
**EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH FOR AUSTRALIA (ERA) INITIATIVE:
CONSULTATION PAPER**

Submission Cover Page

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Does the organisation consent to having its submission identified in a report on the outcomes of this submission process to be prepared by the ARC, which could be made publicly available on the ARC's website? (Y/N)	Y
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Please ensure that all details on this page are completed.

Issues for Response

The ARC is seeking feedback from the sector on the issues raised in the Consultation Paper. These issues are highlighted in the pink boxes throughout the Consultation Paper and listed below.

1. *For the 2008 clusters of ERA, research activity and intensity data will be collected at the two-digit FoR level. Collecting this data at four-digit FoR level over the longer term would provide greater granularity of analysis and reporting. We welcome feedback on any implications that this requirement will have for the span of the reference period in terms of retrospective data collection.*

RESPONSE:

While coding data to the 4 digit level will impose an additional burden on Universities, we believe that the advantages arising from the greater granularity are worthwhile and therefore would support this. Careful consideration may need to be given as to whether reporting ERA outcomes at the 4 digit level is appropriate.

2. *We recognise that non-salaried staff (honorary and adjunct) often contribute to the overall research effort of an institution. Therefore, we are seeking comments on the extent (if any) to which these researchers should be incorporated into staff FTE reporting.*

RESPONSE:

On balance we think that non-salaried staff should not be incorporated into staff FTE reporting. Inclusion of non-salaried staff risks introducing a new class of 'poaching' (i.e. of adjunct staff) and other artificial adjunct relationships into the system.

3. *Are there other core indicators of research quality that could readily be included?*

RESPONSE:

One measure that might have utility, is a measure of 'repeat business' with respect of industry research grants. The core idea is that industry partners are much more likely to re-engage with research providers who have previously provided a high quality service. There are likely to be some difficulties for universities distinguishing between repeat contracts to research groups and separate research relationships within the institution. Changes in industry partner names over time may also make this hard to demonstrate.

Another measure that could be extracted from the existing dataset (publications and grants) is international collaborations. This would be reasonable measure of research quality. Inter-university collaboration within Australia could also be considered.

4. *What other discipline-specific measures of excellence in applied research and translation of research outcomes should be considered by the Indicators Development Group, and how should they be benchmarked?*

RESPONSE:

- Repeat business (relevant for all disciplines)
- Some of the indicators of impact that were being developed including: evidence of take-up in policy and practice.
- End-user verification of take-up of research outcomes
- Technical reports and industry workshops

Note: we are happy to assist in this area if additional consultation is sought.

5. *We would welcome suggestions regarding types of practitioner-focussed outlets that may indicate excellence in applied research or translation.*

RESPONSE:

Australian professional journals that may not be ranked highly or cited through Scopus eg. Australian Social Work, Australian Psychologist, International Journal of Nursing Practice

Note: we are happy to assist in this area if additional consultation is sought.

6. *How feasible is it to collect category 2-4 research income data at four-digit FoR? Are there specific issues for each category for retrospective collection? Are there specific issues for future collections in Category 3?*

RESPONSE:

This is likely to create some additional burden but we don't see it being particularly difficult.

7. *Are all the income categories necessary or appropriate? What additional income streams could be collected under Category 5?*

RESPONSE:

The principal research income streams not currently captured in the HERDC system are the major infrastructure grants eg LIEF. We would prefer that these remain outside the system. As infrastructure income is multi-institutional it is difficult to appropriately attribute funding to individual institutions.

8. *What would the most useful research income reference period be for ERA, considering this does not need to be the same as the six-year publications reference period (see page 10)?*

RESPONSE:

Research income tends to be somewhat 'lumpy', we would therefore argue that 3 years should be the minimum reference period. There may be some advantage to a longer reference period eg. 5 years.

9. *How practical is it to request numbers of successful grants in addition to research income?*

RESPONSE:

We see no difficulty with this.

10. A list of other possible publications types is provided in Appendix B of the Consultation Paper. We are seeking feedback on whether there is support for these types to be included for individual disciplines and whether these categories are appropriately identified.

RESPONSE:

In most instances adding additional publication categories would add little value to ERA, and increase the compliance cost to both Universities and ERA. There may be disciplines, eg Law and Creative Arts, where additional publication types are required.

A less restrictive research book and research book chapter definition than is currently used in the HERD collection would help to remove anomalies. Our major concern here is the 'commercial publisher' requirement which excludes many legitimate research publications.

11. Should all non-publication data be collected over a shorter reference period? If so, what would that period be?

RESPONSE:

We believe that a three year reference period is likely to be adequate for non-publication data. Longer reference periods would further erode the currency of the metric.

12. Please provide comment on the above approaches for attributing publications.

RESPONSE:

Using the published affiliation to attribute publications has a number of advantages.

1. This will be consistent with existing HERDC data. Less important if publication data is being supplied
2. It will not significantly drive 'poaching' behaviour.

However, using the current location of researchers will most accurately reflect current capabilities. Given the long reference period this is a significant advantage.

ERA could monitor the 'poaching effect' by doing a parallel byline affiliation analysis.

13. Which citation data suppliers in your experience result in the most meaningful citation analysis for each of the disciplines?

RESPONSE:

Scopus appears to provide better coverage of non-science disciplines and we have observed no disadvantage in the science disciplines (compared to Thomson ISI).

14. Please provide comments regarding research training indicators. Is it possible to provide HDR completions data retrospectively at the four-digit FoR level?

RESPONSE:

This will require some additional work, primarily with respect to converting RFCD to FoR codes. RFCD data is currently held for most HDR data at the 4 digit level.

15. Do you see value in tagging research outputs as authored by HDR students and value in the analyses this will produce?

RESPONSE:

While not specifically a research quality measure it would be likely to encourage healthy behaviours in research practise, and lead to better development of research student attributes

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16. Institutions are invited to comment on the ease or otherwise of meeting any of the data requirements outlined in this document in addition to the specific questions addressed under particular headings.

RESPONSE:

There appears to be a clear intention to include all research output. We see this as crucial to avoid 'gaming' of the ERA by selectively including research outputs. However we have some concerns

1. It will generally not be possible for Universities to report 100% of research outputs. This will primarily due to non-compliance of researchers. Some tolerance will be needed.
2. There appears to be an opportunity for research outputs to be 'lost' between discipline groups. It may be 'convenient' for some 'interdisciplinary' work to be forgotten or recoded between rounds.

It is not yet clear how the reporting process will operate. We are somewhat confused about how staff numbers will be reported over a reference period and how this might be related to other metrics including publication data. Given the staggered nature of the analysis it is unclear how ERA will ensure that researchers and research FTE will be appropriately allocated to clusters.

17. We propose there is considerable value in having maximum flexibility and utility with respect to reporting, however, we also recognise the workload involved for institutions in assigning reporting codes. We welcome feedback on this issue in respect to both the feasibility and value of such an approach.

RESPONSE:

We see AOU tagging as valuable. We would like to have the opportunity to provide more than one AOU tag so that instances where academic staff conduct research within a Centre or Institute context can be tagged with both the Centre/Institute and the home School of the researcher.

18. Institutions are invited to comment on the feasibility or otherwise of institutions identifying student authorship in previous HERDC collections.

RESPONSE:

We have previously tagged student authorship in our HERD data. There may be some issues with respect to students who are also staff or who became staff.