

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Panel 8 – Law
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 Law 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 of the assessment criteria and working methods as they will be applied by the Law Panel. In areas where no additional information has been provided, 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 Law 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 unit of assessment (UoA) under purview. It also provides a common approach to the working methods applied within the Panel.

Section A: Submissions

UoA under the Panel

3. The Law Panel will assess universities' submissions from the following UoA –

<u>Code</u>	<u>UoA</u>
19	law

4. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

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 the boundaries between individual UoAs, 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. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Assignment of Eligible Academic Staff in Each UoA

7. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

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 Law 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 the 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 the output has been made available electronically or in a physical form.

13. Forms of research outputs that are admissible and specifically relevant to the Law 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 and book chapters.
- Journal articles.
- Policy submissions and reports.

14. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

15. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Double-weighting of Research Outputs

16. Paragraphs 29-31 of the General Panel Guidelines indicate that in exceptional cases a submitting university may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted in the assessment. The basic criterion for double-weighting is that the output, in the judgment of the Panel, should have required the research effort needed to produce at least two single outputs.

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 request.

Co-authored/Co-produced Outputs

18. The Panel affirms the principles and arrangements for 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 grade 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 Law Panel provides the following amplifications of the criteria of assessing research outputs –

- originality refers to the extent to which the output advances or applies new methodologies or provides new perspectives or conclusions on a subject, or provides new data, evidence or arguments relevant to existing perspectives or conclusions.
- significance refers to the influence of the output in the academic field.
- rigour refers to the intellectual coherence of, and soundness of the arguments in, the output, and to the robustness and appropriateness of the methodologies deployed.

24. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Metrics/Citation Data

25. Pursuant to paragraph 24 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel will not use metrics or citation data to inform the assessment of outputs.

26. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Additional Information on Research Outputs

27. Other than the information required on research outputs as specified in the Guidance Notes, the panel requires –

- (a) in relation to each co-authored output, a statement of no more than 100 words to inform the Panel’s judgment on the submitting author’s contribution to the output.
- (b) in relation to subsequent editions, a statement of no more than 100 words indicating significant differences between the submitted edition and the immediately previous edition.

Section C: Assessment Criteria: Research Impact

Range of Impacts

28. The Law 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 impacts within its remit can be manifested in various ways and may occur in a wide range of spheres whether locally, regionally or internationally.

30. Examples are provided to illustrate the range of potential impacts from research across the Law Panel in List A. These examples are indicative only, and are not exhaustive or exclusive. Equally, there is no implication of priority or importance in the ordering of examples in the list.

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 or unlisted impacts.

List A: Examples of Impact

- Contributing to widening access to justice.
- Influencing the development or application of law by courts.
- Influencing the agenda, methods or substance of law reform.
- Informing or influencing practice, policy or law in relation to discrimination on grounds such as religion, gender, sexual preference, race, ethnicity, language and so on.
- Informing or influencing the law, policy or practice of environmental regulation, or management of natural resources or biodiversity.
- Helping professionals and organisations adapt to changing socio-economic, political and legal environments.
- Contributing to continuing personal and professional development.
- Preserving, conserving and presenting cultural heritage.
- Influencing the design and delivery of curriculum and syllabi in schools and other educational institutions where the impact extends significantly beyond the submitting university, for example through the widespread use of text books, primary sources or an IT resource in education.
- Contributing to a wider public understanding of law, legal processes and legal institutions.
- Informing or influencing the development of expert systems in areas such as law enforcement, legal compliance and so on.

- Influencing the methods, ideas or ethics of the legal profession.
- Providing expert advice to governments, regulators, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector locally or internationally, and thereby influencing law, policy or practice.
- Engaging with and mediating between NGOs and charities in Hong Kong or internationally to influence their activities.
- Contributing to widening 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.)

Impact Overview Statement

32. In preparing impact case studies, submitting units should refer to paragraphs 7.7 (a) and (b), 7.8 and Appendix G of the Guidance Notes and also paragraph 49 of the General Panel Guidelines.

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

Impact Case Study(ies)

34. In drafting case studies submitting units should pay careful attention to 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.

35. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

36. Examples are provided in Table B to illustrate potential evidence or indicators that may be particularly relevant to the Law 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.

Table B: Examples of Evidence or Indicators for Impact

Quantitative indicators	Publication and sales figures, funding, generation of new products, number of participants.
Reviews or citations in users documents	Citations and reviews in non-academic users' documents such as court judgments, counsels' written submissions to courts, policy documents, reports of law reform bodies, and civil-society reports.
Public engagement	Media coverage, downloads of linked resources, web access count.
Policy engagements	Influence on public policy debate and practice, formal partnership agreements.
Independent testimony	Acknowledgement in publications, testimony of experts or third parties.
Formal evaluations	Professional evaluation, formal peer review.

(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 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 may review the outputs concerned in order to ensure the quality of the underpinning research is at least 2 star (2*).

39. Research outputs underpinning a case study may also be separately submitted for assessment as research outputs in their own right in accordance with paragraphs 16-24 of the General Panel Guidelines.

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 impacts, the Panel will look for evidence of reach and significance, and 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. The Law Panel provides the following amplifications to supplement the generic criteria for assessing research impact –

- reach will be understood in terms of the extent and diversity of the communities, environments, individuals, organisations or any other beneficiaries that have benefited or been affected. In considering reach, the potential domain for an impact will be taken into consideration. In other words, reach will not be assessed in purely geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries, but rather in terms of the extent to which the potential number or groups of beneficiaries have been affected. It is, for example, recognised that a policy issue affecting Hong Kong uniquely has that region as the potential domain for the impact, and that defines the boundaries of the possible reach achievable.
- significance will be understood in terms of the degree to which the impact has enriched, influenced, informed or changed policies, opportunities, perspectives or practices of communities, individuals or organisations.

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 Law Panel will accept submissions on research environment according to paragraphs 57-58 of the General Panel Guidelines. 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. Note that evidence of attention to achieving a suitable level diversity in the make-up of a research environment will be regarded positively.

44. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Environment Overview Statement

45. In preparing environment overview statements submitting units should pay careful attention to paragraphs 9.6 (a) and (b), 9.7 and Appendix I of the Guidance Notes, and also paragraph 59 of the General Panel Guidelines.

46. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Environment Data

47. In providing environment data submitting units should follow paragraphs 9.6 (c) and (d), 9.8 and Appendix J of the Guidance Notes, and also paragraph 60 of the General Panel Guidelines.

48. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

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 scale of 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 as a whole with a profile rating using one or more of five categories of quality level as set out in paragraphs 62-64 of the General Panel Guidelines.

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

- vitality refers primarily to the extent to which a unit provides an encouraging and facilitating environment for research.
- sustainability refers primarily to the unit's vision for its future research environment and its capacity to support and develop the research activities of the unit in the long-run.

52. The Panel will make an overall judgement about the vitality and sustainability of research environments, rather than assessing each criterion separately.

Section E : Working Methods

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

53. No sub-group or sub-panel will be formed within the Law Panel. The final assessment and grading will be decided by the Panel as a whole.

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 also take into account any potential conflicts of interest of respective panel members and assessors. All panel members will take account of 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 will normally be a non-local member. Final grading of 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 members of the whole Panel and the 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. Normally, research on pedagogy and education issues submitted to this Panel will be assessed by panel members or external reviewers with expertise in pedagogy.

59. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

External Advice

60. This Panel will follow the procedure in paragraph 66 of the General Panel Guidelines when referral to external reviewers for expert advice becomes necessary for panel assessment.

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 about 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 without regard to 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 to inform 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.