Section 3: Criteria and working methods

Main Panel I
Covers the following UOAs:

- 34 Economics and Econometrics  
- 35 Accounting and Finance  
- 36 Business and Management Studies  
- 37 Library and Information Management

Absences of chair and declarations of interest
1. Main panel members will declare any institution in which they have an interest, and continue to update their declarations throughout the exercise. The main panel does not anticipate that it will be involved in the detailed assessment of submissions. However it may receive submissions as part of the benchmarking process, and for these purposes its sub-panels will as far as possible avoid selecting submissions from institutions in which any main panel member has an interest. In accordance with Annex 4, members will withdraw from any meeting at which an institution in which they have a major interest is discussed.

2. The main panel will appoint one of its members as deputy chair, to act on any occasions when the chair is required to withdraw from meetings. The person appointed will not be from the same institution as the chair, nor have any major interests in common.

How the main panel will work with its sub-panels
3. Sub-panels are responsible for:
   a. Preparing draft statements of relevant criteria and working methods.
   b. Making recommendations to the main panel on the quality profiles to be awarded for each submission.

4. Main panels are responsible for:
   a. Reviewing and endorsing the criteria and working methods to be used by the sub-panels.
   b. Deciding on the quality profile to be awarded to each submission following recommendations from the sub-panels.
   c. Maintaining a good level of communication and joint working with the other main panels.

5. The main panel will provide guidance to its sub-panels on their approach to the assessment process, and seek to ensure that work in cognate areas is assessed consistently. The main panel and its sub-panels have worked collaboratively to ensure that their criteria and working
methods are consistent. Where there is variation between the sub-panels’ criteria and working methods, the main panel is satisfied that this is both necessary and appropriate to reflect the range of disciplines covered by their respective UOAs.

6. The main panel will ensure that each sub-panel adheres to its criteria and working methods throughout the assessment process, and that the sub-panels collectively apply consistent standards of quality. This will be done, for example, through examining a selection of submissions at key points during the assessment process. The chair of the main panel will also attend meetings of the sub-panels as appropriate. Generic issues will be referred to the main panel after each round of sub-panel meetings. A final review will take place once sub-panels have determined the overall outcome for each submission. This approach will ensure that the criteria have been interpreted consistently across all sub-panels, but will not require the outcomes themselves to follow a common pattern. In the case of any disagreement, consensus will be sought. Where this cannot be achieved, a simple majority vote of main panel members will be used to decide (with the chair having a casting vote if necessary).

7. The main panel will, in monitoring the work of its sub-panels, take account of their treatment of individual staff circumstances. The main panel recognises that staff affected by the circumstances described in paragraph 39 of the generic statement might not have four outputs to submit. In such cases, sub-panels will assess only the outputs cited: any ‘missing’ outputs which have been suitably explained will be disregarded.

8. The inclusion of researchers at every stage of their career, and an appropriate attitude to staff who have worked at a reduced rate as a result of individual circumstances explained in RA5b and accepted by the sub-panels, will be seen as positive indicators in assessing the research environment.

9. The main panel strongly encourages institutions which have established interdisciplinary teams or units to submit them as a whole to the most appropriate UOA. The membership of sub-panels reflects, as far as possible, the range of work that the panel expects to be submitted. But if a sub-panel judges that it does not have sufficient expertise to assess the work submitted, then it will seek specialist advice or cross-refer the submission to another sub-panel, to ensure consistency of assessment in cognate areas. Common membership within the main panel will facilitate cross-referrals between Sub-panels 34, 35, 36 and 37.

10. If sub-panels judge it necessary to cross-refer a submission or seek specialist advice, then they will follow the procedures described in paragraph 58 of RAE 01/2005 ‘Guidance to panels’. The chair of the main panel, with regard to the advice of the RAE manager, will advise sub-panel chairs on such cases, as appropriate. Sub-panels will keep a record of all cross-referrals and specialist advice sought.

Consistency of quality levels

11. The main panel and its sub-panels regard the cited outputs as the most important indicator of research quality, and this is reflected in the weightings allocated to this element of the quality profile. Research outputs will therefore carry a weighting of 70% towards the overall quality profiles.

12. Indicators of the research environment provide important evidence of the infrastructure supporting high quality research, and departments’ contribution to the development of their fields. These indicators will collectively carry a weighting of 20% towards the quality profile. Within this figure, the sub-panels will recommend a quality profile for research environment based upon their assessment of the evidence relating to: the research infrastructure; research training and support for staff in developing their research; and impact and user engagement.

13. Indicators of esteem and impact will carry a weighting of 10%. These may apply to either individuals, research groups, or the department as a whole.
14. All sub-panels have carefully considered the standard RAE definition of the quality levels – from 4* to Unclassified – and have worked collaboratively to develop criteria for assessing the originality, significance and rigour of submitted research. Cross-membership between sub-panels will assist the chairs in ensuring that these criteria are applied consistently. The main panel will also examine a sample of submissions at key points during the assessment process to ensure that sub-panels continue to apply consistent standards of quality.

15. The quality levels are defined as follows:

- **4*** – work assessed as reaching the 4* level will clearly demonstrate levels of originality, significance and rigour which are comparable to the best work in the field or sub-field whether conducted in the UK or elsewhere. Such work has been, or will be, recognised as making a significant or substantial contribution to knowledge, theory, policy or practice in its field or sub-field. It has become, or is likely to become, a primary point of reference in its field or sub-field.

- **3** – work assessed as reaching the 3 level will demonstrate international standards of originality, significance and rigour. It has advanced, or is likely to advance, knowledge, theory, policy or practice in its field or sub-field. It has become, or is likely to become, a major point of reference in its field or sub-field.

- **2** – work assessed as reaching the 2 level will demonstrate quality that is internationally recognised in terms of originality, significance and rigour. It has made, or will make, a contribution to knowledge, theory, policy or practice in its field or sub-field.

- **1** – work assessed as reaching the 1 level will demonstrate quality that is nationally recognised in terms of originality, significance and rigour. It has made, or will make, a limited contribution to knowledge, theory, policy or practice in its field or sub-field.

- **Unclassified** – work assessed as Unclassified will fall below the standard of nationally recognised work, or fail to meet the definition of research as set out in Annex 3.

### Elements of variation in the criteria statements

16. The main panel has worked collaboratively with its sub-panels to ensure consistency between their criteria and working methods. The main panel nevertheless recognises that some variation between sub-panels is both necessary and appropriate in order to reflect the range of disciplines covered by their respective UOAs.

17. The sub-panels will examine in detail a selection of the work submitted, and will apply similar criteria in selecting this sample. The proportion of outputs which sub-panels will examine in detail reflects the number and size of submissions which they expect to receive. In each case, the main panel is satisfied that the size of the selection is sufficient to allow the sub-panel to form a professional judgement about the profile of cited outputs. The sub-panels will apply common criteria to form a judgement regarding the profile of outputs which they do not examine in detail.

### Range of indicators of excellence

18. The main panel expects its sub-panels to consider all the components of submissions when recommending a quality profile. As noted in paragraph 11, the main panel regards cited outputs as the most important indicator of research quality. It is expected that most of the work submitted will be articles in refereed journals, books (including chapters in books) and research monographs, but the panel will not regard any form of output as necessarily being of higher or lower quality than others.

19. The main panel and its sub-panels will regard the information contained in RA3a, RA3b and RA4 as indicators of the research environment. This reflects the importance of the training of future researchers, and developing the infrastructure and academic vitality of the disciplines covered by its sub-panels. The sub-panels will assess these indicators in the context of the size and research strategy of submitting units, as described in RA5a, and any areas of specialism.
20. The main panel and its sub-panels will regard evidence of national and international recognition presented in RA5a as indicators of esteem. Sub-panels have set out in their criteria a range of esteem indicators appropriate to their UOA.

Methods for ensuring consistency for applying common criteria

21. The chairs of the main and sub-panels have worked collaboratively to ensure that their criteria and working methods are consistent. Membership of the sub-panels has been carefully drawn to ensure that a number of members serve on more than one of the sub-panels in the remit of Main Panel I, and this will further assist the chairs in ensuring consistency. The chair of the main panel will attend sub-panel meetings as appropriate.

22. The main panel and its sub-panels will be supported by a common secretariat, and the secretary and assistant secretary will therefore attend all main and sub-panel meetings. The panel secretary will provide advice and guidance on the criteria and working methods adopted, and report progress to the panel chair and RAE team as appropriate.

Applied research and/or practice-based research

23. Given the disciplines covered by the main panel, it is expected that the work submitted will include applied research and practice-based research. In some areas covered by the sub-panels, research is inherently interdisciplinary. The main panel’s working methods and those of its sub-panels have been developed in this context, and it therefore does not consider it necessary to establish specific criteria or procedures for assessing such work.

24. Applied research, policy-based research or practice-based research will be assessed to the same research standards as all other work submitted. The panel recognises that such research may appear in a range of outlets, including professional journals or research reports. Outlets which are less familiar are more likely to be examined in detail by sub-panels.

Individual staff circumstances

25. The main panel encourages departments to submit all their research-active staff for assessment. Up to four outputs may be submitted for each active researcher in Categories A and C.

26. The main panel expects that departments will normally submit four outputs for each member of staff. It nevertheless recognises that early career researchers and those who have been absent from research during the assessment period for any of the reasons covered in paragraph 39 of the generic statement may not have four outputs to submit. Such cases will be treated consistently by the sub-panels as described below:

   a. The sub-panels will regard two items as normally appropriate for early career researchers appointed between 1 August 2003 and **31 July 2005**, and one item as normally appropriate for those appointed between **1 August 2005** and the census date.

   b. In respect of staff who have taken periods away from work for reasons covered in paragraph 39 of the generic statement or who work part-time, the sub-panels’ normal expectations will be governed by a pro-rata rule (ie, staff available for 20-40% of the assessment period, one output; available for 40-60%, two outputs; etc).

27. Departments should briefly outline in RA5b any specific circumstances affecting a researcher’s output. If, on the basis of the information provided in RA5b, the sub-panels consider it appropriate for fewer items to be submitted, both the numerator and the denominator of the percentage profile will be adjusted so that no disadvantage is caused.

28. If there are no special individual staff circumstances identified in the submission, the maximum number of outputs will be expected. If sub-panels consider that the individual staff circumstances described in RA5b do not adequately justify the reduced output, or if none are cited, any ‘missing’ outputs will be marked as Unclassified.

29. Part-time Category A staff who also hold an academic appointment at another institution
should be indicated in RA5b. In such cases, departments should normally submit the number of outputs pro-rata to their fractional appointment at the submitting institution (i.e., from 0.2 to under 0.4 FTE, one output; from 0.4 to under 0.6 FTE, two outputs; etc). If more outputs are submitted, each should show a demonstrable connection with the work of the submitting unit. The inclusion of insufficiently integrated staff of any category in a submission may have an adverse effect on the assessment of the submission, particularly in respect of the research environment.

30. The main panel recognises that in its subject areas, in exceptional cases, engagement on projects of significant scale and scope could lead to the submission of fewer than four outputs per researcher. As for all instances of reduced volume, departments should provide a full justification for this in RA5b.

Panel observers

31. An observer from the UK Research Councils will attend meetings of the main panel. The observer’s role is as defined in paragraph 10 of Annex A to RAE 01/2005 ‘Guidance to panels’.

Discipline-specific matters

32. The main panel considers that there are no discipline-specific matters which are not covered elsewhere in its working methods or those of its sub-panels.