

*1. How far do you agree that the descriptor provided by the sub-panel describes the main subject areas of the UOA?*

Agree

*Comment:*

The description is a good indicator of the range and depth of activity conducted by researchers in English across the sector.

*2. How far do you agree that the sub-panel's proposed weightings for research outputs, research environment and research esteem are appropriate to the UOA?*

Disagree

*Comment:*

While we are grateful for the care and sensitivity with which the panel has approached the specific needs of English in this area, there was some concern among the subject community about the weighting of only 5% for research esteem. This was thought to be too light given the range of (largely valid and important) activities included in this category.

In addition to the general arguments for a heavier weighting, a light rating for this element might prove to be unduly discriminatory against small departments, in which the activities of a small number of distinguished scholars are particularly important to the overall research culture. Markers of esteem were also felt to be in some cases more concrete and demonstrable indicators of excellence than those factors listed under research environment, which might be more susceptible to 'writing up' in an eloquent submission. While both large and small departments undoubtedly benefit from the mutual research support colleagues offer each other, it might be helpful if the English sub-panel criteria were to reflect the fact that individual research still forms an important and possibly dominant model of research in several branches of English Studies. We would suggest the panel consider raising the esteem element to 10%, perhaps with a commensurate reduction of the Research Environment weighting to 15%. Failing this, a reduction in the number of the factors covered in this section would reduce the administrative burden for what currently is a very small reward.

*3. How far do you agree that the sub-panel's range of indicators for excellence is appropriate in assessing the submitted research outputs?*

Disagree

*Comment:*

While we welcome the generally clear and helpful formulations offered by the sub-panel in this area, there were a number of issues raised by the community and on which we have significant recommendations to make.

Outputs:

There was considerable concern expressed across the range of respondents to our consultation concerning the lack of flexibility in the mechanism for calculating the number of outputs submittable by individuals and the lack of consistency with analogous disciplines such as History. It was felt, very strongly in some cases, that the disparity between the amount of research involved in a large-scale, widely-ranging project (often but not necessarily culminating in a monograph) and that in a short project (often but not necessarily culminating in an article, essay, or short work) was not adequately reflected in the current demand for four equally weighted items. We would recommend that the sub-panel consider adopting the system adopted by the History and Communication, Culture and Media-Studies sub-panels, in which in exceptional circumstances a substantial project might be allowed to count as two or more items.

There was also considerable unease expressed by the community over the description of how research in Creative Writing will be assessed. The generic research paradigm used in paragraph 25, and the statement describing how Creative Writing might demonstrate its relationship to that paradigm through research 'content' or formal innovation, do not, as they stand, provide adequate indicators of excellence in Creative Writing, and so seem unlikely to command the confidence of researchers in this area. Given the considerable growth in Creative Writing since the last RAE and its consequent importance to the UOA as a whole, this is a crucial issue that needs to be revisited with some care. We would recommend that the sub-panel reconsider the criteria for excellence in Creative Writing in the light of those outlined by the sub-panels for Music, Fine Art, and other performance-based UOAs. The same objections might also be raised for performance-based research in English.

Given the volume of Creative Writing that is likely to be submitted in this RAE and the necessarily limited expertise among the sub-panellists in the area, it would also reassure practitioners if the sub-panel were to state explicitly that it would be looking to appoint additional specialist advisers in Creative Writing.

*4. How far do you agree that the sub-panel's range of indicators for excellence is appropriate for the UOA in assessing the research environment component of the submission?*

Agree

*Comment:*

We welcome the statement concerning the lack of clear correlation between grant income, external PG funding, etc, and research excellence, which accurately represents the situation in English. We also welcome the statements concerning the different challenges and opportunities faced by both very small and very large departments, and would encourage the sub-panel to make these a still-more explicit part of its description of its expectations in this domain.

*5. How far do you agree that the sub-panel's range of indicators for excellence is appropriate for the UOA in assessing evidence of esteem within a submission?*

Agree

*Comment:*

The list of indicators covers the major areas of relevant activity, and would seem, in its depth and diversity, to be *prima facie* evidence of the need to weight this element more substantially than it currently is. We would ask the sub-panel to consider whether it might help those drafting submissions if, in addition to a list of those activities which are legitimate markers of research esteem and distinction, they also provide a list of those factors that ought NOT to be listed here (i.e. those activities which could be thought of as a part of any researcher's normal duties).

*6. How far do you agree that the sub-panel has identified appropriate criteria for assessing the vitality and sustainability of research described in each submission, including its criteria for assessing the contribution of researchers at different career stages?*

Agree

*Comment:*

We welcome the sub-panel's helpful attitude towards early-career researchers and those who have for various reasons had periods away from full-time research activity. However, it would be of considerable help to those drawing up submissions, and would reassure the community greatly, if the sub-panel would clarify precisely how account will be taken of such cases. We recommend the adoption of the clear and transparent statements contained in the History criteria in which the precise degrees of compensation permissible for staff at various stages of their career, or who have had various periods of absence from research activity, are spelt out.

*7. If relevant in this UOA, how far do you agree that the sub-panel's criteria and working methods are appropriate for identifying and assessing applied research equitably alongside other forms of research?*

Disagree

*Comment:*

There appears to be some inconsistency of wording between paragraphs 19 and 38 which deal with Applied Research. It would be helpful if the anomaly could be rectified. More generally we have some concern over the definition of pedagogical research. We recommend that this matter be revisited in the final drafting of the criteria statement.

8. *If relevant in this UOA, how far do you agree that the sub-panel's criteria and working methods are appropriate for identifying and assessing practice-based or practice-led research equitably alongside other forms of research?*

Disagree

*Comment:*

See our comments on Creative Writing and Pedagogical Research elsewhere in this document.

9. *General Comments on any other aspect of the sub-panel's criteria and working methods. Where appropriate, respondents might wish to comment here, for example, on any non-standard data or data analyses that the sub-panel has requested:*

*Comment:*

Para 16. Forms of Output:

Given the stated intention to make no prior assumptions about the quality of items based upon their form, it might be reassuring if the sub-panel adopted the strictly alphabetical ordering of forms of output used by other sub-panels. As things stand there is a temptation to read some kind of implied 'ranking' into the non-alphabetical list provided.

It would also be helpful if 'Databases' could be added to this list, given the important work undertaken in this area since the last RAE. A number of respondents also asked if *ODNB* articles could be added to the list of encyclopaedia entries, etc, mentioned at various points. Substantial *ODNB* entries are likely to appear in a significant number of submissions in 2007 and it would be helpful if the sub-panel could indicate their positive attitude to their inclusion.

Paras 22 and 23: Joint Authorship:

There seems a manifest anomaly here in the statement that a book co-authored by two or more researchers in different departments can count equally for each, but one co-authored by two or more in the same department cannot. This seems an indefensible position and needs to be resolved. Given the need for clear documentation about the precise contribution of each researcher to the finished volume, there should not be any difficulty in allowing the same item to appear in each of their submissions wherever they are employed. The current formulation seems actively to deter collaboration between colleagues of the sort applauded elsewhere in the document.

Para 51 Working Methods: The shift from 'read' to 'review' in the course of this paragraph is odd and gives rise to (perhaps unnecessary) concerns about the degree of scrutiny to which each output will be submitted. If the sub-panel intends to 'read' each item, as the statement implies, it would be helpful for them to say so. We would thus recommend the replacement of 'review' with 'read' wherever the latter is what is intended.

The above comments reflect the outcome of a consultation exercise in which CCUE contacted every HE English department in the UK. Responses were received from eighteen departments, and a further thirteen departments were represented at the Executive meeting at which the issues raised were discussed.

#### GENERIC COMMENTS (to appear on a separate consultation document)

Generic criteria:

A related point: RAE 03/2005: *Guidance on Submissions*: Section 2, Paragraph 58: 'Interdisciplinary research, Arrangements for Cross referral and Specialist Advice'.

Here it is suggested that HEIs may ask for either the work of an individual researcher (i.e. all of the items submitted) or all of the outputs and textual commentary relating to a particular research group to be cross-referred to another sub-panel where they deem it important to do so. This seems to exclude the possibility of asking for only one item to be flagged for cross-referral. Given the interdisciplinary range of many researchers in English it would seem at least as likely for just one output to be sufficiently interdisciplinary to require cross-referral as for the whole submission to be so. We would recommend that the option for a single item to be flagged by the HEI for cross-referral be added to the list here.

We would also seek a clear account of the precise mechanisms that will be used to reach a judgement of the quality of interdisciplinary items. For example, if specialists from two disciplines have read a single item, will there be an opportunity for them to confer (in writing at least) as to the originality and significance of the work?

#### Categories of Staff

We note with considerable disquiet the disappearance of the Category of Staff listed as A\* in RAE 2001 - i.e. those who have moved between participating HEIs in the last year of the assessment period. The mechanism that this category provided for ameliorating the extreme effects of staff movement in the final months of the assessment was invaluable as a brake upon game-playing and poaching by Institutions with the money to spend on 'research stars' and the inclination to gamble. Without it, and the compensation that it offered to those institutions whose productive researchers disappeared even while the submissions were being drawn up, there will be no restraint upon aggressive recruitment of staff by those institutions able to do so up to the last moment. The damage is likely to be felt not only by small departments and units who will suffer disproportionately from the disappearance of a key individual, but also any large unit that is not prepared to pay 'retainers' to key individuals subject to headhunting. The resulting disruption to the sector as a whole is likely to be considerable, and to have a severe negative effect on research culture nationally. Regardless of the general arguments over whether the RAE is good for research or not, the Generic Criteria seem in this instance to be clearly setting up rules of engagement that will create perverse outcomes for the health of research in the UK.