

rae2008

Research Assessment Exercise

Units of assessment and recruitment of panel members

July 2004

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Higher Education Funding Council for England
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland

RAE2008: Units of assessment and recruitment of panel members

To	Heads of publicly-funded higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, subject associations and related stakeholder organisations
Of interest to those responsible for	Research
Reference	RAE 03/2004
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Executive summary

Purpose and key points

1. This document sets out the funding bodies' decisions in relation to the following elements of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE2008):
 - the configuration of units of assessment (UoAs) and the grouping of sub-panels under main panels
 - how the two-tiered panel structure to be introduced for 2008 will work, with a summary of the roles and responsibilities of main and sub-panels in assessing submissions
 - the procedures for recruiting members of the main panels and sub-panels, including an invitation to nominate.
2. It also describes how, in developing more detailed rules and procedures for RAE2008 over the coming months, the funding bodies propose to address some

important issues that were raised in the recent consultation on the configuration of UoAs and assessment panels (RAE 02/2004).

Action required

3. Nominations for members of RAE2008 assessment panels are now invited. Completed nomination forms should be sent by e-mail to the RAE team at info@rae.ac.uk by **15 September 2004**.

Introduction and scope

4. The primary purpose of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is to produce robust expert assessments of the quality of research undertaken across the entire spectrum of academic activity in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom. These assessments will be used by the HE funding bodies in allocating their grant to HEIs. RAE2008 will be the sixth such exercise. Following a full review and extensive consultations, the funding bodies have decided to retain the broad framework and approach from previous exercises with some significant reforms.

5. The funding bodies' use of the outcomes of the RAE in allocating funding reflects our shared commitment to funding research selectively, taking into account robust assessments of research excellence. We expect that this approach will encourage HEIs to focus their efforts on developing and supporting research of the highest quality. However, it is not our intention that the RAE should otherwise influence HEIs' decisions on what types of research or which researchers to support, in what subject areas, or on how their research should be organised, managed and conducted. We intend that the exercise should recognise and give equal weight to research excellence in all the forms and contexts in which it may be found. Through consultation and dialogue with stakeholders in the lead-up to the assessment period, we shall work to develop arrangements for assessment in line with these principles.

6. The body of this document is divided into three sections. In Section 1 we set out and explain our decisions on:

- the subject coverage of the UoAs for the 2008 exercise
- how the sub-panels responsible for assessing research submitted within each of these units are to be grouped into main panels. The full list of UoAs for 2008, showing the grouping of sub-panels, is at Annex A.

7. Section 2 gives additional information on the roles and responsibilities of the main and sub-panels and on how we envisage them working together.

8. Section 3 sets out the procedures for appointing members of the main and sub-panels. We are inviting a large number of subject associations, learned societies and other interested bodies, including users of research, to nominate possible members of the sub-panels and main panels. A list of these bodies is on the RAE web-site (www.rae.ac.uk). The purpose of specifically inviting them to nominate is to ensure that they are aware of the call for nominations and have easy access to the nomination form. However, nominations are equally welcome from bodies not on the list that have a particular interest in the conduct and application of academic research within the UK. We are not inviting nominations from individuals nor from HEIs.

9. The nomination form is reproduced for information at Annex B and is available online at www.rae.ac.uk/nominations. All nominations should be submitted by e-mail to the RAE team at info@rae.ac.uk.

Over-arching issues

10. The following paragraphs clarify the funding bodies' approach to some broader issues raised during the consultations on panel configuration.

Applied and practice-based research

11. We remain committed to the principle that the RAE should produce sound and well respected judgements of excellence for the full range of research undertaken in HE across the UK, including applied and practice-based research. In preparing for the next round of assessments in 2008 we propose to tackle this in several ways.

12. First, we shall issue guidance to all panels making it clear that we expect them to recognise excellence in applied research on an equal footing with excellence in basic research. Wherever necessary and possible, they should do so by identifying appropriate criteria for excellence in relation to such work and the specific evidence to be considered in applying these criteria. We expect that the criteria and evidence sets, which may vary between disciplines, will be identified and developed with a strong input from appropriately qualified panel members and in consultation with key stakeholders.

13. We are currently working with stakeholder groups in four disciplines (engineering, health, education, and art and design) to develop fuller generic guidance on this point, for inclusion in the guidance on assessment that the RAE team will issue to panels around the end of 2004.

14. Second, we shall make every effort to ensure that as many sub-panels as possible include people who are well equipped to participate in the assessment of applied and practice-based research from a practitioner or user perspective. To work properly, this means identifying and recruiting panel members who have experience both in conducting research and in commissioning and applying it at a senior level. This would include where appropriate the conduct and application of research linked to professional practice. Experience has shown that it can be difficult to identify such people and to persuade them to give up the time required to make an effective input to the assessment process. We would particularly welcome the collaboration of relevant stakeholder groups and individual employers in making this possible.

Research in HE pedagogy

15. We have discussed with a number of practitioners the challenges posed by the assessment of research in the pedagogy of HE, including in the pedagogy of specific disciplines. We would not wish to discourage institutions from submitting work in these fields that meets the standards of excellence applied across the exercise. It will be up to each institution to decide whether such work should be submitted to the education sub-panel or to discipline panels. The best route may well depend upon the discipline concerned. We realise that discipline sub-panels of the size we propose are unlikely to have members with specific research expertise in relation to pedagogy. We will therefore ask panel and sub-panel chairs to pay particular attention to this field in developing their proposals for additional specialist advice (see paragraph 32, below).

Interdisciplinary research

16. The assessment of interdisciplinary research – which we take to encompass work falling between traditional disciplinary boundaries, undertaken by people with personal expertise across two or more disciplines, or by interdisciplinary teams – presents a particular and growing challenge.

17. We have concluded that for 2008 the majority of research will be best assessed within a discipline-based framework. With an assessment system under which 1-2 per cent of the research community assess the work of the rest, it is not realistic to set up dedicated assessment panels for all themes or emerging disciplines.

18. We propose to address interdisciplinary research in a number of ways, but primarily through improved arrangements for the sub-panels to take additional specialist advice, as set out at the end of Section 2 below. We believe that this will ensure, wherever a sub-panel has to consider significant bodies of interdisciplinary research, that such research is assessed taking account of advice from people who fully understand it. The two-tier panel structure will be particularly helpful where research is submitted that draws on the approaches and methods of related disciplines within the same main panel field. We shall also ask the RAE team to emphasise in the guidance to panels that their criteria for assessment should provide for the full range of interdisciplinary work that they can foresee being submitted.

Joint submissions

19. The funding bodies recognise the importance of supporting and encouraging collaborative research between different departments or institutions. We are firmly committed to ensuring that RAE2008 does not discriminate against joint submissions. As in previous exercises, joint submissions by two or more institutions will be welcomed wherever a significant body of research is being undertaken in collaboration and in the context of a shared research culture and shared research plans.

20. Guidance to the panels will state clearly that in assessing joint submissions they should give due consideration to the context, and ensure that full weight is given to any evidence of benefits from the collaboration in terms of research quality. We will again allow an HEI participating in a joint submission to a particular UoA also to make an individual submission to that UoA.

Timetable

21. A revised provisional timetable for the exercise is at Annex C. This shows the anticipated timing of further announcements on the assessment process and on the structure and content of submissions.

Section 1: Configuration of panels and units of assessment

UoAs and main panel groupings

22. RAE 01/2004 announced the funding bodies' decision to adopt a two-tier structure for the assessment panels for 2008, with some 15 main panels endorsing quality profiles based on the detailed assessment work undertaken by some 70 sub-panels, each considering submissions within a single UoA. RAE 02/2004 invited comments on a proposed division of research activity between 66 subject panels grouped under 15 main panels. It was made clear that the proposals were designed to promote debate, and that any suggested change that had the support of the research community and could be accommodated within our chosen overall structure would be taken seriously.

23. In responses to the consultation, strong arguments were advanced for modifications to the proposed configuration affecting both the divisions between UoAs and their grouping within main panels. We have modified our proposals in a number of cases where compelling arguments were advanced for changes that would be workable within our structure and where there was a reasonable consensus. The changes affect both the scope and grouping of a number of UoAs: they include significant changes in medicine, education and the social sciences.

24. Some respondents made more radical proposals. These included the creation of new UoAs pulling together closely related work that might otherwise be spread across several units and more than one main panel; and innovative groupings of our proposed UoAs to reflect emerging areas of work and shared research approaches running across our proposed main panel boundaries. While sympathetic in principle to any approach that would reinforce new patterns of sharing and collaboration, we had to consider these proposals against the over-arching aims of identifying a suitable UoA 'home' for all research that might be submitted – or as nearly all as possible – and of fitting these UoAs into sensible and workable main panel groupings. Within this framework we have made changes where we could, notably in our revised approach to defining and grouping UoAs in medical subjects.

25. The list of UoAs and the grouping of sub-panels under main panels to be adopted for RAE2008 is set out at Annex A. We envisage that when the panels' criteria for assessment are published during 2005 these will give further guidance on the precise disciplinary coverage of each UoA and the boundaries between them.

26. A team of panel secretaries will be recruited in the coming months, to service main and sub-panels.

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities of assessment panels and specialist advisers

The two-tiered panel structure

27. Submissions to RAE2008 will be made by institutions in one or more of the 67 units of assessment listed in Annex A. Sixty-seven sub-panels will conduct the detailed assessment of submissions and provide provisional quality profiles to main panels for their endorsement. The research described in the submissions will be assessed according to criteria for each UoA developed collaboratively by the main panel and sub-panel.

Main panels

28. Each main panel will work with a manageable, broadly cognate group of no fewer than three sub-panels. The main panels are not designed specifically to cover all work within a single recognised and discrete disciplinary grouping, but UoAs which share broadly similar research approaches have been grouped together as far as possible.

Role of a main panel

- To give leadership and guidance to a group of sub-panels on their approach to the assessment process, including approving their criteria for assessment and working methods.
- To work with the sub-panels during the assessment period to ensure consistent application across the exercise of the overall quality standards, common assessment procedures, and equal opportunities guidance.
- To sign off quality profiles for all submissions to the sub-panels, based upon the work and advice of the sub-panels.
- To give advice as requested by the RAE team and funding bodies on aspects of the assessment process, including requests for additional specialist advice.
- To produce a final report on the state of research in the disciplines covered by the sub-panels.

29. In signing off the quality profiles assigned to submissions, the main panels will confirm that in their view each of their sub-panels has adopted reasonable and consistent subject-specific approaches to the assessment of all forms of research, including basic, applied, practice-based and interdisciplinary research; and that each sub-panel has interpreted the quality thresholds for the four starred levels of excellence across the exercise in a consistent manner. Main panel chairs will, on occasion, act on behalf of their panel or work as a group advising the RAE team.

Sub-panels

30. Cross-referrals of submissions or cited works between sub-panels may be made both within and across main panel boundaries. Such cross-referrals, and the use of additional specialist advice, will be authorised by the RAE manager having regard to the advice of the main panel.

Role of a sub-panel

- To produce draft criteria for assessment and working methods for approval by the main panel.
- Working within the agreed criteria and in collaboration with the main panel, to produce draft quality profiles (to be signed off by the main panel) and associated brief feedback for all submissions made to them.
- To advise the main panel and RAE team on cross-referrals to other sub-panels of submissions or cited research, and on the need for additional specialist advice.

31. We intend that the working relationship between a main panel and its sub-panels should be close and collaborative, with each sub-panel developing its criteria for assessment and later its advice on the quality profiles through an iterative process in dialogue with the main panel. In no case should a main panel receive final advice from a sub-panel without any discussion between them during its development. Main and sub-panel meetings will be timed to make such discussion possible. The precise nature and conduct of the relationship in each case will of course emerge once the panel members have started work.

Specialist advisers

32. As in previous exercises, additional specialist advisers will be available to assist with the detailed assessment of submissions by the sub-panels. We envisage that they will be appointed where a sub-panel has to assess significant work in a sub-disciplinary area that either the members collectively do not feel qualified to cover (including the assessment of research in the pedagogy of the discipline); or which crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries in such a way that they judge it would be best assessed by someone with interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary expertise that they do not have.

33. For the assessment phase of the 2008 exercise, specialist advisers will be recruited centrally by the RAE team on the advice of chairs of sub-panels and main panels, drawing on proposals made by the bodies who nominate panel members. The specialist advisers as a group will be actively managed by the RAE team to ensure that the sub-panels can receive the additional advice they need, and that this advice is fully consonant with both the criteria of individual sub-panels and the standards and procedures of the exercise overall.

34. Specialist advisers' working methods will be finalised once the working methods for the sub-panels have been announced. But we do envisage that they will include creating informal groupings with other advisers and/or sub-panel members. Such groupings would not have the formal status of the 'sub-panels' that were established in the 1996

and 2001 exercises, but would operate with the same level of secretariat support as the 2008 sub-panels and in close collaboration with members of the sub-panel that they are to advise. Their purpose is to help secure a consistent approach between all the specialist advisers assisting a particular sub-panel, and to manage the distribution and co-ordination of work where there is a significant body of research in a particular sub-disciplinary field requiring the input of several people.

Section 3: Selection and duties of panel members

35. We aim to announce the membership of the assessment panels towards the end of 2004.

Main panel composition and recruitment

36. Advertisements will appear shortly in the specialist press inviting applications for appointment as main panel chairs. We envisage that these will be people with a significant personal record in research at the highest level; with previous experience in quality assessment, in research management or leadership across a broad disciplinary field, and in leading groups of their peers to shared decisions.

37. Main panels will be made up of:

- The chair
- The chairs of each of the sub-panels in the main panel grouping
- One or two international assessors
- Where possible and appropriate, other people with specific expertise and observers.

Additional members

38. We would welcome the nomination of international assessors as additional members of main panels. International nominees should be practising researchers with a very high level of knowledge of and expertise in research across a broad discipline area internationally, including substantial experience in at least one country outside the UK. They should be people whose judgement is likely to command the respect of the HE community across their broad disciplinary field.

39. We would also welcome nominations for people to be additional members of the main panels on the basis of their experience in using and commissioning research conducted in higher education while working at a senior level in business or the public sector.

40. We may invite observers from key stakeholder groups to attend main panel meetings. Observers may provide informal advice to panels but will not share their responsibility for determining quality profiles. The funding bodies' chief executives will decide which groups will be invited to send an observer.

Sub-panel composition and recruitment

41. Sub-panels will be made up of:

- the chair (who will also serve as a member of a main panel)
- a group of assessors, not normally exceeding 15 members
- in most cases one or more observers (nominated by invited stakeholder bodies and not participating directly in the assessment process).

42. Sub-panel chairs will be appointed by the funding bodies' chief executives, after considering nominations received and taking advice from main panel chairs and from those who served as panel members in 2001.

43. Sub-panel members will be appointed by the chief executives after taking advice from the sub-panel chair in each case. Sub-panel members will mainly be practising researchers of suitable personal standing and expertise. As in past exercises, we hope that continuity will be assured by the re-employment of panel members who served in previous RAEs. Wherever possible, at least a third of the members of each sub-panel should have previous RAE panel experience. In deciding sub-panel membership the chief executives will have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the overall body of members reflects the diversity of the research community, including in terms of age, gender, ethnic origin, scope and focus of their home institution, and geographical location.

Criteria for appointing sub-panel members

- Sub-panel members will all be appointed on the basis of their personal experience and expertise, not as representatives of any group or interest. The great majority will be practising researchers.
- The membership of each sub-panel should command the respect of the relevant research community.
- The sub-panel's collective expertise should ensure good coverage of the principal fields of work within the UoA.
- Where possible and appropriate, sub-panels should include individuals with significant experience of a broad research environment, including experience of commissioning and using research in business or the public sector, of conducting research linked to practice, or of overseas research organisations.
- The diversity of the research community in the relevant field should be reflected in the sub-panel membership.

44. Further details of the panel members' role and remuneration will be published on the RAE web-site shortly. This will include the approximate number of days to be worked for each role, a schedule of fees, and a provisional timetable for the first round of panel meetings.

Withdrawal of nomination

45. To ensure the publication of main and sub-panel membership in winter 2004, it is highly desirable that as many as possible of those nominated as panel or sub-panel members have confirmed that they are willing and able to serve. For this reason, we ask nominating bodies to inform nominees that their names have been put forward, and to ensure that they are aware of the provisional timetable of main and sub-panel meetings published on the RAE web-site.

46. Where nominees know in advance that they will not be available to sit on RAE panels in 2005 or 2007-08 we strongly urge them to contact the RAE team and ask to be withdrawn from consideration. E-mails to this effect should be sent to the RAE team at info@rae.ac.uk.

Selection procedure

47. We invite nominations for the following roles:

- international representative (main panel)
- additional main panel member
- sub-panel chair
- sub-panel member
- research user/practitioner (sub-panel)
- specialist adviser.

48. Completed nomination forms (Annex B) should be e-mailed to the RAE team at info@rae.ac.uk by 15 September 2004.

49. Final decisions on the selection of all panel members will be made jointly by the funding bodies' chief executives. Panel membership will be announced towards the end of 2004.

Annex A

RAE2008 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 B

RAE 2008 Nomination form

An electronic version of this form can be downloaded from the RAE website, www.rae.ac.uk, with this document under Publications. Completed forms (of no more than two A4 pages each) should be submitted by e-mail to the RAE team at info@rae.ac.uk, by **15 September 2004**. A single form should be used for each person nominated.

Name of nominating body	Contact name
Postal address	Telephone number E-mail address
Full name and title of nominee	Has this person agreed to be nominated? (yes) (no)
E-mail address of nominee	Main panel, sub-panel or specialist field for which nominated
Name of institution, or name and address of company at which nominee can be contacted	Role for which nominated (select one) <i>International representative (main panel)</i> <i>Additional main panel member</i> <i>Sub-panel chair</i> <i>Sub-panel member</i> <i>Research user/practitioner (sub-panel)</i> <i>Specialist adviser</i>
Please summarise the reasons for this nomination addressing each of the following headings: 1. <u>Area(s) of research expertise</u> 2. <u>Current role and other recent posts of relevance</u> 3. <u>Major esteem indicators (e.g. major grants/prizes awarded, editorial posts, chairmanship of subject bodies)</u> 4. <u>Relevant experience of research management and quality assessment</u> 5. <u>Relevant experience of using and commissioning research or as a practitioner (where applicable)</u>	

Annex C

Provisional timetable to 2008

15 September 2004	Deadline for nominations for sub-panel members
September 2004	Main panel chairs appointed
November/December 2004	Panel membership announced
November/December 2004	Guidance for panels issued
February 2005	First round of panel meetings begins
June 2005	Guidance on submissions issued
August 2005	Draft criteria and working methods of main panels and sub-panels issued for consultation
November/December 2005	Final criteria and working methods of main panels and sub-panels issued
31 July 2007	End of assessment period (and cut-off point for publication of cited outputs)
31 October 2007	Census date
30 November 2007	Closing date for submissions
December 2008	Results published