Absences of chair and declaration of interests

1. In the event of the absence of the main panel chair, an acting chair will be appointed as required. The acting chair, in consultation with the chair, will have full powers to act.

2. All main panel members have made a declaration of their interests and will update the RAE team regularly on additional interests. Complete lists of declared interests will be updated and circulated on an ad hoc basis. In line with the RAE team’s guidance at Annex 4, main panel members will withdraw from the discussion of any submission in which they have declared a current or recent major interest. Main panel members will exercise particular care in considering submissions from institutions in which other main panel members have declared an interest. All main panel members are bound by confidentiality agreements.

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 main panels 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 receive all the minutes and, as necessary, the papers of sub-panel meetings. Sub-panel chairs will bring worked assessment examples and developing profiles to the main panel meetings. The main panel chair, international members of the main panel, and the meeting secreta...
panel, and main panel observers will attend meetings of sub-panels as appropriate. The main panel will not undertake sampling or cross-referencing activities.

6. The main panel will provide advice to sub-panels, as necessary, on the means for assuring the appropriate assessment of interdisciplinary work, recognising that the majority of interdisciplinary boundaries are at interfaces with sub-panels beyond those within Main Panel K.

7. The three sub-panels have identified within their assessment criteria the processes by which evidence will be weighed and decisions made. The main panel will oversee these processes. The main panel expects to reach all its decisions by consensus, with a vote being used in the unlikely event that consensus cannot be achieved.

**Consistency of quality levels**

8. The panel has agreed the following expanded definitions of the quality levels. These are used by all three sub-panels:

   a. **4* – quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.** This category is for outputs in any form which are at the forefront of research of international quality. Research at this level contributes by generating, for example, new methods, new practices, new theoretical frameworks, new understandings. In such terms, this work will have made (or will be expected to make) a highly significant contribution to its area.

   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 category is for outputs in any form which are of high quality and which match the standards of international peer reviewed research. Such work will have made (or will be expected to make) a significant contribution to its area.

   c. **2* – quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.** This category is for outputs in any form which match the standards of international peer reviewed research. Such work will have made (or will be expected to make) a recognised contribution to its area.

   d. **1* – quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.** This category is for outputs in any form which match the standards of peer reviewed research. Such work will have made (or be expected to make) a limited contribution to its area.

   e. **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.**

9. The panel has also defined a common understanding of the terms ‘originality’, ‘significance’ and ‘rigour’ (expanded in the case of UOA 45, Education). These are detailed in the sub-panels’ criteria statements.

10. In establishing an overall quality profile for each submission, the following percentage weightings will apply for all three UOAs within Main Panel K: research outputs 70%, research environment 20%, esteem indicators 10%.

11. All three UOAs within Main Panel K will take account of both the volume and source of research income (in total and normalised by full-time equivalent, FTE) in assessing the research environment.

12. All three UOAs within Main Panel K will take account of data relating to research students, including the source and the number of research studentships (in total and normalised by FTE) in assessing the quality of the research environment.

**Methods for ensuring consistency**

13. The main panel will use its international members to help benchmark judgements about levels of international quality. The main panel chair, international members of the main panel, and the main panel observers will attend sub-panel meetings as appropriate.
Elements of variation in the criteria statements

14. A diversity of research methods and activities is included within Main Panel K. The sub-panels have established broadly similar criteria and recognise the same standards of excellence. There are variations only in the following respects:

- some details in the working methods
- some variation in the use of the ‘Other relevant details’ field in RA2
- some variation in the types of esteem indicators identified and the form in which departments are asked to list esteem indicators.

15. Some discipline-specific considerations for UOA 45, Education are reflected in the criteria statement of that sub-panel. In particular, the applied and practice-based emphasis of much research in education, and its impact on policy, render particular specific variations necessary. It is also the case that entry into a career in research in education is more likely to be through non-traditional routes. The Education sub-panel has also identified slightly different working methods in order to accommodate the volume of submissions and associated outputs.

Range of indicators of excellence

16. The panel agrees that research excellence can be found within a wide range and variety of forms. All types of output will be judged on the basis of the criteria of rigour, significance and originality as defined within the sub-panels’ assessment criteria. Since the main panel does not feel that there are easily identified categories of research, these criteria are not separately defined for different types of research.

Applied research and practice-based research

17. The three sub-panels have identified consistent indicators of excellence which are applicable across the whole range of research activity (including applied research and practice-based research) undertaken within their UOAs. Their interpretations of the definitions of quality encompass applied and practice-based research. In judging the excellence of applied and practice-based research each sub-panel will draw as necessary on specialist advice from users on the sub-panels and from other specialist advisers and, where appropriate, through cross-referral to other sub-panels.

18. The three sub-panels have indicated ways in which the ‘Other relevant details’ field in RA2 should be used to elaborate on aspects of the research or its methodology where these are not immediately apparent.

Individual staff circumstances

19. The main panel strongly encourages departments to submit the work of all their excellent researchers, regardless of their individual circumstances, and welcomes the opportunity available to departments to use the confidential arrangements of RA5b to outline mitigating circumstances of individual cases. The main and sub-panels encourage departments to include in their submissions those staff whose quantity of output may have been affected by absences from research, including circumstances addressed by equality and diversity legislation. RA5b must be completed for each individual staff member (either Category A or C) who is submitting fewer than four outputs, to describe any mitigating factors which explain the impact of such circumstances on their work. This will enable the sub-panels to take full account of such mitigating circumstances.

20. Where there are fewer than four outputs per researcher and there is a valid reason (relating to the individual staff circumstances described in paragraph 39 of the generic statement), the ‘missing’ outputs (the difference between four and the number of outputs actually submitted) will not be considered further in any way. If no valid reason is provided in RA5b for fewer than four outputs being submitted, the ‘missing’ outputs will be graded as Unclassified.

21. Early career researchers are individuals who entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to the RAE 2008 as Category A staff on or after
1 August 2003. The main and sub-panels recognise that those new to a research career might not have four outputs. In these cases, the sub-panels will judge on the merit of those outputs cited. The main and sub-panels take the view that the inclusion of researchers at every stage of their career, and evidence of an appropriate attitude to those who have taken career breaks, are positive indicators in judging the research environment. There is, however, no expectation of the full range of esteem indicators in the cases of early career researchers, part-time staff, staff who have taken career breaks or staff for whom special circumstances have been identified.

Panel observers

22. The main panel expects the observers to engage in the main panel’s discussions by providing a Research Council perspective, particularly with respect to: the comparability of standards across panels and sub-panels; assessment of user engagement and applied research; issues of interdisciplinarity; strategic issues, particularly those relating to the health of the disciplines and the research environment; and issues related to the recognition of esteem.