

CCUE SUBMISSION TO CONSULTATION ON REF2014 PANEL CRITERIA AND WORKING METHODS

Generic questions

1a

Overall draft panel criteria and working methods

The generic and four main panel statements achieve an appropriate balance between consistency across the exercise and allowing for justifiable differences between the four main panels.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1b

Are there particular aspects of the criteria and working methods that should be more consistent across all the main panels? Are there differences between the disciplines that justify further differentiation between the main panel criteria? Where referring to particular main panels, please state which one(s).

COMMENT:

Concern exists across the HE sector about the inconsistency between main panels on whether or not to permit reserve items to be submitted alongside prospective double-weighted outputs. English departments* strongly endorse Panel D's policy in this matter.

*Based on CCUE's consultation with all UK English departments, more than 30 of whom submitted detailed responses. Subsequent comments draw on the same evidence.

2a

Individual staff circumstances

The proposals for determining the number of outputs that may be reduced without penalty, for staff with a range of individual circumstances, are appropriate (Part 1, Tables 2 and 3).

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2b

Please comment on these proposals. Respondents are also invited to comment specifically on:

- whether Tables 2 and 3 are set at appropriate levels

- the proposed options for taking account of pregnancy and maternity (Part 1, paragraph 62)
- whether a consistent approach across the exercise is appropriate, or whether there are any specific differences in the nature of research that justify differences in the approach between UOAs or main panels.

COMMENT:

English departments expressed concern about several aspects of the draft guidelines on individual circumstances:

- Table 3 shows a lack of flexibility and compassion with regard to patterns of sick leave and arbitrariness about the criteria for exemption. Decisions about eligible sick leave should be determined by medical professionals, and a system of medical certification incorporated into REF working methods, with consistency across the four main panels.
- Calculation of reduced outputs for part-time staff is not straightforwardly pro-rata'd. It is unclear why not.
- Arrangements for maternity leave raised the greatest concern. CCUE strongly recommends the adoption of the alternative approach outlined in paragraph 62 whereby the number of outputs is reduced by one for each discrete period of maternity leave, irrespective of the length of leave taken.
- The approach to childcare also raised concern. Childcare should not be regarded as an unfortunate complication arising from maternity, but as its natural consequence. The classification of childcare as a 'complex circumstance' leaves too much discretion to individual institutions and does not guarantee that women in this category will be treated sympathetically. The proposal as it stands could have a negative impact on the careers of female researchers and be harmful to disciplines such as English which have a relatively high number of women academics.
- Greater clarity is needed on adoption and on paternity leave.

Main panel D criteria and working methods

D3a

Main panel criteria and working methods

The main panel statement achieves an appropriate balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the sub-panels.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

D3b

Please comment on the balance between consistency and allowing for discipline-based differences between the sub-panels within this main panel. Please state the UOA(s) on which you are commenting.

COMMENT:

See comment under 1b about reserve items.

D4a

Submissions and units of assessment (Section 1)

Do the UOA descriptor and boundary statements provide a clear and appropriate description of the disciplines covered by the UOAs? Please include any suggestions for refining the descriptors and state which UOA(s) you are commenting on.

COMMENT:

The descriptor and boundary statements are clear and appropriate.

D4b

Please comment on the main panel's criteria in relation to multiple submissions in its UOAs.

COMMENT:

The criteria are clear and appropriate.

D5a

Assessment criteria: outputs (Section 2)

Overall, the main panel criteria relating to outputs are clear and appropriate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D5b

Please comment on the criteria in Section 2, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

COMMENT:

- Clearer guidance is needed about the criteria for double-weighting of outputs. Paragraph 63 states that 'the sub-panels recognise that there will be cases where the combined scale of academic investment in the research activity and the scope of the research output is equivalent to two or more single outputs'. Since institutions themselves must decide in REF2014 (unlike in RAE2008) which items to claim double-weighting for, it is important that some indication be given in the

guidelines of what constitutes extended 'scale' and 'scope'. Are such outputs likely to be exceptional cases or would any substantial monograph (for example) potentially fall into this category? If so, this could lead to a very different pattern of submission to previous RAEs, and institutions need guidance about how to approach this.

- We support the proposed methodology for double-weighting, especially the option to specify a reserve output. However, the second bullet point of paragraph 67, 'two single outputs plus one double weighted output, plus the option to identify one of the remaining outputs as a reserve', should be re-phrased. We assume that the Panel intended to stipulate that, in a case where two single outputs and one double-weighted output are submitted, the submitting UoA would have the option to specify a fourth item as a reserve.
- Clarification is sought about how creative writing outputs will be mapped on to the Level Definitions and the quality criteria that support them. Guidance on this will assist institutions in selecting appropriate outputs for submission.

D6a

Assessment criteria: impact (Section 3)

Overall, the main panel's criteria relating to impact are appropriate and helpful to institutions in preparing submissions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D6b

Please comment on the criteria in Section 3, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

COMMENT:

Uncertainty remains about the concept of Impact, which is not fully defined in the criteria. English departments would welcome further guidance on this matter. In particular:

- We would welcome clarification on how the threshold level of the underlying research will be determined.
- In describing the impact template, the use of the word 'holistically' has caused some confusion. We would suggest a clarification along the lines of, 'the impact template will be judged as a whole rather than assigning separate scores to each individual element.'
- We would also welcome clarification over the at times vaguely defined boundaries between what is considered within and beyond academia.

D7a

Assessment criteria: environment (Section 4)

Overall, the main panel criteria relating to environment are clear and appropriate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

D7b

Please comment on the criteria in Section 4, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

COMMENT:

These criteria generally met with approval. We suggest that specific mention is made here of post-docs, since under the guidelines some post-docs will not be returnable as Category A staff.

D8a

Working methods (Section 5)

Overall, the working methods of the main panel and its sub-panels are clear and appropriate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

D8b

Please comment on the working methods, in particular on where further clarification is required or where refinements could be made.

COMMENT:

Further clarification is needed with regard to the role in the assessment process of user representatives (paragraph 120). Some clarification would also be helpful in relation to the nature of the calibration exercises aimed at ensuring consistency across sub-panels (paragraph 121). The description of the level of detail with which outputs will be scrutinised as 'sufficient to contribute to the formation of a reliable quality profile' is very unspecific; as a result, the entire paragraph 122 remains confusingly vague.