

University Grants Committee

Research Assessment Exercise 2026

Draft Guidance Notes

Introduction

This document provides guidance on the procedures and information required for making submissions to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2026. The document is also accessible on the University Grants Committee (UGC) website at <<https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/activity/research/rae/rae2026.html>>.

Distribution

Each UGC-funded university should disseminate this document to every member of its academic staff, and to every member of its administrative staff responsible for research policy and support, in order that the aims, principles and methodology of RAE are fully understood. Universities may ask their staff members to access this document from the UGC website.

Enquiries

All enquiries should be routed through respective RAE coordinating offices of universities.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is part of the University Grants Committee (UGC)'s commitment to **promote** world-class research and drive excellence in the UGC-funded universities through a comprehensive peer review on research quality. Similar to RAE 2020, RAE 2026 will assess research outputs, impact and environment, using international benchmarks to **inform** universities' areas of relative strengths and identify areas and opportunities for development. RAE 2026 results will be used to inform the distribution of part of the research portion of the UGC Block Grant to universities in a publicly accountable way.

1.2 RAE 2026 will continue to be an expert review exercise assessing universities' submissions, including research outputs, impact and environment, during the period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025. RAE 2026 makes reference to the arrangements in RAE 2020 in respect of staff eligibility, panel formation, submission and assessment of research outputs, and handling of RAE results. The exercise measures the research quality of universities by unit of assessment, not individual staff. Thirteen RAE panels covering 41 units of assessment will be formed to conduct the assessments.

1.3 Universities will be invited to provide data on respective staff, research outputs, impact and environment corresponding to respective units of assessment. The census date for reported data is 30 September 2025. Universities' submissions for RAE 2026 will be due in December 2025 (see paragraph 12.2 below). The RAE panels will assess the submissions in 2026.

1.4 RAE 2026 has the following key features distinct from RAE 2020 –

- (a) the respective weighting of research outputs, impact and environment are adjusted from 70:15:15 in RAE 2020 to **65:20:15** in RAE 2026;
- (b) increased panel size by 10%, including local and non-local international scholars/experts, research end-users and professionals in respective fields and with scope to nominate an “inter-disciplinary champion”;
- (c) while the special consideration/exemption to eligible academic staff who have been absent for a prolonged period, including those on leave for health, parental or other compassionate reasons, on a case by case basis will continue, universities may also submit cases with strong justifications if individual academic staff's research output has been significantly disrupted due to the coronavirus pandemic, such as where travel restrictions impeded the type of fieldwork critical to work in that discipline for UGC's consideration on an exceptional basis;
- (d) (i) University's Research Strategy Statement be incorporated into the new University-level Environment Overview Statement, and (ii) Impact Overview Statement be combined with the existing Unit-of-Assessment-level Environment Overview Statement. The two Environment Overview Statements (one at university level and the other at unit of assessment level) will provide an overview of the

university's context and mission, strategy for research and enabling impact, research culture, institutional-level resources and facilities available to support research and impact, etc.;

- (e) in addition to the results in the form of overall quality profiles and sub-profiles of individual elements of assessment by unit of assessment and by panel at both university's level and sector-wide level, sector-wide comments by each of the panels will be released for public information, while individual universities will continue to receive their own RAE results in respect of research outputs at research area level under confidential cover; and
- (f) in addition to impact submissions, research output data and environment submissions will be published by unit of assessment and by university for public information.

1.5 The RAE results are planned for announcement in early 2027 and will inform the UGC's allocation of research funding to reward, support and encourage more excellent research conducted by the eight UGC-funded universities. Funding allocation will be formulated after the completion of RAE 2026 and will be executed in a fair and publicly accountable manner, taking into account sustainability and stability of institutional funding.

II. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF RAE

(A) Background

2.1 Since 1993, UGC has adopted a zero-based funding model which allocates funding to meet the objectives that each university is expected to accomplish during the funding period, and according to the quality of its recent performance.

2.2 UGC funding for each university¹ is made up of three main elements: provision for teaching (about 78%); provision for research (about 20%); and provision for professional activity (about 2%). It is the UGC's intention that public funds in support of research should reward excellence as reflected by performance, so that sufficient funding will be provided for effective pursuit of world class research. There is therefore a need to assess research performance to determine the funding level.

2.3 RAE is thus part of the UGC's performance-based assessment process. It aims to assess the quality of research at each of the UGC-funded universities by unit of assessment (rather than by individual staff members) as one of the key factors for allocating part of the research portion of the institutional recurrent grant in a publicly accountable way. In essence, RAE measures the research quality within a university in comparison with a comparable discipline in other universities (e.g. History with History, not History with Physics), using international benchmarks. While RAE will inform the distribution of part of the research portion of the institutional recurrent Block Grant amongst universities, each university has full discretion to allocate such funding within the university.

¹ Combining both "existing pot" and "new pot" as a "single pot" of money.

2.4 So far, six RAEs have taken place in 1993, 1996, 1999, 2006, 2014 and 2020. In the first RAE, a quality threshold which was not overly stringent was used. The second and third RAEs were built on the basis of the previous RAEs, but giving more recognition to the call for more diversity. The threshold standard was raised in RAE 2006 to quality level of excellence appropriate to the discipline in Hong Kong and showing evidence of international excellence. Similar to RAE 2006, RAEs 2014 and 2020 benchmarked against international standards with sharpened measurement of research quality, especially at the top end.

2.5 In retrospect, RAE has been effective as a means of –

- (a) promoting research excellence;
- (b) inducing improvement in research;
- (c) confirming the standard and quality of Hong Kong's research;
- (d) enhancing the public understanding of and support for research activities;
- (e) informing funding; and
- (f) upholding public accountability.

(B) UGC's Policy on RAE

2.6 The pursuit of research in the UGC-funded universities has two objectives –

- (a) to participate in the global endeavour to extend human understanding thus keeping the knowledge base in the universities current; and
- (b) to encourage research tied to the interests and needs of the community.

2.7 With a view to incentivising the conduct of research of local relevance with economic and social benefits, while recognising the impact brought about by universities' research, and taking into account universities' strategy, resources and infrastructure in respect of research support, research impact and research environment have been included in the assessment since RAE 2020.

2.8 Although RAE is based on, amongst others, individual research outputs, UGC wishes to stress that it is not intended to be an assessment of individuals' research performance. Rather, it aims to assess universities' research performance by unit of assessment. A subject RAE panel will produce a quality profile for each unit of assessment. Results of individual units of assessment in RAE 2026 will be published without disclosing the identities of individual academic staff members.

2.9 To avoid doubt, it must be stated that the aim of RAE is not to produce a league table of the UGC-funded universities. In fact, the quality profiles of units of assessment cannot be converted into a simple linear scale. Nevertheless, the quality

profiles of the various units of assessment of a university will delineate its areas of relative strength. Universities should not use the inferred information for internal evaluation of the performance of the researchers concerned, because staff appraisal must involve dimensions other than research, however broadly defined. Even for research alone, methodologies that are appropriate for assessment in the aggregate for funding purposes may not be appropriate for the assessment of the performance of individuals for purposes of personnel decisions.

2.10 UGC wishes to strongly emphasise that RAE does not imply a disproportionate interest in research to the possible detriment of teaching quality. Both teaching and research are important and inter-related elements in higher education. Indeed, the bulk of the recurrent grants allocated to universities is and should continue to be attributed to teaching. Nevertheless, it is necessary for UGC to adopt different approaches to assess the funding requirements for teaching and research in view of the different nature of these activities.

(C) Objectives and Principles

2.11 In September 2023, UGC decided on the Framework for RAE 2026 taking into account comments and feedback from universities in the consultation. The Framework sets out the parameters and key definitions for the exercise. Against this background, the objectives of RAE 2026 are to –

- (a) assess the research quality of UGC-funded universities to provide assurance of their research performance using international standards;
- (b) identify excellent research across the spectrum of submissions made by universities in order to drive excellence and encourage world-class research, and confirm the standard and quality of Hong Kong's research in the international research arena;
- (c) produce assessment outcomes to inform the distribution of part of the Research Portion of the UGC Block Grant in a publicly accountable manner, and provide direction to develop/enhance the research funding schemes administered by UGC/Research Grants Council (RGC);
- (d) provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of how this investment has translated into benefits and impact beyond academia, thereby gaining public understanding of and support for research activities;
- (e) provide robust benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks for use within the UGC sector and for public information;
- (f) delineate universities' areas of relative strength and identify emerging research areas and opportunities for development; and
- (g) provide evidence on the quality of research environment of UGC-funded universities in order to help attract worldwide research talents to Hong Kong.

2.12 The principles that guide the conduct of RAE 2026 are –

- (a) **International standards** – The RAE is a criterion-referenced exercise against quality levels as defined by international standards of research excellence. To maintain the credibility of the assessment process, international experts and members with discipline-specific expertise and knowledge of local conditions will be engaged;
- (b) **Fairness** – The RAE adopts a single framework which underpins the submission and assessment process across all disciplines, with common rules and procedures, standard definitions, and broad generic criteria. The quality of each submission will be judged on its own merit and not in terms of its category, medium or language. All types of research will be treated equally;
- (c) **Consistency** – The assessment founded upon rigorous expert review will apply the same quality standards across and within panels. Panels’ professional judgement should be consistent within the overall framework of assessment, and complemented by calibration and development of panel-specific assessment criteria and working methods with respect to the differences in the nature of research across the disciplinary spectrum;
- (d) **Inclusiveness** – It is important to maintain an inclusive view on the scope of research (see paragraph 2.13 below). The RAE should include elements that appropriately measure the quality of a broad range of research in the sector, impact of research in a wider socio-economic context, and research environment taking into account the universities’ strategy, resources and infrastructure that support research;
- (e) **Differentiation** – The RAE measures the research quality of universities by unit of assessment, not individual staff, in a comparable discipline. The measurement should be sharpened to differentiate excellence at the top end, and to delineate universities’ relative research strengths and areas for further improvement;
- (f) **Efficiency** – The methodology and implementation of the RAE should be as effective and efficient as possible with a view to minimising the costs, both to the universities and the Government, and burden of the exercise while delivering a robust and defensible process;
- (g) **Transparency** – The credibility of the RAE should be reinforced by transparency in the process through which decisions are made. Relevant stakeholders will be duly consulted and informed throughout the exercise. In line with the principle of public accountability, the operational details, such as the assessment methodology and criteria, and the results will be published for public access; and

- (h) **Validity and Reliability** – The exercise should aim to reach standards of validity and reliability expected by the Hong Kong academic and research community.

(D) Scope of Research

2.13 UGC is of the view that research is not an isolated activity; rather it should support and illuminate teaching and learning. UGC considers it important to maintain an inclusive view in defining the scope of research for the purposes of assessment of research activities. In this regard, the broadened meaning of scholarship as defined by the Carnegie Foundation continues to be a guiding reference for RAE 2026, that is, the discovery of knowledge, the integration of knowledge, the application of knowledge and the sharing of knowledge through teaching are regarded as different forms of scholarship on par with each other, so that high quality research in all forms of scholarship including inter-disciplinary and collaborative research will be encouraged and assessed as equally important across a broad front. This will help address any perceived bias in favour of particular type(s) of research.

2.14 In the context of RAE 2026, research is defined as the process leading to new knowledge, insights, methodologies, solutions and/or inventions. It may involve systematic investigation, use of existing materials, synthesis, analysis, creation of artefacts or concepts, design, performance, and/or innovation.

2.15 A brief definition of the four kinds of scholarship, adapted from the two Carnegie Foundation’s Special Reports entitled “Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate” and “Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate” is at [Appendix A](#).

III. ELEMENTS AND UNITS OF ASSESSMENT

(A) Elements of Assessment

3.1 RAE 2026 consists of three elements of assessment covering a period of six years from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025. The respective weighting of the three elements of assessment are as follows –

- (a) Research outputs – 65%
- (b) Impact – 20%
- (c) Environment – 15%

3.2 The census date for reported data is 30 September 2025.

(B) Units of Assessment

3.3 Assessment of universities’ submissions will be made on a unit of assessment basis. The list of “Units of Assessment” for RAE 2026 is at [Appendix B](#).

3.4 Since RAE covers the whole range of disciplines, with different types of research submissions, the units of assessment are grouped and placed under separate panels for assessment. The unit of assessment forms the basis of the data for assessment. The grouping of the units of assessment with respective RAE panels is also listed in [Appendix B](#).

(C) Assessment Panels

3.5 Each RAE panel will consist of mainly international non-local academics and some local academics in the relevant disciplines, and also local “research end-users” and professionally qualified people from business, government, industry and the arts. Members will be appointed on an **ad personam** basis and will be specifically required to refrain from representing the interests of their own institutions. The standards will thus ultimately be informed and the judgments made by peer review of expert panels and not by UGC.

3.6 To ensure that individual submissions including non-traditional items and inter-disciplinary research receive adequate attention, sub-group(s)/sub-panel(s) under each panel with suitable membership (including members drawn from outside academia) may be set up, and/or at least one member in each RAE panel may be nominated as the “inter-disciplinary champion” with specific role to ensure thorough and appropriate handling of any inter-disciplinary submissions, including any separate evaluation that may be required.

3.7 UGC will strive to ensure broad comparability across disciplines, but it will be up to each panel, with its subject expertise and knowledge of local circumstances, to translate the general definitions into more precise benchmarks appropriate to each discipline or group of disciplines. The panels will also be expected to interpret the guidelines with due regard to the nature of those subjects that may, by their nature, necessarily have a strong regional focus.

IV. ELIGIBLE ACADEMIC STAFF IN EACH UNIT OF ASSESSMENT

(A) Staff Eligibility Criteria

4.1 UGC considers that the sustainability of universities’ research capacity is one of the key factors that determines the long-term research development of the higher education sector. In this regard, UGC has decided that academic staff in each unit of assessment must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for submitting research outputs for RAE [2026](#) –

- (a) holding a full-time paid appointment at a UGC-funded university for a continuous period of at least 36 months covering the census date, i.e. 30 September [2025](#), provided that the employment start date was no later than 1 September [2023](#); and

- (b) [as at 1 September 2023](#), wholly funded by the university proper² for degree or higher degree work and are within staff grades of “Professor” to “Assistant Lecturer” as defined for the purpose of the Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) (see [Appendix C](#)).

Without prejudice to the institutional autonomy with respect to nomenclature of staff grades and titles, universities should include all staff members who meet all the staff eligibility criteria for submission. The staff eligibility criteria should be applied consistently in all submitting universities and across disciplines for RAE 2026. The UGC Secretariat would follow up on any anomaly by seeking explanation from the universities concerned.

(B) Assignment of Eligible Academic Staff to Units of Assessment

4.2 Universities are required to submit the following lists of academic staff to the UGC Secretariat by [1 December 2025](#) –

- (a) a list of all academic staff who meet the criteria as set out in paragraph 4.1 (a) and (b) regardless of whether they intend to submit research items for assessment, and/or whether they are active in research. All eligible academic staff of a university will be taken into account in arriving at the university’s results in RAE 2026. Universities are required to provide a 16-digit alphanumeric code of Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) (e.g. 0000-0002-1825-0097) for each eligible academic staff in the RAE 2026 submission. The purpose of which is to serve as a starting point for building up a central data registry of researchers in the higher education sector in Hong Kong. The ORCID information collected will not be used for assessment in RAE 2026 and will be withheld from access by the RAE panels; and
- (b) a separate list of any full-time academic staff wholly funded by the university proper² for degree or higher degree work within Staff Grades of “A” to “I” as defined at [Appendix C](#) (as at the census date of 30 September 2025) who are not reported in the list in (a) above. Staff on the separate list should be non-eligible academic staff for RAE 2026. Universities are required to provide explanations for the staff members to be included on this list, such as those who are in post covering the census date but do not fulfil the employment start date requirement or those who do not hold a continuous appointment of at least 36 months, and information on the staff’s track record in applying for RGC grants.

4.3 Universities are required to assign each of their eligible academic staff (including those staff on joint appointment by two or more departments in the same university) to a research area and hence the corresponding unit of assessment as listed out at [Appendix D](#). For the purpose of making a submission by a unit of assessment, a university should assign at least three eligible academic staff to the concerned unit of

² Excluding schools/arms of the continuing education and professional training and other analogous organisations.

assessment. Submissions of an eligible staff under a unit of assessment will primarily be assessed by the subject RAE panel as set out in [Appendix B](#). Where appropriate, submissions will be referred to other unit(s) of assessment with the relevant expertise for assessment to ensure that inter-disciplinary research will receive adequate attention and be evaluated by members with suitable expertise (see paragraph 5.2 below).

4.4 Inclusion of staff should only make reference to their job categories and the above eligibility criteria, and not to whether they are active in research. Justification has to be provided in respect of the following –

- (a) any staff carrying titles that would superficially suggest inclusion in Staff Grades “A” to “I” as defined at [Appendix C](#) (e.g. “Professor”, “Assistant Lecturer”) who are nevertheless not included in the list of eligible academic staff; or
- (b) staff carrying titles that are significantly different from the standard ones for Staff Grades “A” to “I” as defined at [Appendix C](#) (e.g. “research officer”, “director”) who are nevertheless included in the list of eligible academic staff.

Universities’ assignment of eligible academic staff to a research area and respective units of assessment can be subject to re-assignment by UGC in case of an anomaly, such as the assignment of certain staff members to a research area and unit of assessment and yet a major part or even all of their research outputs are in the field of other research area(s) or unit(s) of assessment or RAE panel(s). The re-assignment will be based on the recommendations of relevant RAE panel(s) and clarifications made by universities concerned, if any. The re-assignment made will be final in forming the RAE results and no appeal on this will be considered.

4.5 An academic staff member who meets all the eligibility criteria as set out in paragraph 4.1 above should be counted as an eligible academic staff regardless of any paid or unpaid leave he/she has taken during the assessment period. In exceptional cases, special consideration/exemption may be granted by UGC if an eligible academic staff has been absent for a prolonged period [or whose research output has been significantly disrupted due to coronavirus pandemic](#), on a case by case basis, under the scope as set out below –

- (a) the staff member concerned must be an eligible academic staff who was/has been absent [or whose research work has been significantly disrupted](#) for a prolonged period (as specified in (b) below) during the assessment period, i.e. from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025;
- (b) the period of absence/[disruption](#) should last (i) continuously for no less than 70 calendar days; or (ii) accumulatively for no less than 70 days in total, in at most three split periods with in-between breaks of each up to a maximum of seven days;
- (c) the absence/[disruption](#) significantly constrained the staff member’s ability to produce four research outputs during the assessment period;

- (d) the prolonged leave of absence must not be taken on/[the disruption must not due to](#) vocational grounds (e.g. sabbatical, taking up public service or institutional administration); and
- (e) the prolonged leave of absence/[disruption](#) could be on medical (e.g. sickness or injury), parental [and other caregiving](#) (e.g. pregnancy, [taking care of a child](#)), societal (e.g. [travel restrictions or quarantine measures impeding fieldwork critical to research in that discipline](#)) or compassionate (e.g. taking care of a sick family member) grounds or other compelling and exceptional personal circumstances judged acceptable by UGC.

4.6 Universities may request for special consideration/exemption for individual staff members in writing to UGC by [31 July 2025](#). Request for each case supported by the respective Head of University should include case details, justifications and documentary proof addressing to the conditions in (a) to (e) above, as appropriate. UGC will decide on each case and inform relevant universities of its decision by end October [2025](#). Late request will not be considered. UGC's decision will be final and no appeal will normally be considered.

V. SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH OUTPUTS FOR ASSESSMENT

(A) What to Submit

5.1 Universities are invited to submit materials about research outputs in respect of eligible staff in each unit of assessment. Such a submission should reach the UGC Secretariat by [15 December 2025](#).

5.2 The research submissions will normally be assessed by the RAE panel that is designated for the relevant unit of assessment as set out at [Appendix B](#). All research output(s) in respect of each eligible staff member will be submitted to his/her assigned unit of assessment. Where a research output is inter-disciplinary in nature, the submitting university will need to flag this and indicate the primary field and secondary field of the output for relevant panel's consideration. In the event that an output is deemed to fall into the expertise of other unit(s) of assessment (under the same or different panel), the subject panel will make referral to other unit(s) of assessment with the relevant expertise for assessment. The final judgment on cross-panel referral should rest with the Convenor of the panel to which the output is submitted. The final score of the output will be logged into the unit of assessment to which it is submitted or re-assigned (see paragraph 4.4 above).

5.3 Each eligible staff should have a **maximum of four** research outputs meeting the definition in paragraphs 5.7-5.10 below within the assessment period from 1 October [2019](#) to 30 September [2025](#) for submission by the university. In case of an individual output bearing multiple publication dates, the date on which it is firstly published or made publicly available, be it online or printed, should be counted. If an output was published or made publicly available online prior to printed publication, the online publication date should be counted.

5.4 UGC recognises that research, even as broadly defined in this exercise, only represents part of a university’s activities, and understands that there may be valid reasons why some valuable and respected members of staff may not, for the assessment period in question, contribute to the university’s research outputs, such as staff could be heavily involved in public service, or in institutional administration. Notwithstanding that they are outside the scope of exceptional cases in paragraph 4.5 above, any individual university is free to decide, in consultation with the staff concerned, not to make a submission, and no adverse record should or will be attached to any individual in respect of whom such a decision is taken. Nevertheless, non-submission of any research outputs in respect of each eligible staff member will be deemed to result in four “missing” items (see paragraph 6.1 below).

5.5 **Universities can choose to submit fewer than four research outputs or the number of outputs as specified in paragraph 5.6 below per eligible staff.** In such a case, the missing item(s) will be deemed as “unclassified” in the assessment (see paragraph 6.1 below).

(B) New Researchers

5.6 New researchers present a special case since they may not have had time to produce significant or publishable outputs according to the RAE definition. Therefore, all eligible staff who first took up a full-time academic appointment (in Hong Kong or elsewhere) on or after 1 August 2021 will be given special consideration. Whereas an academic, other than a new researcher or a staff member for whom special consideration/exemption is granted by UGC, submitting fewer than four research outputs will have any missing output deemed as “unclassified”, a new researcher may reduce the number of outputs without the reduced item(s) being deemed as “unclassified” according to the following scales. However, a new researcher can choose to submit up to four research outputs if he/she so wishes.

Duration of appointment prior to the census date	Date of appointment #	Number of outputs to be submitted
39 to 50 months	Between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022 inclusive	3 or 4
27 to 38 months	Between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023 inclusive	2 to 4
Less than 26 months	On or after 1 August 2023	1 to 4

“Date of appointment” refers to the date the academic first took up a full-time academic appointment in Hong Kong or elsewhere in staff grades “A” to “I” in Hong Kong as defined at [Appendix C](#), or an appointment not below assistant professorship or equivalent outside Hong Kong.

(C) Definition of Research Output

5.7 All research outputs submitted for assessment must meet all of the following criteria –

- (a) the output contains an element of new insights or innovation;
- (b) the output and its process contribute to scholarship or transfer of knowledge, generating impact to academia or society at large; and

- (c) the output is publicly accessible or effectively shared in the profession.

5.8 Provided that all the above criteria are fully met, it does not matter whether or not –

- (a) the research activities leading to the output items submitted for assessment are funded by UGC. There is no differentiation of funding sources for research outputs in the evaluation; or
- (b) the output items were produced in or outside Hong Kong and/or whether the eligible staff concerned were employed by the submitting universities at the time of publication or production of the outputs.

5.9 The following cases are considered to fall within acceptable research outputs as defined above –

- (a) any publication, patent awarded or published patent applications, artefact, etc, provided it –
 - (i) was published or made publicly available in other form within the assessment period; or
 - (ii) is not yet published, but officially accepted for publication (without any prior condition for its publication) within the assessment period as set out in paragraph 5.3, and supported by a letter of acceptance; or
- (b) other forms of output that was published or made publicly accessible or effectively shared within the profession, e.g. performance recording, video tape, computer software programme, architectural drawings, or any creative work that can be evaluated for merit and an assessment obtained.

5.10 Proprietary research that does not result in output that is accessible to the public and the profession is not accepted as an output for assessment. However, output items of exhibitions and demonstrations relating to proprietary research which: (i) are accessible to the public or the profession, (ii) are non-traditional output for assessment, and (iii) contain enough information for evaluation, may be submitted for assessment. PhD dissertations are not accepted as outputs for assessment.

5.11 Individual panels would decide, by exercising their professional judgement and having regard to the definition of research output, whether any other type of submitted item, including a review article, translation or textbook, would be accepted on the basis of the above criteria. A list of output types to be adopted for data submission is at [Appendix E](#).

5.12 To avoid doubt, UGC wishes to stress that output items need **not** be restricted to papers in journals, and **all output items will be assessed without regard to the medium or language of publication**. In order to facilitate the assessment

process, universities are required to alert UGC in their submissions if any output item is non-English, so that appropriate assistance can be identified in good time.

5.13 To minimise the financial and administrative burden in clearing copyright, manuscripts of the final accepted version of research outputs (see paragraph 5.9 (a) (ii) above) may be submitted for assessment if this is allowed by the copyright owner, but it is not appropriate to submit the version before peer review, as this may differ considerably from the published version.

(D) Double-Weighting of Research Outputs

5.14 Universities may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted (i.e. be counted as two outputs) in the assessment. No single output may be counted as more than double-weighted. Given that a maximum of four outputs may be submitted in respect of each eligible staff member, no more than two outputs in respect of an individual staff member should be double-weighted. When requesting double-weight, the university must reduce the number of outputs in respect of the individual staff member by one, but may submit a “reserve” output for each double-weighting request. The panels will decide whether to double-weight each output so requested. Where the panel does not accept the case for double-weighting, it will count the submitted output as a single output, and grade the “reserve” output as well. If no reserve output is submitted, the missing item will be deemed as “unclassified”.

5.15 There is no presumption that double-weighted outputs will be assessed at a higher quality. The following procedure/criteria are relevant –

- (a) the university requesting the double-weighting of a research output should justify the request in a statement not more than 100 words as to why the output merits double-weighting, e.g. how the research output (e.g. its scale or scope) required research effort equivalent to that required to produce two or more single outputs;
- (b) journal articles, book chapters or conference papers are not normally permitted to be double-weighted, whereas outputs such as single-authored monographs may be considered without ruling out other types of outputs such as publications based on patents or non-traditional outputs; and
- (c) co-authored items may in principle be identified and double-weighted by one or more of their authors, bearing in mind that the double-weighting request should apply to the effort of the author of the submitting university. However, please see the rule in paragraph 5.16 on multiple submission of a co-authored item by the same university.

(E) Co-authorship

5.16 A co-authored (or jointly-produced) research output submitted by different universities may be accepted and counted as one output for each of the universities as long as the co-author of each submitting university has made a

substantial contribution to the co-authored output. Submission of a co-authored research output in respect of two or more academics within the same institution (irrespective of whether or not they are from one or more units of assessment) will however be counted as one output under the submitting university. If a co-authored research output is submitted by a university under the name of more than one academic within the university, the university needs to flag this and specify the academic (i.e. one of the co-authors) under whose name the output is submitted for rating, so that the relevant panel will rate it once, whereas the submission of the same item under the other academic(s)'s name will be deemed as "unclassified". If two or more panels are involved, the panels will collectively decide how to rate such a co-authored item from the same university.

(F) Information Required for Submission on Research Output

5.17 In respect of each output item, universities are required to provide access to the full set of the output to be assessed by panel members and external reviewers. In addition, the following information should be provided –

- (a) data on each output item (e.g. title, publication date, authorship, type, indicators for inter-disciplinary and/or non-English submission, etc);
- (b) keywords and an abstract³ of the output in English;
- (c) in the case of double-weighting request as described in paragraphs 5.14 and 5.15, a statement up to 100 words [to justify why the output merits double-weighting](#);
- (d) in the case of non-traditional outputs as described in paragraph 5.9 (b), the submitting university must provide additional information up to 300 words on (i) novelty of the work; (ii) the deliverables; and (iii) the dissemination method. Particular attention should be drawn to the following –
 - for submissions relating to performing arts, such as drama, music composition, stage performance or a piece of creative work, including documentary film, they should include recordings which need to be made available to the panel members and external reviewers; and
 - for submissions in the areas of design, buildings, multi-media, or visual arts, photographs of the originals must include dimensions and good reproduction;
- (e) [where an individual panel considers it necessary, a brief statement of no more than 100 words for each output item to specify the originality and significance of the output, e.g. the amount and nature of overlaps between research outputs, the relationship between different outputs](#)

³ "Abstract" refers to the originally published or publicly made available abstract or table of content of the output in English depending on the respective output type, and the submission of which is not applicable to non-traditional outputs. Details will be provided to universities separately.

on the same topic, the new elements in a new version of a research output submitted in any previous RAE, etc. Individual panels will specify whether this 100-word statement is necessary in the Panel-Specific Guidelines on Assessment Criteria and Working Methods; and

- (f) where an individual panel considers appropriate, documentary evidence to demonstrate the academic impact of the research outputs. Specifically, whether metrics/citation data are to be used to inform the peer review process will be decided by each of the RAE panels. If a panel wishes to use metrics to inform its decision, it will advise universities on the rating system and quantifiable parameters. Otherwise, no metric/citation data should be included in the submission.

5.18 Panels will provide further guidance on the research outputs expected for submission. If a RAE panel requires any additional information, such request will be relayed to the university(ies) concerned through the UGC Secretariat for further arrangement.

VI. EVALUATION GUIDELINES ON RESEARCH OUTPUTS

6.1 Research outputs will be assessed in terms of their originality, significance and rigour with reference to international standards and be graded into five categories –

- (a) 4 star (4*): world leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour;
- (b) 3 star (3*): internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour;
- (c) 2 star (2*): international standing in terms of originality, significance and rigour;
- (d) 1 star (1*): research outputs of limited originality, significance and rigour; and
- (e) unclassified (u/c): not reaching the standard of 1 star; or not regarded as research outputs in RAE 2026; or missing item in the submission.

6.2 “Originality” will be understood as the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. Research outputs that demonstrate originality may do one or more of the following: produce and interpret new empirical findings or new material; propose new paradigm shift; engage with new and/or complex problems; develop innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques; show imaginative and creative scope; provide new arguments and/or new forms of expression, formal innovations, interpretations and/or insights; collect and engage with novel types of data; and/or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice, and new forms of expression.

6.3 “Significance” will be understood as the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.

6.4 “Rigour” will be understood as the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies.

6.5 The five categorisations are broadly defined as follows –

(a) a panel will grade a research output as four star “world leading” in terms of originality, significance and rigour if the panel sees evidence of, or potential for, some of the following characteristics:

- agenda setting / primary or essential point of reference;
- great novelty in thinking, concepts or results, or outstandingly creative;
- developing or instrumental in developing new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research;
- research that is leading or at the forefront of the research area, or having major / profound influence.

(b) a panel will grade a research output as three star “internationally excellent” in terms of originality, significance and rigour if the output falls short of the highest standard of excellence, but the panel sees evidence of, or potential for some of the following characteristics:

- important point of reference or makes important contributions likely to have a lasting influence;
- significant influence.

(c) a panel will grade a research output as two star “international standing” in terms of originality, significance and rigour if the panel sees evidence of, or potential for some of the following characteristics:

- a recognised point of reference or of some influence;
- provides useful or valuable knowledge / influence;
- incremental advances in knowledge / thinking / practices / paradigms.

(d) a panel will grade a research output as one star “limited originality, significance and rigour” if the panel sees some evidence of, or potential for some of the following characteristics:

- useful contribution of minor influence.
- (e) a panel will grade a research output as “unclassified” if it falls below the quality levels in (a) to (d) above; does not meet the definition of research used for RAE 2026; or a missing item in the submission.

6.6 To minimise any possible divergence in judgment with regard to the use of international standards, all RAE subject panels should make evaluation with regard to the quality, rather than the publication venue of the published item, pitching at the best international norms and the standards of rigour and scholarship expected internationally in respective disciplines or sub-disciplines.

6.7 In principle, the quality of each item will be judged on its own merits and **not** in terms of its publication category (e.g. a journal paper is not necessarily of higher or lower merit than a book chapter), medium or language of publication. Further, the panels will be instructed not to adopt a mechanical approach during the assessment.

6.8 While the quality of individual output items should carry weight in the assessment, outputs should not be judged mechanically as per their category or medium of publication. Panels will be advised to assess the substance of individual output instead of giving mechanical gradings according to the medium of publication.

6.9 Panels will be requested to examine each item in detail for assessment. Panels may decide to use metrics or citation data to inform their assessment. However, such metrics and data will not be used in any algorithmic or deterministic way for the evaluation of research quality. Panels will be advised to take note of the limitations of metrics and citation data, in particular their variability within as well as between disciplines, and the need to consider that some excellent work takes time to demonstrate its full achievements.

6.10 Research outputs will be captured and assessed in terms of academic strength and quality benchmarking against international standards. Research outputs with social relevance should be submitted for evaluation under the element of research impact.

VII. SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH IMPACT FOR ASSESSMENT

(A) What to Submit

7.1 Universities are invited to make a submission about impact of research on unit of assessment basis. The impacts must have been enabled by the submitting university, during the assessment period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025, and must be underpinned by research undertaken at, or significantly supported by, the submitting university during the period from 1 January 2006 to 30 September 2025. Such a submission should reach the UGC Secretariat by **15 December 2025**.

7.2 Universities with three or more eligible academic staff in a unit of assessment are expected to make an impact submission for that unit. In case of nil submission or submission below the requirement, the missing submission or the missing

part of it will be deemed as “unclassified” and the respective panel will take this into account in the overall rating of the unit concerned (see paragraph 7.7 below).

(B) Definition of Impact

7.3 For the purpose of RAE 2026, impact is defined as the demonstrable contributions, beneficial effects, valuable changes or advantages that research qualitatively brings to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life whether locally, regionally or internationally; and that are beyond academia. Impact in this context includes, but is not limited to –

- (a) positive effects on, constructive changes or benefits to the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding, of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals; or
- (b) the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects.

Respective panels will give examples and elucidations on the range of impacts under their disciplinary ambit in the Panel-specific Guidelines on Assessment Criteria and Working Methods (Panel-specific Guidelines).

7.4 Academic impact of research, i.e. the contribution that research brings to academic advances across and within disciplines, is valuable, but will be assessed through other elements such as outputs or environment in the exercise. As the impact element concerns impact beyond academia, impact is not in any case meant to be a reflection of the quality of the initial research outputs. Measures such as journal impact factor or citation indices are relevant to academic impact, and should be handled, where an individual panel decides to use metrics/citation data, in the assessment of research outputs. For the purpose of research assessment, the scope of impact as a distinct element –

- (a) excludes impacts on research or the advancement of academic knowledge within the higher education sector;
- (b) excludes impacts on students, teaching or other activities within the submitting university; and
- (c) includes other impacts on teaching or students where they extend significantly beyond the submitting university, or on other fields (e.g. impact of text mining technologies in linguistics or computer science research in the medical or commercial field).

7.5 The impacts must be generated or substantially supported by the submitting university, and may occur in any geographical location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. While impacts could be at different stages of development, the impacts to be assessed should occur in the assessment period. [This may include, for example, impacts at an early stage, or impacts that may have been submitted in RAE 2020, started prior to 1 October 2019 but have new or expanding impact enabled during the assessment period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025.](#) For the latter, i.e. continuing impact case studies, clear evidence

of the manner and extent to which the development of the impact goes distinctly beyond that presented in the previously submitted impact case study in RAE 2020 should be provided.

7.6 The requirement that impacts must be underpinned by research undertaken at, or significantly supported by, the submitting university means that the research made a distinct and material contribution to the impact taking/taken place, such that the impact would not have occurred or would have been significantly reduced without the contribution of that research. The underpinning research must be within the scope of the relevant unit of assessment at the submitting university, carried out during the period from 1 January 2006 to 30 September 2025. The quality of underpinning research should be equivalent to at least attaining 2 star (2*), i.e. of international standing. Impacts underpinned by research of non-eligible academic staff (e.g. part-time researchers and staff appointed after 1 September 2023) may be selected by universities in the submission. It does not matter if the researchers concerned are not eligible academic staff of the submitting university or no longer employed by the university.

(C) Information Required for Submission on Research Impact

7.7 In respect of each impact submission, universities are required to provide information as specified below, in order to present the impact of the submitting unit, in which the underpinning research has been conducted –

- (a) impact case studies describing specific examples of impacts achieved during the assessment period by the submitting university, underpinned by research, research activity or a body of work derived from research (with quality as equivalent to at least attaining 2 star (2*), i.e. of international standing), undertaken at, or significantly supported by, the submitting university within the period from 1 January 2006 to 30 September 2025 (see paragraph 8.1 below);
- (b) a template for preparing the impact case study is at [Appendix F](#), and the prescribed number of impact case studies required in each unit of submission is set out below –

Number of eligible academic staff (headcount) in the unit of assessment	Number of case study(ies) required for submission to the unit of assessment	Page limit (A4 size) for each impact case study
3 – 15	1	4
16 – 30	2	4
31 – 45	3	4
46 or more	4, plus 1 further case study per additional 40 staff (headcount)	4

7.8 Universities are only required to give examples of evidence of impact in their submission, instead of a comprehensive account of where all their research has

led. The impact case study(ies)⁴ should be the strongest example(s) selected to present the impacts that are generated or substantially supported by the submitting unit. While an impact case study may not comprehensively represent the spread of research activities and dynamics within the submitting unit, its content should be self-contained and self-explanatory, without recourse to inference or reference to external materials. Appropriate facts and evidence should be provided in each case study for the impact claimed.

7.9 Each impact case study should contain –

- (a) a brief summary of the impact in the case study;
- (b) descriptions of the knowledge, insights, methodologies, solutions and/or inventions brought about by research that underpinned the impact, an outline of the underpinning research, when it was undertaken and the key researchers concerned. **For continuing impact case studies as described in paragraph 7.5 above, clear evidence of the manner and extent to which the development of the impact goes distinctly beyond that presented in the previously submitted impact case study in RAE 2020 should be provided;**
- (c) references to key outputs from the underpinning research, including name of author(s), title of output, year and location of publication⁵, and evidence of the quality of the research, as requested by respective panels in the Panel-specific Guidelines;
- (d) a detailed narrative explaining on how research led to or underpinned the impact, the beneficiaries and the nature of the impact, when the impact occurs/occurred, evidence (e.g. indicators) illustrating the extent of the impact, **the relationship between the case study and how it will sustain further innovation and impact**, and how the submitting unit made contributions to the impact in the assessment period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025; and
- (e) sources external to the submitting university that could provide corroboration to support the statements and claims in the impact case study, and details on how the sources can be accessed for audit purposes.

7.10 Individual panels will provide further guidance on the kinds of information and evidence expected in the impact case studies, as appropriate.

⁴ Examples of impact submissions and case studies in RAE 2020 may be accessed online at <https://impact.ugc.edu.hk/> and <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/activity/research/rae/2020/impactsubmissions.html>.

⁵ Separately, universities are required to provide full version of the key outputs referenced in each impact case study and submit information on the outputs as specified in paragraph 5.17 (a)-(b) above for access by the panels.

VIII. EVALUATION GUIDELINES ON RESEARCH IMPACT

8.1 On the basis of the above information, research impacts will be assessed in terms of their reach and significance, regardless of the geographic location in which they occurred. The criteria of “reach and significance” will be understood as –

- (a) “reach” is the extent and/or **diversity** of **the** beneficiaries of the impact, **as relevant to the nature of the impact. Reach will be assessed in terms of the extent to which the potential constituencies, number or groups of beneficiaries have been reached; it will not be assessed in purely geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries. The criteria will be applied wherever the impact occurred, regardless of geography or location, and whether in Hong Kong or elsewhere; whereas**
- (b) “significance” is the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance, **policies, practices, products, services, understanding, awareness or wellbeing of the beneficiaries.**

The focus of assessment is the impact achieved by the submitting unit, not the impact of individuals or individual research outputs, although they may contribute to the evidence of the submitting unit’s impact. Panels will consider the evidence of the quality of individual research underpinning the impact cases (with research being understood as broadly as defined in paragraphs 2.13-2.14 above) and where necessary will review the outputs concerned to ensure that the quality of the research is of at least 2 star (2*), i.e. of international standing. A case study will be regarded as not eligible and deemed as “unclassified” if the respective panel considers that the underpinning research outputs are not up to the required standard. 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. Submissions will be assessed having regard to disciplinary differences.

8.2 Panels will assess the reach and significance of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture that were underpinned by research conducted in, or significantly supported by, the submitting unit/university, as well as the submitting unit’s approach to enabling impact from its research. In assessing the impact described within a case study, the panel will form an overall view about its reach and significance taken as a whole, rather than assess reach and significance separately.

8.3 Panels will exercise their expert judgement and give a collective rating based on the merits of each impact submission. A panel may choose to give a profile rating using the following five categories as appropriate. The rating will be based on the following five categories –

- (a) 4 star (4*): outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance;
- (b) 3 star (3*): considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance;

- (c) 2 star (2*): some impacts in terms of their reach and significance;
- (d) 1 star (1*): limited impacts in terms of their reach and significance; and
- (e) unclassified (u/c): the impact is of either no reach or no significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by research produced by the submitting unit; or nil submission.

8.4 Panels will provide further elaboration on the assessment criteria in respect of the disciplines in their ambit, as well as specification, if any, on the categories of quality levels for the assessment of impact.

IX. SUBMISSION OF RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT FOR ASSESSMENT

(A) What to Submit

9.1 Universities are invited to make a submission about the research environment relating to the assessment period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025 on unit of assessment basis. Such a submission should reach the UGC Secretariat **by 15 December 2025**.

9.2 A research environment submission may relate to a single coherent faculty, and equally to multiple departments, where the scale may vary or research focus be inter-disciplinary. Universities may as well depict the commonalities and dynamics among faculties and departments within the submitting unit, and show how a good research environment is provided in the submission. As scale alone does not inevitably entail a good environment, universities will have to show what they do to ensure a good environment regardless of their scale (whether large or small).

9.3 Universities with three or more eligible academic staff in a unit of assessment are expected to make a submission in respect of the environment element for that unit. In case of nil submission or submission below the requirement, the missing submission or the missing part of it will be deemed as “unclassified” and the respective panel will take this into account in the overall rating of the unit concerned (see paragraph 9.6 below).

(B) Definition of Environment

9.4 For the purpose of RAE 2026, research environment refers to the strategy, resources (e.g. grants obtained, people) and infrastructure that support research giving rise to collaborations, esteem and contributions to the discipline or research base.

9.5 Under this definition –

- (a) “grants obtained” refers to research income and grants received, including funds from the university central allocation and external funding bodies, be they competitive or non-competitive grants and donations;

- (b) “people” covers (i) staff contributing to research, whether eligible academic staff for RAE 2026 or not, including research-active academic staff, research support staff e.g. research assistants, and visiting, adjunct or part-time research staff; and (ii) research postgraduate students;
- (c) “infrastructure” includes facilities (e.g. accommodation and equipment) for carrying out research;
- (d) “collaborations” refers to research collaborations, including local or international research collaborations, with individual academics, industry and other institutions. Collaborative arrangements, partnerships, networks and joint research projects, intra-university or inter-disciplinary research collaborations may be included; and
- (e) “esteem” refers to recognition conferred by a body outside the university. It should demonstrate the distinguished achievement of individual researchers, groups or the unit as a whole. Esteem may include, but is not limited to research-based awards, honours, or prizes.

(C) Information Required for Submission on Research Environment

9.6 For each submission on research environment, universities are required to provide information and data as specified below –

- (a) [one university-level environment overview statement⁶ setting out the university’s context and mission, strategy and resources to support research and enable impact⁷, research culture⁸, etc. during the assessment period, i.e. from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025;](#)
- (b) [one unit-of-assessment-level environment overview statement describing the research and impact strategy\(ies\); research integrity, research ethics and research culture; support for research staff and students; research income, infrastructure and facilities; research collaborations, esteem and wider contributions to the discipline or research base, etc. of the administrative units containing the staff in the submitting unit of assessment during the assessment period, i.e. from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025;](#)
- (c) a template for preparing the [university-level and unit-of-assessment-level environment overview statements](#) is at [Appendix G](#), and the

⁶ This will provide a context for the RAE panels’ assessment of the unit-of-assessment-level information, but will not be separately scored.

⁷ “Impact” has been defined under paragraphs 7.3 – 7.5 above.

⁸ According to the Royal Society (<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/research-culture/>), “research culture” encompasses the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of our research communities. It influences the career paths of academic staff and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated. Research culture may include, but is not limited to, open access and open data policies, approach to contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, equality and diversity, research ethics and integrity.

prescribed maximum length of each environment overview statements are set out below –

University-level environment overview statement –

Number of eligible academic staff (headcount) in the university	Page limit (A4 size) for each environment overview statement (including one page for attachment)
3 – 300	6
301 – 600	7
601 – 800	8
801 or more	9

Unit-of-assessment-level environment overview statement –

Number of eligible academic staff (headcount) in the unit of assessment	Page limit (A4 size) for each environment overview statement
3 – 15	6
16 – 30	8
31 – 45	10
46 or more	13

- (d) data on staff, graduates of research postgraduate programmes and research grants/contracts from different sources of funding etc. during the assessment period, i.e. from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2025; and
- (e) a template for preparing the environment data is at **Appendix H**.

9.7 The university-level environment overview statement⁹ should include a brief overview describing the context and mission of the submitting university, such as the size, structure, mission and stage of development of the university in view of its role statement. The part on research policy and strategy should describe the institutional strategy for research, enabling impact, developing a sustainable research culture, and how the overall institutional policy and strategy contribute to government priorities. The part on people should include institutional staffing strategy, staff development and training in respect of research, as well as evidence of the quality of development, training, and supervision of research students. Reference should be made to paragraphs 9.5 and 9.6 (a) in completing the other parts of the statement. The university is also required to attach its role statement as drawn up with UGC.

9.8 The unit-of-assessment-level environment overview statement¹⁰ should include an overview describing the context and structure of the submitting unit. The part on research and impact strategy should, in the context of the university’s policies, provide evidence of the achievement of strategic aims for research and impact during

⁹ Examples of environment submissions in other jurisdictions may be accessed online such as <<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/environment>> from the United Kingdom.

¹⁰ Examples of environment submissions in other jurisdictions may be accessed online such as <<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/environment>> from the United Kingdom.

the assessment period, as well as current/future strategic aims and goals for research and impact, how these relate to the structure of the unit, and how they will be taken forward. The part on people should provide evidence about staffing strategy, staff development and training in respect of research within the submitting unit, as well as evidence of the support measures/facilities for the development, training and supervision of research students. Reference should be made to paragraphs 9.5 and 9.6 (b) in completing the other parts of the statement.

9.9 The data in conjunction with the [unit-of-assessment-level](#) environment overview statement should cover: (i) staff employed by the university proper, be they wholly funded or partially funded by General Funds¹¹ or wholly self-financed, by staff category; (ii) graduates of research postgraduate programmes, be they UGC-funded or non-UGC-funded; and (iii) on-going research grants/contracts, by source of funding and by role of university in terms of the funding received, in each of the years from 2019/20 to 2024/25. Where a grant/contract is held across more than one unit/university, it should be divided between submissions in different units/universities according to the way the grant/contract income has been used. Similarly, research projects with multiple sources of funding should have the grant income reported under respective funding source categories.

9.10 Individual panels will provide further guidance on the kinds of information and evidence expected in the environment overview statement(s), as appropriate.

X. EVALUATION GUIDELINES ON RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

10.1 On the basis of the above information, research environment will be assessed in terms of vitality and sustainability, including its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. The criteria of “vitality and sustainability” will be understood as –

- (a) “vitality” refers to the extent to which a unit [supports a thriving and inclusive research culture for all staff and research students, that is based on a clearly articulated strategy for research and enabling its impact, is engaged with the local and international research and user communities and is able to attract excellent postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers; and](#)
- (b) “sustainability” refers to the extent to which the research environment [ensures the future health, diversity, wellbeing and wider contribution of the unit and the discipline\(s\), including investment in people and in infrastructure.](#) Panels 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.

¹¹ General Funds comprise the total income received by the university, except that from specific funds (which include income received for specific or designated purposes, examples of which are earmarked grants and RGC research grants). General Funds include income from the UGC block grant, tuition fees, interest and investment income, donations for general purpose, etc.

10.2 Panels may decide on whether to assess each environment submission as a whole, or to attach weighting to individual aspects within the environment element in their assessment. Panels will spell out how they would propose to address the details of the weighting in their Panel-specific Guidelines.

10.3 Irrespective of whether the assessment is made on the environment submission as a whole or by aggregating assessments of individual aspects within the environment element, panels will give a profile rating using one or more of the following five categories as appropriate. The rating will be based on the following five categories:

- (a) 4 star (4*): an environment that is conducive to producing research of world-leading quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability;
- (b) 3 star (3*): an environment that is conducive to producing research of internationally excellent quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability;
- (c) 2 star (2*): an environment that is conducive to producing research of internationally recognised quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability;
- (d) 1 star (1*): an environment that is conducive to producing research of limited quality, in terms of its vitality and sustainability; and
- (e) unclassified (u/c): an environment that is not conducive to producing research of 1 star quality; or nil submission.

10.4 Panels will provide further elaboration on the assessment criteria as well as specification, if any, on the categories of quality levels for the assessment of environment in respective fields under respective purview.

XI. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

(A) Construction of Quality Profiles

11.1 As indicated earlier, the primary purpose of RAE is to assess the research performance of the UGC-funded universities by unit of assessment; it is not intended to evaluate individual staff. Panels will produce sub-profiles for the three elements of assessment – research outputs, impact and environment. The three sub-profiles of a unit of assessment will be aggregated to form the overall quality profile for the unit of assessment. A worked example is at [Appendix I](#).

11.2 The overall quality profile shows the proportion of research activity in the submission judged to meet the definitions of starred levels, as follows –

- (a) 4 star (4*): world leading;
- (b) 3 star (3*): internationally excellent;

- (c) 2 star (2*): international standing;
- (d) 1 star (1*): limited standing; and
- (e) unclassified (u/c)

(B) Publication of RAE Information and Results

11.3 In line with the principle of transparency, information and results of RAE 2026 will be released as follows –

- (a) operational details of the process, such as panel membership, evaluation methodology and the meeting schedules of panels, will be published for general information;
- (b) results in the form of overall quality profiles and sub-profiles of individual elements of assessment¹² will be published by unit of assessment and by panel at both individual university level and sector-wide level;
- (c) sector-wide comments by each of the panels will be published;
- (d) same set of results as mentioned in (b) and (c) will be released to universities and the public;
- (e) in addition to the published results, each university will receive their own RAE results confidentially in respect of research outputs at research area level (except for those research area(s) consisting of fewer than three eligible staff of the university, or where, in providing the RAE results, the research output results of any of the individual eligible staff of the university may be revealed indirectly); the use and handling of such results by each university should also be confidential;
- (f) some reading guides will be developed to help the public and the press understand the statistics;
- (g) research output data, impact submissions and environment submissions (including university-level and unit-of-assessment-level environment statements as well as environment data) will be published by unit of assessment and by university for public information after the release of RAE results; and
- (h) similar to the arrangement in RAE 2020, universities can indicate any part(s) of the impact submissions which are not suitable for publication (having regard to confidentiality, commercial sensitivity or privacy elements in the content of submission). In such cases, universities should submit, in parallel, a redacted version of submission with

¹² Universities are reminded that while the results of individual impact case studies will not be disclosed, the results of some relatively smaller units of assessment could be indirectly linked to the academic unit/staff members especially when they are named in the impact submissions.

relevant parts (e.g. names, listed outputs) masked/removed for publication after release of the RAE results. Universities may also request that an entire impact submission be exempted from publication, subject to UGC’s approval.

11.4 The results, together with other relevant factors, will inform the UGC’s distribution of part of the research funding of the Block Grant for universities until the results for any future RAE are available. The funding allocation will be on the basis that high quality research according to international standard will be adequately funded so that more world class research will be conducted by UGC-funded universities. In addition, funding will be allocated in a fair and publicly accountable manner, taking into account sustainability and stability of institutional funding.

XII. NEXT STAGE

(A) Consultation and Survey on Submission Intentions

12.1 Universities will be further consulted when the general panel guidelines and panel-specific criteria and working methods are developed in the first half of 2024. To facilitate panel formation with a view to matching the panel expertise with the submissions as far as possible, universities will be invited to indicate their submission intentions and provide estimations in finer details, e.g. estimated number of submissions and eligible staff, main areas/keywords of their research submissions, and estimated volume of submissions in languages other than English, under each unit of assessment, tentatively by the third quarter of 2024.

(B) Submission Timetable for RAE 2026

12.2 To summarise, universities are requested to submit the following materials and data in accordance with the dates shown below –

31 July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request(s) for special consideration/exemption for individual staff members as per paragraphs 4.5-4.6
1 December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A list of all eligible academic staff for each unit of assessment as per paragraph 4.2 (a) A list of full-time academic staff wholly funded by the university proper for degree or higher degree work within Staff Grades of “A” to “I” at Appendix C (as at the census date of 30 September 2025) who are not reported in the list of eligible academic staff as per paragraph 4.2 (b)

<p>15 December 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full version of research outputs and information required on research outputs as per section V • Information required on research impact viz. impact case study(ies) as per section VII, Appendix F • Information required on research environment including university-level and unit-of-assessment-level environment overview statements and related data as per section IX, Appendices G and H
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Late submission or submission in addition to the prescribed requirements will not be accepted.

(C) Form of Submission

12.3 Materials and data for submission to RAE 2026 should be forwarded to the UGC Secretariat in a manner to be separately prescribed by UGC. The submissions will be in electronic format in principle. Details on the arrangement for submissions in physical formats will be worked out with the universities in due course. In view of the large volume of submissions involved, **universities are requested to ensure that the submissions are accurate and complete, clearly labeled, and all copies, whether electronic or printed, are of good, readable quality. All universities' submissions are subject to audit.** The Secretariat is undertaking work regarding the establishment of an electronic system for RAE 2026, and will issue operational guidelines with regard to the handling of RAE submissions in different formats.

* * * * *

UGC Secretariat
[October 2023](#)

Scholarship as defined by the Carnegie Foundation

In *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*¹, the Carnegie Foundation argues that scholarship should have a broader and more efficacious meaning that would go beyond just teaching and research. The discovery of knowledge through research, the integration of knowledge, the application of knowledge and the sharing of knowledge through teaching should be treated as different forms of scholarship on a par with each other.

The Four Scholarships

2. The Carnegie Foundation considers that there is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, synthesis, practice, and teaching. Scholarship should comprise four separate, yet overlapping functions: They are the scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching.

(a) Scholarship of Discovery

The scholarship of discovery, at its best, contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of an institution. It is a scholarly investigation, closest to what is meant when academics speak of “research”, that confronts the unknown and creates new knowledge. It is not just the outcomes, but also the process, and especially the passion, that gives meaning to the effort.

(b) Scholarship of Integration

It is a serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together and bring new insight to bear on original research. This type of scholarship is closely related to that of discovery. Such work is increasingly important as traditional disciplinary categories prove confining, forcing new topologies of knowledge. This scholarship also means interpretation, fitting one’s own research – or the research of others – into larger intellectual patterns. A variety of scholarly trends – inter-disciplinary, interpretive, integrative – are examples of scholarship of integration.

(c) Scholarship of Application

It is a dynamic process of creating new intellectual understandings arising out of theory and practice. The term itself may be misleading if it suggests that knowledge is first “discovered” and then “applied”. The process is in fact more dynamic; new intellectual understanding can arise out of vital interaction between theory and practice and one renews the other.

(d) Scholarship of Teaching

It is a process that transforms and extends knowledge while transmitting an intelligible account of knowledge to the learners. As a form of

¹ A Special Report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, by Ernest L Boyer, 1990.

scholarship, teaching encompasses a wide range of activities beyond classroom instruction.

Assessment of Scholarship

3. The broadening of the definition of scholarship helps ensure that scholarly work in areas both within and outside discovery can be appropriately recognized and rewarded, yet it does not seek to open the floodgate by treating anything as scholarship. This leads to the question of how the work should be documented and the criteria that should be used to assess its quality.

4. Academics feel relatively confident about their ability to assess specialized research, but they are less certain about what qualities to look for in other kinds of scholarship, and how to document and reward that work. In *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate*², the authors suggest that the four kinds of scholarly activities, regardless of how variable their products, must be evaluated according to a common set of criteria (which they refer as “quality standards of excellence”) that captures and acknowledges what they share as scholarly acts. The criteria are:

- clear goals;
- adequate preparation;
- appropriate methods;
- significant results;
- effective presentation; and
- reflective critique.

5. The authors also suggest a list of questions (see below) for each criterion to be considered when assessing a scholar’s achievements in a particular category of scholarship. In return, scholars should also take into account these guiding questions when preparing their work for evaluation:

- (a) For clear goals, the possible questions include whether the scholar states the basic purposes of his or her work clearly; whether the objectives are realistic and achievable; and whether he or she identifies important questions in the field.
- (b) For adequate preparation, the possible questions include whether the scholar shows an understanding of existing scholarship in the field; whether the necessary skills are brought to his or her work; and whether the necessary resources are brought together to move the project forward.
- (c) For appropriate methods, the possible questions include whether the scholar uses methods appropriate to the goals; whether they apply methods effectively; and whether they are ready to modify procedures in response to changing circumstances.

² A Special Report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, by Charles E Glassick, Mary Taylor Huber, and Gene I. Maeroff, 1997

- (d) For significant results, the possible questions include whether the scholar actually achieves the goals he or she was aiming for; whether the scholar's work adds consequentially to the field; and whether the scholar's work opens additional areas for further exploration.
- (e) For effective presentation, the possible questions include whether the scholar uses a suitable style and effective organization to present his or her work; whether they use appropriate forums for communicating work to intended audiences; and whether the scholar presents his or her message in all of these forms with clarity and integrity.
- (f) For reflective critique, the possible questions include whether the scholar critically evaluates his or her own work; and whether they bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to their critique. For instance, do they talk to other people, to their peers, to their students, to their clients, and does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of their future work?

6. If a particular piece of work is going to be evaluated as scholarship, an important and critical audience of the scholar is his or her peers. In other words, the work would not be considered as a form of scholarship until it has been documented and could be exchanged in a generalisable way so that people beyond the very local context can learn from, can critique and can build on that knowledge. For example, an interesting piece of teaching material used in a class can at most be considered a scholarly work, as it is only presented in a private encounter between a teacher and a group of students. It will not be considered a work of scholarship of teaching unless it is systematically documented and disseminated to peers of the relevant field for wider debate and exchanges. In short, the six criteria set out in paragraph 5 above will form the basis on which the respective panels would evaluate the output in a particular category of scholarship. In order to be evaluated, outputs should be properly documented to produce evidence and the panels will seek to measure the impact on the basis of benchmark to be operationalised later.

7. To summarise, the quality dimensions proposed above allow sufficient flexibility for the same set of criteria to be applied judiciously to different types of projects from different disciplinary traditions, while enabling one to keep in view the qualities that discovery, integration, application and teaching share as scholarly activities.

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
List of Units of Assessment

Panel (code & name)	Unit of Assessment (code & name)
1 Biology	1 biological sciences (incl. environmental biology, biotechnology, agriculture & food science, veterinary studies)
	2 pre-clinical studies
2 Health Sciences	3 clinical medicine
	4 clinical dentistry
	5 pharmacy, nursing, optometry, rehabilitation sciences and other health care professions
	6 Chinese medicine
3 Physical Sciences	7 physics & astronomy
	8 materials science and materials technology
	9 chemistry
	10 earth sciences (incl. oceanography, meteorology) and other physical sciences (incl. environmental science)
	11 mathematics and statistics
4 Electrical & Electronic Engineering	12 electrical & electronic engineering
5 Computer Science / Information Technology	13 computer studies/science (incl. information technology)
6 Engineering	14 mechanical engineering, production engineering (incl. manufacturing & industrial engineering), textile technology and aerospace engineering
	15 chemical engineering, biomedical engineering, other technologies (incl. environmental engineering & nautical studies) and marine engineering
7 Built Environment	16 civil engineering (incl. construction engineering & management) and building technology
	17 architecture
	18 planning and surveying (land, geo-spatial and other)
8 Law	19 law
9 Business & Economics	20 accountancy
	21 economics and finance
	22 business
	23 hotel management & tourism
10 Social Sciences	24 psychology
	25 political science (incl. public policy & administration & international relations)
	26 geography
	27 sociology & anthropology
	28 social work and social policy
	29 communications & media studies

Panel (code & name)	Unit of Assessment (code & name)
11 Humanities	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
12 Creative Arts, Performing Arts & Design	38 visual arts, design, creative media, other creative arts and creative writing
	39 music and performing arts
13 Education	40 physical education, sport, recreation & physical activities
	41 education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education)

**Description of Academic Staff Grades
“A” to “I”¹**

Academic, Senior

- A. Professor
- B. Reader
- C. Senior Lecturer (U)
- D. Principal Lecturer (P)

Academic, Junior

- F. Senior Lecturer (P)
- G. Lecturer (U)
- H. Lecturer (P)
- I. Assistant Lecturer

¹ Universities are advised to refer to the prevailing Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) Guidance Notes for details on the definition of academic staff and staff grade categorisation of “A” to “I” as defined for the CDCF.

Mapping of Units of Assessment in RAE 2026 with Research Areas

Unit of Assessment in RAE 2026 (code & name)	Research Area (code & name)
1 biological sciences (incl. environmental biology, biotechnology, agriculture & food science, veterinary studies)	1a clinical veterinary studies
	1b biological sciences
	1c other biological sciences (incl. environmental biology)
	1d agriculture & food science
	1e biotechnology
2 pre-clinical studies	2a pre-clinical studies
3 clinical medicine	3a clinical medicine
4 clinical dentistry	4a clinical dentistry
5 pharmacy, nursing, optometry, rehabilitation sciences and other health care professions	5a pharmacy
	5b nursing
	5c other health care professions
	5d optometry
	5e rehabilitation sciences
6 Chinese medicine	6a Chinese medicine
7 physics & astronomy	7a physics & astronomy
8 materials science and materials technology	8a materials science
	8b materials technology
9 chemistry	9a chemistry
10 earth sciences (incl. oceanography, meteorology) and other physical sciences (incl. environmental science)	10a earth sciences (incl. oceanography, meteorology)
	10b other physical sciences (incl. environmental science)
11 mathematics and statistics	11a mathematics & statistics
12 electrical & electronic engineering	12a electrical engineering
	12b electronic engineering
13 computer studies/science (incl. information technology)	13a computer studies/science (incl. information technology)
14 mechanical engineering, production engineering (incl. manufacturing & industrial engineering), textile technology and aerospace engineering	14a mechanical engineering
	14b production engineering (incl. manufacturing & industrial engineering)
	14c textile technology
15 chemical engineering, biomedical engineering, other technologies (incl. environmental engineering & nautical studies) and marine engineering	15a chemical engineering
	15b marine engineering
	15c other technologies (incl. environmental engineering & nautical studies)
	15d biomedical engineering
16 civil engineering (incl. construction engineering & management) and building technology	16a civil engineering (incl. construction engineering & management)
	16b building technology
17 architecture	17a architecture

Unit of Assessment in RAE 2026 (code & name)	Research Area (code & name)
18 planning and surveying (land, geo-spatial and other)	18a planning
	18b surveying, land
	18c surveying, geo-spatial and other
19 law	19a law
20 accountancy	20a accountancy
21 economics and finance	21a economics
	21b finance
22 business	22a business
23 hotel management & tourism	23a hotel management & tourism
24 psychology	24a psychology
25 political science (incl. public policy & administration & international relations)	25a political science (incl. public policy & administration & international relations)
26 geography	26a geography
27 sociology & anthropology	27a sociology & anthropology
28 social work and social policy	28a social work
	28b other social studies
29 communications & media studies	29a communications & media studies
30 Chinese language & literature	30a Chinese language & literature
31 English language & literature	31a English language & literature
32 translation	32a translation
33 linguistics & language studies	33a linguistics & language studies
34 history	34a history
	35a other arts/humanities
	35b area studies (e.g. Japanese studies, European studies, etc.)
35 area studies (e.g. Japanese studies, European studies, etc.), cultural studies and other arts/humanities	35c cultural studies
	36a philosophy
36 philosophy	36a philosophy
37 religious studies	37a religious studies
38 visual arts, design, creative media, other creative arts and creative writing	38a visual arts
	38b other creative arts
	38c design
	38d creative media
39 music and performing arts	39a performing arts
	39b music
40 physical education, sport, recreation & physical activities	40a physical education & sports science
41 education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education)	41a curriculum & instruction
	41b education administration & policy
	41c other education

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
Research Output Types

- A. Authored book
- B. Edited book
- C. Chapter in book
- D. Journal Article
- E. Conference contribution
- F. Patent awarded/published patent application
- G. Software
- H. Performance (e.g. stage performance)
- I. Composition (e.g. music composition)
- J. Design
- K. Artefact
- L. Exhibition
- M. Single coherent work published in two or more parts
- N. Others

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
University-level
Environment Overview Statement¹
 (with descriptors in bullets for reference)

University:

Total number of eligible staff of the university:

(1) Context and mission

- an overview of the university’s
 - size;
 - structure;
 - mission; and
 - stage of development in view of university’s role statement at Attachment 1

(2) Research policy and strategy, including for example –

- the institutional strategy for:
 - research (research strengths, research focus areas and the distribution of research activities across research areas);
 - enabling impact (including stakeholder engagement and knowledge transfer);
 - developing a sustainable research culture (including open access and open data policies, approach to contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, how interdisciplinary and collaborative research has been supported, how research integrity and research ethics are embedded in the institution); and
- how the overall institutional policy and strategy contribute to government priorities

(3) People

- institutional staffing strategy, staff development and training, including for example –
 - leave policies;
 - equality and diversity agenda;
 - measures/facilities for early career researchers/junior scholars/research students, etc.; and
- development, training and supervision of research students

(4) Research funding sources

- breakdown by funding source as a percentage total of overall funding; and
- university-level resources, infrastructure, and facilities available to support research and impact

¹ Maximum length and page format for submissions are prescribed below –

(a)	Number of eligible academic staff (headcount) in university	Page limit (A4 size) for each university-level environment overview statement (including one page for attachment)
	3 – 300	6
	301 – 600	7
	601 – 800	8
	801 or more	9

(b) 12 point size in Times New Roman, single-line spacing, 2 cm margin all around.

Role Statement – Attachment 1²

University:

.....
.....
.....

²Maximum length and prescribed format: one A4 page per attachment, 2 cm margin all round.

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
Unit-of-Assessment-level
Environment Overview Statement¹
(with descriptors in bullets for reference)

University:

Unit of Assessment (UoA):

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA:

(1) UoA context and structure

(2) Research and impact strategy

- in the context of the University policies as stipulated in the University-level Environment Overview Statement, evidence of -
 - the achievement of strategic aims for research and impact, with reference to the impact case studies submitted, during the assessment period;
 - current/future strategic aims and goals for research and impact;
 - how these relate to the structure of the unit; and
 - how they will be taken forward

(3) Research integrity and research ethics

- highlights of success and challenge with the UoA

(4) People

- evidence about staffing strategy, staff development and training within the submitted UoA, including for example –
 - leave policies;
 - equality and diversity agenda;
 - measures for junior scholars; and
- support measures/facilities for development, training and supervision of research students

(Please also provide explanation in this section if there is any missing output in the UoA.)

(5) Income (e.g. grants received), infrastructure and facilities

(6) Collaborations

(7) Esteem

(8) Contribution to the discipline or research base

¹ Maximum length and page format for submissions are prescribed below –

(a)

Number of eligible academic staff (headcount) in the UoA	Page limit (A4 size) for each environment overview statement
3 – 15	6
16 – 30	8
31 – 45	10
46 or more	13

(b) 12 point size in Times New Roman, single-line spacing, 2 cm margin all around.

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
Environment Data

University:

Unit of Assessment (UoA):

(A) Staff Employed by the University Proper¹ of the UGC-funded University

(full time equivalent)	2019/20 (as at 31.10.2019)	2020/21 (as at 31.10.2020)	2021/22 (as at 31.10.2021)	2022/23 (as at 31.10.2022)	2023/24 (as at 31.10.2023)	2024/25 (as at 31.10.2024)
Wholly Funded by General Funds²						
Academic staff primarily undertaking work at degree or higher level						
Academic staff not primarily undertaking work at degree or higher level						
Academic supporting staff and technical research staff						
Administrative, technical and other staff						
Partially Funded by General Funds² or Wholly Self-financed						
Academic staff primarily undertaking work at degree or higher level						
Academic staff not primarily undertaking work at degree or higher level						
Academic supporting staff and technical research staff						
Administrative, technical and other staff						
Total						

(Note: Based on the list of eligible academic staff and associated data submitted by the university, the panels will separately be provided with a profile of eligible academic staff of the unit of assessment by rank and experience of eligible appointment at the submitting institution.)

¹ Excluding schools/arms of continuing education and professional training and other analogous outfits.

² General Funds comprise the total income received by the university, except that from specific funds (which include income received for specific or designated purposes, examples of which are earmarked grants and RGC research grants). General Funds include income from the UGC block grant, tuition fees, interest and investment income, donations for general purpose, etc.

(B) Graduates of Research Postgraduate (RPg) Programmes

(headcount)	1.9.2019 – 31.8.2020	1.9.2020 – 31.8.2021	1.9.2021 – 31.8.2022	1.9.2022 – 31.8.2023	1.9.2023 – 31.8.2024	1.9.2024 – 31.8.2025
UGC-funded Programmes						
Graduates of RPg programmes – doctoral degree						
Graduates of RPg programmes – master’s degree						
Non-UGC-funded Programmes						
Graduates of RPg programmes – doctoral degree						
Graduates of RPg programmes – master’s degree						

(C) On-going Research Grants/Contracts**(i) By Source of Funding**

(HK\$ million)	1.7.2019 – 30.6.2020	1.7.2020 – 30.6.2021	1.7.2021 – 30.6.2022	1.7.2022 – 30.6.2023	1.7.2023 – 30.6.2024	1.7.2024 – 30.6.2025
Research Grants						
Funded by UGC/RGC						
HKSAR Government and Government-related organisations ³						
HK private funds						
Non-HK ⁴						
Research Contracts						
HKSAR Government and Government-related organisations ³						
HK private funds						
Non-HK ⁴						

(ii) By Role of University

(aggregate %)	1.7.2019 – 30.6.2020	1.7.2020 – 30.6.2021	1.7.2021 – 30.6.2022	1.7.2022 – 30.6.2023	1.7.2023 – 30.6.2024	1.7.2024 – 30.6.2025
Research Grants/Contracts						
Coordinating						
Participating for joint research or others						

³ Such as the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF), Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF), Quality Education Fund (QEF), etc.

⁴ Including research grants/contracts from sources outside Hong Kong which are under the control of the submitting university, i.e. the university concerned has the authority to approve the use of funds for the research grants/contracts, while funds may not necessarily be transferred to the university for use in Hong Kong. Examples include the National Natural Science Foundation (NSFC) of China, European Commission, National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States of America, etc.

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
Building of Quality Profiles by Unit of Assessment

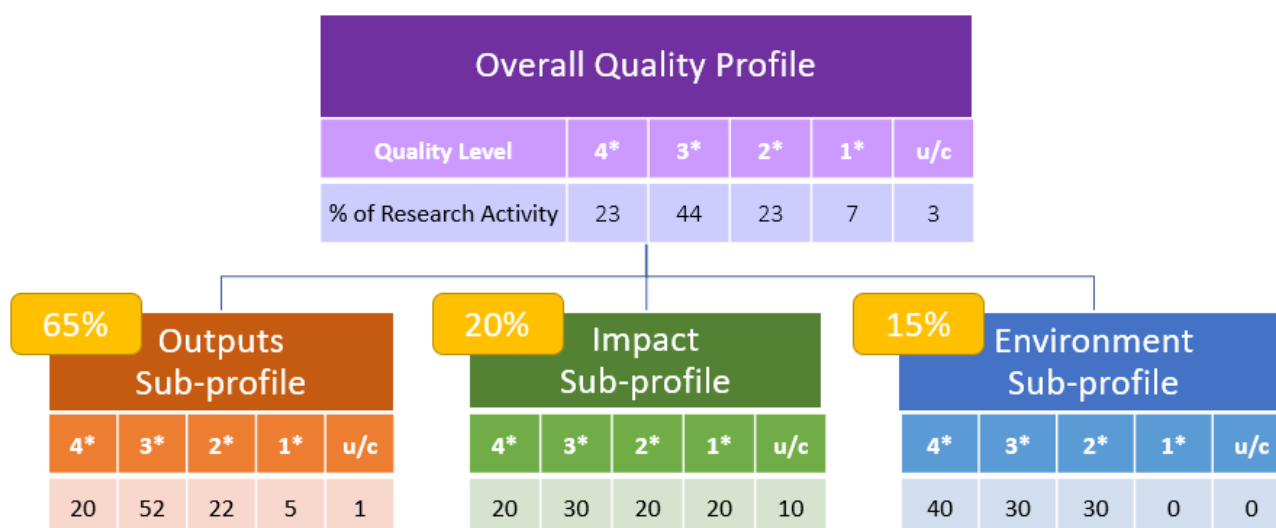
1. The overall quality profile will show the proportion of research activity in a unit of assessment judged to meet the definitions at each starred level. The overall quality profile will be published in steps of 1 per cent. The following table shows the overall quality profiles of two universities under the same unit of assessment.

Unit of Assessment (UoA) A	Number of eligible staff	Percentage of research activity judged to meet the standard of :				
		4 star	3 star	2 star	1 star	unclassified
University X	40	18	41	25	16	0
University Y	60	12	32	45	10	1

2. An RAE Panel will produce an overall quality profile by assessing three elements of a unit of assessment’s submission – research outputs, impact and environment – to produce a sub-profile for each element. The three sub-profiles will be aggregated to form the overall quality profile for the unit of assessment, with each element weighted as follows –

- Outputs: 65 per cent
- Impact: 20 per cent
- Environment: 15 per cent.

Figure 1: Building a quality profile: a worked example



Rounding

3. The sub-profiles will be combined using the weights in paragraph 2 of this appendix. A cumulative rounding process will then be applied to the combined profile, to produce an overall quality profile. This methodology will ensure that the overall quality profile for any submission will always sum to 100 per cent.

4. Using the example in Figure 1, first calculate the initial overall profile, that is, the sum of the weighted sub-profiles for outputs, impact and environment.

	Starred levels				
	4*	3*	2*	1*	u/c
Outputs	20	52	22	5	1
Impact	20	30	20	20	10
Environment	40	30	30	0	0
Weighted					
65%	13.00	33.80	14.30	3.25	0.65
20%	4.00	6.00	4.00	4.00	2.00
15%	6.00	4.50	4.50	0	0
Initial profile	23.00	44.30	22.80	7.25	2.65

5. Cumulative rounding works in three stages –

(a) The initial profile is –

4*	3*	2*	1*	u/c
23.00	44.30	22.80	7.25	2.65

(b) Stage 1: Calculate the cumulative totals (for example the cumulative total at 3* or better is $23.00 + 44.30 = 67.30$).

4*	3* or better	2* or better	1* or better	u/c or better
23.00	67.30	90.10	97.35	100

(c) Stage 2: Round these to the nearest 1 per cent (rounding up if the percentage ends in exactly 0.5).

4*	3* or better	2* or better	1* or better	u/c or better
23	67	90	97	100

(d) Stage 3: Find the differences between successive cells to give the rounded profile. So, for example, the percentage allocated to 2* is the difference between the cumulative total at 2* or better, minus the cumulative total at 3* or better.

4*	3*	2*	1*	u/c
23	44	23	7	0