

**Annex A**

**Review of research assessment: response form**

**Please complete and return as a Word attachment to an e-mail, to responses@ra-review.ac.uk. The deadline for responses is 30 September 2003.**

Response by (name of person or organisation):

**Engineering Professors' Council**.....

Corporate response (representing the views of the group or organisation): Yes/No

Private response (representing the views of one or more individuals): Yes/No

Contact in case of queries:

Name: ...**Professor W M Banks**

Tel: ..... **0141 548 2321**

e-mail: ...**wmb@mecheng.strath.ac.uk**

**Recommendation 1 (see paragraphs 113-116 of the review)**

Any system of research assessment designed to identify the best research must be based upon the judgement of experts who may, if they choose, employ performance indicators to inform their judgement.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 1? Place a cross beside the appropriate answer:

Strongly agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments on recommendation 1:

The performance indicators need to be carefully chosen to match a range of criteria for research excellence, with discrimination between excellent, good, average, poor etc

**Recommendation 2 (see paragraphs 117-126 of the review)**

- a. There should be a six-year cycle.
- b. There should be a light-touch 'mid-point monitoring'. This would be designed only to highlight significant changes in the volume of activity in each unit.
- c. The next assessment process should take place in 2007-8.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 2? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a	<b>X</b>				
Point b					<b>X</b>
Point c		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 2:

Re 2a : The proposal seems to be a good balance between ossification and aspiration.

Re 2b : The thrust of the overall set of proposals runs the risk of turning Research Assessment into a permanent on-going process, increasing the load on Departments and panels.

(See also response to recommendation 8b)

**Recommendation 3 (see paragraphs 127-133 of the review)**

- a. There should be an institution-level assessment of research competences, undertaken approximately two years before the main assessment.
- b. The competences to be assessed should be institutional research strategy, development of researchers, equal opportunities, and dissemination beyond the peer group.
- c. An institution failing its assessment against any one of the competencies would be allowed to enter the next research assessment but would not receive funding on the basis of its performance in that assessment until it had demonstrated a satisfactory performance.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 3? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a				<b>X</b>	
Point b			<b>X</b>		
Point c			<b>X</b>		

Comments on recommendation 3:

Re 3 a) and b) : Our basic concern is that this introduces another layer of bureaucracy.

Re 3 a : The RAE had a strong in-built disincentive to include young researchers. To that limited extent, the recommendation has some merit. However, we don't see how this recommendation would ensure research quality.

**Recommendation 4 (see paragraphs 134-155 of the review)**

- a. There should, in principle, be a multi-track assessment enabling the intensiveness of the assessment activity (and potentially the degree of risk) to be proportionate to the likely benefit.
- b. The least research intensive institutions should be considered separately from the remainder of the HE sector.
- c. The form of the assessment of the least research intensive institutions would be a matter for the relevant funding council.
- d. The less competitive work in the remainder of institutions should be assessed by proxy measures against a threshold standard.
- e. The most competitive work should be assessed using an expert review assessment similar to the old Research Assessment Exercise.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 4? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a		<b>X</b>			
Point b		<b>X</b>			
Point c		<b>X</b>			
Point d		<b>X</b>			
Point e		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 4:

This aspect of the proposals is clearly the most complicated for all stakeholders. Potentially the biggest weakness of the whole set of proposals is how to deal with emerging 'pockets of excellence'. (To that end, we **STRONGLY AGREE** with recommendation 11, which is not included in the consultation).

Therefore, a 'PASS' in RCA must be:

- (i) non-trivial in terms of quality, thus gaining some esteem in the community, and
- (ii) financially beneficial

If a unit submitted to RQA gets a low score, how will it compare to an RCA 'PASS' in both of the above respects? This is not clear from the document.

We welcome the reduction of load on panels that this recommendation would bring. However, regarding point (b), it is necessary to clarify whether this is to be determined by a response from the institution on a subject-by-subject basis, or otherwise.

The difficulty of assessing proxy measures should not be underestimated.

**Recommendation 5 (see paragraphs 156-171 of the review)**

- a. The output of the Research Quality Assessment should be a ‘quality profile’ indicating the quantum of ‘one star’, ‘two star’ and ‘three star’ research in each submission. It will not be the role of the assessment to reduce this profile to summary metrics or grades.
- b. As a matter of principle, star ratings would not be given to named individuals, nor would the profile be published if the submission were sufficiently small that individual performance could be inferred from it.
- c. Panels would be given guidelines on expected proportions of three star, two star and one star ratings. These proportions should normally be the same for each unit of assessment. If a panel awarded grades which were more or less generous than anticipated in the guidelines, these grades would have to be confirmed through moderation.<sup>1</sup>

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 5? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a		<b>X</b>			
Point b		<b>X</b>			
Point c		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 5:

Re 5a : The 1.5’ scale is clearly not sustainable. The proposal however is unclear. Will there be, eg a 100 point scale?

Re 5b : We believe that, in the case of engineering. It is highly preferable to give star ratings to groups rather than individuals.

(See also response to recommendation 9)

Re 5c : We are concerned about how the “expected” profiles would be determined, and about the form of moderation. These need clarification

Re 5d : The linkage to important aspects of recommendation 4 is crucial. We **STRONGLY AGREE** with the proposal 5d, despite its exclusion from the consultation

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<sup>1</sup> This consultation question reflects an edited version of recommendation 5. The recommendation in the review report also states that ‘the funding councils should provide institutions with details of the relative value, in funding terms, of one star, two star, and three star research, and of research fundable through the Research Capacity Assessment in advance of the assessment. These ratios might vary between disciplines.’ In the event that the review recommendations are accepted, each funding council will develop its own policies for reflecting the assessment results in funding, taking proper account of Sir Gareth’s recommendation.

**Recommendation 6 (see paragraphs 172-197 of the review)**

- a. There should be between 20 and 25 units of assessment panels supported by around 60 sub-panels. Panels and sub-panels should be supported by colleges of assessors with experience of working in designated multidisciplinary 'thematic' areas.
- b. Each panel should have a chair and a moderator. The role of the moderator would be to ensure consistency of practice across the sub-panels within the unit of assessment.
- c. Each panel should include a number of non-UK based researchers with experience of the UK research system.
- d. The moderators of adjacent panels should meet in five or six 'super-panels' whose role would be to ensure consistency of practice between panels. These 'super-panels' should be chaired by senior moderators who would be individuals with extensive experience in research.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 6? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a		<b>X</b>			
Point b	<b>X</b>				
Point c		<b>X</b>			
Point d		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 6:

Re 6c : Non-UK based assessors would need to be carefully chosen.

**Recommendation 7 (see paragraphs 198-204 of the review)**

- a. The rule that each researcher may only submit up to four items of research output should be abolished. Research Quality Assessment panels should have the freedom to define their own limits on the number and/or size of research outputs associated with each researcher or group.
- b. Research Quality Assessment panels should ensure that their criteria statements enable them to guarantee that practice-based and applicable research are assessed according to criteria which reflect the characteristics of excellence in those types of research in those disciplines.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 7? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a		<b>X</b>			
Point b		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 7:

Re 7b : While agreeing in principle, previous experience shows that it is a very difficult task to produce an ideal set of criteria prior to seeing the form and balance of the submission. Transparency is fundamentally important.

**Recommendation 8 (see paragraphs 205-213 of the review)**

- a. The funding councils should work alongside the subject communities and the research councils to develop discipline-specific performance indicators.
- b. Performance against these indicators should be calculated a year prior to the exercise, and institutions advised of their performance relative to other institutions.
- c. The weight placed upon these indicators as well as their nature should be allowed to vary between panels.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 8? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a		<b>X</b>			
Point b					<b>X</b>
Point c		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 8:

Re 8b : Would this require a separate detailed input from the institutions, thus eroding the advantage of the 6-year long cycle? The thrust of the overall set of proposals runs the risk of turning Research Assessment into a permanent on-going process and thus increasing bureaucracy. To reduce that risk we believe that performance against indicators should be assessed as an integral part of, and simultaneously with, the RQA process. After all, there is nothing that a Department can do to change these indicators significantly in the intervening 12-month period.

**Recommendation 9 (see paragraphs 214-234 of the review)**

- a. Where an institution submits to Research Quality Assessment in a sub-unit of assessment all staff in that sub-unit should become ineligible for the Research Capacity Assessment, even if they are not included in the Research Quality Assessment submission.
- b. The funding councils should establish and promote a facility for work to be submitted as the output of a group rather than an individual where appropriate.
- c. The funding councils should consider what measures could be taken to make joint submission more straightforward for institutions.
- d. Where an institution submits a sub-unit of assessment for Research Quality Assessment, no fewer than 80% of the qualified staff contracted to undertake research within the sub-unit of assessment must be included in the submission.
- e. All staff eligible to apply for grants from the research councils should be eligible for submission to Research Quality Assessment.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 9? Please indicate your views using the grid below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Point a	<b>X</b>				
Point b	<b>X</b>				
Point c		<b>X</b>			
Point d		<b>X</b>			
Point e		<b>X</b>			

Comments on recommendation 9:

Re 9b : We believe that, in the case of engineering, it is highly preferable to give star ratings to groups rather than individuals. (See response to recommendation 5) Groups have individuals with a different range of skills, eg teaching / research. These should be appropriately rewarded.

**Recommendation 10 (see paragraphs 235-238 of the review)**

Each panel should consider a research strategy statement outlining the institution's plans for research at unit level.

Do you agree or disagree with recommendation 10? Place a cross beside the appropriate answer:

Strongly agree	...
Agree	<b>X</b>
Neither agree nor disagree	...
Disagree	...
Strongly disagree	...

Comments on recommendation 10:

On past experience, this statement enables panels to place into institutional context the subject research.

**Question 11 Burden for institutions**

The review proposals have been designed to make the burden of assessment proportionate with the possibility of financial reward. Do you agree that this has been achieved? Place a cross by the appropriate answer:

- |                            |              |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly agree             | ...          |
| Agree                      | <b>X</b> ... |
| Neither agree nor disagree | ...          |
| Disagree                   | ...          |
| Strongly disagree          | ...          |

Comments on question 11 – burden for institutions:

If the 6 year cycle is adhered to, with a minimum of required information in between, the burden on respondents will be reduced.

**Question 12 Value of research assessment**

What value do you place on the research assessment if the financial reward is likely to be small? Place a cross by the appropriate answer:

- High                                   ...
- Medium                               ...
- Low                                    **X...**

Comments on question 12 – value of research assessment:

We believe that the achievement of research excellence *must* be accompanied by appropriate financial reward.

**Question 13 Equality of opportunity for all groups of staff**

The funding councils wish to promote equality of opportunity for all staff regardless of age, sexual orientation, political belief, disability, gender, race or religion and seek to ensure that its research assessment policies are compatible with this objective. How successful do you consider that the proposals of the research assessment review are in this respect? Place a cross by the appropriate answer:

- |                                     |              |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Very successful                     | ...          |
| Successful                          | <b>X</b> ... |
| Neither successful nor unsuccessful | ...          |
| Unsuccessful                        | ...          |
| Very unsuccessful                   | ...          |

Comments on question 13 – equality of opportunity for all groups of staff:

**Question 14 Overall approach of the review**

Notwithstanding your views on any specific recommendations, and given the responses to the earlier 'Invitation to contribute', do you agree or disagree with the broad approach taken by the review to the question of research assessment? Place a cross by the appropriate answer:

- |                            |              |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Strongly agree             | ...          |
| Agree                      | <b>X</b> ... |
| Neither agree nor disagree | ...          |
| Disagree                   | ...          |
| Strongly disagree          | ...          |

Comments on question 14 – overall approach of the review:

Apart from some points requiring clarification, and included in our response, we broadly agree with the approach.

**Question 15 Further comments**

Question 15 – any further comments: