

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
Panel 11 – Humanities
Panel-specific Guidelines on
Assessment Criteria and Working Methods
(October 2024)

Content:

Introduction
Section A: Submissions
Section B: Assessment Criteria: Research Outputs
Section C: Assessment Criteria: Research Impact
Section D: Assessment Criteria: Research Environment
Section E: Working Methods

Introduction

1. This document sets out the assessment criteria and working methods that the Humanities Panel of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2026 will apply. It should be read alongside the General Panel Guidelines of the exercise. The provisions set out in this document serve as further elaboration and amplification on the assessment criteria and working methods as applied to the Humanities Panel. In areas where no additional information has been specified, the provisions in the General Panel Guidelines will prevail and apply in the assessment process of the Panel. These guidelines do not replace or supersede the requirements for submissions that are set out in the Guidance Notes for RAE 2026.

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

Section A: Submissions

UoAs under the Panel

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

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

4. The Panel expects to receive submissions whose primary research focus falls within the remit of the above UoAs. The full spectrum of disciplines included in the above UoAs may go beyond what has been itemized. UoAs 30 and 31 may include creative writing. "Other arts and humanities" can include, for example, gender studies and art history.

Inter-disciplinary Research

5. The Panel recognises that certain aspects of research are naturally inter-disciplinary or span the boundaries between individual UoAs, whether within the panel or across panels. The Panel will adopt the arrangements for assessing inter-disciplinary submissions as set out in paragraphs 39-40 of the General Panel Guidelines.

6. The Panel welcomes inter-disciplinary submissions if they have a component relevant to the humanities. Areas of inter-disciplinary research that may be relevant to the Panel include, but are not restricted to, applied

linguistics, art history, creative writing, gender studies, museum studies, musicology.

Assignment of Eligible Academic Staff in Each UoA

7. Pursuant to paragraphs 7-11 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Humanities Panel expects all submissions to include one or more sub-categories under a research area. The Panel requires this information so as to ensure that research outputs are assigned to appropriate assessors.

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

Section B: Assessment Criteria: Research Outputs

Output Types

9. The Humanities Panel will consider the eligibility of research outputs as described in paragraphs 15-17 of the General Panel Guidelines, paragraphs 5.7-5.11 and Appendix E of the Guidance Notes.

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

11. Forms of research outputs that are admissible and specifically relevant to the Humanities Panel include the following examples. This is

not an exhaustive list. The ordering of examples in this list also does not imply any differentiation in evaluation –

- books, book chapters and research monographs,
- published conference papers and reports,
- journal articles,
- review articles that incorporate new research or new insights from the submitting staff member,
- edited volumes or special issues of journals involving a significant editorial contribution,
- research-based non-traditional outputs (e.g. exhibitions, documentaries, corpora, databases or other digital outputs),
- scholarly translations that show evidence of new research or new research insights from the submitting staff member,
- descriptive grammars involving language documentation,
- research outputs publicly available via open access websites.

12. Research outputs will be assessed for the quality of the original research they contain. The Panel accepts translations, reprints and subsequent editions of previous work when they contain substantial changes and when the submitting author has specified the nature of the changes in an accompanying statement of up to 100 words.

13. Submitting author(s) should avoid submitting research outputs duplicating items submitted to the current RAE or previous exercises. Submissions with materials in common with another submission (e.g., a book containing material also published as a separately submitted research article) will be evaluated on the basis only of the non-overlapping material. If two research outputs significantly overlap (e.g. a journal article that is also published as a chapter in an edited volume, where both are submitted to the RAE), even if they are in different languages, only one of the outputs will be assessed, and the other output(s) will be unclassified.

14. The brief statement of originality and significance is required only for the situation(s) specified in paragraph 12 and for submissions without an abstract or if the original abstract does not indicate what new insights or

innovations are present in the output (i.e., the requirement under paragraph 18(a) of the General Panel Guidelines).

Double-weighting of Research Outputs

15. Paragraphs 29-31 of the General Panel Guidelines indicate that a submitting university may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted in the assessment. The Humanities Panel encourages double-weighting requests for books involving significant research. There is no penalty involved if a double-weighting request is denied, as the “reserve” output of the individual staff member will be reviewed instead, if applicable.

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

Co-authored/Co-produced Outputs

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

18. Co-authored/multi-authored research outputs will be reviewed in the same way as any other research output. The Humanities Panel does not require a university to include a statement to accompany such submissions.

Non-traditional Outputs

19. The Panel will handle research outputs in non-traditional form according to paragraphs 35-37 of the General Panel Guidelines. The Panel requires an explanation, of up to 300 words, for non-traditional outputs such as exhibitions, documentaries, corpora, databases or other digital outputs, detailing the research contribution which underpins them.

Criteria and Quality Levels for Assessing Research Outputs

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

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

22. The Humanities Panel elaborates the criteria of assessing research outputs as follows—

- originality: will be understood as the extent to which the output makes an 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 findings or new material; propose a 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.
- significance: will be understood as the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly discourse, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.
- 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.

23. In addition, the Panel provides the following advice on their understanding of the quality definitions adopted for assessing research outputs –

4*	3*	2*	1*
A primary or essential point of reference.	An important point of reference.	A recognised point of reference.	Based on existing traditions of thinking, methodology and/or creative practice.
Of profound influence.	Of considerable influence.	Of some influence.	A useful contribution of minor influence.
A major expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application.	A significant expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application.	A useful contribution to the range or depth of research and its application.	An identifiable contribution to understanding without advancing existing paradigms of enquiry or practice
Instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences.	A catalyst for, or important contribution to, new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences.	An incremental and cumulative advance on thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences.	
Outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative.	Significantly novel or innovative or creative.		

A research output will be graded '**unclassified**' if it is either:

- below the quality threshold for one star; or
- does not meet the definition of research used for RAE 2026; or

- a missing item in the submission.

Metrics/Citation Data

24. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

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

Additional Information on Research Outputs

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

Section C: Assessment Criteria: Research Impact

Range of Impacts

27. The Humanities Panel will accept submissions on research impacts that meet the generic definition and criteria as set out in paragraphs 47-49 of the General Panel Guidelines.

28. The Panel will assess the quality of all eligible impact submissions based on their merits on equal footing with no consideration given to the differences among submitting universities/units in terms of staff size, resources and histories. The Panel recognises that impact at a local, regional, national or transnational level can be assessed as 4*.

29. Examples are provided to illustrate the range of potential impacts from research across the Humanities Panel below under Examples of Impact. These examples are not exhaustive or exclusive. Likewise, there is no implication of differentiating importance in the ordering of examples in the list.

30. Universities are expected to submit their strongest impact cases and not to align submitted cases specifically with the particular types of impact listed, as an impact case may describe more than one type of impact. The Humanities Panel stresses that impact must involve a change of the

kind mentioned in the definition of impact given in paragraph 47 of the General Panel Guidelines.

Examples of Impact¹

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

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

More specific examples include:

- Informing or influencing practice or policy as a result of research on the nature and extent of religious, sexual, ethnic, linguistic or other discrimination;
- Research into the languages and cultures of minority linguistic, ethnic, religious, immigrant or other cultures and communities, used by government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities or the private sector to understand and respond to the needs of these cultures and communities;
- Helping professionals and organisations adapt to changing cultural values;
- Contributing to continuing personal and/or professional development leading to a change in policy or practice;
- Preserving, conserving and presenting cultural heritage, resulting in a changed perception or a new understanding;

¹ Examples of impact 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>>. Other examples of research impact as assessed in other jurisdictions may be accessible online such as <<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact>> from the United Kingdom.

Universities may also refer to examples of impacts and indicators detailed in Annex A of <https://2021.ref.ac.uk/media/1450/ref-2019_02-panel-criteria-and-working-methods.pdf> of the United Kingdom Research Excellence Framework 2021.

- Contributing to positive social change via the creative sector, including publishing, theatre, museums and galleries, film and television, fashion, tourism, and computer games;
- Changing the design and delivery of curricula and syllabi in schools or other educational institutions where the impact extends significantly beyond the submitting university, for example through the widespread use of textbooks, primary sources or an IT resource in education;
- Developing materials that contribute to the quality of the tourist experience;
- Transforming the public understanding of wellbeing;
- Providing expert advice to governments, NGOs, charities or the private sector locally or internationally, and thereby influencing policy and/or practice;
- Engaging with and mediating between NGOs and charities in Hong Kong or internationally to influence their activities, for example in relation to health, education or the environment;
- Transforming wider public access to and participation in the political process.

Impact Strategy

31. Universities are reminded to set out their impact strategy in the University-level and UoA-level environment overview statements.

Impact Case Studies

32. Following paragraphs 7.7 (a) and (b), 7.9-7.10 and Appendix F of the Guidance Notes and also paragraph 51 of the General Panel Guidelines, submitting units are required to provide a narrative account that clearly explains the relationship between the research and impact, and the nature of the consequent changes or benefits.

33. Each impact case study should include appropriate evidence and indicators that support the claims for the impact achieved, including specifying beneficiaries, when the impact occurs/occurred, and the relationship between the case study and how it has sustained further innovation and impact. Individual case studies may draw on various

evidence and indicators, which may take different forms depending on the type of impact. All claims made should be fully substantiated through qualitative or quantitative evidence.

34. Examples are provided below under Examples of Evidence or Indicators for Impact to illustrate potential evidence or indicators that may be mostly relevant to the Humanities Panel. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. In addition, the ordering of examples does not imply gradation of importance.

Examples of Evidence or Indicators for Impact²

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

35. *(Template paragraph deleted)*

Underpinning Research

36. High quality research, i.e. research outputs considered to have attained at least 2 star (2*) or international standing, should underpin impact cases. The Panel expects the scholars responsible for the research to make their own judgements regarding the level of quality, and to present their argument as to why it meets the required standard. Where necessary,

² see footnote 1.

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

37. Provided that the Panel is satisfied that the quality threshold has been met, the quality of the underpinning research will not be taken into account in the assessment of the quality of impact. Underpinning research referenced in a case study may also be submitted for assessment as a research output. The evaluation of the outputs concerned under the impact element is a separate assessment only for assuring the threshold of underpinning research. In this case, the guidance on output types and the criteria for assessing research outputs as stipulated in paragraphs 9-14, 20-23 above would apply.

Criteria and Quality Levels for Assessing Research Impact

38. 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.

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

- reach: reach will be assessed in terms of the extent to which potential constituencies have benefitted from the research; 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 whether the impact is local, regional, national or transnational. For example, the Panel will evaluate the extent to which society as a whole, communities or individuals have been benefitted from the introduction of a new cultural event.
- significance: the degree of beneficial effects and change to policies, practices, perspectives or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals, or constructive change to the prevention or reduction of harm, risk or cost. For example, the Panel will evaluate the degree of heightened awareness of a

social or cultural issue resulting from the publication of a new book.

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

Section D: Assessment Criteria: Research Environment

Research Environment

41. The Humanities Panel will accept submissions on research environment according to paragraphs 57-58 of the General Panel Guidelines. The Panel recognises that excellent research can be undertaken in a wide variety of research structures and environments. The Panel has no pre-formed view regarding the ideal size or organisational structure for a research environment. The Panel will assess each submission based on what has been presented in relation to the work of the submitting unit in providing and ensuring a good environment.

42. A research environment submission includes one university-level environment overview statement across the same university, and one UoA-level environment overview statement and environment data for each UoA. The UoA submissions may relate to a single department or to multiple departments. It may depict the commonalities and dynamics among faculties and departments within the submitting unit, and define their prime activities, modes of operation, and ways of attaining their goals.

Environment Overview Statements (One University-level Environment Overview Statement across the University and One UoA-level Environment Overview Statement for Each UoA)

43. Following paragraphs 9.6 (a) and (b), 9.7, 9.8 and Appendix G of the Guidance Notes, and also paragraphs 59 & 60 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel will use the information provided in the university-level environment overview statement to inform and contextualise their assessment of relevant sections of the UoA-level environment overview statement. Submitting units are required to

describe how they have supported the conduct and production of research in the context of the university-level environment overview statement.

44. Within the terms of the Guidance Notes, the Humanities Panel will expect in particular to see the following in the –

44.1 University-level Environment Overview Statement

- context and mission: an overview describing the submitting university's size, structure, mission and stage of development in view of its role statement so as to provide a context for the submission.
- research policy and strategy: describing the institutional strategy for research (including research strengths, research focus areas, 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 attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, the issue of how inter-disciplinary and collaborative research has been supported, and how research integrity and research ethics are embedded in the institution), and consideration of how the overall institutional policy and strategy contribute to government priorities.
- people: institutional staffing strategy, staff development and training (e.g. recruitment, leave policies, equality and diversity agenda, measures/facilities for early career researchers/research students, etc.), and development, training and supervision of research students.
- 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.

In the context of research environment, the university is encouraged to comment on the extent to which generative AI technologies have been addressed, applied or used within any of the above elements.

44.2 UoA-level Environment Overview Statement

In the context of the university's policies as stipulated in the university-level environment overview statement –

- UoA context and structure: submission in this part is expected to briefly describe the organisation and structure of the unit, which research groups are covered in the submission and how research is structured across the submitting unit.
- research and impact strategy: evidence for having achieved strategic aims for research and impact during the assessment period, details of current/future strategic aims and goals for research and impact; the question of how these relate to the structure described above; and how they will be taken forward; methods for monitoring attainment of targets; new and developing initiatives not yet producing visible outcomes but of strategic importance; identification of priority developmental areas for the unit, including research topics, funding streams, postgraduate research activity, facilities, administration and management.
- research integrity and research ethics: give evidence of the steps taken to ensure that research is undertaken in an ethical manner with rigour, honesty and care and respect for those involved in the process. Research conducted with integrity leads to findings people can trust and have confidence in. Disciplinary best practice may consider, but is not limited to, issues ranging from approaches to training, ensuring dissemination and accessibility of results, data availability, registration of protocols, ethical compliance, authorship policies, reproducibility, open research, participatory research, the handling of conflicts of interest and intellectual property, and approaches to dealing with allegations of research misconduct and questionable research practices.
- people: evidence of staffing strategy, staff development and training (e.g. leave policies, equality and diversity, support for research students, etc.) and evidence of their effectiveness; the issue of how individuals at the beginning of their research careers are being supported and integrated into the research culture of the submitting unit; information on postgraduate

recruitment, training and support mechanisms; measures/facilities for the development and supervision of research students;

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

In the context of research environment, the submitting UoA is encouraged to comment on the extent to which generative AI technologies have been addressed, applied or used within any of the above elements.

Environment Data

45. Following paragraphs 9.6 (d) and (e), 9.9 and Appendix H of the Guidance Notes, and also paragraph 61 of the General Panel Guidelines, submitting units are required to provide environment data in conjunction with the UoA-level environment overview statement. The Panel will consider the environment data within the context of the information

provided in the environment overview statement, and within the context of the disciplines concerned. While making no automatic judgment in terms of the scale of any research environment, the Panel recognises that different scales and organisational structures are appropriate to different research areas. In this spirit it will take into account the size of UoAs and the resources at its command. It will also take into consideration the career stage of individuals within the UoAs.

46. Data on “staff employed by the university proper” and “graduates of research postgraduate programmes” will be used to inform the Panel’s assessment in relation to “people” (section (4) of the UoA-level environment overview statement). Data on “on-going research grants/contracts” will be used to inform the Panel’s assessment on “income (e.g. grants received)” (part of section (5) of the UoA-level environment overview statement). Additional quantitative data or indicators that are particularly relevant to the Panel are indicated in paragraph 44 above. Such additional information should be submitted within the appropriate section(s) of the UoA-level environment overview statement.

Criteria and Quality Levels for Assessing Research Environment

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

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

- research and impact strategy, research integrity and research ethics – 25%
- people – 25%
- income (e.g. grants received), infrastructure and facilities – 25%
- collaboration, esteem, contribution to the discipline or research base – 25%

The Panel will use one or more of the five categories of quality level as specified in paragraphs 63-65 of the General Panel Guidelines for assessing each aspect within the environment element and by aggregating assessments of individual aspects to form an overall assessment for each UoA-level environment submission.

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

- vitality: the extent to which a unit supports a thriving and inclusive research culture for all staff and research students, articulates clearly its strategy for enhancing research and its impact, is engaged with the local and international research and user communities, and is able to attract excellent postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers through a worldwide reputation;
- sustainability: 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, and the extent to which activity is supported by a continual portfolio of research funding.

50. The Panel will make an overall judgement about the vitality and sustainability of research environments, rather than assess the two criteria separately. The Panel understands the quality standards for assessing research environment as set out in paragraph 65 of the General Panel Guidelines.

Section E: Working Methods

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

51. To facilitate assessment on particular UoA(s) and/or research area(s) under the Humanities Panel, the following sub-groups will be formed to assess submissions in respective research areas –

- Chinese language & literature

- English language & literature
- Translation
- linguistics & language studies
- history
- area studies (e.g. Japanese studies, European studies, etc.), cultural studies and other arts/humanities
- philosophy
- religious studies

The final assessment and grading will be decided by the Panel as a whole.

Allocation of Work in the Assessment Process

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

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

54. Subject to conflicts of interest of individual members, the impact and environment submissions will be assessed by panel members and impact assessors in the sub-group(s) for respective UoA(s) or research area(s) under the Panel. Final grading of individual submissions will be a collective decision of the Panel.

55. Where appropriate, the Panel will decide, by exercising their professional judgement, whether lay members (local “research end-users” or professionals in respective fields from business, government, industry and the arts, who need not be academics) with suitable expertise will be invited to take part in the assessment. Lay members who are academically qualified may also be invited for assessment of research outputs and research environment. The engagement of lay members will be by invitation from the Panel only.

Cross-Panel Referrals

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

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

58. Cross-panel referrals are envisaged in areas such as, but not restricted to: creative writing, art history and applied linguistics.

External Advice

59. This Panel will follow the procedure in paragraph 67 of the General Panel Guidelines when referral to external reviewers for expert advice becomes necessary for panel assessment. External reviews will be sought in cases where members of the Panel do not have the necessary expertise.

Trial Assessment

60. With reference to paragraphs 91-93 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel will conduct a trial assessment. Submissions used for the trial assessment will be assessed afresh during the main assessment period regardless of their assessment results during the trial. The Panel will decide on the sample size after the submissions are received.

Panel Feedback Report

61. With reference to paragraph 73 and Appendices E and F of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel will provide feedback to the University Grants Committee (UGC) after the assessment process. Non-local panel members will be involved in offering comments for an impressionistic international comparison. The Convenor on behalf of the whole panel will submit the panel feedback report to the UGC by November 2026. Sector-wide comments in the panel feedback report will be released for public information after announcement of the RAE results. Comments on individual universities will be provided to the respective universities under confidential cover in accordance with paragraph 11.3 of the Guidance Notes.