1. Minutes of the previous meeting

1.1 The Group confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record.

2. 2018 Stocktake Review

2.1 The Chair outlined the purpose of the 2018 Stocktake Review as being to (1) assess the readiness and quality of each submission; (2) agree areas of strength and risk to report to the UEB with appropriate recommendations; (3) agree feedback for Heads of Faculty and Heads of Department on each submission; (4) to identify any actions required at local, faculty and institutional levels; (5) to agree appropriate support for impact case studies; and (6) to discuss and agree submission options.

2.2 The Group were reminded that the Stocktake ran from March to July and was therefore largely undertaken before the detailed draft guidance was published in July, and therefore while the flexible allocation of between 1-5 outputs was fully used, there was no consideration of individual circumstances.

2.3 The Group agreed that engagement with the Stocktake exercise was very positive and a considerable improvement on previous years. In total departments had peer reviewed 5,300 outputs (including those from previous exercises) and selected the strongest 3,523 to ensure a minimum of 1 and maximum of 5 per eligible staff. In addition, 208 draft impact case studies were submitted.

2.4 The Group noted that in advance of this meeting the draft impact case studies had been reviewed in detail by a panel consisting of Research Services subject experts, and the
Faculty Director of Research and/or the Faculty REF Coordinator and Faculty Impact Lead. This meeting will use the readiness and potential strength scores to assess the overall submission and support required, and not to reassess the individual case studies in detail.

2.5 The Group discussed the submission of each department / UOA in turn. They noted the interim outputs sub-profile and compared to the description of the peer review process undertaken, noting where the Group had less confidence in the scores provided due to the process undertaken. The Group also noted the distribution of outputs across staff, the proportion of staff without a 3* output, and open access compliance.

2.6 The Group agreed that in general departments have been successful in converting the 2* outputs reported in 2017 into 3* outputs, but are concerned that 4* is either lower or similar to REF2014, taking into account the likely increase in 4* by competitor institutions as fewer outputs are submitted. They agreed that this is the main outputs risk to be reported to the UEB.

2.7 Although the proportion of work rated below 3* has reduced compared to the 2017 Stocktake, the Group noted that some units in particular still have a proportion of staff that do not have at least one 3* output.

2.8 While the Group noted that many of the impact case studies have the potential to score well, in almost all cases the potential score is reliant upon the described impact coming to fruition in time, on the scale anticipated, and with the necessary evidence secured. No case study can yet be considered complete, and all require further activities beyond an improved narrative to achieve their potential rating.

2.9 The Group noted several departments / UOAs to flag to the UEB as being of particular concern and in need of intense targeted support.

2.10 The Group agreed to further consider a potential combined submission to UOA 3 between the faculties of Medicine, Dentistry & Health and Science at its next meeting. This should include modelling of the various options combined with case study options.

2.11 After considering the separate departmental Stocktake submissions and modelling of a joint submission, the Group agreed that they would recommend to the UEB that the Department of Economics and the Management School make a combined submission to UOA 17, and that the Department of Journalism Studies and the Information School make a combined submission to UOA 34.

2.12 The Group discussed the option of making a submission to the Theology panel, but agreed that the institution did not have the critical mass to score well in the Environment, and was not aware of sufficient case studies to support a submission.

3. Code of Practice development
3.1 The Group received and discussed the paper on the proposed process for drafting the Code of Practice. They agreed the timescales and that a first draft should be presented at the next meeting.

3.2 The Group noted the proposed process for determining research independence and suggested the inclusion of several worked examples.

3.3 The Group noted the proposed process for the selection of outputs, and agreed that the next Stocktake Exercise should be as close to possible as the final submission rules.

4. University response to the consultation on the draft guidance

4.1 The Group received a presentation on the draft ‘Guidance on Submissions’ and ‘Panel Criteria and Working Methods’. They noted that all Departments had been invited to input into the consultation but very little had been received back.

4.2. The Group agreed that they were comfortable with the majority of the guidance, but proposed points to be made in our institutional consultation response on some specific issues. In particular, they noted the differing definition of continuing impact in Main Panel A as a cause for concern and that it should be strongly rebuked. The Group also discussed in detail the proposed arrangements for individual circumstances, agreeing that our response should strongly highlight concerns that some institutions may place individuals under significant pressure to disclose confidential circumstances for tactical benefit.

5. Provisional timetable

The group received an updated timetable for information.

6. Round table / AOB

There was no other business.

8. Next meeting

The group agreed that the next meeting should be in January, at which they will review the first draft of the Code of Practice and agree any remaining submission strategies.