

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Panel 11 – Humanities**  
**Panel-specific Guidelines on**  
**Assessment Criteria and Working Methods**  
(September 2018)

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## **Introduction**

1. This document sets out the assessment criteria and working methods that the Humanities Panel of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2020 will apply. It should be read alongside the General Panel Guidelines of the exercise. The provisions set out in this document serve as further elaboration and amplification on the assessment criteria and working methods as applied to the Humanities Panel. In areas where no additional information has been specified, the provisions in the General Panel Guidelines will prevail and apply in the assessment process of the Panel. These guidelines do not replace or supersede the requirements for submissions that are set out in the Guidance Notes for the RAE 2020.

2. This document describes the criteria and methods for assessing submissions in the Humanities Panel. It provides guidance on the type of information required in the submissions. It also provides a single, consistent set of criteria that will be applied by the Panel and sub-group(s)/sub-panel(s), if any, when undertaking the assessment, having regard to any differences in the nature of disciplines of respective units of assessment (UoAs) under purview. It also provides a common approach to the working methods applied within the Panel.

## **Section A: Submissions**

### **UoAs under the Panel**

3. The Humanities Panel will assess universities' submissions from the following UoAs:

<u>Code</u>	<u>UoAs</u>
30	Chinese language & literature
31	English language & literature
32	translation
33	linguistics & language studies
34	history
35	area studies (e.g. Japanese studies, European studies, etc.), cultural studies and other arts/humanities
36	philosophy
37	religious studies

4. The Panel expects to receive submissions whose primary research focus falls within the compass of the above UoAs. The full spectrum of disciplines included in the above UoAs may go beyond what has been itemized. "Other arts and humanities" can include, for example, gender studies and art history.

### **Inter-disciplinary Research**

5. The Panel also recognises that individual UoAs do not have firm or rigidly definable boundaries, and that certain aspects of research are naturally inter-disciplinary or span more than one UoA, whether within the Panel or across panels. The Panel will adopt the arrangements for assessing inter-disciplinary submissions as set out in paragraphs 39-40 of the General Panel Guidelines.

6. The Panel welcomes inter-disciplinary submissions if they have a component relevant to the humanities. Areas of inter-disciplinary research that may be relevant to the Panel include, among others, art history, museum studies, musicology, and gender studies.

## **Assignment of Eligible Academic Staff in Each UoA**

7. Pursuant to paragraphs 7-11 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Humanities Panel expects to receive information on any sub-disciplines under a research area that each eligible staff member and respective research output(s) belong to. For UoAs that are potentially inclusive of many subcategories (e.g. other arts and humanities studies), the Panel requires information on the relevant sub-discipline(s) so as to ensure that research outputs are assigned to appropriate assessors.

8. It is critical that research outputs are assessed by the most appropriate panel. If a panel suspects any anomaly regarding universities' assignment of eligible academic staff (and therefore their outputs) to research area(s) and UoA(s) under its remit, it will follow the procedures for re-assignment of the eligible staff according to paragraphs 10-11 of the General Panel Guidelines. The Panel also recognises its responsibility to handle submissions arising from any re-assignment of eligible academic staff to the Panel.

## **University's Research Strategy Statement**

9. Following paragraphs 2.16-2.18 and Appendix B of the Guidance Notes and paragraph 15 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Research Strategy Statement submitted by each university will provide contextual information for the Panel when assessing the submissions. These Statements will not be assessed, but may help the Panel to understand better the material that is presented in each submission, particularly insofar as UoAs refer to the overall position of their university. The Statements will also help the University Grants Committee (UGC) when viewing the quality profiles of the universities as a whole upon completion of the RAE 2020.

10. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

## **Section B: Assessment Criteria: Research Outputs**

### **Output Types**

11. The Humanities Panel will consider the eligibility of research outputs as described in paragraphs 16-18 of the General Panel Guidelines, and paragraphs 5.7-5.11 and Appendix F of the Guidance Notes.

12. The Panel will assess the quality of each eligible output on its own merits and not in terms of its publication category, medium or language of publication. The Panel will examine each item in detail and will not assess outputs mechanistically according to their publication venue. The Panel recognises that there can be work of the highest quality in various output forms, and no distinction will be made between types of output submitted nor whether an output has been made available electronically or in a physical form.

13. Forms of research outputs that are admissible and specifically relevant to the Humanities Panel include the following examples. This should not be regarded as an exhaustive list. Equally, there is no implication of priority or importance in the ordering of examples in this list:

- books, book chapters and research monographs;
- published conference papers and reports;
- published papers in peer-reviewed journals;
- review articles that incorporate new research or new insights from the submitting staff member;
- software, computer code and algorithms;
- edited volumes and special issues of journals;
- translations that show evidence of new research or new research insights from the submitting staff member;
- research-based non-traditional outputs e.g. a film;
- curated works that show evidence of research input from the submitting staff member;
- textbooks on condition that they show evidence of new research or new research insights from the submitting staff member.

14. Research outputs will be assessed for the quality of original research they include.

15. The Panel will consider translations, reprints and subsequent editions of previous work only when they contain substantial changes and when the submitting author(s) have specified the nature of the changes. Submissions with materials in common (e.g. a research paper in a journal that later forms a significant part of a book chapter) will be unclassified. If one or more outputs consist of the same piece of research in more than one

language (e.g. a re-writing of a submitting member of staff's own work in another language), only one of the outputs will be assessed, and the other output(s) will be unclassified.

### **Double-weighting of Research Outputs**

16. Paragraphs 29-31 of the General Panel Guidelines indicate that a submitting university may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted in the assessment. The Panel recognises that there may be outputs of such scale and scope and will consider the items submitted for double-weighting in line with the General Panel Guidelines.

17. When requesting double-weighting of an output, universities should submit a statement in not more than 100 words explaining in what ways the output is of sufficiently extended scale and scope to justify the claim. The Panel will assess the quality of a double-weighted output in the same way as any other research output.

### **Co-authored/Co-produced Outputs**

18. The Panel affirms the principles and arrangements on assessing co-authored/co-produced research outputs as set out in paragraphs 32-34 of the General Panel Guidelines.

19. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

### **Non-traditional Outputs**

20. The Panel will handle research outputs in non-traditional form according to paragraphs 35-37 of the General Panel Guidelines.

### **Criteria and Quality Levels for Assessing Research Outputs**

21. Panel members will use their professional judgement with reference to international standards in assessing research outputs.

22. In assessing outputs, the Panel will look for evidence of originality, significance and rigour, and will classify each output into one of the five categories of quality level as set out in paragraph 19 of the General Panel Guidelines. The generic description of the quality levels as set out in paragraph 20 of the General Panel Guidelines will be applied in the Panel's assessment.

23. The Humanities Panel provides the following amplifications on the criteria of assessing research outputs:

- originality: will be understood as the extent to which the output introduces a new way of thinking about a subject.
- significance: will be understood as the extent to which the output has exerted, or has the potential to exert, an influence on the academic field.
- rigour: will be understood in terms of the intellectual precision, robustness and appropriateness of the concepts and methodologies deployed within the output.

24. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

### **Metrics/Citation Data**

25. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

26. The Humanities Panel does not expect to refer to metrics or citation data in reaching its judgement on the quality of submitted research outputs.

### **Additional Information on Research Outputs**

27. The Humanities Panel requires the information on research outputs specified in paragraph 5.17 of the Guidance Notes and nothing more, unless specifically required by the Panel during the assessment process.

## **Section C: Assessment Criteria: Research Impact**

### **Range of Impacts**

28. The Humanities Panel will accept submissions on research impacts that meet the generic definition and criteria as set out in paragraphs 47-48 of the General Panel Guidelines.

29. The Panel will assess the quality of all eligible impact submissions based on their merits on equal footing with no consideration given to the differences among submitting universities/units in terms of staff size, resources and histories. The Panel recognises that impact relevant only to Hong Kong may attain standards of international excellence.

30. Examples are provided below to illustrate the range of potential impact from research across the Humanities Panel. These examples are indicative only, and are not exhaustive or exclusive. Likewise, there is no implication of priority or importance in the ordering of examples in the list.

### Examples of Impact

Research in Arts and Humanities may have a wide range of impact areas beyond academia, for example:

- Generating new ways of thinking that may influence creative practice;
- Creating, inspiring and supporting new forms of artistic, literary, linguistic, social, economic, religious or other expression;
- Contributing to innovation and entrepreneurial activity through the design and delivery of new products and services.

More specific examples include:

- Contributing to economic prosperity via the creative sector, including publishing, theatre, museums and galleries, film and television, fashion, tourism, and computer games;
- Informing or influencing practice or policy as a result of research on the nature and extent of religious, sexual, ethnic, linguistic or other discrimination;
- Research into the languages and cultures of minority linguistic, ethnic, religious, immigrant or other cultures and communities, used by government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities or the private sector to understand and respond to the needs of these cultures and communities;
- Helping professionals and organisations adapt to changing cultural values;
- Contributing to continuing personal and/or professional development;
- Preserving, conserving and presenting cultural heritage, resulting in changed perceptions or new understandings;
- Changing the design and delivery of curricula and syllabi in schools or other educational institutions where the impact extends significantly beyond the submitting university, for example through the widespread use of textbooks, primary sources or an IT resource in education;
- Developing stimuli to tourism and contributing to the quality of the tourist experience;
- Contributing new resources to processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation;

- Contributing to a wider public understanding of basic standards of wellbeing and human rights conceptions;
- Informing or influencing the development of expert systems in areas such as medicine, human resources, accounting, and financial services;
- Influencing the methods, ideas, or ethics of any profession;
- Providing expert advice to governments, NGOs, charities or the private sector locally or internationally, and thereby influencing policy and/or practice;
- Engaging with and mediating between NGOs and charities in Hong Kong or internationally to influence their activities, for example in relation to health, education or the environment;
- Contributing to wider public access to and participation in the political process.

*(Note: Other examples of research impact as assessed in other jurisdictions may be accessible online such as <<http://results.ref.ac.uk/Results/SelectUoa>> from the United Kingdom.)*

31. Universities are expected to submit their strongest impact cases and not to align submitted cases specifically with the particular types of impact listed, as an impact case may describe more than one type of impact. The Humanities Panel stresses that impact must involve a change of the kind mentioned in the definition of impact given in paragraph 47 of the General Panel Guidelines.

### **Impact Overview Statement**

32. Following paragraphs 7.7 (a) and (b), 7.8 and Appendix G of the Guidance Notes and also paragraph 49 of the General Panel Guidelines, submitting units are required to describe how they have sought to enable and/or facilitate achievement of impact arising from their research during the assessment period, and how they are developing and adapting their plans to ensure that they continue to do so. This is distinct from the environment overview statement, which should describe how the units support the conduct and production of research.

33. The impact overview statement should include relevant illustrative explanations with examples and traceable references where possible, rather than broad, general statements. The Panel expects the impact overview statement to include:

- context: main non-academic user groups, beneficiaries or audiences for the unit's research; main types of impacts



specifically relevant to the unit's research, and how these relate to the range of research activities or research groups in the unit.

- approach to impact: the unit's approach to interacting with non-academic users, beneficiaries, or audiences; its approach and mechanism to support the achievement of impacts from its research.
- strategy and plans: how the unit is developing a strategy for achieving impact including its goals and plans for supporting and enabling impact from its current and future research.
- relationship to the case studies: how the selected case studies relate to the submitting unit's approach to achieving impact; how particular case studies exemplify aspects of the unit's approach or inform the development of the unit's approach; moreover, the Panel recognises that impact case studies are underpinned by research over a period longer than the assessment period, and that individual case studies may not directly relate to or necessarily arise from the unit's current approach.

### **Impact Case Study/Studies**

34. Following paragraphs 7.7 (c) and (d), 7.9-7.10 and Appendix H of the Guidance Notes and also paragraph 51 of the General Panel Guidelines, submitting units are required to provide a narrative account in each case study that should be coherent, clearly explaining the relationship between the research and impact, and the nature of the consequent changes or benefits.

35. Each impact case study should include appropriate evidence and indicators that support the claims for the impact achieved, including who and what has/have benefitted. Individual case studies may draw on various evidence and indicators, which may take different forms depending on the type of impact. Evidence should be objective, and as substantial as possible.

36. Examples are provided below to illustrate potential evidence or indicators that may be relevant to the Humanities Panel. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. Equally, there is no implication of priority or importance in the ordering of examples in the list.

## Examples of Evidence or Indicators for Impact

- Quantitative indicators e.g. publication and sales figures, tourism data such as audience figures and visitor numbers at exhibitions, events or performances; generation of new products; audience or attendance figures;
- Critiques or citations in users' documents e.g. citations in non-academic reviews, uptake of research as shown in publications from outside academia;
- Public engagement e.g. media coverage, downloads of linked resources, access web count;
- Policy engagements e.g. evidence of influence on public policy debate and/or practice, formal partnership agreement;
- Independent testimony e.g. formal acknowledgement in non-academic publications, testimony of experts or third parties.

*(Note: Other examples of evidence or indicators for research impact in other jurisdictions may be accessible online such as <<http://results.ref.ac.uk/Results/SelectUoa>> from the United Kingdom.)*

37. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

## **Underpinning Research**

38. The Humanities Panel acknowledges the level of quality required for research underpinning impact cases, i.e. equivalent to at least 2 star (2\*) or international standing, as stipulated in the General Panel Guidelines. The Panel expects the scholars responsible for the research to make their own judgements regarding the level of quality, and to present their argument as to why it meets the required standard. Where necessary, the Panel may review the outputs concerned in order to ensure that the quality of the research is of at least 2 star (2\*).

39. Provided that the Panel is satisfied that the quality threshold has been met, the quality of the underpinning research will not be taken into account in the assessment of the quality of impact. Underpinning research referenced in a case study may also be submitted for assessment under the research output element. The evaluation of the outputs concerned under the impact element is a separate assessment, only for assuring the threshold of underpinning research. In this case, the guidance on output types and criteria for assessing research outputs as stipulated in paragraphs 11-15 and 18-20 above would apply.

## **Criteria and Quality Levels for Assessing Research Impact**

40. Panels will exercise their expert judgement in assessing the quality of each impact submission, and will not judge in terms of the type of research underpinning the impact cases.

41. In assessing impact, the Panel will look for evidence of reach and significance. The Panel will grade each impact submission as a whole and give a rating using one or more of the five categories of quality level, following paragraphs 53-55 of the General Panel Guidelines. In respect of the Humanities Panel, the criteria of reach and significance will be assessed as follows:

- reach: the extent and diversity of the communities, individuals, organisations that have benefitted or been positively affected from the impact, as appropriate for the type of impact. For example, the Panel will evaluate the extent to which society as a whole, communities or individuals have benefitted from a new cultural event.
- significance: the degree of beneficial effects and change to policies, practices, perspectives or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals, or constructive change to the prevention or reduction of harm, risk or cost. For example, the Panel will evaluate the degree of heightened awareness of a social or cultural issue resulting from the publication of a new book.

42. The Panel will make an overall judgement about the reach and significance of impacts, rather than assessing each criterion separately. The criteria will be applied in the assessment of the research impact regardless of the domain to which the impact relates.

### **Section D: Assessment Criteria: Research Environment**

#### **Research Environment**

43. The Humanities Panel will accept submissions on research environment according to paragraphs 57-58 of the General Panel Guidelines. The Panel recognises that excellent research can be undertaken in a wide variety of research structures and environments. The Panel has no pre-formed views regarding the ideal size or organisational structure for a research environment. The Panel will assess each submission based on

what has been presented in relation to the work of the submitting unit in providing and ensuring a good environment.

44. As a research environment submission may relate to a single coherent faculty and equally to multiple departments, submissions may depict the commonalities and dynamics among faculties and departments within the submitting unit, and define their prime activities, how they operate and their main achievements.

### **Environment Overview Statement**

45. Following paragraphs 9.6 (a) and (b), 9.7 and Appendix I of the Guidance Notes, and also paragraph 59 of the General Panel Guidelines, submitting units are required to describe how they have supported the conduct and production of research. This is distinct from the impact overview statement, which should describe how the units encourage and facilitate the achievement of research impact.

46. Within the terms of the Guidance Notes, the environment overview statement might include the following:

- overview: the submission in this part is expected to briefly describe the organisation and structure of the unit, which research groups, if applicable, are covered in the submission and how research is structured across the submitting unit.
- research strategy: evidence of the achievement of strategic aims for research during the assessment period, and details of future strategic aims and goals for research; how these relate to the structure described above and how they will be taken forward; methods for monitoring attainment of targets; new and developing initiatives not yet producing visible outcomes but of strategic importance; identification of priority developmental areas for the unit, including research topics, funding streams, postgraduate research activity, facilities, staffing, administration and management.
- people: staffing policy and evidence of its effectiveness; how individuals at the beginning of their research careers are being supported and integrated into the research culture of the submitting unit; arrangements for sabbatical leave; availability of funding for attendance at international conferences; information on postgraduate recruitment, training and support mechanisms; mechanisms by which standards of research

quality and integrity are maintained, for example ethics procedures and authorship; mechanisms by which social equality and diversity within the unit may be achieved.

- income: information on research funding portfolio; evidence of successful generation of research income; major and prestigious grant awards made by external bodies on a competitive basis.
- infrastructure and facilities: provision and operation of research infrastructure and facilities, including special equipment, library, technical support, space and facilities for research groups and research students; information on joint-university or cross-institution shared or collaborative use of research infrastructure.
- collaborations: information on support for and exemplars of research collaborations; mechanisms to promote collaborative research at local and international level; support for interdisciplinary research collaborations.
- esteem: prestigious/competitive research fellowships held by individual researchers; external prizes and awards in recognition of research achievement; invited keynote lectures.
- contribution to the discipline or research base: exemplars of leadership in the academic community such as advisory board membership; participation in the peer-review process for grants committees or editorial boards.

## **Environment Data**

47. Following paragraphs 9.6 (c) and (d), 9.8 and Appendix J of the Guidance Notes, and also paragraph 60 of the General Panel Guidelines, submitting units are required to provide environment data in conjunction with the environment overview statement. The Panel will consider the environment data within the context of the information provided in the environment overview statement, and within the context of the disciplines concerned. While making no automatic judgement in terms of the scale of any research environment, the Panel recognises that different scales and organisational structures are appropriate to different research areas. In this spirit it will take into account the size of UoAs. It will also have regard to the career stage of individuals within the UoAs.

48. Data on “staff employed by the university proper” and “graduates of research postgraduate programmes” will be used to inform the Panel’s

assessment in relation to “people”. Data on “on-going research grants/contracts” will be used to inform the Panel’s assessment on “income”. Additional quantitative data or indicators that are particularly relevant to the Panel are indicated in paragraph 46 above. Such additional information should be submitted within the appropriate section(s) of the environment overview statement.

### **Criteria and Quality Levels for Assessing Research Environment**

49. Panels will exercise their expert judgement in assessing the merits of each environment submission, and will not judge automatically in terms of the size of the research environment concerned.

50. In assessing environment, the Panel will consider research environment in terms of vitality and sustainability, including its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. The Panel will grade each environment submission with weighting attached to individual aspects as follows:

- strategy – 10%
- people – 15%
- income – 20%
- infrastructure – 20%
- collaboration – 15%
- esteem – 10%
- contribution to the discipline or research base – 10%

The Panel will use one or more of the five categories of quality level as specified in paragraphs 62-64 of the General Panel Guidelines for assessing each aspect within the environment element and by aggregating assessments of individual aspects will form an overall assessment for each environment submission.

51. The Humanities Panel provides the following amplifications to supplement the generic criteria for assessing research environment:

- vitality: the extent to which a unit provides an encouraging and facilitating environment for research, has an effective strategic plan, is engaged with the regional and international research community, is able to attract excellent postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers through a worldwide reputation.

- sustainability: vision for the future and investment in people and infrastructure and, where appropriate for the subject area, the extent to which activity is supported by a portfolio of research funding.

52. The Panel will make an overall judgment about the vitality and sustainability of research environments, rather than assessing vitality and sustainability separately. The Panel understands the quality standards for assessing research environment as set out in paragraph 62 of the General Panel Guidelines.

## **Section E : Working Methods**

### **Use of Sub-Group(s)/Sub-Panel(s)**

53. The Humanities Panel is large and may break into smaller UoA-related groups to facilitate some of its work, but all assessment and grading will be finalised and agreed in plenary meetings of the full panel.

### **Allocation of Work in the Assessment Process**

54. The Convenor, consulting the Deputy Convenor and other panel members as appropriate, will allocate work to members and, if necessary, impact assessors and/or external reviewers in light of their expertise and workload. In allocating the work, the Convenor will take into account any potential conflicts of interest of respective panel members and assessors. All panel members will take into account the requirements of the General Panel Guidelines to ensure that the exercise is conducted fairly and equitably.

55. Panel members will examine the submitted outputs in detail, and put forward a recommendation to the Panel for a collective decision on the final grading. To ensure fairness and consistency, each research output will be assessed in detail by at least two members, one of whom should be a non-local member to the extent possible. For a UoA housed at only one or two local universities, submissions will be assigned to at least one non-local member in order to ensure fair and impartial assessment. Final grading on research outputs will be decided by the Panel as a whole.

56. Subject to conflicts of interest of individual members, the impact and environment submissions will be assessed by panel members and

impact assessors. Final grading of individual submissions will be a collective decision of the Panel.

### **Cross-Panel Referrals**

57. This Panel will follow the procedures in paragraphs 41-43 of the General Panel Guidelines when initiating referrals to other panels and assessing submissions cross-referred by another panel.

58. Generally, research on pedagogy submitted to this Panel will be assessed by panel members or external reviewers with expertise in pedagogy or cross-referred to Panel 13 – Education.

59. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

### **External Advice**

60. This Panel will follow the procedure in paragraph 66 of the General Panel Guidelines when making referrals to external reviewers. External reviews may be sought in the cases for which members of the Panel do not have the necessary expertise, such as for outputs in languages other than English or Chinese.

### **Trial Assessment**

61. With reference to paragraphs 89-91 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel will conduct a trial assessment using a sample of submissions selected from universities' submissions. These sample submissions will be assessed by all members of the Panel. Members will share among themselves any important observations in the assessment to ensure fairness and consistency in the actual assessment. Submissions used for the trial assessment will be assessed afresh during the main assessment period regardless of their assessment results during the trial. The Panel will decide on the sample size after the submissions are received.

### **Panel Feedback Report**

62. With reference to paragraph 71 and Appendices E and F of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel will provide feedback to the UGC after the assessment process. Non-local panel members will be involved in offering comments for an impressionistic international comparison. The Convenor on behalf of the whole Panel will submit the panel feedback report to the UGC by 10 November 2020.