

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

Response to RAE Review

Based upon the response to notes for facilitators as below:

Group 1: Expert Review

Paragraph 7, responses are to questions, where letters correspond to question in Notes to Facilitators:

- a) It should be retrospective, but with some measure that provides support to developing areas where it is clear that some form of help would assist new or developing areas. However, establishing a metric for prospective assessment is more difficult, it could be judged on a well argued strategy, or based upon support given nationally for newly developing areas with some form of bidding process, or by consideration of the trajectory from a previous assessment, but this would take a long period of time and therefore not be effective.
- b) Research outputs as previously measured, body of research students and research student completions. External engagement, including such areas as journal editorships, external examining, etc, and other indicators of esteem should be included. Ability to draw in external grant funding should be used as an indicator of recognition of excellence, but the value of external funding achieved should not influence RAE funding, since this self perpetuates a process of double funding, which may be exclusive to those rated at 5 or 5* in the past.
- c) Probably best rated overall at group level, but with the ability to flag individuals.
- d) Probably by subject is the best method of organising work, but with the facility to cross refer being retained. But the number of units should be reduced to more broad disciplines. Furthermore, the assessment of Teaching and Research should not be combined.
- e) Major strengths are that subject experts are involved in making the judgements, a weakness could be that it may prevent the growth of new or developing areas, and this may also impede the growth of interdisciplinary work.

Group 2: Algorithm

Paragraph 10, again responses are to questions, where letters correspond to question in Notes to Facilitators:

- a) Primarily yes, but also some measurement of trajectory, so that a developing department can receive funding for the future if their rate of growth in quality indicates that they would benefit from further funding.

- b) Primarily bibliographic measures, research student numbers and completions, external engagement and other indicators of esteem, measures of financial sustainability.
- c) Yes, but care should be taken in ensuring they are given the correct weighting, and research council income should not count too highly when making an assessment as how to fund for the future. Any unit's ability to achieve research council funding in the last 5 years is effectively a function of their performance in the 5 years prior to that, i.e. it is excessively historic and should not guide future funding.
- d) I think it is unavoidable to tie them to outputs and research student numbers and completions, whatever you change them to institutions will inevitably become more able to 'play' to them.
- e) An algorithm approach is fair, it is transparent, and it enables institutions to plan, however it does enable them to 'play' the system.

Group 3: Self-assessment

Paragraph 13, again responses are to questions, where letters correspond to question in Notes to Facilitators:

- a) Staff profiles, including outputs, research student numbers and completions, externally funded projects/grants, external engagement of staff and other indicators of esteem.
- b) Primarily retrospective, but with a clear recognition of where a department is going, and if this seen as being strongly feasible then it should be supported.
- c) The specific criteria will need to be established for each subject area, but should map across any unit or any institution to meet the broad criteria of national and/or international recognition should apply to these.
- d) By sample auditing across similar units in the same subject areas.
- e) Probably a little more burdensome on the institution, however less burdensome on the sector.
- f) Institutions will be working to clear criteria and should gain a better understanding through the process of these criteria

Group 4: Historical Ratings

Paragraph 16, again responses are to questions, where letters correspond to question in Notes to Facilitators:

- a) This would be acceptable so long as there is a clear mechanism of making the initial assessment and there is some mechanism for a new or more rapidly developing unit to be assessed within an ongoing annual process.

- b) By an initial review, probably having one more combined RAE, but if we are going to benchmark then we should be clear that we use all points properly on the scale and that we fund, accordingly, all but the very lowest point.
- c) By periodic re-assessment, but on a subject basis. A value for money process, other than retaining the RAE in its current form would be difficult.
- d) Not quite sure what is meant by 'likely effects' - of what? If of accepting that changes in research strengths are slow, then this could promote complacency and reduced outputs in terms of quantity and quality.
- e) Strengths: a simple method that is cost and time effective. Weaknesses: bases too much on history, will not encourage the development of new departments/areas of work, may promote complacency.

Group 5: Crosscutting themes

Paragraph 17, again responses are to questions, where letters correspond to question in Notes to Facilitators:

- a) The RAE should be used, as its name implies to assess the quality of research and to fund it accordingly, including funding the development of new and growing departments and subjects. If it is used to restrict research council funding to 5/5* units, then eventually this will cull any further development.
- b) 5 years is a good basis around which to plan research strategies and programme.
- c) Excellence can really only be measured by the application of, or reference to, the particular piece of research both nationally and internationally.
- d) No, the level of funding by subject should be determined by the government, or its funding councils, based upon predictions of the needs of the country.
- e) No, some recognition should be made of those institutions who are still developing and have not had the benefit of significantly greater historic funding.
- f) Yes, assessing cognate subjects in a similar way is sensible.
- g) None, submissions would need to follow common structures to ensure transparency and fairness.
- h) We believe this already happens.
- i) The three most important characteristics for are:
 - Transparent
 - Fair to individuals and institutions
 - Supports developmental growth

Group 6: Have we missed anything?

No