Section 3: Criteria and working methods

Main Panel M
Covers the following UOAs:

- 51 Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages 21
- 52 French 31
- 53 German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages 41
- 54 Italian 51
- 55 Iberian and Latin American Languages 61
- 56 Celtic Studies 71
- 57 English Language and Literature 81
- 58 Linguistics 91

Absences of chair and declaration of interests from members

1. The main panel has appointed a deputy chair to act in the event of planned or unforeseen short-term absences of the chair. When the chair is absent because they have declared an interest in the institution being discussed, the deputy chair will not only conduct the meeting but will also liaise with the panel secretary in drafting any minutes or notes, and take such follow-up action as may be required. In other circumstances, decisions and recommendations made during the chair’s absence will be discussed with them before being ratified.

2. The main panel will maintain a register of members’ declarations of interests, both major and minor. Main panel members will withdraw from the discussion of any submission in which they have declared a current or recent major interest, or possibly several minor interests. The formal note of the discussion provided by the panel secretary and agreed with the members present will be the only part of the discussion to which they are party.

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. In discharging its responsibility to ratify, and if necessary modify, the quality profiles developed by the sub-panels, the main panel expects to compare and monitor profiles but not to introduce a further round of assessment based on criteria different from those adopted at the sub-panel stage.

6. During the assessment phase, there will be regular interaction between the main panel and the sub-panels, and the chair of the main panel will also attend some sub-panel meetings. At least one main panel meeting will be held in the middle of the sub-panel meetings, in order to review progress and discuss any issues that have arisen. At this meeting sub-panel chairs will be asked to report any general problems that their panels are encountering in applying the published criteria, and to raise any specific cases where they would like guidance from fellow chairs. It is expected that at this meeting the main panel will have data on the number and institutional range of submissions for each sub-panel.

7. There will in addition be at least one main panel meeting to review and endorse the final recommendations of the sub-panels.

8. The main panel will seek throughout to ensure consistency in applying the criteria and in resolving problematic cases across all the UOAs represented on the main panel. Where appropriate, the main panel chair will also liaise with the chairs of other main panels, especially those in cognate disciplines.

Elements of variation in the criteria statements and justification

9. The disciplines brought together under Main Panel M are broadly cognate but there are nonetheless important differences, particularly between Linguistics (UOA 58) and the language/literature/culture disciplines (UOAs 51-57). Within the latter group there are in turn differences between the modern languages (UOAs 51-55), Celtic Studies (UOA 56) and English Language and Literature (UOA 57). These differences relate to preferred modes and types of publication, sources and extent of external funding, and prevalence of refereed journals. In particular it is expected that creative writing will constitute a more significant element in submissions to UOAs 56 and 57 than elsewhere. Translation work by contrast is likely to be concentrated in UOAs 51-56.

10. In all cases the sub-panel criteria seek to reflect rather than shape the research activity of the discipline in question.

11. An important factor which cuts across all the discipline areas represented in Main Panel M is the size of the department. All the criteria have been drawn up to ensure that small departments are not placed at a disadvantage in relation to larger ones.

Consistency of quality levels

12. All sub-panels within Main Panel M will adopt the following weightings for the components of the quality profile:
   - research outputs 75%
   - research environment 20%
   - esteem indicators 5%.

13. The three international members on the main panel will have an important role in ensuring that the judgements of the sub-panels are calibrated against attainable international standards of research excellence.

Methods for ensuring consistency for applying common criteria

14. As noted in paragraph 6, during the assessment phase at least one main panel meeting will be held in the middle of the sub-panel meetings, in order to review progress and discuss any issues that have arisen.

15. In addition to having established the common parameters set out in paragraph 12 above, the main panel will ensure consistency between sub-panels in applying quality levels by regular exchange of minutes and mutual discussion of problematic issues and circumstances.
16. The potential range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary work within the research communities which fall under Main Panel M was taken into consideration when the sub-panels were constituted. It is therefore expected that the majority of such research will be reviewed by the sub-panels without further referral. However, if single discipline or interdisciplinary work falls outside the range of expertise of sub-panel members, specialist advice will be sought, either from individual scholars appointed as specialist advisers by the RAE team or through cross-referral to other sub-panels.

17. All sub-panels have agreed to the following common procedure for assessing outputs of unusual scale and scope. Each sub-panel will assess all forms of output equally according to the published criteria, and give full recognition to achievements irrespective of form or mode of delivery. However, the sub-panels appreciate that the nature of their disciplines is such that from time to time there may be projects of significant scale and scope requiring an investment of time and personal effort considerably greater than the expected norm. They will therefore use their discretion to recognise special achievement in such works, and credit their contribution to the discipline appropriately through additional weighting in the quality profile. They anticipate that such judgements will be exceptional. They will not require HEIs to nominate such outputs in submissions, and will disregard any such claims.

Range of indicators of excellence

Research outputs

18. The list of types of output is the same for UOAs 51-56, and there is a considerable overlap between this list and those used in UOAs 57 and 58. All sub-panels will make use of a common set of glosses on the quality descriptors (see any of the sub-panel statements), and on the terms ‘originality’, ‘significance’ and ‘rigour’.

Research environment

19. All sub-panels ask departments to submit statements about the research environment broken down into three sections: structure, staff and students, and strategy. The main panel has drawn up a common list of indicators under each of these headings (see any of the sub-panel statements), while recognising that not all indicators will be appropriate to all departments or schools.

Indicators of esteem

20. The main panel has drawn up a single list of esteem indicators appropriate to the disciplines within its remit (see any of the sub-panel statements). Sub-panel statements also emphasise the need to submit only the most significant indicators of esteem, and to list them relative to individuals so that the sub-panels may take account of the appropriateness of the indicator to the stage that the individual has reached in their career, and any individual circumstances such as those covered in paragraph 39 of the generic statement.

Applied research and practice-based research

21. Applied research, as defined by Main Panel M and all of its sub-panels, involves a process of systematic investigation within a specific context in order to solve an identified problem or meet a specific challenge in that context. It aims to create new or improved systems (of thought or production), artefacts, products, processes, materials, devices or services for long-term economic, social and/or cultural benefit. It is informed by the intellectual infrastructure of scholarly research in the field; it applies and/or transfers enhanced knowledge, methods, tools and resources from basic and strategic research; it also contributes to scholarship in the field through systematic dissemination of the results. The outcomes of applied research cannot usually be used directly in other contexts because of the specificity of the situation in which the research has been developed, although the methods and tools evolved are often transferable.

22. The main type of applied and practice-based output expected for the UOAs within Main Panel M is teaching materials. These will be assessed on their research content, rather than on the work per se. Sub-panels will assess such work according to the extent to which it meets the quality level criteria of originality, significance and rigour.
Individual staff circumstances

23. All sub-panels will take into account any individual staff circumstances cited in submissions in relation to any of the categories listed in paragraph 39 of the generic statement. If these circumstances are deemed to be acceptable by the sub-panel, there will normally be a reduction of the usual expected quantity of four research outputs, but there will be no moderation of the quality levels. Allowances will also be made for individual circumstances in relation to esteem indicators and contribution to the research environment.

24. Sub-panels will not consider any circumstances affecting a submission which may be known to members but which are not described in RA5b.

Panel observers

25. An observer appointed from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) will act as a conduit between the main panel and the Research Councils. Where necessary they will be asked to provide advice and information on Research Council award levels and on post-award assessment practices and outcomes.

Discipline-specific matters

26. Other than the issues noted in paragraph 9 above, the panel has not identified any discipline or panel-specific matters for which provision is needed within the working methods for the main panel.