

Research Assessment Exercise 2026
Panel 13 – Education
Panel-specific Guidelines on
Assessment Criteria and Working Methods
(October 2024)

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Introduction

1. This document sets out the assessment criteria and working methods that the Education 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 Education 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 Education 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 Education Panel will assess universities' submissions from the following UoAs –

| <u>Code</u> | <u>UoAs</u> |
|-------------|---|
| 40 | physical education, sport, recreation & physical activities |
| 41 | education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education) |

4. The Panel expects to receive submissions whose primary research focus falls within the respective remit of the above UoAs. The UoAs under the Panel's remit cover the full spectrum of applied and theoretical work as it relates to the practice of education, physical education, sport, recreation and physical activities.

Unit of assessment descriptors and boundaries

Unit of Assessment 40: physical education, sport, recreation & physical activities

4.1 The UoA includes research stemming from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, and covering a wide range of disciplines and areas that contribute to research in physical education, sport, recreation and physical activities. Examples include (in alphabetical order) adapted physical activity, anthropology, behaviour change, biomechanics, business and marketing, coaching, economics, events, law; motor learning and control, nutrition, philosophy, physical activity and public health, physical education, physiology, policy, politics, psychology, sociology, sports injury and rehabilitation, strength and conditioning.

4.2 The Panel expects submissions to this UoA of research from a range of areas relating broadly to physical education, sport, recreation and physical activities informed by a variety of

epistemologies, methodologies and methods. This includes empirical, theoretical, strategic, applied or policy focused research.

Unit of Assessment 41: education (incl. curriculum & instruction, education administration & policy and other education)

4.3 The UoA includes research which has an educational focus or orientation broadly. It is concerned with research in the following illustrative areas:

4.4 Research which addresses education systems, issues, processes, provision and outcomes in relation to sectors, such as: early years, primary, secondary, further, higher, medical, workplace, adult and continuing education. It also includes teacher, healthcare and other forms of professional education, vocational education and training, and informal, community and lifelong learning.

4.5 Research which addresses substantive areas, such as: curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment; language and literacy; bilingualism, multilingualism, and intercultural communication; teaching and learning; children, young people, student and adult learners; ethnic minority learners; special educational needs and disability; parents, families and communities; culture, economy and society; teacher training, professionalism and continuing professional development (CPD); special and inclusive education; participation, rights and equity issues; technology-enhanced learning; education policy; the organisation, governance, management, effectiveness and improvement of educational institutions; education, training, workplaces, industry and the labour market; comparative, international and development education.

4.6 Research which employs a range of theoretical frameworks and methodologies drawn from disciplinary traditions, including, but not limited to: anthropology, applied linguistics and communication, economics, geography, history, humanities, mathematics, statistics, philosophy, political science, psychology, speech, language and hearing sciences, science and sociology.

4.7 The Panel accepts submissions in pedagogical research in higher education (whether or not this is generated in education departments or similar units) and in professional education (including, for example, medical, clinical and healthcare education, engineering and other professional education), while recognising that such work may instead be submitted in another relevant UoA/Panel. The Panel also accepts submissions in speech, language and hearing sciences including speech and language pathology and the education of speech and language therapists and audiologists. The Panel will consider submissions in counselling and neuroscience. However, submissions in these areas may be referred to another sub-panel for advice.

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 discipline of Education is inherently diverse and celebrates its inter-disciplinarity. The UoAs under the Education Panel's remit are likely to draw on, but not to be restricted to, relationships with sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, communication studies, computer science, physiology, statistics, history, philosophy, business and economics. Research in the field of Education and which falls under the Panel's remit deploys a wide range of methodologies and qualitative and quantitative methods with structured, exploratory and participatory research designs.

Assignment of Eligible Academic Staff in Each UoA

7. Pursuant to paragraphs 7-11 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Education Panel does not expect to receive information on sub-disciplines in relation to eligible academic staff and their respective research outputs.

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. In practice, the Panel would find the assignment of eligible academic staff likely susceptible to anomaly in cases where a member of academic staff in a discipline other than Education had made a submission based upon research describing studies that are narrowly focused on curriculum or practices of their parent discipline. They should be judged by education experts in that parent discipline.

Section B: Assessment Criteria: Research Outputs

Output Types

9. The Education 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 the publication venue. The Panel recognises that there can be work of the highest quality in various output forms, and no distinction will be made between types of output submitted nor whether the output has been made publicly available electronically or in a physical form.

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

11.1 The following items are regarded as “traditional” in their academic format:

- Books, book chapters and research monographs.
- Published papers in scholarly journals.
- Commissioned reports.

- Systematic, synthesis or meta analysis reviews incorporating new research or insights.

11.2 The Panel is receptive to receiving alternative, non-traditional types of outputs provided they meet the criteria outlined in paragraph 15 of the General Panel Guidelines and are supported by additional information of up to 300 words as explained in paragraph 18 (b) of the Guidelines. Examples include:

- New materials, devices, and artefacts relating to educational practice.
- Portfolio of design work, creative arts, or research relating to educational practice.
- Documentary film or video.
- Further editions of a published work.

11.3 Please note the requirements for an abstract that includes a clear indication of what new insights or innovation are presented in outputs, as at paragraph 18(a) of the General Panel Guidelines. If the form of an output (e.g., an artefact or video) does not, by itself, reveal its research imperatives and associated process of investigation, so as to establish a permanent legacy of that research in the public domain, then it is either a non-traditional research output or not a research output at all. Universities submitting non-traditional outputs must provide additional information as advised in paragraph 5.17 (d) of the Guidance Notes.

12. Research outputs will be assessed for the quality of original research they include. In the case of edited books, consideration will be given to the specific research contribution (in terms of new insights or innovation) the staff member, as editor, has made to the output. This should be clarified in an additional brief statement of no more than 100 words. Translations are acceptable as a research output if they make an original and distinctive contribution to the work translated.

12.1 All such formats as those listed above are acceptable, provided that they contain a significant component of previously

unpublished research and original insight. Such outputs will also be judged for the quality of the research whether or not it has been subject to peer review. That said, the Panel recognises that peer review normally entails careful refereeing of papers submitted for publication but is equally aware that peer review invokes practices of scrutiny that can vary greatly in depth, scope and independence.

13. The Panel will consider subsequent editions of previous work only where a new edition serves to elaborate the original work with a substantial amount of new novel and insightful material.

14. Other than the requirement in paragraph 18(a) of the General Panel Guidelines and the instance(s) described in paragraph 12 of the Panel-specific Guidelines, the Panel does not require the submission of a brief statement of no more than 100 words for each output item to specify the originality and significance of the output.

Double-weighting of Research Outputs

15. Paragraphs 29-31 of the General Panel Guidelines indicate that in exceptional cases a submitting university may request that outputs of extended scale and scope be double-weighted in the assessment. In view of the established practice in Education and related areas of publishing major research outputs in the form of scholarly books or monographs, the Panel recognises that there may be outputs of such scale and scope. It will consider the items submitted for double-weighting in line with the General Panel Guidelines.

16. When requesting for double-weighting of an output, universities should submit a statement in not more than 100 words, explaining in what ways the output is of sufficiently extended scale and scope to justify the claim. The Panel will decide whether to double-weight the output on the basis of the scale and originality of its contribution to knowledge. The Panel will consider a substantial authored contribution to be most likely a monograph or book approximately equivalent to requiring research effort for producing at least two single outputs. A substitute output should be submitted to function as a backup for cases where double-weighting is proposed on submission but not considered by the Panel to be appropriate.

Co-authored/Co-produced Outputs

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

18. The Panel will consider co-authorship to be a normal element of research activity. The Panel will expect all named co-authors to have made a significant contribution to the research process leading to the output concerned. If a submitted co-authored research output involves more than five authors, the submitting university must provide additional information that clarifies the extent and character of the contribution made by the author with whom the submission is associated as outlined in paragraph 34 of the General Panel Guidelines. This description is limited to 100 words.

Non-traditional Outputs

19. The Panel will handle research outputs in non-traditional form according to paragraphs 35-37 of the General Panel Guidelines. In such cases, the contribution to knowledge of the output needs to be clearly detailed in the additional explanatory information of no more than 300 words, which should identify its novelty, the method(s) used to ensure academic rigour in the production of the output, deliverables, and dissemination method as advised in paragraph 5.17 (d) of the Guidance Notes. For submissions involving recordings, images or photographs, the Panel would expect the contents to be of good quality in at least 16-bit audio and high definition 1280 × 720 video resolution for recordings and 300 dpi (dots per inch) for images/photographs respectively.

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 grade each output into one of the five categories of quality level as set out in paragraph 19 of the General Panel Guidelines. The generic description of the quality levels as set out in paragraph 20 of the General Panel Guidelines will be applied in the Panel's assessment.

22. The Education Panel provides the following amplifications on the criteria of assessing research outputs –

- 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 a 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.
- 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.
- 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. The Panel will take into consideration the following characteristics in particular –

- The significance of the work to advance knowledge, skills, understanding and scholarship in relation to theory, practice, educational management and/or policy.
- The challenge and logistical difficulty posed by the research.
- The logical coherence of argument.
- Its contribution to theory-building.

Metrics/Citation Data

24. Pursuant to paragraph 24 of the General Panel Guidelines, the Panel acknowledges that metrics and citation data may serve as advisory or secondary information, and that they should not be used in any algorithmic or deterministic way for the evaluation of research quality.

25. The Education Panel will examine each output in detail for the assessment. The Panel is aware of the limitations of 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. For these reasons, the Panel will not refer to metrics or citation data in making its judgment on the quality of submitted research outputs.

Additional Information on Research Outputs

26. Other than the information required on research outputs as specified in the Guidance Notes, and unless specifically required by the Panel during the assessment process, no other information should be provided. The Panel will take no account of any such information if submitted.

Section C: Assessment Criteria: Research Impact

Range of Impacts

27. The Education 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 impacts within its remit can be manifested in various ways and may occur in a wide range of spheres whether locally, regionally or internationally. In all such cases the Panel believes it is imperative for submissions to trace back claims of impact to particular research findings.

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

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. For example, a new research centre can influence both educational policy, curriculum and practice; a new technical development can have economic impacts as well as impacts on learning and performance; a new dissemination programme can influence public understanding and behaviour.

Table A: Examples of Impact¹

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Impact on practitioners | Published research findings suggest that a particular type of educational or coaching practice is likely to have a beneficial impact on learners. A practitioner support network was therefore created, and the research team worked with the network to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) and produce materials for wider dissemination. N practitioners attended the CPD and adopted the materials. The practice became embedded as part of the CPD curriculum and in turn was found to have a positive impact on the practitioners' learning and practice. |
|-------------------------|---|

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.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Impact on communities | Published research findings suggest a particular kind of community learning centre can promote positive benefits to learners and communities. A systematic scaling up was therefore implemented by the government, establishing and funding more community learning centres. More young people were recruited onto self-study programmes and free on-line courses were created centred on local concerns. A number of benefits to the learners and communities engaged with the programmes and courses were evidenced. |
| Impact on technical resources | An on-line CPD intervention was developed as part of a design-based research study. This was then scaled up and rolled out through a spin-out company. N teachers signed up for the CPD intervention, and evaluation evidence indicated that it impacted on their practice and deployment of resources in various (named) ways. |
| Impact on families | Research findings suggesting a particular approach to improving the engagement of whole families in difficult-to-reach communities were published. A regional government outside of Hong Kong drew on these findings to develop and implement a new approach to engaging with families from difficult-to-reach communities in the region. N schools were involved in the project, reaching Y families, which led to their enhanced involvement in community-related matters. |
| Impact on education policy | As a consequence of a study on the effective use of funding by school Principals, the government changed regulations to give Principals more autonomy in some areas of budgeting, but reducing their autonomy in others. |

Impact Strategy

31. Universities are reminded to set out their impact strategy in the University-level and UoA-level Environment Overview Statements.

Impact Case Study(ies)

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 describe how they have sought to enable and/or facilitate achievement of impact arising from their research during the assessment period, and how they are developing and adapting their plans to ensure that they continue to do so. This is distinct from the Environment Overview Statement, which should describe how the units support the conduct and production of research.

33. Each impact case study should include appropriate evidence and indicators that support the claims for the impact achieved, including who and what has/have benefitted, when the impact occurs/occurred, and the relationship between the case study and how it has/had 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.

34. Examples are provided in Table B to illustrate potential evidence or indicators that may be mostly relevant to the Education Panel. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. Equally, there is no implication of priority or importance in the ordering of examples in the list. The imperative for indicators is that they provide strong evidence that significant change has been achieved within the setting of the case.

Table B: Examples of Evidence or Indicators for Impact²

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Quantitative indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial data relating to cost effectiveness. Performance measures (e.g., examination results, recruitment statistics). Attendance statistics. Survey measurements of attitude or opinion. |
| Documentary evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recorded changes to public policy, legislation, regulations or guidelines. |

² See footnote 1.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New codes of professional activities. • Pamphlets, brochures and other publications disseminating activity. |
| Engagements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uptake of new methods, tools or materials by institutions or practitioners. • Incorporation of products into best practice or training materials. • Evidence of public discussion and reference in policy arena. |
| Independent testimony | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder acknowledgement of effective actions or supportive materials by relevant stakeholders. • Published approval of impact by independent commentators. • Formal acknowledgement of impact by relevant institutions or practitioners. |
| Reviews and citations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citations in the academic or professional literature. • Reference in social media. • Invited presentations on broadcast media. |

35. The Panel provides the following advice on particular aspects of impact case studies –

- Case study impact may occur in a wide range of spheres: creativity, culture, economy, policy, organisations, practitioners, professional services etc. These categories may overlap and so should not be restrictive; case studies may describe impacts in more than one sphere.
- Impact may be local, regional or international and beneficiaries may be various. The Panel will treat all spheres of impact and any beneficiaries identified on an equal basis.
- The unit submitting a case study must itself have conducted research that underpins the claimed impact. The significance of underpinning research from other institutions should be acknowledged.

- The chain of evidence that links underpinning research within the submitting unit to the impacts claimed for a case study must be traced and made clear. It is understood that the form for such evidence may be varied; no type of evidence is inherently preferred.
- The quality of underpinning research for impact is a threshold judgement (a level is met that is adequate to the case): judgement of the case study does not involve judgement of research quality beyond that threshold. The Panel does not routinely expect to review underpinning research output(s): the submitting unit should provide its own evidence of threshold quality, such as that obtained from peer review or citations.
- Submissions should include only those outputs that best illustrate the quality of underpinning research; the submission should not therefore be comprehensive.
- Case studies may achieve impact through public engagement. Evidence of reach and secondary reach should be thorough and may be wide-ranging.
- Key claims made as evidence for research-led impact in the submitted narratives will be judged by the Panel for integrity, clarity and coherence.
- Evidence cited for impact of a case study should be, as far as possible, independently verifiable. The status of those giving testimony on impact should be made clear in terms of whether they are a participant or a reporter of what is claimed.
- Submitted impact initiatives may be at various stages of maturity but they should be sufficiently developed to furnish some verifiable evidence of change or benefit beyond academia having taken place within the assessment period.
- The submitting unit need not have undertaken all of the underpinning research or have been exclusively involved in exploiting.
- Dissemination activity without evidence of its benefit will not be considered impact.

Underpinning Research

36. The Panel acknowledges the level of quality required for research underpinning impact cases, i.e. equivalent to at least 2 star (2*) or international standing, as stipulated in the General Panel Guidelines. Impact case studies should include appropriate evidence or indicators of the quality of the underpinning research. Where necessary, 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 under the research output element. The evaluation of the outputs concerned under the impact element is a separate assessment only for assuring the threshold of underpinning research. In this case, the guidance on output types and criteria for assessing research outputs as stipulated in paragraphs 9-14, 20-23 above will 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. In respect of the Education Panel, the criteria of reach and significance will be understood as follows –

- reach: 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. For example, the Panel will evaluate the extent to which society as a whole, communities or individuals have benefitted from the introduction of a new form of educational assessment.

- significance: the degree of beneficial effects to policies, practices, perspectives or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals, constructive change to the prevention or reduction of harm, risk or cost. For example, the Panel will evaluate the degree of constructive change to student achievement associated with the adoption of some new technology for learning.

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 Education 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 of 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 coherent faculty and equally to multiple departments, and may depict the commonalities and dynamics among faculties and departments within the submitting unit, and define their prime activities, how they operate and their main achievements.

Environment Overview 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's policies as set out in the University-level Environment Overview Statement.

44. Within the terms of the Guidance Notes, the Education 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 contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, how inter-disciplinary 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.
- people: institutional staffing strategy, staff development and training (e.g., 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(s), which research groups are covered in the submission and how research is structured across the submitting unit(s).
- research and impact strategy: evidence of the achievement of strategic aims for research and impact during the assessment period, details of current/future strategic aims and goals for research and impact; 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 agenda, measures for early career scholars, etc.) and evidence of their effectiveness; how individuals who are at the beginning of their research careers or transitioning into academia from professional practitioner backgrounds are being integrated into the research culture of the submitting unit and supported to progress and develop in their research careers; 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 and exemplars of research collaborations; mechanisms to promote collaborative research at local and international level; support for inter-disciplinary research collaborations; research collaboration with research users; collaborations with relevant key stakeholders.
- 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: exemplars 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. Any supporting statistics should be fully explained: in particular, the Panel recognises the risk of metrics being misleading if not presented in the context of the institution’s overarching research strategy.

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 environment, the Panel will consider research environment in terms of vitality and sustainability, including its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. The Panel will grade each environment submission as a whole with a profile rating using one or more of five categories of quality level as set out in paragraphs 63-65 of the General Panel Guidelines. No weighting will be attached to individual aspects in the assessment.

49. The Education 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, that is based on a clearly articulated strategy for research enabling 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, encouraging members to initiate meaningful collaborations organically and not by top-down imposition.
- 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 infrastructure, and the extent to which activity is supported by a diverse portfolio of research funding; leadership from individuals who have earned “accountable autonomy” within their education institution, and which encourages and provides opportunities for cross-disciplinary research.

50. The Panel will make an overall judgement about the vitality and sustainability of research environment.

Section E: Working Methods

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

51. No sub-group or sub-panel will be formed under the Education Panel to assess submissions in respective research areas.

Allocation of Work in the Assessment Process

52. The Convenor, consulting the Deputy Convenor and other panel members, as 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 will also take into account any potential conflicts of interest of respective panel members and assessors. All panel members will take account of the requirements of the General Panel Guidelines to ensure that the exercise is conducted fairly and equitably.

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(s) which is(are) only housed at one or two local universities, submissions will be assigned to at least one non-local member in order to ensure fair and impartial assessment. Final grading on research outputs will be decided by the Panel as a whole.

54. Subject to conflicts of interest of individual members, the impact and environment submissions will be assessed by members of the whole Panel and the final grading of individual submissions will be a collective decision of the Panel.

55. Where appropriate, lay members (local “research end-users” or professionals in respective fields from education, government, the sports industry who need not be academics) with suitable expertise will take part in the assessment. Lay members who are academically qualified may also be invited to assess research outputs and research environment.

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 other panels will be assessed by panel members of the respective panels

or external reviewers with expertise in pedagogy. In the case that the expertise of members of the Education Panel is called for, the Education Panel may also assess research on pedagogy and education cross-referred from other panels.

58. The need for cross-panel referrals will be judged when the composition of the Education Panel is finalised. It is envisaged such referrals might be necessary in areas such as: neuroscience, speech and language therapy (to Panel 1 – Biology or to Panel 2 – Health Sciences), applied linguistics and language education (to Panel 11 – Humanities).

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 may be sought in the cases for which 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 using a number of submissions selected from universities' submissions. These sample submissions will be assessed by all members of the Panel. Members will share among themselves any important observations in the assessment to ensure fairness and consistency in the actual assessment. Submissions used for the trial assessment will be assessed afresh during the main assessment period regardless of their assessment results during the trial. The Panel will decide on the sample size after the submissions are received.

Panel Feedback Report

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.