Absences of the chair and declarations of interest

1. The panel has elected a deputy chair who will assume the role of chair as required. To minimise the potential for conflicts of interest, the deputy chair was chosen from a different institution and a different academic area from the chair. If both the chair and deputy chair are absent, a temporary chair will be elected from among those members present. Sub-panels have elected a deputy chair, in accordance with these principles.

2. When submissions are discussed from an HEI in which a member has declared a major interest, that member will withdraw from the meeting. Minor conflicts of interests will not necessarily exclude a panel member from the discussion of a submission, provided that such conflicts are transparent and brought to the attention of other panel members.

How the main panel will work with its sub-panels

3. Sub-panels are responsible for:
   • preparing draft statements of relevant criteria and working methods
   • making recommendations to main panels on the quality profiles to be awarded for each submission.

4. Main panels are responsible for:
   • reviewing and endorsing the criteria and working methods to be used by the sub-panels
   • deciding on the quality profile to be awarded to each submission, following recommendations from the sub-panels
   • maintaining a good level of communication and joint working with the other main panels.

5. The essential principles are that there should be clear, open and frequent communication and an iterative process of discussion between
the main panel and its sub-panels. In this way it is hoped to effect continuity and convergence in RAE2008. Continuity is important to ensure that RAE2008 builds on previous exercises and is broadly in accord with the expectations of the subject community. Greater convergence between the cognate disciplines represented by the sub-panels should help ensure consistency across disciplinary boundaries.

6. Sub-panels have reviewed the RAE2001 guidance on submissions and the panel criteria statements. They have subjected these statements to thorough and robust scrutiny to ensure they reflect relevant academic developments and support the move towards greater convergence across the sub-panels. Through this process, new assessment criteria and working method statements have been produced for RAE2008, which build on the principles of continuity and convergence as described in paragraph 5.

7. The mechanisms for achieving these broad aims will be:
   a. The sharing of detailed minutes between the main panel and its sub-panels.
   b. Frequent informal communication between the sub-panel chairs and the main panel chair outside of meetings, including discussion via circulation of papers and e-mail as appropriate.
   c. The proactive referral of issues for discussion from the sub-panels to the main panel and vice versa.
   d. The maintenance of continuity through the secretariat.

Consistency of quality levels and methods for ensuring consistency

8. The main panel is concerned to ensure that the correct balance is reached between recognising the research outputs as the primary indicator of quality, and encouraging those elements which together comprise research environment and esteem indicators. It is important to provide sufficient weight to these two areas to encourage the maintenance of an appropriate research infrastructure and to ensure that they are valued within institutions. It has therefore asked sub-panels to adopt a quality profile of 80% for research outputs, 15% for research environment and 5% for esteem.

9. During the assessment phase in 2008 the main panel will act as a forum for discussing issues related to the assessment, as identified by sub-panel chairs, so that difficulties can be swiftly addressed and good practice easily disseminated. To facilitate these discussions, each sub-panel will select one or two whole submissions to consider at the first sub-panel meeting in 2008 so that issues and concerns can be identified and then discussed and addressed at the first main panel meeting.

10. Main Panel N covers four sub-panels with different sizes of academic community; in particular, UOA 62 (History) is considerably larger than the others. The main panel will not expect each sub-panel to have a similar distribution of quality profiles, and will not regard consistency of distribution as a mechanism for ensuring that the sub-panels apply common criteria. Nevertheless, the main panel will moderate quality profiles to ensure that variations in distribution reflect genuine discipline-based circumstances rather than inconsistencies in the assessment process.

11. A common secretariat for all the sub-panels and the main panel will also be an important mechanism for ensuring consistency.

12. The main panel will monitor and in certain circumstances mediate when interdisciplinary research is assessed. Chairs of sub-panels will be asked to identify, in the first instance, submissions requiring cross-referral to other panels. These may involve more than one sub-panel under Main Panel N or UOAs within the remit of other main panels. Specialist advisers may be employed to advise on the quality of selected outputs in new and emerging fields, or in other fields as defined by the sub-panels.

13. Due to the size of UOA 62, that sub-panel anticipates requiring the services of a number of specialist advisers to ensure that all submitted outputs can be examined in detail. The quality of
the judgements made by these advisers, as with all advisers, will be managed by each sub-panel and endorsed by the main panel.

**Indicators of excellence**

14. The main panel endorses the importance of ensuring equality of treatment when considering research outputs. It wishes to ensure, as far as possible, that the RAE does not constrain or promote certain research activities (other than the general encouragement of research excellence). This will be achieved, for example, by the recognition of new career academics and of different modes of scholarly publication.

**Esteem**

15. The following indicators of esteem might be presented by a department in its submission:

- advising on tenure or filling of chairs externally
- distinctions and prizes awarded during the period
- editorships of journals or peer-reviewed monograph series
- giving invited conference papers and keynote lectures
- membership of editorial boards
- research awards from national and international charitable bodies
- serving on committees of professional societies and other organisations such as Research Councils
- visiting fellowships and professorships
- visits from overseas researchers and research students.

**Research environment**

16. The main panel recognises two dimensions to the research environment and regards both as important. The first aspect is the immediate environment of the particular department or HEI. Relevant factors in this context include the research ethos and infrastructure of the department and the institution; how members of staff are supported in their research; the existence of a significant and active postgraduate community; and levels and use of research income.

17. Second, the main panel recognises the importance of the broader environment of each subject, nationally and internationally. Contributions to this broader research environment include editing journals; refereeing articles, manuscripts and grant proposals; reviewing books; organising conferences and workshops; and creating (and gaining funding for) collaborative research projects, especially those that cross institutional, disciplinary or national boundaries. Departments should describe any activities that provide significant support for or development of the research environment of their discipline as thus broadly understood.

18. Sub-panels have defined the broadest possible range of indicators of excellence and esteem within their own disciplines, so that research excellence can be identified in whatever structure it is presented.

**Elements of variation in criteria statements**

19. The main panel’s understanding of 4* quality (defined for the RAE as quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), is: ‘work which is or ought to be a primary point of reference in its field, ie, a contribution of whose general theme every serious worker in the field is or ought to be aware’. Particular emphasis should be placed upon the importance of research within its own area (including developing areas of research and interdisciplinary areas), and upon the phrase ‘every serious worker in the field is or ought to be aware’, implying that an output’s lack of academic recognition before submission should not be viewed negatively. Sub-panels have produced further commentaries which will expand this definition for their own academic areas.

20. The term ‘rigour’ in respect of research excellence is accepted by the main panel as taking the broad definition of ‘good scholarship’, and
does not prevent the recognition of more groundbreaking and original research and forms of research.

21. In all the areas covered by the main panel, sub-panels 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 main panel appreciates that the nature of the disciplines which it covers is such that exceptionally there may be projects of significant scale and scope requiring a considerable investment of time and personal effort. Sub-panels will therefore use their professional judgement to recognise special achievement in such works and credit their contribution to the discipline appropriately. They will do this in two ways:

   a. Through additional weighting of such outputs in the quality profile.
   b. Through accepting that the submitted outputs are the result of a project of significant scale and scope which may have restricted the volume of other research outputs produced during the assessment period.

22. In the light of developments in the modes of academic publishing, each sub-panel may expect to receive more electronic outputs than in the previous exercise. These will be evaluated on an equal basis with those in other (and more traditional) formats and published in other locations.

23. Every sub-panel member will be expected to read the entire submission document from each department, in respect of research esteem and environment. Every sub-panel also aims to assess in detail all submitted outputs, with the help of specialist advisers as necessary. If circumstances beyond the sub-panel’s control prevent it from assessing in detail all eligible submitted outputs this will not adversely affect the department’s quality profile.

Applied research and practice-based research

24. The main panel recognises the importance of considering all types of research in whatever form they may be placed in the public domain. For example, a scholarly exhibition or television programme or museum-based or gallery-based activity might be submitted as a research output. The main panel desires to receive a breadth of submissions reflecting the extent of research covered by the UOAs under its remit.

25. Some submitted outputs of a more unusual nature may require specialist advisers to assist the deliberations of the sub-panels.

Individual staff circumstances

26. The main panel has received and noted RAE 02/2005, ‘Equality briefing for panel chairs, members and secretaries’ and has received a presentation from the Equality Challenge Unit. It endorses and fully accepts the guidance provided. Further consideration will be given to the implications of this guidance at sub-panel level, to ensure that the recommendations are fully incorporated within the assessment criteria.

27. In assessing submissions, all sub-panels will take account of the circumstances described in paragraph 39 of the generic statement. The manner in which these circumstances are accounted for is described in the sub-panels’ criteria statements.

28. Due note will be taken of the length of time within the assessment period that a member of staff is research active. Each case will be considered individually and on the basis of information provided by the HEI in the RAE submission. A general indication of this consideration is provided in the statements by the sub-panels.

29. In addition to those special circumstances covered specifically in the sub-panel statements, institutions should submit information in RA5b
concerning other mitigating circumstances which may have reduced an individual’s potential to engage in research. Sub-panels will use this information to make a judgement about the academic impact of such circumstances, where equality legislation does not apply.

Panel observers

30. Observers from the Research Councils can most usefully provide information on the national distribution of Research Council income between institutions to assist the evaluation of merit and esteem. In particular these observers may support the main panel’s remit to promote equal opportunities, for example by providing insights into the impact of age and gender on attracting research income (issues that are under review by the Research Councils).

Discipline-specific matters

31. The contribution made by Category C staff will be evaluated in the same way as that of Category A staff in relation to research environment and esteem, and their submitted work will count towards the assessment of submitted research outputs. In order for individuals to be accepted as eligible for submission as Category C staff, and for their research activity to be included in a department’s quality profile, the department must provide strong evidence that such staff have a close and continuing relationship with the research of the department. Category C staff will be expected to have substantially similar research roles to those of staff on the payroll of the university, eg, to co-supervise research students and to be engaged in the development of research seminars, colloquia or conferences. The research activity of individuals who cannot demonstrate such an enduring and substantial connection will not be counted towards the department’s quality profile.