

## The structure of the UK Research Assessment Exercise in 2008

The sixth national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is to be completed by 2008. This exercise will facilitate the four higher education (HE) funding bodies (Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), and Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI)) in distributing public funds, based on a rigorous assessment process that is both transparent and robust.

This is an extremely important assessment of research that will determine the level of funding for HE institutions. Although the exercise is called RAE 2008, only outputs (publications, etc.) published between 1 January 2001 and 31 July 2007 will be included. There will be 15 main panels and 67 sub-panels. Nursing and midwifery are together in unit of assessment 11 in main panel 'c' along with dentistry, nursing, allied health professions/studies and pharmacy.

The main difference between RAE 2008 and RAE 2001 is the introduction of quality profiles, as well as a two-tier panel structure, both of which have been introduced to enhance the robustness of the exercise. Each sub-panel will have a chair, expert panel members (not normally exceeding 15), and one or two observers (not yet decided). The sub-panel chairs will be appointed by the four HE funding bodies' chief executives, who will review the nominations along with the main panel chairs, the RAE team and the RAE steering group. Sub-panel members will mainly be 'practising researchers of suitable personal standing and expertise'. It is desirable that at least a third of the members of each sub-panel should have previous RAE panel experience. The four HE funding bodies have stated that the membership of sub-panels will 'reflect the diversity of the research

community, in terms of age, gender, ethnic origin, scope and focus of their home institution, and geographical location' and panel members will be individuals 'with a significant personal record in research at the highest level' (see: [www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/03/rae0403.doc](http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/03/rae0403.doc)). Panel membership is important, as the criteria for assessment for each unit will be decided by the sub-panel and approved by the main panel along with one or two international assessors (where appropriate). Up to four research outputs may be submitted (not yet decided for each panel). Eligible outputs and other details of data to be collected will be outlined in the *Guidance of Submissions* due to be published in June 2005.

The outcomes of RAE 2008 will impact on the quality, type and future funding of research and approximately £9 billion (over six years) will be allocated by the four HE funding bodies to institutions that are conducting top quality research.

One thing we can be certain about is the importance of peer-reviewed publications. *Evidence Based Midwifery* is preparing a special edition of the journal for the International Congress of Midwives in Brisbane 2005. We are looking for research papers of around 3000 words with an international focus.

### Reference

Higher Education Funding Council for England, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland. (2004) *Research Assessment Exercise 2008*. See: [www.rae.ac.uk/Pubs/2004/03/](http://www.rae.ac.uk/Pubs/2004/03/) (accessed 4 and 11 November 2004).

I would like to thank Josie Linton RAE officer ([infor@rae.ac.uk](mailto:infor@rae.ac.uk)) for advising on the content and accuracy of this information.

**Marlene Sinclair**  
Editor

### *Evidence Based Midwifery* editorial panels

#### UK editorial panel

Dr Barbara Bale, University of Glamorgan, Wales, and acting chief executive, Health Professions Wales  
 Dr Soo Downe, University of Central Lancashire, England  
 Dr Billie Hunter, University of Wales Swansea, Wales  
 Dr Margaret Maguire, midwifery development officer, NHS Scotland  
 Dr Marianne Mead, University of Hertfordshire, England  
 Professor Jane Sandall, King's College, London, England  
 Chair: Louise Silvertown, RCM deputy general secretary  
 Dr Marlene Sinclair (professional editor), University of Ulster, Northern Ireland  
 Dr Hora Soltani, Derby City General Hospital, England  
 Dr Andrew Symon, University of Dundee, Scotland  
 Emma Godfrey (editor), McMillan-Scott  
 Polly Kerr (assistant editor), McMillan-Scott

#### International editorial panel

Professor Cecily Begley, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland  
 Assistant Clinical Professor Debra Erickson-Owens, University of Rhode Island, US  
 Dr Heather Hancock, University of South Australia  
 Professor Edith Hillan, University of Toronto, Canada  
 Kathy Herschderfer, secretary general, International Confederation of Midwives  
 Dr Helen Lugina, Muhimbili University College, Tanzania  
 Dr Mallavarapu Prakasamma, director, Academy for Nursing Studies, India

#### Editorial advisory panel

Joseph B Cunningham, lecturer in research methods and statistics, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland  
 Frances Day-Stirk, RCM director of learning, research and practice development  
 Professor Allan Templeton, president, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
 Catherine McCormick, midwifery officer, Department of Health, England  
 Andrea McGlynn, nurse-midwife, Illinois, US  
 Dr Rhona McInnes, University of Glasgow, Scotland  
 Sue Macdonald, RCM education and research manager  
 Simon Morrison, RCM head of communications and marketing  
 Helen Spiby, University of Leeds, England  
 Cathy Warwick, chair, midwifery committee, Nursing and Midwifery Council, UK  
 Matthew Pulzer, managing editor, McMillan-Scott