Absences of chair and declaration of interests

1. In cases of planned or unforeseen absence of the chair, the sub-panel has elected a deputy chair who will act on the chair’s behalf. Where consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be deferred until the deputy chair has an opportunity to consult with the chair. The deputy chair may also represent the chair in cases of planned absence when reporting to the main panel.

2. Members will declare in advance any conflicts of interest. Members will not participate in any aspect of the assessment of a submission from an institution in which they have declared a major interest, and will withdraw from the meeting whenever it is discussed. Where the chair has declared an interest, the deputy chair will lead discussion for that item. Should the chair and deputy chair declare an interest in the same institution, the sub-panel will elect a member to lead discussion for the item.

3. The chair will decide whether members should participate in assessing submissions from institutions in which they declare a minor interest. In the case of the chair, the deputy chair will make this decision. Should the chair and deputy chair declare a minor interest in the same institution, the sub-panel will elect a member to make the decision.

UOA descriptor

4. The UOA includes (but is not restricted to): comparative, area, national and sub-national politics; public administration and policy studies, including science and technology policy; political behaviour and political sociology, including gender; political theory and philosophy, including history of political thought; international relations, including strategic, war and peace studies, international history, international political economy and foreign policy analysis; methods in political studies; and HE pedagogic research in politics and international studies.

UOA boundaries

5. The sub-panel expects to receive submissions from all areas of the discipline in the UOA descriptor but recognises that some of the outputs submitted will cross disciplines. The sub-panel is confident in its ability to assess a wide range of interdisciplinary outputs, but where such outputs fall largely or wholly within the remit of another sub-panel they will also be referred to that sub-panel for advice. The sub-panels considered to be the most likely recipients (and providers) of cross-referred outputs include:

- UOA 32 Geography and Environmental Studies
- UOA 34 Economics and Econometrics
- UOA 36 Business and Management Studies
- UOA 38 Law
- UOA 40 Social Work and Social Policy & Administration
- UOA 41 Sociology
- UOA 42 Anthropology
- UOA 43 Development Studies
- UOA 44 Psychology
- UOA 47 American Studies and Anglophone Area Studies
- UOA 48 Middle Eastern and African Studies
- UOA 49 Asian Studies
- UOA 50 European Studies
- UOA 60 Philosophy
- UOA 62 History.

6. The sub-panel will also refer work to specialist advisers where it considers that their input is necessary to facilitate the assessment process.

Research staff

7. The outputs of staff in Categories A and C will be assessed according to the same criteria. In the case of Category C staff, departments should use RA5c to demonstrate the sustained commitment of individuals to the research activity of the department. Examples of such commitment might include: co-authorship with Category A staff, co-directorship of externally funded research grants, supervision of research students, or participation in graduate training programmes. The contribution of any Category C
staff for whom a sustained commitment has not been demonstrated will be discounted from all components of the submission. The inclusion of insufficiently integrated Category C staff in a submission may additionally have an adverse effect on the quality profile for the research environment.

8. Departments should refer to paragraphs 35-36 below, and paragraphs 23-24 and 26-28 in the main panel statement for details on how the sub-panel will take account of special individual circumstances. Departments are invited to use RA5b to detail any such circumstances that have negatively affected the contribution of an individual to the submission.

9. The sub-panel welcomes the inclusion of early career researchers in submissions, for whom the overall quantity of research output is not comparable with that of a more experienced member of staff. It is the expectation of the sub-panel that early career researchers appointed between 1 August 2003 and 31 July 2005 will submit a minimum of two outputs; those appointed after 1 August 2005 will be expected to submit a minimum of one output. Where fewer than four outputs are submitted, an appropriate adjustment will be made to ensure that departments are not disadvantaged by their inclusion of early career researchers.

10. The sub-panel will not take any special account of the situation of newly recruited staff who are not early career researchers.

Research outputs

11. The sub-panel expects to examine in detail virtually all the outputs submitted. Outputs will be assessed on their own merits in the context of the submitted work of the department as a whole. Departments are encouraged to submit the highest quality outputs published within the assessment period by the members of staff they wish to submit.

12. The sub-panel will grade outputs against the following quality levels:

a. 4* – quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour. This standard will be achieved by a research output that is, or is likely to become, a primary reference point of the field or sub-field.

b. 3* – quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence. This standard will be achieved by a research output that is, or is likely to become, a major reference point that substantially advances knowledge and understanding of the field or sub-field.

c. 2* – quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour. This standard will be achieved by a research output that is, or is likely to become, a reference point that advances knowledge and understanding of the field or sub-field.

d. 1* – quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour. This standard will be achieved by a research output that makes, or is likely to make, a contribution to knowledge or understanding of the field or sub-field.

e. Unclassified – quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work or which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

13. The sub-panel will ensure that it does not apply criteria in a way that the 4* quality level is only attainable by certain types of research or certain types and sizes of department.

14. The sub-panel defines quality in the field or sub-field primarily in terms of:

a. Originality, recognising that new knowledge and understanding can come in a wide variety of forms.

b. Rigour, recognising the need for sensitivity to a plurality of approaches and methods while endorsing high standards of scholarship.

c. Significance, recognising the different needs and expectations of academic and other
communities, giving due weight to potential as well as actual significance.

15. Where the significance of outputs depends particularly upon their importance for policy and/or practice, departments are invited to draw attention to the nature of this evidence in the ‘Other relevant details’ field in RA2 (100 word maximum).

16. All forms of research output will be treated equally. The sub-panel will not rank nor regard any particular form of output as of greater or lesser quality than another per se.

17. The sub-panel expects to receive outputs in the form of authored books and other research monographs; journal articles (including review articles); edited books and chapters in edited books; and scholarly and critical editions. Other works, including textbooks and other teaching materials, work published in non-print media (CD-ROMs, web-sites, etc), published conference papers and proceedings, consultancy reports, annotated bibliographies, information guides, research guides and commentaries on, or introductions to, translated versions of existing works, will be assessed insofar as they can be shown to demonstrate research as defined for the RAE.

18. The sub-panel wishes to make clear its attitude to the following types of evidence of research quality:

a. Authored books. The sub-panel will not establish a list of the relative standing of publishers. It recognises that some types of research are published by less prominent or more specialist publishers.

b. Journal articles. The sub-panel will not establish a list of the relative standing of journals. It recognises that some types of research are published in less prominent or more specialist journals.

c. Review articles. The sub-panel recognises that review articles can sometimes contribute to and/or advance research, and will evaluate those that do according to the same criteria applied to journal articles.

d. Contributions to edited books. The sub-panel would normally expect departments to cite a chapter in an edited book as the output to be assessed, regardless of whether the author is or is not also the editor or co-editor of the book in which the chapter has appeared. However, it recognises that on occasion the editing of a book itself contributes to and/or advances research, and that more than one chapter may have been written by the editor. In these circumstances departments should indicate in the ‘Other relevant details’ field in RA2 (100 word maximum) whether a particular output consists of the whole edited work or selected chapters.

e. Book reviews. The sub-panel will not regard book reviews (as distinct from review articles) and translations without research input as demonstrating research activity.

f. Applied and commissioned research (see paragraph 34). The sub-panel will judge the quality of applied and commissioned research according to the same standards of originality and rigour as for all other forms of output, while recognising that its significance may relate particularly to its relevance to policy and/or practice.

g. Textbooks. The sub-panel recognises that, in many cases, it is possible to distinguish clearly textbooks from research monographs, but it notes that textbooks frequently reflect the writer’s research or provide an innovative synthesis of existing scholarship. The sub-panel is also aware that publishers sometimes market a research monograph as a textbook to increase sales. It will judge the research merits of such works according to the same criteria applied to all other forms of output.

h. Teaching materials and subject-related pedagogy. These will be treated in the same way as textbooks. Higher education pedagogic research will be judged by the standards applied to all forms of research output.
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i. Interdisciplinary work. Full credit will be given to interdisciplinary work and, where necessary, such items will be referred to specialist advisers or other relevant sub-panels for consideration.

j. Reprinted collections. Where collections of essays or papers include work originally published before and after the beginning of the census period, the sub-panel will assess only the latter elements.

k. New editions. The sub-panel will base its assessment of a new edition of an existing book on the extent to which the edition has been significantly revised.

19. The sub-panel regards submission of four outputs per researcher as the normal expectation for this assessment period. RA5b must be completed for all researchers who cite fewer than four outputs. Where fewer outputs per researcher are submitted, the sub-panel will consider each case on its merits in the context of information provided by departments in the narrative parts of the submission, particularly with reference to staff absences and other special circumstances (see paragraphs 8 and 35-36) or, for early career researchers, in the context of the expectations set out in paragraph 9. Where such circumstances provide valid reasons for the submission of fewer than four outputs per researcher, the sub-panel will apply a proportional adjustment to the submission when constructing the quality profile.

20. The sub-panel recognises that many outputs will be jointly authored and will assess their quality by the standards that apply to all outputs. It expects that a member of staff who returns jointly authored work will have made a substantial contribution to it. The sub-panel also accepts that a jointly authored output may be listed by more than one individual in a department’s submission. In such cases it will be assessed at the same quality level. Where it appears that the repeated inclusion in a department’s submission of the same jointly authored works indicates an unusually low overall volume of research activity submitted, a proportional adjustment may be applied to the submission as part of the quality profile construction process.

21. The sub-panel will also consider whether any adjustment to the overall quality profile should be made to reflect the presence within the submission of items of exceptional scale and scope.

Research environment

Research students and research studentships

22. Quantitative data and other information on research students and research studentships, including the standard analyses provided by the RAE team, will contribute to the sub-panel’s assessment of the research environment.

23. The sub-panel will consider the volume of research students in relation to the number of research-active staff and, where appropriate, the number of research degrees awarded per research-active staff in the assessment period.

24. In considering data and information on research studentships, the sub-panel will consider evidence of success in Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and ESRC studentship competitions, and in ESRC recognition exercises and other similar processes, as indicators of quality under this category.

Research income

25. Quantitative data and other information on external research income, including the standard analyses provided by the RAE team, will contribute to the sub-panel’s assessment of the research environment.

26. The sub-panel acknowledges the importance of external research income for the development and sustenance of the research environment. It is nevertheless aware that the opportunities for funding vary considerably across sub-fields within the UOA.

Research structure

27. The sub-panel invites departments to provide information in RA5a on the following aspects of their research structure:

a. Mechanisms and practices for promoting research and for sustaining and developing an active and vital research culture.
b. The nature and quality of the research infrastructure, including significant facilities for research students.

c. Research groups (where they exist), their activities, their mode of operation and their main achievements. The sub-panel nevertheless recognises the value of individual as well as collaborative research activity. It also recognises that collaborative research can take place between individuals working both within and outside a particular department.

d. Arrangements for supporting interdisciplinary or collaborative research.

e. Any difficulties of fit between the organisational structure of the submitting institution and the UOA framework.

f. Relationships with research users, including the public, private and voluntary sectors.

28. Statements should be evidence-based.

Staffing policy

29. The sub-panel invites departments to provide information in RA5a on the following aspects of their staffing policy:

a. Arrangements for developing and supporting the research of staff (including post-doctoral fellows and contract researchers) noting, if appropriate, how this fits with their non-research duties.

b. Arrangements for developing the work of colleagues new to research and for integrating them into a wider, supportive research culture.

c. Details of the contribution of staff in Categories B and D to the strength, coherence and research culture of the department at the census date and how their departure has affected this.

d. Arrangements for ensuring the sustainability of research.

30. Statements should be evidence-based.

Research strategy

31. The sub-panel invites departments to provide information in RA5a on the following aspects of their research strategy:

a. The main objectives and activities in research over the next five years, including any ongoing research work that is not yet producing visible outcomes.

b. Where possible, an evaluation of the research plans put forward in the 2001 exercise. The sub-panel recognises that in certain cases change in response to circumstances may have been a more appropriate strategy than consistency with the plans envisaged in 2001.

32. Statements should be evidence-based.

Esteem indicators

33. Departments should list indicators of peer esteem and national and international recognition which relate to the staff submitted. The sub-panel recognises that the level and range of esteem indicators likely to be displayed will vary according to the different career stages of the staff submitted. These may include (but are not restricted to):

- journal editorships and membership of editorial boards
- keynote addresses or prestigious public lectures
- organisation of conferences or symposia
- advisers on policy or practice issues to government, voluntary bodies, Research Councils, other national, international, regional or local agencies or other contributions to public service
- advisers on policy or practice issues to private sector bodies
- awards and prizes
- international recognition, eg, international research collaborations, visiting research posts in overseas institutions
- competitively awarded research fellowships.
Applied research and practice-based research

34. There are substantial levels of applied research and practice-based research activity in the UOAs within Main Panel J. This may include action research and participatory research. The sub-panel will assess the outputs of this research, which may include confidential reports. The sub-panel fully recognises this type of research and will consider the quality of the research against the same indicators of excellence as other forms of research, ie, in relation to its originality, significance and rigour. The sub-panel invites departments to draw attention to the impact of the research, eg, on the policy-making or user community, including business, in the 'Other relevant details' field in RA2 (100 word maximum).

Individual staff circumstances

35. Departments should note any special individual circumstances that have significantly affected the contribution of particular staff to the submission. In assessing submissions, the sub-panel will take account, as a minimum, of the circumstances described in paragraph 39 of the generic statement where the quantity of outputs in the submission may have been affected.

36. Departments should use RA5b to detail any such circumstances that have negatively affected the contribution of an individual to the submission. Departments are invited to comment on the timing, duration and impact of special circumstances in relation to an individual researcher's activity. In the case of part-time staff, departments are also asked to indicate the proportion of an individual researcher's FTE across the assessment period.

Working methods

37. The sub-panels of Main Panel J have sought to achieve a consistent approach to working methods and criteria where appropriate, unless the context of the discipline requires additional or alternative approaches. Departments should read this statement alongside the generic and main panel statements.

38. The assessment of this sub-panel will be one of peer review based on professional judgement, representing the collective decision of the sub-panel and reflecting the quality of each submission as a whole.

39. The sub-panel will not use quantitative indicators to assess the evidence presented, other than those mentioned above in relation to research students, studentships and income.

40. To begin the process of assessment, all sub-panel members will read all the submissions. Outputs that require the views of other sub-panels or specialist advisers will be identified, noting in particular information in RA5a where departments have identified research of an interdisciplinary nature.

41. The sub-panel will then undertake the detailed assessment of research outputs, with outputs being examined in detail by at least two members. Their views will be reported to and discussed within the sub-panel which will take responsibility as a whole for assigning the recommended quality level.

42. The quality profile for outputs will be calculated as follows:

a. Where there are four outputs per researcher, these will be assessed and assigned quality levels. These quality levels will then be carried forward to the overall departmental profile.

b. If an individual researcher has produced fewer than four outputs, an evaluation will be made of the reason for this on the basis of information within the department's submission (including early career researcher status).

c. If there is a valid reason for the submission of fewer than four outputs, only the quality level(s) attached to the submitted output(s) will be carried forward into the overall departmental profile.

d. If there is no valid reason for the submission of fewer than four outputs, the ‘missing’ outputs will be graded as Unclassified.

e. After taking into account any reductions in volume of outputs due to individual staff circumstances as described above, and
assessing the quality of all the submitted outputs, the sub-panel will consider whether any additional adjustment to the quality profile should be made to reflect the presence within the submission of items of exceptional scale and scope.

43. The sub-panel will then assess research environment and esteem. The quality of environment will be assessed by the extent to which it supports, or is capable of supporting, research activity as defined in the quality levels. The quality of esteem will be assessed by the extent to which indicators of esteem reflect research activity as defined in the quality levels. Two members of the sub-panel will lead the discussion of these elements of each submission. In calculating the quality profiles for environment and esteem, the sub-panel will initially assign 100% of the profile allocated to each element to one of the quality levels (4*, 3*, 2*, 1* or Unclassified). Where there are clear differences in the quality of aspects of the research environment or esteem (eg, between studentships and research culture, or for different research groups or departments within the submission), the sub-panel may decide to allocate a profile across two or more quality levels.

44. The sub-panel will then review the final quality profile for a submission to ensure that it fully reflects its professional judgement of the characteristics of the submission as a whole. The quality profile will not be confirmed (for recommendation to the main panel) until the sub-panel's final meeting.

45. The sub-panel will form its judgement through deliberation and consensus. Where differences remain, decisions will be reached by a simple majority vote of the sub-panel and, if necessary, the casting vote of the chair (or deputy chair where appropriate).

46. Where work developed or undertaken jointly by departments in two or more institutions is submitted for assessment as a coherent whole in the form of a joint submission, the institutions involved should provide a brief description in RA5a of the nature and extent of the collaboration leading to the joint submission. Joint submissions will be assessed in the same way as submissions from single institutions.

47. In line with all sub-panels of Main Panel J, the weighting given to each element of assessment will be as follows: outputs 75%; environment 20%; and esteem 5%.