

Interpretation of generic level definitions

1. 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:

- agenda-setting
- research that is leading or at the forefront of the research area
- great novelty in developing new thinking, new techniques or novel results
- major influence on a research theme or field
- developing new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research
- major changes in policy or practice
- major influence on processes, production and management
- major influence on user engagement.

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:

- makes important contributions to the field at an international standard
- contributes important knowledge, ideas and techniques which are likely to have a lasting influence, but are not necessarily leading to fundamental new concepts
- significant changes to policies or practices
- significant influence on processes, production and management
- significant influence on user engagement.

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:

- provides useful knowledge and influences the field
- involves incremental advances, which might include new knowledge which conforms with existing ideas and paradigms, or model calculations using established techniques or approaches
- influence on policy or practice
- influence on processes, production and management
- influence on user engagement.

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, or potential for, some of the following types of characteristics:

- useful but unlikely to have more than a minor influence in the field
- minor influence on policy or practice
- minor influence on processes, production and management
- minor influence on user engagement.

e. Research will be graded as '**unclassified**' if it falls below the quality levels described above or does not meet the definition of research used for the REF.