



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 2
23rd January 2014, 10.00 am - 4.15 pm
Finlaison House, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison (main panel member)
Fiona Armstrong (observer)
Trevor Barnes (main panel member)
Frans Berkhout (main panel member)
Hastings Donnan (main panel member)
Michelle Double (adviser)
Gillian Douglas (main panel member)
Janet Finch (chair)
Colin Hay (main panel member)
Herbert M Kritzer (main panel member)
Deborah McClean (adviser)
Katy McKen (adviser)
Peter Neary (main panel member)
Jone Pearce (main panel member)
Alan Penn (main panel member)
Michael Pidd (main panel member)
Andrew Pollard (main panel member)
Keith Richards (main panel member)
Mark Robson (main panel member)
Graeme Rosenberg (REF team)
Sue Rossiter (main panel member)
Peter Taylor-Gooby (main panel member)
Martin Walsh (main panel member)
Paul Wies (main panel member)
Teresa William (main panel member)
Michael Wykes (adviser)

Apologies:

Wim van Oorschot (main panel member)

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting.
- 1.2. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.

2. Register of interests

- 2.1. The register of declared major conflicts of interest was tabled. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct. Members were reminded that conflicts of interest should be updated via the panel members' website.

3. Chair's introduction

- 3.1. The chair reminded members that the main panel is responsible for ensuring that the published assessment procedures are followed and that assessment standards are applied consistently by its sub-panels. The focus of the meeting would be on the assessment of outputs.
- 3.2. Members noted the information that had been provided about the number and size of submissions to REF2014 compared with RAE2008.
- 3.3. In discussion a member noted that while sub-panels had been provided with standard analyses (by submitted FTE and headcount) of research income and degrees awarded it might be difficult to assess the annualised data in submissions because staff numbers were not available for each year. It was agreed that the use of REF4 data should be discussed when the assessment of Environment was considered.
- 3.4. Consideration of the volume of submissions also gave rise to a discussion of the likely volume of material being cross-referred. Members were reminded that requirements for cross-referral should be identified in the course of allocating material for assessment and not later than the end of March 2014. If necessary sub-panel members should be encouraged to scan their reading lists to identify candidates for cross-referral at as early a stage as possible.
- 3.5. The REF manager confirmed that advice on cross-referral was available via the panel members' website. He confirmed that an additional assessor would only be sought if there was a significant volume of work that the panel was unable to assess itself.
- 3.6. The chair drew members' attention to the Equality and Diversity briefing which had been circulated. The secretariat would assess clearly-defined circumstances and make recommendations to sub-panels as to the appropriate reduction in outputs. It was likely that the secretariat would need to seek advice from sub-panels concerning early career status.

- 3.7. Papers providing guidance on conflicts of interest, the agreed granularity of scoring and on the schedule of meetings had also been circulated and were noted.
- 3.8. It was noted that sub-panels would receive guidance on audit at their forthcoming meetings. Random auditing of submissions had already begun and some adjustments to submissions had been made. Reports of these amendments would be available via the secretariat in due course. Panel instigated audits would be managed via the panel executive. The REF Manager explained that impact case studies would not be subject to random audit by the REF audit team. All impact case study audit would be via panel instigated audit. It was anticipated that between 5 and 10 percent of cases would be audited across the exercise as a whole.
- 3.9. Members expressed some concern about the potential additional workload that could be entailed in identifying case studies for audit. The REF Manager agreed to consider this further. The need for a consistent response to shortcomings identified via audit was also noted.

4. Output calibration

- 4.1. The chair introduced the output calibration exercise. She reminded members that the main panel was responsible for ensuring that the published assessment procedures were followed and that the assessment standards were applied consistently by its sub-panels.
- 4.2. The output calibration exercise was being undertaken to assist the panel in fulfilling that responsibility. Sub-panel Chairs would be responsible for ensuring that this was followed through in their own deliberations.
- 4.3. Each sub-panel chair had identified five outputs (including one for discussion by the panel as a whole) for the calibration exercise. Outputs had been made available to members in advance of the meeting and all members had read the items identified for plenary discussion and a subset of the remainder. The panel first discussed the items that had been nominated by each sub-panel chair for discussion by the panel as a whole. A primary and secondary (expert) rapporteur reported their assessment of the item and any issues that they had encountered in applying the criteria for discussion by the panel as a whole. The panel then broke into 4 sub-groups to discuss any further issues that had arisen from the remainder of the nominated outputs. Each sub-group reported its findings to the panel as a whole.
- 4.4. The panel did not assign ratings to the outputs. Discussion focussed on the application of the assessment criteria (originality, significance, rigour), within the context of grade boundary definitions, and on exploring any issues that arose in doing so.

- 4.5. In the course of discussion panel recognised that there were disciplinary differences between the units of assessment covered by its sub-panels. In some cases these differences would naturally require the application of the criteria in discipline-specific ways.
- 4.6. The panel also identified issues where they would expect sub-panels to adopt the same approach in the practical application of the criteria. These are documented in paragraphs 4.7-4.11
- 4.7. The panel agreed the following principles, consistent with the published criteria and working methods:
- Different types of work should each be judged in their own terms. Criteria applicable to work of a different type to that being assessed - whether within the same discipline or from a different discipline - should not be used in determining scores.
 - To be awarded the highest score, the sub-panel should expect the output to be very strong on all three criteria, but not necessarily in equal degrees. If not, a specific case should be made for awarding the highest score.
 - The output item must be judged solely on its own merits without, for example, bringing in evidence of other work by the same author, or from the same project, except with relation to paragraphs 40 and 41 of the Panel Criteria document where sub-panels consider that there is 'material in common'
- 4.8. The panel also endorsed the following points, in relation to the application of the criteria and level descriptors. These do not in any way supersede the published criteria, but provide supplementary points arising from the calibration exercise.
- 4.9. In considering *originality* sub-panels should note that:
- Originality can reside in the type of data used or generated, and/or the methods employed, and/or the insights or findings
 - Transfer of insights from other disciplines, including theory, can be the basis of an original contribution
 - Putting a new label on issues which are well established cannot rate highly on originality
 - Literature reviews can score high on originality, provided they are comprehensive and produce new insights
- 4.10. In considering *significance* sub-panels should note that:
- The value of a piece of work beyond its own discipline (one which 'speaks to other disciplines' which deal with the same topic) is a positive feature

- Work which has wider implications, beyond the issue studied, should be regarded positively provided the author has identified this
- The output criteria of significance should not be conflated with the criteria of reach and significance for assessing impact.

4.11. In considering *rigour* sub-panels should note that:

- The clarity, quality and coherence of the argument are important factors
- Where evidence is offered, using it systematically rather than illustratively is a positive feature
- Where different types of data are used, the question of how well they are integrated is relevant to the judgement
- The type of rigour exercised must be appropriate to the inferences drawn if it is to score highly; sophisticated methodology is not enough of itself
- In work which is value based, and where the value-orientation is clear in the submitted output, a high score could only be given if the work includes a strong critical element, through which the value position is genuinely interrogated.

4.12. A member sought advice on how the criterion of originality should be assessed where several items were submitted for the same individual in the same submission which had significant material in common. It was agreed that assessors should be alert to the possibility of such items being submitted. Where this arose extra safeguards should be put in place in order to ensure that a fair assessment was achieved. This might include assigning a common second reader to the outputs submitted for an individual.

4.13. The panel was reminded that the panel criteria and working methods (paragraphs 92 and 93) stated that UOA boundaries are not rigidly defined and that institutions would not be penalised if submissions contained some work that overlaps UOA boundaries. Where a submitted output fell outside the UOA to which it had been submitted and expertise is not available on the sub-panel, advice should be sought by cross-referral.

4.14. A member suggested that it would be helpful to discuss the assessment of practice-based outputs with sub-panel chairs in main panel D.

5. Impact calibration planning

5.1. Proposals for an impact calibration exercise had been set out in paper 03.2014. Following discussion it was agreed to extend the scope of the impact calibration exercise to include impact templates (REF3a) as well as impact case studies (REF3b). In contrast to the outputs exercise items would be rated by members of the main panel for the purposes of discussion, but scores were not to be collated

in advance of the meeting. It would be helpful if sub-panel user member views were obtained by the sub-panel chairs to inform discussion at the main panel meeting.

- 5.2. It was agreed that each sub-panel chair would identify 3 case studies and 2 impact templates. One of the case studies should be nominated for plenary discussion. The practicalities of the exercise (including which impact templates would be discussed in plenary session) would be confirmed in due course via the panel advisers.
- 5.3. Action: Sub-panel chairs should send two REF3a and three REF3b for use in the calibration exercise to their panel adviser by 14th February 2014.

6. Future meetings

- 6.1. The next meeting would be on 6th March 2014 at Finlaison House, 15 – 17 Furnival Street, EC4A 1AB. Annex D of 01d.2014 provided a summary of all forthcoming main panel meetings.

7. Any other business

- 7.1. It was noted that three sub-panels were starting work on assessment of Environment. The main panel would be carrying out an Environment calibration. The sub-panels should not finalise their Environment sub-profiles until that exercise had taken place and its findings taken into consideration.
- 7.2. Chairs of those sub-panels which had started work on Environment assessment should identify generic Environment assessment issues for discussion at the March meeting of the main panel and to inform the Environment calibration.
- 7.3. The Chair reminded members that the role of international members was to ensure that international standards are applied to assessments. Sub-panel chairs and international members should determine how best to work together to achieve this. This might involve “dipstick” testing some outputs, but the international members were not expected to act as outputs assessors.
- 7.4. The chair noted that approximately 1% of the outputs submitted to the sub-panels requested double weighting. A calibration exercise would be undertaken at the next meeting. Where sub-panels wished to proceed with the assessment of double-weighting claims in the meantime they should do so. Final decisions on difficult cases should be postponed until after the calibration exercise had taken place.
- 7.5. One sub-panel chair agreed to bring five examples of straightforward cases. All other sub-panel chairs agreed to provide two examples of problematic cases. There was some discussion as to whether the cases could be assessed without

examining the output itself, but it was agreed that outputs, as well as statements, should be provided for this calibration. All examples should be provided to the panel advisers by 14th February 2014.

- 7.6. Further details on the conduct of the calibration exercise would be confirmed in due course.
- 7.7. There being no further business the chair thanked members for their contributions and declared the meeting closed.



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 3
6th March 2014, 10.00 am - 4.30 pm
Finlaison House, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison, Fiona Armstrong (observer), Trevor Barnes, Frans Berkhout, Jane Broadbent (deputising for Mike Pidd), Hastings Donnan, Michelle Double (adviser), Gillian Douglas, Janet Finch (chair), Colin Hay, Herbert M Kritzer, Deborah McClean (adviser), Katy McKen (adviser), Peter Neary, Jone Pearce, Alan Penn, Andrew Pollard, Keith Richards, Mark Robson, Graeme Rosenberg (REF team), Sue Rossiter, Peter Taylor-Gooby, Martin Walsh, Paul Wiles, Teresa William, Michael Wykes (adviser)

Apologies:

Wim van Oorschot

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting.
- 1.2. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.

2. Minutes and matters arising

- 2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.
- 2.2. Following feedback from some sub panels, the main panel confirmed that the points recorded in paragraphs 4.9 – 4.11 of the minutes were to assist sub-panels in the application of the published assessment criteria and do not replace or extend the criteria in any way.
- 2.3. It was noted that Environment calibration would be discussed at meeting 4.

3. Register of interests

- 3.1 The register of declared major conflicts of interests was tabled. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct. Members were reminded that conflicts of interest should be updated via the panel members' website.

4. Impact assessment and calibration

- 4.1. The chair introduced the impact calibration exercise. She reminded members that the main panel was responsible for ensuring that the published assessment procedures were followed and that the assessment standards were applied consistently by its sub-panels.
- 4.2. The impact calibration exercise was being undertaken to assist the panel in fulfilling that responsibility. Sub-panel chairs would be responsible for ensuring that this was followed through in their own deliberations.
- 4.3. One of the panel advisers gave a presentation highlighting the threshold criteria for assessing impact cases, which was then discussed by the main panel. The key points for panel members to note, and to convey to sub panels, were identified as:
 - If a case study fails to meet one of the threshold criteria then it should be graded as Unclassified. An audit query can be raised in any case where there is significant doubt about whether there is sufficient evidence to make this judgement.
 - The quality of the underpinning research is a threshold judgement; but the assessment is of the quality of the impact, not of the research. So, in establishing the quality of the underpinning research panel members should take a broad view of the underpinning research to establish that it is predominantly of at least two star quality
 - The research making a distinct and material contribution to the impact is a key factor in making threshold judgements; panel members need to ascertain that the research cited in the case study made such a contribution
 - Case studies must be assessed on the basis of the evidence provided in the four pages of the document. Corroborating sources should be used to verify evidence cited in the case study and not to gather further information.
 - The assessment of Impact Templates should be in terms of the unit's approach, strategy and how conducive these are to achieving impact.
- 4.4. The chair drew members' attention to the paper describing the approaches being taken by the sub-panels to allocating impact for assessment. It was noted that sub-panels are planning to take slightly different approaches but that all sub-panels would meet the minimum requirement of allocating impact case studies and templates to at least one academic member and one user or assessor.
- 4.5. Action: Sub-panel chairs were asked to provide an update on their approaches to the allocation of impact templates and case studies to their panel adviser by 4th April 2014.

- 4.6. The chair drew members' attention to the paper on the audit of impact case studies. It was noted that central REF team are asking sub-panels to identify between 5 and 10% of the submitted cases for audit. An initial set of audit queries should be identified by the end of the first impact meeting of each sub-panel.
- 4.7. Members expressed some concern about the timescales for providing requests for audit. It was agreed that an initial set (5%) of cases could be identified by the end of the first impact meeting with further cases within a month of the meeting, but it was noted that this may have implications for the timeliness of audit responses.
- 4.8. The panel discussed the extent to which members should check publicly available corroborating sources or other URLs contained in case studies. The panel accepted that case studies should be self-contained and the assessment based only on the evidence presented within the four page document.

5. Calibration of impact case studies

- 5.1. Each sub-panel chair had identified three impact case studies (including one for discussion by the panel as a whole) for the calibration exercise. Case studies had been made available to members in advance of the meeting and all members had read the items identified for plenary discussion and a subset of the remainder. The panel first discussed the case studies that had been selected for discussion by the panel as a whole. A primary and secondary (expert) rapporteur reported their assessment of the item and any issues that they had encountered in applying the criteria for discussion by the panel as a whole. Subsequently the panel broke into four sub-groups to discuss any further issues that had arisen from the remainder of the nominated case studies. Each sub-group reported its findings to the panel as a whole.
- 5.2. Discussion focussed on the application of the assessment criteria (reach and significance), within the context of grade boundary definitions, and on exploring any issues that arose in doing so.
- 5.3. The panel agreed the following points, which do not in any way supersede the published criteria and working methods, but provide additional clarification arising from the calibration:
 - There are many possible pathways to impact: impact can be planned or serendipitous; co-production of research and impact is valid.
 - Panel members should be aware of the constraints of the area that the researchers were working in and that the types of evidence presented should be assessed according to contexts such as geography or governance.

- Cases which claimed impact on a single company or organisation could, in principle, score high on 'reach' if it was clear that the focus of the impact claimed could only be specific to that organisation.
 - The challenges of demonstrating an influence on public or policy debate were discussed. It was acknowledged that giving advice to policy makers in itself does not constitute impact. Ideally there should be an explanation of how the advice influenced policy thinking or debate, but in the absence of this evidence, repeated invitations to speak to policy makers can imply some level of influence.
 - In cases where the impact claimed is that something has been prevented from happening (which falls within the published criteria for impact) panel members should be mindful of the inherent difficulty of evidencing such a claim, and make their judgements accordingly.
 - Background knowledge of certain impact case studies is inevitable but panel members must assess the case on the written evidence presented and without seeking additional information (unless by way of verifying something through the audit process).
 - There is a difference between dissemination and impact. Cases claiming impact from dissemination should ideally demonstrate a change as a result of the dissemination activity, but a range of other evidence could indicate the dissemination activity was valued (for example, repeat visits, growing audience numbers over time, and so on.)
 - In some instances a case study will group together either underpinning research which appears unrelated or a range of impacts which seem unrelated (a 'portfolio' approach). The assessment of these cases should take account of the coherence of the overall narrative.
- 5.4. Panel members were reminded that it is possible to cross-refer impact case studies to another sub-panel, but that it was not expected that this would be necessary except in a small number of cases.
- 5.5. The panel did not assign formal ratings to the case studies however following the plenary discussion panel members scored the cases discussed anonymously. These grades were collated and presented to the panel. In most cases there was a reasonable correlation between the ratings assigned.
- 5.6. The following challenges were highlighted in the cases where there was a notable discrepancy in the ratings:
- The lack of a narrative chain from the research to the impact; a limited description of the research and its findings made it hard to understand how it had made a distinct and material contribution to the impact
 - Claims of impact were made but not backed up with evidence.
 - The difficulties of assessing the evidence presented for the impact of dissemination activity.

- The need to weigh evidence of successful impact in one setting, against little or no evidence of impact in another setting where it had been attempted.

6. Lunch

7. Calibration of Impact Templates

7.1. Each sub-panel chair had identified two impact templates for the calibration exercise. Templates had been made available to members in advance of the meeting and panel members had read the items identified for their breakout discussion. The four sub-groups discussed one common impact template and a number of other templates. Discussion focussed on the application of the assessment criteria (reach and significance) and how the unit had facilitated the achievement of impact, within the context of grade boundary definitions, and on exploring any issues that arose in doing so. Each sub-group reported its findings to the panel as a whole.

7.2. The following were identified as characteristics of a strong template:

- A strong narrative
- Claims which were backed up by evidence
- A strong forward looking strategy. Section b need not necessarily describe a structured approach to impact given the time period covered by the REF, but section c should show what the unit has learned from their approach to date and how it intends to build on this.
- Dissemination could be an important part of a Unit's strategy for encouraging impact from its research, but the strongest examples showed evidence of engagement with stakeholders rather than just transmitting information to them.
- A clear description of the main beneficiaries and users groups for the unit's research

7.3. The following were identified as characteristics of poor templates:

- A lack of clearly articulated strategy
- A lack of coherence, including too many lists that don't add to the narrative
- Too great a reliance on the descriptive
- Over-claiming the influence of the unit's own research, without making reference to other research in the same area

7.4. The panel felt that feedback to the sector on impact templates at the end of the exercise would be beneficial for future exercises.

8. Double weighting

- 8.1. Sub-panel chairs had nominated double weighting statements for the calibration exercise. Panel members were asked to return their personal judgements on the selected cases ahead of the meeting, based purely on the submitted statements without consulting the outputs.
- 8.2. The panel agreed the following principles, consistent with the published criteria and working methods:
 - It would be important to ensure that the judgement about whether to double weight an output should be based on the scale and scope of the output itself.
 - The judgement about whether to accept a claim for double weighting should appropriately take into account the normal scale and scope of outputs in a particular discipline
 - The double weighting judgement should, wherever possible, be made on the information provided in the double weighting statement but in some cases it may be necessary to look at the output to reach a final judgement.
 - The double weighting judgement must be separate from any assessment about the quality of the output, and this should be reflected in sub panel arrangements for assessing double weighting claims.
 - The duration of the research period was not of itself a justification for double weighting, rather a justification would need to be based on the long time scale required for certain research processes in particular disciplines
 - The following factors should not have any bearing on the double weighting judgement: the number of authors; the date of publication; the presence or lack of a reserve output

9. Any other business

- 9.1. There being no further business the chair thanked members for their contributions and declared the meeting closed.



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 4

24 April 2014

Finlaison House, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison, Fiona Armstrong (observer), Frans Berkhout, Hastings Donnan, Gillian Douglas, Janet Finch (chair), Colin Hay, Herbert M Kritzer, Deborah McClean (adviser), Katy McKen (adviser), Peter Neary, Alan Penn, Mike Pidd, Andrew Pollard, Keith Richards, Mark Robson, Graeme Rosenberg (REF team), Sue Rossiter, John Scott, Peter Taylor-Gooby, Martin Walsh, Paul Wiles, Teresa Williams, Michael Wykes (adviser)

Apologies:

Trevor Barnes, Michelle Double (adviser), Jone Pearce

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting. She congratulated Professor Scott on the award of the British Sociological Association's Distinguished Service Award.
- 1.2. The chair reported the withdrawal of Professor Wim van Oorshot as an international member of the Main Panel.
- 1.3. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.
- 1.4. The chair noted that this would be the first meeting looking at all three elements of the assessment process. She noted that the aim of reviewing emerging sub-profiles was to ensure consistent application of the assessment criteria and also to understand any variations which may arise.
- 1.5. The chair reminded sub-panel chairs of the subject overview and feedback reports which would be finalised towards the end of the assessment phase.
- 1.6. The main panel will provide guidance on the types of information to be included in subject overview reports, with some information collated at main panel level, where there are common themes. Some detail, such as disciplinary strengths, will be at sub-panel level. Some sub-panel members commented that these reports had been found to be helpful by their disciplines after the RAE2008.

- 1.7. Feedback statements will be prepared for each submission in a UOA with a comment about outputs, impact and environment. The feedback would focus on noting strengths and could perhaps include comments on weaknesses of content or evidence. The latter would only be appropriate where helpful and defensible. The chair noted that it would be helpful for each submission in a UOA to have a co-ordinator on the sub-panel to take the lead in drawing together feedback for each submission.
- 1.8. A paper will shortly be provided by the REF Team to provide more detail and the reports will be discussed further as an agenda item at the next meeting of this main panel.
- 1.9. The chair provided a brief update on the work of the EDAP which had been discussed at a recent meeting of the main panel chairs. The process for considering complex circumstances cases was working smoothly. Sub-panels will consider recommendations made by the secretariat regarding clearly defined circumstances information at their July meetings.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 2.1. The accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting was confirmed.

3. Conflicts of interest

- 3.1. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct. Individuals were reminded to update any changes to their conflicts of interest via the Panel Members' Website.

4. Impact sub-profiles

- 4.1. The chair introduced the item, noting that the data on emerging sub-profiles circulated before the meeting was based on panellists' scores, rather than panel agreed scores.
- 4.2. Two sets of data for templates and case studies had been circulated.
- 4.3. The meeting received a slide presentation showing the proportion of case studies scored by individual panellists at UOA level and also the distribution of scores. It was noted that the data might be anonymised to share with sub-panels at their impact meetings in May.
- 4.4. Action: REF team to consider whether an anonymised version of the data might be provided to the sub-panels.

- 4.5. Relatively small variations in the emerging impact sub-profiles were discussed. Some were felt to be explicable by the history of certain of the disciplines within main panel C which is of policy orientation and/or practitioner engagement.
- 4.6. The chair noted that the scoring patterns for the impact templates were generally lower than for the case studies. This was felt to be the natural result of units selecting their exemplar case study material with a relatively low number of case studies required in the majority of submissions. However, the impact templates present the organisational structure for the support of impact which, in many cases, is less mature than the impacts which have been generated.
- 4.7. User members of the main panel had been in attendance at the impact calibration meetings of the sub-panel. They were invited to share their observations and agreed that the process had been robust and conducted with diligence and integrity.
- 4.8. Strength of evidence provided within impact case studies was discussed and the panel was reminded that corroborating sources should be audited to verify claims, rather than simply to receive additional information.
- 4.9. The panel noted the varying amount of scoring data recorded at this point. This was not due necessarily to a difference in the amount of assessment which had taken place, but rather to differing approaches to discussing, agreeing and recording scores for the impact case studies and templates. The chair reminded sub-panel chairs that they were expected to recommend impact sub-profiles following their May meetings, with only outstanding audit queries delaying final decisions to the July round of meetings. Critical to this would be having scoring data recorded in the panellists' personal spreadsheets.

5. Calibration of Environment templates and data

- 5.1 Three sub-panels had already undertaken environment assessment. Three breakout groups, chaired by international and user members, considered two environment templates and the associated REF4 quantitative data selected by those sub-panel chairs as illustrative of the issues raised during their assessments. Following feedback from the three breakout groups and discussion of the material, a further eight environment templates and their associated data, relating to the remaining eight UOAs were discussed in plenary session. One panel member left the room during the discussion of an environment template from an HEI for which they had a major conflict.
- 5.2 Scores were collected in advance of discussions and again at the end of the plenary session. The scoring data showed very little variation, and after the breakout and plenary sessions, the scores were still more convergent.
- 5.3 Discussions focused on the application of the published assessment criteria of 'vitality' and 'sustainability'. No substantive issues were identified in applying the criteria consistently to the range of material considered, which included environment templates for a range of submission sizes and shapes.

5.4 There was a discussion about the use of the quantitative data to inform the assessment of the environment, particularly in relation to the 'People' (PGR data) and 'Infrastructure, Income and Facilities' (research income data) elements. The quantitative data have been submitted by HEIs on the basis of their HESA data, with the overall institutional total only allowed to exceed the submitted HESA data in exceptional circumstances. It was noted that the HESA data relate to all staff in a department, School or UOA, whereas not all eligible staff may have been submitted for assessment in the REF.

5.5 The main panel agreed the following points, consistent with the published criteria and working methods:

- The presentation of the material is a factor: poor presentation is unlikely to score highly, whilst excellent presentation which lacks evidence or detail is equally unlikely to score highly.
- Clarity in the narrative is felt to be a strength.
- A strong strategy section would set out what a unit was seeking to achieve with its research and what the unit perceived as the strategic benefits of its structure. It would be unlikely to consist simply of a list of research groupings with details of their activities.
- A 'bottom up' strategy of allowing excellent scholars to determine how best to take their research forward was discussed and it was agreed that this could represent a strong strategy, providing there was evidence of appropriate support for the researchers and of strong outcomes.
- In general, there should be coherence between claims and the assessment process should be alert to claims in the template which are either not backed up or which are contradicted by the data.
- Some templates contain assertions without evidence which was felt to be a weakness.
- A sense of the trajectory of a submitted unit, where they have come from and where they are moving to, is an essential aspect of a unit's sustainability.
- It is acceptable within the published guidance for environment templates to refer to unit staff who have not been included for assessment, or who are included elsewhere as they are part of an interdisciplinary unit perhaps. However, their role should be clearly described in order for them to be properly considered as part of the sustainability and vitality of a unit.
- Systematic use of fixed contract research 'stars' on small fractional contracts, may be considered to have an impact on the sustainability of a unit. This would be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Some aspects of the narratives considered describe institutional support for the research environment. The strongest narratives described how the unit concerned drew on and benefited from such institutional support.

5.6 There was a discussion of the methodology for arriving at a sub-profile for environment, which noted that each of the four elements would be scored

individually. It was, however, also hypothetically possible for a sub-profile to be entirely at one quality level.

6. Output sub-profiles

- 6.1. The chair noted the variation in the proportion of output scores recorded to date. She reminded sub-panel chairs of the objective to read and score 50% of outputs by the May sub-panel meetings.
- 6.2. It was noted that the current output scores are provisional as they are based on panellists' individual scores rather than panel agreed scores. Based on the provisional data, the main panel identified some variation in the emerging output sub-profiles.
- 6.3. There has been expectation of grade inflation in media reports in the run-up to the REF. Sub-panel chairs reported that on reading the outputs, the quality does genuinely seem higher than in RAE2008. It was noted that it was too early in the assessment process to know whether this will ultimately be reflected in the quality sub-profile for outputs.
- 6.4. Consideration was given as to whether the variations were explicable according to external evidence or disciplinary differences or whether there were different disciplinary approaches to assigning scores to outputs.
- 6.5. Where sub-panel chairs reported that some individuals are scoring generally lower than their sub-panel colleagues, it was noted that reports are available via the Panel Members' website which provide an output sub-profile based on a single individual's scores and which also compare an individual's scores to the sub-panel mean. These could be used to highlight individuals' scoring patterns within the sub-panel. Ultimately, assessment decisions are cabinet decisions which are the responsibility of the sub-panel, rather than of individual readers, which should ensure consistency of application of the published assessment criteria.
- 6.6. There was a discussion of the requirement in the working methods for submitting units to comment on outputs which contain material in common with outputs published before the REF2014 assessment period. Some submissions did not contain such comments and with a view to ensuring consistency of approach across the sub-panels, it was agreed to ask the REF team whether audit was appropriate in such cases or whether sub-panels should use their professional judgement based on their knowledge of the material.
- 6.7. ACTION; Advisers on behalf of the chair to obtain and circulate to the main panel clear guidance on how consistently to handle such material.

7. Future meetings

- 7.1. The timetable for future meetings was noted, and particularly the interim targets for assessment of outputs, impact and environment.

8. Any other business

- 8.1. There being no other business, the chair thanked members for their contributions and declared the meeting closed.



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 5

19 June 2014

Finlaison House, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison, Fiona Armstrong (observer), Trevor Barnes, Hastings Donnan, Gillian Douglas, Janet Finch (chair), Colin Hay, Vicky Jones (REF team), Herbert M Kritzer, Deborah McClean (adviser), Katy McKen (adviser), Peter Neary, Alan Penn, Mike Pidd, Andrew Pollard, Keith Richards, Mark Robson, Sue Rossiter, Mary Daly, Peter Taylor-Gooby, Martin Walsh, Paul Wiles (deputy chair), Teresa Williams, Michael Wykes (adviser)

Apologies:

Frans Berkhout, Jone Pearce, John Scott

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting, particularly Mary Daly who was deputising for John Scott who was unable to attend.
- 1.2. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.
- 1.3. The chair observed that whilst all three components of the REF would be on the agenda, the meeting would be devoted largely to a discussion of impact. Having attended a number of sub-panel meetings where impact was assessed, the chair reported her confidence in the application of the criteria to date and noted the strength of the collaboration between academic and user members of sub-panels.
- 1.4. The chair noted that the Main Panel would look at the outcomes from all eleven sub-panels with a view to maintaining confidence that the criteria had been applied uniformly and that any variances between sub-panels were understandable. The chair noted that whilst all panels had completed, or very nearly completed their assessment of impact that the Main Panel would not be formally approving the profiles at this meeting.
- 1.5. The chair reported that the four Main Panel chairs had met with the REF Steering Group earlier in the week and also with the panel advisers to review emerging

impact profiles across all four Main Panels. The Main Panel chairs had discussed the issue of feedback statements to individual HEIs and expressed a desire for consistency across all four Main Panels.

- 1.6. The chair and advisers had seen a preview of the REF 2014 results website which had been developed and they reported that the site looked very promising.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 2.1. The accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting was confirmed.
- 2.2. There were two matters arising. In relation to 4.4 it was confirmed that an anonymised version of the data was not shared with sub-panels, but rather the Main Panel Average. In relation to 6.7 further guidance was obtained and circulated to sub-panels.

3. Conflicts of interest

- 3.1. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct and/or individuals agreed to update their conflicts of interest after the meeting.

4. Impact

- 4.1. The Main Panel Chair invited each sub-panel chair to give a brief report as to how each sub-panel had enacted the panel criteria and working methods to assess impact. Sub-panel Chairs noted that they had read some outstanding examples of impact with wide ranging types and examples of impact.
- 4.2. It was noted that the impact assessors, drawn from senior posts with research-intensive external organisations, had been highly committed to the process; all had been involved in the assessment of both the case studies and templates in each sub-panel.
- 4.3. Each sub-panel had monitored scoring patterns of impact assessors and academic members to ensure that the criteria were being applied consistently and sub-panel chairs reported positive findings from the calibration process.
- 4.4. The Chair invited the user members of the Main Panel to report on the sub-panel meetings which they had attended. Members reported that it had been instructive to attend meetings of the sub-panels and recorded their broad confidence in the process noting the commendable volume of very considerable and outstanding impact case studies. It was noted that they were impressed by the diligence, transparency, scrupulousness and fairness at every stage in the assessment.

- 4.5. Main Panel user members were impressed by how sub-panel user members were integrated with academic members.
- 4.6. It was noted that the audit process for impact had worked well.
- 4.7. The Main Panel reviewed the data on the emerging impact sub-profiles for each UoA. The Chair invited members to confirm that they were comfortable that the criteria and working methods had been applied consistently and that the degree of variance between sub-panels was explicable. To provide further assurance the Main Panel Chair invited those members of the Main Panel who were not sub-panel chairs to review a small sample of impact case studies by way of an audit process to confirm that the Main Panel was comfortable with the level and degree of variance in sub-profiles. Action: sub-panel chairs to provide information for the audit.
- 4.8. The advisers would produce anonymised data to enable each sub-panel to share information about the emerging sub-profiles for impact across Main Panel C.

5. Environment

- 5.1. The Chair invited members to report any initial observations from the calibration and assessment of REF5 Environment templates. The Main Panel confirmed that sub-panels should correlate the data and narrative submitted as part of their focus on assessing the vitality and sustainability of each submission, and on a case by case basis.

6. Assessment of research outputs

- 6.1 The advisers projected the data of emerging sub-profiles of panel agreed scores for each sub-panel which amounted to 47% of outputs across the Main Panel as a whole.
- 6.2 The Main Panel discussed a number of issues relating to the assessment of outputs which had arisen to date. These included a discussion of the application of the criteria when assessing claims for double-weighting individual outputs and the treatment of outputs submitted more than once in the same submission. It was noted that a report on these items may be included in the Main Panel report at the end of the assessment.

7. Assessment of criminology research outputs

- 7.1 The chair invited the deputy chair to introduce a discussion of the consistent assessment of criminology outputs which had been submitted to three sub-panels. Members concluded that the criteria had been applied in a consistent manner and that all outputs had been assessed in accordance with the guidance.

8. Overview reports and feedback statements

- 8.1 The chair reported the discussion from the recent meeting with the four Main Panel Chairs and advisers. She confirmed that reports for each sub-panel would largely be about the assessment of outputs and environment. It was confirmed that whilst there would only be one report for each sub-panel within the Main Panel, each sub-panel report could have separate paragraphs.
- 8.2 With regard to the feedback on individual submissions which would be provided in confidence to the Vice Chancellors of submitting HEIs, the chair noted that it would be useful to gather some examples across the Main Panel for consistency. Action: Sub-panel chairs were invited to produce an example for discussion at the next meeting.

9. Any other business

- 9.1. One item of other business was raised which related to the consistent treatment of individual staff circumstances relating to early career research status. Three members left the room for this discussion due to conflicts of interest. The advisers were tasked with circulating further guidance to the Main Panel ahead of the next meeting.

10. Future meetings

- 10.1. The timetable for future meetings was noted, and particularly the next targets for the assessment of outputs and environment.
- 10.2. The Chair thanked members for their contributions and declared the meeting closed.



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 6
24th July 2014, 10.00 am - 4.30 pm
Finlaison House, Furnival Street, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison, Fiona Armstrong (observer), Trevor Barnes, Frans Berkhout, Hastings Donnan, Michelle Double (adviser), Gillian Douglas, Janet Finch (chair), Colin Hay, Herbert M Kritzer, Deborah McClean (adviser), Katy McKen (adviser) Peter Neary, Jone Pearce, Alan Penn, Michael Pidd, Andrew Pollard, Keith Richards, Mark Robson, Graeme Rosenberg (REF team), Sue Rossiter, Duncan Shermer (REF team), Peter Taylor-Gooby, Martin Walsh, Paul Wiles, Michael Wykes (adviser)

Apologies:

Teresa Williams

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting and explained that the majority of the meeting would be devoted to the consideration of the assessment of outputs and of impact. She also took the opportunity to remind members of the confidentiality and data security arrangements for the REF (which could be found via the panel members' website).
- 1.2. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

- 2.1. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2014 had been circulated. The minutes were approved subject to an amendment to the list of those present and minor amendments to paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4.
- 2.2. The panel advisers informed the panel that advice had been sought from the REF team in relation to the matter discussed under paragraph 9.1. The REF team advised that, if the sub-panel had reason to doubt the nature of a role in relation to early career status, further information should be sought via audit or from relevant information in the public domain. This was in hand for the example that had been identified at the last meeting.

3. Register of interests

- 3.1. The register of declared major conflicts of interest was tabled. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct. Members were reminded that conflicts of interest should be updated via the panel members' website.

4. Assessment of research outputs

- 4.1. The chair reminded members that at earlier meetings and through observation of sub-panel meetings they had satisfied themselves that panel criteria were being applied in a consistent manner and in accordance with the panel criteria and working methods.
- 4.2. As sub-panels moved towards the completion of the assessment of outputs it was appropriate to examine the emerging quality profiles in order to identify and understand the reasons for any significant differences in the profiles and to be confident that they reflected the quality of the submitted material. In particular the panel should ensure that difference did not arise from inappropriate procedural differences between sub-panels.
- 4.3. The panel advisers projected information on the current fte-weighted sub-panel outputs profiles. Information on the number of submissions and average submission size (FTE) was also provided and members invited to comment.
- 4.4. It was acknowledged that, while a majority of outputs had been assessed, the profiles were neither complete nor finalised.
- 4.5. The panel noted the range and distribution of fte-weighted scores.
- 4.6. In the course of discussion members identified a number of features which could give rise to an increase in the proportion of work at the higher quality levels compared to RAE2008 in submissions overall within the scope of main panel C. These included:
 - Improvement in quantitative methodology in some areas
 - Investments in capacity-building coming to fruition
 - The reduction in the overall volume of outputs submitted
 - The use by institutions of individual staff circumstances to submit few outputs per person and hence submit only the strongest outputs
 - Improved familiarity with the requirements of the exercise

- 4.7. Members also cited examples of reviews published by other organisations which had identified high quality research in some areas within the scope of the main panel.
- 4.8. Sub-panel chairs outlined the actions they were taking to support the maintenance of consistency in their sub-panels. These included:
- Monitoring and reporting on individual and sub-group scoring patterns, providing information to assist individuals in calibrating their scoring, and following up with individuals where necessary to ensure a consistent approach
 - Revisiting items that had been assessed earlier in the process to ensure that it benefitted from any learning that had occurred in the course of the assessment period.
 - Reviewing scores at the highest and lowest levels
 - Use of additional readers or moderating groups, particularly where initial assessors had found it difficult to come to an agreement on scores.
- 4.9. The panel then broke into sub-groups to continue discussion of the profiles in more detail. Data had been circulated in paper 02.2014 and was updated and tabled to provide context for the discussions. Break-out groups were chaired by international members who were charged with critically examining the profiles and identifying issues to be raised in plenary with the sub-panel chair. Sub-panel chairs were not members of the group considering their own panel's sub-profile.
- 4.10. In plenary session each sub-panel was considered in turn. The sub-panel chair was invited to respond to the issues identified by the groups and to reflect on whether any action was required. In the course of discussion the following matters were considered in relation to the emerging sub-panel outputs profiles:
- the diversity of academic subjects covered by the UOA influenced the distribution of scores
 - of the range and scale of institutions submitting to the UOA
 - the number of double-weighted outputs submitted
 - the volume of cross-referred material
 - the effect of the volume of early career researchers
 - institutional submission strategies in relation to numbers and choice of UOA.
- 4.11. The panel requested information on the distribution of early career researchers and on the quality profile of outputs associated with early career researchers. This information would be compiled by the advisers.
- 4.12. The panel advisers were also asked to provide information on the volume of double-weighting requests, the quality profiles of outputs accepted for double weighting, declined for double-weighting and their associated reserve outputs. In the first instance the chair and deputy chair would review this information to determine whether further action was required;

5. Impact audit

- 5.1. The panel advisers projected information on the current fte-weighted sub-panel impact profiles. Information on the number of submissions and average submission size (FTE) was also provided.
- 5.2. Paper 03.2014 had been circulated and set out the arrangements for the main panel audit of impact which had been agreed at the previous meeting.
- 5.3. The chair expressed her gratitude to the international and user members for their hard work and diligence in completing the audit in time to provide feedback to the meeting.
- 5.4. The output of the audit comprised comments on individual case study assessments and comments on the assessment process, based on the descriptions submitted by sub-panel chairs.
- 5.5. The comments on case studies would be passed to sub-panel chairs by the advisers. Sub-panel chairs should consider the comments and identify any further action that might be required.
- 5.6. The chair provided a summary of the main findings in relation to process and interpretation of the criteria. She reported that there was no indication that any single sub-panel had applied the assessment criteria in a different way from other sub-panels and that all sub-panels were following the published working methods. The audit had identified some differences in process. She invited the panel to consider these further in the interests of ensuring that the final impact profiles reflect the quality of the submitted material. The areas in which some variation had been identified included:
 - The number of assessors per case study
 - The process for agreeing final scores for endorsement by the panel – whether by scoring teams, in sub-groups or via discussion by the whole panel
 - The degree to which individual scoring patterns were examined and, where appropriate, moderated.
- 5.7. She also asked sub-panel chairs to consider their sub-panel's approach to the following matters and to ensure that they had taken consistent approaches. Some of these matters had been addressed when the main panel carried out its impact calibration exercise. The notes of that exercise would be re-circulated for reference:
 - Weak chain of evidence from underpinning research to impact

- Partial performance (ie only part of the claimed impact has been evidenced)
- Application of “reach”
- Impact based on a body of work or contribution to debate
- Dissemination
- Potential impact
- Impact which had started before the impact period and was ongoing

5.8. In conclusion the chair asked each sub-panel chair to consider their sub-panel's processes in light of the audit findings and panel discussion. Where necessary they should identify actions required to ensure that their final recommended quality profiles reflect the quality of the material submitted. This should be completed and the proposed actions reported to the chair by 1st August 2014. The chair would refer to the appropriate user panel member as appropriate.

5.9. The REF manager provided an update on impact assessment across the 4 main panels. He indicated that some work would be undertaken to confirm that no panel had systematically scored in a different way and with a view to understanding any significant differences in scores across the main panels.

6. Environment update

6.1. Members noted paper 4.2014. Assessment of the environment template would be considered in more detail at the next meeting.

7. Feedback statements

7.1 Members noted paper 5.2014 which included REF team guidance on the content of institutional feedback statements. Members were reminded that the feedback should reflect the language of the panel criteria and working methods and should not include advice to institutions.

7.2 The REF manager confirmed that, where it was necessary to provide feedback that would be useful, it was acceptable to identify individual case studies in the feedback.

7.3 Members had provided examples of draft feedback to institutions and these were discussed. In the course of discussion members agreed that:

- the impact commentary should address both the template and the case studies
- where possible generic points (for example areas where institutions appeared not to have followed the published guidance) should be included in the subject overview report so that reference could be made back to this from the institutional reports
- There were differences of opinion as to whether or not individual case studies or groups should be identified

7.4 The panel advisers would circulate annotated copies of the draft.

8 Subject overview report

8.1 The chair initiated a discussion on a matter which might be included in the subject overview report. The panel advisers would provide information on outputs flagged as “interdisciplinary” which may shed light on the issue.

9 Future meetings

9.1 The next meeting would be on 1st October 2014 at HEFCE, Finlaison House, London.

9.2 The chair indicated that there would be a dinner for panel members following the final meeting on 28th October. Members should bear this in mind when making travel arrangements.

10 Any other business

10.1 There was no further business. The chair thanked members for their contributions and declared the meeting closed.



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 7

1 October 2014

Finlaison House, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison, Fiona Armstrong (observer), Trevor Barnes, Frans Berkhout, Michelle Double (adviser), Hastings Donnan, Gillian Douglas, Janet Finch (chair), Colin Hay, Herbert M Kritzer, Deborah McClean (adviser), Katy McKen (adviser), Peter Neary, Jone Pearce, Alan Penn, Mike Pidd, Andrew Pollard, Keith Richards, Mark Robson, Graeme Rosenberg (REF team), Sue Rossiter, John Scott, Peter Taylor-Gooby, Martin Walsh, Paul Wiles, Teresa Williams, Michael Wykes (adviser)

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting, and noted that the two substantial areas of business were the assessment of Environment as this had not previously been looked at by the main panel and the review and endorsement of the recommended quality profiles. She also reminded members of the confidentiality arrangements for the REF (which could be found via the Panel Members website).
- 1.2. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 2.1. The accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting was confirmed.

3. Conflicts of interest

- 3.1. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct. Individuals were reminded to update any changes to their conflicts of interest via the Panel Member's Website.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1. Members noted paper 02.2014 and agreed that it demonstrated that there had been no significant variation in the scoring of outputs submitted by Early Career Researchers compared to the general REF population.
- 4.2. The panel discussed publication of the data and noted that EDAP will publish an overall report on data relating to scoring profiles for staff returned with fewer than four outputs.
- 4.3. The Panel noted that HEIs had made consistent use of the tariffs allowing a reduction in the number of outputs required for Early Career Researchers and other staff circumstances, resulting in a reduction in the average number of outputs submitted per FTE across the REF.
- 4.4. Members noted paper 03.2014 which set out analysis of the scoring profiles of outputs where double weighting was requested, and their reserves. It was noted that the three sub-panels with very low numbers of double weighting requests were not included in this analysis.
- 4.5. The panel discussed the variations in acceptance rates across the eight sub-panels and was satisfied that each sub-panel has dealt with double weighting requests consistently, and was confident in the process of the application of the criteria.
- 4.6. The Panel noted that it would be helpful to the sector for the overview report to comment on the robustness of double weighting claims received by the Panel; claims were often poorly made and did not meet the criteria.
- 4.7. The Panel noted that items where a double weighting request has been submitted tended to score higher than the overall average. However, it was also noted that over 90% of the double weighting requests were related to authored books and books had a higher average score than other output types, regardless of whether they were double weighted.

5. Calibration of output quality judgements against international standards

- 5.1. Members noted paper 04.2014 which outlined the exercise undertaken by the international members to calibrate sub-panel assessments against international standards. The Chair thanked the International Members for undertaking this exercise.
- 5.2. The Panel noted that the International members were satisfied that sub-panels had applied the criteria with reference to international research quality standards.

6. Impact

- 6.1. The Chair reminded the Main Panel that, following the calibration exercise undertaken in July, sub-panels had been invited to examine their application of grade boundaries when scoring impact case studies and templates. Members noted paper 05.2014 which set out the actions undertaken by each of the sub-panels.
- 6.2. These actions were concerned with the consistent setting of grade boundaries only, the Main Panel having satisfied itself with the robustness of the assessment process at Meeting 6.
- 6.3. Following discussion of the actions taken by the eleven sub-panels, the Main Panel was satisfied with the consistent setting of grade boundaries for impact.
- 6.4. The REF Manager updated the Main Panel on the calibration exercise undertaken across the four main panels to ensure consistent application of grade boundaries. Three case studies were selected from two sub-panels from each main panel. Case studies reporting on common types of impact were chosen to allow comparison across the main panels; the types were health, environment, public understanding and commercial. The case studies were then all scored by the main panel chairs and main panel user members (including the Chair and two user members from Main Panel C). These scores were then compared to the panel agreed scores for the case studies. The exercise concluded that there was no indication that any main panel had applied grade boundaries differently.

7. Consideration of Environment sub-profiles

- 7.1. As sub-panels approach the completion of their Environment assessment, it was appropriate to examine the current sub-profiles across the main panel to identify and understand the reasons for any significant differences in the profiles and to be confident that they reflected the quality of the submitted material. In particular the panel should ensure that differences did not arise from inappropriate procedural differences between the sub-panels.
- 7.2. The members noted paper 06.2014 which set out the procedures that each sub-panel had followed in their assessment of the Environment submissions. It was noted that all panels had carried out calibration exercises. The panel was satisfied that the sub-panels had applied the panel criteria and working methods in a consistent manner.
- 7.3. Members discussed the challenge of the FTE denominator for income and PGR environment data. It was noted that all sub-panels had used the metric data to relate to the narrative and had interpreted the two together.

- 7.4. The Panel Advisers projected information on the current FTE-weighted and unweighted Environment profiles. The panel noted the difference between the two types of profile: the FTE-weighted profile shows the proportion of staff submitted in 4* environments; the unweighted profile shows the proportion of HEIs with 4* environments.
- 7.5. It was acknowledged that whilst the majority of Environment assessments were now complete the sub-profiles were not yet finalised.
- 7.6. The Panel noted the variation in scoring patterns across the sub-panels, in particular in relation to the use of 100% 4*. The panel discussed how sub-panels had applied this grade boundary. As a result of this discussion the chair invited all sub-panel chairs to consider whether they wish to revisit their sub-panel's use of 100% 4*. Where necessary they should consider actions to ensure that the grades awarded reflected the quality of the material submitted. The proposed actions should be reported to the chair.

8. Consideration of overall quality profiles and quartile data

- 8.1. As the sub-panels approach the completion of their assessment of the three elements of the submissions, the Main Panel has a responsibility to examine the overall quality profiles for each submission in its sub-panels.
- 8.2. The advisers projected comparative data showing maximum, minimum, median and quartile data for all sub-panels for the overall profiles and each of the sub-profiles at 4* and at 3* plus 4*.
- 8.3. The members noted the data and that this was a means of presenting the data that they had been viewing throughout the assessment process in order to allow the panel to examine and understand the patterns in the profiles and sub-profiles in the eleven sub-panels.

9. Endorsement of quality profiles

- 9.1. The Main Panel has a responsibility to endorse the quality profiles as recommended by its sub-panels and to investigate and understand any substantial differences in the overall profiles for each sub-panel. As the sub-panels move towards making final quality profile recommendations to the main panel it was appropriate for the main panel to examine the provisional recommended quality profiles.
- 9.2. The Panel Advisers projected anonymised data showing the relationship between the three sub-profiles and the overall profile for each submission in each sub-panel. An alphabetical list showing the overall profile for all submissions in each sub-panel was also projected.

- 9.3. The members discussed the calculation by which the sub-profiles translate into the overall profile for HEIs. It was noted that the reduced granularity for impact and environment sub-profiles has the potential to have a significant effect on an individual HEI's overall profile. The panel noted that this was a product of the calculation of the overall profile as published in the assessment framework and guidance on submissions and that it was not unexpected.
- 9.4. The Chair invited sub-panel chairs to speak to their sub-panel's overall profiles and the relationship to the sub-profiles, as appropriate, against the following points: the overall distribution of profiles and the quartile data; the relationship between the Overall, Outputs, Impact and Environment profiles; and finally comment on the strengths of individual submissions and any results which may be of interest where appropriate
- 9.5. Following a discussion of all eleven sub-panels, the Main Panel provisionally endorsed the quality profiles recommended by the sub-panels. The Main Panel will endorse the final quality profiles at meeting 8, subject to any minor changes at round 7 sub-panel meetings.

10. Subject Overview report

- 10.1. The panel had received paper 08.2014 which was a draft of the Main Panel C overview report. It was noted that the overview report will consist of a main panel overview section followed by subject overviews from each of the sub-panels. The main panel overview section will report on common themes across the sub-panels and therefore statements made at MP level need not be repeated in sub-panels' subject overview reports.
- 10.2. Members discussed a number of topics that could be highlighted in the main panel section of the report. The discussion was structured around the three elements of the submissions and procedural issues. The points were noted and will be incorporated into the next draft of the report for discussion at meeting 8 of the main panel.
- 10.3. Given the timing of the sub-panel meetings in relation to the main panel meeting it was noted that sub-panels will need to delegate sign-off of their subject overview to the sub-panel chair so that changes can be made after final sub-panel meetings.
- 10.4. Sub-panel chairs sought guidance on the required length for their subject overviews. The REF Manager confirmed that they should be between four and eight pages with an expectation that single discipline sub-panel subject overviews would be shorter than for combination sub-panels.
- 10.5. Sub-panel chairs should submit draft subject overviews to the main panel by 17-October; it was noted that some SP meetings are after this date.

11. Any other business

- 11.1. It was confirmed that there will be a dinner for the Main Panel following the meeting on October 28.



REF Main Panel C: Meeting 8

28 October 2014

Finlaison House, London

Minutes

Present:

Cara Aitchison, Fiona Armstrong (observer), Trevor Barnes, Frans Berkhout, Hastings Donnan, Michelle Double (adviser), Gillian Douglas, Janet Finch (chair), Vicky Jones (REF team), Herbert M Kritzer, Vivien Lowndes, Deborah McClean (adviser), Katy McKen (adviser), Peter Neary, Jone Pearce, Alan Penn, Mike Pidd, Andrew Pollard, Keith Richards, Mark Robson, Graeme Rosenberg (REF team), Sue Rossiter, John Scott, Peter Taylor-Gooby, Martin Walsh, Paul Wiles, Teresa Williams, Michael Wykes (adviser)

Apologies:

Colin Hay

1. Introduction and competence to do business

- 1.1. The chair welcomed members to the meeting, particularly Vivien Lowndes, deputising for Colin Hay (SP21). She thanked the members of the panel warmly for their contributions over a sustained period to the success of the assessment process. She also extended her thanks to both the panel advisers and REF team for their support and hard work, which had facilitated the work of the main and sub-panels.
- 1.2. The main items of business for the meeting are formal endorsement of the recommended quality profiles and consideration of the overview reports.
- 1.3. In the light of the attendance, the panel confirmed its competency to do business.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 2.1. The accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting was confirmed.

3. Conflicts of interest

- 3.1. The panel reviewed the register of their declared major conflicts of interest and confirmed they were correct. Individuals were reminded to update any changes

to their conflicts of interest via the Panel Member's Website. It was noted that conflicts of interest would be published after the exercise has finished.

4. Environment

- 4.1. The panel received an update regarding the final environment sub-profiles. Sub-panel chairs highlighted any changes which had been agreed since the last meeting, particularly in relation to the award of 100% 4* sub-profiles after discussions at the last meeting.
- 4.2. Some sub-panels had made some small adjustments and some had felt that none were necessary. One sub-panel had finalised its environment sub-profile which had been reported as provisional at the last meeting.
- 4.3. The panel advisers projected the weighted sub-profiles for environment for each UOA and also that for the main panel. It was noted that the process of finalising the individual sub-profiles had had a small cumulative effect on the main panel sub-profile.
- 4.4. The chair invited sub-panel chairs to explore those sub-profiles which were substantially different to the weighted average (proportions of 4* and 1*, for example). It was noted that the quality sub-profiles reflect the range of strengths identified by sub-panels in the course of their assessments. It was noted that some sub-panels had a wider range of submissions across the quality levels and that some were more concentrated at the higher quality levels.

5. Endorsement of profiles recommended by the sub-panels

- 5.1 The chair introduced the item concerning the final endorsement of the sub-panels. She invited members of the main panel who do not chair sub-panels to highlight any observations.
- 5.2 The ESRC observer, Dr Fiona Armstrong, observed that the rigour of the process had been noteworthy. The sequencing of the assessment with regard to impact could be re-considered for the next exercise. She noted that impact had been rigorously and carefully assessed and that those impacts arising from social sciences research which have led to policy being questioned or its development arrested were important and that case studies had been received which were able to describe and evidence this, and that this should be reflected in the overview report.
- 5.3 The panel advisers projected the quality profiles and sub-profiles for each UOA in turn. The sub-panel chairs highlighted any changes since the main panel had considered and endorsed the profiles in principle at the last meeting.

- 5.4 One sub-panel chair raised the previously discussed issue of institutions which had submitted the same output twice for two authors in the same UOA, reporting that this had been very carefully considered by the sub-panel on different occasions. It was the only sub-panel in which this had been a significant issue. The panel discussed the process which had been followed to arrive at the panel agreed scores for the relevant outputs and agreed that it had been consistent with the published 'Panel Working Methods and Criteria'.
- 5.5 The REF manager noted that there was still one outstanding staff eligibility audit, so that there may be a small further adjustment. This would be discussed with the individual sub-panel chair and reported to the main panel chair should it lead to a member of staff being deemed ineligible and, therefore, a change to the output sub-profile for the institution concerned.
- 5.6 The panel confirmed that the published assessment procedures and criteria had been applied by the sub-panels, and that the sub-panels had consistently applied the overall standards of assessment.
- 5.7 The REF manager confirmed that, when published, the sub-profiles would be presented to one decimal place, whereas the overall quality profile would be rounded to the nearest integer.
- 5.8 That being the case, the panel confirmed that it endorsed the quality profiles for each submission in each UOA.

6. Overview reports

- 6.1 The meeting discussed the sub-panel specific reports. Each sub-panel chair had provided a draft sub-panel report to allow a discussion of the expected length, content and coverage with a view to a level of consistency in the reports.
- 6.2 It was noted that feedback which would be useful for submitting HEIs for the next assessment exercise would be most useful for institutions and that there would be necessary variations in length where UOAs cover more than one discipline.
- 6.3 The panel reflected on the balance between including material in the main panel overview report and the individual sub-panel reports. It was noted that the reports would be circulated to subject associations and other stakeholders, so that a certain amount of summary context in each sub-panel report would be helpful.
- 6.4 There was a discussion about the range and content of the sub-panel reports. It was agreed that providing enough detail that sub-panel chairs would not need to produce any other reports or reflections for discussion with subject associations and other relevant bodies after the publication of the results would be preferable.

This would have the advantage of providing the additional context of the main panel overview report. The chair would be working with individual sub-panel chairs to agree their final reports.

- 6.5 The panel advisers tabled a brief analysis of broad issues which had been included in the eleven sub-panel reports to inform discussion of what should be included in the main panel report and what in the sub-panel reports.

- 6.6 The current draft was reviewed and members were invited to send any suggested additions or re-wording to the panel advisers. A further draft would be produced before a meeting of the main panel chairs in mid-November.

7. Panel members survey results

- 7.1. The panel noted the results of the panel members' survey. The REF manager noted that sub-panel executive groups had not been surveyed and were likely to have had more contact with systems than sub-panel members. Any comments could be sent directly to the REF team.

8. Administrative matters relating to the end of the REF assessment process

- 8.1. The REF manager outlined the timetable for the publication of the REF2014 results.
- 8.2 It was noted that submissions would be published on the web in January and HEIs would receive their individual feedback statements. Overview reports would be published in late January/early February.
- 8.3 Sub-panel chairs may be approached for comment on the afternoon of December 17th by the press. If they are approached sooner than that, they should refer the enquiry to the REF team. Comments should, of course, be on the basis of information in the public domain and should not touch on the assessment of individual submissions. The REF team will provide a slide pack in January for main and sub-panel chairs to use in discussions with their subject associations and other bodies.
- 8.4 The REF manager outlined the presentation of the summary data which would be published for each UOA. There would also be a REF-wide analysis which would include messages which are best looked at the level of the whole exercise, such as improvements since the RAE2008.

9. Any other business

- 9.1. The deputy main panel chair thanked the chair warmly on behalf of the panel and made a presentation.

9.2 There being no other business, the meeting was declared closed.