

# rae2008

Research Assessment Exercise

## Guidance to panels

**January 2005**

*Ref RAE 01/2005*



## RAE 2008

### Guidance to panels

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<b>To</b>	Main panel chairs and members; sub-panel chairs and members  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
<b>Of interest to those responsible for</b>	Research assessment, Research policy, Planning
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## **Executive summary**

### **Purpose**

1. This document guides and instructs the main panels and sub-panels of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) on developing their assessment criteria and working methods for RAE 2008 and on their assessment of submissions. It also provides general information to higher education institutions on RAE 2008, including on criteria setting and assessment processes.

### **Key points**

2. We will publish in 2005 two documents that will comprise the main guidance to institutions in preparing their RAE 2008 submissions: 'Guidance on submissions' in the summer, and 'Panel statements of criteria and working methods' by the end of the year. A summary of the RAE 2008 process is at paragraphs 26 and 27. The timetable for RAE 2008 is at Annex E.

3. RAE 2008 is underpinned by a number of important principles. These are described in paragraphs 14-25, and include:

- a. Recognising the primacy of expert review as upheld in consultations following Sir Gareth Roberts' Research Assessment review. Expert panels will use their professional judgement to assess RAE submissions, supported by a range of quantitative indicators, as appropriate. International panel members will assist this expert review by validating the standing of research considered to be of the highest quality worldwide.
- b. Developing an assessment process which operates neutrally without distorting the activity that it measures and neither encourages nor discourages any particular type of activity or behaviour other than providing a stimulus to the improvement of research quality overall.
- c. Ensuring that appropriate measures of excellence are developed which are sufficiently wide as to capture all types of research, including practice-based research, applied

research, basic/strategic research, interdisciplinary research. Where possible users and commissioners of research will be involved in the assessment process to provide an external perspective on the range of research under consideration.

- d. Assessing the sustainability and vitality of the research described in each submission, including the contributions to research excellence of less experienced researchers alongside more experienced colleagues.
- e. Maximising efficiency in terms of the cost expended on participating in and running the exercise being proportionate to the potential returns.

### **Action required**

4. This document is for information and guidance to main panel members and sub-panel members of RAE 2008. No action is required by higher education institutions.

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## Introduction

5. This document guides and instructs RAE 2008 panels on developing their assessment criteria and working methods for the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise and on their assessment of submissions. In this document, 'panels' is used to mean both main panels and sub-panels. Where guidance is directed exclusively to main panels or exclusively to sub-panels, we identify it as such.

6. This document also provides information to UK higher education institutions (HEIs) on criteria setting and assessment processes. We will publish in 2005 two further documents that will comprise the main guidance to institutions in preparing their submissions: 'Guidance on submissions', and 'Panel statements of criteria and working methods'.

7. The document contains the following sections:

a. **Section 1** Overview

- i. Purpose of RAE 2008
- ii. General principles of RAE 2008
- iii. Summary of process
- iv. Timing and publication of results
- v. Supplementary guidance to panels

b. **Section 2** Guidance to main panels

- i. Developing working methods and assisting sub-panels in developing criteria
- ii. Ensuring sub-panels' compliance with the guiding principles of RAE 2008
- iii. Interdisciplinary research
- iv. Guiding sub-panels in assessing submissions; deciding quality profiles and ensuring consistency across sub-panels

c. **Section 3** Guidance to sub-panels

- i. Procedural matters
- ii. UOA descriptors and boundaries
- iii. Components of submissions
- iv. Working methods: assessing submissions

- v. Arrangements for assessing joint submissions; cross-referrals and interdisciplinary research

- vi. Data analyses

d. **Section 4** Questions to guide development of working methods

e. **Annexes**

- i. Annex A Roles and responsibilities of panels
- ii. Annex B Definition of research for the RAE
- iii. Annex C Content of submissions
- iv. Annex D Quality profiles and definitions of quality levels
- v. Annex E Timetable for RAE 2008
- vi. Annex F Glossary of terms
- vii. Annex G Confidentiality arrangements; declarations of interest; storage and transmission of information
- viii. Annex H Data analyses
- ix. Annex I List of abbreviations

## Section 1: Overview

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8. The RAE is conducted jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland. The RAE is managed by the RAE team, based at HEFCE, on behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies.

### Purpose

9. The primary purpose of RAE 2008, the fourth such national exercise since 1992, is to produce quality profiles (see Annex D) for each submission of research activity made by institutions. The quality profiles will be used by the four funding bodies in determining their grant for research to the institutions which they fund with effect from 2009-10. Any UK HEI that is eligible to receive research funding from one of these funding bodies is eligible to participate. A timetable for the 2008 RAE is at Annex E.

10. Since the focus of the exercise is on research excellence, the RAE serves also to act as a general stimulus for continuous improvement in the quality of research undertaken and disseminated by UK HEIs, and as a quality assurance mechanism. It provides assurance to governments that good returns are being achieved on their investments in the national research base through the funding bodies.

11. The definition of research for RAE 2008 is virtually the same as that used in RAE 2001 (see Annex B): we have made minor amendments to the phrasing of the definition that do not affect meaning. We are content that this definition, when taken with panels' elaborations on their methods for recognising and assessing all forms of research against appropriate criteria of excellence, will cover the full range of research activity and outputs that submissions might describe.

12. As with previous RAEs, the assessment process is based on expert review: panels will use their professional judgement to form a view about the quality profile of the research described in each submission, taking into account all the evidence presented. Annex A describes the roles of

the members of panels and others involved in the assessment process. A summary of the evidence to be presented in submissions is at Annex C. A detailed document, 'Guidance on submissions' will be published in summer 2005. It will specify the content of each submission and guide institutions on policy and practical matters in preparing submissions.

13. Results from RAE 2008 will be defined in terms of a quality profile for each submission. Details of the quality profiles and descriptors of the quality levels are at Annex D. We have consulted main panel chairs in defining the descriptors for the quality levels.

### General principles of RAE 2008

14. The guidance which follows provides a common framework and parameters within which all panels will exercise the collective professional judgements of their members. Framed in the context of the general principles governing RAE 2008, the guidance ranges from mandatory instructions for panels on certain core matters to suggestions on approaches to other issues. It also recognises the legislative context on issues of equality of opportunity.

15. **Equity.** A guiding principle of RAE 2008 is that all types of research and all forms of research output shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Panels are instructed to adopt assessment processes and criteria that enable them to recognise and treat on an equal footing excellence in research across the spectrum of applied, practice-based and basic/strategic research, wherever that research is conducted.

16. **Diversity.** Submissions to RAE 2008 will reflect the diversity of excellent research conducted across the UK higher education sector. We are developing processes for the 2008 RAE that are sufficiently flexible to encourage that diversity. Accordingly, panels are instructed to define appropriate criteria for identifying excellence in different forms of research endeavour, while attaching no greater weight to one form over another; and to make provision to recognise the diversity of evidence for excellent research.

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17. **Equality.** We will encourage HEIs to submit the work of all their excellent researchers, including those whose volume of research output has been limited for reasons covered by equal opportunities guidelines. To comply with equal opportunities monitoring legislation, we will require HEIs to confirm that they have developed, adopted and documented an appropriate internal code of practice in preparing submissions and selecting staff for inclusion in RAE submissions. We may require institutions to submit their code of practice for audit; hence institutions will need to ensure that decisions documented through this code of practice are consistent with relevant parts of their annual HESA returns. These matters will be addressed further in the 'Guidance on submissions' document. For their part, panels will be briefed on all current and pending equal opportunities legislation that will affect RAE 2008. (See RAE 02/2005.)

18. **Expert review** is central to the RAE. Widespread confidence in discipline-based expert review founded upon academic judgements was upheld in consultations following Sir Gareth Roberts' Research Assessment review (RA review). To maintain this confidence, we have appointed panels of experts who are currently or have recently been active in high quality research. While these experts will draw on appropriate quantitative indicators to support their professional assessment of RAE submissions, expert review remains paramount.

19. **Clarity.** We aim to make all written documents and statements about the RAE clear and consistent. This principle will guide both the preparation of formal written documents (such as the forthcoming 'Guidance on submissions') and advice and interpretation provided by the RAE team. Similarly it will be a key element for panels in preparing statements of criteria and working methods.

20. **Consistency.** Assessments made in the RAE should be consistent across cognate areas. Following consultation on proposals for the conduct of RAE 2008, we have grouped under the leadership of each main panel a group of broadly cognate sub-panels for units of assessment

(UOAs) that share broadly similar research approaches. Main panels will work with sub-panels to define and agree criteria and working methods that are appropriate to the unit of assessment and provide for consistent approaches. Crucially, main panels will ensure consistent application of the quality standards in the quality profiles awarded to submissions.

21. **Continuity.** The RAE has developed through an evolutionary process, building on and learning from previous RAEs. With every successive exercise a balance has to be struck between continuity and development. Enhancements to RAE 2008 follow from extensive review and consultation, and have been adopted where it is judged they can bring demonstrable improvements which outweigh the cost of implementing them.

22. **Credibility.** As was demonstrated through responses to the RA review and the funding bodies' subsequent consultation on the conduct of the RAE, the fundamental methodology, format and processes employed in the exercise – that is, discipline-based expert review founded upon academic judgements – are credible to those being assessed. We will maintain this credibility through due process, by upholding the integrity of the assessment process through careful guidance to panels, and by assuring the integrity of data in submissions through audit.

23. **Efficiency.** The cost and burden of the RAE should be the minimum possible to deliver a robust and defensible process. Previous RAEs have been highly cost-effective given the value of public funds distributed through their ratings (including the estimated cost to HEIs). For example we estimated the costs of the 1996 RAE in England to be some 0.8 per cent of the value of public research funding subsequently allocated with reference to its results. We will continue to weigh the burden on institutions against the need to ensure accountability in disbursing public funds.

24. **Neutrality.** The RAE exists to measure the quality of research in HEIs. It should carry out that function without distorting the activity that it measures, and it should not encourage or

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discourage any particular type of activity or behaviour other than providing a general stimulus to the improvement of research quality overall.

25. **Transparency.** The credibility of the RAE is reinforced by transparency about the process through which decisions are made. This principle is central to the funding bodies' work. It has already been applied throughout the RA review and the funding bodies' subsequent consultation. Decisions and decision-making processes will be explained openly.

### Summary of process

26. Institutions will make submissions by 30 November 2007. Each submission will contain:

- information on staff in post on the census date, 31 October 2007
- details of publications and other forms of assessable output which they have produced during the publication period (1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007)
- data about research students and research income and a textual commentary relating to the assessment period (1 January 2001 and 31 July 2007).

All of these data in submissions will relate to a body of research activity within a unit, research group or department. Department in this sense will not always describe an administratively discrete unit, and may indeed describe joint submissions between two or more institutions. The publication period and the assessment period will apply to all units of assessment.

27. Sixty-seven sub-panels will conduct a detailed assessment of submissions within 67 units of assessment. They will work under the guidance of 15 main panels. For each submission that it assesses the sub-panel will provide a provisional quality profile to the main panel for endorsement.

### Timing and publication of results

28. A quality profile for each submission will be published in December 2008. It will profile the proportions in multiples of 5 per cent of research activity within the submission judged to meet

each of four 'starred' quality levels. The profile for a submission that contains no research that 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) will not be awarded a quality profile. See Annex D.

29. Alongside the quality profile, the funding bodies will publish the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of staff submitted in each submission (submitted staff). Unlike in previous RAEs, we will not collect through the RAE process any information about staff who have not been included in submissions at the level of each unit of assessment (non-submitted staff). Therefore, panels will only receive for assessment information about submitted staff; in reaching judgements about the quality of research in any submission and the profile to be awarded to it, panels will not take account of any information about non-submitted staff. Although the funding bodies will not collect data about non-submitted staff at the unit of assessment level through the RAE, for equal opportunities monitoring purposes we will require institutions to make an individualised staff return to HESA. As was done for the 2001 RAE, the HESA return will include fields that will identify those staff who are eligible for submission in the RAE, which staff are submitted, and for all eligible staff (including those not submitted), the UOA they are associated with. Therefore, data about proportions of submitted and non-submitted staff in the RAE will be available through the HESA staff record.

30. Reports and feedback from the exercise will be available early in 2009. We will publish in 2007 information about the form of reports and feedback and specific guidance to sub- and main panels in formulating them. The feedback is expected to comprise:

- a. A published report by each main panel confirming its working methods and giving a brief account of its observations about the state of research (strengths, weaknesses and vitality of activity) in the areas falling within its remit.
- b. Feedback on each submission summarising the reason for the quality profile awarded

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with reference to the published criteria of the sub-panel that assessed it. We expect to send this feedback only to the head of the institution concerned. In the case of joint submissions, we will provide feedback which is helpful to all of the institutions involved.

31. The funding bodies will also publish in 2009 on the RAE web-site those parts of submissions that contain factual information about the research environment. This will include the names of submitted staff and the listings of their research output. Personal and contractual details will be removed, and data on research students and research income will be presented in aggregate. We will give institutions an opportunity to indicate any staff whose contributions should be omitted from the published list for reasons of security.

32. The current, indicative timetable for RAE 2008 is at Annex E.

### **Supplementary guidance to panels**

33. We expect to provide to panels a supplement to this document that will deal with matters requiring further work and that will affect the assessment phase of RAE 2008. These include:

- recording panel discussions
- obtaining research outputs for assessment or selective reading
- requesting and using specialist advice and advice from other panels
- the form and content of unit of assessment reports
- feedback to institutions on submissions.

We expect to publish this guidance no later than 2007.

## Section 2: Guidance to main panels

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34. The funding bodies intend to give institutions the fullest possible account of the assessment framework and processes to enable them to prepare submissions, in line with the key principles of the RAE detailed in Section 1. We will publish draft statements of working methods prepared by each main panel in summer 2005 for consultation, and final versions of these by December 2005. Once we have published final statements, we will not permit main panels to depart from them other than in exceptional circumstances that cannot be accommodated within the published framework. In such cases, we will publish the reason and details of the change as an amendment.

35. Each main panel's statement of working methods will describe how it intends to operate in terms of conducting its meetings, liaising with and advising the sub-panels that report to it, and seeking and treating advice from outside its membership, in line with the roles and responsibilities of panel members described at Annex A. Guidance to main panels on constructing the statement follows. It should be read in conjunction with Section 3, Guidance to sub-panels. Questions to guide the development of working methods are in Section 4.

### **Developing working methods and assisting sub-panels in developing criteria**

36. In developing its own working methods and in assisting sub-panels to develop their assessment criteria and working methods, each main panel will:

- a. Describe how a planned or unforeseen short-term absence of the main panel chair will be handled, for example by electing a deputy chair at the outset of the exercise or voting in a temporary chair on an as-needs basis. Describe the boundaries of the deputy chair's role in such cases. The chief executives or equivalents of the HE funding bodies will appoint an interim chair in any case of prolonged absence of the chair.
- b. Describe how the main panel will deal with declarations of interest, in particular where

the main panel chair and one or more sub-panel chairs declare an interest in the same institution. In line with Annex G, panel members will withdraw from the discussion of any submission in which they have declared a current or recent major interest. The formal note of the discussion provided by the panel secretary and agreed with the members present should be the only part of that discussion to which they are party.

- c. Discuss and define in broad terms the expected working relationship between the main and sub-panels, in particular what information and level of detail from the sub-panel's discussions the chair of each sub-panel will bring to meetings of the main panel. The main and sub-panel should enjoy a collaborative working relationship, and a process of iterative dialogue will lead to sub-panels developing their criteria and in due course reaching recommendations on quality profiles.
- d. Ensure that the extent of any variation in the approaches described within the criteria statements of the sub-panels is in keeping with the extent to which the research approaches and methods vary between the disciplines they cover. Assessment criteria and working methods may vary across units of assessment. However, except where research approaches vary substantially between the subjects, in general sub-panels grouped under the same main panel should adopt criteria reflecting broadly the degree of similarity in their approaches to research.

### **Ensuring sub-panels' compliance with the guiding principles of RAE 2008**

37. Main panels will:

- a. Describe, with regard to each of the components of the submission, how the sub-panels should define appropriate criteria of excellence in recognising quality.
- b. Agree the range of indicators of excellence that are appropriate in the disciplines covered

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by the main panel. The range of indicators should be sufficiently wide as to capture all types of research, including practice-based research, applied research, basic/strategic research, interdisciplinary research. Where the main panel could reasonably expect to receive for assessment submissions that cite evidence of applied or practice-based research, define a brief typology for this and appropriate criteria of excellence by which the sub-panels will judge it.

- c. Guide the sub-panels to exemplify indicators of quality consistently in criteria statements. Examples of indicators used to judge research output, for example, might include originality, imaginative range, or significance, as demonstrated by the extent to which knowledge or understanding in the field has been increased or practice has been or is likely to be improved.
- d. Discuss and agree the parameters of sub-panel variation so that each sub-panel chair approaches the task of setting criteria and working methods with the principles of equity and consistency uppermost in mind. These parameters might include, for example, the permitted degree of variation (if any) in the maximum number of research outputs listed per researcher; or the relative weight that the sub-panels will attach to the different components of submissions (see paragraph 38d iii).

### **Interdisciplinary research**

- e. Describe what approaches the sub-panels should adopt to ensure that interdisciplinary research is assessed by people best placed to assess it using appropriate criteria. Interdisciplinary research might include work drawing together people and knowledge from discrete fields to provide a distinctive contribution to the field as a whole; individual endeavour at the interface of two or more recognised disciplines; or collaborative working across disciplinary fields leading to the development of emerging sub-disciplines. Suitable approaches

to assessing such work might include the main panel brokering via the RAE team the provision of advice external to the sub-panel, from other sub-panels, or from specialist advisers – perhaps interdisciplinary researchers themselves. Consider also whether all of a sub-panel's criteria can be deployed in all cases of interdisciplinary research. For example, benchmark standards of excellence might not apply equally to research in new interdisciplinary fields as to established disciplines.

- f. Ensure that sub-panels take full account of the RAE team's briefing on legislation that affects the RAE in terms of respecting equality of opportunity. Compliance with legislation is a duty on HEIs and funding bodies. The RAE team will monitor HEIs' compliance with relevant legislation through their code of practice, mentioned in paragraph 17. While panels will not monitor compliance as part of the assessment process, the RAE team will brief all main and sub-panel chairs before the criteria-setting phase of RAE 2008 on the impact of relevant legislation on the RAE to inform their reading of submissions. A summary of that briefing will be made publicly available. Furthermore, main panels must encourage sub-panels to develop criteria and working methods that encourage institutions to submit the work of all of their excellent researchers.

### **Guiding sub-panels in assessing submissions; deciding quality profiles and ensuring consistency across sub-panels**

38. Main panels will:

- a. Describe how they will assist sub-panels in applying their common criteria consistently to avoid undue variation. Methods might include inviting a number of sub-panel chairs midway through the assessment phase to brief the main panel on how they each have tackled assessing a submission containing substantial evidence of interdisciplinary

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research or a substantial number of research outputs in transient forms (such as musical and visual performance), and providing feedback or advice where their approaches suggest unwarranted variation between broadly cognate areas.

- b. Describe how sub-panels can draw on advice external to their membership and, in general terms, in what instances sub-panels should propose to the RAE team the referral of submissions or parts of submissions to other panels or specialist advisers (including foreign language advisers). See Annex A. In all cases, referrals will be sanctioned and arranged by the RAE team.
- c. Guide sub-panels on how they may obtain from panel observers contextual information on the dual-support system of research funding. See Annex A.
- d. Describe how the main panel will ensure that each of the sub-panels reporting to it applies the quality levels consistently. The quality levels are described at Annex D.
  - i. The definition of each quality level relies on a conception of quality (world-leading quality) which is the absolute standard of quality in each unit of assessment. The method for assessing submissions against the definitions is summarised in Figure 1 at Annex D. The method takes account of all of the components of a submission: research output, research students and studentships, research income, and research environment and esteem indicators. The method reflects an underpinning principle that sub-panels should assess each submission in the round; and that the assessment process does not provide for making judgements about individual researchers but about a range of indicators relating to a unit, research group or department being assessed.

### **Main panels**

- ii. Each main panel will determine, within the parameters detailed in paragraph 38d iii, the extent to which the different

components of submissions will contribute to the quality profiles recommended by each sub-panel for each submission in its domain. In all cases, components will be grouped under three overarching elements: research outputs, research environment and esteem indicators. Firstly, main panels will decide and define in their statement of working methods whether research student data and research income data will be assessed under the heading of research environment or esteem indicators. For example, a main panel might consider that research income contributes to research environment; or that it is a measure of esteem in the subject areas covered by its sub-panels. Postgraduate student completions might be considered an indicator of research environment, while peer-reviewed research studentships could be a measure of esteem. We would expect these decisions to apply consistently to all of the sub-panels under one main panel unless the main panel identifies defensible reasons for variation between the sub-panels.

- iii. Main panels will allocate a percentage weighting to each of the three elements (research outputs, research environment, esteem indicators) as indicators of quality, in a way that is consistent with research practice and culture in their field. Specific weightings should as far as possible be consistent across all sub-panels under one main panel and with other cognate subjects, and the rationale for them explained in statements of working methods. Given the primacy of expert review in the process, the minimum weighting allocated by any panel to research outputs must be 50 per cent of the total quality profile: some panels may reasonably decide that research outputs should be weighted more highly than this. Panels must allocate a significant weighting to each of the other elements, environment and esteem, as they see fit.

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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 reasons for the weightings in their statements of working methods.

### **Sub-panels**

- iv. In making their assessments, sub-panels will draw up a quality profile for each of the three elements of a submission. In determining how to attribute the components of a submission to one (or fractionally to more than one) of the quality levels that comprise the quality profile, sub-panels should consider how far the evidence for that component reflects the standards described for each quality level. Sub-panels will then sum the weighted profiles to form a final quality profile for the submission.

## Section 3: Guidance to sub-panels

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39. The funding bodies intend to give institutions the fullest possible account of the assessment framework and processes to enable them to prepare submissions. We will publish draft statements of assessment criteria and working methods prepared by each sub-panel in summer 2005 for consultation, and final versions of these by December 2005. Once we have published final statements, we will not permit sub-panels to depart from them other than in exceptional circumstances that cannot be accommodated within the published framework. In such cases, we will publish the reason and details of the change as an amendment.

40. Each sub-panel's statement should include details of the coverage and boundaries of the unit of assessment in disciplinary terms. It should describe how the sub-panel intends to operate in terms of conducting its meetings, liaison with or reference to the main panel to which it reports, and seeking and treating advice from outside its membership, in line with the roles and responsibilities of panel members described at Annex A. Finally it should detail the criteria it will use to assess submissions.

41. Guidance to sub-panels on constructing statements follows, and questions to guide the development of working methods are in Section 4.

42. This section describes how the RAE team expects each sub-panel to tackle each aspect of its working methods and criteria. It should be read in conjunction with Section 2.

### Procedural matters

43. Describe how the sub-panel will deal with the planned or unforeseen absence of its chair, for example by electing a deputy chair at the outset of the exercise or voting in a temporary chair on an as-needs basis. The chief executives or equivalents of the HE funding bodies will appoint an interim chair in any case of the prolonged absence of the chair.

44. Describe how the sub-panel will deal with declarations of interest. In line with Annex G, panel members will withdraw from the discussion of any submission in which they have declared a current or recent major interest. The formal note

of the discussion provided by the panel secretary and agreed with the members present should be the only part of that discussion to which they are party.

### UOA descriptors and boundaries

45. Describe the coverage of the unit of assessment sub-panel and its boundaries, noting in particular any cases where one person is a member of two or more sub-panels. Bear in mind that where submissions span the boundary between two or more UOAs or where a submission contains significant bodies of work that it does not feel competent to assess, the sub-panel may request via the RAE team referral of all or parts of submissions to another sub-panel(s) or referral of parts of submissions to specialist advisers or foreign language specialists.

46. Describe in what instances (that is, in what research areas) the sub-panel expects to request external advice. Define broadly how the sub-panel will use information and advice received from other sub-panels or specialist advisers to supplement its own judgements. The RAE team will develop, in consultation with main panels, a standard form for requesting and a standard format for providing external advice.

### Components of submissions

#### Body of research activity

47. In defining how they will assess the work of a collective group of staff returned within the submission as research-active (see Annex C for definitions of staff categories), sub-panels will:

- a. Bear in mind that Category A staff will be academic staff in post at the submitting institution at the census date. There will be no category of staff A\* for RAE 2008.
- b. Detail how the sub-panel will judge the contribution before the census date, of staff returned in Categories B and D to the strength and research culture of the submission at the census date.
- c. Describe how the sub-panel will weigh the evidence provided to form a view as to the

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extent and value of the contribution to the department or unit made by individuals listed in Categories C and D, whose contractual relationship to the institution is different from those in Category A.

- d. Take account of the situation of early career researchers and of those who have been absent from research for longer than six consecutive months within the assessment period for whatever reason – ill-health, career breaks, sabbatical, secondment – and for whom the evidence of quality, in terms of research outputs listed against their name, may be less than the norm. Early career researchers (with dates of entry into the profession) will automatically be flagged in submissions. In their submissions institutions will also be permitted to flag those staff who have been absent from research for long periods for whatever reason (with dates, but no explanation of the reason). Furthermore, institutions may wish – and sub-panels will wish to encourage them – to use the narrative parts of submissions to describe the contribution of early career researchers; and to explain any special circumstances that have negatively affected the contribution of an individual to the submission. Sub-panels might reasonably look for evidence of a supportive research culture and environment in which to situate the contribution of researchers in such cases. (See RAE 02/2005.)
- e. Ensure that the quality profile recommended for any submission reflects the sub-panels' view of the characteristics of that submission as a whole. In reaching a view on the quality profile, sub-panels may reasonably consider the impact on the emerging profile of the research-active staff (including their listed research outputs and other indicators of excellence) who fall into the categories described in a-d above; but the profile denotes something more than the sum of the

contribution of individuals. However, sub-panels might reasonably describe their intended approach to assessing submissions that contain an exceptionally high proportion of early career researchers or staff who have experienced prolonged absence from research during the assessment period, and guide institutions on how best to present evidence that the sub-panel will find useful.

48. In describing how they will assess research output, sub-panels will:
- a. Consider the range of research outputs that may be listed in submissions. Research output means any publicly available assessable output (unless confidential<sup>1</sup>) embodying the research process. HEIs must have confidence that any output listed will be fully and properly assessed: sub-panels may neither rank nor regard any particular form of output as of greater or lesser quality than another per se. In addition to printed academic work, research output may include, but is 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.
- b. Describe how the sub-panel will judge the significance of a particular output as one indicator of quality and the range of ways in which the sub-panel will measure significance; examples might include the significance of the outcomes of the research for other researchers; the significance or potential significance for technical innovation, or for improvement of systems; or for improving the standards of practice in a particular field or for contributing to wealth creation.

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<sup>1</sup> Confidential outputs do not need to be publicly available. Examples would include research reports for companies which are commercially sensitive; reports for government departments or agencies which have not been released into the public domain. Institutions will make appropriate arrangements for panels to access the outputs. Responsibility will rest with the submitting institution to ensure that all necessary permissions for access to confidential work have been obtained.

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- c. Indicate the maximum number of outputs per researcher that institutions may list for assessment. As in previous RAEs, the normal maximum number will be four. If sub-panels wish to set a lower maximum of two or three, they must discuss and agree this with the main panel and state it in the criteria. There should be no automatic penalty for failure to list the maximum number: each case must be looked at on its own merits. Different panels may take differing views, reflecting their knowledge of normal practice and expectations in their own subject area, including of group research, on how far volume of output may reliably be used as an indicator of quality.
  - d. If a sub-panel considers that volume of research output at the level of the department or unit is a significant factor for assessing quality, it should say clearly how this will be taken into account and what other linked factors it will consider in cases where the volume of research outputs in the submission as a whole appears unusually low. Factors might include: a high proportion of individuals or groups working on a long-term project that might eventually lead to outcomes of high quality; or of researchers who have experienced prolonged absence from research for whatever reason; or a policy of the submitting department, which is clearly demonstrated in its description of research strategy and planning, to recruit and develop new researchers whose research output may be limited in early years. Sub-panels may give other examples relevant in their field. Give guidance to submitting institutions on whether and in what level of detail they should explain the reasons in RA5 (the supporting statement) for a lower number of research outputs than the maximum.
  - e. Indicate the arrangements that the sub-panel will use for deciding which of the listed outputs to examine in detail and the approach it will take to assessing work which is not examined in detail, especially in cases where the sub-panel expects to assess research outputs in new or non-standard media. It is not expected that all sub-panels will examine in detail all the research outputs listed.
  - f. Bear in mind that HEIs will be invited to list output that best reflects the quality of research undertaken in the submission over the assessment period. Give guidance to institutions on whether they need to provide any narrative in RA5 in cases where the bulk of research output in the submission appeared in the earlier or in the later part of the assessment period.
  - g. Institutions may list, as examples of the best quality research, outputs that have resulted from collaborative research and are returned severally by different departments or institutions or in different units of assessment as evidence of their distinctive contribution to the research. Sub-panels will describe how such institutions should make this contribution clear for the sub-panel to assess.
  - h. Establish how the quality of different outputs will be assessed, especially in regard to outputs not examined in detail by the sub-panel. Evidence that research outputs have already been reviewed or refereed by experts and judged to embody research of high quality may be used as one measure of quality. However the absence of such review may not, in itself, be taken to imply lower quality. Describe how the sub-panel will take account of different types of reviewing processes, including those that may be applied by users of research in commissioning or funding research work. Users may apply distinctive criteria for excellence, and evidence of their review processes should be taken as evidence that those criteria have been met.
  - i. If there is likely to be any uncertainty in the subject community concerned, sub-panels will detail how their assessment criteria encompass teaching material that embodies research outcomes. Teaching materials are admissible if they can be shown to embody research within the RAE definition, but the preparation of teaching material in itself is not accepted as a research activity for the purposes of the RAE.

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- j. Detail how the sub-panel will assess the quality and dissemination of research in the pedagogy of higher education, including whether the sub-panel might seek specialist advice or the cross-referral of such work.
  - k. Describe how, if appropriate, HEIs should make use of the character-limited text box facility in RA2 (listed outputs) to provide concise factual additional information about listed outputs.

### **Research students, studentships and income**

49. Explain how far the sub-panel will consider the source of research income and source of studentships as significant indicators of research quality.
50. Explain whether the sub-panel will use quantitative and comparative indicators and what use they will make of data analyses (see paragraphs 60-61).

### **Research environment and esteem**

51. Submitting institutions may find it helpful to have a structure for this section that allows departments to explain the context of their submission in terms of their research environment and organisation, strategies for promoting and developing research staff (particularly those new to research) and the significance of their research on a range of academic and other audiences. Sub-panels should also encourage institutions to explain, if applicable, their support for interdisciplinary research, any other UOAs to which related work has been submitted, and instances where there is a bad fit between departmental structure and the UOA framework which has led to departments being split between UOAs.

### **Additional information**

52. In addition to the standard information listed, sub-panels will be permitted to request specific, additional information such as quantitative indicators of total research output and other contextual information where they are reasonable, justifiable and explicit. Sub-panels will detail any such information requirements; these

will be subject to the approval of the funding bodies, specified within the sub-panels' statements of criteria and working methods, and will not require the collection of any **types** of data from HEIs that have not previously been collected for the RAE.

### **Working methods: assessing submissions**

53. The sub-panel will recommend to the main panel a quality profile for each submission returned within its UOA. Its members should reach a collective decision, within the framework of the exercise and consistent with the sub-panel's published statement of assessment criteria. They must debate the reasoning behind the quality profile in sufficient detail so as to reach a collective conclusion on the basis of collective debate. They will make their assessment on the basis of:
  - a. The information in the submissions and selective reading or assessment of works listed in these.
  - b. Standard analyses that will be provided by the RAE team for all units of assessment (see Annex H).
  - c. Exceptionally, non-standard analyses requested by the sub-panel, published in the sub-panel's criteria and supplied by the RAE team (see Annex H).
  - d. Any advice the sub-panel may seek from other sub-panels or specialist advisers on the evidence presented in submissions.
54. Describe how the work of assessing submissions will be divided among the members, either at the first assessment meeting, or beforehand by the chair. Describe whether all sub-panel members will review all submissions independently or only a selection of them in detail; and whether, for example, one sub-panel member will be designated to lead the discussion for each submission.
55. Describe how reviewing of the cited works will be shared among sub-panel members, for example in relation to their specific expertise.

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56. Describe how the sub-panel will weigh the evidence in discussion; for example, whether it will start with a discussion on the quality of research outputs and move on to consider other elements of the submission. Bear in mind that sub-panels must be able to show in all cases how their proposed quality profiles relate to all of the evidence before them and to their published criteria. Descriptors of quality profiles are at Annex D. Guidance to main and sub-panels in applying these descriptors is given in sub-paragraph 38d.

### **Arrangements for assessing joint submissions, cross-referrals and interdisciplinary research**

57. Work developed or undertaken jointly by departments in two or more UK institutions may be submitted for assessment as a coherent whole. Institutions will be required to agree on and indicate their respective inputs to the work described, which may not necessarily relate to the full-time equivalent number of staff submitted by each institution. Joint submissions will be assessed in the same way as submissions from single institutions. Explain how institutions need to briefly describe in RA5 the nature and extent of the collaboration leading to the joint submission.

58. HEIs making submissions may ask for work to be cross-referred to other relevant sub-panels. Such requests for cross-referral shall be judged and acted on by the RAE team on the advice of the sub-panels concerned. Sub-panels may also request the cross-referral of work when they believe this will enhance the assessment process even where this has not been requested by the submitting HEI. In all cases of cross-referral the whole submission will be made available to all panels concerned. Responsibility for the quality profile awarded will remain with the sub-panel for the UOA to which the work was originally submitted.

59. In view of procedures agreed by the main panel (see sub-paragraph 37e above), describe whether and how the sub-panel wishes institutions to identify interdisciplinary research in submissions, and its procedures for ensuring

such work is assessed by competent peers. Bear in mind that interdisciplinary research will be assessed against the criteria developed by the sub-panel to which it is submitted. The sub-panel's stated criteria for excellence should provide for the full range of interdisciplinary work that the sub-panel can foresee being submitted.

### **Data analyses**

60. The RAE team will make available to each sub-panel the standard analyses listed at Annex H. Sub-panels will describe whether and how the sub-panel will use these data analyses to supplement their judgement on the quality of the work submitted.

61. Where the sub-panel expects to use analyses other than the standard ones listed, the precise form of these must be detailed in the criteria statement, together with an account of how the sub-panel will use them to supplement its judgement about the evidence submitted. The RAE team will provide the standard analyses and, by agreement with each sub-panel, other analyses specified in their criteria statements. Ad hoc analyses requested after criteria statements have been published, or during the assessment period, will not be provided. Examples of analyses requested by panels in the 2001 RAE are at Annex H for information.

## Section 4: Questions to guide development of working methods

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### Questions for main panels

62. When developing their working methods, main panels are invited to work through the headings and questions presented here. Panel secretaries will ensure that the statements of working methods are drafted in a style that is broadly consistent between main panels, for institutions' ease of use of the resulting published statements.

63. The questions identify the generic issues which need to be addressed by all main panels. Panels may wish to supplement this information with discipline-specific issues. This section should be read together with Section 2.

### Working methods

64. How will the main panel deal with absences of the chair and declarations of interest from members?

65. How will the main panel work with its sub-panels?

66. What information and level of detail from sub-panel meetings will sub-panel chairs bring to meetings of the main panel?

67. What are the key elements of variation in the criteria statements of the sub-panels that report to the main panel, and on what grounds is this variation justified?

68. What is the range of indicators of excellence applicable in the units of assessment covered by the main panel? How will these indicators make provision for assessing different forms of research – including interdisciplinary research, applied research, basic/strategic research, practice-based research?

69. How should the sub-panels who report to the main panel ensure their processes take account of the work of researchers whose volume of research output may have been limited for reasons covered by equal opportunities legislation?

70. What approaches will the main panel adopt to assist sub-panels in the consistent application of common criteria?

71. If appropriate, what are the special characteristics and appropriate criteria of excellence for assessing applied research or practice-based research in the subjects comprising the main panel's domain? Detail a brief typology of applied and/or practice-based research.

72. How will the main panel facilitate the provision of external specialist advice to sub-panels?

73. What factual information might the panel request of panel observers to verify assertions made in submissions?

74. How will consistency between the sub-panels in applying quality levels be assured? Will research student data and research income data be assessed under the heading of research environment or esteem indicators? What differential weightings will all of the sub-panels within the main panel's remit apply to the three elements of submissions: research outputs, research environment and esteem indicators?

75. What discipline- or panel-specific matters (if any) do the panel's working methods need to provide for?

### Questions for sub-panels

76. When developing their working methods, sub-panels are invited to work through the headings and questions presented here. Panel secretaries will ensure that the sub-panels' criteria are drafted in a style and to a structure that is consistent within each main panel area, for institutions' ease of use of the resulting published statements.

77. These questions identify the generic issues which all sub-panels need to address. Sub-panels may wish to supplement this information with discipline-specific issues. This section should be read together with Section 2 and Section 3.

### Procedural matters

78. How will the sub-panel deal with absences of the chair and declarations of interest from members?

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**UOA descriptor**

79. What research falls within the unit of assessment?

**UOA boundaries**

80. What are the detailed boundaries of the unit of assessment within the broad framework indicated by the descriptions of the UOA? To which other sub-panels might research on these boundaries be submitted?

81. What arrangements will the sub-panel use to assess submissions which span the boundary between two or more UOAs? In what areas does the sub-panel expect to request external advice (from other sub-panels or specialist advisers)? How will it use such advice?

82. How will the panel consider the various components of submissions, as follows in paragraphs 83-96?

**Research staff**

83. How will the sub-panel judge the contribution of staff in categories B, C and D; newly recruited staff; early career researchers and researchers who have been absent from research for prolonged periods for whatever reason?

**Research output**

84. What types of research output does the sub-panel expect submissions to list (for example, papers, books, materials, images, devices, patents)?

85. What is the maximum number of outputs per researcher that may be listed?

86. What information, if any, do institutions need to provide if they list fewer outputs than the maximum?

87. Roughly what proportion of research outputs listed in submissions does the sub-panel expect to examine in detail?

88. How will the sub-panel select which of the listed outputs to examine in detail?

89. How will the sub-panel assess the quality of outputs whether examined in detail or not by the sub-panel? List the criteria for excellence to be used to judge each type of output.

90. How will the sub-panel make provision for assessing teaching material embodying research outcomes; and research in the pedagogy of HE?

91. Other than information to identify the listed output, and to allow access to it for assessment, what further information if any would the sub-panel require to measure the significance of the output and relate it to other aspects of the submission?

**Research students and research studentships**

92. How will the sub-panel use data on research students and research studentships in judging quality? Will the sub-panel take account of standard and/or non-standard analyses detailed in Annex H and if so, how?

93. What principles will guide the sub-panel's judgement of different sources of research studentships?

**External research income**

94. How will the sub-panel use data on external research income in judging quality?

95. What principles will guide the sub-panel's judgement of different sources of research income? Will the sub-panel take account of standard and/or non-standard analyses detailed in Annex H and if so, how?

**RA5a Research environment and esteem**

96. Describe how HEIs should lay out the textual parts of submissions (RA5a): panels may consider using the following list:

- a. Research groups, who belongs to them, their prime activities, how they operate (including in relation to the non-research activities of the unit), and their main achievements.
- b. Other UOAs to which related work has been submitted and any difficulties of fit between departmental structure and the UOA framework.
- c. Mechanisms and practices for promoting research and sustaining and developing an active and vital research culture.

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- d. The nature and quality of the research infrastructure, including significant equipment, research facilities, and facilities for research students.
  - e. If applicable, arrangements for supporting interdisciplinary or collaborative research.
  - f. If applicable, information on relationships with research users (including industry and commerce), and where appropriate on the account taken of government policy initiatives and objectives.
  - g. Arrangements for developing and supporting staff in their research, including how this support sits with their non-research duties.
  - h. Arrangements for developing the research of colleagues new to research and for integrating them into a wider, supportive research culture.
  - i. Details on how the departure of staff in categories B and D has affected the strength, coherence and research culture of the department at the census date.
  - j. Any other issues on which the sub-panel would find comment helpful.
  - k. A statement about the main objectives and activities in research over the next five years, including any ongoing research work that is not producing immediately visible outcomes.
  - l. Where relevant, an evaluation of any research plans described in the 2001 RAE.
  - m. Evidence of esteem and of the significance of the research, relating to the staff submitted. Give examples of the measures of peer esteem and evidence of significance which the sub-panel will regard highly.

### ***Additional information***

97. Does the sub-panel wish to request any additional information? Please specify.
98. Why is this information required?
99. How will this information add value to the process of assessing research quality?

### ***RA5b Individual staff circumstances***

100. Encourage institutions to use this section to inform the sub-panel of any individual staff circumstances which have significantly affected their contribution to the submission (for example, engagement on long-term projects, or secondment). This section should also be used to describe matters covered by equal opportunities legislation.

### **Working methods**

101. How will the sub-panel divide the work of assessment between its members? Describe how it will divide the assessment of listed works.

102. How is the sub-panel going to weigh the evidence and make decisions?

103. How is the sub-panel going to approach the interpretation of the quality profile for its discipline?

104. What arrangements will the sub-panel make for assessing joint submissions, cross-referrals and interdisciplinary work.

## Annex A

### Roles and responsibilities of panels

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1. Submissions to the RAE 2008 will be made by institutions to one or more units of assessment. Fifteen main panels will oversee and endorse the work of 67 sub-panels in establishing criteria and working methods, and conducting the detailed assessments of submissions.

#### **Main panel**

2. The main panel comprises the chair, the chairs of each of the related sub-panels and a number of additional main panel members, including individuals nominated and selected as international experts or experts who have experience as users or practitioners of research. It will:

- a. Provide leadership and guidance to its related sub-panels on their approaches to the assessment process, including guiding them in establishing and endorsing their criteria for assessment and working methods.
- b. Work with the sub-panels during the assessment phase of the exercise to ensure consistent application of the overall quality standards, common assessment procedures and adherence to equal opportunities guidance.
- c. Endorse quality profiles for all submissions to the sub-panels, based on the advice and work of the sub-panels.
- d. Provide advice to the RAE team and the funding bodies on aspects of the assessment process, including requests for specialist advice beyond the expertise of the sub-panels.
- e. Produce a final report on the state of the research in the disciplines covered by the sub-panels.

3. In this context, the role of the main panel's chair is to preside over the main panel and guide all of the relevant sub-panels to ensure that they complete the assessment within the timescale, in accordance with the funding bodies' policy and operational framework, and in accordance with their own published criteria and working methods.

4. Main panel members (other than chairs of sub-panels) are not expected to take part in the

detailed assessment of submissions, unless called upon to offer specific advice to a sub-panel. As a collective, however, the main panel will define and implement working methods that enable and ensure consistency in the treatment of submissions by sub-panels.

5. International members on main panels will be practising researchers with a high level of knowledge and expertise in research across a broad discipline area internationally, including substantial experience in at least one country outside the UK. As such, they may offer perspectives on the international context for and standards of research in the subjects covered by the main panel.

#### **Sub-panels**

6. Sub-panels will:

- a. Produce draft criteria for assessment and working methods for approval by the main panel.
- b. Work within the agreed criteria and in collaboration with the main panel, to produce draft quality profiles (to be endorsed by the main panel) and associated brief feedback for all submissions made to them.
- c. 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.

7. In this context, the role of the sub-panel's chair is: to ensure that within a policy and operational framework, criteria and working methods appropriate to the subject are drafted and finalised through consultation with the subject community; to lead the sub-panel in assessing all of the submissions to a particular unit of assessment; and to recommend a quality profile for each. The sub-panel chair will also continue to advise the funding bodies on the sub-panel's composition to ensure that it has sufficient breadth of expertise to assess submissions.

8. Sub-panel members, as experts in their field, will collectively conduct the detailed assessment of submissions. As individuals, they may be called

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on to lead the assessment of particular submissions, parts of submissions or cited works within them, especially in their own sub-disciplines or thematic areas.

9. Individuals nominated as users or practitioners will be appointed to sub-panels as full members: their role will not differ from that of other sub-panel members.

## **Observers**

10. Generally, panel observers from Research Councils UK will sit on main panels. Within the assessment process, their role is distinct from that of panel members in being a passive one: observers will not offer information or opinion on particular institutions or submissions or on the quality of any research activity presented in submissions. However, observers play an important role in providing any advice that main panels may reasonably request on the Research Councils' arm of dual-support funding – for example, on the operation of a research grant awarding scheme – and in providing a feedback loop to key stakeholders on RAE process issues.

## **Panel secretariat**

11. A panel secretary will work closely with one main panel and the related sub-panels. They will provide advice and guidance on the rules and procedures for the conduct of the assessment; assist panels in planning and managing their work; co-ordinate the schedule of meetings; attend each meeting, prepare the agenda and relevant papers and a written record of the discussions; and prepare reports and feedback. The panel secretary will also report the progress of the main and sub-panel's work to the RAE team.

12. An assistant panel secretary will work in support of each panel secretary and may take the lead role in support to one or more sub-panels.

## Annex B

### Definition of research for the RAE

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(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 C

### Content of submissions

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Submissions will comprise the basic set of data outlined below. The data are organised in the same basic structure as for the 2001 RAE, except that RA5 now comprises research environment, strategy, indicators of esteem and significance. There will be no form RA6. We will publish detailed definitions and notes on the submission data in 'Guidance on submissions' in summer 2005, including on different categories of research active staff and sources of funding for staff. After consultation on the draft statements of criteria and working methods, additional contextual information may be required in submissions to some units of assessment, where the RAE team is convinced that this is reasonable and justifiable and will add value to the assessment of submissions.

a. **Research-active staff details (RA1)**

Information on academic staff selected by the institution for inclusion in the following categories:

Category A: Academic staff in post at the submitting institution on the census date.

Category B: Academic staff who held a contract with the institution after 1 January 2001 and who left the institution (or, exceptionally, are being returned under a different UOA) after that date and before the census date.

Category C: Other individuals active in research in the department as independent investigators at the census date.

Category D: Other individuals active in research in the department as independent investigators after 1 January 2001 but not at the census date.

b. **Research output (RA2)**

For each member of staff named as research-active and in post on 31 October 2007, up to four (or fewer if specified by the unit of assessment sub-panel) items of research output produced during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007.

c. **Research students (RA3a)**

Numbers of full-time and part-time postgraduate research students and of degrees awarded during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007.

d. **Research studentships (RA3b)**

Numbers of postgraduate research studentships and source of funding in the period 1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007.

e. **External research income (RA4)**

Amounts and sources of external funding in the period 1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007.

f. **Research environment and esteem (RA5a)**

Including information about the structure, policies and strategies within which research is undertaken and developed, indicators of esteem and significance; and any reasonable additional information requested by the sub-panel relating to the period 1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007.

g. **Individual staff circumstances (RA5b)**

Including details of any individual staff circumstances which have significantly affected their contribution to the submissions, such as engagement on long-term projects, secondment, and any matters covered by equal opportunities legislation.

## Annex D

### Quality profiles and definitions of quality levels

Table 1 Sample quality profile\*

Unit of assessment A	FTE 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.

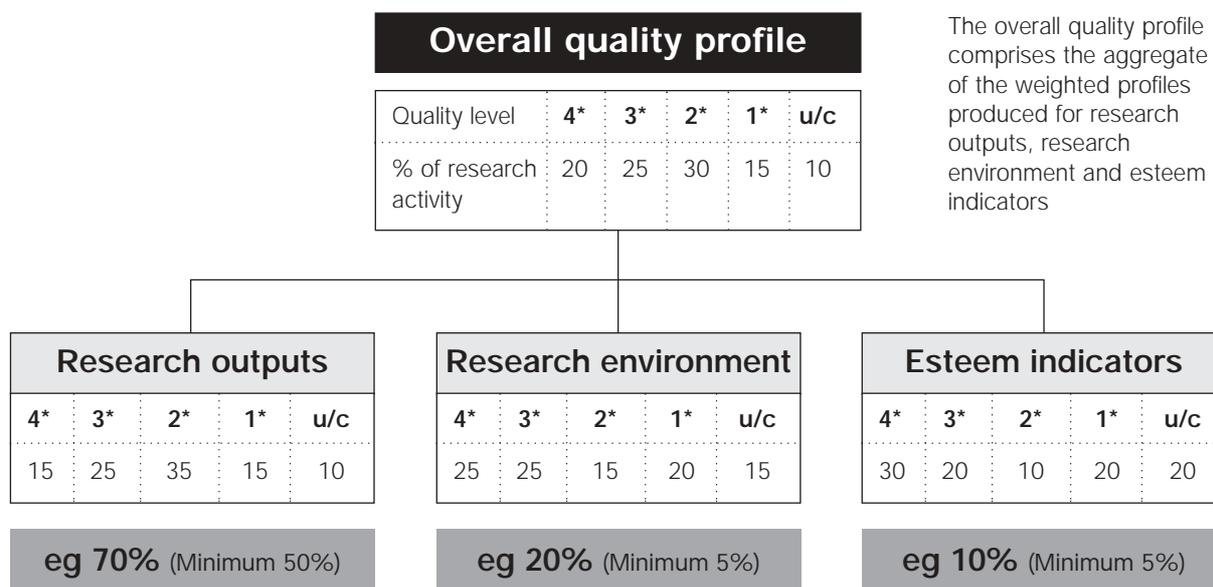
1. Sub-panels will use their professional judgement to form a view about the quality profile of the research activity described in each submission, taking into account all the evidence presented. Their recommendations will be endorsed by the main panel in consultation with the sub-panel.

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 20% of research activity is at 4\* level. This is made up of 70% x 15 (research outputs), 20% x 25 (research environment) and 10% x 30 (esteem indicators), rounded to the nearest 5%.

## Notes to Figure 1

These notes should be read in conjunction with paragraph 38d.

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 (RA5).
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 their 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 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

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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.
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.

## Annex E

### Timetable for RAE 2008

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<b>January 2005</b>	Guidance to panels issued
<b>Summer 2005</b>	Guidance on submissions issued
<b>Summer 2005</b>	Draft criteria and working methods of main panels and sub-panels issued for consultation
<b>By 31 December 2005</b>	Final criteria and working methods of main panels and sub-panels issued
<b>31 July 2007</b>	End of assessment period for research income and research student data
<b>31 December 2007</b>	End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs)
<b>31 October 2007</b>	Census date
<b>30 November 2007</b>	Closing date for submissions
<b>December 2008</b>	Results published

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#### Indicative timetable of panel meetings

Round one	January – March 2005	Criteria-setting (drafting)
Round two	March – May 2005	Criteria-setting (drafting)
Round three	October / November 2005	Criteria-setting (final)
Round four	June / July 2007	Consideration of submission intentions
Rounds five to eight	January – November 2008	Assessment phase

Each round of meetings will comprise one meeting of each main panel and sub-panel lasting one or two days. Sub-panels will normally meet before main panels, except in round one when main panels will meet first.

## Annex F

### Glossary of terms

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<b>Publication period</b>	The period during which research outputs must be placed in the public domain if they are to qualify for assessment in RAE 2008. The publication period runs from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007.
<b>Census date</b>	The date determining the affiliation of research staff to a particular institution. (Staff may be submitted to the RAE by the institution by which they are employed on this date, regardless of previous or forthcoming changes in their employment status.) The census date will be 31 October 2007.
<b>Department</b>	The staff included in a submission to one of the 67 discrete units of assessment 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 a university or college.
<b>Eligible staff</b>	Staff who can be shown to have undertaken significant autonomous research, or otherwise to have made a significant independent research contribution to the research output of a unit or department.
<b>Expert review</b>	Assessment of outputs by experts in the discipline. Most will be active researchers but, in some cases, research users who are not currently active researchers but are expert users will participate in the assessment.
<b>Funding bodies</b>	The four UK funding bodies for higher education: the Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales, and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland.
<b>Joint submission</b>	The collaborative work of two or more institutions in a single subject area, submitted to a single unit of assessment.
<b>Panel</b>	Generic term covering both main panels and sub-panels in RAE 2008.
<b>Quality profile</b>	The results of each submission's assessment – replacing the rating used in previous RAEs. The quality profile shows the proportion of overall research activity described in a submission that meets each of four defined levels of quality (one, two, three and four star).
<b>Research activity</b>	The totality of the research and research-related activities reported in a submission. Research activity includes the conduct, management and dissemination of research.
<b>Research output</b>	The outcome of a research process, presented in the public domain.
<b>Submission</b>	The complete set of information provided to the RAE by a department within a unit of assessment.
<b>Unit of assessment (UOA)</b>	One of 67 discipline areas to which RAE submissions may be made by institutions.

## Annex G1

### Confidentiality arrangements

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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 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

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\* 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.

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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

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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.

## Annex G2

### Declarations of interest

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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 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 visiting lecturer/fellow/professor or similar status.
  - 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 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 inferable connection with their panel membership.

## Annex G3

### Storage and transmission of information

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1. In line with the obligations of confidentiality placed upon them and in line with data protection legislation, panel chairs, members, secretaries, observers and specialist advisers will take all reasonable steps to ensure that other people cannot have access to information contained in RAE submissions (RAE data), or information pertaining to submissions and generated by panels or advisers in the course of the RAE process (RAE information), whether held in paper or electronic copy. In particular, recognising that computer systems and specifically e-mail are not necessarily secure, panel chairs, members and others involved in the RAE process will exercise appropriate caution when using them.
2. Copies of RAE data or information generated in the course of the RAE process must be destroyed or returned to the RAE manager as soon as they are no longer required for assessment purposes.
3. Paper copies of such data and information must be kept in a secure place and not disclosed to anyone not directly involved in assessing the work of the institution(s) that the data or information identify.
4. Paper copies of RAE data and information may not be faxed unless the recipient:
  - is involved in the assessment of the institution(s) identified within the information, and
  - can guarantee that they will receive the information directly from the fax machine, therefore ensuring that the information is not disclosed to anyone not directly involved in assessing the institution(s) identified.
5. RAE data may not be loaded into any computer (or other storage medium) which is not under the direct control of one of the funding bodies without written authority from the RAE Manager, which will not be unreasonably withheld.
6. E-mail may be used to transmit non-confidential information, for example by panels during the criteria-setting phase of the exercise in 2005. It may also be used to facilitate the administrative processes involved during the assessment phase, for example arrangement of meetings and circulation of agendas. However, because e-mail is not a secure method of exchanging information, RAE data and information pertaining to submissions that are generated by panels in the course of the RAE process must not be distributed or discussed using this medium.
7. Guidance on storage and transmission of RAE data and information will be kept under review, updated and drawn to the attention of individuals involved in the assessment process throughout the period to 2008. Review of these principles will be especially important once we have developed methods for transmission of panel papers between panel members and secretaries, and for collecting and disseminating RAE submissions to panels.

## Annex H

### Data analyses

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#### **Standard analyses provided to panels for each submission**

1. Total number of research-active\* staff by category (headcount)
2. Total number of research fellows
3. Total number of NHS-funded staff
4. Total number of research assistants who are supervised by research-active staff
5. Research assistants supervised per research-active staff
6. Total number of research students who are supervised by research-active staff
7. Research students supervised per research-active staff
8. Total number of publications listed for assessment
9. Numbers of staff with 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 research outputs (five separate totals)
10. Total number of studentships (listed by sponsor)
11. Studentships (listed by sponsor) per research-active staff
12. Studentships per research student
13. Total research income (listed by source of income)
14. Research income (listed by source of income) per research-active staff

#### **Standard analyses provided to panels for each Unit of Assessment**

15. Total number of research-active staff
16. Total number of staff by category (headcount)
17. Average number of research assistants supervised per research-active staff
18. Average number of research students supervised per research-active staff
19. Total number of publications listed
20. Average number of research degrees awarded per annum (by category)
21. Average number of studentships (listed by sponsor) per research-active staff
22. Average number of studentships (listed by sponsor) per research student
23. Average research income (listed by source of income) per research-active staff

#### **Examples of non-standard (ad hoc) analyses requested by panels in RAE 2001**

24. Research masters degrees awarded per staff FTE
25. Research masters degrees awarded per staff headcount
26. Doctoral degrees awarded per staff FTE
27. Doctoral degrees awarded per staff headcount
28. Studentships per staff FTE
29. Studentships per staff headcount
30. Income by source per staff FTE
31. Income by source per staff headcount
32. Research assistants per staff FTE
33. Research assistants per staff headcount
34. Income from selected sources per staff FTE
35. Income from selected sources per staff headcount

\* In all cases, 'research-active staff' refers to those selected for submission.

## Annex I

### List of abbreviations

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<b>FTE</b>	Full-time equivalent
<b>HE</b>	Higher education
<b>HEFCE</b>	Higher Education Funding Council for England
<b>HEFCW</b>	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution
<b>HESA</b>	Higher Education Statistics Agency
<b>RA</b>	Research Assessment
<b>RA review</b>	Sir Gareth Roberts' Research Assessment review
<b>RAE</b>	Research Assessment Exercise
<b>SHEFC</b>	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
<b>u/c</b>	Unclassified (quality level)
<b>UOA</b>	Unit of assessment

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