

Main Panel A supplementary criteria – level definitions

1. In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of the quality of the output in terms of its originality, significance and rigour, and will apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels.
 2. The sub-panels will look for evidence of some of the following types of characteristics of quality, as appropriate to each of the starred quality levels:
 - scientific rigour and excellence, with regard to design, method, execution and analysis
 - significant addition to knowledge and to the conceptual framework of the field
 - actual significance of the research
 - the scale, challenge and logistical difficulty posed by the research
 - the logical coherence of argument
 - contribution to theory-building
 - significance of work to advance knowledge, skills, understanding and scholarship in theory, practice, education, management and/or policy
 - applicability and significance to the relevant service users and research users
 - potential applicability for policy in, for example, health, healthcare, public health, food security, animal health or welfare.
 3. Unless there is sufficient evidence of at least one of the above, or the definition of research used for the REF is not met, research outputs will be graded as 'unclassified'.
 4. The sub-panels welcome research practice that supports reproducible science and the application of best practice. Examples include registered reports, pre-registration, publication of data sets, experimental materials, analytic code, and use of reporting checklists for publication purposes and those relating to the use of animals in research. These contribute to the evaluation of rigour for submitted outputs. Replication studies may be submitted as outputs and will be evaluated on the extent to which they contribute significant new knowledge, improved methods, or advance theory or practice¹.
 5. The sub-panels will use citation information, where appropriate and available, as part of the indication of academic significance to inform their assessment of output quality.
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