

Code of Practice

Institution name: Ravensbourne University London

Date of submission: 13 May 2026

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Institutional Context and Purpose of this Code of Practice

Ravensbourne University London is a specialist institution with a distinctive research and knowledge exchange profile rooted in creative industries, business and computing. The University's research strategy for 2025–2030 positions interdisciplinary collaboration, responsible innovation and working with industry at the centre of its academic identity.

Ravensbourne's research is organised through six interdisciplinary Knowledge Exchange and Research Labs: the Audio-Visual Media Lab, the Emerging Technology Lab, Business and Social Purposes (EBS) Lab, the Collaborative Observatory for Architecture and Cities (COAC+), the Learning Lab, the Digital Hack Lab and the Regenerative Fashion Lab. Each Lab is a research and knowledge exchange platform focused on significant industrial, professional or societal challenges, characterised by multidisciplinary collaboration, structured industry partnerships and an explicit impact plan. Labs are led by academic staff and draw on researchers from across the institution; they provide the primary structural framework through which research activity at Ravensbourne is organised and supported.

A Code of Practice (CoP) is a mandatory requirement for participation in REF 2029 and establishes the minimum standards governing institutional decision making in relation to the volume measure and output selection. This document sets out the policies, procedures and governance arrangements that Ravensbourne University London will apply in:

- Identifying “teaching and research” contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)
- Determining Research Independence (RI) for “research only” contracts
- Allocating contracts to Units of Assessment (UoAs)
- Selecting outputs for submission

This Code of Practice has been developed through consultation with academic staff, Lab leadership, People and Culture, data governance teams and equality representatives. It is designed to reflect both the requirements of REF 2029 and the University's commitment to fairness, responsible research assessment and inclusive research culture.

1.2 How this CoP supports the REF principles

Each institutional Code of Practice must address the principles of robustness, transparency and equity and inclusion.

- **Robustness** – Robustness within this Code of Practice is defined as the application of clear, objective, consistent and auditable processes that ensure submissions accurately reflect the

scale and shape of Ravensbourne's research activity. The University's approach to identifying SRR is grounded in explicit contractual expectations. Criteria for RI are based on REF funding bodies' guidance. The University has strengthened its data governance infrastructure to ensure that the HESA Staff record accurately reflects eligible contracts, including the correct application of REFQUALCON and REFUOA2029 fields. Internal quality assurance mechanisms include annual data verification exercises, cross-validation between the People and Culture department, the Research Office and Lab leadership, documented audit trails for all RI determinations, and peer review, cross-lab moderation and documented rationale for output selection.

- **Transparency** – Ravensbourne will publish its approved Code of Practice on its external website and communicate it directly to all academic and research staff. The University will provide accessible formats of the CoP where required and ensure that staff on leave or part-time contracts remain fully informed. A university-wide all-staff consultation event was held on 30 March 2026, providing an open forum for engagement, clarification, and feedback. Consultation mechanisms were designed to be focused to ensure effective and proportionate engagement, including the use of a concise feedback form. This form includes a specific equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) question to capture staff perspectives on fairness and inclusivity within the proposed processes. This approach aligns with Ravensbourne's wider EDI strategy (held by the Registrar) ensuring the CoP reflects the University's commitment to fairness, responsible research assessment, and an inclusive research culture. The consultation generated feedback that have directly informed the development of this Code of Practice and wider research support. Consultation feedback indicated that:
 - the Research Labs model is reported to be effective in providing tailored one-to-one support and enabling clear, granular communication;
 - all-staff research meetings are identified as a valuable mechanism for promoting transparency;
 - regular and consistent communication is recognised as important for staff engagement;
 - there is a lack of clarity regarding processes for capturing and managing research outputs;
 - awareness of research leave opportunities appears to be limited among staff.

In response, the University commits to:

- developing a revised publication policy during 2026, with clear actions for all staff
- maintaining and further developing the Labs model as the primary mechanism for delivering research support, and to ensure that the Research Office remains the first point of contact for staff engaging with the REF process;
- all-staff research meetings were identified as an important forum for institutional transparency, and the University will continue to hold these meetings with a standing REF agenda item throughout the submission period;
- to develop a dedicated SharePoint site to serve as a central hub for all REF-related information. The site will provide staff with timely updates, clearly signposted key decision points and timelines with FAQs, and named contact points;
- proactively communicating research policy to all academic staff on contracts as part of the annual workload planning and appraisal cycle.

- **Equity and inclusion** – Decisions relating to RI, Unit of Assessment (UoA) allocation, and output selection are subject to a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), in accordance with REF requirements. The EIA process analyses data across protected characteristics to identify any potential for direct or indirect discrimination. Where risks or disparities are identified, appropriate mitigating actions are implemented, monitored, and reviewed to ensure fairness and consistency in decision-making. Ravensbourne supports diverse forms of scholarship, including practice-based outputs, digital artefacts, exhibitions, performances, applied research and collaborative industry projects. The Code of Practice explicitly safeguards the recognition of these forms within selection processes. Staff on teaching-only contracts are invited to share details of their research outputs with the Research Office, and these may be considered for submission where appropriate or through exception cases.

1.3 Contextualisation within Institutional Policies

Ravensbourne University London is firmly and unequivocally committed to promoting equality of opportunity across all aspects of its institutional life, and to fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive working, learning and social environment that is wholly free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination in any form. This commitment is not aspirational but a legal obligation, a cultural priority, and a defining feature of how Ravensbourne operates as an institution. The University seeks to ensure that all staff, students, visitors, contractors, and external partners are treated at all times with dignity, respect, and fairness, irrespective of any protected characteristic as defined under the Equality Act 2010. Those characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. No decision made under this Code of Practice whether relating to the identification of staff with Significant Responsibility for Research, the determination of Research Independence, the allocation of contracts to Units of Assessment, or the selection of outputs shall be made in a manner that discriminates, directly or indirectly, against any individual on the basis of these characteristics.

This Code of Practice has been developed not as a standalone compliance exercise, but as a document that is fully integrated into the broader institutional context of Ravensbourne's policies, strategies, and values. It has been designed to operate in alignment with, and to reinforce, the institutional policies and frameworks such as Ravensbourne's EDI strategy which sets out the University's overarching approach to building a diverse and inclusive community and provides the institutional framework within which all equality-related decisions are made. The EDI Strategy informs the design of every process described in this Code of Practice, from the composition of decision-making committees to the mitigation actions identified through the EIAs conducted for each stage of the REF submission process. Where this Code of Practice identifies risks of disadvantage to particular groups, for example, Early Career Researchers, staff returning from parental or sick leave, or staff with disabilities, the mitigating actions implemented are consistent with and drawn from the principles established in the EDI Strategy.

The Knowledge Exchange and Research Strategy 2025-2030 sets out Ravensbourne's vision for research and knowledge exchange activity over the current strategic period. It positions interdisciplinary collaboration, knowledge exchange, and deep engagement with the creative industries at the heart of the University's academic identity. This Code of Practice supports the delivery of that strategy by providing a fair, transparent, and well-governed framework for identifying and developing the research community at Ravensbourne. The processes set out in this CoP are directly informed by the research expectations and structures established within the Research Strategy, including the University's six interdisciplinary Knowledge Exchange and Research Labs

Ravensbourne's commitment to research integrity underpins the REF process throughout: from the review and selection of outputs for submission, to assessment of substantive link, and in the responsible

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

use of metrics and peer review in output evaluation. New Publications and Research Integrity policies are being developed and will be published on the institutional SharePoint site prior to the first output collection cycle.

1.4 Update on Actions Since REF 2021:

Since REF 2021, Ravensbourne University London has undertaken substantial development in research governance and culture. Key actions include: formalisation of six interdisciplinary knowledge exchange and research labs, each with defined leadership and governance structures; revision of workload allocation models to clarify research expectations within Teaching and Research contracts; strengthening of data governance procedures in preparation for the transition to volume calculation based on CONFTE across academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27; establishment of the Knowledge Exchange and Research Committee (KERC) to provide strategic oversight of research activities; creation of dedicated REF governance structures (REF Steering Committee, REF Assessment Advisory Group, and Appeal Committee) with clear separation between decision-making and appeals processes; implementation of a comprehensive programme of research training and development opportunities, including mandatory EDI and unconscious bias training for all staff; development of enhanced support mechanisms for staff throughout the REF submission process, including individual meetings and Research Office assistance; and introduction of structured research culture monitoring using the Research Culture Index, enabling ongoing assessment of inclusivity, leadership, collaboration and responsible research practices. The University is committed to increasing the number of staff on Teaching and Research contracts over the REF period, as research culture develops and as staff demonstrate sustained programmes of independent research activity. Ravensbourne University London supports staff on fixed-term and part-time contracts by ensuring equitable access to research funding, training, career development opportunities, and full inclusion in institutional activities. The University promotes realistic workload planning, provides access to research infrastructure, and adopts flexible approaches to accommodate different working patterns.

1.5 1.5 Scope of this Code of Practice

This CoP does not cover decisions about moving staff between contract types (e.g. from teaching-only to teaching and research contracts). Such decisions are managed through separate institutional processes and fall outside the scope of REF appeals. The CoP focuses exclusively on the required identification and submission processes for REF 2029.

Part 2: Identifying Staff Contracts with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR)

Ravensbourne's "teaching and research" (ACEMPFUN 3) contracts in the HESA staff record precisely identify all staff with significant responsibility for research. All staff on these contracts are allocated a minimum of 35 days of research time per year (pro rata for part-time staff), documented through the workload allocation model.

Part 3: Determining Research Independence

3.1 Policies and Procedures

Criteria and Evidence

Research Independence (RI) is the test for inclusion in the volume measure that applies to “research only” (ACEMPFUN 2) contracts. RI is defined as undertaking self-directed research rather than primarily supporting another individual's research programme. The following indicators of RI will be used at Ravensbourne:

- Holding, or having held in the past, the formal role of project lead / principal investigator, or co-lead / co-investigator on external research funding awarded to Ravensbourne
- Holding in the last five years the formal role of project lead / principal investigator, or co-lead / co-investigator on external research funding awarded to another UK University from a major funder, evidenced by the funder's public records
- Holding, or having held in the past five years, a research fellowship demonstrating research independence, as documented on the [list provided by the REF funding bodies](#)
- Having previously held, or concurrently holding, a teaching and research appointment with SRR at Ravensbourne (which inherently demonstrates independence)
- From 2026/27 onwards, having been identified as independent in the prior year's process

All Research-only contracts which meet at least one of the above indicators will be determined to be included in the REF volume.

Decision-Making and Communication

KERC, as the University's primary research governance body, takes responsibility for the annual RI determination. Subsequent decisions on UoA allocation and output selection are made by the REF Steering Committee, which reports directly to KERC, providing a clear separation between the governance of the volume measure and the governance of the submission itself.

Each July, People and Culture (P&C) provides the Research Office with records of staff holding permanent or fixed-term research-only contracts within the relevant HESA reporting year. All eligible staff are invited to attend a meeting with the Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research to discuss and evidence how they meet the independence criteria, using the Independence Review Form (Appendix 1). Where staff are unable to attend, completed forms may be submitted via email.

The Research Office reviews all submitted forms against internal records of grants, fellowships, and research activity. Where a form has not been submitted, the Research Office will complete a draft based on available records, which is then shared with the staff member for verification.

In September each year, Independence Review Forms are considered by the KERC. Decisions are communicated in writing by the Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research in September/October. Staff on research-only contracts who are determined to meet the criteria for independence are recorded as REFQUALCON = 'yes' in the HESA staff return.

3.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

Roles and Responsibilities: Ravensbourne University London has established a clear and robust governance structure to oversee preparations for REF 2029. The Knowledge Exchange and Research Committee (KERC) provides strategic oversight of research and knowledge exchange activity and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Code of Practice, and making decisions on RI.

An independent REF Appeals Committee, chaired by the Registrar, is responsible for considering and determining appeals. The Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research (decision-making) chairs the KERC and is responsible for communicating RI outcomes. In support of these structures, the REF Manager (advisory) oversees the administration of REF processes, including checking documentary evidence, maintaining records of decisions, and ensuring that HESA data is accurately updated. The Director of People and Culture (advisory) provides staff data and is responsible for the completion of the HESA staff return.

Committee membership is designed to reflect the diversity of Ravensbourne's academic community, including representation from Early Career Researchers and at least one member with specific expertise in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), thereby supporting inclusive and balanced decision-making processes.

Training: All members of the KERC are required to complete mandatory training before participating in REF decision-making. This includes: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) awareness (institutional requirement for all staff at Ravensbourne); unconscious bias training (institutional requirement for all staff at Ravensbourne); a REF 2029 briefing provided by the REF Manager, covering REF guidance, assessment criteria and institutional procedures.

3.3 Appeals

In accordance with REF guidance, Ravensbourne provides staff with a clear and timely opportunity to query or appeal decisions relating to REF processes. Appeals are managed through an independent institutional procedure, separate from the original decision-making body. Appeals may be submitted on the following grounds only:

- (1) concerns regarding potential prejudice or bias in the decision-making process; or
- (2) equality-related circumstances that may have limited the appellant's ability to engage fully with the process, such that relevant information was not appropriately considered.

Appeals must be submitted in writing via email to the Registrar through the research office at research@rave.ac.uk within two weeks of receiving notification of the relevant REF decision. The submission should clearly state the applicable grounds for appeal and provide a reasoned case. Staff submitting an appeal will be provided with the documentation considered by the KERC where applicable.

Appeals will be reviewed by the Chair of the REF Appeals Committee, supported by two additional members of the Committee. Outcomes will be communicated in writing within two weeks of receipt of the appeal. The decision of the REF Appeals Committee is final.

3.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Ravensbourne currently has a very small number of staff on research-only contracts (typically fewer than five per year). Due to this low population size, quantitative equality impact analysis is not statistically meaningful. The EIA was therefore conducted as a qualitative assessment, informed by the University's EDI Strategy, Research Strategy and People and Culture policies. The procedures have been designed

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

to be inclusive (multiple forms of evidence accepted), supportive (individual support sessions available), transparent (clear criteria communicated in advance), representative (diverse committee membership), and developmental (staff can progress to independence over time). Other mitigating actions embedded within the process include: form-based submissions supplemented by individual meetings for staff with accessibility requirements, including neurodiverse colleagues; extended timelines and proactive engagement for staff on leave during key periods; mandatory unconscious bias training; and flexible meeting arrangements. Staff who are on leave or absent during key data collection periods will not be disadvantaged.

Part 4: Allocating Contracts to UoAs

4.1 Policies and Procedures:

Criteria and Evidence

Eligible contracts must be allocated to Units of Assessment via the REFUOA2029 field in the HESA Staff record. Ravensbourne aims to make submissions to the following Units of Assessment: UoA 17 (Business and Management Studies), reflecting research in digital business, creative industries management, entrepreneurship and industry partnerships; UoA 23 (Education), reflecting research in inclusive education, pedagogy, digital learning and widening participation; and UoA 32 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory), reflecting practice-based research, design innovation, digital creativity, fashion and design. Researchers will be assigned to UoAs by considering the best fit of their current research and publication track record to the above UoAs, their membership of Research Labs, and the University's overall submission strategy and the representativeness of each UoA submission.

Decision-Making and Communication

Decisions on allocating staff contracts to UoAs will take place annually in September or early October, after decisions on inclusion in the volume measure have been made. This sequencing ensures that UoA allocation cannot influence a staff member's inclusion in or exclusion from the volume measure. Decisions will be made by the REF Steering Committee, informed by information held in the Research Office. Staff allocations to UoAs will be communicated to individual staff members as part of their broader REF notification. Consultation feedback identified that guidance on how UoA allocations are determined is currently limited, and that staff are unclear about the criteria used and how they can raise questions about their allocation. In response, the University commits to providing all staff with a clear written explanation of the UoA allocation criteria alongside their notification letter, including the rationale for their specific allocation. A plain-language guide to the three UoAs to which Ravensbourne intends to submit UoA 17 (Business and Management Studies), UoA 23 (Education), and UoA 32 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory) will be published on the internal sharepoint site. If one of the listed UoA submissions becomes unviable due to staff numbers or other factors, the University may choose to make use of the process for exceptions to submit for small units.

4.2 Staff, Committees, and Training:

Roles and Responsibilities

The REF Steering Committee serves as the primary decision-making body for UoA allocation and output selection. It is chaired by the Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange and reports directly to KERK. The REF Manager (advisory) is responsible for collating data on the best-fit UoA for staff and recording decisions. The Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange (decision-making) chairs the REF Steering Committee and has primary responsibility for the development of the REF submission.

Training

All committee members involved in REF decision-making processes, including members of the REF Steering Committee, which is the body responsible for Unit of Assessment (UoA) allocation, are required to complete mandatory training prior to undertaking their roles. This includes: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) awareness (institutional requirement for all staff at Ravensbourne); unconscious bias training (institutional requirement for all staff at Ravensbourne); a REF 2029 briefing provided by the REF Manager, covering REF guidance, assessment criteria and institutional procedures. This ensures that all decisions relating to UoA allocation are made consistently, fairly, and in line with sector expectations.

4.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The EIA for UoA allocation considered: career implications for representation within a UoA submission; representation of staff diversity within decision-making bodies; and whether allocation processes disadvantage any groups with protected characteristics. At Ravensbourne, the processes for determining SRR and RI are completely separate from decisions about UoA allocation. UoA allocation does not determine inclusion or exclusion from the REF submission, and decisions on UoA allocation take place after decisions on inclusion in the volume measure are made. There is no career progression advantage or reward differential based on which UoA a member of staff is allocated to. Given the institution's multidisciplinary research environment, staff working across disciplinary boundaries are not disadvantaged by UoA allocation decisions. The same mitigations outlined in Part 3 apply, including representative committee membership and transparent processes.

Part 5: Selecting outputs

5.1 Policies and Procedures:

All academic staff will be invited to submit details of outputs produced within the REF 2029 publication period to the Research Office on a regular basis (at least annually). This process will be aligned with existing workload planning and appraisal cycles, supporting both REF readiness and the broader development of research culture at Ravensbourne. Submitted outputs will be assessed for potential eligibility, and for those within scope of the REF Open Access (OA) policy, compliance status and/or valid exceptions will be recorded. An updated Publications policy, including Open Access requirement, is being developed in 2026 and will be published on the institutional SharePoint site prior to the first output collection cycle.

The University encourages the identification and inclusion of a diverse range of output types, including practice-based, digital, and non-traditional outputs. In line with the “Hidden REF” initiative ambitions, Ravensbourne shared the ambition to submit at least 5% of outputs in types that may not have been traditionally submitted (the ‘Hidden REF’ ambition), where these are eligible and of sufficient quality.

Output Review Process

Potentially eligible outputs will be reviewed at least once by a member of the REF Assessment Advisory Group, using the REF criteria of originality, significance and rigour, and with reference to REF 2029 panel criteria when published. Each reviewer will assign a quality score using a 13-point scale, ranging from 0 (unclassified) to 12 (high 4*). Where outputs are reviewed by more than one assessor, a single agreed consensus score will be recorded.

Outputs will be selected from the reviewed pool based on both quality and eligibility. Eligibility criteria include a demonstrable substantive link to Ravensbourne University London and an alignment with the relevant Unit of Assessment (UoA) descriptor. For outputs within scope of the OA policy, eligibility includes compliance with OA requirements, a valid exception, or inclusion within permitted tolerance levels.

Initial output selection will be undertaken by the relevant UoA Lead for each submission. Final selections will be reviewed and ratified by the REF Steering Committee.

Identifying substantive link to outputs: Substantive link is a new requirement for REF 2029, ensuring that outputs submitted have been enabled by the submitting institution. A substantive link must be evidenced through an eligible employment relationship with an author who has made a significant research contribution to the output. Eligible employment must be a minimum duration of 12 months and FTE of 0.2, and include a role-descriptor with an explicit expectation of research activity. All teaching and research and research-only contracts at Ravensbourne include an explicit expectation of research activity within the role.

Outputs produced solely by teaching-only staff

In exceptional, clearly justified and pre-cleared cases, outputs authored by staff on “teaching only” contracts, honorary emeritus contracts, or other non-research contracts may be considered for submission. Such outputs will only be eligible where the University can evidence that dedicated time and funding or resources was explicitly allocated to support the specific research activity.

At Ravensbourne, such outputs will be identified in the general call for academic staff to supply details of their outputs. These outputs will be considered potentially eligible where:

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

- there is documentary evidence the research process was undertaken during time allocated to scholarship, KE or research (SKER) in the author's workload allocation, and
- there is documentary evidence the research process was supported by resource or funding (normally from, but not limited to, one of the University's Research Labs), where funding includes buy-out of additional time for SKER, internal funding, or hosting external grant funding at < 100% fEC, and resource includes in-kind provision of research space, workshop venues, or relevant facilities or equipment.

All cases will be reviewed by the REF Steering Committee and approved by the Knowledge Exchange and Research Committee. In accordance with REF requirements, prior clearance will be sought from the REF Director before any such outputs are submitted.

Outputs produced by teaching-only staff who have since moved to a teaching and research contract

Outputs authored by individuals while on a "teaching only" contract may be eligible for submission if the individual subsequently moved to a "teaching and research" or "research only" contract during the REF period, and the contracts constitute continuous employment. At Ravensbourne, such outputs will be identified in the general call for academic staff to supply details of their outputs and will be considered for submission on an equivalent basis to the outputs produced by staff where the substantive link this via a "teaching and research" and/or "research only" contract(s) only.

Selecting outputs where the substantive link is via former staff: Eligible outputs where the substantive link is via a former staff member will be considered for submission on an equivalent basis to the outputs of current staff. Outputs produced following compulsory redundancy are not eligible and will not be submitted. For outputs of former staff who left through voluntary redundancy or severance, retirement, or expiration of fixed-term contracts, eligible outputs may be considered in the same manner as other outputs.

Assigning outputs to UoA/s: Much of Ravensbourne's research output is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. Outputs may be submitted to one or more UoAs where the research described meets the relevant UoA descriptor; this UoA may be different from those to which the staff member's contract is allocated in the HESA staff return. Preliminary assignment of outputs to UoAs will be taken by academic UoA Leads. The REF Steering Committee will review and ratify assignments of outputs to UoAs.

Procedures for supporting diversity of outputs: Ravensbourne actively supports diverse output types including practice-based research outputs and artefacts, exhibitions, performances and installations, digital artefacts and design portfolios, collaborative industry outputs and knowledge exchange products, and traditional scholarly publications. The University anticipates submitting a diverse portfolio of outputs including practice-based and non-traditional forms. Staff will be encouraged to disclose a full range of research outputs through established internal processes. Outputs identified for review in British Sign Language (BSL) or Welsh will be considered using appropriate processes including independent assessors with relevant language expertise.

Procedures for ensuring submissions are representative of the research undertaken within the submitting unit during the REF period: Submissions are developed to reflect the breadth of research activity within each Lab and UoA during the REF period. A preliminary selection of eligible research outputs will be undertaken by academic UoA Leads, based on quality identified through the review process. The output selections will then be reviewed and ratified by the REF Steering Committee, which will consider both the representativeness of each UoA submission and the representativeness of the Univer-

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

sity's submission as a whole. In considering representativeness, the REF Steering Committee will examine whether: submitted outputs are reflective of the research strategies and structures of the UoA over the period 2021–2028; submitted outputs reflect the diversity of research output types produced; and submitted outputs reflect contributions from multidisciplinary collaborations and institutional partnerships. To better support representativeness, the REF Steering Committee may select alternative outputs of the same quality for submission on the 13-point scale.

Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice: Ravensbourne aligns its output selection processes with responsible research assessment principles and is committed to implementation of the principles of DORA (Declaration on Research Assessment). This is supported by the REF Assessment Advisory Group undertaking a calibration exercise prior to review of outputs and the REF Assessment Advisory Group including external members and individuals with REF panel experience.

5.2 Staff, Committees, and Training

Roles and Responsibilities: The REF Steering Committee have overall responsibility for selecting outputs for submission. Additional roles include: the REF Manager (advisory), who collates staff output details and undertakes preliminary eligibility assessment; the REF Assessment Advisory Group (advisory), reports to REF Steering Committee and conducts internal review of output submissions and provides expert advice on developing additional statements; UoA Leads (decision-making), undertake preliminary output selection; and the REF Steering Committee (decision-making body, includes UoA Leads as members), which reviews, ratifies and considers the representativeness of submissions.

Training: All members of the REF Steering Committee and REF Assessment Advisory Group are required to complete mandatory training before participating in REF decision-making. This includes: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) awareness (institutional requirement for all staff at Ravensbourne); unconscious bias training (institutional requirement for all staff at Ravensbourne); a REF 2029 briefing provided by the REF Manager, covering REF guidance, assessment criteria and institutional procedures; and responsible research assessment training covering DORA principles and appropriate use of metrics.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA):

An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted on output selection processes. The EIA was informed by the University's EDI Strategy, Research Strategy and People and Culture policies, and sector reports on EDI in REF 2021. The EIA considered: career implications for representation within a UoA submission through outputs; review of outputs in languages with protected statuses (BSL, Welsh); representation of staff diversity within advisory and decision-making bodies; whether selection criteria disadvantage any groups with protected characteristics; and support for diverse output types to ensure equitable treatment. Mitigating actions implemented include: outputs in BSL or Welsh reviewed by external assessors with appropriate language expertise; mandatory unconscious bias training and calibration exercises before output review; explicit recognition of non-traditional outputs in selection criteria; representative committee composition across disciplines, career stages and protected characteristics; and no disadvantage for career breaks or absences.

Part 6: Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary Equality Impact Assessment

Table 1: Sex – headcount and selected outputs by UoA

Main Panel	UoA	Female headcount n	%	Male headcount n	%	Female selected outputs n	%	Male selected outputs n	%
Main Panel C	17 – Business and Management Studies	4	80%	1	20%	4	67%	2	33%
Main Panel C	23 – Education	1	50%	1	50%	2	50%	2	50%
Main Panel D	32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	1	11%	8	89%	2	22%	7	78%
	Institution	6	38%	10	63%	8	42%	11	58%

At UoA level, no statistically significant differences were identified. In UoA 17, female staff constitute 80% of the headcount and 67% of selected outputs (expected 4.8, observed 4). In UoA 32, the single female staff member accounts for 22% of selected outputs against an 11% headcount share (expected 1.0, observed 2). In UoA 23, outputs are equally distributed between the one female and one male member of staff. These variations reflect small individual differences within a very small population and do not indicate any systematic issue with the selection process.

Table 2: Pregnancy and Maternity – headcount and selected outputs by UoA

Main Panel	UoA	No maternity leave n	%	At least one period n	%	No maternity leave outputs n	%	At least one period outputs n	%
Main Panel C	17 – Business and Management Studies	5	100%	0	0%	6	100%	0	0%
Main Panel C	23 – Education	2	100%	0	0%	4	100%	0	0%
Main Panel D	32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	9	100%	0	0%	9	100%	0	0%
	Institution	16	100%	0	0%	19	100%	0	0%

No eligible staff members declared one or more qualifying periods of maternity leave during the REF 2029 census period across any of the three Units of Assessment. As a result, all selected outputs relate to staff with no declared maternity leave, and no comparative analysis between groups is possible. There are no statistically significant differences to report for this characteristic.

Table 3: Age – headcount and selected outputs by Main Panel

Main Panel	25–35 n	%	36–45 n	%	46–55 n	%	56–65 n	%	Over 65 n	%
Headcount – Main Panel C (UoAs 17 & 23)	1	14%	0	0%	5	72%	1	14%	0	0%
Headcount – Main Panel D (UoA 32)	1	11%	2	22%	3	33%	3	33%	0	0%
Headcount – Institution	2	12%	2	12%	8	53%	4	24%	0	0%
Selected outputs – Main Panel C	1	13%	0	0%	8	100%	1	13%	0	0%
Selected outputs – Main Panel D (UoA 32)	1	11%	1	11%	3	33%	4	44%	0	0%
Selected outputs – Institution	2	11%	1	5%	11	58%	5	26%	0	0%

There are no statistically significant differences between the expected and observed number of outputs at the 95% confidence interval ($p < 0.05$) for any age group. The apparent lower output share for the 36–45 band (observed 1 vs. expected 2.2) is based on just two individuals and carries no statistical weight. The University will monitor age distribution in subsequent interim EIA reviews as the staff population develops.

Table 4: Disability – headcount and selected outputs by Main Panel

Main Panel	Declared Disability n	%	No Known Disability n	%	Declared Disability outputs n	%	No Known Disability outputs n	%
Main Panel C (UoAs 17 & 23)	1	13%	6	88%	1	10%	9	90%
Main Panel D (UoA 32)	1	11%	8	89%	1	11%	8	89%
Institution	2	12%	14	88%	2	11%	17	89%

Staff with a declared disability represent 12% of the eligible headcount and account for 11% of selected outputs. The expected number of selected outputs from staff with a declared disability, based on their proportion in the eligible population, is 2.4; the observed number is 2. There is no statistically significant difference between the observed and expected number of outputs at the 95% confidence interval.

Table 5: Race – headcount and selected outputs by Main Panel

Main Panel	BAME head-count n	%	White British head-count n	%	BAME se-lected outputs n	%	White British se-lected out-puts n	%
Main Panel C (UoAs 17 & 23)	4	57%	3	43%	5	50%	5	50%
Main Panel D (UoA 32)	0	0%	9	100%	0	0%	9	100%
Institution	4	25%	12	75%	5	26%	14	74%

Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities staff represent 25% of the eligible headcount and account for 26% of selected outputs. The expected number of selected outputs from BAME-declaring staff, based on their proportion in the population, is 4.8; the observed number is 5. There is no statistically significant difference between the observed and expected number of outputs at the 95% confidence interval.

Table 6: Contract Mode – headcount and selected outputs by UoA

Main Panel	UoA	Part-time n	%	Full-time n	%	Part-time out-puts n	%	Full-time out-puts n	%
Main Panel C	17 – Business and Management Studies	1	20%	4	80%	2	33%	4	67%
Main Panel C	23 – Education	1	50%	1	50%	2	50%	2	50%
Main Panel D	32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	3	33%	6	67%	2	22%	7	78%
	Institution	5	31%	11	69%	6	32%	13	68%

Although contract mode is not a protected characteristic, an analysis has also been conducted given that part-time working is more prevalent among certain groups with protected characteristics, including women and disabled staff.

Part-time staff represent 31% of the eligible headcount and account for 32% of selected outputs, which is almost exactly proportionate to their share of the population. The expected number of selected outputs from part-time staff, based on their proportion in the population, is 5.9; the observed number is 6. There is no statistically significant difference between the observed and expected number of outputs at the 95% confidence interval.

The data confirms that part-time staff are not disadvantaged in the output selection process. This is consistent with the University's commitment to flexible working and equitable research opportunities, and the explicit recognition in the Code of Practice that part-time working should not disadvantage staff in the REF process.

Table 7: Structural Observations (non-significant but noted for monitoring)

#	Observation	Monitoring commitment
1	All BAME-declaring eligible staff (4 of 4) are in UoA 17 only. UoA 23 and UoA 32 have no BAME-declaring staff, reflecting the current composition of Ravensbourne's research-active staff.	KERC to monitor BAME staff distribution across UoAs at each interim EIA and as part of annual research community development reporting.
2	Only 2 members of staff have declared a disability (13% of headcount). Declared disability rates in HE are typically lower than actual rates, suggesting potential under-disclosure.	Research Office to proactively encourage declaration; People and Culture to include reminder in annual appraisal cycle.
3	No staff declared maternity or family-related leave in the census period. This may reflect successful reasonable adjustments or may indicate low awareness of the individual circumstances disclosure process.	Individual circumstances guidance to be prominently included in all REF communications and on the REF SharePoint site.
4	Religion or belief and sexual orientation cannot be reported due to low declaration rates (<65%). This limits the completeness of the EIA.	Annual declaration rate reminders to be issued; EDI Committee to report on rates at each interim EIA review.

Table 8: Summary action plan

Area	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Target Outcome
Declaration rates (disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation)	Regular staff communications encouraging declaration of protected characteristics; embed in induction and appraisal cycles.	From 2029–30	People and Culture / Research Office	Increased declaration rates; reported at each interim EIA.
Disability	Proactive individual support from Research Office for staff with declared disabilities at each output collection cycle, including workload planning adjustments.	Each output collection cycle	Head of KE&R	Disability output gap at or below zero at next interim EIA.
Race / Ethnicity	Monitor BAME representation across all UoAs at each interim EIA. Include research community	Each output collection cycle	KERC / People and Culture	Broader BAME representation across UoAs reported annually.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

Area	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Target Outcome
	diversity as standing KERC agenda item.			
Pregnancy & maternity	Ensure individual circumstances processes are clearly communicated and destigmatised via REF SharePoint site and annual REF communications.	Prior to first output collection cycle	Research Office / People and Culture	Increased individual circumstances declarations at each interim EIA.
Religion/belief & sexual orientation	Targeted communications via staff networks to raise awareness of declaration. As per declaration rate action above.	From 2029–30	EDI representatives / People and Culture	Sufficient data to report these characteristics in the next EIA.
Age / ECR support	Targeted mentoring and research development for ECRs and mid-career staff (25–45 age bands); ensure research leave policy is well communicated.	From 2026–27	Head of KE&R / Research Labs	Reduced output gap for younger age bands at interim EIA.
Output selection training	Develop supplementary REF training on responsible use of metrics, recognition of diverse outputs, and EDI-informed assessment of borderline outputs (drawing on EDAP guidance).	Prior to second output selection round	REF Manager / Research Office	Training completion confirmed to KERC before final selections.

Conclusion

The EIA has found no statistically significant differences between the observed and expected distribution of selected outputs for any protected characteristic for which sufficient data is available. No chi-squared value approached the critical threshold of 3.841 ($p < 0.05$ with 1 degree of freedom).

As this is Ravensbourne's first independent REF submission, these findings represent an important baseline. The University is committed to strengthening data collection and monitoring, improving declaration rates for under-reported characteristics, and developing a more diverse and inclusive research community across all three UoAs over the REF census period.

The action plan above sets out specific, time-bound commitments to address each of the structural observations identified.

Appendix 2: Independence Review Form

Research Independence Review Form

For staff on Research Only contracts | Academic Year 2025–26 onwards

PURPOSE OF THIS FORM

This form is used to assess whether staff on Research Only contracts at Ravensbourne University London meet the criteria for Research Independence (RI). Completed forms are reviewed by the Knowledge Exchange and Research Committee (KERC) each September. Staff determined to be independent are recorded as REFQUALCON = 'yes' in the HESA staff return.

INSTRUCTIONS TO STAFF

Please complete all sections of this form. Tick each criterion that applies to you and provide supporting evidence references in the column provided. If you are unable to attend the scheduled meeting with the Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research, this completed form may be submitted by email to the Research Office at research@rave.ac.uk. If you require any support completing this form (including alternative formats), please contact the Research Office.

SECTION A — STAFF DETAILS

Full Name		
Job Title		
Contract Type	Research Only ☐ Permanent ☐ Fixed term	
FTE		HESA Reporting Year
Research Lab(s)		
Date of Submission		Staff ID / Personnel No.

SECTION B — RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE CRITERIA

Research Independence (RI) is defined as undertaking self-directed research rather than primarily supporting another individual's research programme.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

To qualify for inclusion in the REF 2029 volume measure, staff on Research Only contracts must meet AT LEAST ONE of the five criteria listed below. Please tick 'Yes' for each criterion that applies to you and provide a reference or brief description of the supporting evidence in the final column. You may meet more than one criterion.

#	Independence Criterion	Applies?	Evidence Reference
C1	Holding, or having held in the past, the formal role of project lead / principal investigator, or co-lead / co-investigator on external research funding awarded to Ravensbourne University London.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
C2	Holding in the last five years the formal role of project lead / principal investigator, or co-lead / co-investigator on external research funding awarded to another UK University from a major funder, evidenced by the funder's public records.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
C3	Holding, or having held in the past five years, a research fellowship demonstrating research independence, as documented on the list provided by the REF funding bodies (https://2029.ref.ac.uk/publication/research-fellowships/).	☐ Yes ☐ No	
C4	Having previously held, or concurrently holding, a teaching and research appointment with SRR at Ravensbourne University London (which inherently demonstrates independence).	☐ Yes ☐ No	
C5	From 2026/27 onwards: having been identified as independent in the prior year's RI determination process at Ravensbourne.	☐ Yes ☐ No	

NOTE: Meeting at least one criterion above is sufficient. You do not need to satisfy all criteria. The Research Office will cross-reference your responses against internal records of grants, fellowships, and research activity.

SECTION C — SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

For each criterion you have indicated as applicable in Section B, please provide supporting details below. Multiple forms of evidence are accepted. Where possible, include dates, funder names, grant reference numbers, fellowship names, or other verifiable references.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

C1 – Principal / Co-Investigator on Ravensbourne-held External Funding

Project title: Funder: Grant ref:
Your role (PI / Co-I / Co-lead): Award period (from – to):
Additional projects: please list below or attach a separate sheet.

C2 – Principal / Co-Investigator on External Funding at Another UK University (last 5 years)

Project title: Funder:
Host institution: Grant ref:
Your role: Award period (from – to):
Evidence source (public funder record / URL):

C3 – Research Fellowship Demonstrating Independence (last 5 years)

Fellowship name and awarding body:
Duration (from – to): REF funding bodies fellowship list: ☐ Confirmed
Evidence (letter of award / funder website / URL):

C4 – Previous or Concurrent Teaching and Research Appointment at Ravensbourne

Role title: Department / Lab:
Period held (from – to): ☐ Previous ☐ Concurrent

C5 – Identified as Independent in Prior Year's RI Determination (from 2026/27)

Year of prior determination: Outcome confirmed by KERC: ☐ Yes

Additional Evidence or Context (optional)

Please provide any further information that supports your claim to research independence, including details of self-directed research projects, research outputs, impact activity, or other relevant context.

SECTION D — EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

Ravensbourne is committed to ensuring that the RI determination process is fair and inclusive for all staff. If any personal circumstances may have affected your ability to demonstrate independence against the criteria above (for example, career breaks, parental leave, long-term illness, disability, or part-time working), please provide details here. This information will be treated sensitively and will be considered by KERC when reviewing your form.

Disclosure is entirely voluntary. This information will not disadvantage your application and will be used only to ensure that your circumstances are taken into account fairly.

Relevant personal circumstances (optional):

Type(s) of circumstance (e.g. maternity/paternity leave, long-term illness, disability, career break, part-time working, other):

Period(s) affected:

How this may have affected your ability to meet the RI criteria:

Do you require any support or accessibility adjustments for the RI review meeting? ☐ No ☐ Yes
– please specify:

SECTION E — STAFF DECLARATION

Please read the declaration below carefully before signing. By signing this form you confirm that the information provided is accurate and complete to the best of your knowledge.

I confirm that:

1. The information I have provided in this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.
2. I understand that this form will be considered by the Knowledge Exchange and Research Committee (KERC) as part of the annual Research Independence determination for REF 2029.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

3. I have been informed of my right to appeal any RI determination on grounds of potential bias/prejudice in the decision-making process or on equality-related grounds, by submitting a written appeal to the Registrar via research@rave.ac.uk within two weeks of receiving notification.

4. I consent to the Research Office using the information in this form and cross-referencing it with internal institutional records for the purposes of the REF 2029 submission.

Staff Signature:	Date:

SECTION F — FOR RESEARCH OFFICE / KERC USE ONLY

This section is to be completed by the Research Office following review of the submitted form. It is not to be completed by the member of staff.

Date form received by Research Office	
Form completed by staff member? ☐ Yes ☐ No (Research Office draft)	
Meeting held with HoKER? ☐ Yes – date: ☐ No – form submitted by email	
Criteria ticked by staff member	
Internal records cross-check completed? ☐ Yes ☐ N/A	
Grant/fellowship records verified? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No / not applicable	
EDI / personal circumstances noted? ☐ Yes – see Section D ☐ None disclosed	
Draft determination (Research Office recommendation)	
Reviewed by Research Office (name & date)	

KERC DETERMINATION

KERC Decision: ☐ INDEPENDENT (REFQUALCON = Yes) ☐ NOT INDEPENDENT (REFQUALCON = No)

Rationale for decision:

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

EDI considerations noted by KERC:

KERC Chair Signature	Name (print)	Date of KERC meeting

Decision communicated to staff? ☐ Yes Date:	
HESA staff return updated? ☐ Yes REFQUALCON value recorded:	
Record filed by REF Manager (name & date)	
Appeal received? ☐ No ☐ Yes – date received:	
Appeal outcome (if applicable)	

RETENTION: This form and all supporting evidence must be retained securely by the Research Office for the duration of the REF 2029 cycle and for a minimum of five years following submission. Records are subject to Ravensbourne's data protection and records management policies.

Appendix 3: REF Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Ravensbourne University London

Research Excellence Framework 2029

REF Steering Committee — Terms of Reference

Status:	Approved
Version:	2.0
Date:	April 2026
Owner:	Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research
Approved by:	Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The REF Steering Committee is a sub-committee of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. It is responsible for overseeing Ravensbourne University London's strategic preparation for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029, providing institutional leadership and governance across all aspects of the submission.

The Committee ensures that Ravensbourne's REF 2029 submission is coherent, compliant, and maximises the recognition of the University's research excellence. It operates in full alignment with Ravensbourne's Knowledge Exchange and Research (KER) Strategy 2025–2030, which positions the University as a practice-led, industry-facing specialist institution. The Committee's decisions should reflect Ravensbourne's distinctive research identity: applied, industry-embedded, and practice-based.

The REF Steering Committee does not duplicate operational tasks, which are managed by the REF Manager and relevant professional services teams. Rather, the Committee provides strategic direction, makes key decisions on submission content and approach, and ensures accountability to the University's senior leadership.

1. Purpose

The REF Steering Committee exists to:

- Provide strategic oversight and direction for Ravensbourne's REF submission, consistent with the KER Strategy's emphasis on quality over volume, and on applied, industry-embedded research;
- Ensure institutional compliance with REF guidance issued by Research England and the other UK higher education funding bodies;
- Make decisions on the scope, structure, and content of the submission, including the selection of Units of Assessment (UoAs), research outputs, impact case studies, and environment statements, with due regard for Ravensbourne's specialist disciplinary profile;
- Monitor progress against the REF submission timetable and escalate risks or issues to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee or Senior Leadership Team as appropriate;
- Promote a culture of research excellence and integrity across the institution in preparation for and beyond the REF cycle.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Strategic Oversight

The Committee shall:

- Approve the institutional REF strategy and submission plan, and review these at regular intervals throughout the REF cycle;
- Oversee the alignment of REF preparation with Ravensbourne's KER Strategy 2025–2030 and wider institutional priorities, including the University's 'industry-first' knowledge exchange identity;
- Advise the Vice-Chancellor and Senior Leadership Team on matters relating to the REF, including resource requirements and institutional risks.

2.2 Submission Decisions

The Committee shall:

- Agree the Units of Assessment to which Ravensbourne will submit, and any changes to these during the cycle, taking account of Ravensbourne's areas of demonstrable disciplinary strength;
- Oversee the process for identifying and selecting staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), ensuring compliance with the REF Code of Practice;
- Approve the overall portfolio of outputs, impact case studies, and Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) statements proposed for submission;
- Consider and resolve any contested decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of individual staff, outputs, or impact case studies, in line with the Code of Practice and appeals procedures.

2.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Committee shall:

- Ensure that REF processes are conducted in accordance with Ravensbourne's equality and diversity obligations and the requirements of the REF Code of Practice;
- Monitor the equality impact of decisions relating to staff selection and submission content, and take action to address any identified concerns;
- Receive and consider the outputs of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) at key decision points throughout the REF cycle;
- Ensure Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are appropriately supported and represented in REF-related decision-making.

2.4 Code of Practice

The Committee shall:

- Oversee the development, approval, and implementation of Ravensbourne's REF Code of Practice;
- Ensure that the Code of Practice is communicated effectively to all relevant staff and that its provisions are adhered to throughout the submission process;
- Ensure that appropriate appeals and grievance mechanisms are in place and accessible to all eligible staff.

2.5 Governance and Compliance

The Committee shall:

- Ensure that all aspects of REF preparation are conducted with integrity and in compliance with REF guidance, including requirements relating to open access and research data management;
- Receive regular progress reports from the REF Manager and Unit of Assessment Leads, and escalate significant risks or issues to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee;
- Ensure that post-submission lessons are captured and inform future research strategy and planning.

3. Mode of Operation

The Committee shall meet at least four times per academic year, with additional meetings convened as required during intensive periods of REF preparation (for example, ahead of submission deadlines). The quorum for meetings is the Chair plus at least three other voting members, of whom at least two must be academic staff members.

The Chair may, where necessary, take decisions between meetings by correspondence. Any such decisions will be reported to and ratified at the next Committee meeting.

The REF Manager shall act as Secretary to the Committee, preparing agendas, commissioning papers, and maintaining accurate records of decisions and actions.

4. Reporting and Accountability

The REF Steering Committee is accountable to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, to which it reports termly. The Chair of the REF Steering Committee shall provide a written or oral update at each meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

Significant decisions, including the final approval of submission content, shall be reported to the Senior Leadership Team and, where appropriate, to the Board of Governors.

5. Composition

The Committee shall comprise the following voting and advisory members:

Role	Member / Nominee	Voting Status
Chair	Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research	Voting
Deputy Vice-Chancellor	To be confirmed	Voting
Unit of Assessment Lead(s)	One per UoA submitted	Voting
Academic Staff Member	To be specified — reflecting diversity of research-active staff	Voting
Academic Staff Member	To be specified — second academic voice	Voting
ECR Representative	To be appointed — Early Career Researcher	Voting
Director of People and Culture	Or nominee — responsibility for EDI matters	Voting

Role	Member / Nominee	Voting Status
REF Manager	Secretary to the Committee	Non-voting (Advisory)
External Adviser	Co-opted as required by the Chair	Non-voting (Advisory)

The Chair may co-opt additional members with relevant expertise as required. The inclusion of an ECR representative is a mandatory requirement to ensure emerging researcher perspectives are embedded in submission decisions and to satisfy Ravensbourne's EDI obligations under the REF Code of Practice.

6. Conflicts of Interest

Members of the Committee must declare any conflict of interest, including any personal interest in decisions regarding the selection of outputs, impact case studies, or staff at the earliest opportunity and in accordance with Ravensbourne's Conflicts of Interest Policy.

Where a conflict is declared, the member concerned shall withdraw from the relevant discussion and decision. The Secretary shall maintain a register of interests for all Committee members, to be updated at the start of each academic year and ahead of each key decision point.

7. Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually, or following the publication of updated REF guidance, and any revisions approved by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

Appendix 4: Appeal Committee Terms of Reference

Ravensbourne University London

Research Excellence Framework 2029

REF Appeals Committee — Terms of Reference

Status:	Approved
Version:	2.0
Date:	April 2026
Owner:	Registrar
Approved by:	REF Steering Committee and Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The REF Appeals Committee is an independent committee established by Ravensbourne University London to hear and determine formal appeals submitted by eligible staff in connection with decisions made during the REF submission process. The Committee operates in accordance with Ravensbourne's REF Code of Practice and relevant REF guidance issued by Research England and the other UK higher education funding bodies.

The REF Appeals Committee is independent of the REF Steering Committee and the REF Assessment Advisory Group. It is convened specifically to ensure that staff have access to a fair, transparent and timely appeals mechanism, consistent with Ravensbourne's obligations under the REF Code of Practice and its broader equality and employment duties.

1. Purpose

The REF Appeals Committee exists to:

- Provide a formal, independent mechanism through which eligible staff may appeal against specific decisions made during Ravensbourne's REF submission process;
- Ensure that appeals are heard fairly, consistently and in a timely manner and that appellants are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process;
- Uphold the principles of natural justice, including the right of appellants to be heard and the requirement that decision-makers are free from conflicts of interest;
- Provide assurance to the REF Steering Committee, Senior Leadership Team and staff that Ravensbourne's REF processes are conducted with integrity and in compliance with the REF Code of Practice;
- Produce determinations that are clearly reasoned, evidenced and communicated to all relevant parties.

2. Grounds for Appeal

Staff may submit a formal appeal to the REF Appeals Committee on the following grounds:

- A decision regarding whether the member of staff has been identified as having a Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), where the appellant believes the decision was made incorrectly or without proper regard to the relevant criteria;
- A decision regarding the circumstances relating to the individual's output requirements, including decisions made in connection with individual staff circumstances under the equality provisions of the REF Code of Practice;
- A decision regarding the selection or non-selection of a specific output, impact case study, or other submission element where the appellant has a direct and material interest and where they believe the decision was made on procedural grounds inconsistent with the Code of Practice or Ravensbourne's published REF processes.

Appeals based solely on disagreement with an academic or quality judgement where for example, a peer assessment of output quality does not constitute valid grounds for appeal under these Terms of Reference. The Committee will not substitute its own academic judgement for that of the REF Assessment Advisory Group or Unit of Assessment Leads.

Staff are encouraged to seek informal resolution of concerns through their Unit of Assessment Lead or the REF Manager before submitting a formal appeal. The availability of an informal resolution route does not affect a member of staff's right to submit a formal appeal within the prescribed timeframe.

3. Eligibility

The right to appeal is available to all members of staff who:

- Are employed by Ravensbourne University London on the census date specified in the relevant REF guidance;
- Are, or believe they should be, identified as Category A eligible staff for the purposes of the REF submission; and
- Have been directly and materially affected by a decision falling within the grounds for appeal set out in section 2 above.

Staff who are uncertain about their eligibility to appeal are encouraged to contact the REF Manager for guidance before submitting a formal appeal.

4. Appeals Process

4.1 Informal Resolution

Before submitting a formal appeal, staff are strongly encouraged to seek informal resolution through their Unit of Assessment Lead or the REF Manager. This route is available throughout the REF process and is designed to resolve concerns quickly and informally wherever possible. Engaging with informal resolution does not affect a staff member's right to proceed to a formal appeal within the timeframes specified below.

4.2 Submission of Formal Appeals

Formal appeals must be submitted in writing to the REF Manager within 15 working days of the date on which the appellant received formal written notification of the decision being appealed. The 15 working day clock begins on the date of formal written notification. Appeals submitted outside this timeframe will not normally be considered unless the appellant can demonstrate exceptional circumstances such as a serious medical condition, bereavement, or other significant personal circumstance that prevented timely submission.

An appeal submission must include:

- A clear and concise statement of the decision being appealed, including the date of formal notification;
- The specific grounds on which the appeal is made, with reference to the grounds set out in section 2;
- A summary of the relevant facts and any supporting evidence the appellant wishes the Committee to consider;
- A statement of the outcome the appellant is seeking.

The REF Manager will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within five working days and will notify the appellant of the expected timeline for consideration.

4.3 Initial Review

Upon receipt of a formal appeal, the REF Manager will conduct an initial review to confirm that the appeal falls within the grounds set out in section 2 and that the appellant is eligible to appeal under section 3. Where an appeal does not meet these criteria, the REF Manager will notify the appellant in writing, with reasons, within five working days of receipt.

Where an appeal is accepted for consideration, the REF Manager will provide the Committee with a full case file, including the appeal submission, the original decision and the rationale for it and any relevant documentation from the REF submission process.

4.4 Hearing

The Committee will normally consider appeals at a formal hearing, at which the appellant will have the opportunity to present their case in person and to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative who is not involved in the REF submission process. The appellant may also submit written representations in lieu of attendance if they prefer.

The REF Manager (or nominee) will attend the hearing to present the institutional position and to answer questions from the Committee. The appellant and the REF Manager will not be present in the room at the same time during deliberations.

Hearings will normally be convened within 20 working days of an appeal being accepted for consideration, subject to the availability of Committee members and the appellant.

4.5 Determination

Following the hearing, the Committee will deliberate in private and reach a determination by majority vote. The Chair shall have a casting vote in the event of a tie. The Committee's determination shall be one of the following:

- The appeal is upheld in full, and the Committee directs that a specified remedial action be taken;
- The appeal is upheld in part, and the Committee directs that specified partial remedial action be taken;
- The appeal is dismissed.

The Committee's determination, together with the reasons for it, will be communicated in writing to the appellant and to the REF Steering Committee within five working days of the hearing. The determination of the REF Appeals Committee is final within Ravensbourne's internal processes. Nothing in these Terms of Reference affects a member of staff's right to pursue external remedies available to them under employment law or otherwise.

4.6 Record-Keeping

The REF Manager shall maintain a confidential record of all appeals submitted, including the grounds of appeal, the Committee's determination and any remedial action taken. An anonymised summary of appeals and their outcomes will be reported to the REF Steering Committee at the end of each appeal round and included in Ravensbourne's REF equality impact analysis where required.

5. Mode of Operation

The REF Appeals Committee will be convened as and when formal appeals are received. It is not a standing committee with regular scheduled meetings. The Committee will meet as a full panel for each appeal hearing, save where the Chair determines that a paper-based consideration is appropriate (for example, where an appeal raises a straightforward procedural question that does not require an oral hearing).

The quorum for a hearing is the Chair plus both other Committee members. No appeal may be determined in the absence of any Committee member unless the appellant has consented to the reduced panel and all parties agree that the appeal can be fairly determined.

The REF Manager shall act as Secretary to the Committee for administrative purposes but shall not be present during deliberations.

6. Composition

The Committee shall be composed as follows:

Role	Specification	Status
Chair	The Registrar provides oversight of the appeals process and ensures proceedings are conducted fairly, consistently and in accordance with the REF Code of Practice. Independent from the REF Steering Committee and REF Assessment Advisory Group.	Voting
Academic Member	One academic staff member at Senior Lecturer level or above, with no involvement in the relevant Unit of Assessment submission and no personal interest in the outcome of the appeal. Drawn from the trained pool. Inclusion of an academic member is essential to ensure disciplinary credibility and understanding of research contexts.	Voting
Professional Services Member	One senior professional services staff member with relevant experience in People and Culture, governance, or staff relations. Drawn from the trained pool.	Voting

No member of the REF Appeals Committee may be a member of the REF Steering Committee, the REF Assessment Advisory Group, or a Unit of Assessment Lead for the UoA to which the appeal relates. All members must be free from any conflict of interest in relation to the appeal being heard.

A pool of trained members shall be maintained to ensure that the Committee can be constituted promptly when an appeal is received. Pool members shall receive appropriate training in REF processes, equality and diversity and appeals procedures before being called upon to serve. This composition, the Registrar, academic member and professional services member applies to all formal hearings and supersedes any alternative formulations appearing in other institutional documents.

7. Conflicts of Interest

Before each hearing, Committee members must confirm in writing that they have no conflict of interest in relation to the appeal. A conflict of interest includes but is not limited to: a personal or professional relationship with the appellant, prior involvement in the decision being appealed, line management responsibility for the appellant, or any other circumstance that could give rise to a reasonable perception of bias.

Where a conflict is identified or declared, the affected member shall be replaced by another member from the trained pool. The REF Manager shall maintain a record of all conflict declarations.

8. Confidentiality

All aspects of the appeals process are strictly confidential. Committee members, the REF Manager and all parties to an appeal must not disclose any information relating to the appeal including the fact that an appeal has been submitted, the identity of the appellant, or the outcome to any person who is not directly involved in the process, except as required by law or by Ravensbourne's reporting obligations.

Breach of confidentiality by a member of staff may be treated as a disciplinary matter under Ravensbourne's relevant policies.

9. Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed following each appeals round and at least annually, with any revisions approved by the REF Steering Committee and noted by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. Revisions must remain consistent with the requirements of the REF Code of Practice and any guidance issued by the relevant funding bodies.

Appendix 5: REF Assessment Advisory Group Terms of Reference

Ravensbourne University London

Research Excellence Framework 2029

REF Assessment Advisory Group — Terms of Reference

Status:	Approved
Version:	2.0
Date:	April 2026
Owner:	Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research
Approved by:	REF Steering Committee

The REF Assessment Advisory Group (AAG) is an expert advisory body established to support Ravensbourne University London's preparation for REF 2029. Operating under the oversight of the REF Steering Committee, it provides independent, specialist advice on the assessment and selection of research outputs, impact case studies, and Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) statements across the University's Units of Assessment (UoAs).

The AAG is advisory only and does not hold decision-making authority. It brings independent disciplinary expertise, sector insight, and constructive challenge to support robust, evidence-based evaluation of research quality and impact. Through its work, the Group promotes consistency, transparency and alignment with REF criteria and panel expectations, enabling the REF Steering Committee to make well-informed and defensible submission decisions. All final decisions on submission content remain the responsibility of the REF Steering Committee.

Given Ravensbourne's identity as a practice-led, industry-facing specialist institution, the AAG shall bring particular expertise in the assessment of applied, practice-based, and interdisciplinary research, and shall ensure that REF assessment criteria are applied in ways that properly recognise the quality and contribution of such work.

1. Purpose

The REF Assessment Advisory Group exists to:

- Provide independent and expert advice on the quality, integrity, and suitability of research outputs, impact case studies, and SPRE statements proposed for submission;
- Support Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads in undertaking rigorous, evidence-based evaluation of research activity within their respective units, with particular sensitivity to practice-based and applied research methodologies characteristic of Ravensbourne's disciplinary profile;
- Advise on the consistent interpretation and application of REF assessment criteria, including quality profiles, sub-profiles, and panel-specific guidance;
- Offer constructive challenge to ensure that assessments are robust, transparent, and aligned with sector best practice;

- Help ensure that the University's submission accurately represents the full breadth, depth, and distinctiveness of its research excellence and impact;
- Act as a critical friend and sounding board to the REF Manager and UoA Leads on emerging risks, uncertainties, and strategic decisions relating to the assessment process;

Provide assurance that internal assessment processes are fair, consistent, and defensible in line with the REF Code of Practice.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Output Assessment

The AAG shall:

- Review research outputs proposed for submission against the REF assessment criteria of originality, significance, and rigour, providing indicative quality ratings (aligned to REF star ratings) and concise written commentary where required;
- Support the consistent calibration of internal assessments across UoAs, helping to ensure alignment with REF panel expectations and sector benchmarks;
- Advise on the balance, coherence, and breadth of the outputs portfolio within each UoA, including the representation of diverse research methodologies, output types, and staff contributions;
- Identify outputs that may require further scrutiny, including external review or additional evidence, and highlight any associated risks for consideration by the REF Steering Committee;
- Provide expert guidance on the assessment of non-traditional, practice-based, and interdisciplinary research outputs including applied prototypes, creative works, digital artefacts, professional partnerships, and contract research products ensuring appropriate recognition of their quality and contribution in line with REF guidance and Ravensbourne's KER Strategy;
- Where appropriate, advise on the sufficiency and quality of supporting information (e.g. statements of significance or contextual information) accompanying outputs.

2.2 Impact Case Study Assessment

The AAG shall:

- Review draft impact case studies for clarity, coherence, and evidential robustness, ensuring alignment with REF impact assessment criteria, particularly reach and significance;
- Provide indicative feedback on the strength of impact claims, including the underpinning research, pathways to impact, and the quality and sufficiency of corroborating evidence;
- Support the consistent calibration of impact assessments across UoAs, with reference to REF panel criteria and sector benchmarks;
- Advise on the selection and prioritisation of impact case studies for submission, taking into account sub-panel expectations, portfolio balance, and the overall strategic narrative of the UoA;
- Provide guidance on strengthening case studies, including the identification, development, and systematic capture of appropriate indicators and sources of evidence;
- Identify risks or gaps in evidence, attribution, or narrative coherence, and recommend where further development or external validation may be required;
- Provide advice on case studies involving sensitive, contested, confidential, or legally complex claims, including considerations relating to ethics, data protection, and reputational risk.

2.3 Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) Statement Assessment

The AAG shall:

- Review draft SPRE statements for accuracy, coherence, and alignment with REF environment assessment criteria, including vitality, sustainability, and contribution to a positive research culture;
- Provide feedback on the clarity, credibility, and persuasiveness of the narrative, ensuring it is evidence-based and aligned with REF guidance and sub-panel expectations;
- Advise on the effective presentation of Ravensbourne's research strategy, culture, people, and infrastructure, including how these enable high-quality research, impact, and knowledge exchange;
- Identify gaps, risks, or areas of weakness in the environment narrative, including evidential gaps, and recommend approaches to strengthen the submission;
- Provide guidance on the inclusion and framing of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), researcher development, and support for professional and technical staff, ensuring alignment with the REF Code of Practice and institutional priorities.

2.4 Panel Intelligence and Benchmarking

The AAG shall:

- Share insight into REF panel expectations, working methods, and emerging assessment norms, drawing on members' experience as current or former REF panel members, assessors, or observers where applicable;
- Provide advice on sector benchmarks and comparable institutional approaches to REF submission, including approaches used by other specialist, practice-based institutions;
- Support the interpretation of evolving REF guidance to ensure alignment between internal assessment processes and external expectations;
- Alert the REF Steering Committee and REF Manager to any material changes in REF guidance, panel decisions, or sector developments that may require adjustment to Ravensbourne's approach.

2.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The AAG shall:

- Have due regard to EDI considerations in all advisory activities, including promoting fairness, transparency, and the avoidance of bias in the assessment of research outputs, impact case studies, and SPRE statements;
- Advise on the equitable and consistent treatment of research arising from diverse methodologies, disciplines, and career pathways, including interdisciplinary, collaborative, and practice-based work;
- Support the consistent application of the principles set out in Ravensbourne's REF Code of Practice, ensuring that all advisory processes are aligned with institutional equality obligations and relevant legislation;
- Be alert to potential unintended bias or structural disadvantage within assessment processes and raise any concerns with the REF Steering Committee or REF Manager as appropriate.

3. Mode of Operation

The AAG shall meet at least four times per academic year at key points in the REF submission cycle, with additional meetings or working group sessions convened as required. Given the intensity of the 2027–28 submission period, additional sessions should be anticipated and planned for in advance.

Between meetings, members may be asked to undertake individual or small-group reviews of specific outputs, impact case studies, or environment materials, with timescales agreed in advance.

The REF Manager shall act as Secretary to the AAG, coordinating meeting arrangements, circulating materials for review, and maintaining records of advisory outputs and recommendations.

Where AAG members are asked to provide written assessments of outputs or case studies, a standardised scoring and commentary template shall be used to ensure consistency. Advisory assessments are strictly confidential and for internal use only.

The quorum for AAG meetings is the Chair plus at least half of the remaining members, including at least one external subject expert.

4. Composition

The AAG shall be constituted to reflect the breadth of Ravensbourne's UoAs and the disciplinary expertise required to assess the quality of its research, with particular regard to practice-based, applied, and industry-engaged scholarship. Membership shall include:

Role	Details	Status
Chair	Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research provides strategic leadership and oversees the delivery of the Group's advisory responsibilities. Note: the Head of KER also chairs the REF Steering Committee; any decisions arising from the AAG's advice that require escalation are managed transparently through documented processes to maintain the advisory/decision-making distinction.	Voting
External Subject Expert (Creative Industries / Practice-Based Research)	Independent academic with demonstrable expertise in practice-based or creative research; ideally with REF panel or assessor experience. Appointed by the REF Steering Committee.	Voting
External Subject Expert (Business / Computing / Technology)	Independent academic with expertise in business, computing, or technology research aligned to Ravensbourne's UoAs; ideally with REF experience. Appointed by the REF Steering Committee.	Voting
Additional External Expert(s)	Further external expertise co-opted as required to cover specific UoAs or disciplinary gaps identified during the REF cycle.	Voting

Role	Details	Status
Unit of Assessment Leads	One per UoA attend for relevant agenda items only. Do not participate in assessment of their own UoA's materials.	Non-voting (for own UoA items)
REF Manager	Secretary to the Group.	Non-voting (Advisory)

External members shall be appointed by the REF Steering Committee on the recommendation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, following an open call or targeted approach as appropriate. Appointments shall normally be for the duration of the REF cycle, with the possibility of renewal.

A minimum of two external subject experts is required to ensure the AAG's independence and breadth of disciplinary coverage. At least one external expert should have demonstrable experience in assessing practice-based or applied research. Internal staff may be invited to attend specific meetings in an advisory capacity where their expertise is relevant but shall not participate in the assessment of their own outputs or impact case studies.

5. Conflicts of Interest

All AAG members must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest before undertaking any advisory activity. Conflicts include but are not limited to: co-authorship of outputs under review, collaboration with staff whose work is being assessed, personal or professional relationships that could compromise objectivity, and any financial interest in the research under consideration.

Declared conflicts shall be managed by the AAG Chair (or, where the Chair is conflicted, by the REF Manager in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor). Members with a declared conflict shall not participate in the assessment of the relevant materials. The REF Manager shall maintain a register of interests for all AAG members, to be updated at the start of each academic year and ahead of each assessment round.

6. Confidentiality

All materials provided to AAG members for review including draft outputs, impact case studies, SPRE statements, and associated data are strictly confidential. Members shall not share, reproduce, or discuss these materials outside of the AAG process without the express permission of the Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research.

Members shall be required to sign a confidentiality agreement upon appointment, and to reaffirm their commitment to confidentiality at the start of each assessment round.

7. Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually or following the publication of updated REF guidance or significant changes to Ravensbourne's REF strategy, and any revisions approved by the REF Steering Committee.

Appendix 6: Referenced Material in the CoP

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Policy Statement

At Ravensbourne we have a vision to inspire a highly diverse range of people, valuable to and valued by the world beyond the university. Situated in the heart of London, diversity is in our DNA. We are proud of the many abilities, ethnicities, cultures, identities, and religions that make up our creative community. Our students, staff, alumni, and collaborators are dynamic, diverse, and exceptionally talented. We're proud of our legacy as a south-east London university that serves the local area and welcomes students from around the world.

We want our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our creative community. Everyone should feel respected, supported, and able to thrive.

We understand that educational establishments have a historic position of power and privilege. We have a commitment to encouraging Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) among our community and eliminating unlawful discrimination. We must also play an active role in helping to dismantle structural inequality and address how we can transform the future. It's critical that we continually ask questions about power, representation and how we include our entire community.

What do we mean by:

- **Equality:** We have a duty to protect all our staff and students from harassment, discrimination, or victimisation on the grounds of their perceived, actual or connection to protected characteristics. Members of our community can all access opportunities and resources.
- **Equity:** We go beyond equality, acknowledging this is not enough. We recognise the need to take positive action and make changes to "level the playing field" to enable equity of outcomes.
- **Diversity:** People in our community have a wide range of identities, skills, backgrounds and experiences that intersect to make them who they are. There is strength in diversity of people, approach, and thought. We acknowledge and celebrate diversity and difference, knowing we can always learn more.
- **Inclusion:** Everyone is considered in our decisions and actions. Different experiences and perspectives are valued. Our space is one where people feel safe to participate, engage and learn.
- **Belonging:** We are all welcomed and respected as part of the Ravensbourne Community, whatever part we play within in it.

We take our approaches into our work with industry and other partners, seeking change opportunities wherever our people are.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out our key principles and commitments in relation to EDI.
- Make it clear that discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation are unacceptable.

- Promote a positive working and learning environment for everyone, free from inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour.
- Highlight that everyone plays a part in creating this thriving environment.
- Provide a framework for respect and good conduct to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and harassment. This includes online harassment, racial harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct.

This policy applies to all staff of the university, including sessional lecturers, one off workers and student staff.

Staff and students of Ravensbourne must also uphold our Community Code of Conduct as found in the General Academic Regulations.

This policy does not form part of, and is not intended to vary, the contract of employment or worker's contract. It may be amended from time to time, as necessary.

3. Principles

The key principles of this policy are:

1. Ravensbourne demonstrates equality, fairness, and respect in all in our interactions with staff, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
2. Ravensbourne does not unlawfully discriminate against individuals or groups based on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.
 - Age.
 - Disability.
 - Gender reassignment.
 - Marriage and civil partnership.
 - Pregnancy and maternity.
 - Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin).
 - Religion or belief.
 - Sex.
 - Sexual orientation.
3. Ravensbourne opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Pay and benefits.
 - Terms and conditions of employment.
 - Dealing with grievances and discipline.
 - Dismissal.
 - Redundancy.

- Leave for parents.
 - Requests for flexible working.
 - Selection for employment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities.
4. Ravensbourne expects everyone in our community to treat each other with dignity, respect, courtesy, and consideration.
 5. Ravensbourne expects everyone in our community to take personal responsibility in complying with this policy and to demonstrate active commitment by:
 - Actively discouraging all forms of discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation.
 - Suitably challenging inappropriate behaviour where they feel able to do so or raising their concerns with the appropriate person.
 - Supporting any member of the University who feels they have been subject to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation.
 - Proactively seeking opportunities to develop their knowledge of EDI issues and encouraging others to do the same.
 6. Ravensbourne expects those in leadership and management roles to set the standard for positive behaviours, take responsibility for highlighting good practice and ensure concerns are investigated and acted upon.
 7. Ravensbourne will always investigate, and if required take appropriate action, in line with our policies and procedures on all issues raised in relation to EDI.
 8. Ravensbourne is required in certain cases to report concerns to the relevant authorities including the police and the DBS. For example, but not limited to cases of:
 - Hate Crime.
 - Serious assault.
 - Threat of serious assault.

4. Commitments

We are committed to upholding our responsibilities as an employer and an educational institution to EDI. We aspire to go beyond our legal requirements to deliver best practice EDI. We will continue to develop, learning from and alongside our community.

In support of this policy Ravensbourne is committed to the following.

1. Encouraging and promoting EDI in our workplace and within our collaborative and partnership environments.
2. Creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation where dignity and respect are paramount.

3. Celebrating difference and recognising contributions to Ravensbourne from all members of our community.
4. Providing guidance, resources, and learning and development opportunities for staff and managers to continually improve their understanding in relation to EDI.
5. Ensuring staff understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, suppliers/contractors and the public.
6. Taking all complaints of discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation seriously and responding in line with the relevant internal procedures or external requirements.
 - Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the relevant policy and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
 - Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations.
 - Harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
 - Crimes committed against someone because of their race or religion, sexuality, disability or because they are transgender are Hate Crimes.
7. Supporting and encouraging all staff to develop to their full potential, through good management and other opportunities for learning, development, and progression.
8. Making decisions concerning staff based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
9. Reviewing employment practices and procedures regularly to ensure fairness. Updating these in line with best practice and changes in the law, and ensuring changes are communicated and understood.
10. Monitoring and reporting on the diversity of the workforce to help drive equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - This will include assessing the effectiveness of this policy and any supporting activities and reviewing and updating as needed to address any issues and continue to improve.
11. Taking the appropriate steps to assess the equality impact of relevant activities in line with our duty.
12. Striving to continually learn and improve in our EDI practices and approaches, aiming to achieve equity of outcomes.
13. Fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging for all staff and students regardless of background, and to eliminate any barriers to this.
14. Encouraging and supporting difficult conversations about discrimination.

Executive Summary

Ravensbourne University's Knowledge Exchange and Research (KER) Strategy positions the institution as a globally recognised leader in emerging technologies and interdisciplinary innovation through structured research platforms coordinated by the Centre for Excellence in Emerging Technology (CEET). This strategy responds to a fundamentally transformed UK research funding landscape where research culture excellence is shifting from an aspirational goal to a compliance imperative with direct funding consequences. By 2030, the Labs will demonstrate internationally recognised collaborative research excellence, actively partnering with industry, communities, and policymakers to translate emerging technologies into measurable economic and societal impact whilst securing institutional funding access through demonstrated research culture vitality.

1. Strategic Context: The Changing Landscape

The Contemporary Regulatory Environment

The UK research funding environment has undergone unprecedented transformation in 2025. In September, Science Minister Patrick Vallance announced a three-month pause to REF 2029 development to ensure the exercise provides 'a credible assessment of quality' and supports 'the government's economic and social missions.' Simultaneously, Research England announced it will 'explore the option of baseline performance in research culture being a condition of funding.' This represents a fundamental shift from incentive-based approaches to regulatory enforcement of research environment standards.

This development transforms research culture leadership from an institutional aspiration into a compliance requirement with direct implications for funding security. Universities failing to meet baseline performance measures in research culture may face removal from the £2 billion annual allocation of quality-related research funding. The scale of financial risk involved places collaborative research excellence firmly within executive decision-making territory and requires institutional structures that demonstrate research culture vitality across all aspects of academic activity.

The announcement of potential 'twin or multi-track lighter touch approach to assessment for less research intensive institutions and smaller specialist institutions' creates additional complexity for Ravensbourne. Our KER strategy provides the strategic framework necessary for positioning the institution appropriately within emerging assessment categories whilst ensuring compliance across multiple evaluation mechanisms.

Strategic Rationale: Why Now

Ravensbourne's traditional strengths in creative and applied research, combined with emerging capabilities in computing and business innovation, position us distinctively within this new regulatory context. However, positioning alone is insufficient. We require integrated research infrastructure that demonstrates collaborative excellence, external engagement, and international significance—the hallmarks of research culture vitality that emerging regulatory frameworks will assess. The Labs framework provides this essential infrastructure, creating thematic research platforms that deliver excellence and evidence simultaneously.

2. Vision, Mission, and Strategic Purpose

Vision

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

By 2030, Ravensbourne University's Knowledge Exchange and Research ecosystem will be internationally recognised as a catalyst of sustainable innovation, partnering actively with industry, communities, and policy-makers to translate emerging technologies, creative practice, and business innovation into impactful economic and societal outcomes whilst demonstrating the research culture excellence that ensures institutional funding security.

Mission

Our mission is realised through four interconnected commitments.

We conduct industry-embedded, interdisciplinary research that advances knowledge and solves pressing sector challenges through international collaboration with global academic and industry partners, providing evidence of research culture vitality essential for regulatory compliance and REF excellence.

We co-create solutions with companies, communities, and public agencies through transparent, ethical knowledge exchange that spans local to global networks whilst demonstrating the collaborative research environment required under emerging assessment frameworks.

We develop talent pipelines by mentoring students and early-career researchers in practice-based, industry-relevant projects that directly inform and enhance our teaching practices whilst building international research capacity and evidencing investment in research culture.

We disseminate insights via open-access publications, policy briefs, and public engagement to maximise global reach and local benefit through strategic international partnerships, providing evidence of research excellence and impact required for funding security.

Values Underpinning KER

Our approach rests on several foundational commitments. We believe in purpose-led research that addresses genuine societal and sector needs rather than pursuing impact retrospectively. We commit to ethical collaboration where industry partnerships are structured around mutual benefit and transparent objectives. We prioritise inclusive research culture where no researcher experiences isolation, where diverse perspectives strengthen enquiry, and where early-career and student researchers are integrated meaningfully into research activity. We operate with international ambition, recognising that contemporary challenges require global partnership and that research culture excellence is demonstrated through cross-border collaboration. Finally, we maintain institutional transparency about research methods, funding sources, and outcomes, recognising that public trust is foundational to research culture vitality.

3. Alignment with University Strategy 2030

The KER strategy directly supports Ravensbourne's University Strategy 2030 across all five strategic pillars, whilst simultaneously addressing regulatory compliance requirements.

Purpose-Led Research forms the foundation of all Lab activity. All Labs adopt research questions co-written with industry and community partners, ensuring research is framed around genuine sector challenges and societal priorities rather than disciplinary conventions alone. This approach simultaneously meets University expectations for purpose-driven research and provides evidence of industry engagement required for research culture assessment.

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange is embedded within the Lab model itself. Structured industry collaboration modes Embedded Research, Living Labs, Contract Research and Consultancy, and Collaborative Research create systematic pathways for translating research into practical innovation. These collaboration

models generate external income, intellectual property, and business development opportunities whilst demonstrating the external engagement that research culture assessment prioritises.

Inclusive Community is reflected in the design of all Labs. Research teams span at least two schools plus external and international partners, creating interdisciplinary environments where diverse expertise strengthens enquiry. Community co-design methodologies, particularly in the Digital Hack Lab and COAC+ projects, ensure that research addresses needs identified by those most affected by the challenges being investigated.

Global Outlook is operationalised through explicit international partnership requirements. Each Lab maintains active collaborations with leading international universities and research institutions. Joint funding applications with international partners (Horizon Europe, bilateral research councils, global foundations) provide tangible evidence of research culture vitality whilst positioning research outcomes for global significance.

Values-Based Culture underpins all KER activity. Open-access output policies, ethical review for all projects, and transparent governance structures demonstrate institutional commitment to research integrity. International ethics compliance and adherence to global research standards ensure that collaborative research meets the highest ethical benchmarks.

4. The Labs Framework

What Are The Labs?

The Labs are Ravensbourne University's principal knowledge exchange, research and innovation platforms, structured around industry-facing research whilst embedding the collaborative practices that assessment of contemporary cultural and professional landscapes requires. Coordinated through the Centre for Excellence in Emerging Technology (CEET), the Labs represent a strategic commitment to research excellence grounded in industry partnership, interdisciplinary collaboration and diverse, far-reaching engagement.

The Labs exist for a purpose beyond traditional academic research. They position Ravensbourne as a trusted research partner for industry, creative sector partners and social innovation organisations facing genuine challenges. They create research and knowledge exchange environments where established and early-career researchers, students and professionals address real-world problems. They generate outcomes that advance knowledge, influence policy and drive innovation through their collective collaborative research culture platform.

The Labs spanning emerging technologies, creative industries, education, learning design, social innovation and urban development engage deeply with industry while maintaining a critical perspective on contemporary challenges and opportunities. They function as mutually reinforcing agents rather than competing forces.

Understanding a Lab

A Lab at Ravensbourne is a research and knowledge exchange platform focused on significant industrial, professional or societal challenges. Each Lab is characterised by four defining elements.

A clear challenge or opportunity identified through exploratory research or industry consultation. Rather than approaching research solely from academic disciplinary perspectives, the Labs' approach is to identify questions that reflect and respond to contemporary industrial and professional challenges.

A multidisciplinary approach, encompassing a variety of specialisms and interests and spanning multiple perspectives. Structured around a core working group, teams are normally drawn from multiple schools

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

to ensure disciplinary breadth. External partners, typically industry or other external communities, are integrated into project design and delivery, contributing their expert perspective from the outset. Where appropriate, international collaborators bring global perspective and reach.

Structured collaboration with industry and communities. The Labs employ specific collaboration modes that include Embedded Research positioning researchers within partner organisations, Living Labs conducting research in real-world community settings, Contract Research and Consultancy scaling initial projects into larger research programmes, and Collaborative Research bringing diverse stakeholders together on time-boxed challenges. These modes create genuine partnership with mutual objectives, shared learning and tangible outputs benefiting all parties.

An explicit impact plan that identifies beneficiaries, specifies research outputs, defines success metrics and articulates pathways to Research Excellence Framework (REF) contributions. The plan ensures that research is designed for impact from inception, with clear mechanisms for research reaching intended audiences and contributing to change.

These four elements work together to create research and knowledge exchange platforms that are simultaneously rigorous academically, externally engaged and collaborative in culture.

The Four Collaboration Modes

Our Labs engage industry partners through four structured collaboration modes, each designed to create authentic partnerships and demonstrate research culture excellence.

Embedded Research positions researchers within partner companies or research facilities, where joint research questions are developed collaboratively and intellectual property agreements reflect mutual contribution. This mode is particularly effective for sector-specific challenges and creates opportunities for long-term partnerships that span multiple projects.

Living Labs establish real-world testbeds where research is conducted in authentic contexts involving community participants. These testbeds span national and international settings, enabling comparative research that addresses challenges across diverse contexts and demonstrating the inclusive research environment required under emerging frameworks.

Contract Research and Consultancy structures initial consultancy projects to scale into larger funded initiatives such as doctoral research or Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. This mode enables companies to test collaboration through lower-risk initial projects, building relationships that may expand into substantial research programmes.

Collaborative Research brings together students, researchers, SMEs, NGOs, and community members through time-boxed challenges to address specific problems. Virtual collaboration and international participation are integral to this mode, demonstrating the accessible, inclusive research environment that contemporary frameworks value.

All collaboration modes are underpinned by standardised agreements including non-disclosure agreements, data-sharing protocols, and intellectual property arrangements. A shared KE Canvas captures mutual objectives, risk management requirements, international compliance provisions, and research culture quality indicators for each partnership.

Why This Structure Works

The Lab model achieves multiple objectives simultaneously. Each Lab delivers cutting-edge research that advances knowledge and contributes to REF impact. Simultaneously, the structured collaboration and interdisciplinary approach provides evidence of research culture excellence. External partnerships demonstrate engagement and impact. International collaboration signals research significance. The student and early-career researcher involvement evidences talent pipeline development. The transparent governance and clear objectives provide assurance of research integrity. A single research infrastructure thus serves both excellence and compliance functions, reducing the risk of misalignment between strategic purpose and regulatory requirements.

5. The Labs

Audio-Visual Media Lab

The Audio-Visual Media Lab explores creative media practice through critical inquiry and practical experimentation, investigating media production and consumption in an era of rapid technological transformation.

The Lab recognises that the creative media industries are undergoing fundamental transformation, driven by emerging technological and professional developments including artificial intelligence, interactive and immersive technologies, distributed production and new distribution platforms. It engages directly with this transformation, collaborating with creative practitioners, companies, and technology partners to understand emerging capabilities whilst maintaining a critical perspective on their social, cultural, and professional implications.

The Lab's ambitious programme ultimately focuses on creating production workflow demonstrators, designed for industry adoption. Rooted in a critical perspective combined with practical exploration, the Lab seeks to explore and demonstrate how emerging technologies can be integrated into contemporary production practice, making this understanding accessible to audiences beyond technology experts and pioneers. Working with education, technology and creative media partners with an international reach, the Lab aligns fully with the overarching collaborative research ethos and the cross-disciplinary, diverse and far-reaching character of the Ravensbourne Labs.

By 2028, the Lab aims to establish a robust knowledge base on emerging creative media practice and to provide insights and recommendations that can be adopted by associated industries. Ultimately, it seeks to position Ravensbourne as an influential educational and exploratory space that shapes the way creative media professionals work and create. This outcome represents not only scholarly and academic impact but also tangible contributions to innovation and relevance within the creative industries.

Emerging Technology, Business and Social Purposes (EBS) Lab

The Emerging Technology, Business and Social Purposes (EBS) Lab explores how emerging technologies can be understood and applied to advance responsible business practices and create social value. The Lab critically examines how technology is used within organisations and societies, seeking pathways that promote inclusion, fairness, and sustainability.

Recognising that emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, present both transformative potential and systemic challenges when adopted without clear attention to social purpose, the Lab brings together business scholars, technologists, ethicists, and social impact practitioners. It serves as a collaborative platform for exploring how organisations can integrate technological innovation with entrepreneurial approaches, sustainable business models, and the future of work to deliver meaningful societal impact.

The Lab contributes to policy and governance debates, producing evidence-based recommendations for the ethical and inclusive adoption of emerging technologies. This work informs international policy discussions and supports social responsibility and human-centred innovation.

Through these interconnected initiatives, the EBS Lab seeks to strengthen Ravensbourne University London's position as a leading voice at the intersection of technology, business, and social purpose. The Lab aims to engage with international academic, policy, and business communities by sharing its research frameworks and insights that support responsible, purposeful use of emerging technologies. By 2028, the Lab aspires to demonstrate tangible impact through collaborations, knowledge exchange, and contributions that help organisations navigate technology to deliver social and economic value.

The Collaborative Observatory for Architecture and Cities (COAC+)

The Collaborative Observatory for Architecture and Cities (COAC+) redefines and explores the built environment through emerging technologies, immersive experiences, community collaboration and regenerative design ethos.

The Lab addresses urgent challenges in urban development and social sustainability: cities expanding without adequate planning for environmental impact or community wellbeing, community members excluded from decisions affecting their neighbourhoods, and limited evidence on how digital technologies can support inclusive urban design. COAC+ addresses these challenges directly through collaborative research that combines technical expertise with community input.

The Lab's 2028 programme explores how digital technologies, such as AI, extended reality (XR), and digital twins, can enhance our understanding of the impact of built environment initiatives on cities and their communities. Through a combination of spatial research, data analysis, and participatory design, the Lab examines how technological innovation can support evidence-based planning, adaptive reuse, and community-led regeneration.

These initiatives are strategically designed to create urban planning methodologies developed in collaboration with national and international development organisations. By 2028, COAC+ aims to demonstrate that Ravensbourne research shapes how cities plan sustainable development, with methodologies influencing urban authorities and development agencies locally and globally.

The Learning Lab

The Learning Lab advances innovative, inclusive, and evidence-based education through research and innovation in pedagogy, learning design, and educational technology.

The Lab recognises that global educational systems face substantial challenges: persistent attainment gaps disadvantaging students from underrepresented backgrounds, insufficient support for neurodiverse learners, underutilised potential of artificial intelligence in personalised learning support, and limited evidence-based guidance for educators navigating rapid technological change. The Learning Lab addresses these challenges through rigorous research translating findings into practical guidance for educators.

Current research projects span evidence-based learning approaches for neurodiverse students, AI-assisted academic support exploring how technology can close attainment gaps, and evidence-based approaches to student belonging and mattering. Each project combines rigorous research methodology with extensive international comparative work, ensuring findings have relevance beyond UK contexts.

The Lab's strategic development through 2028 centres on creating an evidence-based pedagogy framework that will be adopted by partner institutions across multiple continents, generating measurable international

impact. Simultaneously, the Lab develops an industry-informed curriculum design toolkit with global applicability, working with edtech companies and international education agencies to ensure toolkit relevance for diverse contexts. An international teacher training programme incorporating multinational industry input showcases how collaborative research generates practical professional development for educators worldwide.

These combined research efforts are designed to generate policy citations in international education frameworks and global teaching standards, positioning research evidence where it influences educator practice at scale. By 2028, the Learning Lab aims to demonstrate that Ravensbourne research shapes how educators approach learning design, inclusive pedagogy, and technology integration worldwide.

Digital Hack Lab

The Digital Hack Lab empowers researchers, students and community partners to design and create sustainable solutions for complex challenges through digital innovation and systemic thinking. The Lab addresses growing recognition that many contemporary challenges require systemic rather than technical solutions.

Challenges such as sustainability, social equity, community resilience and organisational transformation can all benefit from the application of digital tools and design methodologies. Exploring these complex problems through the development of innovative tools are often applied narrowly, but by taking a systemic route, the Digital Hack Lab creates a space where digital capability is combined with systems thinking and community co-design, generating solutions grounded in a deep understanding of context, need and continued resilience.

The Lab facilitates both industry and student collaborative projects incorporating international partnerships that create evidence of cross-sector research and knowledge exchange. These projects bring staff and students into contact with real organisational challenges, building applied research skills and enabling networks. The Lab also explores collaborative funding opportunities to further its work and expand its reach.

The Lab commits to generating innovations that will be adopted by international development programmes, ensuring research outcomes contribute directly to addressing global development challenges. By 2028, the Lab aims to demonstrate measurable adoption of its design methodologies by international organisations addressing equality, climate change and community resilience along with other pressing concerns as we continue to build better worlds together.

Regenerative Fashion Lab

The Regenerative Fashion Lab addresses one of the most pressing sustainability challenges of our time, transforming the fashion and luxury industries toward circular, regenerative models that restore rather than deplete natural and human resources.

The Lab works at the intersection of craft heritage, culture, innovative technology and sustainable supply chain development. Rather than treating sustainability as a compliance burden, the Lab positions regeneration as opportunity for heritage craft skills to find contemporary market value, for technology to enable transparency and traceability, and for luxury brands to differentiate through authentic sustainability commitment.

The Lab's focus centres on circular textiles development, regenerative supply chain design, and heritage craft innovation. Working closely with industry and academic institutions that include international luxury and fashion brands and craft communities, the Lab creates demonstrator projects showing how circular business models can be profitable and achievable at scale.

Beyond demonstrator projects, the Lab produces research evidence on regenerative supply chains through publication and examining international case studies. These outputs feed directly into national and international debates on fashion sustainability with the intention to influence industry practice globally.

The Lab's community engagement is integral to research and as such hosts skill-share events with heritage craft communities to ensure that traditional knowledge is preserved, documented and valued. These events reach hundreds of participants, creating learning pathways for new practitioners and demonstrating fashion industry responsibility toward communities.

By 2028, the Lab aims to achieve demonstrable influence on international fashion sustainability standards, positioning Ravensbourne as an authoritative voice on sustainable luxury innovation whilst contributing measurably to reducing environmental and social harm within the fashion supply chain.

6. Industry Engagement Framework

Strategic Principles

Our approach to industry collaboration rests on several principles. Partnerships must be authentic and mutual, reflecting genuine shared interests rather than transactional relationships. They must be transparent, with clear objectives, resource commitments, and success metrics established at inception. They must be ethical, adhering to national regulations and international best practice in research governance. They must be documented, with agreements that protect all parties' interests whilst facilitating knowledge creation. They must be integrated, connecting with teaching and student experience rather than remaining separate from core academic activity.

International Partnerships and Global Reach

Ravensbourne's KER strategy prioritises international partnership as core to both excellence and compliance. This commitment manifests across several dimensions.

Global Academic Partnerships position each Lab within leading international research networks. Joint research projects, visiting scholar exchanges, and sabbatical partnerships demonstrate research environment quality and access to international expertise. Collaborative research proposals to international funding bodies (Horizon Europe, UKRI Global Challenges, bilateral research councils) provide tangible evidence of research significance.

Multinational Industry Engagement extends beyond UK companies to include global technology leaders, multinational corporations in fashion and media sectors, and international development agencies. These partnerships signal market significance, create export opportunities for research outcomes, and demonstrate the external validation that research culture assessment values.

Cross-Border Research Projects address challenges that transcend national boundaries—climate change, sustainable development, emerging technology governance—through partnerships spanning multiple continents. These projects generate research outcomes with global relevance and demonstrate Ravensbourne's engagement with international research communities.

International Compliance Infrastructure ensures that cross-border collaboration meets the highest ethical and governance standards. All international agreements undergo legal review to ensure compliance with research regulations in partner countries. Ethics protocols reflect international standards, and data governance arrangements protect research participants and institutional interests.

7. Research Culture and Compliance Framework

What Research Culture Means in Practice

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

Research culture excellence, as emerging regulatory frameworks will assess it, extends beyond individual researcher behaviour to encompass institutional structures and collective practices. At Ravensbourne, a culture of research excellence means:

Collaborative Environment: No researcher experiences isolation. Team structures, mentoring relationships, and collegial review processes ensure that researchers receive support from peers throughout their careers. For early-career and doctoral researchers, this is particularly critical—intentional integration into research teams reduces the vulnerability that contributes to research culture challenges.

Transparent Governance: Research objectives, methodologies, and outcomes are communicated clearly to all stakeholders. Governance structures provide accountability for research quality and integrity. Decision-making processes are documented, and feedback loops enable continuous improvement.

Ethical Integrity: All research adheres to formal ethics review. Industry partnerships are governed by transparent agreements. Data management practices protect research participants and uphold data security. Publication practices reflect commitment to open science where appropriate and institutional values.

Support Infrastructure: Researchers have access to professional development, mentoring, and career guidance. Technical support is available for research methods and tools. Administrative infrastructure reduces bureaucratic burden so researchers can focus on research quality.

Inclusive Environment: The research environment welcomes researchers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse career trajectories. Research perspectives are strengthened through disciplinary and cultural diversity. Under-represented groups in research are actively supported and included in research leadership.

Career Pathways: Clear career progression frameworks exist for all researchers, including those pursuing diverse career paths. Early-career researchers have explicit support and mentoring. Researchers with caring responsibilities receive accommodation and flexibility.

Regulatory Compliance and Baseline Performance

Research England's emerging requirement for 'baseline performance in research culture being a condition of funding' will assess whether universities demonstrate these elements through structured evidence. Ravensbourne's compliance framework addresses this through continuous baseline performance monitoring, peer review integration, governance transparency, and adherence to international standards.

Risk Management and Mitigation

Several risks could undermine research culture excellence. Mission drift occurs when Labs shift focus away from original strategic objectives toward activities with shorter-term financial return. This is managed through annual strategy reset workshops where Lab leaders review objectives against institutional priorities and regulatory requirements, adjusting focus where necessary.

Partner withdrawal can destabilise Labs dependent on specific industry relationships. This risk is mitigated by intentionally diversifying partner bases, developing flexible intellectual property models that accommodate changing partner needs, and maintaining research culture evidence that survives partner transitions.

Resource bottlenecks occur when specialist technical support becomes limiting for research delivery. Mitigation includes pooling technical expertise across Labs, maintaining shared equipment calendars, and prioritising research culture infrastructure investment.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

Policy shifts in REF assessment or research culture requirements could alter strategic priorities. A dedicated horizon-scanning group monitors policy development and research community trends, enabling rapid response to significant changes.

Compliance failures pose existential risk to institutional funding. Multiple safeguards prevent this outcome: continuous baseline performance monitoring, collaborative environment assessment, structured ethics review, and regular regulatory compliance audits.

8. REF 2029 Excellence and International Strategy

REF as Strategic Framework

REF 2029 serves not merely as assessment exercise but as strategic anchor for KER activity. The Labs are structured to deliver excellence across REF assessment dimensions.

Research Outputs: Each Lab maintains rigorous publication standards with explicit quality targets. Output selection is managed collaboratively, ensuring that researchers new to REF submissions receive mentoring and guidance. Joint publication projects strengthen individual researcher profiles whilst demonstrating collaborative research culture.

Research Impact: All Labs develop explicit impact pathways from inception. These pathways identify potential beneficiaries, specify the mechanisms through which research will reach them, and establish metrics for impact realisation. REF impact pathways are reviewed annually, enabling strategic adjustment as projects develop.

Research Environment: The collaborative, interdisciplinary, internationally engaged Lab structure provides substantial evidence of research environment excellence. Mentoring relationships, collegial review, inclusive team composition, and transparent governance all demonstrate the research culture that REF assessment emphasises.

Talent Development and Early-Career Support

Research culture excellence requires intentional investment in researcher development at all career stages. The Labs provide this through doctoral researcher integration into Lab research projects, early-career researcher support with dedicated mentoring, visiting scholar programmes bringing international expertise, and professional development integration within Lab activity rather than as separate training programmes.

9. International Strategy and Global Positioning

Strategic Rationale for International Focus

International research collaboration serves multiple strategic purposes. At the research level, emerging technologies and societal challenges increasingly require global partnership, with research problems spanning disciplinary and national boundaries. At the compliance level, international collaboration and recognition signal research significance in ways that research culture assessment values. At the competitive level, international networks enhance recruitment of high-quality researchers and students whilst positioning Ravensbourne within global research communities.

International Collaboration Architecture

Ravensbourne's international strategy operates across four levels.

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

Bilateral Research Partnerships connect individual researchers and Labs with leading international universities. These partnerships enable joint research projects, visiting scholar exchanges, and collaborative publication. Bilateral partnerships tend to be deep, enabling sustained collaboration over multiple research cycles.

International Research Consortia bring together multiple universities and industry partners around major research questions. Consortium participation signals research quality and enables access to research funding that prioritises international collaboration.

Global Industry Networks connect Labs with multinational corporations and international industry associations. These networks provide access to research challenges with commercial significance, industry-validated perspectives on research priority, and pathways to international impact through product and service innovation.

International Policy Networks link research outcomes to global policy bodies including UN agencies, international NGOs, and global policy institutes. These networks ensure research contributes to international policy dialogue and societal benefit at scale.

10. Governance and Leadership

CEET Labs Steering Committee

Strategic oversight of the KER strategy is provided by the CEET Labs Steering Committee, comprising the Head of Knowledge Exchange and Research, who provides overall strategic direction and institutional alignment; the heads of each Lab, who bring operational expertise and research leadership; two industry advisers, one with significant international experience, who provide market perspective and external accountability; and a student representative, who ensures researcher voice and early-career perspective in strategic decisions.

The Committee meets quarterly to monitor KPI dashboards including REF progression, international metrics, and research culture baseline performance indicators; commission mid-term reviews with international peer evaluation; ensure alignment with evolving university strategy, REF requirements, and emerging regulatory frameworks; support researchers through REF processes whilst ensuring collaborative culture compliance; and facilitate international KER partnerships and global collaboration opportunities.

Lab Leadership and Accountability

Each Lab is led by a Lab Head with responsibility for defining and reviewing research vision and strategic objectives, managing partnership relationships and collaboration modes, delivering high-impact research aligned with REF excellence criteria, ensuring research culture compliance and inclusive team environment, providing mentoring and support for all team members, and transparent reporting on research progress, impact realisation, and regulatory compliance.

Lab Heads are accountable to the Steering Committee through annual performance review, mid-term strategic review, and ongoing KPI monitoring. Performance assessment considers research excellence, international impact, industry partnership success, research culture compliance, talent development, and contribution to institutional strategic objectives.

11. Implementation Roadmap 2025–2030

Phase 1: Foundation Setting (September 2025–December 2025)

REF 2029

Research Excellence Framework

In the foundation-setting phase, several critical activities establish the framework for sustained excellence. The CEET Labs Steering Committee is established with full membership including international advisory capacity and explicit research culture oversight. Intensive workshops with existing Lab leaders align the Labs with the Industry Engagement Framework, emerging REF requirements, and research culture compliance standards. Standardised agreements governing industry partnerships are developed, including international compliance protocols and research culture quality indicators. A regular LabTalks/Research Rave series featuring international guest speakers and cross-Lab discussion establishes collaborative research environment visibly.

REF Milestone: Complete comprehensive REF impact pathway mapping for all Labs, identifying submission strategies, output priorities, and impact realisation mechanisms.

Compliance Milestone: Establish research culture baseline performance monitoring systems capturing researcher satisfaction, support infrastructure adequacy, ethics compliance, and collaborative environment quality.

International Milestone: Initiate minimum one international research partnership per Lab, establishing relationships that will develop over the implementation period.

Phase 2: Framework Implementation (January 2026–August 2026)

In the implementation phase, Labs operationalise new structures and establish sustainable practices. All Labs establish designated collaboration modes with initial industry partners, including international partnerships where appropriate. Unified CEET branding and communication strategy with international accessibility is implemented. A public portal featuring collaboration opportunities, Lab descriptions, and partnership information is launched. Systematic KPI tracking including international collaboration metrics, REF progression indicators, and research culture compliance measures begins.

International Milestone: Establish minimum two active international partnerships per Lab, with collaborative research projects underway.

Compliance Milestone: Demonstrate baseline performance research culture indicators meeting emerging regulatory standards.

Industry Milestone: Secure initial industry partnership commitments for 2026–2027 research cycles across all Labs.

Phase 3: Optimisation and Growth (September 2026 onwards)

In the final phase, focus shifts to optimisation, scaling, and regulatory alignment. The first annual strategic review including REF progression assessment and research culture compliance evaluation, with mid-term peer review, is completed. Opportunities for new Labs based on emerging international trends, REF potential, and research culture excellence requirements are identified. Successful collaboration models are scaled while maintaining regulatory compliance and research quality. International research consortia for major funding applications to Horizon Europe and global funding bodies are established.

REF Milestone: Position all researchers for REF 2029 submission readiness, with clear publication strategies, impact pathways, and collaborative support structures in place.

Compliance Milestone: Achieve research culture baseline performance standards securing institutional funding access under emerging regulatory requirements.

International Milestone: Establish at least two international research consortia with potential for major grant applications.

12. Metrics, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

Key Performance Indicators

Ravensbourne's KER strategy is monitored through integrated metrics spanning research excellence, compliance, international reach, knowledge exchange performance, and impact realisation.

Research Excellence: Field-weighted citation impact targets ≥ 1.5 (relative to global averages in relevant fields), ensuring research reaches standards comparable with leading international institutions. REF-quality outputs per researcher targets ≥ 2.5 per researcher, maintaining individual researcher productivity whilst supporting collaborative research.

Research Culture Compliance: Baseline performance indicators assessed annually through researcher satisfaction surveys, support infrastructure audits, ethics compliance review, and collaborative environment assessment. These metrics provide evidence of compliance with emerging regulatory requirements.

International Reach: Percentage of publications with international co-authors targeted at $\geq 60\%$, demonstrating consistent international collaboration. International funding secured as percentage of total external research income targeted at $\geq 30\%$, providing evidence of research significance to international funding bodies.

Knowledge Exchange Performance: External KE income from industry partnerships, assessed annually and benchmarked against sector comparators. Partner satisfaction metrics captured through regular surveys and project close reviews, with targets of Net Promoter Score ≥ 60 and global partner satisfaction $\geq 70\%$.

Talent Development: Doctoral completion rates monitored to ensure timely progression and successful research outcomes. Percentage of research team members with international experience targeted at $\geq 80\%$, reflecting commitment to researcher development and global perspective.

Societal Impact: Policy citations tracked through media analysis and policy institute reviews, providing evidence of research influence on government and international policy. UN Sustainable Development Goal alignment assessed for all projects, mapping research contribution to global development priorities.

13. Expected Outcomes and Strategic Impact

Institutional Outcomes

By 2030, Ravensbourne's KER strategy will deliver several critical institutional outcomes.

Research Funding Security: Demonstrated research culture excellence will ensure compliance with emerging regulatory requirements from Research England, securing institutional access to quality-related research funding and protecting the financial sustainability of research activity.

REF 2029 Excellence: Structured research environment, collaborative team culture, and international partnerships will position Ravensbourne research for strong REF 2029 performance, enhancing institutional research reputation and supporting future funding access.

Industry Partnership Success: Systematic industry engagement frameworks will establish Ravensbourne as trusted research partner for creative, technology, and business innovation challenges, generating sustainable external income and enhancing institutional reputation for applied research excellence.

International Recognition: International research partnerships, joint publications, and collaborative research projects will establish Ravensbourne as respected participant in global research communities, enhancing recruitment of international researchers and students.

Research Outcomes

The Labs will deliver high-impact research across six strategic domains: creative media practice and emerging production technologies through the Audio-Visual Media Lab; responsible technology adoption and social purpose through the EBS Lab; sustainable urban development and community-led regeneration through COAC+; inclusive pedagogy and educational innovation through the Learning Lab; systemic solutions for complex challenges through the Digital Hack Lab; and circular fashion and regenerative supply chains through the Regenerative Fashion Lab.

Societal and Economic Impact

Beyond research excellence, the KER strategy will deliver substantial societal and economic benefit. Industry partnerships will generate external income, intellectual property, and business development opportunities. Research addressing sustainable fashion, inclusive education, digital inclusion, creative sector innovation, responsible technology, and urban regeneration will contribute directly to addressing societal challenges. Research evidence will inform government policy on creative sector sustainability, educational innovation, digital technology governance, and urban development. Integrated doctoral and early-career researcher development will contribute to talent pipeline for creative, technology, and business sectors.

14. Conclusion: Strategic Integration and Long-Term Vision

Ravensbourne's Knowledge Exchange and Research Strategy represents more than a collection of research projects. It represents a fundamental commitment to research excellence aligned with institutional mission, contemporary regulatory requirements, industry needs, and societal challenges. The integrated Labs framework delivers high-impact research whilst simultaneously demonstrating the research culture excellence that emerging regulatory frameworks will assess.

By structuring research around collaborative teams, external engagement, international partnership, and transparent governance, Ravensbourne ensures that excellence and compliance are mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities. Research quality and research culture vitality are not separate concerns managed by different institutional units; they are integrated within a unified strategic framework where collaborative research practice simultaneously delivers both.

This strategy positions Ravensbourne to thrive within an increasingly complex regulatory environment whilst maintaining focus on research excellence and societal impact. By 2030, Ravensbourne's Labs will be recognised internationally as catalysts of sustainable innovation, demonstrating research culture excellence that secures institutional funding access whilst delivering research outcomes that advance knowledge, drive industry innovation, and contribute meaningfully to addressing global challenges.