

RAE 2008 Consultation on assessment panels' draft criteria and working methods

To Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
Heads of HEFCW-funded higher education institutions
Heads of SHEFC-funded higher education institutions
Heads of universities in Northern Ireland
Subject associations and related stakeholders

Of interest to those responsible for Research assessment, Research policy, Planning

Reference RAE 04/2005 Web only

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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This consultation invites views from UK higher education institutions, subject associations and other relevant stakeholders on the draft criteria and working methods of the main and sub-panels in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

Key points

2. Respondents may comment on any part of the main and sub-panels' criteria statements, but we invite specific comments on certain core aspects of all the statements. These are listed in paragraphs 61-62.

Action required

3. Consultation responses should be made using the online form by 1200 on **Monday 19 September 2005**. We regret that it will not be possible to consider any response received after that time.

4. This document contains the following sections:

a. Section 1 Introduction to the consultation

- i. How to respond
- ii. Deadline for responses
- iii. Publication of responses
- iv. Next steps
- v. Introduction to the draft statements of criteria and working methods

b. Section 2 Generic statement on criteria and working methods

- i. Definitions
- ii. Content of submissions
- iii. Categories of research active individual

- iv. Unit of assessment description
- v. Assessment process
- vi. Joint submissions
- vii. Research outputs
- viii. Minimum proportions of work examined in detail
- ix. Staffing issues
- x. Interdisciplinary research: arrangements for cross-referral and specialist advice
- xi. Assessment of applied and practice-based research
- xii. Assessment of pedagogic research
- xiii. Dealing with declarations of interest and confidentiality

c. Section 3 Main and sub-panels' draft statements of criteria and working methods

d. Annexes

- Annex A Quality profiles and definitions of quality levels
- Annex B Units of assessment and main panels
- Annex C Definition of research for the RAE
- Annex D Declaration of interest
- Annex E Confidentiality arrangements

Section 1 Introduction to the consultation

5. This consultation seeks the views of higher education institutions (HEIs), subject associations and other relevant stakeholders on the criteria and working methods that the 15 main and 67 sub-panels in the 2008 RAE will employ. Main and sub-panels have drafted these statements within a common framework set out in guidance issued in January 2005 (RAE 01/2005 'Guidance to panels' and RAE 02/2005 'Equality briefing for panel chairs, members and secretaries').

6. In this document, 'panels' is used to mean both main panels and sub-panels. Where we refer exclusively to main panels or to sub-panels, we identify them as such.

How to respond

7. This is a web-based consultation and responses should be submitted via the online forms. For respondents without access to the internet, we can provide for responses in other formats. Please contact the RAE team (info@rae.ac.uk or tel 0117 931 7267) by 5 September 2005 if you wish to discuss this.

8. We will not be able to acknowledge responses. However, the instructions accompanying the response form describe clearly how respondents can ascertain that their response has been submitted and received.

9. For general enquiries about this consultation, please contact info@rae.ac.uk. For technical queries about responding online, please contact Shawn Pearson (s.pearson@hefce.ac.uk).

Deadline for responses

10. The deadline for responses is 1200 on **Monday 19 September 2005**. We will be unable to consider any response received after that time.

Publication of responses

11. Please make clear on whose behalf you are responding. The form requires respondents to indicate whether their response represents the collective view of an HEI, subject association or other stakeholder organisation; or the private view of an individual or group of individuals. For the purposes of this consultation, 'group of individuals' includes a department or faculty or other grouping in an HEI. All responses must include the details (name, telephone number and e-mail address) of someone we can contact if we have any queries about the response.

12. The RAE team will publish an analysis of responses following completion of the consultation process. Additionally, all responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case HEFCE, where the RAE team is based. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. HEFCE has a responsibility to decide whether any information provided in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. HEFCE can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional

circumstances. This means that information provided in response to this consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Further information about the Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Next steps

13. Panels will meet to finalise their criteria and working methods, taking into account comments received through this consultation process, in autumn 2005. The RAE team will publish an analysis of the consultation responses and the panels' final statements of their criteria and working methods by January 2006.

Introduction to the draft statements of criteria and working methods

14. The draft statements of criteria and working methods should be read in conjunction with the guidance to HEIs on the data requirements for the 2008 RAE (see RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'). The latter explains the purpose of the RAE and the principles underpinning it, the role of main and sub-panels, and the data they will use to make assessments, and gives other details on the context in which these draft statements may be understood.

15. The purpose of publishing statements of criteria and working methods is to give HEIs information about how submissions will be assessed in good time to assist with their planning. As with previous RAEs, the assessment process is based on expert review: each panel will use its professional judgement to form a view about the overall quality of the research activity described in each submission, taking account of all the evidence presented, against its published criteria and in line with its published working methods. Results for each submission will be published in the form of a quality profile, which is described at Annex A.

16. Once these draft criteria statements have been finalised, they and the 'Guidance on submissions' will comprehensively describe how submissions in the 2008 RAE will be made by HEIs and assessed by panels. HEIs should note, therefore, that these draft statements are subject to amendment following the consultation. HEIs should not rely on the current draft statements in planning and preparing their submissions. Once the final statements are published, they will not be subject to change nor do we anticipate permitting panels to depart from them other than in exceptional circumstances, for example, a change in law that could not be accommodated within the published framework.

17. Section 2 of this document contains a generic statement on the criteria and working methods that all panels will adopt. Section 3 contains draft statements prepared by each of the main panels and each of the sub-panels.

18. The operation of the RAE is bound by overarching principles and the panels' criteria are themselves set within a common framework. This framework takes account of equal opportunities legislation, and of aspects of the assessment process that were strongly supported by the higher education (HE) sector following Sir Gareth Roberts' review of research assessment. The principles and framework are described in RAE

01/2005 'Guidance to panels' and RAE 02/2005 'Equality briefing for panel chairs, members and secretaries'.

19. In view of this existing framework, we wish to steer respondents to this consultation to focus on aspects of the panels' criteria and working methods that the panels themselves can change, rather than on matters that have been fixed in our published framework. We have organised all the statements to make clear which items we actively seek comments on, and the online response form guides respondents to focus on these items. We welcome observations on other aspects of the panels' criteria and working methods, but in finalising their criteria we will ask panels to focus on the aspects that we have highlighted in this consultation.

Section 2: Generic statement on criteria and working methods

Definitions

20. For the purposes of the RAE, and throughout the panels' criteria and working methods, the following definitions apply:

- a. **Assessment period** means the period from 1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007. The research described in submissions, including data about research students and research income and the textual commentary, must relate to this period.
- b. **Census date** means the date determining the affiliation of research staff to a particular institution. Staff may be submitted in the RAE by the institution that employs them on this date (or in the case of Category C staff by the institution that is the focus of their research), regardless of previous or forthcoming changes in their employment status. The census date is 31 October 2007.
- c. **Department** means the staff included in a submission to one of the 67 UOAs recognised by the RAE, and, by extension, their work and the structures which support it. RAE departments are often not identified with a single administrative unit within an HEI, or in the case of joint submissions, across HEIs.
- d. **FTE** means full-time equivalent:
 - i. For staff, it refers to the extent of a member of staff's contracted duties as compared to those of a typical full-time member of staff in the same category. The length of time in the year for which the individual was employed and the relative proportion of total contracted time spent on research are irrelevant in reporting staff FTEs.
 - ii. For students, it refers to the amount of study undertaken in the year of programme of study, compared to a full-time student with the same qualification aim studying for a full year.FTEs should be expressed to two decimal places, as for example 0.67; apart from the contracted FTE of Category A staff, for which the minimum FTE that may be reported is 0.2.
- e. **Publication period** means the period during which research outputs must be placed in the public domain (or in the case of confidential outputs, lodged with the sponsor) if they are to qualify for assessment in RAE 2008. The publication period runs from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007 for all UOAs.
- f. **Returned** refers to any data included in any of forms RA0 to RA5c.
- g. **Selected staff** refers to the named staff included in RAE submissions by HEIs, in accordance with their own internal code of practice on preparing submissions and selecting staff for inclusion. Other staff may be eligible for inclusion (that is, they may satisfy the data definitions and requirements), but HEIs are not required to include all their eligible staff.
- h. **Submission** means a complete set of forms RA0 to RA5c returned by an HEI in any of the 67 UOAs.
- i. **UOA** means one of the 67 subject units of assessment defined for the 2008 RAE, which are listed in Annex B.

21. The definition of research for the RAE is at Annex C. Research outputs and research income may be included in submissions provided that the work they embody or

fund meets this definition. Consultancy income and research outputs arising from consultancy contracts should normally be excluded, since consultancy is usually concerned with applying existing knowledge. However, they may be included if the work undertaken or published as a result meets the RAE definition of research, irrespective of the nature of the contract or invoicing arrangement.

Content of submissions

22. Each submission will contain the core data detailed in sub-paragraphs 22a to 22i below. (The RA code in brackets refers to the research assessment form through which the data will be collected.) For detailed definitions of the data required in each RA form, see RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'.

- a. Overall staff summary (RA0): summary information on research active staff selected (FTE and headcount) and related academic support staff (FTE) in the unit of assessment. The data collection software will populate some of RA0 using the data that HEIs enter in RA1.
- b. Research active individuals (RA1): detailed information on individuals selected by the institution for inclusion as research active.
- c. Research output (RA2): up to four items (or fewer if designated for a particular UOA by its sub-panel) of research output produced during the publication period (1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007) by each individual named as research active and in post on the census date (31 October 2007).
- d. Research students (RA3a): numbers of full-time and part-time postgraduate research students and degrees awarded.
- e. Research studentships (RA3b): numbers of postgraduate research studentships and the source of funding for them.
- f. External research income (RA4): amounts and sources of external funding.
- g. Textual description (RA5a): including information about the research environment and indicators of esteem.
- h. Individual staff circumstances (RA5b).
- i. Category C staff circumstances (RA5c).

23. Panels may request further specific information where this is reasonable, justifiable and explicit. Details of such information for each UOA are listed in sub-panels' draft statements of criteria and working methods in Section 3.

Categories of research active individual

24. The definitions of staff categories A to D are:

- a. **Category A** Academic staff in post and on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date. Eligible Category A academic staff must be employed under a contract of employment with the HEI on the census date. Their contract must list research and/or teaching as their primary function.
- b. **Category B** Academic staff who held a contract with the institution after 1 January 2001 and who left the institution (or transferred into a department returned to a different UOA) after that date and before the census date, and who otherwise would have been eligible for inclusion as Category A.

- c. **Category C** Independent investigators active in research who do not meet the definition for Category A staff, but whose research on the census date is clearly and demonstrably focused in the department that returns them.
- d. **Category D** Independent investigators who met the definition for Category C staff during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 October 2007 but not on the census date.

For detailed definitions, please refer to Part 3, Section 1 of RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'.

Unit of assessment description

25. Each of the sub-panels' criteria statements contains a description of the UOA and of its boundaries with other UOAs. The description indicates the main subject areas covered by the UOA and is not intended to give an exhaustive account of the sub-disciplinary coverage. HEIs should refer to the UOA descriptions when deciding in which UOAs to make submissions.

Assessment process

26. This is an expert review exercise. Sub-panel members will exercise their knowledge, judgement and expertise to reach a collective view on the quality profile of research described in each submission, that is the proportion of work in each submission that is judged to reach each of five quality levels from 4* to unclassified (see Annex A). The definition of each level relies on a conception of quality (world-leading) which is the absolute standard of quality in each UOA. Each submission will be assessed against absolute standards and will not be ranked against other submissions.

27. In reaching a view on quality profiles, sub-panels will take account of all components of a submission: research output, research students and studentships, research income, and research environment and esteem indicators. An underpinning principle is that sub-panels should assess each submission in the round: they will not make collective judgements about the contributions of individual researchers, but about a range of indicators relating to the unit, research group or department that is put forward for assessment.

28. Each sub-panel will recommend provisional quality profiles for debate and endorsement by its main panel. Sub-panels must be able to demonstrate in all cases how their quality judgements relate to all the evidence before them and to their published criteria.

29. In all cases, submissions will be assessed against the criteria for the UOA in which the submission was originally made. Responsibility for recommending a quality profile lies with the sub-panel for that UOA, regardless of whether the sub-panel sought advice on aspects of the submission from specialist advisers or other sub-panels (see paragraph 52 below).

30. Although they reflect a common framework, the assessment criteria and working methods of each main panel and each sub-panel differ in varying degrees across the different UOAs. However, in general sub-panels grouped under the same main panel have developed criteria that reflect broadly similar approaches to research. Aspects of significant variation, for example where research approaches vary substantially between subjects, are described in the relevant main panel criteria statement.

Joint submissions

31. Joint submissions to one UOA by two or more UK HEIs, of research they have developed or undertaken collaboratively, are encouraged where this is the most appropriate way of describing the research. For further details on joint submissions, please refer to paragraphs 52-56 of RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'. Panels will receive joint submissions as a unified entity, and will assess them in the same way as submissions from single institutions.

Research outputs

32. While submissions will list up to four items of research output by each submitted researcher, there is no automatic disadvantage in failing to cite four items. Sub-panels will look at each case. The criteria statements offer further guidance on their respective approaches in cases where fewer than four items are listed.

33. HEIs are allowed to list the maximum of four outputs against any researcher, irrespective of their status or the length of time they have had to conduct research. So, for example, four outputs may be listed against part-time researchers or against individuals whose time for research has been constrained by their ill health – even if the panel's criteria indicate that the panel would not necessarily expect to see four items listed.

34. We have deliberately defined research output broadly: any form of publicly assessable output embodying research as defined for the RAE may be submitted, as may confidential outputs that are not publicly available. Where an output is published as a single coherent work it should be submitted as such and not subdivided for submission as two or more separate items.

35. Where a cited research output includes significant material that was previously published separately (for example, an article reissued as a chapter in a book):

- a. If both outputs were published within the publication period and both are cited, the panel may judge that these should be treated as a single output.
- b. If the earlier output was first published outside the publication period, the panel may take the view that not all of the work reported in the later output should be considered as having been issued within the publication period.
- c. In either of the above cases, the publication history should be appropriately noted in the 'other relevant details' section of RA2, explaining where necessary how far any work published earlier may have been revised to incorporate new findings.

36. In the case of confidential outputs, HEIs must have the prior permission of the person(s) or organisation(s) to whom the work is confidential for the output to be made available for assessment (see paragraph 39).

37. Panels' criteria for judging the quality of research outputs are intended to be sufficiently broad to enable them to recognise high quality research outcomes in all forms of research – whether basic, strategic, applied, practice-based or interdisciplinary. In addition to printed academic work, research outputs may include, but are not limited to: new materials, devices, images, products and buildings; intellectual property, whether in patents or other forms; performances, exhibits or events; work published in non-print media. Each sub-panel's criteria statement gives further guidance. In some cases, sub-panels may ask for brief supplementary material describing the research content and significance of certain works, particularly where research outputs do not exist in a conventional form.

38. Panels' criteria statements reflect an underpinning principle of the RAE that all forms of research output will be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Sub-panels will neither rank outputs, nor regard any particular form of output as of greater or lesser quality than another *per se*. Some panels may specify in their criteria that where they do not examine an output in detail, they may use, as one measure of quality, evidence that the output has already been reviewed or refereed by experts (who may include users of the research), and has been judged to embody research of high quality. No panel will use journal impact factors as a proxy measure for assessing quality.

39. So that panels can take full account of research that is of relevance to non-academic users, including industry and public bodies, the RAE team has made provision for confidential research outputs that are not publicly available to be submitted for assessment. These could include commercially sensitive research reports for companies, and reports for government departments or agencies which are not in the public domain. Where a confidential output is listed in a submission, the HEI will be responsible for securing permission from the sponsor, and making the output available on request for panels to examine.

Minimum proportions of work examined in detail

40. It is not expected that sub-panels will examine in detail all the research outputs cited. Each sub-panel must, however, examine a proportion which, in its opinion, is sufficient to make an informed judgement on the quality profile of the work presented. Sub-panels indicate in their criteria statements how they will decide what work to examine in detail, and their approach to assessing work that is not examined in detail.

41. Each sub-panel indicates the minimum proportion of research outputs which it will examine in detail. This is a collective responsibility, not a requirement for each sub-panel member. The phrase 'examine in detail' indicates reading in full, reading substantially from or sufficiently to make an informed assessment or, for outputs which by their nature cannot be read, an equivalent level of scrutiny. Sub-panel members are not required to

re-examine work which they have already examined in detail outside the RAE process as part of their normal academic work. They may include such work in the minimum proportion that they report as having examined in detail. Where 'virtually all' is the phrase used to describe the proportion to be examined in detail, this means 90 per cent or more.

42. Where a sub-panel does not examine a research output in detail, it may use information contained in the RA2 text box in assessing it. Therefore, it is essential that HEIs adhere strictly to the specification that some sub-panels have supplied in their criteria statement for the RA2 text box entitled 'other relevant details'.

43. For research outputs produced in languages other than English or Welsh, an abstract in English is required in the 'other relevant details' box describing the content and nature of the work. Panels will use this to identify appropriate specialist advisers to whom the work may be referred. The abstracts themselves will not form the basis for assessment. This requirement is waived for outputs submitted in any of UOAs 51 to 57 if the output is produced in any of the languages in the remit of that UOA.

Staffing issues

44. HEIs are invited to use form RA5b to describe, confidentially, any circumstances of individual staff that have significantly adversely affected their contribution to the submission. Main and sub-panels' statements describe how they will apply their criteria in assessing the contribution of such staff to submissions. HEIs will need to provide sufficient, explicit information in RA5b about how the individual's particular circumstances have adversely affected their contribution, to enable panels to apply their published criteria. HEIs need not describe circumstances (for example, a disability) that have had no adverse effect on an individual's capacity to undertake research, as reflected by their contribution to the submission. The circumstances that might be described in RA5b include but are not restricted to:

- a. Matters covered by legislation, including maternity leave.
- b. Part-time working.
- c. Engagement on long-term projects.
- d. Researchers in the early stages of their career – defined in general for RAE 2008 as those entering the academic profession in the census period, but HEIs should refer to panels' criteria statements for subject-specific guidance.
- e. Prolonged absence (more than six months consecutively in the assessment period) due to:
 - i. Secondment.
 - ii. Career break.
 - iii. Ill health or injury.

45. Panels will use the information supplied confidentially in RA5b in assessing submissions against their published criteria.

46. Academic and academic-related duties which might be expected for any staff member working in a UK HEI, including teaching and administration, are not regarded as

an explanation in themselves for listing fewer than four items (or the number prescribed by a particular sub-panel, if lower) of research output against an individual.

47. The work of Category C staff will not be given less weight purely because the basis of their relationship with the institution is different from that of Category A staff. However, panels may reasonably form a view as to the extent and value of the contribution made by individuals listed in Category C in the light of evidence available.

48. For each individual returned as Category C, HEIs will be required to provide information in RA5c demonstrating that their research is clearly and demonstrably focused in the department that returns them. Sub-panels' criteria statements give examples of the types of evidence to be supplied in each case. If a sub-panel is not convinced by the evidence provided for a Category C staff individual, they may take account of this in assessing that individual's contribution to the research of the department.

Interdisciplinary research: arrangements for cross-referral and specialist advice

49. In view of concerns that the assessment of interdisciplinary research has presented challenges in previous RAEs (see paragraph 12 of RAE 01/2004 'Initial decisions by the UK funding bodies'), panels will continue to have access to mechanisms for cross-referring parts of submissions. There will also be enhanced arrangements for using specialist advisers to ensure that interdisciplinary research is assessed by those competent to do so.

50. An HEI may request that parts of submissions it makes to one UOA are cross-referred to other relevant sub-panels. 'Parts of submissions' may range from all the research output listed against a submitted researcher, to all the research output and textual commentary relating to one or more research groups. Neither entire submissions nor single outputs may be cross-referred, although the sub-panel may refer single outputs to specialist advisers (see paragraph 52).

51. Sub-panels may also request cross-referral of parts of submissions on the same grounds, even where submitting HEIs have not done so. In all cases, the RAE Manager will consider the request, and take advice from the relevant main and sub-panel chairs. Where it is thought that cross-referral will enhance the assessment process, the relevant parts will be cross-referred to all the sub-panels concerned. Although advice will be sought only on the cross-referred parts, the entire submission will be made available to the receiving panel so that it can judge the cross-referred part in context. Advice from other sub-panels on cross-referred parts will be sought and given on the basis of the assessment criteria for the UOA to which the work was originally submitted. The sub-panel for the UOA to which the work was originally submitted will retain responsibility for the quality profile awarded.

52. Sub-panels may request that parts of submissions, including but not limited to interdisciplinary research, are referred to specialist advisers where they believe this will

enhance the assessment process. This includes where HEIs identify single or multiple research outputs as being outcomes of interdisciplinary research. The RAE team has a database of individuals who were nominated as specialist advisers through the process described in RAE 03/2004 'Units of assessment and recruitment of panel members'.

Assessment of applied research and practice-based research

53. As we indicated in RAE 01/2004 'Initial decisions by the UK funding bodies', we have striven to ensure that the panel membership comprises individuals who have experience in conducting, managing and assessing high quality research; as well as experts who are well equipped to participate in the assessment of applied and practice-based research from a practitioner, business or other user perspective.

54. Panels will treat on an equal footing excellence in research across the spectrum of applied, practice-based and basic/strategic research, wherever that research is conducted. Panel criteria encompass a range of indicators of excellence that are sufficiently broad to enable them to recognise the distinctive characteristics of applied and practice-based research, and to ensure that they apply their quality benchmarks equitably. The panel criteria statements detail how they will assess a broad range of research, including applied research relevant to users in industry, commerce and the public sector. Certain main panels could reasonably expect submissions to cite evidence of applied or practice-based research. The RAE team has asked these panels to define a brief typology and appropriate criteria by which the sub-panels can judge such research.

Assessment of pedagogic research

55. Submission of pedagogic research is encouraged where it meets the definition of research for the RAE at Annex C. The RAE team has consulted the Higher Education Academy to provide a more descriptive account of pedagogic research that HEIs may find helpful in preparing submissions (see paragraph 56).

56. Pedagogic research in HE will be assessed where it meets the 'Definition for Research for the RAE'. It is research which enhances theoretical and/or conceptual understanding of:

- teaching and learning processes in HE
- teacher and learner experiences in HE
- the environment or contexts in which teaching and learning in HE take place
- teaching and learning outcomes in HE
- the relationships between these processes, outcomes and contexts.

Reports of studies providing descriptive and anecdotal accounts of teaching developments and evaluations do not constitute pedagogic research. Pedagogic research is firmly situated in its relevant literature, and high quality pedagogic research makes a substantial contribution to that literature.

57. Each panel's criteria statement describes how it will ensure that pedagogic research will be assessed by experienced and expert reviewers. In some cases, panels have appointed as panel members one or more experts in HE pedagogy; in others,

research in HE pedagogy is intrinsic to the subjects covered, so the panel membership needs no specific expert. In some main panel areas, for example engineering (main panel G) and in the medical and related panels (main panels A and B), pedagogic research will be cross-referred to a specific member or members of one of the sub-panels. Other sub-panels expect to refer some pedagogic material to specialist advisers or to the education sub-panel for advice. We expect that panel members and specialist advisers involved in the assessment of pedagogic research will co-ordinate their activity to ensure consistency of approach in its treatment.

Dealing with declarations of interest and confidentiality

58. All main and sub-panel members, panel secretaries, and specialist advisers have declared any major interests they have in HEIs eligible to participate in the RAE. A 'major interest' is one that could be deemed material to them participating in assessing the submission from that HEI. They will not participate in assessing a submission from any HEI in which they have declared such an interest, and will be required to withdraw from any panel meeting during discussion of that submission. Major interests will be continually updated and a register of interests will be maintained by the RAE Manager.

59. The guidance to panels on declaring and dealing with major interests is at Annex D. How each panel will implement this guidance is described in its criteria statement. Minor interests (for example supervision of doctoral students registered at, or co-holding of grants held at, submitting institutions) will not be kept on the register, but panels will declare, minute and handle them on a case by case basis.

60. All main and sub-panel members, panel secretaries, and specialist advisers are bound by a duty of confidentiality governing information contained in RAE submissions and panel discussions. Details are at Annex E.

Section 3: Main and sub-panels' draft statements of criteria and working methods

61. We actively seek comments on the following aspects of all main panel statements:
 - a. The degree of consistency between the sub-panel criteria in the main panel's remit.
 - b. The main panel's methods for ensuring an appropriate degree of consistency between its sub-panels during the assessment phase of the exercise in 2008.

62. We actively seek comments on the following aspects of all sub-panel statements:
 - a. The coverage of the unit of assessment (UOA description) and the definition of its boundaries with other UOAs.
 - b. The relative weighting that the sub-panel proposes to apply to each of research outputs, environment, and esteem in building up a quality profile for each submission.
 - c. The sub-panel's proposed range of indicators of excellence for assessing each of research outputs, environment, and esteem.
 - d. The sub-panel's criteria for assessing the vitality and sustainability of research described in each submission, including its criteria for assessing the contribution of researchers at different stages in their career.
 - e. The sub-panel's criteria and methods for assessing applied research, where relevant to the UOA.
 - f. The sub-panel's criteria and methods for assessing practice-based research, where relevant to the UOA.

63. In each case, we invite respondents first to answer a 'closed' question; and second, if they wish, to provide more detailed comments explaining their position. We encourage respondents who express opposition to a specific panel proposal to provide a comment, outlining alternatives where possible.

64. In view of the common procedural framework we have adopted for identifying and handling interdisciplinary research (see paragraphs 49-52), and the intention of panels generally to apply no different criteria in assessing interdisciplinary research, we have not identified interdisciplinary research as a specific issue for this consultation.

65. Space is available at the end of each response form for comments on any other aspects of the statement.

66. We will provide panels with a quantitative summary and a complete set of qualitative responses to use in refining and finalising their statements.

Annex A

Quality profiles and definitions of quality levels

Table 1 Sample quality profile*

Unit of assessment A	FTE Category A staff submitted for assessment	Percentage of research activity in the submission judged to meet the standard for:				
		four star	three star	two star	one star	unclassified
University X	50	15	25	40	15	5
University Y	20	0	5	40	45	10

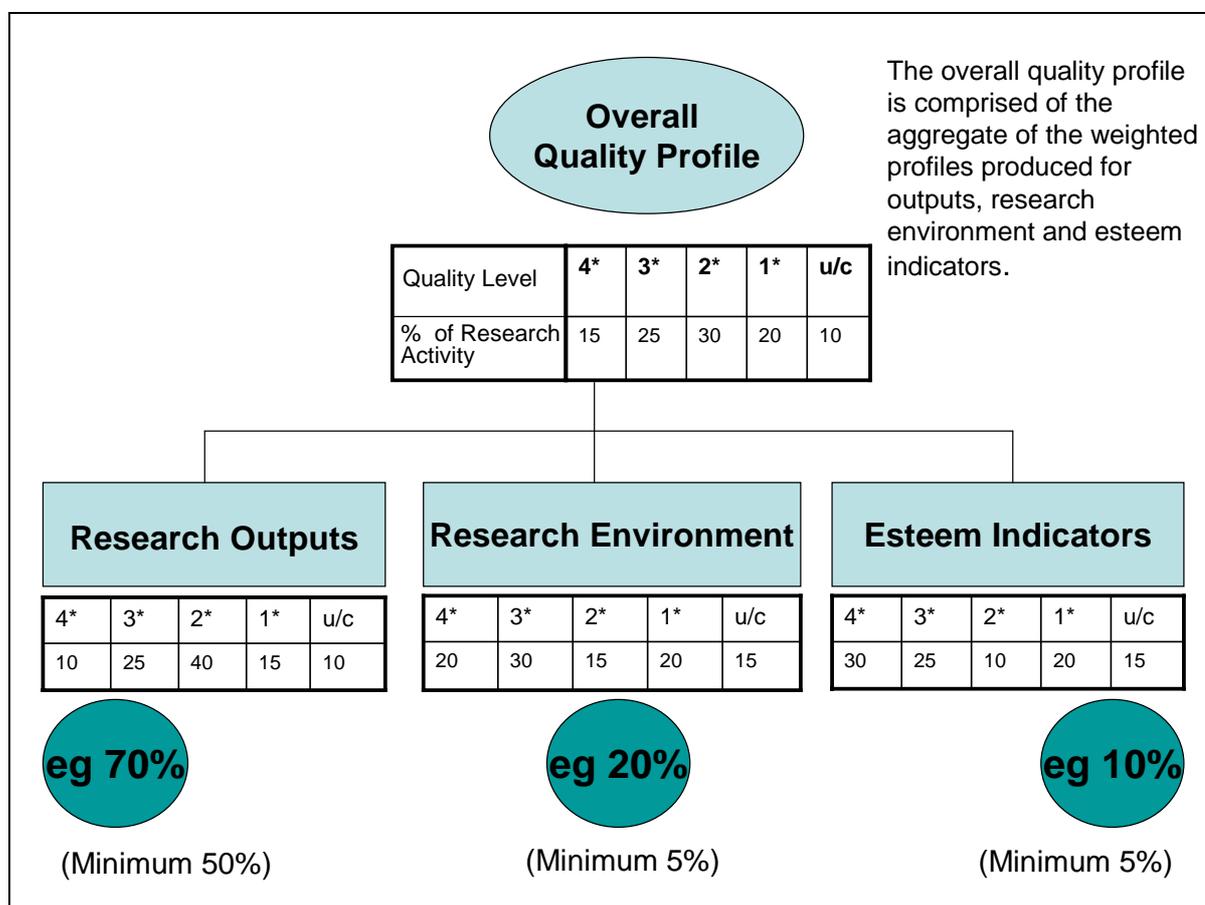
*The figures are for fictional universities. They do not indicate expected proportions.

Table 2 Definitions of quality levels

Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

1. Sub-panels will use their professional judgement to form a view about the quality profile of the research activity described in each submission, taking into account all the evidence presented. Their recommendations will be endorsed by the main panel in consultation with the sub-panel.
2. 'World-leading' quality denotes an absolute standard of quality in each unit of assessment.
3. 'World leading', 'internationally' and 'nationally' in this context refer to quality standards. They do not refer to the nature or geographical scope of particular subjects, nor to the locus of research nor its place of dissemination, for example, in the case of 'nationally', to work that is disseminated in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
4. The profile for a submission that contains no research which meets the one star threshold will be 100 per cent unclassified. A submission that contains no research (that is, no work that meets the definition of research for the RAE research) will not be awarded a quality profile.

Figure 1
Building a quality profile



The percentage weightings to the three elements are illustrative. Panels should allocate these. The minimum weighting for the research outputs profile is 50%. In this example the overall quality profile shows 15% of research activity is at 4* level. This is made up of 70% x 10 (research outputs), 20% x 20 (research environment) and 10% x 30 (esteem indicators), rounded as described in paragraphs 8-11 below.

Notes to Figure 1

1. Panels are required to consider all the components of the submission when reaching an overall quality profile. The components equate to the different data collected in the RAE, namely submitted staff information (RA1), research outputs (RA2), research student data (RA3), research income (RA4), supporting statement on research environment and esteem indicators (RA5a).
2. These different components will be assessed under three overarching elements: research outputs, research environment, and esteem indicators. Research outputs (RA2) will always be assessed as one of these three elements.
3. Main panels will decide whether the components of submissions other than research outputs (RA3, 4 and 5) will be assessed under the 'Research environment' or

'Esteem indicators' element. For example, a panel may consider that research income contributes to research environment, or that it is a measure of esteem in its subject area. Similarly research student numbers, research student completions and research studentships may either be part of the research environment or an indicator of esteem. Main panels will explain in their statements of criteria and working methods their reasoning for assigning components of the submission to a particular element.

4. Main panels will allocate a percentage weighting to each of three elements – research outputs, research environment and esteem indicators – which will indicate the extent to which the different elements will contribute to the overall quality profile of a submission. Given the primacy of expert review in the process, the weighting allocated to research outputs must be at least 50 per cent of the overall quality profile: some main panels may reasonably decide that research outputs should be weighted more highly. Main panels must allocate a significant weighting to each of the other aspects, environment and esteem, as they see fit, but since the quality profile will be defined in multiples of 5 per cent, the minimum weighting in either case will be 5 per cent. Main panels must define their reasoning in every case in their criteria statements.

5. Sub-panels will assess research outputs and develop a quality profile for this element. Sub-panels will also assess the evidence within the components of the submission assigned to the research environment and esteem indicators elements and draw up a quality profile for each.

6. Sub-panels will sum the three weighted quality profiles to develop an overall quality profile for the submission. They will use the rounding methodology described in paragraphs 8-10 of this annex to round the overall quality profile. Overall quality profiles will be published in steps of 5 per cent.

7. Sub-panels will finally confirm that, in their expert judgement, the overall profile is a fair reflection of the research activity in that submission, and that their assessment has taken account of all the different components of the submission.

Rounding

8. All sub-panels will adopt a cumulative rounding methodology to ensure that the overall quality profile for any submission will always round to 100 per cent and to avoid the unfair consequences that simple rounding can produce. They will first sum the weighted quality profiles for outputs, environment, and esteem and then adopt a cumulative rounding methodology.

Worked example

9. Using the example in Figure 1, first calculate the initial overall profile, that is, the sum of the weighted profiles for outputs, environment and esteem.

	4*	3*	2*	1*	u/c
Outputs	10	25	40	15	10
Environment	20	30	15	20	15
Esteem	30	25	10	20	15
Weighted					
70%	7	17.5	28	10.5	7
20%	4	6	3	4	3
10%	3	2.5	1	2	1.5
Initial profile	14	26	32	16.5	11.5

10. Cumulative rounding works in three stages:

a. The initial profile is:

	4*	3*	2*	1*	u/c
	14	26	32	16.5	11.5

b. Stage 1: Calculate the cumulative totals (for example the cumulative total at 3* or better is 26+14=40)

	4*	3* or better	2* or better	1* or better	u/c or better
	14	40	72	88.5	100

c. Stage 2: Round these to the nearest 5 per cent, (rounding up if the percentage ends in exactly 2.5 or 7.5)

	4*	3* or better	2* or better	1* or better	u/c or better
	15	40	70	90	100

d. Stage 3: Find the differences between successive cells to give the rounded profile. So, for example, the percentage allocated to 2* is the difference between the cumulative total at 2* or better, minus the cumulative total at 3* or better (70-40=30).

	4*	3*	2*	1*	u/c
	15	25	30	20	10

11. Cumulating totals the other way (rounding down if the percentage ends in exactly 2.5 or 7.5) gives exactly the same answer.

Annex B

Units of assessment and main panels

Main panel	UOA	UOA name
A	1	Cardiovascular Medicine
	2	Cancer Studies
	3	Infection and Immunology
	4	Other Hospital Based Clinical Subjects
	5	Other Laboratory Based Clinical Subjects
B	6	Epidemiology and Public Health
	7	Health Services Research
	8	Primary Care and Other Community Based Clinical Subjects
	9	Psychiatry, Neuroscience and Clinical Psychology
C	10	Dentistry
	11	Nursing and Midwifery
	12	Allied Health Professions and Studies
	13	Pharmacy
D	14	Biological Sciences
	15	Pre-clinical and Human Biological Sciences
	16	Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science
E	17	Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences
	18	Chemistry
	19	Physics
F	20	Pure Mathematics
	21	Applied Mathematics
	22	Statistics and Operational Research
	23	Computer Science and Informatics
G	24	Electrical and Electronic Engineering
	25	General Engineering and Mineral & Mining Engineering
	26	Chemical Engineering
	27	Civil Engineering
	28	Mechanical, Aeronautical and Manufacturing Engineering
	29	Metallurgy and Materials
H	30	Architecture and the Built Environment
	31	Town and Country Planning
	32	Geography and Environmental Studies
	33	Archaeology

Main panel	UOA	UOA name
I	34	Economics and Econometrics
	35	Accounting and Finance
	36	Business and Management Studies
	37	Library and Information Management
J	38	Law
	39	Politics and International Studies
	40	Social Work and Social Policy & Administration
	41	Sociology
	42	Anthropology
	43	Development Studies
K	44	Psychology
	45	Education
	46	Sports-Related Studies
L	47	American Studies and Anglophone Area Studies
	48	Middle Eastern and African Studies
	49	Asian Studies
	50	European Studies
M	51	Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages
	52	French
	53	German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages
	54	Italian
	55	Iberian and Latin American Languages
	56	Celtic Studies
	57	English Language and Literature
	58	Linguistics
N	59	Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
	60	Philosophy
	61	Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies
	62	History
O	63	Art and Design
	64	History of Art, Architecture and Design
	65	Drama, Dance and Performing Arts
	66	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies
	67	Music

Annex C

Definition of research for the RAE

(Changes in phrasing from the definition used for the 2001 RAE are in **bold**.)

'Research' for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, **and** to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship*; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and **routine** analysis of materials, components and processes **such as** for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.

* Scholarship for the RAE is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.

Annex D

Declaration of interest

Major interests

All panel chairs, members, secretaries, observers and specialist advisers are bound by the following arrangements for avoiding conflicts of interest.

1. All main panel chairs and members, sub-panel chairs and members, panel secretaries and assistant secretaries, observers and specialist advisers (hereafter collectively called panel members) are asked to make a declaration of their interests. For the purpose of the RAE, interests are defined as:
 - a. The institution(s) at which the individual is employed.
 - b. Any institution at which the individual has been employed since January 2001.
 - c. Any institution(s) at which the individual has been engaged in substantial teaching or research since the start of the assessment period (1 January 2001); this might include institutions at which the individual has the status of visiting lecturer/fellow/professor or similar.
 - d. Any institution(s) at which the individual's partner and/or immediate family member is employed.

Panel procedures

2. A complete list of the declared interests of panel members and others involved in the assessment will be prepared by the RAE team and made available, in confidence, to panels when they start their work.
3. Individuals will be asked to update the RAE team regularly on any additional interests. Complete lists of declared interests will be updated and circulated accordingly on an ad hoc basis.
4. As a matter of principle, individuals will withdraw from panel meetings when submissions are discussed from the HEIs in which they declare to have an interest. Each main and sub-panel will publish in its criteria statement its protocol for dealing with declared interests, in line with this principle.

Requests for information

5. Panel members are likely to receive numerous invitations to discuss issues concerned with RAE 2008. Although the RAE team seeks improved clarity and transparency during this exercise through the dissemination of information, we do not wish panel members to compromise their position by entering into discussions which could be perceived to give a particular individual or institution an unfair advantage.
6. It is therefore strongly recommended that panel members should not discuss issues concerning individual departmental or institutional submissions. However, they

may accept invitations to talk at meetings where a number of different institutions are represented, for example those arranged by a professional body or subject association.

7. If any member has concerns over a potential conflict of interests or the propriety of a proposed action s/he should discuss it with the RAE Manager.

8. Panel members are not expected to suspend normal relations with their colleagues and peers during the exercise. They should not feel in any way obliged, for example, to withdraw from external examining, or participation in appointment committees. They are, however, asked to exercise caution in dealings with individual departments, or with subject associations or similar bodies, where there is an actual or clearly inferrable connection with their panel membership.

Minor interests

9. The RAE team has also invited main and sub-panels to consider operating a policy whereby panel members declare minor interests on an *ad hoc* basis, so that they can be minuted in panel meetings and handled on a case by case basis. The following were offered as examples of minor interests and possible methods of dealing with them. They are illustrative and do not constitute an exhaustive or prescriptive list:

- a. Panel member supervises or co-supervises one or more doctoral students from a submitting institution. Panel member declares this for the panel to note.
- b. Panel member supervised a doctoral student who went on to become a research active staff member within a submission made to the panel. Panel member declares this and does not take lead/sole responsibility for assessing the published output linked to that individual.
- c. Panel member was supervised as doctoral student by a research active staff member within a submission made to the panel. Panel member declares this and does not take lead/sole responsibility for assessing the published output linked to that individual.
- d. Panel member is co-investigator or co-holder of a grant with the submitting institution. Panel member declares this and does not take lead/sole responsibility for assessing the published output linked to that individual.
- e. Panel member is on the editorial board of a journal series published by a submitting department or unit, or has co-organised a conference or conference series with a submitting department. Panel member declares this and does not take lead responsibility for assessing the research environment and esteem indicators element of that submission.
- f. Panel member has acted during the assessment period as a member of an appointment or promotions committee for a submitting department or unit, or has provided references for staff members returned in the submission. Panel member declares this for the panel to note.
- g. Panel member acts as an external examiner for research degrees for a submitting department or unit. Panel member declares this and does not take lead/sole responsibility for assessing the research environment and esteem indicators element of that submission

h. Panel member studied at a submitting department or unit before the assessment period. Panel member declares this and does not take lead/sole responsibility for assessing the research environment and esteem indicators element of that submission.

i. A member of the panel member's wider family studies or works at a submitting department or unit. Panel member declares this for the panel to note.

10. Panels might wish to invite a panel member who declares a number of minor interests in one institution to treat that institution as a major interest.

Annex E

Confidentiality arrangements

All panel chairs, members, secretaries, observers and specialist advisers are bound by the confidentiality arrangements described in the following letter.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

Research Assessment Exercise 2008: Confidentiality arrangements

Purpose

1. This letter sets out arrangements for ensuring that all information contained in RAE submissions made by institutions for the 2008 RAE is maintained and treated confidentially by panels[◇]. As for the 2001 RAE, apart from personal data and details of confidential outputs, information from submissions will be published on the internet following completion of the assessment: we expect to publish this early in 2009. The arrangements described below provide for maintaining the confidentiality of all submission information unless or until such time as it becomes freely available in the public domain.
2. The letter also deals specifically with the treatment by panels of any confidential research outputs that may be cited in submissions. Research outputs in the 2008 RAE are defined as publicly available, assessable outputs of research in whatever form. However, institutions may submit for assessment confidential outputs provided they mark them as 'confidential' in submissions and make them available to panels.
3. The letter also describes arrangements for ensuring the confidentiality of panels' discussions about submissions, or other information deduced from or generated as a result of submissions.
4. We have two objectives in placing confidentiality obligations on panel members. Firstly, subject only to any legal obligations on HEFCE to disclose further, we wish to ensure that the starred quality profile awarded to each submission and the brief feedback given in confidence to heads of institutions by the panel via the RAE team stand as the only public comment from panels and their constituent members on any individual submission. Secondly, we aim to discourage parties who are not involved in the assessment process from approaching or placing pressure on panel members to disclose information about the panel's discussion of particular submissions. In other words, maintenance of confidentiality is essential if panel members are not to be inhibited from

[◇] In this context, 'panels' refers both to main and sub-panels. The same arrangements for ensuring confidentiality will apply, so far as they are relevant, to chairs, members, observers and secretaries of main and sub-panels and to specialist advisers.

expressing their opinions freely in panel discussions, and therefore essential to the effective operation of the RAE as a peer review. In legal terms, a breach of confidentiality by a panel member may, in certain circumstances, constitute a breach of data protection legislation and/or a breach of a common law duty of confidentiality, may give rise to financial losses, or may infringe or impact upon intellectual property rights in research outputs.

5. The obligations set out below will subsist indefinitely.

Obligations on panel members

Information contained in RAE submissions

6. The higher education funding bodies, through the RAE team, collect a range of information from institutions in RAE submissions for the purpose of assessing the quality of research. In recognition of this purpose, you shall use any information which you receive in RAE submissions from institutions only for the purposes of carrying out your functions as a panel member.

7. You shall not make copies of such information except as is necessary to carry out your function as a panel member. You shall destroy, or return to the RAE Manager, originals and any copies you may make of such information, as soon as they are no longer needed for that function or on the request of the RAE Manager, whichever may be sooner. This provision applies equally to paper copies or those stored in electronic or other non-paper formats.

8. You shall not disclose the information received to any other person except your fellow panel members and panel observers and secretaries. You shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that other people cannot have access to the information, whether held in paper or electronic copy. In particular, it is important to remember that computer systems and specifically e-mail are not necessarily secure, and you agree to exercise appropriate caution when using them. Full guidance on the storage and transmission of RAE information will be included in the Guidance to Panels which will be provided to panel members and made publicly available in January 2005.

Confidential research outputs

9. Confidential research outputs will be indicated as such in submissions and will clearly be marked 'confidential'. You shall treat as confidential all such information, including the research outputs themselves and details of their sponsors or commissioning organisations. Even if you personally consider that the designation 'confidential' may be wrong, you agree to accept any designation of confidentiality which an institution has placed upon part or all of its submission. If you feel in a particular case that this inhibits you from carrying out your function as a panel member, you should raise the issue with the RAE Manager who will be able to provide or seek advice.

10. An institution's submission may contain material which is patented or patentable, which is subject to other intellectual property rights, which is commercially sensitive, or which the interests of the institution and/or its researchers require to be kept confidential or given a restricted circulation. Institutions make submissions to the RAE on the understanding that their position in these regards will not be prejudiced by the fact of submission. You shall respect and honour that understanding and act accordingly. You are in particular reminded of the danger of 'prior disclosure' in the case of potentially patentable material, and the paramount need therefore to respect the confidentiality of such material.

Discussion about submissions and information deduced from submissions

11. You agree that you shall restrict your discussion of submissions and of research groups described within submissions to panel meetings and to related dialogue between yourself, the RAE team, panel secretary and assistant secretary and members of the main and sub-panels with which you work. You shall not discuss with anyone who is not involved in the assessment process, as described above, either the submission or the assessment of an identifiable institution or group of institutions whose individual members could be identified, still less the work of individual researchers named in submissions, even if ostensibly anonymised. You may, of course, comment on the process and conduct of the 2008 RAE in general terms. If you are at all unsure as to what is covered by 'in general terms' you should seek advice from the RAE Manager.

12. Nothing in this agreement prevents you from disclosing information after it becomes freely available in the public domain (without the breach of any obligation of confidentiality), or which you are required by law to disclose, or which was already known to you and not subject to confidentiality obligations before being disclosed to you in the context of the RAE. It would be prudent, however, to contact the RAE Manager in advance to discuss any possible disclosure. Some information provided to or generated by RAE panels may be disclosable under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, if you receive any request for information which falls or may fall under that Act you must pass it to the RAE Manager for consideration and action, and you should not respond to such requests yourself. If you are in any doubt with regard to any issue of confidentiality, either in general terms or in relation to a particular piece of information, you should seek advice from the RAE Manager or following completion of the RAE, the Director (Research and Knowledge Transfer) at HEFCE.

13. Acceptance of these confidentiality obligations is a condition of your appointment as a panel member. The four higher education funding bodies reserve the right to amend the membership of RAE panels in the event of any breach of the confidentiality obligations on panel chairs and members.