

## **Periodic Assessment of Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities VER 2026**

### **Final Report of the Law Sub-panel**

The Sub-panel Law observed a high quality of research in the legal field, marked by considerable diversity in research topics and methodological approaches in terms of outputs, illustrating impact case studies that meet a high standard of excellence, as well as well-defined creative environment statements, which, *inter alia*, embrace not only clearly articulated research strategies and international collaboration, but most importantly, commitments to staff development and EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) aspects. Further comments and recommendations in relation to the outputs, social impact as well as the creative environment statements are provided below.

### **Outputs**

As far as the outputs are concerned, the Sub-panel Law reviewed 125 outputs supplemented by 7 additional submissions in the interdisciplinary category, resulting in a total of 132 outputs. The outputs were evaluated on a 1-5 scale, namely, “World leading” (1), “Internationally excellent” (2), “Internationally recognised” (3), “Nationally recognised” (4), and “Below the standard of nationally recognised work” (5) based on originality, significance, and rigour.

Overall, the outputs reflected substantial breadth in terms of research areas, characterised by a commendably high standard of quality. Notably, the largest proportion of outputs — 39.5% were rated as “Internationally recognised” (3), followed by 36.5% rated as “Nationally recognised” (5) and a further 20.5% assessed as “Internationally excellent” (2). The least

share of outputs – 1.5% fell under the highest “World leading” category, however, on the other hand, only 2% were scored as “Below the standard of nationally recognised work” (5).

The outputs in each category were distinguished by the extent and character of their originality, significance and rigour. In terms of originality, this was reflected in how clearly they identified and addressed gaps in the existing body of knowledge, providing novel legal insights, while also advancing debates in the legal field. Higher-category outputs showed strong awareness of the scholarly landscape and positioned their contributions in relation to it. They advanced, extended, or challenged existing understandings, engaged with complex or new legal problems while also employing and developing innovative research methodologies. Indeed, originality was also assessed in terms of methodological approach by demonstrating, for instance, an interdisciplinary approach to the subject matter, or introducing new terms of comparison. Importantly, the outputs not only presented original contributions but also explained their relevance and significance with clarity. Their originality was purposeful and well-contextualised. It often resolved tensions, introduced new perspectives, paradigms or developed underexplored areas of inquiry. Their findings also showed a degree of universality. The lower-category outputs, by contrast, tended to display limited or implicit originality. Their contributions were more narrowly framed and less clearly justified in terms of relevance.

Furthermore, placement within categories depended on how effectively originality was combined with rigor and significance, and on how clearly the importance of the contribution was communicated. The main differences between quality levels lay in the clarity, depth, and potential impact of the contribution, as well as in how effectively its significance was conveyed. The higher-category work presented well-defined and convincingly argued contributions that addressed meaningful gaps. These were supported by robust methodology and coherent analysis. Such outputs were well embedded in existing

scholarship and often engaged with adjacent fields, thereby extending the reach of their findings. The outputs presented the capacity to influence knowledge and scholarly thought, or to contribute to the development and understanding of policy and/or legal practice. Mid-range outputs demonstrated some novelty but were more incremental. Their relevance and impact were less clearly articulated, and cross-field engagement was more limited. Lower-category outputs typically lacked a clearly substantiated contribution. The significance of the work was insufficiently articulated.

As far as rigour is concerned, the high-quality outputs combined rigorous execution with substantive and well-situated innovations. They provided a clear and persuasive account of their importance to ongoing scholarly debates. They showed awareness of gaps and explained why addressing them mattered. Lower-quality outputs showed limited engagement with existing scholarship, for instance, providing purely case commentaries without any academic discourse, and offered minimal or unclear contributions to knowledge with barely any legal analysis. Their significance was weakly articulated, and their findings remained narrow in scope.

Finally, the field demonstrates a solid baseline of quality. Many outputs constitute internationally recognised work. However, stronger articulation of originality and significance would often improve assessment outcomes. Applicants should also explain more clearly how their outputs advance knowledge and/or practice. This report presents a high-level outline of the evaluative logic underpinning the scores. In practice, assessment is context-specific and applied on a case-by-case basis. The criteria are specifically operationalised depending on the nature of the output and its disciplinary orientation, be it—for example—in legal history, doctrinal (black-letter) analysis, or critical legal studies.

## **Social Impact**

In relation to social impact, the Sub-panel Law reviewed eight cases of social impact. Both realised impact and well-substantiated impact potential were valued. Impact can be evidenced in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Claims should be presented in a clear and specific manner. For instance, it is insufficient to be a member of a committee or a working group without demonstrating further results, such as leading to the changes of legislation, implementation of new policies etc. In all cases, links between underpinning research and outcomes should be explicit and plausible. The narrative should also clearly demonstrate a causality between research findings and their impact, avoiding generic expressions, such as “[..] there are many court decisions based on this research [..]”. Lack of corroboration should also be avoided.

## **The Creative Environment**

In terms of the creative environment, applicants are encouraged to make full use of the space provided in the underlying sections to present their cases. While strategic intent is often well presented, greater specificity is needed regarding the implementation of strategies, the role of collaborations, and the alignment between staffing and long-term sustainability. For instance, applications should demonstrate how the research units foster and support high-quality research. The link between these two aspects should be clearly stated, rather than adding information about infrastructure and facilities, collaboration, engagement and staff development when these aspects are disconnected from their impact in promoting quality research. Applicants are also encouraged to explain the added value of international collaborations more clearly. More detail on staff development, including intra-institutional support and progression across career stages, while also addressing EDI aspects, would further strengthen the case presented by an institution.

### **Sub-panel members**

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