

Section 2: Generic statement on criteria and working methods

Definitions

12. For the purposes of the RAE, and throughout the panels' criteria and working methods, the following definitions apply:

- a. **Assessment period** means the period from 1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007. The research described in submissions, including data about research students and research income and the textual commentary, must relate to this period.
 - b. **Census date** means the date determining the affiliation of research-active staff to a particular institution. Staff may be submitted in the RAE by the institution that employs them on this date (or, in the case of Category C staff, by the institution that is the focus of their research), regardless of previous or forthcoming changes in their employment status. The census date is 31 October 2007.
 - c. **Department** means the staff included in a submission to one of the 67 UOAs recognised by the RAE, and, by extension, their work and the structures which support it. RAE departments are often not identified with a single administrative unit within an HEI, or in the case of joint submissions, across HEIs.
 - d. **Early career researchers.** These are individuals of any age who first entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to RAE2008 as Category A staff on or after 1 August 2003.
 - e. **FTE** means full-time equivalent:
 - i. For staff, it refers to the extent of a member of staff's contracted duties as compared to those of a typical full-time member of staff in the same category. The length of time in the year for which the individual was employed and the relative proportion of total contracted time spent on research are irrelevant in reporting staff FTEs. The minimum contracted FTE that may be reported for Category A staff is 0.2.
 - ii. For students, it refers to the amount of study undertaken in the year of programme of study, compared to a full-time student with the same qualification aim studying for a full year.FTEs should be expressed to two decimal places, as for example 0.67.
 - f. **Publication period** means the period during which research outputs must be placed in the public domain (or in the case of confidential outputs, lodged with the sponsor) if they are to qualify for assessment in RAE2008. The publication period runs from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007 for all UOAs.
 - g. **Returned** refers to any data included in any of the RAE submission forms RA0 to RA5c.
 - h. **Selected staff** refers to the named staff included in RAE submissions by HEIs, in accordance with their own internal code of practice on preparing submissions and selecting staff for inclusion. Other staff may be eligible for inclusion (that is, they may satisfy the data definitions and requirements), but HEIs are not required to include all their eligible staff. Further information, and guidance from the Equality Challenge Unit on preparing a code of practice, is given in Annex G of RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'.
 - i. **Submission** means a complete set of forms RA0 to RA5c returned by an HEI in any of the 67 UOAs.
 - j. **UOA** means one of the 67 subject units of assessment defined for the 2008 RAE, which are listed in Annex 2.
13. The definition of research for the 2008 RAE is at Annex 3. Research outputs and research income may be included in submissions, provided that the work they embody or fund meets this definition. Consultancy income and research outputs arising from consultancy contracts should normally be excluded, since consultancy is usually concerned with applying existing knowledge. However, they may be included if the work undertaken or published as a result meets the

RAE definition of research, irrespective of the nature of the contract or invoicing arrangement.

Content of submissions

14. Each submission will contain the core data detailed in sub-paragraphs 14a to 14i below. (The RA code in brackets refers to the research assessment form through which the data will be collected.) For detailed definitions of the data required in each RA form, see RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'.

- a. Overall staff summary (RA0): summary information on research-active staff selected (FTE and headcount) and related academic support staff (FTE) in the unit of assessment. The data collection software will populate some of RA0 using the data that HEIs enter in RA1.
- b. Research-active individuals (RA1): detailed information on individuals selected by the institution for inclusion as research active.
- c. Research output (RA2): up to four items (or fewer if designated for particular reasons in UOA criteria) of research output produced during the publication period (1 January 2001 to 31 December 2007) by each individual named as research active and in post on the census date (31 October 2007).
- d. Research students (RA3a): numbers of full-time and part-time postgraduate research students and degrees awarded.
- e. Research studentships (RA3b): numbers of postgraduate research studentships and the source of funding for them.
- f. External research income (RA4): amounts and sources of external funding.
- g. Textual description (RA5a): including information about the research environment and indicators of esteem.
- h. Individual staff circumstances (RA5b).
- i. Category C staff circumstances (RA5c).

15. In line with recommendations from the Roberts' Review of research assessment, some panels request that HEIs detail in RA5a further

specific, quantitative information that will contribute to the assessment of the research environment. Such additional information requirements are specified in the relevant panels' criteria statements.

16. The word limits for RA5a, RA5b and RA5c are given in Annex 6.

Categories of research-active individual

17. The definitions of staff Categories A to D are:

- a. **Category A.** Academic staff in post and on the payroll of the submitting institution on the census date. Eligible Category A academic staff must be employed under a contract of employment with the HEI on the census date. Their contract must list research and/or teaching as their primary function.
- b. **Category B.** Academic staff who held a contract with the institution after 1 January 2001 and who left the institution (or transferred into a department returned to a different UOA) after that date and before the census date, and who otherwise would have been eligible for inclusion as Category A.
- c. **Category C.** Independent investigators active in research who do not meet the definition for Category A staff, but whose research on the census date is clearly and demonstrably focused in the department that returns them.
- d. **Category D.** Independent investigators who met the definition for Category C staff during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 October 2007 but not on the census date.

For detailed definitions, please refer to Part 3, Section 1 of RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'.

Unit of assessment description

18. Each of the sub-panels' criteria statements contains a description of the UOA and of its boundaries with other UOAs. The description indicates the main areas covered by the UOA and is not intended to give an exhaustive account of the sub-disciplinary coverage. HEIs should refer

to the UOA descriptions when deciding in which UOAs to make submissions.

Assessment process

19. This is an expert review exercise. Sub-panel members will exercise their knowledge, judgement and expertise to reach a collective view on the quality profile of research described in each submission, that is the proportion of work in each submission that is judged to reach each of five quality levels from 4* to Unclassified (see Annex 1). The definition of each level relies on a conception of quality (world-leading) which is the absolute standard of quality in each UOA. Each submission will be assessed against absolute standards and will not be ranked against other submissions.

20. The five quality levels from 4* to Unclassified apply to all UOAs. Some panel criteria statements include a descriptive account of the quality level definitions, to inform their subject communities on how they will apply each level in judging quality. These descriptive accounts should be read alongside, but do not replace, the standard definitions.

21. In reaching a view on quality profiles, sub-panels will take account of all components of a submission: research output, research students and studentships, research income, and research environment and esteem indicators. An underpinning principle is that sub-panels should assess each submission in the round: they will not make collective judgements about the contributions of individual researchers, but about a range of indicators relating to the unit, research group or department that is put forward for assessment.

22. Each sub-panel will recommend provisional quality profiles for debate and endorsement by its main panel. Sub-panels must be able to demonstrate in all cases how their quality judgements relate to all the evidence before them and to their published criteria. The quality profile they recommend for any submission must reflect the sub-panel's expert and informed view of the characteristics of that submission as a whole.

23. In all cases, submissions will be assessed against the criteria for the UOA in which the submission was originally made. Responsibility for recommending a quality profile lies with the sub-panel for that UOA, regardless of whether the sub-panel sought advice on aspects of the submission from specialist advisers or other sub-panels (see paragraphs 52-55 below).

24. Although they reflect a common framework, the assessment criteria and working methods of each main panel and each sub-panel differ in varying degrees across the different UOAs. However, in general, sub-panels grouped under the same main panel have developed criteria that reflect broadly similar approaches to research. Aspects of significant variation, for example where research approaches vary substantially between subjects, are described in the relevant main panel criteria statement.

Joint submissions

25. Joint submissions to one UOA by two or more UK HEIs, of research they have developed or undertaken collaboratively, are encouraged where this is the most appropriate way of describing the research. For further details on joint submissions, please refer to paragraphs 52-56 of RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions'. Panels will receive joint submissions as a unified entity, and will assess them in the same way as submissions from single institutions.

Research outputs

26. Submissions should list up to four items of research output by each submitted researcher, but there is no automatic disadvantage in failing to cite four items. Sub-panels will look at each case. The criteria statements offer further guidance on their respective approaches in cases where fewer than four items are listed. Staff citing no research outputs would not usually be considered as research active and should not be submitted to the exercise.

27. HEIs are allowed to list the maximum of four outputs against any researcher, irrespective of their status or the length of time they have had to conduct research. So, for example, four outputs

may be listed against part-time researchers or against individuals whose time for research has been constrained by their ill health – even if the panel's criteria indicate that the panel would not necessarily expect to see four items listed.

28. We have deliberately defined research output broadly: any form of publicly available, assessable output embodying research as defined for the RAE may be submitted, as may confidential outputs that are not publicly available. Where an output is published as a single coherent work it should be submitted as such and not subdivided for submission as two or more separate items.

29. Where a cited research output includes significant material that was previously published separately (for example, an article reissued as a chapter in a book):

- a. If both outputs were published within the publication period and both are cited, the panel may judge that these should be treated as a single output.
- b. If the earlier output was first published outside the publication period, the panel may take the view that not all of the work reported in the later output should be considered as having been issued within the publication period.
- c. In either of the above cases, the publication history should be appropriately noted in the 'Other relevant details' field in RA2, explaining where necessary how far any work published earlier may have been revised to incorporate new findings.

30. In the case of confidential outputs, HEIs must have the prior permission of the person(s) or organisation(s) to whom the work is confidential for the output to be made available for assessment (see paragraph 33).

31. Panels' criteria for judging the quality of research outputs are intended to be sufficiently broad to enable them to recognise high quality research outcomes in all forms of research – whether basic, strategic, applied, practice-based or interdisciplinary. In addition to printed academic work, research outputs may include, but are not

limited to: new materials, devices, images, products and buildings; intellectual property, whether in patents or other forms; performances, exhibits or events; work published in non-print media. Each sub-panel's criteria statement gives further guidance. In some cases, sub-panels may ask for brief supplementary material describing the research content and significance of certain works, particularly where research outputs do not exist in a conventional form.

32. Panels' criteria statements reflect an underpinning principle of the RAE that all forms of research output will be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Sub-panels will neither rank outputs, nor regard any particular form of output as of greater or lesser quality than another *per se*. Some panels may specify in their criteria that where they do not examine an output in detail, they may use, as one measure of quality, evidence that the output has already been reviewed or refereed by experts (who may include users of the research), and has been judged to embody research of high quality. No panel will use journal impact factors as a proxy measure for assessing quality.

33. So that panels can take full account of research that is of relevance to non-academic users, including industry and public bodies, the RAE team has made provision for confidential research outputs that are not publicly available to be submitted for assessment. These could include commercially sensitive research reports for companies, and reports for government departments or agencies which are not in the public domain. Where a confidential output is listed in a submission, the HEI will be responsible for securing permission from the sponsor, and making the output available on request for panels to examine. Please refer to paragraph 98 of RAE 03/2005 'Guidance on submissions' for further information.

Minimum proportions of work examined in detail

34. It is not expected that sub-panels will examine in detail all the research outputs cited. Each sub-panel must, however, examine in detail

a proportion which, in its opinion, is sufficient to make an informed judgement on the quality profile of the work presented. Sub-panels indicate in their criteria statements how they will decide what work to examine in detail, and their approach to assessing work that is not examined in detail.

35. Each sub-panel indicates the minimum proportion of research outputs which it will examine in detail. This is a collective responsibility, not a requirement for each sub-panel member. The phrase 'examine in detail' indicates reading in full, reading substantially from or sufficiently to make an informed assessment, or (for outputs which by their nature cannot be read) an equivalent level of scrutiny. Sub-panel members are not required to re-examine work which they have already examined in detail outside the RAE process as part of their normal academic work. They may include such work in the minimum proportion that they report as having examined in detail. Where 'virtually all' is the phrase used to describe the proportion to be examined in detail, this means 90% or more. Where a sub-panel indicates that it intends to examine in detail all the submitted outputs, the only constraints on fulfilling this intention would be those outside the sub-panel's control, for example, if a fire were to destroy, before the sub-panel was able to assess it, an original artefact listed as an output.

36. Where a sub-panel does not examine a research output in detail, it may use information contained in RA2 in assessing it. Therefore, it is essential that HEIs adhere strictly to the specification that some sub-panels have supplied in their criteria statement for the field in RA2 entitled 'Other relevant details'.

37. For research outputs produced in languages other than English or Welsh, a 300 word abstract in English is required describing the content and nature of the work. A separate field for each output in RA2 will be available for this. Panels will use this abstract to identify appropriate specialist advisers to whom the work may be referred. The abstracts themselves will not form the basis for assessment. This requirement is

waived for outputs submitted in any of UOAs 51 to 57 if the output is produced in any of the languages in the remit of that UOA.

Staffing issues

38. HEIs are invited to use RA5b to describe, confidentially, any circumstances of individual staff that have significantly adversely affected their contribution to the submission. Main and sub-panels' statements describe how they will apply their criteria in assessing the contribution of such staff to submissions. HEIs need not describe circumstances (for example, a disability) that have had no adverse effect on an individual's capacity to undertake research, as reflected by their contribution to the submission.

39. Panels will consider the following individual circumstances to the extent that they are stated to have had a material impact on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period:

- a. Family and domestic matters, including:
 - i. Absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave.
 - ii. Part-time working or other flexible working arrangements.
 - iii. Time spent acting as a carer or other domestic commitments.
- b. Disability, ill-health and injury, including:
 - i. Any disability to which the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 applies, including both permanent disabilities and any temporary disability with a duration of 12 months or more.
 - ii. Absence from work on the advice of a registered medical practitioner.
- c. Engagement on long-term projects of significant scale and scope.
- d. Status as an early career researcher. These are individuals of any age who first entered the academic profession on employment terms that qualified them for submission to

- RAE2008 as Category A staff on or after 1 August 2003.
- e. Prolonged absences (absences for more than six months consecutively in the assessment period) which were agreed by the individual with the institution but which do not fall into one of the categories above. They include:
 - i. Secondment to non-academic positions outside the higher education sector.
 - ii. Career breaks for purposes unconnected with research, teaching or other academic duties.
 - f. Other absences which the institution is legally obliged to permit, such as absences for religious observance or absence arising out of involvement as a representative of the workforce.
 - g. Any other personal circumstances which are considered to have had a significant impact on an individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs in the assessment period.
40. Other circumstances comparable with the examples in paragraph 39 will be considered, as long as an explanation is provided as to the way in which they are said to have impacted on the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs.
41. Panels will review the information provided regarding individual circumstances. They will determine whether those circumstances can reasonably be considered to have affected the individual's ability to produce the expected volume of research outputs and, if so, whether and to what extent they will reduce the volume requirement in respect of that individual.
42. While guidance is given below on the information to be provided by HEIs in respect of individual circumstances, it is for the panel to decide the extent of any reduction in the volume requirement.
43. Information about individual circumstances of Category A or C staff should be submitted in RA5b. HEIs must provide the panel with sufficient information regarding the individual circumstances to enable them to assess the extent of the impact of those circumstances on the individual's research capability. This will normally include:
 - a. A broad description of the nature of the circumstances (eg, ill-health, maternity leave).
 - b. The timing of circumstances, ie, when they occurred.
 - c. The duration of the circumstances.
 - d. The extent of the impact of the circumstances on the individual's ability to carry out research activities (eg, impossible to carry out research at all, roughly 50% reduction in time available).
44. As indicated above, an outline description of the nature of the circumstances must be given. This is required so that the panel can ensure that it treats similar situations in a consistent manner. However, personal details such as the precise diagnosis of medical problems need not be given, as long as the HEI explains clearly the nature of the impact on the individual's research capability. It is for the HEI to satisfy itself that the relevant circumstances exist or have existed and that the impact is as described. The panel will seek further information about individual circumstances where it feels unable to make a decision on the basis of the information provided.
45. All information submitted in RA5b will be kept confidential by the RAE team and by the panel members, who are subject to confidentiality undertakings in respect of all information contained in submissions. It will be used only for the purposes of assessing the RAE submission in which it is contained, will not be published at any time and will be destroyed on completion of the RAE.
46. It is the responsibility of the HEI to ensure that the information in RA5b is submitted in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and all other legal obligations.
47. Panels will use the information supplied confidentially in RA5b in assessing submissions against their published criteria. Panels will not take account of circumstances that may be known to them, but which are not referenced in submissions.

48. In the case of part-time working, HEIs must include an entry in RA5b if they wish a sub-panel to consider this as a mitigating factor for a researcher citing fewer than four outputs.

49. Academic and academic-related duties which might be expected for any staff member working in a UK HEI, including teaching and administration, are not regarded as an explanation in themselves for listing fewer than four items of research output against an individual.

50. The work of Category C staff will not be given less weight purely because the basis of their relationship with the institution is different from that of Category A staff. However, panels may reasonably form a view as to the extent and value of the contribution made by individuals listed in Category C in the light of evidence available.

51. For each individual returned as Category C, HEIs must provide information in RA5c demonstrating that their research is clearly and demonstrably focused in the department that returns them. Sub-panels' criteria statements give examples of the types of evidence to be supplied in each case. If a sub-panel is not convinced by the evidence provided for a Category C staff individual, it may take account of this in assessing that individual's contribution to the research of the department.

Interdisciplinary research: arrangements for cross-referral and specialist advice

52. In view of concerns that the assessment of interdisciplinary research has presented challenges in previous RAEs (see paragraph 12 of RAE 01/2004 'Initial decisions by the UK funding bodies'), panels will continue to have access to mechanisms for cross-referring parts of submissions. There will also be enhanced arrangements for using specialist advisers to ensure that interdisciplinary research is assessed by those competent to do so.

53. An HEI may request that parts of submissions it makes to one UOA are cross-referred to other relevant sub-panels. The RAE team will consider all such requests but will not be bound by them. 'Parts of submissions' may range from all the research output listed against a submitted researcher, to all the research output and textual commentary relating to one or more research groups. HEIs may not request cross-referral of either entire submissions, or single outputs, although sub-panels may refer single outputs to specialist advisers (see paragraph 55).

54. Sub-panels may also request cross-referral of parts of submissions on the same grounds, even where submitting HEIs have not done so. In all cases, whether requested by a sub-panel or an HEI, the RAE manager will consider the request, and take advice from the relevant main and sub-panel chairs. Where it is thought that cross-referral will enhance the assessment process, the relevant parts will be cross-referred to all the sub-panels concerned. Although advice will be sought only on the quality of the cross-referred parts, the entire submission will be made available to the receiving panel so that it can judge the cross-referred part in context. Advice from other sub-panels on cross-referred parts will be sought and given on the basis of the assessment criteria for the UOA to which the work was originally submitted. The sub-panel for the UOA to which the work was originally submitted will retain responsibility for recommending the quality profile awarded.

55. Sub-panels may request that parts of submissions, including but not limited to interdisciplinary research, are referred to specialist advisers where they believe this will enhance the assessment process. This includes where HEIs identify single or multiple research outputs as being outcomes of interdisciplinary research. The RAE team has a database of individuals who were nominated as specialist advisers through the process described in RAE 03/2004 'Units of assessment and recruitment of panel members'.

Assessment of applied research and practice-based research

56. As we indicated in RAE 01/2004 'Initial decisions by the UK funding bodies', we have striven to ensure that the panel membership comprises individuals who have experience in conducting, managing and assessing high quality research; as well as experts who are well equipped to participate in the assessment of applied research and practice-based research from a practitioner, business or other user perspective.

57. Panels will treat on an equal footing excellence in research across the spectrum of applied research, practice-based and basic/strategic research, wherever that research is conducted. Panel criteria encompass a range of indicators of excellence that are sufficiently broad to enable them to recognise the distinctive characteristics of applied research and practice-based research, and to ensure that they apply their quality benchmarks equitably. The panel criteria statements detail how they will assess a broad range of research, including applied research relevant to users in industry, commerce and the public sector. Certain main panels could reasonably expect submissions to cite evidence of applied research or practice-based research, and these panels have defined in their criteria statements a brief typology and appropriate criteria by which the sub-panels will assess such research.

Assessment of pedagogic research

58. Submission of pedagogic research is encouraged where it meets the definition of research for the RAE at Annex 3. Pedagogic research pertaining to sectors other than higher education (for example, pre-school, compulsory education, or lifelong learning) falls squarely within the remit of UOA 45 (Education). We anticipate that submissions substantially comprising research on pedagogy in these sectors would normally be submitted to UOA 45, but see also paragraph 61 below. Higher education pedagogic research is also within the remit of UOA 45. However, in view of the arrangements described in paragraph 61, HEIs need not artificially disaggregate relatively small bodies of

subject-specific higher education pedagogic research from their submissions to other UOAs.

59. The RAE team has consulted the Higher Education Academy to provide a more descriptive account of higher education pedagogic research that HEIs may find helpful in preparing submissions (see paragraph 60).

60. Pedagogic research in HE will be assessed where it meets the definition of research for the RAE. It is research which enhances theoretical and/or conceptual understanding of:

- teaching and learning processes in HE
- teacher and learner experiences in HE
- the environment or contexts in which teaching and learning in HE take place
- teaching and learning outcomes in HE
- the relationships between these processes, outcomes and contexts.

Reports of studies providing descriptive and anecdotal accounts of teaching developments and evaluations do not constitute pedagogic research. Pedagogic research is firmly situated in its relevant literature, and high quality pedagogic research makes a substantial contribution to that literature.

61. In all cases pedagogic research will be assessed by experienced and expert reviewers. Some panels have appointed as panel members one or more experts in higher education pedagogy; others consider research in higher education pedagogy to be within the collective expertise of their membership. In some main panel areas, for example engineering (Main Panel G) and in the medical and related panels (Main Panels A and B), pedagogic research will be cross-referred to a specific member or members of one of the sub-panels. However, as with any other body of research where it considers that seeking external advice will enhance the assessment process, a sub-panel may also refer some pedagogic material to specialist advisers or to the Education sub-panel for advice. We expect that panel members and specialist advisers involved in the assessment of pedagogic research will co-ordinate their activity to ensure consistency of approach in its treatment.

Dealing with declarations of interest and confidentiality

62. All main and sub-panel members, panel secretaries, and specialist advisers have declared any major interests they have in HEIs eligible to participate in the RAE. A 'major interest' is one that could be deemed material to their participation in assessing the submission from that HEI. They will not participate in assessing a submission from any HEI in which they have declared such an interest, and will be required to withdraw from any panel meeting during discussion of that submission. Major interests will be continually updated and a register of interests will be maintained by the RAE manager.

63. The guidance to panels on declaring and dealing with major interests is at Annex 4. How each panel will implement this guidance is described in its criteria statement. Minor interests (for example supervision of doctoral students registered at, or co-holding of grants held at, submitting institutions) will not be kept on the register, but panels will declare, minute and handle them on a case-by-case basis.

64. All main and sub-panel members, panel secretaries, and specialist advisers are bound by a duty of confidentiality governing information contained in RAE submissions and panel discussions. Details are at Annex 5.