

Section C4: Assessment criteria: environment

Environment template

105. 'Guidance on submissions' (paragraph 183) indicates the broad categories of information that institutions are required to provide about the research environment. Main Panel C provides more detailed guidance below on the areas which might be addressed, where relevant to the submitting unit, within the different headings of the template for REF5 (see Annex C). Evidence and indicators should be included where appropriate. This part of the unit's submission presents the opportunity to describe how the unit has supported the production of excellent research. This is distinct from evidence provided in the impact template (REF3a), which should describe how a unit encourages and facilitates the achievement of impact.

106. There is no requirement that the environment element of a submission relates to a single, coherent organisational unit.

107. Information is requested in five sections of the environment template:

- a. **Overview:** This section will not be assessed. It should be used to provide brief contextual information, describing what research groups or sub-units are covered by the submission, **and** how research is structured across the submitted unit. Neither the existence of groups, nor their absence, is, in itself, considered significant by the sub-panels.
- b. **Research strategy:** Evidence of the achievement of strategic aims for research during the assessment period, and details of future strategic aims and goals for research; how these relate to the structure described above; and how they will be taken forward. This may include:
 - an evaluation of the strategy or strategies outlined as part of RAE 2008 and subsequent changes, where appropriate
 - an outline of the main objectives and activities in research for five years following submission, and their drivers; methods for monitoring attainment of targets
 - new and developing initiatives not yet producing visible outcomes, or not yet performing at a national or international level, but nevertheless of strategic importance
 - identification of priority developmental areas for the unit, including research topics, funding streams, postgraduate research activity, facilities, staffing, administration and management.

c. **People:** Staffing strategy and staff development within the submitted unit, including: evidence of how the staffing strategy relates to the unit's research strategy and physical infrastructure; support for early career researchers and career development at all stages in research careers; evidence of how the submitting unit support equalities and diversity. This may include:

i. **Staffing strategy and staff development:**

- staffing policy and evidence of its effectiveness, including: recruitment objectives and successes; the balance between short-term and long-term contracts among Category A staff; the demographic profile of the unit and how it affects current and future management of research activity; the pattern of staff recruitment over the assessment period, noting recent recruits and how departures have affected research; succession planning, with particular reference to early career researchers; the role and involvement of joint appointments and fixed-term appointments; the relationship of staffing policy to strategy
- prestigious/competitive personal research fellowships held by submitted staff during the assessment period, and how these have contributed to the development of the staff and the submitted unit
- evidence that equality of opportunity is being effectively promoted and delivered in arrangements for developing the research careers of all staff (including, where appropriate, Category C staff) including: study leave (evidence may include numbers of staff and length of period of leave); opportunities extended to develop the research careers of part-time staff, staff whose research career has been interrupted for any reason, and those seconded from outside academia; the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and evidence of its positive influence
- where appropriate, the contribution of any Category C staff to the strength, coherence and research culture of the unit, and implementation of its research strategy
- mechanisms by which standards of research quality and integrity are maintained (for example ethics procedures and authorship policies).

ii. **Research students:** Evidence of the quality of training and supervision of PGR students, which may include:

- prestigious/competitive studentships and how they have contributed to the PGR culture and research environment
- evidence of a strong and integrated PGR culture, indicating the contribution to the research environment of both PhD candidates and those on professional doctorates (where appropriate), including: support offered to PGR students (including employability skills), and the contribution of submitted staff to doctoral programmes.

d. **Income, infrastructure, facilities:** Information about research income, infrastructure and facilities. This may include:

- research funding, including that allocated as part of larger research consortia, links between research funding and high quality research output, and major and prestigious grant awards made by external bodies on a competitive basis
- strategies for generating grant income appropriate to the discipline
- evidence of infrastructure and/or facilities supporting a vital and sustainable research environment could include: the nature/quality of research infrastructure, including major infrastructure funding; university investment and policies to support the research environment; significant equipment; technical support staff; space/facilities available for PGR students and research groups, including library and IT provision.

e. **Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base:** Contributions to the wider research base, including work with other researchers outside the submitted unit whether locally, nationally or internationally; support for research collaboration and interdisciplinary research; and indicators of wider influence or contributions to the discipline or research base. This may include:

- interdisciplinary research, where appropriate, including what disciplines are involved, and arrangements to support interdisciplinary or collaborative research
- details of existing networks and clusters and of research collaborations with industry, commerce, third sector and other users of

research, and how these have enriched the research environment

- evidence of national and international academic collaborations including indicators of their success
- seminar series, contribution to journal editorship and preparation, conferences and research-based CPD
- contribution to professional associations or learned societies, and developmental disciplinary initiatives, both national and international
- co-operation and collaborative arrangements for PGR training, including whether these have received formal recognition nationally or internationally.

Environment data

108. 'Guidance on submissions' (Part 3, Section 4) sets out quantitative data relating to the research environment to be included in submissions (REF4a/b/c). Sub-panels will use the data in the context of the information provided in the environment template (REF5), to inform their assessment. Data on research doctoral degrees awarded (REF4a) will be used to inform the sub-panels' assessment in relation to 'research students' (section c.ii). Data on research income (REF4b/c) will be used to inform the sub-panels' assessment in relation to 'income, infrastructure and facilities' (section d).

109. Data on both doctoral degrees awarded and research income will be considered in the context of the narrative provided in the REF5 template, and taking account of the size of the submitting unit, its areas of specialism, its research groups, research strategy and different levels of research funding available in different fields.

110. The sub-panels do not require these data to be presented by research group, and this information should not be provided.

111. For those UOAs indicated below, additional data are requested as part of the environment template (REF5). They are not required by any other sub-panel and should not be provided in any UOA other than those mentioned below.

112. **Sub-panel 19** (Business and Management Studies) and **Sub-panel 25** (Education) recognise the role of professional and other doctoral qualifications and their contribution to the vitality of the research environment. To obtain a clear understanding of the nature of the research environment, units submitting

in those two UOAs are asked to disaggregate the total number of doctoral degrees awarded as reported in REF4a for each year in the assessment period into PhDs and research-based professional doctorates. This information should be included as part of the 'People: research students' section of the REF5 template. The disaggregated data should be presented in tabular format, reported in academic years according to the standard data in section REF4a. The total disaggregated data should sum to the totals reported in REF4a.

113. **Sub-panel 26** (Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism) wishes to consider whether PGR student research activity is growing in newer units and being sustained or developed further in more established units. The sub-panel recognises that some units that submit work for assessment in this UOA represent relatively 'young' discipline areas. Doctoral degree awards alone may, therefore, not present a full picture of this growing area of research. The combination of the number of postgraduate research student awards and doctoral registrations over the assessment period is therefore seen as a useful indicator of research capacity, sustainability and growth. Therefore, submissions in UOA 26 should include the FTE of postgraduate research students enrolled on doctoral programmes, broken down into the academic years of the assessment period (from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2013). Only students registered and actively pursuing their research programme should be included (not, for example, students who are writing up their thesis for the whole of the year, or visiting from other institutions). This information should be included in tabular format as part of the 'People: research students' section of the REF5 template.

Environment criteria

114. The sub-panels will assess the environment according to the generic criteria and level definitions in 'guidance on submissions', Annex A, Table A4. The criteria will be understood as follows:

- **Vitality** of the research environment reflects the existence of a thriving, dynamic and fully participatory research culture based on a clearly articulated research strategy, displayed both within the submitting unit and in its wider contributions, and in terms appropriate to the scale and diversity of the research activity that it supports.
- The **sustainability** of the research environment will be understood in terms of the extent to which it is capable in the future of continuing to support and develop such research activity as defined in

the quality levels, both within the submitted unit and the discipline more generally.

115. In assessing the environment element of submissions, panels will apply the criteria in terms of both the research environment within the submitting unit, and its participation in and contribution to its subject discipline and academic community.

116. Sub-panels will develop a sub-profile for research environment, taking account of all of the narrative sections of the environment template, as well as the quantitative data (both standard and sub-panel-specific where requested, as stated in paragraphs 108-113). In forming the environment sub-profile sub-panels will attach equal weighting to the following components within the environment template:

- research strategy
- people (staffing strategy and staff development; and research students)
- income, infrastructure and facilities
- collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base.

117. The assessment will be carried out in the context of the discipline area and in light of the range of research undertaken by the submitting unit. Having assessed the narrative and quantitative information, sub-panels will use their expert judgement to form an overall view about the graded environment sub-profile for each submission, based on all the relevant information provided in the submission.