

The RAE and Me

**A guide for postgraduate
students**

What is the RAE?

- **The RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) assesses research quality in universities across the United Kingdom. The assessment, carried out every five (?) years, covers research in virtually every subject covered in universities from theoretical physics to art history.**
- **The main purpose of the RAE is to enable the higher education funding bodies to distribute public funds for research selectively on the basis of quality.**

What is research?

‘Research’ for the purpose of the RAE is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

What is research?

A research output:

- ***Must* be measurable in terms of its originality, significance, and rigour**
- ***Has to* be in the public domain**
- ***Can* be publication (book, chapter, article), artefact, performance**
- ***Can't* be teaching materials, professional practice**

How does the RAE work?

The RAE provides quality ratings for research across all disciplines.

1. Higher education institutions (HEIs) make submissions in subject areas where they have research activity
2. Panels in each subject area (UoA) use a standard scale to award a rating for each submission in their area.
3. HEIs receive grants from one of the four higher education funding bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland according to these ratings

Why is it important?

Prestige and *Money*:

- HE funding councils: money for teaching plus research
- *Teaching* : funded per FTE student
 - A medicine etc 4
 - B science subjects 1.7
 - C Studio subjects 1.3
 - D All other 1

Research

- **Dual support system.**
 1. **Funding councils (HEFCE etc): block grant funding to support research infrastructure**
 2. **Research Councils etc.: grants for specific projects and programmes (AHRC has £75m p.a.; ESRC over £100m; Engineering & Physical Sciences RC £500m)**
- **HEFCE research funding 2005-06 = £1,252 million (teaching funding = £4,004m):**
 - **quality-related research (QR) funding (£1,228m)**

QR Funding

1. Subjects weighted by cost:

- A High cost laboratory and clinical subjects 1.6
- B Intermediate cost subjects 1.3
- C Others 1.0

QR Funding

1. *And by RAE score (plus number of staff entered in 2001)*

2001 RAE rating Funding weights

RAE score	Funding weight:
1	0
2	0
3b	0
3a	0
4	1
5	3.0059
5*	3.7552

How did we get here?

1992

- **First nationwide RAE**
- **Polytechnics became universities**
- **Higher Education Funding Councils established**

1992 RAE criteria

Rat'g	Fund'g	Description
5	4	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of international excellence in some subareas of activity and to attainable levels of national excellence in virtually all others.
4	3	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in virtually all subareas of activity, possibly showing some evidence of international excellence, or to in some and at least national level in a majority
3	2	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in a majority of the subareas of activity, or to international level in some.
2	1	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in up to half of the subareas of activity.
1	0	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in none, or virtually none, of the subareas of activity.

1992 RAE

- **72 units of assessment (UoAs)**
- **Up to two publications for each researcher submitted**
- **2,700 submissions from 170 HEIs. Work of over 43,000 FTE academics included**
- **UoA 68: Communication and Media Studies**

1996

5*	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of international excellence in a majority of sub-areas of activity and attainable levels of national excellence in all others
5	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of international excellence in some sub-areas of activity and to attainable levels of national excellence in virtually all others
4	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in virtually all sub-areas of activity, possibly showing some evidence of international excellence, or to international level in some and at least national level in a majority
3a	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in a substantial majority of the sub-areas of activity, or to international level in some and to national level in others together comprising a majority.
3b	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in the majority of sub-areas of activity.
2	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in up to half the sub-areas of activity.
1	Research quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in none, or virtually none, of the sub-areas of activity.

1996

- **2,896 submissions received from 192 HEIs across the UK. These listed 55,893 individual active researchers**
- **69 UoAs**
- **UoA 65: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies**
- **Up to four publications by each researcher during the specified period**
- **Funding starts at 3b**

2001

- **2,598 submissions from 173 HEIs, listing the work of almost 50,000 researchers.**
- **68 UoAs**
- **UoA 65: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies** (Communication studies, cultural studies, film studies, and media studies)
- **Up to four items of research output for each individual**
- **55 per cent of research-active staff now in 5 or 5* departments; 31 per cent in 1996. Research rated 1 or 2, which in 1996 was 24% of submissions, now 6 per cent of submissions.**
- **Funding starts at 4 (except for Capability Funding - £22.1m)**

2001: Complaints

- **Wasted effort**
- **Funding levels imposed afterwards**
- **Distortion of departmental activities**
- **Distortion of career pathways**
- **Inconsistencies between panels**
- **'Transfer market' of high-rating research staff**
- **Reduced opportunities for 'new researchers'**
- **'Fixing' of ratings, activity, thought**
- **Never mind the quality, just publish**

RAE 2008: Changes

1. Panels

- 15 main panels and 67 sub-panels
- UoA 66: Communication, Cultural & Media Studies
- in Panel O with UoA 63: Art & Design; UoA 64: Art History; UoA 65: Drama, Dance & Performing Arts; UoA 67: Music

2. Outputs: Definitions of quality levels

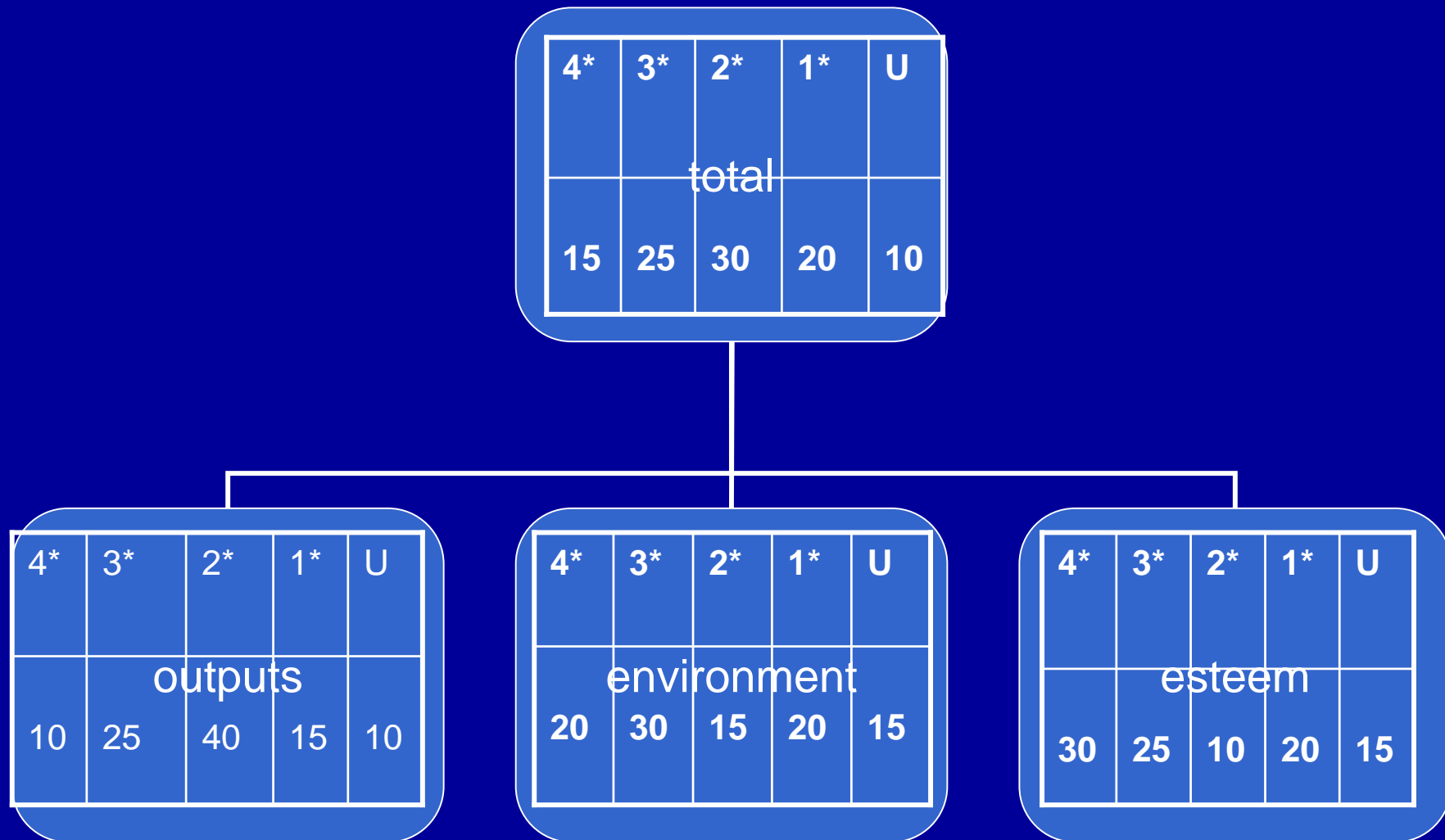
4*	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
3*	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence
2*	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
1*	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour
U	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

3. Move from aggregate score to profiles (Roberts effect)

Sample quality profile

U of A 66	No. of Staff submitted	% of research at 4*	% of research at 3*	% of research at 2*	% of research at 1*	% of research unclassified
Univ. X	50	15	25	40	15	5
Univ.Y	20	0	5	40	45	10

4. Move to *weighted* Quality profiles (outputs = 70%; environment = 20%; esteem = 10%)



RAE 2008: Timings

- **Panels now in place**
- **Submissions by 30 November 2007**
 - **information on staff in post on 31.10.07**
 - **up to four items of research output produced between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2007 by each researcher in post on 31 October 2007**
 - **data about research students + research income + a written commentary relating to period from 01.01.01 to 31.07.07**
- **quality profile for each submission to be published December 2008**

How does the RAE affect you?

1. As a research student

1. Research students count:

- **Institutions have to submit:**
 - Numbers of full-time and part-time postgraduate research students and degrees awarded.
 - Numbers of postgraduate research studentships and source of funding.
 - Total number of research doctoral degrees awarded in each calendar year 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 (partial year to 31 July).
 - Total number of research masters degrees awarded in each calendar year 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 (partial year to 31 July).

2. Research students are important to research environment (20%)

- **Support and training of research students**
 - Graduate research seminars
 - Funding support
 - Training schemes
 - Integration into department
 - **Facilities for research students**
 - **Numbers of research studentships and number externally funded**
- ## **3. Research degree programme (RDP) supervision fund £188M**

How does the RAE affect you?

2. Looking for a job before Oct. 2007?

1. Junior academics

- are important for research culture
- don't have to submit 4 outputs:
 - employed after 01.08.05 = 1 output
 - employed after 01.08.04 = 2 outputs
 - Employed after 01.08.03 = 3 outputs

- But:

2. Departments want as high a percentage as possible of 4* and 3* outputs

How does the RAE affect you?

2. Looking for a job after 2008?

- We don't know how the funding will work
 - It's likely to be more selective
 - May produce different types of jobs
 - So check on:
 - HEI's research rating
 - Its research funding
 - Other support for research in department
 - The nature of the contract offered
- NB. 07-08 there may be temporary contracts**

And the future?

Uncertainties:

- Relationship of RAE to funding?
- After 2008: metrics and/or peer review?
- Role of research councils?

Certainties:

- League tables will continue.....