

UoA 27 Chemical Engineering: Overview

The Panel carried out its assessment work in line with its published Criteria and Working Methods (*RAE 5/99*). The Panel examined at least 10% of the cited outputs from each submission, across the range of output media.

The Panel considered 17 submissions, comprising 293.5 FTE Category A/A* staff. This compares to 21 submissions in 1996, comprising 333.1 FTE Category A staff. Institutions had demonstrated greater selectivity in their decision to submit to the UoA in 2001; and a small number of institutions had been more selective in the number of staff returned. The Panel noted that some chemical engineering research activity had been submitted to Unit of Assessment 26, General Engineering. The General Engineering Panel had sought cross-referral advice from the Chemical Engineering Panel on a number of submissions made to General Engineering.

The Panel identified the following general issues in respect of submissions made to the Unit of Assessment:

1. Expansion of research in the discipline within the last few years

Overall, the submissions showed evidence of expansion in the range of research in the subject over the RAE assessment period. The expansion in interdisciplinary areas of research was particularly positive.

2. Improvement in the quality of research being undertaken

The Panel noted the improvement in the quality of chemical engineering research submitted to this UoA. As a result of this increased quality, and of greater selectivity, 276 FTE Category A/A* staff were in departments rated 4, 5 or 5*; compared to 165.2 Category A staff in 1996. With the number of active researchers above 4, the UK was clearly a world leading centre (in the areas of choice).

3. Development of more focused research strategies by departments, targeted at specific areas

The higher rated departments had clear strategies for focusing on chosen areas of excellence, and developing their researchers. To ensure growth and strength in the future, it was important that departments did not try to focus on too many research areas with limited resources.

4. Age profile of researchers within the discipline

Overall in the submissions, the Panel saw evidence of good, young researchers developing in the discipline, which was a positive sign for the future strength of chemical engineering research.