as a member of a particular group

3. Avoid making decisions on auto-pilot

4. Give the panel time to critically review and reflect on its decision making

5. Consider what to do collectively to mitigate bias

Discussion

In groups, discuss what overall strategies you can adopt to mitigate against bias in any decision-making in relation to REF.

How does this all apply to REF2021?

1. Determining who is an independent researcher

2. Selecting outputs:
   - Determining the number of outputs individuals contribute to the pool
   - Taking account of personal circumstances
   - Creating a culture and process supportive of disclosure of personal circumstances

3. Selecting Impact Case Studies

1. Determining who is an independent researcher

Category A - 'academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater...on the census date, whose **primary employment function** is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research' .

- Staff should have **a substantive research connection** with the submitting unit.....

- Staff on '**research only' contracts** should meet the definition of an **independent *researcher**...an individual who 'undertakes self-directed research, rather than carrying out another individual's research programme....'.*

1. Determining who is an independent researcher

- All UoM staff coded 'teaching and research' are automatically eligible
- For research only staff to be eligible the indicators are:

  - o Leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on an externally funded research project;
  - o Holding an independently won, competitively awarded fellowship where research independence is a requirement (as per the illustrative list provided on the REF website);
  - o Leading a research group or a substantial work package.

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1. Determining who is an independent researcher

- UoAs within Main Panels C and D have supplementary indicators :

  - Being named as a Co-I on an externally funded research grant/award;
  - Having significant input into the design, conduct and interpretation of the research (REF Panel Criteria paragraph 189).

1. Determining who is an independent researcher

- How can discrepancies or too much discretion in determining 'independent researchers'   lead to bias or inequalities in your area?

- How will you ensure that your Unit of Assessment's REF roster is accurate for the census date?

- How can you address concerns around independence?

- What measures can you take to minimise the concerns identified?

2. Selecting Outputs

"Each unit of assessment must decide which outputs to select for submission, in accordance with the Guidance on Submissions and its internal Code of Practice"

- In practice, the tools used for output selection will present you with a submission optimised for Grade Point Average

- However, this is based on internal review scores (from the Research Review Exercise)

2. Selecting Outputs

- In practice, the tools used for output selection will present you with a submission optimised for Grade Point Average - we prioritise quality of outputs in the first instance

- So where might bias be a factor in the output submission?

  - Information based on internal review scores (from the Research Review Exercise)

  - Decisions on author's contribution to the output

  - Final decisions on output 'ranking' (e.g. where RRE outputs may be interchangeable)

2. Selecting outputs – Staff Circumstances

- Two types of Circumstances:
  - Unit reductions: UoA's may request a reduction of between 0.5 and 1.5 out put per staff circumstance
  - Removal of the requirement to submit a minimum of one output

- The declaration of equality-related circumstances that have affected a researcher's productivity over the REF period is entirely an individual decision.
- No member of staff will be placed under pressure to declare the circumstances if they do not wish to do so.

3. Selecting Impact Case Studies

- Who is more likely to be selected as an impact case author and what unconscious biases could come into play?

- How are Impact Case Studies identified?

- How will you select Impact Case Studies for submission?
  - As with Output assessment, bias in 'scoring' case studies when assessing which should be taken forward for submission