

Research Assessment Exercise 2008

Joe Sventek
joe@dcs.gla.ac.uk

UK Funding of Research

- UK government subscribes to a "dual ladder" for funding research:
 - Peer-reviewed funding of proposals by research councils, such as the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
 - Block grant, based upon FTEs of research active staff
- The block grant (QR) funding is based upon a ranking of department quality
- The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is the mechanism by which department quality is determined
- RAE's are conducted every 5-7 years; the ranking achieved in a particular RAE is used to determine the QR grant until the next RAE takes place



The Next RAE



- The next RAE will be conducted in 2007/2008
- Each university must submit by 30 November 2007:
 - Information on staff in post on the census date, 31 October 2007
 - Details of publications and other forms of assessable output which they have produced during the publication period (1 January 2001 to **31 December 2007**) [restricted to four (4) research outputs for each reported member of staff]
 - Data about research students and **research income** and a textual commentary relating to the assessment period (1 January 2001 to 31 July 2007)
- All data in submissions will relate to a body of research activity within a unit, research group, or department
- A quality profile for each submission will be published in December 2008. This quality profile will then be used by Funding Councils to determine the QR payments to the university for the coming period.

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Research-active categories



- A: academic staff in post at census date
- B: academic staff in post during the period but not at census date
- C: other research-active individuals in post at census date
- D: other research-active individuals in post during the period but not at the census date

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Definition of quality levels



★★★★	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
★★★	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour, but falls short of ★★★★★.
★★	Quality that is recognized internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
★	Quality that is recognized nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below ★, or work that does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

What happens during the RAE?



- A panel made up of senior peers, both from the UK and from the EU/North America, reviews the submissions made by each university to the Computer Science and Informatics Unit of Assessment
- These panel members read each of the nominated publications, the departmental material that covers the submission, and material from the university in terms of research strategies and tactics
- The result of the RAE determines the research block grant that each department receives from their funding council for the coming 6 years
- High scores in previous RAE's have been used in advertising by those high-ranking departments, and may affect choice of university for PhD studies, and other indicators of departmental esteem

Important Considerations



- Weighting of submission elements: 70% outputs, 20% environment, 10% esteem
- Therefore, publications/outputs are **CRITICAL**.
- Important aspects to consider:
 - publication quality
 - best exemplified by publications in **extremely competitive** computer science journals and conferences
 - note that lead time in most CS journals is 18-24 months from submission, so probably best to focus new publications on **extremely competitive** conferences
 - publications in allied, domain-specific journals/conferences may count for less unless the computer science innovation is obvious

Outputs



- A maximum of four outputs per individual submitted for assessment
- If fewer than four outputs are listed, an explanation must be provided in RA5b; if no reasonable justification exists for <4 outputs, the "missing" outputs will be assigned an Unclassified rating
- Output quality is assessed with regards to originality, rigour and significance to the discipline
- Up to 300 words of additional information about each output is solicited; in addition to addressing originality, rigour and significance, it should also include: a statement summarizing the research contribution of the output, and evidence of academic or other impact.



Environment



- The following aspects will be assessed:
 - Infrastructure, facilities and administrative support for research
 - Arrangements for developing and supporting staff in their research
 - Cumulative impact of research
 - Industrial collaboration, relationship with research users, contribution to public awareness and understanding
 - Academic collaboration, national and international, within discipline and interdisciplinary
 - Research degrees awarded
 - Research income: funding strategy, amount received and sustainability
 - Credibility, vitality and sustainability of the research organization

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Esteem



- The following aspects will be assessed:
 - Awards, fellowships of learned societies, prizes, honours and named lectures
 - Personal research awards and fellowships
 - Keynote and plenary addresses at conferences
 - Significant professional service
 - Positions in national and international strategic advisory bodies
 - Industrial advisory roles
 - Editorial roles
 - Research co-ordination
 - Conference organization (e.g. programme chairs, PC memberships, including continued membership of a PC over several years).
- Maximum number of esteem indicators is $2 \times (|\text{Cat A}| + |\text{Cat C}|) + (|\text{Cat B}| + |\text{Cat D}|)$ and no more than 4 indicators from any one individual

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