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**Abstract**

Ratings awarded to university departments in the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2001 were analysed to determine whether they were influenced either by the status of the university (pre-1992 or post-1992) or by whether the university was represented on the panel that determined the ratings. There was little evidence that panel membership has any effect on ratings, but an analysis of covariance also showed that, among universities not on the panel, pre-1992 universities were more favourably assessed, relative to post-1992 universities, than would be expected on the basis of their ratings in the 1996 RAE. This finding, along with the preponderance of pre-1992 universities on all panels (even those where the majority of the research is conducted by post-1992 universities), is used to urge strongly that in future RAEs, panel membership should be made much more representative of higher education in general and of the institutions submitting the research considered by each panel in particular. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)