

Main Panel D supplementary criteria – level definitions

Interpretation of generic level definitions

1. The terms 'world-leading', 'international' and 'national' will be taken as quality benchmarks within the generic definitions of the quality levels. They will relate to the actual, likely or deserved influence of the work, whether in the UK, a particular country or region outside the UK, or on international audiences more broadly. There will be no assumption of any necessary international exposure in terms of publication or reception, or any necessary research content in terms of topic or approach. Nor will there be an assumption that work published in a language other than English or Welsh is necessarily of a quality that is or is not internationally benchmarked.

2. In assessing outputs, the sub-panels will look for evidence of originality, significance and rigour and apply the generic definitions of the starred quality levels as follows:

a. In assessing work as being **four star** (quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:

- a primary or essential point of reference
- of profound influence
- instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
- a major expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
- outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative.

b. In assessing work as being **three star** (quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:

- an important point of reference
- of considerable influence
- a catalyst for, or important contribution to, new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences

- a significant expansion of the range and the depth of research and its application
 - significantly novel or innovative or creative.
- c. In assessing work as being **two star** (quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond its area/field:
- a recognised point of reference
 - of some influence
 - an incremental and cumulative advance on thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences
 - a useful contribution to the range or depth of research and its application.
- d. In assessing work as being **one star** (quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour), sub-panels will expect to see evidence of the following characteristics within its area/field:
- an identifiable contribution to understanding without advancing existing paradigms of enquiry or practice
 - of minor influence.
- e. A research output will be graded '**unclassified**' if it is either:
- below the quality threshold for one star; **or**
 - does not meet the definition of research used for the REF. (See 'Guidance on submissions', Annex C).