**Research Review Exercise (2025-26)**

**The 2025/2026 RRE will ask colleagues to propose any number of outputs that they consider to be of 4\* quality, that they have not already nominated in previous exercises. Colleagues without any further 4\* at this point in the cycle will asked to be confirm this via an MS Form, so that engagement may be monitored.**

**To assist in identifying potential 4\* work, please refer to the REF2021 criteria summarised below.**

The REF2021 criteria define **three areas** for assessing the quality level of an output: **originality, significance and rigour.**

**Originality** is the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. Research outputs that demonstrate originality may do one or more of the following:

* produce and interpret new empirical findings or new material;
* engage with new and/or complex problems; develop innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques;
* show imaginative and creative scope; provide new arguments and/or new forms of expression, formal innovations, interpretations and/or insights;
* collect and engage with novel types of data; and/or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice, and new forms of expression.

**Significance** is the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.

**Rigour** is the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies.

**Output Grade Boundaries**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **4+** | **4** | **4-** | **3+** | **3** | **3-** | **2+** | **2** | **2-** | **1+** | **1** | **1-** | **0 (ungraded)** |
| 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 which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.  | Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.  | Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.  | 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.  |

**Notes on the criteria and definitions of the starred levels:**

* World-leading’ quality denotes an absolute standard of quality in each unit of assessment.
* ‘World-leading’, ‘internationally’ and ‘nationally’ in this context refer to quality standards. They do not refer to the nature or geographical scope of particular subjects, nor to the locus of research nor its place of dissemination. For example, research which is focused within one part of the UK might be of ‘world-leading’ standard. Equally, work with an international focus might not be of ‘world-leading, internationally excellent or internationally recognised’ standard.