Section 3: Criteria and working methods

Main Panel O
Covers the following UOAs:

- 63 Art and Design 25
- 64 History of Art, Architecture and Design 35
- 65 Drama, Dance and Performing Arts 45
- 66 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies 55
- 67 Music 65

Absences of the chair and declarations of interest
1. The main panel has nominated a permanent deputy chair to act in the absence of the chair or when the chair declares a conflict of interest in an institution’s submission. Where both the chair and deputy chair declare a conflict of interest in the same institution, then one of the remaining sub-panel chairs will be nominated to officiate in that instance.

2. A current register of major interests for all main panel and sub-panel members will be collated by the RAE team and held by the panel secretary. Where a panel member declares a number of minor interests in a particular institution, the panel will judge whether this constitutes a major interest (as defined in Annex 4). The chair, deputy chair and panel secretary will ensure that declarations of interest by any panel member are identified before meetings. Member(s) will withdraw from the discussion of any submission in which they have declared a current or recent major interest.

How the main panel will work with its sub-panels
3. The main panel recognises and welcomes both the richness and complexity of research across the arts, humanities and social sciences, along with developments in the research environment since RAE2001. In conducting their expert review of such research, the judgement of panel members will be informed by assessment criteria and working methods that are sufficiently flexible to encompass all types and forms of research, and precise enough to support members in forming their expert judgements on the quality of such research. The sub-panels’ expert review of research will be guided by the following principles:

a. Neither advantage nor disadvantage will be given to any type of research environment in terms of its size or approach; the panels believe there is no ‘ideal’ model for such work.
b. Neither advantage nor disadvantage will be given to any form of output, whether it be physical or virtual, textual or non-textual, visual or sonic, static or dynamic, digital or analogue.

c. In seeking to identify research excellence, the sub-panels have allowed sufficient latitude in the working methods and criteria for submissions to describe their research environment and research outputs in ways most appropriate to that work.

4. Research will be assessed where it: has been published, exhibited, performed, recorded, screened or broadcast during the publication period; meets the definition of research for the RAE; has entered the public domain during the publication period; and can be judged against the assessment criteria and methods described in this statement alongside those for the sub-panels. With these conditions in mind, the sub-panels will assess the intrinsic quality of research wherever and however it is undertaken, and whatever its form of output.

5. As experts in their respective fields, panel members will have been in continuous engagement with research throughout the entire assessment period and will remain conversant with research outputs and activities. Hence, they will be accumulating and sustaining an informed overview of research in the public domain, which will aid the application of their expert judgement during the assessment process.

6. The sub-panels will examine both the quality and the sustainability of research reported in a submission. They will consider how its research environment has met the needs of current and future researchers. The sub-panels will assess strategies that seek to ensure a research submission’s intellectual sustainability through, for example, enhancement of the research environment or development of future researchers.

7. In designing common criteria and methods, the main panel and its sub-panels seek to enable the collective judgement and expertise of their members to be fully and fairly applied. The criteria and methods are designed to ensure that quality profiles reflect each submission’s characteristics as a whole. They will not include judgements about individual researchers but will instead take full account of a range of indicators relating to each submission. These common criteria and methods will ensure consistency and equity between the UOAs, as well as accommodating their distinctive disciplines and interdisciplinary relationships.

8. The main panel will review recommended quality profiles for each submission as proposed by the relevant sub-panels. Each recommendation will be accompanied by summary and statistical data relating to the assessment, with a report of the sub-panel’s deliberations. Detailed reports will be required where, for example: both the chair and deputy chair declare an interest in a submission; research activity over the assessment period has been constrained for good reason; the scale and scope of a research output is such that it has been given additional weighting in the quality profile; the work of an assessment team has included cross-referral to another sub-panel or a request for specialist advice. In considering and comparing this information, the main panel will either confirm the recommendations, or, exceptionally, ask the sub-panel to give further consideration to specific points.

9. In all cases it is intended that discussion of a submission will continue until consensus on its assessment is reached. Where the members of a sub-panel are unable to reach consensus after detailed and full debate, the submission will be forwarded to the main panel to advise on how agreement might be reached. If, after this advice and further consideration of all the material provided, a sub-panel remains unable to reach a consensus then the assessment will be decided through a vote of the sub-panel members.
Specialist advice

10. The working methods for assessment will ensure that sub-panels within Main Panel O can readily collaborate in providing specialist advice to assess a submission where, in whole or part, the research crosses sub-panel boundaries. If such research is referred to other sub-panels or to specialist advisers, the criteria for assessment will continue to be that of the sub-panel to which the work was originally submitted. In such instances the advice resulting from cross-referral will assist sub-panel members in forming their own judgement on its quality.

11. The members charged by their sub-panel to undertake a detailed examination of the research submitted will identify:

- multidisciplinary research where some of the work falls outside the sub-panel’s expertise, and so may be cross-referred to another sub-panel
- interdisciplinary research where the work may constitute a new field of research and so require the combined expertise of members from different sub-panels or other specialist advisers to collaborate in the assessment
- applied research where specialist advice is required from a research user working in the context of its application.

12. The sub-panels will, on a case-by-case basis, determine how specialist advice should best be incorporated into the sub-panel’s assessment. Sub-panels will consider all requests for cross-referral, in the context of RAE policy (as stated in paragraphs 52-55 of the generic statement), and will normally take account of such requests. Sub-panels may themselves refer work to other sub-panels or specialist advisers as appropriate. In such instances specialist advice will be drawn from one of the following:

- another sub-panel of Main Panel O
- a sub-panel outside of Main Panel O
- outside the overall panel membership of RAE2008.

Elements of variation in criteria statements

13. With the principles of equity and consistency in mind, the main panel and its sub-panels have worked to establish common criteria and methods across their domains. In this context there are no variations of any substance in the sub-panels’ criteria and methods. Also, in the knowledge that the richness and complexity of research across the arts, humanities and social sciences will be evidenced in the research outputs themselves, not in the criteria described, the sub-panels have set out to explain as clearly and fully as possible how they will undertake the assessment. The sub-panels’ assessment criteria and working methods have been designed to support members in forming their expert judgements over a rich and diverse research domain.

Consistency of quality levels

14. In applying their expert judgement to determine an overall quality profile, sub-panels will assess three components in each submission: research outputs, research environment, and esteem indicators. In seeking to recognise both the quality and sustainability of the research, the components will each be allocated the assessment weightings shown in Table 1 and contain the elements listed.

Indicators of excellence

15. To build quality profiles for the components of the assessment (as set out in Table 1), sub-panels will apply their expert judgement to assess each component against three indicators (not measures) of excellence, as shown in Table 2.
Table 1 **Main Panel O allocated weightings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research outputs</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>RA2</th>
<th>Research outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research environment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>RA5</td>
<td>Research strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Research structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RA3a</td>
<td>Research students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RA3b</td>
<td>Studentships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RA4</td>
<td>Research income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem indicators</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>RA5</td>
<td>Indicators of esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RA3b</td>
<td>Standing of competitive scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RA4</td>
<td>Standing of competitive grants and awards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 **Indicators of excellence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research outputs</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>The degree to which the work has enhanced, or is likely to enhance, knowledge, thinking, understanding and/or practice in its field.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Originality</td>
<td>The degree to which the work has developed new formulations or data and/or initiated new methods and/or forms of expression.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rigour</td>
<td>The degree of intellectual precision and/or systematic method and/or integrity embodied in the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research environment</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>The degree to which the research environment has been designed and developed to contribute to research activity and sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
<td>The degree to which support and training have enhanced and sustained the work of the people who undertake research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>The degree to which intellectual and operational infrastructures, in their immediate and wider contexts, have enhanced and sustained research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem indicators</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>The degree to which, individually and collectively, the work of researchers has been recognised externally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>The degree of influence and/or contribution made to research practices and their debates in the wider context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>The degree to which researchers and the research environment have benefited through the department’s reputation for research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods for ensuring consistency

16. To support sub-panels and to ensure consistency between the assessment teams within a sub-panel, and between the sub-panels, common assessment criteria and working methods will be employed to help interpret the quality levels and their indicators of excellence. Though guiding the members in forming their expert judgements, the criteria and methods set out below will support but not determine sub-panels' judgements.

17. Sub-panels will interpret the quality levels as follows:

- **4*** – research that is world-leading because it meets the indicators of excellence to an outstanding degree in that it has been, or is likely to be, an essential point of reference for work being undertaken across its field and influential upon that work
- **3*** – research that is internationally excellent because it meets the indicators of excellence to a high degree in that it has been, or is likely to be, a major point of reference for work being undertaken in its field
- **2*** – research that is internationally recognised because it meets the indicators of excellence to a substantial degree in that it has been, or is likely to be, an important point of reference for work being undertaken in its field
- **1*** – research that is nationally recognised because it meets the indicators of excellence to some degree in that it has been, or is likely to be, a useful point of reference for work being undertaken in its field
- **Unclassified** – work that is unclassified because it either falls below the threshold for research that is nationally recognised, is not research as defined for the RAE, or represents a research output 'missing' for no good reason.

18. In defining quality levels the terms 'world-leading', 'international' and 'national' will be taken as quality benchmarks within the generic definitions of the quality levels (see Annex 1). They will not denote geographic exposure in terms of publication or reception, or any necessary research content in terms of topic or approach, eg, work on international themes will not equate to either 'world-leading' or 'international' just as work on national themes will not equate to 'national excellence'.

19. To help distinguish each of the quality levels within the absolute standards set out above, and relative to each other, members will assess each of the indicators of excellence for each component of the assessment on the scale 0-4.

20. The overall score for the indicators of excellence in a component of assessment will then be used to identify an initial quality level as set out for RAE2008.

21. Members will review the assessment and judge whether the initial quality level should be adjusted up or down, to reflect their assessment of the overall quality of the work.

22. The members will apply their expert judgement within the assessment process set out above for all components of the assessment, and consistently between the sub-panels, in order to identify a quality level.

23. Throughout the assessment phase in 2008 the chair of Main Panel O will attend enough sub-panel meetings to ensure consistency in the above methods as they support members in applying their expert judgements on the quality of research.

Applied and other types of research

24. The sub-panels welcome all types of research for assessment whether produced through writing, making, composing, or performing. Without privileging one type of research over any other, they will judge how such research embodies new knowledge, or enhances understanding/appreciation, or enriches the intellectual/creative infrastructure in which such work is conducted.

25. The sub-panels recognise that the types of research described in RAE 03/2005 ‘Guidance on submissions’ (ie, scholarly research, basic research, strategic research, practice-based research and applied research) are suffused by the distinctive practices of their research domains, and that, for example, practice-as-research may be a distinctive feature of some. In this respect, further information on the distinctive practices of each UOA can be found in their own statements of criteria and working methods.
26. The sub-panels consider applied research to be a process of systematic investigation within a specific context in order to solve an identified problem or achieve a specific goal in that context. The aims of applied research may include the creation of new or improved systems (of thought or production), artefacts, events, products, processes, materials, devices, or services for economic and/or social and/or cultural benefit. Applied research should be informed by the intellectual infrastructure of scholarly research in the field – applying or transferring enhanced knowledge, methods, tools and resources from other types of research, and contributing to scholarly research through systematic dissemination of its results.

27. Research concerning the pedagogies of higher education that falls within the research domains of Main Panel O will be assessed where it meets the definition for such research as set out in paragraphs 59 and 60 of the generic statement and in Annex 3. Where pedagogical research other than in higher education is submitted to Main Panel O, it will be referred to the Education sub-panel (UOA 45).

28. Scholarly research will be assessed where it has created or developed the intellectual/creative infrastructures within which research is conducted. Scholarly research establishes the fields in which issues, problems or questions are located, and identifies and publishes the knowledge, resources, theories, methods, tools and models evolved through other types of research, along with the subsequent results.

Practice-as-research

29. The sub-panels recognise that outputs reflecting practice-as-research will be an element of some submissions. In this context they acknowledge that a number of competing terms (including practice-based, practice-led and practice-as-research) have general currency for defining this area of research, and the sub-panels intend no judgement between them. All outputs of practice-as-research are welcomed by sub-panels, provided they meet the definition of research as defined for the RAE, and they will be assessed against the same criteria and indicators of excellence as all other outputs.

Interdisciplinary research

30. The panel recognises that, since RA2001, interdisciplinary research has continued to advance within the arts, humanities and social sciences as well as with other disciplines beyond this domain. Research Council support for interdisciplinary work between, for example, the social sciences and linguistics or history, or between design and business or engineering, has been further accompanied by support for other fresh interdisciplinary initiatives between, for example, the creative arts and natural and physical sciences.

31. In this light the sub-panels anticipate receiving interdisciplinary work to assess. They recognise that the descriptors of the research covered by other sub-panels are inherently interdisciplinary, often having no firm or rigidly definable boundaries.

32. It is expected that the assessment criteria of the sub-panel which receives the submission will be flexible enough to accommodate interdisciplinary work, and these criteria will be shared with other sub-panels to facilitate its assessment. Within Main Panel O, the working methods shared by sub-panels will further enable the configuration of assessment teams with the range of expertise appropriate to such research.

Individual staff circumstances

33. The panel expects that four outputs will normally be submitted for each researcher but where, for valid reasons, the work of a researcher has been limited or circumstances have significantly affected the nature of their contribution to a submission, this will be taken into account in the assessment. The sub-panels will take account of individual staff circumstances that prevent researchers from submitting four outputs in the categories listed in paragraph 39 of the generic statement. The following discipline-specific reason will also be considered by Main Panel O and its sub-panels:

- Category A staff completing their PhD during the assessment period.

34. The submission of outputs from early career researchers (as defined in paragraph 39 of the
generic statement) is both welcomed and encouraged, and the main panel acknowledges that such individuals may reasonably be submitted with fewer than four outputs. Early career researchers are defined as individuals who entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to the RAE2008 as Category A staff on or after 1 August 2003. The numbers of outputs normally expected for early career researchers will depend on their level of academic experience, and are outlined below:

- researchers entering the academic profession on or after 1 August 2005 may be submitted with one output without penalty
- researchers entering the academic profession between 1 August 2004 and 31 July 2005 may be submitted with two outputs without penalty
- researchers entering the academic profession between 1 August 2003 and 31 July 2004 may be submitted with three outputs without penalty.

However, where such researchers are submitted with more than the expected number of outputs, they will be treated in exactly the same way as other researchers.

35. The panel recognises that Category A staff holding fractional contracts may reasonably be expected to produce fewer than four research outputs during the publication period. Where such instances are accepted by a sub-panel, account will be taken of this in the assessment, broadly in proportion to the fraction of the post held. However, where such staff do submit four outputs, they will be treated in the same way as a full-time researcher. Where Category C staff have a bona fide research relationship with a department that is less than full-time, then the same principle will apply.

36. Institutions should make full use of RA5b to explain how any of the circumstances described above has led to a researcher producing fewer than the normally expected number of outputs. Explanations should include details of the timing, duration and impact on research of the particular circumstance, and must be sufficient to allow sub-panels to judge whether the quantity of outputs listed is acceptable. Confidential information need not be supplied. Information in RA5b will not be published, but it will be subject to the same verification process as other submission data. The outputs of early career researchers should be identified in the ‘Other relevant details’ field in RA2, with additional context in RA5a. In calculating the overall quality profile, the sub-panels will recognise the appointment and development of early career researchers, and take account of the circumstances of all staff described in RA5b.

Observers on the main panel

37. Research Council observers may be called upon to verify relevant factual claims made in submissions, or to provide advice on the operation of particular research grant schemes, where specifically asked to do so by the main panel. They may also be invited, on occasion, to attend sub-panel meetings, where requested by the relevant sub-panel chair.